The Eclipse of Urbanism and the Greening of Public Space

Image Making and the Search for a Commons in the United States, 1682–1865

MARK LUCCARELLI

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INTRODUCTION

'History is the sum of all possible histories – a set of multiple skills and points of view, those of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The only mistake, in my view, would be to choose one of these histories to the exclusion of all the others' (Braudel quoted in Lee 2012: 6). But mainstream environmental discourse of the last 25 years is all about living up to the inevitability of convergence of all peoples and all conditions. In consequence the radical ecological thinking that had begun to link the environmental crisis to our modes of production and decision-making has been virtually overturned. Admittedly the ecology movement of the 1970s (as expressed in the work of such popular authors as Barry Commoner and E.F. Schumacher) was hampered by formulating its programme in the language of abstract utopianism and at the same time inconsistently in the phenomenology of place, but it uncovered critical linkages between the modes of production, spatial organisation and environment, linked to specific ways of living. While this perspective focused on functions we associate with urbanism – the production and distribution of goods and services, the provision of housing and the development of a commons/public space – it was fairly clear in the need to promote a different kind of urbanism in line with rescaling and reviving industrial economies around achieving environmental sustainability. Today this perspective has been replaced by a global environmentalism sustained by three positions: (1) a new 'materialism' intended to overturn the idealising qualities/tendencies of earlier pastoral discourses; (2) a turn away from the privileging of the local and the phenomenology of place to the global scale, both cultural and geological; and (3) an often assumed or under-stated, but clearly evident, reliance on global civil society as the foundation on which political agency as regards environment, and much else, is built.

Global environmentalism proceeds on the basis that the transnational and cosmopolitan turns implicit in green urbanism and global environmentalism have put the world on track to address the problems inherent in outmoded forms of thinking. But as the global process becomes mired in a new geo-politics of state competition and instrumentalised by the neo-liberal growth model, we should be questioning the effectiveness of the dominant conception of global era politics. We lack the language and the scope to draw on the increasingly distant testimonies of Marsh, Thoreau, Leopold, Carson and so many others;

such fading language pales against the neo-environmental enfolding of 'green' into the corporate global economic agenda. There is a case to be made that a strong environmentalist tradition, linking politics to environment, economy and society, has been winnowed away by concessions to increasingly abstract and insulated academic discourses. I propose to return here to the public nature of academic work; by 'public' I mean that a work focuses on ideas, interpretations and proposals that address our students and colleagues as well as the general public that relies on academics for informed discussion.

We do see signs of conceptual progress: environment is not separable from urbanism – nature is not separable from culture; I think this point is well recognised, but both must be understood in relation to a broad range of spatial formulations and political choices around the shaping of space as a whole. In short, to write convincingly about the fate of the surroundings or environs requires re-narration of spatial history. I begin by examining urbanism. By 'urbanism' I mean a way of life that has achieved a balance between conceptual and lived space manifest in an active civic life, public art and vernacular forms and practices. Urbanism was classical in birth, but took a significant turn toward engagement with nature in the late Middle Ages. While European urbanism gained a foothold in British America, it was trumped by the 'abstract space' of the global market long before the War for Independence; the process had already begun in the eighteenth century and its pace was greatly accelerated in the far reaches of the empire. The appropriation of urbanism as a trope for an expanding mercantilist capitalism degraded its essence and cemented the association of the city with privilege and the Crown's imperial agenda.

One excellent illustration of the process is evident in the development and fate of Philadelphia, the crown jewel of British America.[1] William Penn's 'greene countrie towne' was conceived in line with a medieval idea of urban community and Christian theme of rebirth and renewal, but it was also a reiteration of an alternate English urbanism, a new kind of London born in response to the agrarian hopes of the English Revolution. Philadelphia's idyllically pastoral envisioning was common enough, but its specifics – setting, people and design – made it *sui generis*, a place unique to its geography and history. It also meant that, despite some interesting features of its urban plan designed to overcome the fate of the commercial city, Philadelphia was soon enough riven asunder by the mobility of goods and people. It was transformed through image and

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1. I chose Philadelphia, in part, because it was the largest, most important and architecturally accomplished, as well as perhaps the best visually documented, city of British North America.

function into a spearhead of advancing mercantilism, then the emerging form of the world market system. The parallel with today's increasingly labelled 'green cities' is telling. Green urbanism, conceived in terms of environment and environmentality, has turned visions of garden cities and urban ecology to sham purposes through technologies of salesmanship and 'liveability'.

The nineteenth century was witness to a more promising development, at least in some respects. Then a conception of green arose in relation to public space – as a matter of design and territoriality – as well as to a developing sense of the political and articulating state policies around conservation. With a genteel origin expressed in part through a picturesque landscape aesthetic, an understanding of green public space that was extended by poets, planners and academics by embracing democratic sensibilities, environmental science and practices of resource conservation, this synthesis became an important counter-veiling force that led to significant reform. Measured against the present, the idea and representation of green public space of nineteenth century America was a considerable achievement, even though it ultimately failed to redirect the spatial pattern brought on by industrialism. What emerges from such episodes is an understanding that events develop patterns over time and that culture, as the embodiment of values, must be linked to other structures in order to become an effective means of promoting change.

Rather than thinking in terms of sequences of events and structures of interlocking systems, our era's progressive social impulses, and the academic discourses that have followed in their wake, are directed toward definable spheres or fields. Since the 1970s, the city has been one such site of environmental contestation. The interest of planners and geographers has followed the lead of activists, both urbanists and environmentalists, in defining urban form and function as a site for significant reform. The emphasis has coincided with other groups interested in social politics of race and gender and in architectural preservation. In the US this has constituted a spatial turn back 'to the centre' and away from the suburban and rural peripheries, as one American critic put it. In part this has been constructive, but it rests on an inadequate intellectual foundation and a poor understanding of the fundamentals that pertain to urban redesign, specifically the need to *creatively address the binaries of place/mobility and production/consumption*. Urbanism today, after all, is embedded in forces that threaten the world's social diversity in the interest of a regime of global development and modernisation. States have increasingly distanced themselves from their democratic and national origins to become global actors; their project depends on deepening spatial differentiation and forwarding reckless

resource exploitation and regional abandonment. Under such circumstances, it is silly to conceive of the city as the hope for environment when the production of these 'global cities' is part and parcel of the dismantling of so many regional and national economies. We should disabuse ourselves, therefore, of the thought that urbanism as a cultural and spatial phenomenon can spearhead environmental reform.

'Environmental' urbanism might be said to be a phenomenon of medieval Italian and German towns. Their growth into small cities inspired the modern reflection on the lifeworld as encompassing the city, agriculture, gardens, landscape – the identification of set of linked spaces that constitute the environmental sphere. The other important aspect was religious in the broad sense: as the medieval city was a Christian community, the understanding of spatiality reflected a moral and ethical point of view. After the Middle Ages, however, cities became increasingly instrumentalist in outlook and territorial in ambition. Carving out new abstract spaces and unsettling ancient conceptions of urban-rural balance, they required ever more elaborate planning and architecture organised around conceptions of Enlightenment rationality and control to preserve public space. Alternately, urban planning became the locus of Arcadian impulses that have evolved into intricate visions marked by the infusion of natural and cultural spaces:

> Imagine an urban countryside, a highly varied but humanized landscape. It is neither urban nor rural in the old sense, since houses, workplaces, and places of assembly are set among trees, farms and streams. Within that extensive countryside, there is a network of small, intensive urban centers. The countryside is as functionally intricate and interdependent as any contemporary city … Cities are no longer islands encircled by a barrier reef of suburbs, washed by a rural sea. Nor is that sea an emptiness to pass over, a mine of food and energy, or a remoteness in which to rest. Most people no longer think of 'home town' but of 'home region' (Lynch 1984: 294).

In contemporary urban planning and geography discourses we see bits and pieces of this green utopian project. Re-forming of the industrial-urban complex is related to life-shaping questions pertaining to biophilia, urban agriculture, human-powered mobility and health awareness, multimodal transportation systems, species preservation in urban spaces, etc. It's important to point out, however, that these visions advanced by advocacy organisations and academics do not address the broader historical and political questions upon which they depend.

Introduction

For all their importance, cities did not become the key levers of historical change that one might have predicted in 1500. For one thing cities are dependent on larger territories (regions); the functions of cities have continuously waxed and waned, not only in competition with other cities, but in relation to their territories, constantly re-inventing themselves and devolving functions onto larger and larger territories or alternately re-centring activities onto smaller spaces. The lack of clear territoriality makes the city a force for revolutionising the conditions of our interaction with the material world rather than establishing a new paradigm for systematising environmentality. More importantly, cities lost their political integrity long ago in the rise of nation-states for a number of reasons – including the fact that the states were better positioned to deal with the social and territorial inequalities that blossomed in the free medieval cities, as Lewis Mumford points out in his first study of urban society and culture (1938). This history points to the conflicting demands to which the organisation and representation of space is subject, as well as to the question of governance of space. It also shows that cities cannot be studied alone; urbanism is a *structure* interacting with social, cultural and political spheres, which in this study is represented by the production, practice and concept of space. Similarly the representation of landscape, even when intended to reflect pastoral themes, should not be divorced from the development of urbanism and of spatial development generally.

A starting point is to consider space as a 'product' of human activity organised in the following typology: (1) social practices that shape the division and development of spaces, (2) the 'lived' space, which people inhabit and use and where they have their life world and (3) the representation and conception of space (by artists, architects, planners, etc.) (Lefebvre 1991/1974). Conceived space concerns plans, ideas and aesthetics of representation. I am interested particularly in the way 'conceptual space' is felt aesthetically, and the relation between feeling and the moral understanding. The aesthetics of space reflect the intersection of fact and value, and of the biosphere and the world that is largely of our own making. Social organisation may produce space, but the extension of human activity through space also frames social and cultural experience in many ways, including providing the means to reflect on capitalist market processes. I am also interested in how conceptual space embodies state form, even as it frames 'the political', i.e. creates objects of public concern. In this study conceptual space takes three forms – abstract, pastoral and public; or, the market, Arcadia and the republic. The means of spatial production and the differentiation, appropriation and conflict between and among conceptual

spaces frame the book's narrative. In the case of public space, its production was clearly political and therefore urban in origin. The 'greening' of civic space meant the lending of public significance to environmental policies. The decline of the public sphere and the rise of abstract spaces – territorial and market-oriented – also represented the decline of urbanism and the inherited urban forms, while the public sphere's partial greening represented the efforts of men like Henry David Thoreau and Frederick Law Olmsted whose Puritan origins led in due course to an attempt to curb abstract space, even if the reform efforts stopped short of the required reconstructions of spatial and public spheres.

Spatial theory also permits moving from urbanism, one anchor of this work, to consider landscape and nature. Geographers have attempted to stretch the term landscape by attributing to it a set of inherent qualities that are rooted in physical, social or political geography; this tends to attribute agency to space itself and has caused confusion because it clashes with the cultural and aesthetic origin of landscape in poetry and painting. Landscape as discussed in this book was a *zu sammenheng*: it draws together nature and culture, moving us from an aesthetic drawn from various qualities of the observed world to *bildung*, culture as edification and human development.[2] Landscape is a space that pulls nature and culture together, but in a way that answers first to the demands of culture, starting with the perceptions and interests of the urban dweller. Indeed landscape is 'idea' and is primarily aesthetic, functioning as a tradition with its own set of references and inferences, but in very different contexts (Cosgrove 1986). We are familiar with the landscape painting as the progenitor of a private bourgeois sphere – the realm of middle class tourists and amateur artists; we see it as a set of codes for building exclusionary nationalisms. But landscape underwent an expansion in meaning as it became rife with the new invention of 'nature' drawn from both a greater scientific understanding of the biosphere and from a push of the imagination toward expanding human experience to include that of plants animals and places. Thus landscape came to frame experience. Seen in terms of the broader context of the historical development of American space, landscape picturesque, and particularly picturesque's engagement with wildness, occupies a critical role in the greening narrative. The opening to nature suggested by respect for the wild led to what Benton MacKaye later called a 'new exploration' and it suggested opposition to the goal of modernisation at any price (1962/1928).

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2.   Space is much broader because it concerns the social and political developments that shape both city and its surroundings (a conceptual function related to the spatial concept of 'region').

Introduction

This book has been undertaken for the purpose of restoration and reconstruction, to suggest where the lines of cultural continuity lie and how they might be re-engaged. The alternatives that emerged by mid-nineteenth century around green space had one virtue lacking in post-1980 environmentalism: a vision rooted in historical experience that could contribute to a political process for redefining the commons as essential; this had an impact for pursuing sometimes constructive policies for conservation and urban spatial reform. Nonetheless the emergence of green space charted in this book is highly problematised. Making use of these ideas as a kind of positive civil tradition should not be easy in the face of many obstacles suggested here. In conclusion, I briefly consider, then, the possibility that the chief legacy of green space as an influence on urban form and political life might be an inversion of positive naturism, that is to say that green space may emerge as a reclaiming of lands by a powerful nature of our own devising.

Chapter 1

PHILADELPHIA: GREEN URBANISM AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Economic geography establishes the most important spatial context for understanding city-regions. By the eighteenth century Philadelphia had become one of a growing number of cities that developed after the rise of capitalism in the fourteenth century. Cities were essential to the growth of the world economy but their role in local economies differed and their significance in the development of new societies is by no means ensured. In part, this chapter concerns the question of how cities failed to be the cultural centres we assume they are and perhaps ought to be. City-regions become the generators of economy, of trade and financial services enabled by far-flung networks, but how do they become the bearers of culture, the owners of the future?

A typical version of how this is accomplished is the story of singular cities, capital cities, which imprint their brand on a nation and a people: Paris, London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, even Moscow. That city might have been Philadelphia for the United States. Although it had a population of just over 40,000 in 1800, Philadelphia's importance during the colonial and early national periods is larger than our present preoccupation with the influence attributed to mega-sized cities might suggest. Philadelphia was the main publishing centre of the colonies and it became quickly the most cosmopolitan of North American cities, attracting a good deal of emigration of intellectuals and artists from the British Isles; the influx of radical ideas of the Enlightenment may have been key to the creation of an active bourgeois public sphere in the city, as well as the interest in architecture and urban representation. It was the seat of the Continental Congress from which the Declaration of Independence was issued. It served as the capital for much of the first decade after adoption of the Constitution. Second, Philadelphia was a planned city and arguably the clearest example of the effort to use planning both to improve conditions of everyday life and to find space for a civic culture. In this sense it was clearly the most abreast of developments in Europe of all the colonial cities.

Philadelphia: Green Urbanism and the Atlantic World

The Atlantic World

While farming was far and away the most important activity in British North America, occupying at least ninety per cent of the population, it was mercantile cities that were the real activators of the economy. These cities were made possible by a relatively liberal trading regime that permitted the development of important commercial cities in the colonies; these cities were important enough that they inevitably came into competition with London and this competition and the Crown's response to it was an important contributing cause of the War for Independence.[1] The cities also shaped the character of British America, particularly north of the Mason-Dixon line, where the most important cities developed (the southern colonies had two significant cities, Savannah in Georgia and Charles Town, later Charleston, in South Carolina). Cities like Philadelphia spearheaded the western British segment of the Atlantic World linked developmentally and by trade (the carry trade to the West Indies and also specialised industries based on available resources such as shipbuilding and iron production).[2] Much agriculture, not all, counted for little in this because it was dispersed, far-flung and also heavily self-supporting, producing only a small percentage of its produce for the market. This lack of integration would have important consequences later.

Cities built on a surprisingly large scale in eighteenth century terms are important to understanding colonial American geographical development. The key to this development is the creation of miniature British cities on the continent on a scale to rival that of the Old World. British America was part of the Atlantic World; North American cities acted as a funnel pouring agricultural commodities into the West Indies and Europe itself. These commercial cities were the heart of British America and afterward the United States, forming

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1. By the term the 'Atlantic World' I mean that section of the larger world economy that focused on trans-Atlantic development and included all of the European countries and their American empires. Braudel (1984c: 410) points out that American merchant shipping was all over the Atlantic from Madeira Islands to the Barbary Coast, from France to West Africa, but London remained at the centre because London banks provided the credit and received the lion's share of the deposits. In addition, British mercantile policy had something to do with shaping and limiting American industry and trade.

2. The concept of the Atlantic World puts the development of the Americas at the centre of early modern history. This breaks down American isolation, putting developments in the US closer to the heart of European history. The difficulty is that such a relational theories geography can understate the importance of territorial and political developments, as we shall explore in Chapter 2. See Bailyn 2005.

the country's most urbanised regime. By 1750, Philadelphia had emerged as the largest and most influential of these cities.

As connected to the Atlantic trading system as they were, there was something about North American cities that differentiated them from European ones. North American cities may be pictured as urban enclaves hugging the eastern edge of a still largely unexplored continent, 'urban islands' dependent on transatlantic trade; they existed by virtue of new global networks of trade, investment and communication. Lacking long-standing relation to a countryside that had emerged from a feudal period, North American cities reflected a redefinition of space, the outcome of the successful establishment of trans-oceanic commerce begun with the age of exploration (Bender 2006: 15–16). From this perspective they were part of a global network and lacked character. They grew rapidly from trans-Atlantic trade and had minimal connections to the surrounding countryside. On the other hand, European cities reflected histories and patterns of settlement that grew from existing villages and roads and pathways – all part of the development of a cultural landscape that connected these cities to a more distant past. Connections among North American cities relied on ships and navigable seaways, the fastest and easiest mode of communication at that time, to link them to regions and cities throughout the Atlantic World. Land connections, by contrast, between cities and from cities to rural areas were spotty and often unreliable. Through much of its colonial history, travel and communication between cities in British North America was also by ship; Benjamin Franklin noted in his autobiography that his trip from Boston to Philadelphia in 1723 proceeded quickly by ship to New York, at which point he made the foolish decision to attempt to cross New Jersey by land. Vast wooded tracts, swamps ridden with yellow fever and difficult-to-negotiate rivers marked much of the interior, even areas adjacent to the cities.

New Jersey provides a useful example, in part because it always lacked a cultural or political identity, which makes it a clear example of the geo-economic processes that shaped North America in general. Lying at the heart of Atlantic America, New Jersey is today the most densely populated state in the union, but the colony (actually created in 1702 when the Crown merged two separate colonies) remained remarkably under-developed throughout the colonial period. The north-western third of the colony was characterised by hilly, even mountainous, land covered in dense hardwood forests. The wood supply and proximity to Philadelphia led to the development of slave-manned iron foundries in the 1740s. Large tracts were denuded of trees, but once the industry was killed off by restrictive British import duties the land went feral

or was given over to marginal farming. In the south of the colony the Atlantic coastal plain has created a flat, featureless landscape. It is characterised by a sandy soil that has proven to be difficult for rain-watered agriculture. The settlers called this area the 'pine barrens'; it remained largely unsettled and its industries – glass and iron making – never established themselves well. Thus, using and then abandoning sizable pieces of land which became 'wildernesses' was part of American settlement patterns from the beginning. Population could always move on to a more profitable environ. Thus, as in much of Atlantic America, there was never a premium placed on intensive agricultural development in New Jersey. Lands that would have been drained or terraced for agriculture had they been in Europe during the great expansion of northern European population and agriculture after the fourteenth century were quickly passed over in favour of more promising agricultural lands further south or west. Settlement remained sparse and investments of capital and especially labour in intensive agriculture proved futile (Postan 1993; Stansfield 1983).

The cities of Atlantic America were also constricted by physical geography: hemmed in by the Appalachians to the west, isolated from one another by difficult terrain and a lack of roads and inland waterways, their main connection to each other and to the outside world was by sea. Of course, as Carl Bridenbaugh points out, the American city was primarily a 'commercial community' and the 'character of the commercial development in each settlement depended chiefly on the nature of its hinterland' (1964/1938: 4). Arguably what made Philadelphia the most prosperous of these cities was its relatively large agricultural hinterland. But, the real business of the city was carrying trade; commerce depended (partly) on agricultural products, but the merchants did not extend their power through capital investment or management or infrastructure improvement in order to tie the surrounding regions ever more closely to the city. Undercapitalised farmers carried on production haphazardly on thinly populated lands. To put it from a different angle, the cities were neither the culmination of a well-developed rural society, nor the agents of an agricultural revolution. The linkages to Europe were stronger than to their own hinterlands.[3]

Therefore Bridenbaugh's assertion that cities 'rise and flourish in proportion as their natural advantages correspond with the demands of a particular age'

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3. This was less so in the case of New England, a set of commonwealths that mandated a consistent form of social organisation throughout; but the rise of a mercantile elite in Boston and Newport and Providence meant that it too moved in the same direction. It was also subject to change over time.

(4) – like all assertions of economic developmentalism – is only partly true. It's a sound observation in regard to global market conditions, but says little about the internal relation of cities to land to domestic economies. Bridenbaugh's observation is a good model for explaining the rise of ship-building, which was to become colonial Philadelphia's largest industry: here the advantages of less expensive materials, plentiful labour and innovative technique provided an opening that, when developed, became an economic niche. For example, a ship built in a Philadelphia shipyard cost on average ten to fifteen per cent less than one built in England (Thayer 1982: 75). New England had its own ship-building industry, but could not match Philadelphia's prices. On the other hand, Boston and Plymouth had the advantage of a well-developed fishing industry and developed trade in the provision of naval stores, both of which were very important exports. Later, ship-building stimulated by the growing imperial competition between Britain and France became more important to the British economy, much to Philadelphia's advantage. Furthermore Philadelphia (and New York as well) benefited from the growing importance of grains and barrelled meats as exports to the West Indies in the first half of the eighteenth century (Thayer 1982: 74–75). Generally 1750 was the high point in a regime of multilateral trans-Atlantic trade; problems began shortly thereafter, problems exacerbated by the Crown's handling of the political crisis that ensued.

Thus Philadelphia, like other North American cities, grew and flourished under a relatively free trading regime, though that was partly due to the fact that the colonists were able to get around the weakly enforced Navigations Acts designed to keep trade within the Empire.[4] During the early national

4. The world economy of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had features associated with what we are now wont to call 'globalisation'. The great expansion of the trading system after 1989 has been interpreted by advocates of free trade as a sea change that corrected the 'distorted' age of ideology between 1914 and 1989 when potent political regimes developed growth regimes based on territorial expansion; or, alternately, post-1989 is viewed as a return to the *status quo ante* i.e. the return to the more open trading system that lasted between 1815 and 1914 under British auspices. What these observations seem to miss is that there have always been competing demands on the global trading system – demands for openness under certain conditions and closure under others. The oscillation between the two varies with the economic trajectory of particular nations as characterised most importantly by their standing in the hierarchy of spatial zones that constitutes world economies. But there is also performance of the global system as a whole to consider. Kondratieff showed that global trade and growth corresponds to waves of expansion and contraction, created by periods of growth followed by structurally necessary periods of contraction. Contraction obviously increased competition and led to calls for political intervention. After 1650 the world economy went into a long-term decline that resulted in growing competition among cities, and

period, Philadelphia was 'the nation's premier commercial center' and 'one of the wealthiest urban areas in the world' (B.G. Smith 2015: 15). These statistics belie the question of whether largest and most powerful could translate into the leading city – the city that could establish an urban hierarchy, just as it became the place people looked to establish trends of fashion and culture. Arguably Philadelphia was the most important city of eighteenth century America, but its advantages were not so great as to negate the cultural and economic integrity and independence of other urban centres in North America.

Bridenbaugh (1964/1938: 26) was right, therefore, about the lack of a fully developed urban system. American cities lacked the institutional means to create an urban hierarchy,[5] or, to put it another way, as colonial outliers with very little political influence they were subordinate to the imperial centre (London) while London was unable, for a variety of political reasons, to order the relations among colonial cities; hence they were forced to compete with one another. The competition between cities paralleled the lack of integration of rural areas discussed earlier.

Town Planning and Civic Identity

Considered as a world unto itself – a little republic – Philadelphia's achievements were substantial: there was a tradition of civic humanism manifest in the first American attempt at urban planning; the city become reflexive in its sense of place and, though a colonial city, nonetheless managed a distinctive style and developed an impressive public architecture that continued well into the nineteenth century.[6] Philadelphia was best placed to offer an American contribution to the building of comfortable, environmentally viable and publicly

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falling profits amplified demands for protection of markets and for territorial consolidation. During that era France and Britain competed for global dominance, and it was precisely this period in which British North America broke away and the industrial revolution began in Great Britain (Braudel 1984c: 30–41, 69–70, 78–80; see also Wallerstein 1974).

5.   According to Vries (1989: 784), as European cities recovered from the plague, the more decentralised medieval pattern was replaced by a 'more structured urban system that by 1600 featured a polycentric hierarchy of competing urban zones that sought to organize the life of major European regions'.

6.   In their famous book on the development of American architecture, *American Skyline* (1956), Christopher Tunnard and Henry H. Reed point to William Strickland's Merchant Exchange Building (1831–1834) – the Thirteen Arches a collaboration of Strickland, the sculptor William Rush and the painter Thomas Scully – as contributing to the expression of a classical merchants' city.

minded cities. Ironically, the very lack of a well-ordered state system provided the space required to reinvent urbanism, but also the lack of an enabling force to make it important. Thus American cities were a case of parallel development: their civic orientation had once characterised the cities of Italy and Germany. The achievement of Philadelphia was greatest because its Quaker founders had done the most, arguably, to realise this opportunity to build something new in response to the seventeenth century town planning discourse, the particular requirements of the city's natural environs and, of course, the founders' religious convictions. Religious motivation was fundamental to re-imaging the relation between nature and culture, as it had played an important role in late medieval Italy by supporting the idea of civic virtue and the cultural significance of the rural landscape. Pennsylvania shared some of these qualities, specifically the hopeful application of a sense of religious expectation to the interpretation and shaping of the profane world. Interestingly enough, developments in London provided the impetus for the green planning of Philadelphia.

Whilst the case of colonial Philadelphia demonstrates how networked capitalism made possible the exercise of a fair measure of independence and attention to physical planning, William Penn's hope to build a 'Holy Experiment' in the New World was quite unique: it was different both to the almost purely commercial motives of the southern colonies and to the other-worldly emphasis in New England where settlement was thought about almost exclusively in terms of community. Most importantly, despite religious symbolism, Philadelphia was the only American city to refer directly and intentionally back to the issues of European urbanism and politics. Civic and cultural renewal, though promised by post-millennialism, was only possible through the rise of a distinctive civic identity. The seventeenth century development of town planning in London, though a failure, was crucial. So was the renewal of the latent sense of Englishness that developed among subaltern classes during the English Civil War, as Britain was emerging as a modern nation.

The Philadelphia bourgeoisie's awareness of itself as a social grouping, distinct, if not apart, from its trans-Atlantic connections expressed itself in the tools of conceptual space directed to civic ends: mapping to help define and identify the city in its larger environs; town planning and architecture to shape the character of the city; visual representation to describe and publicise the city; and finally landscape representation of the city's edge or the urban setting designed to connect the city to its setting. Thematically the concern with the urban environs was commercial, civic and pastoral: it was concerned with the development of eutopia (a good place) and evocative of Arcadia, but

its classical geometries also defined it as public and commercial spaces. Green squares and rural markets were as much a nod to a return to pastoral as a practical arrangement for supplying the city with produce.

This sense of difference and separation was not simply a manifestation of some abstract planning discourse or a bourgeois desire to abstract space for profit. It reflected something deeper, captured by Braudel in this passage: 'Every [European] town is and wants to be a world apart. It is striking fact that all or nearly all of them between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries had ramparts. They were held in a restrictive and distinctive geometry, cut off even from their own immediate surroundings' (Braudel 1984a: 491). Was Philadelphia so different in this regard? It lacked ramparts,[7] but its rectangular geometry was surely unique in a seventeenth century world of unplanned towns and aspiring cities that were no more than a thin line of settlement straggling along roads or waterfronts. The city was virtually surrounded by water and, until a bridge was built over the Schuykill, it could be accessed only by ferries. Indeed the city was distinct from its countryside in both its natural and economic geographies. The natural spaces of the rivers and the instrumental space of the city's grid made it different. Difference is important in creating a sense of place, but difference is also the genesis of the city disconnected from its larger social and natural environments, something Philadelphia's founders wished to avoid.

When William Penn came to Pennsylvania in 1682, his ship docked fifteen miles (25 kilometres) south of the Philadelphia site at the Swedish town of Uppland, which he promptly renamed Chester. Sweden had been the former colonial owner of this territory and Penn might well have made use of the existing infrastructure for his new capital of Pennsylvania.[8] After all, most urban settlements in North America (Boston, New York) were simply overgrown villages, which grew into cities. Chester, for example, had the advantage of being an already existing settlement as well as being downstream from the eventual site of Philadelphia, that much closer to the sea and at a point where the Delaware River is considerably wider than it is at the Philadelphia site. Alternately Penn might have chosen the site of the Swedish Ft Christina, later

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7.   It came closest to a fortified town during the War for Independence, when obstacles were constructed in the river to protect it from British attack.

8.   Penn had already made up his mind before arriving. After landing at Chester, he proceeded north to inspect the site for his new city. Afterwards he moved to Pennsylvania in 1693, founded an extensive estate north of Philadelphia he called Pennsbury and then moved back to England. He was in the colony for only three years, returning fifteen years later to deal with a bill of grievances drawn by his tenants, leaving the colony for good in 1701 (Dunn and Dunn 1982: 26).

Town Planning and Civic Identity

Wilmington, Delaware (at that time Penn's grant included what would become the State of Delaware). To choose a more northerly location meant putting up with a greater tendency for the river to freeze over as well as higher banks along the Delaware that made unloading ships more difficult (Forest nd). The importance of his planning vision, however, required Penn to find a site that could be built de novo; a second consideration was better access to the interior, which they incorrectly assumed would be provided by the Schuylkill, which formed the western boundary of the Philadelphia site. Here was an opportunity to build an expansive and broad city whose physical identity was secured by its peninsular situation.

Philadelphia was laid out in rectangles, a geometric pattern later known colloquially as the 'grid'. Its layout reflected the advance of classical geometry in urban layout. Created by Thomas Holme with the collaboration of Penn himself, the basic principle of the plan was to facilitate the easy movement of
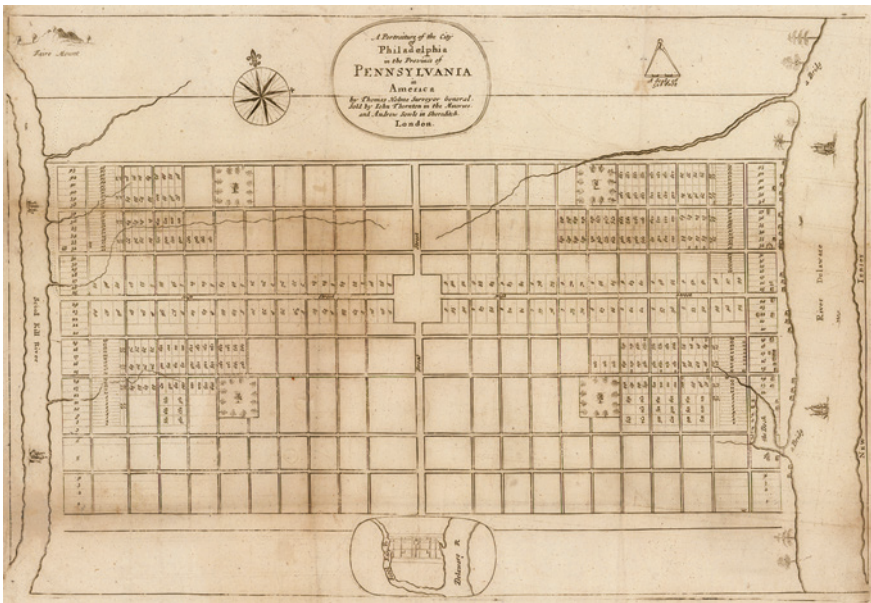
Figure 1.1. **A Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia in the Province of Pennsylvania in America**, *by Thomas Holme, printed in London, 1683. Formerly a captain in Cromwell's forces during the English Civil War, Holme converted to Quakerism thereafter and became Surveyor General of Pennsylvania at the invitation of its founder William Penn. Published in London, the map was an expression of both commercial and civic intentions on Penn's part. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.*

pedestrian and freight traffic within a generously proportioned (by the standards of the day) urban area and thereby pre-empt overcrowding. Both the east–west and north–south streets are relatively broad, giving adequate room for carriages and pedestrians. The plan's dimensions are obviously dictated by the idea of stretching the city between the larger Delaware River on the right and the smaller Schuylkill River depicted on the left.

The Holme plan aimed at a 'compact yet uncrowded settlement' (Reps 1980: 221), but it was also an attempt to create favourable environs for a well-rounded urban life. Partly this was a reflection of modernisation: the plan's wide streets, open squares and dispersed settlement were responses to the stressed environs of overgrown medieval cities that had inadequate space to cope with increased trade and traffic, conditions which gave rise to over-crowded conditions and made the circulation of fresh air and access to light unavailable luxuries. There was also the enhanced danger of fire under conditions of overcrowding. These were not theoretical points, but observations at the time rooted in London's historical experience. The demands of an expanding commercial economy had already pushed London to breaking point. By 1650 the city had reached a population of approximately 350,000 and its narrow streets had become overcrowded with buildings and population. Communicable disease and fire are the scourges of cities. In 1664 London underwent an attack of the plague; barely two years later on 2 September 1666 what has gone down in history as the 'great fire' consumed medieval London, burning much of the city within its walls. Despite these setbacks the steady stream of migration into the city meant that population growth barely missed a beat, reaching 600,000 by 1700 and thereby making London Europe's second largest city just behind Paris. Obviously the destruction of old London actually aided in the intensive redevelopment of the city.

Penn's wish was to overcome London's twin legacies of fire and overcrowding by designing 'a greene Country Towne, wch will never be burnt, and allways be wholsome' (quoted in Milroy 2006: 257). This must certainly have been a large part of his decision to found a new city rather than simply building onto an existing town. Town planning, then, was essential from the beginning and it was not original to American conditions nor was it a statement of pastoral idealism. Generally speaking, city planning had a long history beginning in the Italian Renaissance for the creation of new towns for military fortifications. (Leonardo worked on the latter). Planning ideas easily crossed borders, influencing developments elsewhere. Specifically, in this case, Holme's Philadelphia plan not only reflected on London's experience, but apparently

borrowed directly from one of several proposals to redesign the street plan of London after the 1666 fire. The Newcourt scheme, to which Holme's plan of Philadelphia bears a strong resemblance, was quite modest in its design parameters as compared to the more famous plan of Sir Christopher Wren, which incorporated all the latest urban motifs from the continent, including diagonal avenues, curvilinear streets and open areas in the form of circles and ellipses. The plain rectangular geography of Newcourt's plan seemed to be fixated on the open squares, endlessly repeated and evenly spread throughout the city.

*Figure 1.2. **Plan for Rebuilding London**, by Richard Newcourt, 1666 (detail). Copyright London Metropolitan Archives; reproduced by permission. The platting indicates the grid and square scheme that lies at the heart of the Philadelphia plan.*

The Holme Plan borrowed, or coincidentally repeated, the utilitarian geometry of Newcourt's by its emphasis on green squares. But what should be the purpose of these squares? Creating ornamental gardens is one strong possible interpretation, though those would certainly be more consonant with the highly

decorative Wren design. It's impossible to know what was in Newcourt's mind at the time, but there may be something to the fact that his plan for London came just a few years after the English Civil War, when in 1649 a small band of 'True Levelers' (also known as the 'diggers') began to cultivate St. George's Hill in Weybridge, Surrey some twenty miles (35 kilometres) outside central London. At that time, the leader of the band, Gerard Winstanley and his supporters, published a manifesto, which included the following:

> The Work we are going about is this, To dig up Georges-Hill and the waste Ground thereabouts, and to Sow Corn, and to eat our bread together by the sweat of our brows.
>
> And the First Reason is this, That we may work in righteousness, and lay the Foundation of making the Earth a Common Treasury for All, both Rich and Poor, That every one that is born in the land, may be fed by the Earth his Mother that brought him forth, according to the Reason that rules in the Creation. Not Inclosing any part into any particular hand, but all as one man, working together, and feeding together as Sons of one Father, members of one Family; not one Lording over another, but all looking upon each other, as equals in the Creation; so that our Maker may be glorified in the work of his own hands (Winstantley et al. 1649).

The demand on the part of the poor and disposed English peasantry for access to land for cultivation might well have established the underpinning for what I think lies implicit in the Newcourt plan: the provision of ample space for allotment gardens, widely available to the urban working population within the city itself and considered as a means to cushion the people from the vagaries of the market and to satisfy the evidently-strong feeling in the seventeenth century for restoration of a sense of place, linked to a communal-agrarian vision. The Holme plan must have wished to further the visionary Newcourt plan, but in a more practical way linked to the market system and a consensus social vision. For one thing, the smaller number of squares in the Holme plan suggests that these could not be ample to provide gardens for a significant population.

Could the green squares of the Holmes plan be the market place for the smallholders? There is strong evidence to suggest that was the case. In his commentary that accompanied the plan, Holme remarked that four subsidiary public squares in his plan (marked with trees, see Figure 1.1) were intended as open green space 'for the like Uses, as the Moore-fields in London' (quoted in Milroy 2006: 257). The Moorfields were the last open area in London. After the fire of 1666, the area became a centre of open-air markets and retained a country-town feel. The idea of the public gardening squares was a public representation of the city's linkage to its surroundings through an urban public

space common to all social classes. That Holme and Penn should include these environmental conceptions indicates an interest shared with contemporaries in England in incorporating aspects of nature – defined in terms of gardens, open-air markets and countryside – into the fabric of the city.

Furthermore, one must consider that, in Penn's original vision of the city, a substantial green belt was planned to provide ample space for smallholdings within travelling distance of the city. The idea was of a vast reserve that would keep the city supplied with produce. '"The Liberties" was the term applied by William Penn to a certain tract of land lying north and west of the city. It contained what was called 'the liberty land or free lots' because the proprietors (the Penn family) awarded to each buyer of city lots, in accordance with the extent of his purchase, a section of land in the urban periphery. Apparently the designated periurban reserve was meant to be part of the city proper, but Penn's wishes in this regard gave way to the practical difficulties of surveying at one fell swoop a large territory and he agreed to separate the city proper from its surrounds. 'The city contained about 1,820 acres … the Liberties contained on the east side of the Schuylkill, 9,161 acres; west side, 7,074 acres; total, 16,235 acres' (Independence Hall Association 1999–2013a). In short the 'liberty lands' were part real estate deal, part greenbelt – really an example of the idea made popular two hundred years later by Ebenezer Howard of having a green reserve near urban places. Each purchaser of a city lot received a parcel of additional land just to the north of the city, providing a reserve of agricultural countryside close to the city that provided a great agricultural preserve and market area:

> this district was also characterized, particularly along Second Street, by its farmers' market-yards for the wholesale trade in butter, eggs, poultry, meats, vegetables and other products of the farms of the adjacent country. Some of the fine old market-taverns and produce-yards still remain, but their marked characteristics have become obscured by the spread of the great city. Long before the consolidation of the Northern Liberties into the city Second Street was famous for its fine retail shops, and Third Street was the site of a large wholesale trade in groceries, provisions and leather (Independence Hall Association 1999–2013b).

Little wonder that the farmers' markets of the city of Philadelphia were so praiseworthy, noted by William Birch among others.

As late as the 1820s, Timothy Dwight, president of Yale University, praised the urban garden squares, a feature he associated with the essence of Philadelphia:

> Nothing is so cheerful, so delightful, or so susceptible to the combined elegancies of nature and art [than the inclusion of 'public squares' in the design of

the city]. On these open grounds, the inhabitants might always find sweet air, charming walks, fountains refreshing the atmosphere, trees excluding the sun, and, together with fine flowering shrubs, presenting to the eye the most ornamental objects, found in the country. Here, also, youth and little children might enjoy those sports, those voluntary indulgences, which in fresh air, are, peculiar to them, the sources of health and the prolongation of life. Yet many large cities are utterly destitute of these appendages; and in no city are they so numerous, as the taste for beauty, and a regard for health, compel us to wish (1969/1821: 490–491).

Modern planning is the key, Dwight reasoned, when he contrasted Philadelphia's 'grid' scheme streets ninety feet wide and free five to ten acre squares with Boston's narrow and ancient streets: 'The reasons, why Boston, considered at large, is not so well built as New York and Philadelphia is obvious. Compared with these two cities, Boston is ancient' (1969/1821: 492). Philadelphia was the beneficiary of a Renaissance tradition of town planning that had been revived in London in the seventeenth century. As we have noted, the city was laid-out and conceived in a way to avoid the problems London had faced. This example of town planning was perhaps first significant appearance of environmental thinking in North America. Its failure to become a model for the handling of American cities would have enormous consequences. Unfortunately, many commentaries on the Philadelphia plan and the early city do not even acknowledge this aspect of the city. They emphasise instead the unimaginative 'grid' street layout. But the plan's evident green dimension should change our estimation of the original plan of the city.

There is another important dimension of the Holme Plan that warrants attention. Holme envisioned two river ports that were meant to divide trade functions, with the Schuylkill port designed for local trade – that is, within the colonies – and the Delaware Port meant for international trade. The third centre was the central square of the city, indicated both by the size of the central square and the width of Broad Street which bisected the city into east and west sections. Because this square was separated from both centres of commerce it could serve as the site for a civic centre – the focal point of civic life. Penn knew very well that in a capitalist society owners lived and breathed their work; workers were expected to perform for long hours. A civic centre expressed Penn's hope for a 'greene country towne' in which green is linked to a civic space that incorporates landscape and architecture in a manner compatible with a society dedicated to reforming and improving the human condition (which was, after all, central to the Quaker message).

Holme had, in effect, proposed a polycentric city[9] as a means both of making a separation between the civic life and the commercial life and of dividing commercial functions into two centres and thereby avoiding over-crowding and to create a city balanced between its internal regional links and markets, on the one hand, and the international market on the other. The commercial bi-centric plan did not succeed reflecting the uneven character of capitalist economic growth discussed earlier, but one can be fairly certain that the residents of Philadelphia wished it had done. Inevitably historians have judged the city by what followed. One of the more important is the historian of cities John Reps, who couldn't see past the adoption of the rigid geometry of the plan, its so-called 'grid' design. Conceding that Holme mapped out a 'city in which the human figure was never dwarfed by either the plan or the buildings', Reps goes on to argue that it was nonetheless a plan that 'sowed seeds of seamless mechanized and unimaginative town planning' without any consideration of topography (1980: 221). The 'grid' became a symbolic expression of instrumental reason, an expression of utilitarianism, or of the triumph of commercial interests, and a bulwark of self-interested individualism aimed at comfort, equality and commerce. The design is seen, therefore, as having stripped away the last vestiges of the city as sacred centre and place of symbolic meaning (Spera 1980).

While it is true that the plan dealt a blow to the European hierarchy of coded urban space, I would argue that it was not simply a retreat to privatism and utilitarianism. It was rather an attempt to create a new egalitarian public space and for some time it succeeded, until the War for Independence, as we shall see. Secondly the plan was 'environmental' in the literal sense that it attempted to counter unfavourable living conditions; and its solutions, though amenable to the selling of access to air and light as commodity for those who could afford to live near the squares or at the edge of town, were also part way toward finding public solutions in the arrangement of space. This was also very modern, in that it foreshadows the rise of the housing reform movement at the turn of the twentieth century in the US, one of the first examples of social environmentalism (Gottlieb 2005) designed to counter the poor living conditions of the mass of the population.

Neo-traditionalist planning (beginning with Jacobs 1962) has sharply criticised the entire rationalist-modernist oeuvre of population dispersion that resulted from this insight – and with good reason, considering the conditions

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9. I owe this insight to Kenneth Finkel in his commentaries on the growth of the city in Foster 1997: sketch 7.

of the twentieth century. Long experience with the dispersal of urban functions suggests that, to survive, cities require concentrations of population and thrive on proximity of functions. Obviously, from the perspective of twentieth century America with its cult of automobility and suburbanisation, it's not surprising that there should have been a tendency to criticise any planning scheme that even hinted at diffusion. On the other hand, our appraisal of the Holme plan should take into account that, rather than planning for dispersion, he has planned for three centres, an early expression of polycentrism in urban planning, which is an interesting and still significant alternative to both dispersion and over-concentration.[10] At a time of far more limited transportation, and given an Anglo-American tradition of limited state management of urban development, urban growth had led to conditions of intense overcrowding, especially in the case of London, as noted above. This aspect of the Holme plan – its provision (on paper, at any rate) for an extensive urban area – was meant to create an agreeable density, enough to satisfy the needs for commerce but not so much as to deny its inhabitants the pleasures of life: access to air and light and the occasional green space. The plan should be praised for its conceptualisation, but the reality was somewhat different from the hoped-for results. In fact, an exhaustive quantitative study of densities in colonial cities published in 2000 showed that densities were very high, which imposed costs on poor urban residents. Even though Philadelphia had the lowest densities of any major city and had managed to extend the urban grid south into the area later named 'Society Hill', it had problems with overcrowding: 'the development of new blocks in Philadelphia did not keep pace with the growth in population. Instead, the already occupied blocks acquired more and taller structures in place of open yards and gardens … [while] outer wards that stretched toward the western boundary of the Schuylkill River were about two-thirds vacant' (Shammas 2000: 511). Clearly the Delaware River wharfs became the true centre of the city and building and population naturally tended to concentrate there, as indicated in the Hill map (see Figure 1.3). It was exactly these conditions that Penn had hoped to avoid, but the success of the trans-Atlantic commercial economy and the paucity of regional development led directly to concentration – a tendency that can only be combatted by direct measures undertaken by the state.

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10. The principle of polycentrism had some success during the City Beautiful movement of the early twentieth century, when architect-planners laid out some of the best features of American cities, the civic centres. Polycentrism might also be understood as a feature of the original garden city movement in Britain.
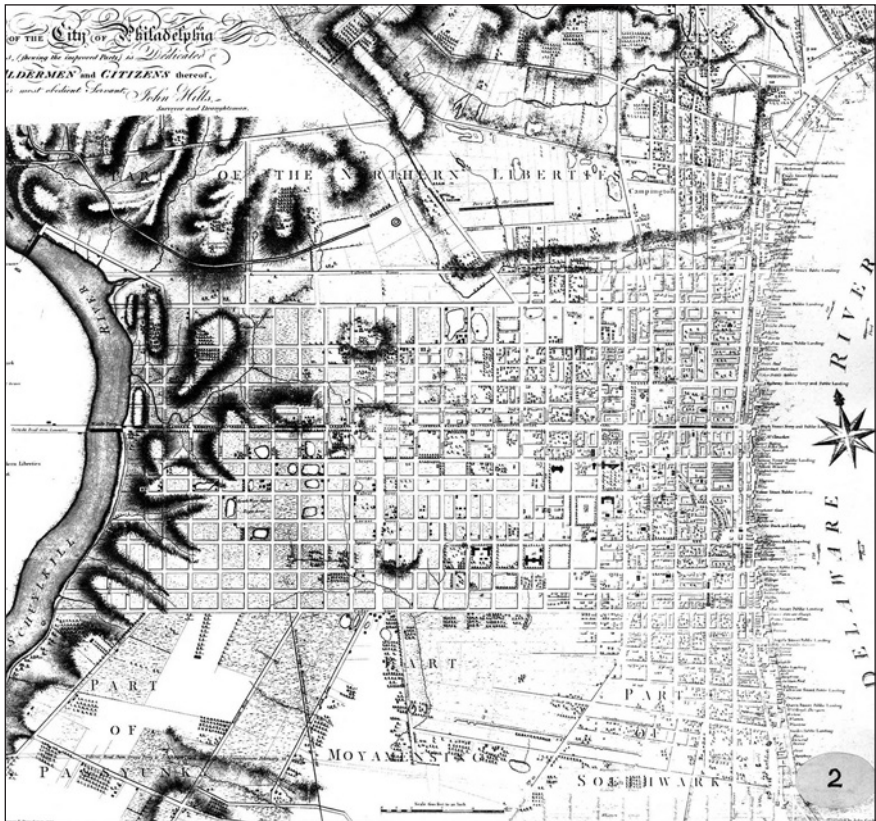
Town Planning and Civic Identity

*Figure 1.3. Plan of Philadelphia and its environs, published and sold by John Hills, surveyor & draughtsman, 1797. From The Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. The city plan incorporates topographical features, which had become more common when accurate maps were drawn for defensive purposes during war. Representation of the hills suggests a much stronger understanding of, and **implicit feeling for**, the topographical site. Notice the greater capacity to accurately understand building trends: the more difficult terrain in the western portion, which could not be represented in the original plat map by Holme, certainly helps explain why the two proposed urban centres around the central square and on the Schuylkill River went almost wholly undeveloped for almost one hundred years.*

There is also the matter of culture as an influence on concentration. Eighteenth century cities preserved the ancient practice of connecting work and residence. The bourgeoisie had yet to discover the value of a home-centred life (Fishman 1987: 39–72) and preferred to live above their place of work, contributing to the surprising densities of late eighteenth century American cities. Carole Shammas has argued, furthermore, that two additional factors contributed to high densities: first that poor disenfranchised families, often African-American or female-led, chose the more flexible social life of cities and could afford limited housing choices – mainly apartments or alley cottages; and, second, that the lack of active city government meant that the extension of city services to the largely undeveloped part of the city to the west went unfunded. Nevertheless, the fundamental structural cause of the crowding of eighteenth century Philadelphia and its failure to spread economic activity and housing out over the space originally envisioned for the city, reflected the failure to realise the bi-centric commercial goal of an economy that was both global and regional at the same time. Partly it reflected an overestimation of the usefulness for navigation of the Schuylkill River at a time when topographical maps were unavailable (see Figure 1.3, by contrast), but it was more fundamentally a reflection of the growing imbalance between the local economy and international commercial trade fuelled by big capital in London. Thus, an economy focused on international trade in barrelled pork, as well as shipbuilding, had no need for – and little interest in – a strong infrastructure linking it to the countryside. In fact it took the city nearly 150 years to finally expand over the Schuylkill River.

Cityscape as a Picturesque Object of the Merchants' Republic

As we have noted, Penn's city became the most important in British North America and afterwards served as the US capital for almost a decade. Philadelphia had some important advantages that permitted it to prosper for most of the colonial period, even under these highly competitive economic conditions. Partly this had to do with geography, as we have seen: the city was the natural port draining the rich agricultural lands of the middle colonies; it was a ship building centre where innovative entrepreneurs produced ships at costs below competitors' rates. It was also the most cosmopolitan of British American cities, making it an important conduit for European and particularly British aesthetic ideas and concerns. Thirdly, Philadelphia was a planned city and was arguably

the clearest example of the effort to use planning both to improve conditions of everyday life and to find space for a civic culture of active participation. One reason for its success reflects how well it was linked through trade and movement of people and ideas to the Atlantic World.

Drawings, engravings and maps were the representational media of that era. In 1687, four years after the publication of the Holme plan, the surveyor was commissioned to draw a 'Map of the Improved Part of Pennsylvania', which Penn used to secure continued favour from Whitehall. The map's careful delineation of proprietary boundaries must have helped to convince wealthy Quaker merchants of the safety of investing in the colony, as well reinforcing the message that Pennsylvania was a rapidly growing commercial enterprise. Stripped down to its essentials, cartographic representations presented an improved Pennsylvania to a British audience (Roeber 2007). Nonetheless these commercial uses of print culture for a business audience were very quickly made subject to two countervailing trends: first of all relatively straightforward cartographic representations (such as the Holme map) gave way to an increasingly accurate topographical maps that made the physical geography essential to the representation of the place (see Figure 1.4). Secondly, the idea of an urban landscape, which emerged from architecture and city planning in the Renaissance, began to affect the representation of cities and the imagination of what a city could be.

The British military officer and accomplished watercolourist Captain Joshua Watson observed that 'Philadelphia at a distance does not make much show' and 'if it were not for the Towers of the two shot Manufactories and the Steeples on one of its Episcopal Churches and Free Masons Hall, a stranger might enter it without knowing he was in town' (Foster 1997: sketch 2). Even though the city had not been transformed architecturally into a suitable picturesque object, artists managed the task. The delightfully fanciful East Prospect of Philadelphia (Figure 1.4) is a case in point. Essentially commissioned as promotional material, it draws attention to the realisation of what had become a major city in the British Empire – with its fine safe harbour, substantial wharfs and impressive buildings – through the exercise of considerable artistic license. In effect, Heap has managed a work of landscape that succeeds in drawing our interest to the city and its harbour, its link to the world and the measure of its importance. The landscape is greatly enhanced: the boredom of the drawing's horizontal plane is broken by church steeples drawn far out of scale, city buildings given elevations where none existed and excessively large and conveniently

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empty wharves jutting out into the river. All these devices break the monotony and add visual definition. In addition the picture is framed by greatly exaggerated heights in the background (whereas an observer would not be able to see them). But the greatest embellishment is the waterscape in front of the city. Drawn completely out of scale are languidly anchored ships and a fanciful water

Figure 1.4 (continued on facing page). **The East Prospect of the City of Philadelphia, in the Province of Pennsylvania**, *engraving, published 1768 in London and based on a 1756 drawing commissioned by Thomas Penn, proprietor of Pennsylvania.*

Cityscape as a Picturesque Object of the Merchants' Republic

mill behind a rural shoreline festooned with large tropical-looking plants in the foreground. The scene is visually striking and both represents the city as a place of considerable wealth and achievement and emphasises its appealing setting, which serves to frame the city. The geophysics of the framing combined with the sense of rural accouchement provides a depth of place association and per-

George Heap and Gerard Vandergucht, artists, Thomas Jefferys, engraver, from The Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Insets: 'the State House', and 'the Battery'. The engraving provided much useful information including a street plan and prominent features identified by number, but it also presented a highly picturesque cityscape.

manence that belie the actual character of the urban processes; the city appears to have grown from its rural and physical environment over a long period of gestation. These visual enhancements reflect the beginning of environmental imagining associated with picturesque, indicating that, by the 1750s, notions of picturesqueness had crossed the Atlantic and helped frame an understanding of the urban landscape. However, the picturesque itself must be seen in a larger context of the visual imagination, especially in this case as it reflects on and helps shape an understanding of urbanism.

The Heap drawing reflects urbanism as landscape in the sense that Denis Cosgrove use the term 'the idea of landscape' – a concept of order and sensibility of the visual that 'emerged as a dimension of European elite consciousness' at the dawn of modernity (Cosgrove: 1). The idea of landscape changes over time to reflect different historical circumstances and national contexts. Picturesque is key to the Anglo-American context – seen here as linking civic pride, urban promotion and commercial success. But we have to go deeper to see the true significance of this formulation of cityscape for the future of urbanism in the US.

The link between the idea of landscape and urbanism is apparent in the concept of 'civic humanism', which also grew from the Renaissance and came to attention again in the twentieth century through the work of the German historian Hans Baron. If the republican political structure of Renaissance Florence meant anything, it was the idea of communal liberty and development of public-spiritedness around shared space. It is precisely this political concept that is expressed in public architecture and in the urban landscape, with its classical references, open squares and life of the street. Picturesque as applied to depicting cities as 'natural objects' references the geophysical and rural landscape, rather than the classical references of Italy, in order to establish the context for cityscape. But the implication is the same, in that the sensibility created by depicting the city in terms of a recognisable visual structure helps to underwrite a sense of communal identity and destiny.

The complication lies with the particular variant of communitarianism and republicanism that civic humanist landscape represents and the development of American reactions to it. In the first place, it is a communitarianism expressed in great public buildings and founded on the development of commerce. Forgotten in this formulation is the green square communitarianism of the original plan. Thus the Heap cityscape represents Philadelphia as a merchants' republic inside the British Empire, based on the celebration of its acquisition of wealth. It is also a republicanism that assumes the unquestioned leadership of the merchant class. The modern city, represented by Philadelphia,

is a landscape both dedicated to the expression of civic humanism and to the growth of a commercial economy. American humanism, as Pocock argues, borrows from its heavily Christian (Puritan) foundation in creating an opposition between wealth and civic virtue. That form of republicanism harkens back to the Levellers and the original formulation of Philadelphia. The result is a very different republicanism founded on a rural basis (Moulakis, 2011).

The End of the Merchants' Republic

After 1750, the British Crown wished to take stock of its North American possessions and fit them more securely into a system of trade that benefited London, which is to say they wished to reinforce the existing social hierarchy. They attempted a system of managed trade called 'mercantilism' which sought, among other things, to insure that those economic peripheries (colonies) remained subordinate to the centre (the cities of the mother country). British restrictions on colonial North America through the Navigation Acts pretty much destroyed the colonial iron industry, for example, but in practice restrictive policies didn't work all the time, nor were they meant to, since it was to no-one's advantage to stifle trade altogether, nor to contain it within a single imperial system: there was and has always been a strong multilateral element in trading relations, from which the colonies both benefited and suffered.[11] Discomfort came from intense competition; colonial merchants had to go head to head with their counterparts from all over the world, but in doing so they were not really on equal terms. Throughout modern history, global webs of financial interdependence have created an economy marked by networks dominated by urban hierarchies with one or two cities sitting on top of the global food chain. As colonials who lacked the capacity to mint currency and establish independent banks, the Americans had several disadvantages when it came to financing trade: 'it was to London that American trade brought its payments from the various centres in Europe; and from London that it obtained its credit' (Braudel 1984c: 410–411).

The move for independence was clearly a response to these increasingly difficult economic conditions. The alternatives, then as now, were either to expand a trading network or consolidate territory. The former route was now

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11.   In short, while the British Crown would not want North American merchants to vanquish London merchants, they had no qualms about them taking over from a competing power. For example, see Braudel (1984c: 413–425) on the inability of Spain and Portugal to keep control of the Latin America trade.

blocked off by the Crown's policies, which certainly had the effect of convincing many in the business class of the necessity of gaining control over their own territories. Territorial consolidation as independent states had the advantage of creating internal markets, but also meant ferocious competition among the seaboard cities for the internal market. This meant offering needed goods or services aimed at the interior, which, although harkening back to the virtues of the original plan, required a very different sort of city from the one Philadelphia had been. Such changes take time and cannot address immediate economic distress. Indeed the creation of an American federal state with relatively weak powers of economic regulation could neither resolve the short-term urban economic crisis nor lay the foundations of an urban system. American cities were forced instead into strident competition to secure markets with the effect of further narrowing the latitude necessary for developing the environmental and civic dimensions of urban life.

Philadelphia needed innovation to compete with New York; what it got, eventually, was an opening to reinvent itself as a centre for industrial production. Industrial expansion had almost nothing to do at the time with increasing consumption on the part of the masses. It was required instead to develop basic industries (steel) needed to produce the hardware (rail) to expand the infrastructure necessary to conduct a huge run on nature. The accumulation of 'natural resources' combined with new technologies made possible the military expansion of a few countries that became the 'developed nation' club. The conditions that lead to the twentieth century wars were already in the making. In short, expansion by capital produces crises, the solution of which requires more expansion without rationale, except, perhaps, for the rationale of overcoming limits and projecting power. The so-called 'industrial revolution' that has led to the global environmental crisis had one important origin in the crisis of urban over-expansion. In the case of Philadelphia, as with many other American cities, the solution rested on creating an industrial city – a city of massive workshops. Under these conditions, civic humanism became a memory.

American War for Independence/Revolution

Seeking independence reflected a calculation on the part of American elites that challenging London's pre-eminence through the political process was worth the risk of involving the citizenry in a revolt. Seizing their chance, workers and farmers challenged their 'betters' and in the process questioned the primacy of the city itself. The limits of the economy in Philadelphia exacerbated class dif-

ferences and created class bitterness. But the creation of an American territorial space could not itself solve the economic crisis. The city needed innovation to grow, and growth was necessary to maintaining its social and political structure. Independence from Britain could but alleviate the problem, and it had the disadvantage from the perspective of the leading citizens of unleashing social forces that were hostile to the entire project of city building. But the questions of better opportunity and greater equality were transposed onto matters of spatial politics and further insulated from public debate by agreements to impose a heavily procedural constitutionalism as the legal basis for the republic.

At the start, rising disputes that led to the War for American Independence were marked by insurgency, introducing elements of class conflict into the political debate. Artisans who did the skilled labour necessary to Philadelphia's mercantile economy did not constitute a self-identifying working class, but they were part of the 'lower sort'[12] and represented original component of what would become the great American working middle class. At the time, they identified themselves in juxtaposition to the 'better sort' or elite elements; the juxtaposition could become opposition when the circumstances brought about by social strife or political conflict opened the door to the expression of grievance.

Like most trading cities, Philadelphia was dominated by a financial/commercial elite. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of 500 families and inequality was growing. At the time of the Revolution 72 per cent of taxable income was concentrated in the upper ten per cent of the population (B.G. Smith 1990: 86). Nonetheless, artisans were self-directed men – that is to say, they worked for themselves, occupying a status akin to that of guild craftsmen in the medieval city. They formed the backbone of a highly organised popular resistance to British taxation policies, which quickly spilled into grievances against the upper classes. They also engaged in violent resistance, which took the form of threats, boycotts and mob violence that soon terrified British officials and colonial supporters of the Crown. Hence, Philadelphia experienced a popular uprising during the time of the revolution in which the labouring classes played the predominant role. Out of this movement arose a strong majoritarian politics centred on defiance of the Tories (Loyalists), and in favour of price controls and militia service for all (Rosswurm 1995: 248).

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12. According to B.G. Smith (1994: 4–5) Philadelphia's working class included unskilled workers, mechanics, artisans, tradesmen; they were not a coherent social class: 'artisans occupied all ranks of society' and were concentrated in the middle strata and on rare occasions achieved upper class status.

This fierce and often violent resistance may have been the 'cause' of revolution in the sense that, by charging colonial elites with indifference to British revenue policies (Tinkcom 1982: 115), it may have required them to take a stronger stance in opposition to the crown; at the same time violent street actions so angered the British that punitive measures were undertaken, setting off yet another round of violent confrontation. In Boston, in particular, the popular resistance was strongly committed to a fierce version of republican theory that critiqued the corruption and luxury of the British Empire and to a lesser extent of the colonial upper classes (Wood 1998/1969); at the same time, the popular leaders of the revolt were soon to fall back on constitutionalism. As 'constitutionalists' they emphasised the protections of liberties inherent in the proceduralism[13] of the 1776 Pennsylvania constitution, which strictly limited state powers and favoured the legislative over the executive.

The Development of the Public Sphere

Even before the conflict came to a head, Philadelphia had been in the process of change. The eighteenth century transformation of the public sphere was marked by the end of the 'public representativeness' (or symbolic expressions of consensus) of the merchants' republic and the rise of an often-bitter public debate. The route from received wisdom to public contestation was broached, ironically enough, by the expansion of the commodity field:

> To the degree … to which philosophical and literary works and works of art in general were produced for the market and distributed through it, these cultural products become similar to … [the] type of information [produced under capitalism]: as commodities they became in principle generally accessible. They no longer remained components of the Church's and court's publicity of representation; that is precisely what is meant by the loss of their aura of extraordinariness and by the profaning of their once sacramental character. The private people for whom the cultural product became available as a commodity profaned it inasmuch they had to determine its meaning on their own (Habermas 1991/1962: 36–37).

These changes reflected a 'structural transformation' insofar as they first reflected the increasing freedom of the rising educated classes from the interferences of

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13.   Proceduralism defines politics largely in legal terms, that is in terms of jurisdictional questions. Federalist political systems will always have a strong measure of procedural elaboration and issues that might be expressed in terms of content are often hidden under a procedural rubric.

officialdom. The British state accommodated these changes but also outflanked them by incorporating the principle of Parliamentary representation and shared responsibility into its mode of governance. Nonetheless, this system created a leading class who, to a surprising degree, felt themselves masters of their own affairs. It is important to recognise, however, that the structural transformation of the public sphere also permitted a democratisation that reached down into citizens' groups and even to the labouring classes.

It began in the social world of the city: specifically, in the conviviality made possible by the city's taverns, providing venues for meetings of the various civic associations. These groups, including the Freemasons, the Library Company and the Pennsylvania Hospital Company (Thayer 1982: 76), among others, were the organisational sinew of civil society and the foundation of local political culture. At its core, the bourgeois public sphere entertained new ideas found in books brought over from Europe in the same ships that brought goods and men (the city became famous for its private subscription libraries) and debated these ideas in the form of journals (86). Benjamin Franklin's contribution to the rising public sphere in Philadelphia is described in his Autobiography as founded on reading and public discussion: 'I had formed most of my ingenious acquaintance into a club for mutual improvement which we called the Junto. We met on Friday evenings. The rules I drew up required that every member in his turn produce one or more queries on any point of morals, politics or natural philosophy, to be discussed by the company, and once in every three months produce an essay of his own writing' (1961/1793: 72). After some time Franklin was instrumental in founding British North America's first subscription library (the Library Company), a model for other such libraries which had the effect, he thought, of improving 'the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesman and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed to some degree to the stand generally made throughout the Colonies in defence of their privileges' (82). He tells us that he comes to see the importance of virtue in other human beings, not out of a religious dogma, but because virtues produced beneficial results (70–71). This welding of social mores to politics through associations of exchange is the key to the now 'classic' bourgeois public sphere and its role in the Revolutionary era; but it also accounts for the American version of civic humanism.

Overcoming Political Strife: Territorial Expansion and Public Sphere Contraction

Civic humanist understandings of the public sphere are the first point in a politics of increasing self-governance on the part of the citizenry. They are challenged by political strife, which is a positive development, but if too strident such disputes can also lead to the weakening of the civic sphere and disconnection from the republic. In the case of Pennsylvania, popular elements sought to go beyond the urban public sphere by removing the locus of representative government from the city to the country. Pennsylvania should become an agrarian republic and Philadelphia a mere appendage. Among other things, the radicals abolished the city of Philadelphia's charter, effectively reducing the city's political independence from the new state. In short, these Spartan republicans of the countryside turned against the mercantile class and in the process turned against the city's identity, its sense of place, in favour of the abstract principles of a territorial state. The agrarianism they supported was not place-centred: it was not founded on a picture of the countryside, on its particularities or its picturesque charm, but rather on an abstract definition of free and expanding territory as a space suitable for the making of free men. Territory organised around classical principles to maximise small ownership and refer organisationally and symbolically to the republic should take the place of the commercial city and money economy. Indeed, this was more an argument for spatialisation – rural decentred space – rather than one of place.

The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 reflected elements of what might be called radical agrarianism or anti-urbanism, depending on one's perspective. It hamstringed the state government while at the same time abolishing all vestiges of the communal independence enjoyed by the city of Philadelphia. The city charter was abolished and the state assembly assumed control over city affairs; three years later the capital was moved to rural Lancaster. The constitution effectively made over Pennsylvania as a rural republic in which all male citizens aged 21 or older who paid taxes could vote; there was a unicameral legislature and a very weak executive. Not only was the colonial merchant class ejected from power (Miller 1982: 158), but also there was an assumption that the political space could trump the economic space. In fact, a Spartan republicanism with its emphasis on simplicity can easily slide into a position of economic autarchy. It is only a logical extension of ancient Greek republican conceptions of sovereignty: political independence is clearly augmented by economic independence. Revolutionary-era populist republicanism was an expression of what Pocock (1975) identifies as the dilemma of republican political virtue: the vita

activa that arises in response to the crisis of republics promotes responses that undercut its initial concern with virtue and with the vita contemplativa. The moral(istic) engagement of the activated citizenry neglects the roundedness (in place, in the larger world) revealed by contemplation (imagination). American republicanism became an expression of artisan radicalism, but it could also support what Richard Hofstadter calls an 'anti-intellectual' strain in American life.[14] Furthermore, the Republicans were soon out-manoeuvred by the old ruling elite, who felt secure enough to entertain a division into Constitutionalist and anti-Constitutionalist camps. The former were influential in authoring the state's constitution of 1776, which operated by a strict proceduralism founded on a conception of the 'negative State' (later a fundamental of the capitalist liberal ideology). The 'anti-Constitutionalists' who become the core of the Federalist Party in Pennsylvania were strong supporters of the call to create a stronger central government, capable of supporting American commercial interests. Republicans were reduced to making common cause in a tactical alliance that was doomed to failure (Miller 1982: 163–166). Perhaps the biggest success of the local elite, after hosting the convention that drafted the new constitution, was having Philadelphia named as the provisional national capital in 1790. It was a temporary reprieve but, for a brief time, the visual order and symbolic significance of the city, still the largest in the US, was secure. Uncertainty about the future lingered and then the reality of the new federal constitution set in when the Congress made the decision to move the capital to a new city.

Representing Philadelphia in 1800: A Post-Republican Picturesque

William Russell Birch (1755–1834) worked in the shadow of these events. His *The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania as it Appeared in the Year 1800* comprised a set of 28 prints and is considered the first detailed representation of a city in American art (Hallam 1997). This provided the immediate context for Birch's urban landscapes, while the wider significance is his ability to capture the city's sense of place at perhaps the height of its importance.

 The City of Philadelphia (1800) was a commercial endeavour, sold by subscription to a select group of men, some of whom had been clients for Birch's work in portraiture. Like all art since the Renaissance it has its origins

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14. Arguably it is only later, when we come to the idea of civic pragmatism in the work of intellectuals like John Dewey and Thorstein Veblen, that republicanism regains its bearings, an urban republicanism that would have liked to think of itself as Athenian. See also attempts at urban republicanism discussed in Chapter 5.

as a commodity form – produced for private consumption – yet in its themes it is so clearly a statement that pertains to the public that one could well imagine that such retrospectives might have become public art had there been continued interest in them.

In order to see the extent of Birch's appraisal of a city's legacy one must see the work as a whole. The prints were bound and delivered as an urban picturesque, a kind of cityscape view book. One can look at the individual works of art, of course, but in this case it is imperative to look at the collection as a whole as well, because it provides a kind of tableau incorporating instances of a broad range of human activities from work (industrial and commercial) to contemplative leisure and civic activities against settings that include public buildings (eighteen examples), gardens (five), marketplaces (four) and residences (two). Collectively several themes are apparent; I will simply list them here and return to the more complicated issue of how they fit together below: (a) classical virtue, especially demonstrated in the public buildings and works; (b) demonstration of social cohesion and especially the contributions of the labouring classes; (c) the importance of industriousness; (d) a social ecology of the street involving the interactions of all classes and races; (e) the Arcadian city in touch with a reassuring and peaceful greenness; and (f) a city-region moving toward realisation of William Penn's 'greene country towne'. Taken together, these themes may be said to be productive as the presentation of Philadelphia as eutopia – a good place, but one that contains tensions that must be read carefully. Thematically, these combine a real accounting of Philadelphia's development with a self-conscious attempt to buttress the city's self-identity and its grounding in a republican conception of society.

Echoing the rationale of the Holme map and the Heap drawing discussed earlier, Birch is still somewhat incongruously concerned with showing off the city to European eyes. In his brief autobiographical statement, Birch provides some interesting insights into his orientation. He was looking for a project of some 'duration' that would provide income (apparently) but that also allowed him to make visual sense of his surroundings. The depiction of Philadelphia was quite sensitive in picking up many of the threads that made up urban life and at the same time forceful in presenting the civic landscape. Birch depicted a Philadelphia rooted in commerce and united with the themes of republican virtue and artisan self-reliance, suggesting a city possessed of a self-identity maintained within the more complicated picture created by the rise of the American republic. In one respect, as I suggested above, the work harked back to the work of artists and engravers enlisted to correct the com-

mon perception during the colonial era that the colonies consisted largely of a vast and unsettled forest:

> the work of my Philadelphia views, which I had projected as a work of dura-
> tion, to be published by subscription, and as no work of the kind had ever been
> published by which an idea of the early improvements of the country could be
> conveyed to Europe, to promote and encourage settlers to the establishment
> of trade and commerce which in its early progress when the restless minds of
> those with capital expected nothing but a Forrest, seeing [instead] number
> after number of the establishments of a City, soon caused the full effect of its
> intention, by the arrival of Funds[,] Tallants [,] Projecters [real estate or prop-
> erty developers] and every other aid that a new country could wish. …There
> is reason to suppose from that ardent attempt of the Arts, at so favorable a
> season, when Europe was at war, that the present bustle in solid improvements
> in our Citys, and internal projections [projects] in the Country did originate
> (Birch nd: 47–48).

That he expresses concern about the European conception of America as 'noth-ing but a Forest', such that he feels compelled to demonstrate that the 'early improvements of the country' have become 'solid improvement in our Citys' appears as a rather outdated conception for an observation written after 1800 about a city already over a hundred years old and the acting national capital of the US (the government actually moved to Washington in November 1800, just one month before the release of the City of Philadelphia). One would think his audience should be the Americans seeking to celebrate their independence rather than a European audience of investors. But that Birch thought in these terms is precisely my point. I am not so concerned with the economics of the matter, although it is worth noting that Birch is actually correct that business investment would continue to drive American economic growth after independ-ence. What is more important is that his work links cityscape as a picturesque visual order to civic republicanism which overshadowed the grandeur one would expect in a national capital. Partly this reflects the inadequacy of the Philadel-phia street plan as a setting for a national capital and partly it reflects Birch's unwillingness to use poetic license to give it expression. But there is something more: Birch like all artisans, is grateful for the sponsorship of the cultural elite. His representation of the city dignifies the spaces of the established local class of gentlemen, many of whom have sponsored his work. The work remains local and particular to the merchants' republic and to Penn's civic vision and landscape of a 'greene country towne', a vision of a ruralised city even though it was a city increasingly encroached on by commercialisation and plagued by the prospect of an uncertain future.

Philadelphia: Green Urbanism and the Atlantic World

Art historian John Hallam points out that picturesque was an aesthetic that applied to visuals arts, as well as landscape design, architecture and travel literature. He suggests that picturesque was less a specific formula than a broad tendency to encode 'shifting social and political and economic positions' through an aesthetic that mixes as well as contrasting opposites such as old/new, rough/smooth, urban/rural, etc. The consequence is aesthetics as political and social mediation (1997: 28). The result is harmonisation of Philadelphia as a centre of business and commerce and an 'embellished urban vision' of an artistic and educational mecca that embodied the social and political ideals of the democratic state (35). Such was Birch's intention, a conclusion that seems fully compatible with statements in his autobiography.

I see a different dimension, a text that creates a rather complex temporality, in which the present coexists with a past and with a questionable future. Certainly, several of Birch's plates presented buildings – churches, banks, voluntary associations – which speak for the republic through neo-classical architecture. But what I most strongly see attested to in the Birch prints is a Philadelphia that points to earlier lived and conceived landscapes that are actually liberated from the stolidity of the present by picturesque technique.

There is no need to overstate my perception. Surely Birch's picturesque is attuned to his contemporary viewers: the visual appeal lies in the manner in which the city is framed, though not without contradictions and difficulties, managing to support the portrait of a city with a strong public identity. Even here, there are contradictions that are not resolved easily – and perhaps not really resolved at all – which points to the fundamental problem of seeing the engravings as representations of Birch's present. What one finds is conflicting temporal spheres between the unrealised grandeur of the capital city of the present, the picturesqueness of the green city republic (both aristocratic and popular) now fading into the past and the humdrum commercialism of Philadelphia's future.

Present and Future

Any representation that calls for the combination of the enduring form of the city's civic buildings with picturesque variation meant to capture a sense of the life-world would be difficult for any artist. One visual incongruity lies between the narrow streets of the grid-pattern city and the grand public buildings, which require space to be appreciated. If a cityscape was to represent the nation it must have sufficient space and proper settings for the embellishment
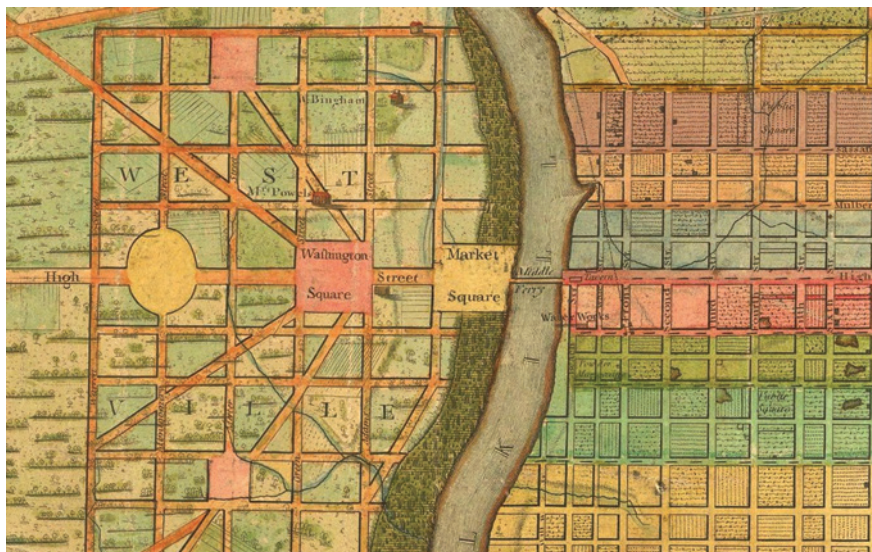
Figure 1.5. [Varle Plan] **To The Citizens Of Philadelphia This New Plan Of The City And Its Environs Is respectfully dedicated By the Editor** *(detail), P.C. Varle Geographer & Engineer, Delaware, 1802, David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. Highly decorative plan with insets, it features a street plan for the extension of the city in line with baroque planning and suitable for placing the national capital and its monumental buildings.*

of public buildings. I speak now from the perspective of the European urban landscape conception and the emerging sense of public space associated with the development of the modern nation-state.

The proposed extension of the city as depicted by Varle and published in in 1802, far too late to influence the decision whether to move the capital, illustrates precisely what would have been needed to make a success of adapting the city to its potential visual function as national capital: curvilinear streets, broad avenues for vehicular traffic, ample space for setbacks. All this was provided in the plan for Washington, D.C. discussed in the next chapter. What actually happened in Philadelphia was that important buildings such as the bank of the US and the new President's house designed for George Washington (who never actually lived there) were fitted into the existing street structure. The result was that Birch, who felt the need to minimise poetic license in favour of mimesis, struggles with representations of the authority, material and symbolic, vested in Philadelphia's putative future as the national capital.

*Figure 1.6. **Girard's Bank, Late the Bank of the United States, in Third Street Philadelphia**, plate 17 from **City of Philadelphia**, 1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. An official seat of American finance, the bank was at the time, perhaps the most important (semi) public building in the United States and part of Philadelphia's claim on the national capital.*

Authority, commerce, industry are presented, Hallam tells us, as a phalanx that provides a clear and unified urban alternative to the expression of early agrarian republicanism (26). But Figure 1.6 indicates Birch's struggle to accentuate the 'grandeur' exhibited by the impressive portico of the Bank of the US, with its references to learned authority. Despite the building's rather modest size, inadequate for the task that it might have assumed (had it become a permanent feature of the federal government), its impressive portico actually crowds the rather narrow streets. Its architecture requires some setting back from the street in order to be visually accessible and its representation of the classical world demands respect, which is of course the point for a very important public building reflecting the financial power of the federal government. Birch frames

Figure 1.7. **High Street from the Country Market-place Philadelphia: with the procession in commemoration of the death of George Washington,** *plate 11 from* **City of Philadelphia,** *1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. A rare depiction of a ceremony in this series.*

the building from the intersection of an adjoining street, giving an illusion of greater space and larger size then was the case. A similar trick of perspective is used to give greater significance to the funeral procession of Washington by framing the foreground through the market portico and using the empty street to frame the procession with backdrop of open space.

The first important aesthetic problem that Birch faced is spatial and concerns the aesthetic and archetronic limitations of the grid street plan. Geometric precision and endless repetition may be the stuff of mathematical purity, but such buildings have little picturesque appeal. They are important symbolically, as we have seen, but fail to fulfil the criteria on which the picturesque, whether in the city or the country, is dependent: free occurrence or happenstance,

Figure 1.8. **High Street, with the First Presbyterian Church**, *plate 9 from* **City of Philadelphia**, *1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. Birch creates two focal points for the eye: one is picturesque, reflected the church in the foreground at the right; the other is archetronic, the sweep of geometry that pulls the eye to the vanishing point along the street's axis.*

variation and association between unlike elements. Furthermore the narrow uniform spaces created by the street plan provided settings inadequate to the task of lending public buildings a sense of grandeur.

Figure 1.8 depicts the First Presbyterian Church on High Street. The church was one of the newest in the city (1794–1795), though one must say that almost all the buildings depicted in Birch's drawings, with the notable exceptions of the State House and Christ Church had been built within the previous decade. The church was cutting-edge architectural design – 'the first building in Philadelphia to have a classic temple façade' (Teitelman 2000: plate 9). As an item on its own the church was a beautiful thing, with well proportioned columns, nicely framing a tri-part fenestration layout with attractive

Present and Future

*Figure 1.9. **Library and Surgeon's Hall, in Fifth Street Philadelphia**, plate 19 from **City of Philadelphia**, 1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. The building, essentially a Georgian five bay house with a Palladian décor (inset statuary), exudes a feeling of balance, sobriety and dignity – an example of sturdy aristocratic republican virtue. Like Franklin's conception of the library, this is a very approachable building, a sense amplified by Birch's presentation of it. The building is tied to a street scene and includes a workman with his cart and two men who appear to be playing the gambling game 'craps' on the sidewalk.*

domed windows and door. Nicely carved Corinthian details and an attractive iron fence complete the assets of the facade.

The problem of the building is less apparent in Birch's beautiful representation of it, but should be clear on reflection. First of all, it breaks with the city's brick building pattern. Secondly, it breaks with the street. The virtue of the vernacular Georgian buildings surrounding the Church is that they don't require a setback. They can be flush with the sidewalk and built adjacent to one another, creating uniformity in which variation of height and architectural details still makes visual sense. But the classic temple, as we discussed earlier,

must be a freestanding building and it requires a setback – for it, like the Bank of the US (Figure 1.6) only makes visual sense from a distance. What Birch has done in Figure 1.8 is quite different from the solution implemented in the case of Figure 1.6. The difference is a matter of setting, but it also reflects different perceptions of the city. The street is republican: it reduces all building to participation in the whole of the city's fabric on a single plane; it is 'democratic' in the sense that all buildings compete equally for attention; by contrast, using setbacks and squares to frame public buildings bespeaks a hierarchy: those buildings that occupy the prominent places are meant to designate the public perspective and to define civic virtue. The Presbyterian is one of many churches in a denominational system that emerged after the American Revolution. The denomination's place in society is suggested by the classical design, implying the higher social status of its parishioners, but beyond that there is little to explain what it should mean to the society at large. Birch is looking to express the city as a place that somehow undercuts that condition of fragmentation by constructing a sense of space that lies beneath the architecture. The only alternative was to express place in relation to the street, which is precisely what Birch manages to do. He does it in classical terms and relies on the human scale of the buildings. Arguably, it is the most impressive architectural representation in the collection. He gives us an illusion of spaciousness in this engraving, not by avoiding the street, but by using it and the surrounding buildings. He does so by depicting the street and the roofline of the market sheds on the left side of the picture. The eye is naturally swept down the street toward a disappearing horizon and then back to the temple which is located in the foreground right of the engraving. The powerful sweep of the horizontal lines creates a feeling of visual spaciousness, which was really lacking in the layout of the city, and it is a visual spaciousness that is created by depicting and exaggerating the street itself.

The Presbyterian Church was the architecture of Philadelphia-present and so was the newly constructed Surgeon's Hall and Library, which gave a dignified and serious façade in a building quite well scaled to its setting. The scene dominated by the library and surgeon's hall might be termed landscapes of city life. It seems to me that the larger contribution lies in Birch's presenting not simply buildings, but urban landscapes that, by implying a civic commitment, impart a bond between the public (the viewer of the engravings) and the city. The civic landscape is both spatial – that is, the creation of urban spaces that represent or symbolise important themes; and aesthetic – that is, the representation of place that pleases the eye and draws us in, not the least because it depicts life.

The Two Pasts (Conceptual and Lived Spaces)
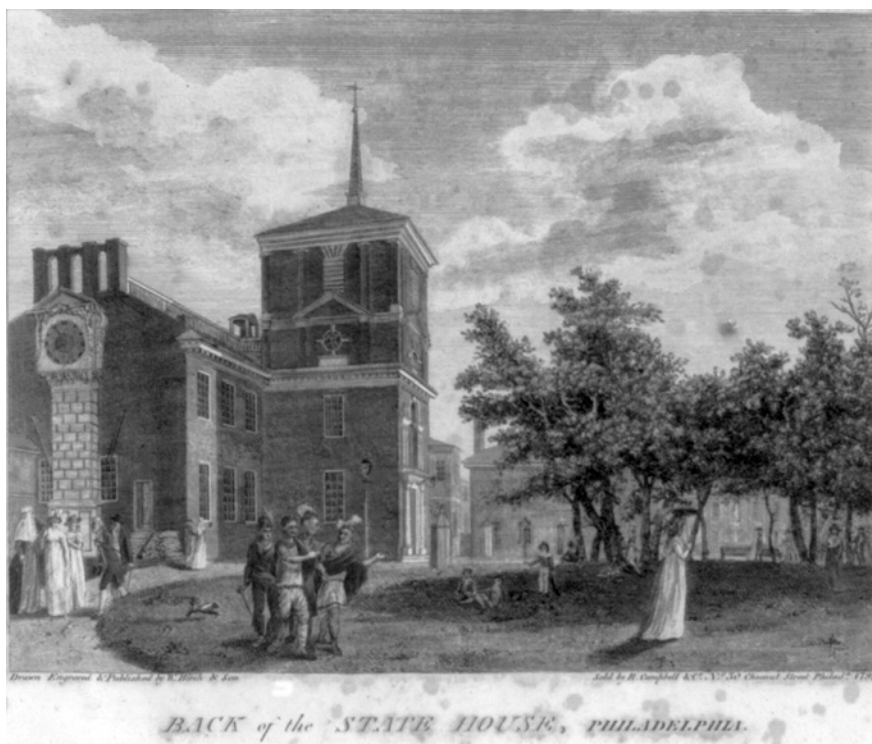
Figure 1.10. **Back of the Statehouse**, *by William Birch, 1799, engraving (detail), from Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. Women and children relaxing amidst the greenery. Peaceful relations with the party of Amerindians (depicted) flow from the tender feelings engendered by the garden.*

The dream of pastoral eutopia was more than Arcadian: the hope was to combine the public sphere with the green space: a free city surrounded by hills and fields. In Figure 1.10 Birch represents a garden with strong Arcadian overtones, specifically the achievement of a peaceable kingdom associated with nature, women, children and the first inhabitants of the land; it also reflects on the first settlement of Philadelphia in which the Amerindians were dealt with on friendly terms. The capacity to link what Habermas calls 'public representativeness' or the quality of civic virtue with an aesthetic vision related to place is a great achievement of Birch's conceptual space. One thinks immediately of the value of the Great Meadow of Central Park or the reflecting pool in

Figure 1.11. **The City and Port of Philadelphia, on the River Delaware** *[as seen]* **from Kensington**, *frontispiece of* **City of Philadelphia**, *1800, by William Birch, engraving, The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. Here the city is framed by the waterscape and lies under the protecting and nurturing boughs of a great tree.*

Washington as such places of public representation.[15] Birch's representation of the garden arouses similar hopes.

Birch was also concerned with depicting the city at a distance, as noted in Figure 1.11; that practice is something of a trope of picturesque painting and travelogues where the city itself becomes a picturesque object. The shipyard in the foreground is set on a point of land that affords an overview of the city, which lies flat on its featureless plain. The city forms the horizon line of the engraving and is represented at a distance of at least two miles. One can make

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15.   The city as the focus of social life has always been essential to defining a public sphere, even though since the 1920s we have mused on the possibility of decoupling the public sphere from a physical setting, powered by new communication technologies.

out the masts of ships moored at the Philadelphia docks and the rooflines of a few buildings. We know it is Philadelphia largely because of the presence of the Christ Church spire, which at a height of 200 feet (thirty metres) dominates the city. The horizon line is located only about a third, or even less, of the distance between the bottom and the top of the painting. This permits Birch to devote the upper sixty per cent of the painting to a massive elm which constitutes much of the painting's middle ground. The elm is large and irregular in form. It is not a cultivated tree, and we can see a rather substantial dead bough to the left of the engraving. The tree has grown in a natural way – i.e. it has not been pruned. The leaf masses are shown in all their intricate detail – right down to the individual leaves. Birch uses colour variation to great effect to represent the tree's irregularities and intricate beauty. The tree also organises the painting, for its overarching boughs hover over the city, framing it for the viewer, and its stem provides a useful border of the city to the right of the painting (i.e. the northern boundary of the city).

Beyond its structural uses in framing the landscape, the elm has great symbolic value. Clearly one gets the sense of the tree as the great protector of the city; the city is guarded under her protective boughs. This was probably Birch's intention for the elm has a great symbolic significance in the Pennsylvania story. It was here, under this tree known as the 'Penn elm' that the colony's founder was said to have signed the treaty with the Delaware tribes that gave him use of their lands. Pennsylvania was always quite proud of its record of negotiation with the Amerindians. Birch seems to be emphasising this fact: a great commercial city must be built on peaceful relations with its neighbours; and wise rulers who pursue peaceful solutions lay the foundation for the growth of trade and the development of a prosperous city. The conceptual landscape is from the perspective of design and of elite, but arguably utopian, expectations for the city.

Birch also presented what may be called the lived landscape, which, though not from the perspective of the people, certainly focuses on their activity and relation to the city. This is the second past that concerns Birch. One of the more colourful paintings in the collection, the vividness of the buildings matches the conviviality of the street life. What makes the engraving interesting is that Birch has managed to represent the 'high' and the 'low' in a single moment. The building may be the realm of the privileged but the street belongs to the common citizen and it is a highly interesting, lively place where the produce of the countryside is being hawked to passers-by. To the left, merchants are working out of sheds extending from the building, but as the eye moves to the

Figure 1.12 (continued on facing page). **Southeast Corner of Third and Market Streets,** *or 'Cook's Folly', plate 8 from* **City of Philadelphia***, 1800, by William Birch, engraving (detail), from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA.*

The life of the street in its multiplicity is balanced against the dignified backdrop of one of the most important commercial buildings in the city.

Figure 1.13. **High Street, from the Country Market-place**, *plate 10 from* **City of Philadelphia**, *1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. Markets as the concrete expression of rural to urban interchange.*

right and toward the very centre of the engraving we see a street butcher. A wagon is bringing more produce from the countryside and two young African American children are roaming about, probably hawking their owner's wares.

In fact, a large part of the appeal lies in broad scope of his portraiture: concern is not limited to the city, per se, and certainly (a few cases aside) not the architecture, but rather embraces the people of the city as they are engaged in everyday life. The foundation of the visual appeal lies in connecting all the necessary activities of daily life to an appealing place. Visual appeal is the enchanting of an everyday world invested with shared meanings. One of the best examples is Southeast Corner of Third and Market (Figure 1.12). Birch places the building in the centre of the etching. One of the most fashionable buildings in Philadelphia, later known as 'Cook's Folly' because of its limited commercial success, it was torn down in 1838 (Teitelman: plate 8) perhaps as the older bourgeois pattern of combining shops below and elegant residences

Figure 1.14. **Arch Street Ferry**, *plate 4 from* **City of Philadelphia***, 1800, by William Birch, engraving, from The Library Company, Philadelphia, PA. The most representative of Birch's attempts to represent the lived space of Philadelphia, the print captures much of the life of the city and of working class experience. The ferry is unloaded of barrels of flour or salted pork headed for the city or for the trans-Atlantic trade.*

above gave way in the 1830s to the rise of residential districts. Essentially Georgian, with typical use of brick and characteristic symmetrical fenestration balanced in relation to a central entrance hall, one is given an overall sense of solidity. To this the architect has added certain classical features as a decorative motif along Palladian lines. More interesting than the building is the depiction of street life at that corner, as both commercial and leisure activities spanning several social classes and racial groups are included.

Again in Birch's depiction of The Country Market-place (Figure 1.13), we see everyday life as essential to a landscape scene. Throughout Birch is endeavouring to represent the city as it actually was in terms of the details of everyday occurrences. Market activities are extremely important, as depicted

in this scene. The relation of the city to the countryside is depicted in Figure 1.9 in the form of rural folk and country wagons, here leaving the scene after a day's work. In Figure 1.7 Birch creates a sense of spaciousness, appropriate to the rural connotation but certainly not representational. He does this in two ways, by framing the picture from inside a market shed. The semi-arched entranceway to the shed creates a sense of enclosure which is relieved when the eye travels further afield into the street. Secondly, Birch exaggerates the width of the street, which makes it possible for him not to show the housing on the opposite side. A sense of the decorative is achieved by the placement of the attractive lamp hanging down from the market shed ceiling, by the beautiful textures of the street cobble stones and by the motif of hooks and beams to the left of the painting.

At the same time, Philadelphia is presented as a city whose sense of place is not enclosed; it is a city open to other worlds. An island city situated on a broad river with direct access to the Atlantic reflects the world of the sailing ship, the most important technology of landscape in its day. The sailing ship is the machine that produces the urban eutopia of the eighteenth century – the city as a mecca of opportunity and better life. At the same time, the ship reflects natural space – the oceans and the power of the wind upon which trade is dependent. In *Arch Street Ferry* (Figure 1.14) wind flutters the streamers and sails. It is Birch's least geometrically structured composition, its organic form suggesting the natural space that lies beyond the city and upon which the city depends. But the ship industry lionised here was already in serious decline, and the ordered character of the merchants' republic had already been contested in the Revolution. This suggests an aesthetic issue that parallels a social one: on the one hand the depiction of public space was representative of the values of dignity, order and republican virtue, as opposed to the boisterousness and disorder that always accompanies social strife and is magnified by conditions of social inequality. Typically critics have interpreted this print as static, a representation of 'an idealized Enlightenment city of order and harmony … [without] the messiness and illness and dirt' of the real city (Arch 2004: 182). An alternate reading might suggest that it reflected Birch's hope for the restoration of order after a period of rebellion, which should be taken as a necessary reminder of the need to keep society focused on civic virtue and the common weal. There is no particular reason to think that Birch, or indeed the descendants of the Philadelphia founders, either represented the American future, or harkened back to an uncomplicated view of 'the Enlightenment city'. The American future would be defined by the abstraction of empty space, certainly not by its idealisation;

'enlightenment' is less the concern here than the security and sovereignty of the republic. What I see in Birch is a restatement of the republican idea of a civic order given expression by the embedding of labour and craft in the production of a social necessity – in this case, protection. The interest of the social whole is more fundamentally understood, however, in the human interface with the natural world, reflected here in the prominence of organic form, suggesting Birch's picturesque orientation and a precursor to the interest in landscape that would become an important feature of American intellectual life.

Eclipse of Urbanism

Birch refers back to a commonality by representing the materialities that underlay the public sphere: association with the tree of life, the topos, the living landscape, the produce of the countryside, the architecture of beloved and symbolic buildings are brought forth to form a green place. The city now becomes a container of place-ness that reflects on the common threads that emerged out of civic consciousness. Nostalgia is evident, but beside the point. I don't think that Birch thought of this work as a retrospective; indeed it is very much in line with the programme of presenting the city as a place worthy of respect and investment. In short it reflects exactly the same motive that had motivated all the artist-publicists of the city during the eighteenth century, but its effect is quite different. The city Birch wishes us to see is a successful urbanism, one wrestling with social conflict but containing it within a structure. Thus we might say that Birch's Philadelphia as a green place cut across social classes and political platforms united in a version of the lifeworld or environmental sphere. The value placed on arriving at consensus is not particular to Birch; it remains the goal of traditional political theorists and is still a necessary element of any political community. While the consensus that Birch pointed to no longer accurately described the politics of the city, it was prescient regarding the future terms by which American citizenship would be defined – i.e. in terms of symbols and values that referred back to an interpretation, and indeed to various interpretations, of the subjective and collective meanings ascribed to the lifeworld.

The eclipse of urbanism, in the first instance, meant the end of the polis as that public sphere that grew under the auspices of the merchants' republic and was broadened by the American Revolution. Ironically, with the success of the Revolution, the evolution of citizenship as an active urban civic life came to an abrupt end. Local citizenship as doing and acting continued to be important,

certainly, but the primary battles of what citizenship meant would be fought on different turf. That new public sphere growing under the auspices of the American republic concerned itself not with concrete places and historically determined issues, but with abstractions – the union, the 'pursuit of happiness' and 'the frontier' among others. These symbols of nationhood referred citizenship to new debates about the character and content of the American environmental sphere, and it was here that advocates of closer attention to and respect for the surround (the green) would have to stake their claims.

To do so would also mean responding to a second sense of the eclipse of urbanism: the changing spatial context from a world dominated by trans-Atlantic trade as part of an overseas empire to one focused on territorial expansion and increasingly systematic exploitation of resources as part of a national republic. America was a republic with very strong agrarian tendencies that contributed to the shift away from urbanism, but agrarianism, while succeeding in pulling political power away from cities, also failed, as we shall see, to systematically alter the character of the American economy or way of life. Population pushed west duly fulfilling 'the promise' of the frontier, but cities were also carving out large periurban regions. The locus of interest in the urban environment shifted to those peripheries, opening the door to the importing of picturesque landscape aesthetics. It was here that the struggle for green awareness would begin.

Chapter 2

WASHINGTON: TERRITORY

Le Goff tells us that the European city has always been defined in some measure by its antithesis: 'the town/country opposition, more or less equivalent to the civilized/barbarian one, was already strong in the Roman world [and] it became stronger in the Middle Ages' (2005: 100). The city felt itself different, marked its distinctiveness through walls and monuments and developed a characteristic way of life, a singularity which became the basis for the creation of urban networks of trade, finance and cultural exchange: 'The city closes itself off from the rural environment in order to enlarge the scope and intensity of its communication with the wider world' (Roberto Lopez paraphrased in Hohenberg and Lees, 1985: 22).

If the planning of Philadelphia reflected the dream of its founders to build a new urbanism on the groundwork of the commercial city by tempering urbane sophistication with democratic spaces and the development of strong ties to the surrounding countryside, Washington was designed to negate the commercial city in favour of a monumental city marking the founding of the republic; a city as different from the hustle and bustle of the networked Atlantic World in such cities as Philadelphia or New York as the US was meant to be from European kingdoms. Interestingly, Washington shared characteristics with the emerging continent capitals. Like them, Washington was designed to symbolise and represent the emerging polity. Its designer, Pierre L'Enfant, utilised techniques of planning introduced in the late Renaissance reconstruction of Rome (Partridge 2005), complete with wide boulevards, roundabouts, statues, fountains and terminal vistas – a plan that could be more completely realised since it applied to a city to be built *de novo*. The design may also be said to reflect the project of George Washington and the other southern gentry who engineered American independence and conceived of the US as a republic along classical lines, i.e. an aristocratic republic designed to resist the corruptions of commerce and unchecked power. Washington was a conceptual space conceived apart from the market and from historical development.

Washington: Territory

Ironically Washington's conceptualisation echoed the Baroque city that Lewis Mumford sees as the spatial counterpart to political absolutism, where scale represents the absolute power of the monarch, where power and glory are understood as a necessary dimension of reason (logos). To be fair, architecturally the simple classical design of the public buildings, the lack of décor, the plainness of the 'federal' style domestic architecture of the period indicate the modest goals of the republican founding. The design also emphasised the principles of the federal republic: the constitutionally mandated division of powers among the branches of the state. But the vastness of Washington's scale is Baroque (Tafuri 1976: 32). Vastness suggests imperial ambition and the conceptualisation of a city as a monument is a throwback to the 'administrative' city of the ancient world. It has a purity defined by its independence from the influences of place, history and culture in the existing American cities.

In its particulars, the conception and execution of the new capital city reflected the interests and thinking of the Virginians and especially of George Washington. To unlock that thinking, one must imagine, first of all, the selection of the site for the capital within the framework of the geography of that era. Washington was to be located far to the west in a backwater, many miles from the sea and without existing urban development to speak of, an area far removed in culture and level of development from the deep-water port cities that hugged the Atlantic seaboard. The choice of a location for the new city was certainly a concession to Virginia's powerful delegation, including the first president whose estate was located in the vicinity of the new site. It reflected a southern conception of the predominance of the landed estate as the centre of social life, to the relative diminishment of the city. Cities were seen as political centres on the pattern of Williamsburg, the colonial capital of Virginia – a small town of two thousand inhabitants, half of whom were slaves, which managed at the same time to see itself as a 'seat of empire',[1] in Carl Bridenbaugh's famous formulation (1950). The link between Virginia and its land claims to the west was central to this claim, but what was most significant was the pattern of social life reflected in the geographic development of the region of which Washington and Williamsburg were a part: the Tidewater, a low-lying plain traversed by tidal rivers often deep enough to accommodate ocean-going vessels. Onto these vessels tobacco could be loaded from the docks of the large estates that lined the rivers and shipped directly to European markets. It was

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1. Virginia claimed vast western territories, which it latter ceded to the federal government. It was also enormously influential in inter-colonial affairs.

a region that didn't require commercial cities and it was a political system in which the 'country party' dominated political life.

Thus Washington was, in this respect, a reflection of the southern understanding of a city: first and foremost a place for the meeting of representative government and secondly an administrative centre. Washington, D.C. had no state granted city charter; instead it was authorised by the Residence Act passed by Congress in 1790; the resulting city was placed on lands ceded from the states of Virginia and Maryland and was governed under the direct control of the Congress.[2] It was the republic's own city, a federal territory, and in effect an anomaly compared to the usual American political designation of place as a multi-jurisdictional territory, simultaneously local, state and federal. By the 1960s Washington became infamous as a 'colony' without any form of representation for its then overwhelmingly African American population; this was an anomaly no-one really anticipated because it was assumed that the city would remain what it was for most of its history until the twentieth century: a thinly populated town centred on the seasonal activities of the Congress. Later adjustments gave the city local government and the right to vote in national elections, though it still lacks representation in Congress.

It is a commonplace of histories of Washington that the city was built on a 'swamp', meant to suggest the absolutely arbitrary and ridiculous nature of the city planners. The story is more or less a myth: while the area between the capital and the river was low-lying, it was not a wetland; the important sites were placed on higher ground, in any case. What one can say is that Washington is an example of a city building in which 'site' took hind seat to 'situation'. Geographical considerations of the situation of the city required that it be poised between the northern and southern states and as far west as practical at that time. In terms of the site chosen, arguably the best place for the city would have been on the considerably higher ground overlooking the Potomac River as it reaches its fall line. But that site was already occupied by a small commercial settlement called Georgetown that had itself replaced an earlier Amerindian settlement. The plans for the new city required a much larger site and of course one without pre-existing structures or a large number of property claims to negotiate. Having met those conditions, Washington could be conceived as the intersection of vectors that symbolised the oppositional relations between the branches of the new federal state. The existing landforms,

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2. Initially both Maryland and Virginia ceded territory to create the District of Columbia, though later Virginia reclaimed most of its part of the district

Figure 2.1. Pierre L'Enfant's street plan for Washington, DC. 1791, Wikimedia commons. The city was designed with the five principles of axiality, symmetry, focus, hierarchy and unity in mind.

most importantly the Potomac and Anaconda Rivers, were simply in the way and thus largely ignored.

The up-to-date plan for the district was no accident. Washington hired a French architect, Pierre L'Enfant. His design focused on architectonics of the city expressed in the siting of the major governmental structures and on a street design that would maximise vistas of these buildings. Architecture was everything. There was a strict adherence to classical forms that expressed reason, order and restraint. In this respect Washington was unlike the emerging Baroque architecture of Europe, which was far more emotive and sentimental. The purity of its classical architecture expressed the timelessness of the city. The result, as Tafuri puts it, is a city that 'tends to underscore its own separation (not its extraneousness) from development' (1976: 36). This was not a city as lifeworld, but city as polis, now abstracted from life. In this sense, it is almost

completely a conceptual space. It reflected something of great and deep value: the primacy of government as an activity of citizens meant to overcome the tendency of states to become unresponsive agents of power in the service of aggrandisement. Washington as a site refers then to a *civitas* – the sphere of citizens – as opposed to a realm, whether of King or nation. Consequently there were no provisions made for the accouchements of civilisation: theatre, art gallery, church were left out. There were only the buildings meant to house the representatives of the people. The buildings themselves were signs that read 'republic' – their semiotics drawn from classical references, ironically not appreciated by the people. We could classify Washington as space in the absence of place; space largely divorced from the social geographies of the colonial settlement; space as republican triumph over historical determinism; and space triumphant over landscape (Führ 2005).

A second feature of the Washington plan worthy of note is the layout of its streets on west/east and north/south axes. A *symbolic geography* that would be endlessly augmented in literature and statecraft for over one hundred years, the city was linked to the spaces of the West, indeed *its* spaces of the West – for the territories there had passed into the hands Congress and were shaped by congressional rule into a state-defined space on the basis of the old Roman division of land into rectangular parcels (known in America as the 'grid') to facilitate land distribution. The US capitol building was perched at the centre of the dividing lines of streets running in north/south and east/west in accordance with cardinal directions symbolising the grid layout of the territories. At the same time, Washington did refer, at least in some representations, to pastoral. This was not a liberal vision at all, but a classical one; it aimed at denying commercialism and subordinating mercantilism to the state. It reflected an agrarian republicanism that accepted cities but only in a very traditional sense of the city as administrative centre set in the countryside; it rejected capitalism and in the process urbanism as it existed. The concept of Washington as a city reflected an agrarian republicanism that accepted the city as an administrative and political centre, but rejected urbanism. The pastoral republic was in accordance with what has come down to us as a 'Jeffersonian' vision of an agrarian republic; and it was fitting, therefore, that Jefferson should be inaugurated there in 1801 and not in Philadelphia – the colonial commercial centre with its close ties to the Atlantic World.

The city he laid out was on such a vast scale that it dwarfed existing settlements at Georgetown and Alexandria, Virginia – dwarfed them in scale, though not in population, because for much of the nineteenth century Wash-
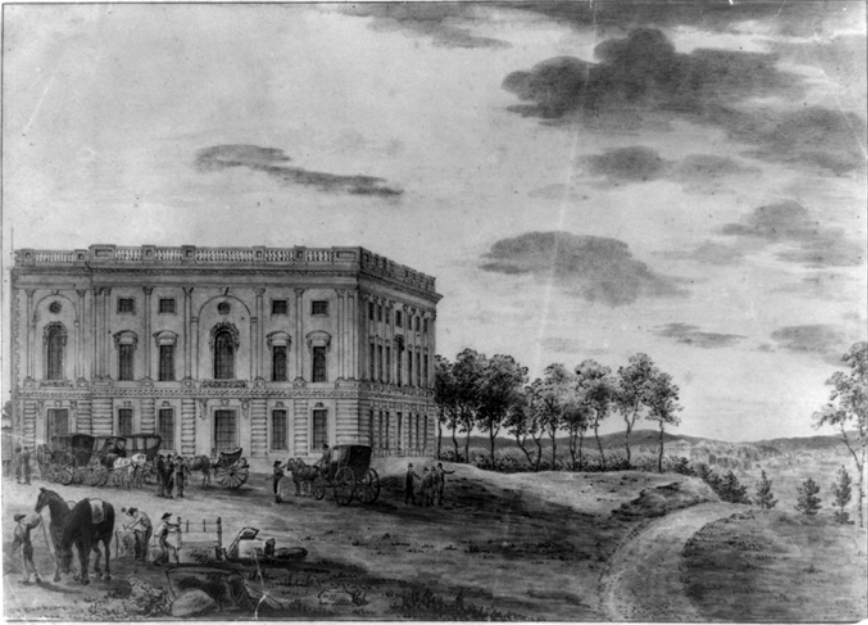
*Fig 2.2. **A view of the Capitol of Washington before it was burnt down by the British**, by William Birch, ca 1800. Watercolour. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. That this was merely a wing of the uncompleted building is made clear by positioning it to the extreme left of the composition. Work is ongoing, as indicated by the workmen in the foreground. To mitigate the feeling of a construction site, Birch depicted a rural, almost camp-like, setting.*

ington was effectively an overgrown town whose physical dimensions had the effect of exaggerating the paucity of its population. Under the conditions created by a limited and seasonal population base, the vast distance between the White House and Capitol Hill was not intended to create a cohesive urban space. Indeed cohesion in an urban centre and cohesion around a single urban centre were the last things the founders wished to effectuate. Their idea was polycentrism, a country with many small competing urban centres (Schuyler 1988: 16) and a vast territory rural in character, pastoral in appeal and decentralised in governance.

When asked by George Washington how he would approach the planning of the new national capital, L'Enfant replied that he wished 'to lay the foundation of a federal City which is to become the capital of this vast Empire' (Stillman 2005: 60). It would take time to develop the monumental city on the

scale L'Enfant imagined; in the meantime the real work of shaping 'American' territorial space was happening in the federal republic's vast western territories.

Territory and Space

Territoriality may be defined as politically bounded space – a dimension of spatiality that stands in relation to, but is distinguishable from, social space. The *spatial turn* in the humanities and social sciences has been driven primarily by the wish to ground environment in the social sphere. 'Space' becomes shorthand for society-cum-environment expressed within a geographical regime. Consequently, there is a strong tendency to see the political as a derivative of the social and environmental dimensions of space. In my reading of *The Production of Space*, however, Lefebvre opens the door to seeing territory as a distinct dimension of spatiality, which, though not entirely self-determining, exhibits a dimension of agency reflecting the development of 'the political'. As politics become more and more the province of State power, the acquisition of demographic, economic, technical powers leads to what Lefebvre calls an 'accumulation process' closely linked to the development of the 'exclusive territorial authority' of the State, replacing the medieval system in which the 'systems of authority and rights' were 'foundationally non-territorial' and territories were variegated and overlapping.[3] Lefebvre sees territory as an historically emergent space 'where centralized power sets itself above other power and eliminates it; where a self-proclaimed "sovereign" nation pushes aside any other nationality, often crushing it in the process; where a state religion bars all other religions; and where a class in power claims to have suppressed all class differences' (281). From Lefebvre's perspective, we should see the Land Ordnance of 1785, the classically-inspired American scheme for dividing the land into rectangular 'sections' for the purpose of quick surveying and easy disposal, as a material condition created by State edict for supporting the myth of American classlessness. I have no intention of following Lefebvre's totalising discourse of opposition for the purpose of revolutionary action, but I will engage his argument that the State has a tendency to the reflect the existing social order, particularly as it raises the question of when and how territorial space might come to reflect civic values.

3.　Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 37. Since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) the territorial sovereignty of the state within its borders has been accepted as the basic principle of international law and the basis of the international system, though this was modified after the Second World War.
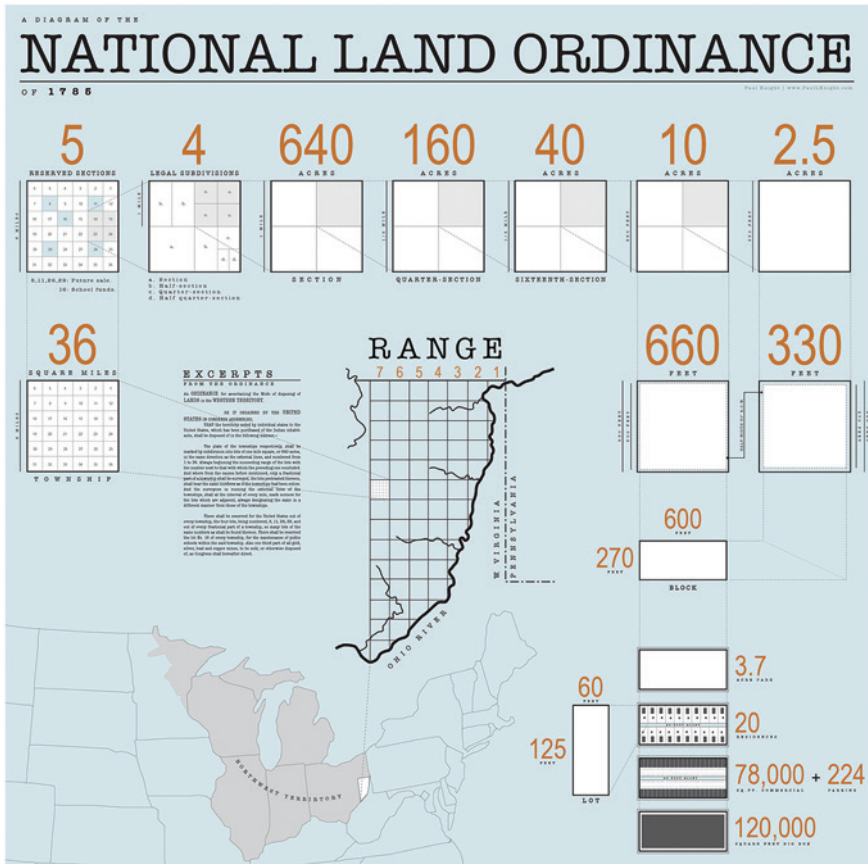
Fig 2.3. National Land Ordinance (1785) Diagram, showing method of subdivision. It was applied to the Northwest Territory including the present day states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin. Diagram by Isomorphism, 2010, Wikipedia. The method of geometrical subdivision could be applied to all scales from the local county down to individual lots. It was applied to shaded states on the map.

One important point about the Land Ordnance is that it attempted to balance property rights with community rights. The provision for a land reserve to be turned over to the local state and used to support schooling is an example of a civic architecture that balances private land use. The Northwest Ordnance, also passed in 1785, established the system by which new territories were organised and could then apply for admission to the union as equal states. Under this scheme, the federal state ceded exclusive territorial authority to state

governments, thereby avoiding the worst kind of colonialism. It was the first mapping of America.

In many respects the legislation bore the influence of Thomas Jefferson, Virginia landowner and scholar – a man both representative of and outside the gentry class responsible for bringing the southern colonies into the War for Independence. Jefferson was a classicist, by which I mean he saw inherited conceptions of order as essential to reclaiming the republican political structure. Nonetheless the material world, specifically the organisation of space, and the possibility of exploring new means to describe its importance and impact on human societies, developed a central theme in his work. Jefferson was systematic in the sense of promoting the organisation and development of knowledge of urbanism. In his travels, he had gathered plans from a number of European cities from Frankfurt and Amsterdam to Paris and Milan (twelve cities in all) and in 1791 he passed them on to Pierre L'Enfant who had been engaged by George Washington to plan his new city. For Jefferson the twin sciences, architecture and planning, were required to give definition to a city (Jefferson, 1944: 502–504). Like other members of the American 'country party', Jefferson believed that commerce threatened both liberty and order. He went further than most in hoping that substantial commercial cities would never be built in America in the first place. He favoured an hierarchically ordered urban system – built up from an agrarian base and ranging from small market towns to county seats to state capitals. His principled support of an agrarian society composed of small self-sufficient farms, kept viable by the existence of substantial land reserves, required converting the abstract space of the market into the constitutional space of a 'gardening state'. For Jefferson, however, the constitutional state displaced the capitalist market, or would do so, he thought, if the Hamiltonian party were kept from the levers of power and if federalism and if government was held strictly accountable to local authorities. The new landscape of a new world meant moving away from 'European' commercial cities altogether; that is to say, his idea was classical, even if the results are lacking.

The agrarian west (the Northwest Territory) represented Jefferson's hope for the future. Unlike anywhere in the Americas it would develop in the *absence* of slavery. It was meant to be a new society. What would remain of the colonial inheritance then? Certainly the legal and representative governmental institutions of British precedence counted for much, but in other respects Jefferson hoped for something quite new. Jefferson saw expansion as essential to finding a new space that could be leveraged against the commercially oriented and British derived cities of the Atlantic seaboard.

Washington: Territory

Jefferson had almost nothing to do with the promoting or drafting of the US Constitution of 1787 that had replaced the existing Articles of Confederation with a much stronger central government. His sympathies probably lay with the Anti-federalists, the Constitution's opponents. During those years he was a diplomat in France; he knew nothing of its content and later was rather slow to endorse it. Partly this suggested Jefferson's distrust of the mercantile interests who organised the constitutional convention, but it was also theoretical, reflecting Rousseau's idea of plebiscitary democracy, a strong tendency in Jefferson's political faith in the general will of the people. But given the emphasis on constitutionalism in the British and then American political system, Jefferson relied more on another idea which is present in Rousseau – the link between nature, instinct and self-government. Whether intentionally or not, Jefferson's views reflect Rousseau's notion that the settlement of new territories, free of the prejudices and afflictions of established society, could make it possible to realise a buried dimension of the human character: mutualism, a moral force that would perhaps make constitutional legalisms unnecessary and redundant (Ryn 1990: 182–188).

Jefferson's eventual support of the Constitution, or his simple acceptance of its existence as a fact of political life in the newly united states of North America, reflected his pragmatism and his situation as a statesman rather than a political theorist. In truth, he sought to reconcile economic openness to market forces (liberalism) with his emphasis on the mutualistic ethos of democratic communities. Economic liberalism in regard to trade relations helped to sanction an expansionist land policy that he enacted as president in the purchase of the massive Louisiana Territory in 1803. In a letter to the explorer George Rogers Clark, Jefferson suggests his ambition in acquiring the territory:

> we shall divert through our own Country a branch of commerce which the European States have thought worthy of the most important struggles and sacrifices, and in the event of peace on terms which have been contemplated by some powers we shall form to the American union a barrier against the dangerous extension of the British Province of Canada and add to the Empire of liberty an extensive and fertile Country thereby converting dangerous Enemies into valuable friends (1951: 237).

The stain of slavery and the unwillingness to directly confront the political and social structure of the South as well as the reluctance follow along the path of commercialisation that had emerged in northern port cities helps explain the lure for Jefferson of new territories in which social relations could be reconceived. Joyce Appleby has portrayed Jefferson's hope for a decentralised

republic of mixed-crop farms stretching from the upper South into the West as a form of 'economic liberalism', by which she means both willingness to engage with world market forces and a belief in free enterprise as the cornerstone of the republic. (Making a distinction between these two elements of liberalism is critical.) She is surely correct that the material basis of Jefferson's hope was a strengthening European market for wheat beginning in the late 1780s – a phenomenon that lasted for about twenty years (Appleby, 1992: 260–270). It is worth noting, in this connection, that Jefferson's hopes for a distinct American future required turning international trade to the advantage of the United States by maintaining a neutral foreign policy. Trade with European powers would keep urbanisation at bay, permitting the US to develop its own neo-classical political institutions. By avoiding entangling foreign alliances as well as over-reliance on foreign trade the United States could become an agrarian republic with its own peculiar historical development. Ironically, one might well say that Jefferson argued for continuity in economic terms: he saw the US as an outgrowth of the agricultural economy that prevailed during the colonial period. The difference between British America and the US was not a matter of economic enlargement, but rather of political and social development. On the other hand, Jefferson banked on the availability of land and the implicit economic strategy for creating the 'empire of liberty' by substituting land extensiveness for commercial intensity.

Much discussion around Jefferson focuses on the question of liberalism, which is logical considering the fact that American politics has been conceived largely in the terms of the liberal philosophical tradition. In many respects, however, the question of liberalism distracts us from the important and contradictory impulses with which Jefferson struggled: the impulse toward egalitarianism and the yearning for liberty. For conventional thinkers, both Federalist and Republican, social hierarchy was an assumed value. Jefferson could accept it only as a consequence of the variation in aptitude that seems to be a part of human nature and was very guarded about careless acceptance of hierarchy as a consequence of the inherited social order. He readily admitted that the quality of governance depended on leadership, which in turn required broadmindedness and education, but he was determined that this not be limited to a specific social class. He thought democratic ideals married to quality could produce a meritocracy – which he later called a 'natural Aristocracy' of talent and virtue. His concept became a singular American ideal, not widely shared among leaders at the time.

Washington: Territory

In these respects, however, Jefferson was not fundamentally at odds with his standing as a gentleman and scholar, a graduate of the College of William and Mary and founder of the University of Virginia. But there was something else. Jefferson attempted an ethical transformation of the spatial turn in American politics. The federalism of the Constitution was itself deeply ingrained in the politics of territorial space. It attempted to preserve the localism of the old British colonial system before the eighteenth century interferences by the Crown by permitting the several states to exercise certain sovereign powers and possess sovereign rights (Zick 2005: 234). The extent of these rights and powers has always been contested, but it remains true that state governments have something of the character of independent states and exercise considerable powers independent of Washington.

Jefferson followed along with the 'states' rights' perspective on federalism. In tacit alliance with the 'country party' Republicans, such as James Madison, chief author of the US Constitution, Jefferson agreed that strict constitutionalism, adherence to agrarian pursuits and obedience to the moral lessons of classical history were necessary to avoid the corruption that wealth, and the use of offices for personal gain, brings to public institutions.[4] Indeed, Jefferson far exceeded his fellows in the starkness of his anti-Whig views; although economic success was essential, he rejected the emphasis on economic growth proposed by the Federalist Party as fundamentally incompatible with the ethos of a republic (Appleby 1992: 260–270; Katz 2003: 11).

In his creative thinking, however, he developed another line of reasoning. Rather than a constitutional approach to the division of power, he entertained a notion of politics as an exercise in doing and acting in everyday life. Democracy was likened to a habit of holding leadership accountable for their actions through meetings. Encompassing a strong emphasis on rural neighbourhoods, Jefferson wrote of 'ward republics' or direct democracy, governance by the citizens. In New England the town meetings affected him so powerfully that he wrote to John Cabell: 'I felt the foundations of government shaken under my feet' – a sensation he came to accept and indeed welcome as he reached the conclusion that it is only through the exercise of such force of the part of the people that the social fabric can be altered (1944: 661). The local has no metaphysical status in Jefferson's cosmos: it simply means the most accessible to

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4.   Cato the Elder became governor of Sardinia in 198 BC: 'whereas his predecessors had been in the habit of charging the cost of their tents, beds and clothing to the public funds, and exhorting immense sums from the province to pay for large retinues of servants and friends and for sumptuous banquets and entertainments, he substituted an unheard-of economy in his administration'. Plutarch 1965: 126.

the ordinary citizen – and only access can bring democracy.[5] The emphasis on local citizenship should be seen in connection with his interest in gardens. He believed, in line with Cicero, that power must be contained, not only through constitutional arrangements, but by the cultivation of an ethos of restraint and pastoral tranquillity:

> Happy the man who, far from business schemes, like the early race of mortals, ploughs and reploughs his ancestral land, with oxen of his own breeding, and no slavish yoke around his neck … Beneath the ancient oak one loves to lie, Or on the matted grass. While deep waters from the spring rush off, Birds chatter in the trees; And pouring forth, the stream resounds. Inviting gentle sleep (Horace, a translation of a plaque in Jefferson's garden in Daufenbach 1995: 403).

Jefferson has Horace blessing his garden, but this is simply one part of a broader perspective that includes a social-political position Paul Thompson calls the '*Central American Tenet*: Farmers make the best citizens' (2001: 223), a proposition Jefferson links to a discourse of nature. The linkages between nature and politics and nature and agriculture carve out what might be called 'spaces in-between', which are a kind of conceptual space. Lefebvre identifies conceptual spaces in architectural drawing, an architectural coda, city plans, drawings of idealised spaces or communities, etc. Conceptual space in this definition is a bit narrower than a space in-between, though for the purpose of this work I will use 'conceptual space' in this broader sense implied by the German word '*raum*'. In our essay 'Reconsidering environment: spatial contexts and the development of the environmental humanities' Sigurd Bergmann and I define *raum* in phenomenological terms – that is, as space sensed, experienced and imagined, 'an assemblage of diversified places, rooms and environments' embracing and nurturing life (2015: 9).

A Space in-between (1): The Pastoral Farm

On the one hand Monticello, Jefferson's beloved estate modelled on a Palladian villa, was a typical plantation in which he could live as a gentleman pursuing his various scientific and political pursuits while the labour was untaken by slaves. On the other hand, Monticello was a site for Jefferson's gardening experiments, which, if required, could be undertaken on much more modest scale by small owners. If he sought to carve out a 'neo-Roman existence' of classical virtue, it

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5. In a rural republic the township is the foundation; later versions of this idea in urban America substitute the neighbourhood. In this sense Lewis Mumford, Paul Goodman and Jane Jacobs were all Jeffersonians.

did not prevent him from applying examples taken from ornamental landscape design of his day. Nor did his use of ornamentation require him to convert his plantation into a leisure estate. Jefferson blended pastoral themes with a practical working farm such that his 'pastoral farm' blended agricultural improvement with symbolic ornamentation and picturesque design (Daufenbach 1995: 406, 408, 410) – to create a space greater than a working farm and no less than one. It was a garden and a commercial farm and it occupied the American interior space. In this sense it 'entangles' social space with nature (Luccarelli and Bergmann 2015: 17) through mediating concepts – garden and georgic pastoral. In short the garden is a space in-between; it is both 'a metaphor for, or mediator of, "Nature"' (Crozier 1996: 65), and a physical place that expands the social world into the natural world, extending our understanding and relation to life by creating a widened lifeworld. In this sense the garden is an extended reflection on space that by opening the door to 'utopian and metaphysical visions … allows insights into the "imaginary" of a culture [and becomes] a means by which a culture can explore its own imaginary' (65).

A Space in-between (2): The Agrarian Republic

Jefferson understood the implications of gardening applied to its polar opposite, landscape. For if the garden mixes labour with nature and encloses a special space from its surroundings, landscape does the opposite: opens vision to a broad view of space. Gardens had long been associated with sacred ground in medieval Europe, while landscape became the conceptual space of freedom from enclosure, freedom from restraint, manifest, Crozier tells us, in the creation of the modern constitutional state: 'This new dimension opened a space, a possibility for the modern political exploration of freedom – a proto value deeply embedded in the imaginary of the West. Now relieved of the self-imposed fear of the outside, of contingency, the constitutional "walls" of the polis could be transformed into truly human bounds' (1996: 80). Jefferson's creative, though not completely original, solution was to posit a space between garden and landscape, community and individuation. The garden embedded in open space takes on a new meaning, from conservator of sacred space to shaper of open space – a process that began with the landscapes of cities from the late Middle Ages to early colonial America (see Luccarelli 2015). What was different from the medieval and early modern period was the social utopianism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Utopia, in Jefferson's hand, became a project of reconstruction, of renewal of the land based on a vision of 'social transformation' first found amongst the radicals of seventeenth century

England, a marker for 'a new point in history: the arrival in popular consciousness of the notion of an ideal society' (Stephens 2016: np). This moment was evident in Jefferson's conception of the 'ward republic' as well as his synthesis of garden and landscape. What it represents is the first formulation of a green space linked to an egalitarian social vision. Spatiality can now be seen in relation to place. Place-ness signified specificity and uniqueness; space in the sense we are talking about here incorporates place and goes beyond it. Place-awareness grew out of civic humanism, as we have seen in Chapter 1; we can trace its lineage back to the early Renaissance/late medieval period, when visualisations of culture embedded in nature were subordinated to the rise of civic process. Green space emerges in the eighteenth century as a sphere or field capable of interface with the constitutional State and its own spatial expression, which made it relevant to the new political forms and in line with egalitarian hopes and hopes for liberty. Landscape represents spaciousness in the sense of emptiness, but it also invites the exercise of freedom to transform landscape in line with a vision, the freedom to restructure culture with nature in mind. Thus the conundrum of interpreting American space is reflected in the dual character of the American landscape itself.

Jefferson's egalitarian push for a synthesis of nature-culture around the pastoral farm and the ward republic are often missed because of the prominence of his neo-classical conceptions, especially in regard to urbanism. His definition of urbanism mirrors the functions of specific types of ancient cities: political centres (state capital) and learning centres (the university town). They were conceived apart from commercial centres and from one another so that there could be never be the corruption of truth by power, nor the utilisation of knowledge to extend political control against the interest of the democratic society. This was evident in his choice of visuals. The centres of governance, both local and state, should be dominated by impressive classical buildings and quiet squares, still evident in many state capitals and in county seats of the South and Middle West. Jefferson designed his University of Virginia as an acropolis elevated above the surrounding landscape, as close to the spirit of a landscape dotted with 'pastoral farms', and thus as far removed geographically and spiritually from the commercial cities of the old British America, as Jefferson could imagine.

Breakdown

The circumstances of economy represented by the old pre-industrial regime can be summarised by the formulaic statement – agriculture was limited by

supply, industry was limited by the lack of steady demand (Braudel 1984b: 183). In effect Jefferson thought the second part of the prescription perfectly acceptable as he was no friend of industrialisation, but he also thought better of the first part of the formula. He was convinced that American enterprise could somehow maintain its position in the world economy as one of the most important sources of supply that would end scarcity in agriculture. This most surely would lead to industrialisation but that, he assumed, would be the fate of the Old World and particularly Britain, while the US with abundant land could maintain the *status quo ante* thereby avoiding the fate of over-development. The economy of the everyday – 'Main Street' in American parlance – would be saved from the forces of capital accumulation – now indicated by 'Wall Street'. Jefferson had failed to understand the implications of the spread and development of the capital market in regard to land. He thought that massive lands to the west would act as a kind of reserve to draw off population increases and prevent urbanisation. Actually capital penetration of the land market, immigration and advancement in transportation soon carved up all of Jefferson's magnificent Louisiana Territory.

This brings us to the question of the State. Historically the State has had two great impacts on exchange: one function is to regulate prices to bolster consumption, the other is to guarantee monopoly in order to assure profit. Ideally for the development of a democratic society, states would intervene to regulate prices, but at the same time refuse to grant monopolies, thereby maximising the function of the economy while diminishing the power of capitalism. Very often, however, the historical choices seem to have been between a national and controlled mercantilist economy which regulates prices and grants monopolies, on the one hand, and a free trade regime on the other. In the US capitalism advanced as the perfect storm: both deregulation and (indirect) support of monopoly. A liberal (deregulated) land policy and increasing State support for capital penetration proved a disastrous combination to Jefferson's hopes for establishing a stable and orderly rural society where political power could be shared by all classes – a new (pastoral-tinged) republic. The acceleration of settlement and appropriation of space meant that the huge territories which he thought could provide new lands for orderly settlement over hundreds of years were gobbled up within two decades, making agriculture the first capitalist enterprise of the US.

Under such economic conditions, Europe moved toward a highly regulated state regime. With the development of the modern European nation state, a different kind of 'garden culture' arises; the distinction becomes one

between garden culture and wild culture (Gellner 1983: 50–52). As Zygmunt Bauman makes clear, the modern state is a gardening state (a disciplinary mode). This became necessary, according to Bauman, because of the appearance of 'masterless men' – uprooted social classes that heralded the breakdown of social control. Hence the 'gardening state' was charged with weeding out the incompatible species (Bauman 1989: 67). At the same time, it functioned very well to develop a fixed conception of citizenship around which European politics of social justice and distribution could be organised.

Rather than organisation of a citizenship on the basis of space that 'required a clear demarcation between the inside and outside', in the US the territorial dimension of space moved in an opposing direction. What emerged has been nicely defined in theoretical terms by Michael Crozier. Spaciousness is threatening to order, but it is also associated with freedom from restraint: 'the image of wildness, of *vastitas*, where there is freedom from the restraints of cultivation, where the mind being encumbered by the concept can experience *vastare* – the "ravaging" of the mind – where the complexity of nature is quite happily encountered "chaotically" and where an individual can be absorbed into the marvelous' (1996: 76). It's this functionally inhuman quality of spaciousness that pervades the idea of wildness as inhuman, chaotic and disorganised and always threatening to logos.

Spaciousness emerged as an ideology of the frontier, founded on a social theory developed by Frederick Jackson Turner. Jefferson's turn to western space anticipates Turner and, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Thoreau's adventure in the woodlands of Maine is quite concerned with discovering a culture of the frontier. For now I will simply state the obvious: Turner's idealisation of the frontier overlooked much; and even its ideological and descriptive appeal in articulating the famous 'open society' concept may best be understood as a cultural pattern ascendant only in Jackson Turner's own country, the upper Mississippi Valley. The frontier thesis certainly overlooked the negative consequences of rapid settlement in a free enterprise system: rural poverty and, perhaps even worse, social isolation. Agriculture requires investment and that was often beyond the means of hard-pressed farmers. At the same time, the frontier became ideologically linked to self-making and 'possessive individualism', with dire consequences for ecological sustainability.

Often theories of American difference (or exception) are dismissed because they are read directly from physical geography. They are theories that lay great weight on geographical determinism. Effectively the argument is as follows: Modern European states are constrained by scale, while American geography is

vast. European territoriality involved sharply reduced claims to the extent that its old empires were dismantled in favour of ethnically defined states, while the shaping of American space was expansion and the state's claims to universality, cutting across the limitations of history and ethnicity, made for a territoriality appropriate to a super-state.

The perspective is too limited, but it is not entirely incorrect. Powerful European states fixed space to territoriality, linked territory to place-identity and thus eventually to citizenship. Imperialism for the Europeans was extra-territorial – either to be paid for by conquest and subjugation of the unfortunate smaller nations of Europe or through the colonisation of non-European peoples in Africa and Asia. Chantal Mouffe equates the rise of the European nation-state with the perfection of its control over territory. '*Territorium*' signifies the 'drive to rationalize, unify and homogenize social relations within a single territorial space' (quoted Brenner 1999: 49). It created what Ulrich Beck has called society within the national 'container', which ironically made possible the development of liberal democracy. Modern territorially delineated sovereign states enabled the greatest period in human enlightenment, but it was order circumscribed by borders and organised according to territorial sovereignties, making Machiavelli's state-centred 'realism' a prescient and still very useful understanding of the political. It gave rise to the quest of European states for territorial expansion at the expense of neighbouring states and for the creation of overseas empires: geopolitics. Max Weber refers to the resulting state of affairs as the iron cage of history.

Did not the US also practice imperialism and geopolitics?[6] Brian Blouet suggests it was fundamental to the very structure of the American state:

> In the nineteenth century the US employed geopolitical policies long before the term *geopolitics* came into use. The Louisiana Purchase provided living space [lebensraum]; the Monroe Doctrine established a sphere of influence; the insistence that the states should not impede interstate commerce with tariffs created a customs union (2001: 24).[7]

The American concern with 'geopolitics', according to Blouet, reflected a widespread belief that territorial expansion is the primary route for national economic growth and that expansion should be pursued even at the cost of war with competing nations. The theory has underwritten the wars of the twentieth

6. 'Geopolitics' and geopolitical policies construe nationhood in terms of expansion at the cost of other nations.

7. A 'customs union' establishes free trade among members who are then protected by a common tariff against competition from outside the CU.

century. The extent to which the US avoided wars with competing powers was a consequence of its privileged geographic isolation. Hence Blouet sees the national profession of its 'Manifest Destiny' as a territorial ambition to conquer the continent. The settling of lands, the social principles of the 'frontier' and the spreading of democracy were thin pretexts for geopolitics (24).

Blouet's perspective fails to account for the form of US expansion and its implications about territoriality. He is certainly correct about US ambitions; Jefferson's attitude toward the world of 'live and let live' has been long since replaced by Wilson's 'make the world safe for democracy'. The crux of the matter, though, is that the American perspective on space was not geopolitical, for geopolitics is essentially about enfolding territory into rigid boundaries. *Lebensraum* is the theory of territorial expansion, whereas the Americans promoted a theory of expansion on the basis of a new relation to space beyond the territorial, a sense of space premised on the 'defeat of the past' and the acceptance of the possibilities of improved communication (Howe 2007: 3–18). Space becomes more than territory: its integrity is broken into multiple spheres of influence penetrated by networks of actors, while paradoxically becoming more and more economically integrated into the world economy. This combination of fragmentation and integration formed a new system of space.

The new relation to space was partly captured in speech given before Congress by South Carolina Representative, John C. Calhoun in 1816:

> Let us, then, bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals. Let us conquer space. It is thus the most distant parts of the republic will be brought within a few days' travel of the center; it is thus that a citizen of the West will read the news of Boston still moist from the press. The mail and the press are the nerves of the body politic. By them, the slightest impression made on the most remote parts, is communicated to the whole system; and the more perfect the means of communication, the more rapid and true the vibration (1851: 190–191).

If the topic was not remarkable – Calhoun was speaking on behalf of a bill he had sponsored for federal expenditures to facilitate what were widely known as 'internal improvements' – the theory of space is astonishingly contemporary. Indeed it resembles that used by the Clinton administration almost hundred years later to justify expenditures for improvements to the World Wide Web. In short, the concern was less territorial than relational – in this case the mobility of goods and services marks one understanding of 'territory' that is not delimited by traditional boundaries. Calhoun's speech was delivered in the midst of a period of time (1815–1900) characterised by the development of the

national market, but one must keep in mind that the 'national' market was on a virtually continental scale and the entire period was marked by phenomena we now see on the global stage: massive migration, the creation of new states and increasing economic integration. The US fragmented into multiple states whose territories were penetrated and reshaped by organised interests while becoming ever more integrated into a single economic system. When the US was prepared to make its entry onto the world stage, it brought this understanding of space and society with it.

There were clear implications in regard to American foreign policy, specifically the development of the 'open door' policy of equal multilateral access to the world economy that was first articulated by Secretary of State John Hay at the turn of the twentieth century, and an important foundation for the reconstruction of the world economy after the Second World War. According to William Appleman Williams, whose book *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* remains a seminal work of historical revisionism, while the Americans did ponder the idea of creating a conventional territorial empire (and took significant overseas territories after the Spanish-American War of 1898), in the main US expansionism was trans-territorial. It was based on articulating both spheres of common interests and spheres of competition among states and social actors across nation-state boundaries. To be succinct: it is a system that maximises the capacity of organised interests, operating on various scales, to penetrate and remake space.

Remaking capitalism in a way designed to maximise American interests was central to this reconceptualisation of space. Note, however, that it would be a serious mistake to equate Calhoun's speech – and American motivations in general – with an exclusively material motive. This is not only about economic expansion; nor is it a simple imperial justification for territorial consolidation: it is about changing the very definition of citizenship in relation to space by transcending the concept of place-centredness.

The implication for cities and regions is obvious: the integrity of locales – whether rural or urban – would come under pressure from above to make social relations and the organisation of space (urbanism and geographical landscape) reflect the new social order. The resulting cities and landscapes were quite unlike those formed under the pressures of the *territorium* (or the modern nation-state) where, as we have seen, the unification of space became a means of rationalising, unifying and homogenising social relations under state guidance. Instead of unification, space would be fragmented. Instead of the capital city – the symbol of the national territory – we should have the industrial city

Vastitas

at the centre of social and conceptual space: the city as the expression of the leading social class and the manifestation of the conquest of nature through industrialisation. Instead of the agricultural region as a supply chain to local markets and container of cultural heritage, we have the agricultural region linked to the world market.

This is a new articulation of trans-territoriality, revolutionary in its implications. It was a violation of the spirit of the original American federal system, which was designed to replace the centralised nation-state model by layering territorial powers, creating a political system of multi-layered citizenship, as Jefferson had once imagined.

Vastitas

The problem of the governance of territory in the emerging US became very clear when the old political guard of New England managed one final critique before fading away. It took the form of the 1814 Hartford Convention of the New England-dominated Federalist Party. The Federalists threatened to take those states they controlled (New England) out of the Union if the ongoing second war against Britain were not stopped. The immediate issue was trade, which had been massively disrupted by the War of 1812 (so called in the US, though it was actually a part of the Napoleonic Wars). The war was framed as an exercise in national self-assertion against British policies designed to re-subordinate North America to British imperialist interests, but it was also clearly a naked land grab. The Democratic-Republican 'war hawks' agitated loudly for the war as an opportunity to seize lands in North America occupied by Great Britain (i.e. Canada) and her Spanish ally (Florida) (Watts 1989). When the war did not go to well – Washington had been laid to siege, fleetingly occupied and partly burned by British troops – the bitter divisions engendered by the prosecution of the war caused erupted at the Hartford Convention.[8] Their criticism of the war effort ultimately led to the destruction of the Federalist Party and the period of political consensus known as the 'Era of Good Feelings', but the critique of the Federalists, whether one 'agrees' or not, was prescient about the arrival of a new kind of social space, which it came to oppose in favour of a restoration of European territoriality.

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8. Andrew Jackson seemed to have believed that secession was the real purpose of the convention and was reported to have said that he would 'have hung every man of them', though this was later scaled down to feeling that only the 'three principal leaders' should feel the hangman's noose. James 1938:181.

Washington: Territory

The Federalists had owed much to mercantilist theory of regulated capital-ism – at least insofar as they supported a regulated, sound financial system. They supported national institutions like the Bank of the United States because they feared poorly regulated, inflation-prone 'wildcat' banks. At the same time, they supported a multilateral trading system that was the lifeblood of the mercantile cities of the eastern seaboard. They maintained a neutralist foreign policy stance largely because they saw war as an obstacle to their economic self-interest but also because they had legitimate concerns about rapid westward expansion. Most important of all, the Federalists wanted a go-it-slow approach to western expansion because of the negative social and political consequences of defining society as a flight from responsibility. John Adams saw the frontier as renegade territory, a lawless and undefined space that would magnify all of the follies of human nature: 'the frontier is an ungoverned wilderness where "desperate Debtors and unthinking Plebians" would clash with speculating "Proprietors" and "great fortunes" seeking to "lay the foundation of great estates for their Posterity". Envy, hatred, violence, fly-by-night "Paper money" … will be the result' (quoted in Watts 1989: 41–42).

Most historians have tended to ignore Adams's prescient insights – and in terms of their immediate impact on events of their time, rightly so. Historians whose tendency is to concern themselves with the building of the nation-state would be inclined to ignore backward-looking comments. Arguably the most important moment in American historiography was the early twentieth century rise of the progressive historians who took movement to the American West as essential to the development of a democratic society. After all, even after all the attempts at revisionism, Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis about the relation between space and democracy is arguably still the essential pivot of American history. Steven Watts (1989: 13), on the other hand, found Adams fascinating because it seemed to him that the dimension of space revealed unsatisfactory and long-lasting qualities of American liberal capitalism that emerged out of the republic's first war since independence. In some ways, American abstract space presented greater opportunity for destruction than the old state-based territoriality, but it did also open the prospect of *the liminal*: the crossing of boundaries, at least temporally, that opens the possibility for innovation – if a means for normalising those innovations can be found. The innovation, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the development of a regional imaginative space juxtaposed to the national space.

Chapter 3

THE HUDSON VALLEY: LANDSCAPE

Driving west on Interstate-84 headed to New York State over the rugged hills that straddle the New York-Connecticut border, one suddenly comes across a vast panorama of a great and gentle dale embraced by hills and mountains as it rolls northward. This is the Hudson River Valley – an undulating plain stretching north from the Hudson highlands toward the old Dutch stronghold of Ft Orange, now the city of Albany, capital of the State of New York. The Hudson Valley is a perfectly enclosed little region: insulated from New England to the east and the bulk of New York State to the west by mountain ranges and linked along a broad and surprisingly deep river, connecting farms, forests and small cities, south to New York City and the Atlantic beyond. It is perhaps the greatest single American expression of a regional landscape, with strong touches of a regional consciousness brought back to life by Pete Seeger and the Hudson River projects back in the 1970s, chief among them the restoration of a nineteenth century working sail boat, dubbed *Clearwater* which became an embodiment of the spirit of the river as a place of work and celebration. Compared to the intensive land use along the corridor between Boston and Washington, D.C., the Hudson Valley, though facing increasing development pressures of its own, appears on the surface to be strangely well preserved as if passed over by modern America.

The eastern seaboard of the US is closed off from the North American continent by a series of coastal mountain ranges. The Hudson is a short river, but along with the St. Lawrence in Canada, an important one. While many rivers in what became the US breach the coastal ranges, the Hudson is the only one open to navigation by ocean going vessels. Actually the Hudson, with its deep wide channel, is a veritable highway for ships. As we have seen, the physical geography of North America, as well as its economic geography under British rule, created a series of linked urban islands and scattered settlements along the eastern seaboard. These islands of settlement were isolated from the North American interior by the Appalachian range. Of all the major rivers in what would become the north-eastern United States – the Connecticut, the

The Hudson Valley: Landscape

Delaware, the Susquehanna, the Potomac – only the Hudson provided an access point through the Appalachians by ship, deep into the interior. Ships could reach 190 miles (300 kilometres) north and west to Fort Edward. But there were limits to navigation beyond physical geography. After it turned west, north of Albany, the river led right into the heart of the most powerful confederation of Amerindians, the Iroquois, rulers of their own inland empire and subsequently allied to the British in their struggle against the French for supremacy over North America.

The Hudson is an amazing natural drainage system that mystified observers for years. Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist, observed the river in 1749 and was moved to record what he understood as its chief geological mystery: 'Why does this river go on in a direct line for so considerable a distance?'[1] How could a river of such majestic proportions contain such a modest flow of water? It seemed so unlike the rivers of central Europe, the Rhine or the Danube, which made sinuous courses to the sea. Here is a river that had managed over time to carve its way through the Appalachian highlands with a deep and consistent channel and yet had such a relatively weak outflow that it had become tidal, with an enormous tidal inflow reaching over a hundred miles to the north. The Europeans should have looked further north for their comparisons. The effects of the great retreat of the glaciers from the last Ice Age had shaped the Hudson some 12,000 years ago. Two primeval lakes created by glacial melt carved the river. The more northerly of the two lakes collapsed, scouring a path through the Highlands, as the massive weight and irresistible force of a wall of water found its way down to the sea. The deep canyon that the water carved became the bed of the lower Hudson River, though rising sea levels also contributed to its creation. After the cataclysmic morphological forces associated with the Ice Age had completed their work, this deep river bed was left to drain a relatively modest watershed, giving plenty of opportunity for the sea tide to roll up into the river itself. What we have today is essentially a tidal fjord, a drowned valley, where fresh water flowing south from the Adirondack Mountains in the far north mixes with tidal currents headed north. Tides capable of raising and lowering water levels by nearly five feet (one and a half metres) extend 150 miles to the north from its mouth.[2]

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1. Lewis 2005: 13. The lower course, which is relatively straight, is about 150 miles (240 km) long.

2. The Hudson, along with its main tributary, the Mohawk, drains an area of 13,370 square miles (34,628 square km); Lewis 2005: 12, 17.

The Hudson Valley: Landscape

The magnitude of the geological forces at work created a varied tableau, unlike any other riverine environment along the American Atlantic seaboard: for much of its course, the river flows through a gently rolling valley enclosed by uplands on both sides and at some distance from the river; but in the middle of the valley is cut by a series of ridges of the Appalachians known locally as the 'Highlands'. An estuary flowing upstream for over 150 miles (over 200 kilometres) through a chain of mountains makes for both a rather dramatic landscape and a rather puzzling geology. That the most visible highlands are in the middle of the river's flow violates common sense about a river's flow from uplands down to the sea. Narrow enough to be dramatic, especially from the Highlands down to New York, but broad enough to be a microcosm in its middle range. The Hudson is somewhat unusual and unexpected, certainly unique in the eastern US.

Thus the significance of the Hudson Valley as a generator of American landscape painting is hardly accidental; its physical geography was outstanding and its proximity to New York combined with the ease of travel secured by the invention of the river steamer, as well as the literary recovery of the regional past, all played important part in the development of what became the first significant expression of landscape in the US. But, at the same time, it was a region directly involved in the western movement of population and the eastern movement of agricultural produce, a waterway essential to the development of New York's vast hinterland. The Erie Canal (opened 1825) made the Hudson part of the first real American 'highway' to the West. It was not, therefore, a region of picturesque retreat and economic irrelevance as it became in the twentieth century. By the late 1940s, Jack Kerouac's autobiographical character, Sal Paradise, (in *On the Road*) attempts to begin his cross-country encounter with the 'awful' but sublime continent by hitchhiking north up Route 9A into the heart of the Hudson Valley … until he discovers that he has reached a literal dead end. Not finding a viable highway route out, he is forced to return to New York to pick up roadways that headed directly west. By then the river and its valley had become the past, which I cannot help but thinking was Kerouac's point: the dead end was a metaphorical genteel past suitable only for nostalgic recollection, but this is a very different landscape from the complex landscape of past engaging present as encountered in the nineteenth century and discussed in this chapter.

Regional History

The chief geographical significance of the river was as an avenue for accessing lands to the west. The Erie Canal created a continuous navigable waterway linking the Port of New York to Albany then to Buffalo and thence to the Great Lakes. Thus the original hope of Henry Hudson to find the 'northwest passage' across the North American continent was partly realised by engineering. While Henry Hudson's effort at finding the Northwest Passage was in vain, he gave the Dutch reason to claim the area. The river he explored – actually first identified by Giovanni Verrazzano sailing for France almost a hundred years earlier – was known to the Mahican (Mohican) Amerindians as 'Muhheakunnuk' (Great Waters Constantly in Motion) and to the Dutch as 'Nordt' (North) or 'Mauritius' (undoubtedly after Prince Maurice of Nassau; Lewis 2005: 91). Its significance in geo-economic and territorial terms would not be clear until well after the War for Independence.

The flora is dense forest and in many places rocky and therefore often less suitable for agriculture than it might have been, but agriculture had not been the primary motive for settlement. The Dutch East India Company, the proprietors of New Netherland, were drawn largely by the desire to get in on the lucrative fur trade that had sustained French Canada. Trading relations between the French, Dutch and English and various Amerindian tribes assured that European goods reached deep into North America by the beginning of the seventeenth century. In exchange the tribes trapped beaver and other animals, transporting the pelts by river to trading forts. The Hudson was one of the most important of the rivers of North America, leading north along the territories of the Five Iroquois Nations, who dominated the fur trade. Other key rivers were the Connecticut and the St. Lawrence in Canada, the later a supply river fed by the Huron, which established the entire pattern of the fur trade. The rivers were not navigable for any great distance by ships, the Hudson being something of an exception, as even ocean going ships could reach 150 miles north to the Netherlands' northern outpost, Fort Orange (later Albany). The Hudson's tributaries that drained the forests where the Amerindians found game in plenty were shallow streams that traversed rocky, mountainous terrain. To transport pelts through such a country a lightweight shallow draft boat was required: the birch bark canoe. Shallow enough to traverse rivers, steady enough, in the right hands, to cross wind-blown lakes and light enough to be portaged around cataracts, the canoe made the northern woods an economic resource region tied to the world economy.

Regional History

The Hudson River conferred the great advantage on Dutch traders of unfettered access to the interior for ocean going vessels all the way to Fort Orange (Albany) 150 miles north of New Amsterdam (New York). Here, still well within the navigable section of the river, fur traders trapped the animals for pelts and then moved further north, trading for furs with various Amerindian tribes in the forested uplands. Raw materials – fur and lumber – remained the most important products well into the colonial era. By virtue of the fact that it was navigable by ocean going vessels well north of the port of New York, the river became the trading avenue of New Netherland. The Dutch chose to grant huge tracts along the banks of the river to 'patroons'; the British took over New Netherlands in 1664 but recognised Dutch land titles and largely maintained Dutch land policies, with the consequence that the valley remained dominated by great landholding families, who, unlike the southern gentlemen of the Tidewater region of Maryland and Virginia, found their chief economic interest in trade, and were perhaps less allied to an agriculture system and world view. As late as 1700 the patroons used their estates along the Hudson to produce agricultural commodities mainly for consumption within the colony; the export commodities were fur (the initial attraction), now supplemented by timber. They also had great difficulty attracting tenants who found opportunities to own land elsewhere. Lacking motivation, and at times short of capital or labour or both, the patroons did not press their lands into maximum use, accounting, perhaps for the area's innate conservatism and certainly for its slow pace of development during the colonial period. Vast tracts of land remained forested.

The limitations of the Hudson as it had been discovered were reached by the mid-eighteenth century. The fur trade had given out, and the peaceful Amerindian tribes like the Mahicans[3] died out, mostly from disease. Power among the Amerindians had shifted to the tribes further west. The real potential impact of the river as an avenue to the West was blocked throughout the colonial period by these powerful western tribes, known as the Iroquois and also as the Five Nations. The Iroquois became important as the geopolitics of North America heated up: the British were able to enlist them as allies in their long struggle with the French. The conflict between Britain and the Iroquois on the one side and the French and their Amerindian allies on the other created a balance of power that precluded rapid economic settlement or

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3. The Mahicans were an Algonquin tribe whose territories extended along the middle eastern seaboard and were generally known as the Delawares. The Mahicans were the subject of the first American novel widely read in Europe, James Fennimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).

development of the region. New York State was one of the flash points that locked North America into the same geopolitical struggles that always limited and contextualised European political life. Access to expansion and concerns about borders limited the Americans' vision – limitations the new federal state was established to rectify, as we have seen.

In the eighteenth century, the delay in development added to the impact of the manorial system produced a rather unique American geographic landscape. By the early nineteenth century, the gentlemen farmers were keen to introduce the latest soil conservation practices being discussed in Europe, including the use of manure, the practice of crop rotation and the planting of nitrogen-fixing crops. With investments in other enterprises and an enormous farming operation, large manors were in the province of gentlemen farmers. When the wheat crop was devastated by the Hessian fly, the large farmers could afford to plant far less valuable rye as a substitute and wait out the plague. Frontier farmers, by contrast, were wholly dependent on planting the most valuable of cash crops (wheat), which was typically planted repeatedly over the same ground year in and year out. Cash was needed for capital improvements; the typical small frontier farmer was thus engaged in a race to raise enough for capital improvements through maximum exploitation of land before soil exhaustion or other misfortunes of the volatile global market ruined them or forced them to move further west, where new cheap land opened up and the cycle repeated itself. The damage done by clearing the land and exposing the ploughed soil to wind and water is greatly exacerbated on lands with delicate ecologies marked by thin soils, steep topography or climatic extremes. In the case of the Hudson Valley, however, the ownership pattern inhibited settlement by land hungry small farmers, limiting the amount of marginal land that might have otherwise been cleared and preserving forested areas. After the defeat of the France (1763), Britain stood alone as the North American power. The demise of a balance of power between the European states deprived the Amerindians of their independence and though they briefly exploited the divisions between the home country and the colonists during the Revolutionary War, the great northern reserves of forest fell into European hands.

France's loss of Canada in 1763 and the achievement of independence for the US twenty years later meant that the geopolitical balance of power in the far north was smashed. The way to western settlement was opened and the exploitation of the river as an avenue for making those settled lands into New York's hinterland was achieved within a relatively short time. This meant that the river valley's backwardness, which attracted writers and artists, was in the

process of rapid transformation. Thus, even as the Hudson regional landscape imaginary was being born, the river was becoming an artery of commerce and economic growth.

The 1820s marked a watershed in the history of the region: the river became the first superhighway linking the old Northwest (now called the Middle West) to the East. The same time period also saw the beginning of a 150-year expansion of industry in old towns such as Newburgh, Poughkeepsie and Hudson. Cheap western grains flooded into New York, bringing ruinous competition for local farmers. The future for the Hudson Valley was agricultural decline, attenuated by what have turned out to be temporary successes in finding specialised farming niches including apple production and sheep grazing (Historic Hudson 2013).

Agricultural decline was more than compensated for by the exploitation of natural resources made accessible by the river: timber extraction, rural tanneries and industries in the rising towns along the river. But these new industries exacted a high price in pollution and resource exploitation.[4] The same river that would become the centre of a famed picturesque landscape was caught up in a resource rush: the Hudson's forests and its banks were the venue for a spike in economic growth that would last for a century.

From Land to Space

As we have seen in the last chapter, the relation to land (agriculture) was primary to the territorial integrity of the US. The country was ruralising by expanding west and in consequence of the War for Independence, while the opposite circumstance was shaping modern Britain, then finalising its systematic expul-

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4. After America's period of industrialisation waned by the mid-twentieth century, the Hudson region was badly polluted and largely abandoned. Capital investments in infrastructure (first the railroads and then highways) had long since displaced the river as primary transport system. As capital moved onward to secure economic growth, much of the Hudson's infrastructure had been left to rot. By the 1970s, the river towns had experienced extensive decay. Those few industries that remained like the infamous Hudson Falls and Fort Edward GE plants had recklessly polluted the river with PCBs; the river has yet to fully recover. Few resources were left to work with, except the intrinsic natural values of the river itself and the economic value of its proximity to New York City. The towns filled up with unemployed migrants from New York and began to suffer from urban decay and rising crime; they struggle now to reinvent themselves. At the time singer/songwriter Pete Seeger happened upon the idea of restoring a 19th century working sail boat, dubbed *Clearwater*, which became an embodiment of the spirit of the river as a place of work and celebration (Dunwell 2008: 270).

sion of the people from the land. In the 'westering' movement the American leaders willingly made the vast American lower middle class of mobile settlers the agents of change – the de facto policy makers of the fledgling American state. Their trek to the West was already giving rise to the myth of the frontier settlement. The Americans had not cultivated countryside in English sense, in which 'the creation of landscape for leisure and aesthetic enjoyment' had equal weight to agriculture and rural trade. By contrast, the countryside ideal that emerged in both the US and Canada 'has tended to value the settled rural landscape more as a symbol of agriculture progress' (Bunce 1994: 35–36). While this characterisation lops off the experimentation that we shall discuss, it is certainly a fair summary of the strongest understanding of landscape until the mid-nineteenth century.

Jefferson's pastoral farm ideal, which supported a neo-classical concept of territoriality, could not withstand the slow erosion of the integrity of land as it was converted into commodity, a process which converted territory into abstract space. The legacy of his Jeffersonian Republican Party was aborted by its putative successor, the Democratic Party; its main concern was to lay the groundwork for the economic development of the western and southern states in order for them to compete for influence with the established states of the Atlantic seaboard. The understanding of the matter of citizenship as the pursuit of the commonweal is a difficult enough matter to deal with, not to have the question of aesthetics add another layer of complexity to the issue. During his travels in America, Alexis de Tocqueville recorded many observations of the American character, but identification with landscape was not one of them. In fact, he thought that wild spaces and nature were primarily a European concern, of no interest to Americans. In *Democracy in America* he remarks, 'Europeans think a lot about the wild, open spaces of America, but the Americans themselves hardly give them a thought. … The American people see themselves as marching through wilderness, drying up marshes, diverting rivers, peopling the wilds and subduing nature' (quoted in White 1996: 121). The concern with politics and economics overshadowed everything else in American life. Arguably, a representative figure, such as the founder of the Democrats, General and then President (1829–1837), Andrew Jackson, was an important symbol of the national life. As the first president who claimed common origin amidst primitive conditions, he helped to fix the idea of the frontier as the reigning metaphor for the national landscape (Ward 1955).

The other important factor was the crushing of the conservative political alternative. Based on the mercantile elite, the Federalist Party, as we have

seen, had been reluctant to aggressively advance territorial claims and had even expressed misgivings at the kind of society created by the liberal land policies favoured by the agrarian party. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, however, advocates of mercantilism soon made peace with liberal agrarianism. The new 'National Republicans' absorbed both parties by combining policies favourable to protectionism for northern industries' territorial expansion. The Federalists became what I should call the 'party of republican memory'. They feared an ungovernable form of capitalism. (This, of course, is the theme of Adams's *The Education*). Justice John Marshall's failure to stop the eviction of the Creek Indians by the State of Georgia could stand for the political impotency of the Federalist notion of the republic of laws when confronted with the land hunger justified by Jacksonian democracy.

The spatial consequences of the American Revolution were clear: as the strategy for lifting millions out of poverty was land-extensive, the demands on resources increased in direct proportion to the numbers pursuing ownership. Insofar as the ties of place (which had only represented the restrictions and deprivations of the old order) abate, identification with territorial acquisition and 'natural' spatial freedom – the horizon, the open plain, the land without fences – will solidify, even though the purpose of such identification was, as Tocqueville pointed out, based on harvesting of resources. The problem lies when 'harvesting' becomes relentless exploitation. Furthermore, such spaces are subject to further social construction, becoming 'abstract space' – or the space of the evolving capitalist market. Thus 'American nature' was easily absorbed into the defining systems of American space – both the abstract space of the developing market and the territorial space of the federal state. At the same time, 'American space', had the virtue of being experienced by the people (the majority) as a form of liberation grounded in a heroic trek and part of a process of nation building. Rare was the critic who saw it all so clearly. The question posed is whether, or not, any source of value could be proposed in the face of the restlessness of man in flight from himself. More prosaically this often took the form of proposing some residual *space* of value, a conceptual space juxta-posed to the abstract space of utilitarian or instrumental value demanded by the developing capitalist economy and way of life. That a powerful tendency in American culture was to interpret these marginal spaces as set apart – a realm of 'nature' opposed to culture – reflected the main currents of socially defined space: a reflection of the dynamism of American capitalism and its ability to penetrate all spheres of the social world. Therefore bifurcation of culture and nature, to the extent that it existed, was not merely some consequence of a

literary ideology or a miscreant environmental consciousness, but rather reflected the nature of American space itself.[5] To combat that tendency required not criticism but a ground for renewal and reconstruction that could begin, perhaps, in a landscape aesthetic. The aesthetic achievement of a conceptual landscape, or landscapes, as cultural expression was grounded in subjectivity disappointed by modernity and sceptical to Enlightenment reason. The creation of green space requires the application of the sensibilities earned through a greater attention to landscape to higher public purposes – the project Frederic Law Olmsted would begin.

The Landscape Turn

The turn to landscape in the US, as manifest in the rise of landscape painting, gardening and landscape architecture, is probably most often attributed to transnational influences, particularly the continuing British influence, and as an outgrowth of urbanisation and national economic developmentalism. Both the growth of a larger and larger leisured class and the freeing of land near cities from subsistence provided the geographical foundation that made the growth of the imaginary possible. Philadelphia and New York both retained strong connections to Britain in the period after independence and seemed to offer wonderful opportunities for aspiring British and French picturesque artists. But the relation of audience to landscape was quite muddled in the US and could not be fitted into a European context. While not disputing these trends, I would invite consideration of an additional explanation: landscape reflected a search for a visual order and accompanying sense of community found lacking in urban life, especially after the eclipse of urbanism described in Chapter 1, but also in consideration of the westward movement of its population.

There is no question that the Hudson was a substantial reason for the emergence of New York as the premier city in the US, and at the same time the city's wealth, increasing population and appeal to tourists from other parts of the US helped reinvent the river as a landscape of exception to everyday life that transported visitors back in time and into a conceptual space. Tourism reflected a craving on the part of the upper and middle classes to enjoy picturesque landscapes, indulge the senses, imagine the past and re-think the present. However facile these thoughts and feelings might have been, they reflect the beginning

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5.   Dismissing the national does not solve this problem. The global sphere becomes a sphere of abstract space tied not to borders, nations, regions, towns or cities, but to the consuming global audience.

of an attempt to account for the growing urbanisation and commercialisation of the world and the concomitant decline of urbanism. The city becomes less appealing if seen mainly as an engine for accumulating wealth, rather than a place for spending it – a topic I take up in some detail in the next chapter. This is an important consideration: before the theorising of what landscape is or is not, it is useful to see how it functions in concrete circumstances. Here the main point is that nostalgia is also the means of enchantment, which lays the groundwork for an aesthetic.

In part, this interest was the consequence of its geographic landscape, as we have seen, but it was also an imaginative landscape created by local colourists like Washington Irving and James Fennimore Cooper, the first widely read American authors (Stone 2012: 25–26). Irving's *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty,* published in 1809, ostensibly a history of New Netherland, was actually the satirical deliberations of a gentry-man on the follies of Enlightenment reason and in particular doctrines of political improvement but, as was perhaps appropriate to such a work, much was said about historical events and local customs. The topic was somewhat rarified at the time because Irving was speaking through the voice of the attributed author and narrator, one Diedrich Knickerbocker, about the Old Dutch way of life that stood apart from 'Yankeedom' and was at the point of the book's publication already 150 years in the past. The British took over New Netherland by 1664 and much of the Dutch customs and spoken language had already been lost. Importantly, the *History of New-York* was more of a repossession or re-invention of a lost past, a tendency in Romantic writing, which applies even more strongly to Irving's next important work, a series of essays and stories released in instalments in 1819 and 1820. *The Sketchbook* recalls remote and long forgotten 'cloves' and 'hollows' of the Hudson region, associated with the old Dutch settlement, by name, and made magical by telling of European fairytales in American clothing, as in the famous stories 'Rip Van Winkle' and the 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'. Irving gives us a faintly mysterious and highly nostalgic version of American soil, only twenty years after the Revolution. The European reference suggests both the colonial past dating back to the Dutch settlement and the European picturesque landscape setting: natural landscape features in a settled agricultural region. It was a blend of nature and artifice in the minds of those elaborating the aesthetic. Responding to the barbs of 'English Writers on America', Irving manages to set out the task taken on by the landscapists of the Hudson River, that of defining an American character and (by inference) an American landscape:

The Hudson Valley: Landscape

> That such men should give prejudiced accounts of America is not a matter of surprise. The themes it offers for contemplation are too vast and elevated for their capacities. The national character is yet in a state of fermentation: it may have its frothiness and sediment, but its ingredients are sound and wholesome (Irving 1892/1819–1820: 46).

If the American character was not yet formed, perhaps the consolidation of socially privileged classes through the mechanism of tourism might lay the groundwork for the definition of a suitable conceptual space – the landscape of the Hudson region. Dutch in origin, only partly Yankee in constitution, commercial in profession and cosmopolitan in faith, New York made a good port of departure. Geographically it was close to the centre – accessible from southern ports – and perhaps the first American centre of technical innovation: Robert Fulton's 146-foot paddleboat, designed for opening up America's extensive inland waterways to comfortable travel. The first important tests for his new style steamer, eventually to have its greatest impact on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, were conducted on the Hudson; launched in 1807, the boat took forty-odd passengers from New York to Albany in 32 hours. This was a significant development in extending the ease of travel and encouraging more travel.

It is important to note that the steamer and river travel did not invent urban outdoor recreation. Mountainous areas adjacent to New York had long been sought after for health purposes. These areas were understood as 'resorts', effectively retreats from the heat, epidemics and unpleasantness of crowded urban life, especially during summer. Those with the means sought to find an 'agreeable retreat with fine air and good accommodations' (Dwight 1828: 11). But travel by stage was difficult and also limited the range of the traveller; resorts were suitable for summer holidays and the typical traveller stayed put once he arrived. The coming of the steamboat changed all of this. Resorts along the Hudson benefitted and a new series of hotels was built in the adjacent Catskill Mountains. But steamboats made possible a new kind of tourist traffic, as the Hudson became a convenient highway into the interior of the north woods. One could contemplate excursions to more distant destinations and tours of the length of the river landscape, often allowing for multiple stopping points to gain access to scenic spots or conduct tours on foot, or by carriage. The steamers, or at least the larger ones, were equipped with an upper deck, called the 'promenade', which was shaded by awnings and offered views of the passing scenery. By the 1820s many of the steamboat landings adjacent to famous scenic venues, such as those in the Catskill Mountains, were connected

by stage to interior towns where carriages could be hired to take the traveller into the mountains: 'after gratifying his curiosity and taste with ["rude"] scenes like these, the traveller will return to [the town of] Catskill to take the next steam boat; and by making the necessary arrangements he can proceed up the river with very little delay' (Dwight 1828: 11,13–14, 27). It was even possible to contemplate daylong trips for those who had neither time nor money for longer excursions. Thus the steamboat both extended the number of people who could benefit from access to rural retreats and opened a relatively large region to tourism. The Catskills and the Adirondacks were made accessible. Lake Champlain and the White Mountains to the east could be reached. These were the backwaters of the Hudson River and constituted what we might call a 'scenic watershed' of early national art – a fertile ground in which to pursue 'the longing for nature' (Ladino 2012) through aesthetics. The Hudson also had its promoters who could assure readers that the scenic delights were also important cultural markers of identity. The Hudson as 'America's Rhine' became a twentieth century commonplace, but I find the analogy made as early as the mid-nineteenth century in Theodore Dwight's *American Magazine*: 'The Rhine has its castled crags, its vine-clad hills, and ancient villages; the Hudson has its wooded mountains, its rugged praecipes, its green undulating shores – a natural majesty and an unbounded capacity for improvement by art'. Though lacking in the ruins that were seen as necessary to picturesque, Dwight's referencing of 'flourishing towns' and 'neat villas' reflective of the 'hand of taste at work' is meant to reassure the reader of the suitability of the region for the picturesque construction of a landscape imaginary in America (Dwight 1847: 108).

What Dwight's work shows is that landscape appreciation was moving from an exclusive activity of the European upper class to a middle class American preoccupation. The Hudson and its territories reached by steamer was its most important locale, a fact amplified by the Hudson River school of landscape painting. But there was another important influence at work: the horticulturalist and landscape architect, Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852). Downing's farm near the Hudson at Newburgh, New York, was about sixty miles or 100 kilometres north of New York City. From there, Downing began to collect and grow native plants to be used for ornamental purposes. His landscape gardens married English garden designs and techniques to American conditions and he became the most important advocate of gardening and landscape, famed in the Hudson and nationally. His attributes his strong feelings about nature to a rural orientation derived from a strong sense of heritage: 'As a people descended from the English stock, we inherit much of the ardent love of rural life and its

pursuits' (Downing quoted in Major 1997: 21). But the countryside he loved was both rooted in locality and inferred a strong sense of nationality. Downing was an early eco-regionalist in his preference for native species[6] and he was inclined toward broad agricultural landscapes – for aesthetic reasons, certainly, but also for moral ones: a landscape of farms belonging to the dream of an agrarian republic. As importantly, he thought of landscape gardens as 'pleasure grounds' not primarily of large landed estates, but of simple 'republican cottages': a landscape garden will impart a character of 'simplicity, dignity, grace, elegance, gaiety [and] chasteness', he argues (Downing 1967/1841: 57). Thus the Hudson Valley landscape ideal was not a simple restatement of an established aesthetic but an adaptation that supported the development of the American landscape garden and the suburban sensibility that went along with it. Trees were essential. Downing refers to the felling of the forest as a 'mania' that has had a lasting effect 'even in those portions of the Atlantic states where such labour should be for ever silenced' (Downing 1967/1841: 315). He conceived the idea of a great park on the outskirts of New York, a proposal that became Central Park. He also designed the first landscape gardens for the national mall in Washington.[7] Downing was important, not only because he made the case for the domestication of landscape and the promotion of vernacular architecture necessary to the development of an American sense of place, but because he worked out the broader ethos implied by a landscape aesthetic. The 'republican cottage' was as important as the scenic landscape of the region in forging the beginnings of conservationism and landscape architecture in the US. He also endorsed the hegemony of the picturesque as the foundation of landscape aesthetics in America and his practice confirmed its eclectic character.[8]

Landscape as Environmental Orientation and Political Inclination

The popular representations of the Hudson River and its environs became the first locus of an alteration in the conceptual (ideal) space of urbanites, an early indication of a shift from urbanism to what I should like to call an 'exurban orientation'. The representation of Hudson River and its valley in writing

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6. He was not, however, a purist in this regard.

7. His plans were never executed; Congress was unwilling to authorise the funds.

8. Downing was so rooted in picturesque theory that his work distinguished between 'picturesque' and 'beautiful' without acknowledging that he meant picturesque beauty, as opposed to classical beauty; see Downing 1967/1841: 58–61. From a classical perspective, picturesque beauty was imperfect and flawed, see Conron 2000: 4.

and painting began to re-establish an idea of a visual moral order on a new foundation – not urban, not social, not strictly rural, but more exurban and ambulatory. It was also comparable, if different, to contemporary northern European national conceptions of landscape. For me the key is the environmental orientation of the perception of landscape in contrast to that of urbanism. I concur with Cosgrove in his judgment that the 'idea of landscape' (1986) was at first essentially an outgrowth of Italian Renaissance humanism that was first and foremost an architectural development at the scale of the piazza as an assemblage of buildings. Architecture supplied the visual principles of geometry and order for European urbanism, which became more systematic as cities grew and as rulers accumulated more power. The early Renaissance architecture was based on civic practices rooted in the structure of the medieval town and the Catholic humanism of the late Middle Ages (Luccarelli 2015). Beginning with the remaking of Rome in the sixteenth century, and culminating with the complete redevelopment of Paris in the nineteenth century, the older classicist and humanist perspective yielded design principles then applied on a city-wide scale: the creation of boulevards, vistas and memorials became the tools for the remaking of the city as a kind of landscape. The visual principles and political means for their enactment implied an architectural orientation toward order and hierarchy. 'Knowledge' (*wissenschaft*), as opposed to practice, became the guide to planning and architecture – the property of the rising architectural schools linked to the political power of the centralised Kingdom and thus the State. In short, the political orientation of landscape urbanism came to reflect the social and economic organisation of nineteenth European capitalism, in which Paris, for instance, was the centre of a colonial empire with strong central organisation and a corporatist economic policy. This conception of urbanism and the accompanying ideas of landscape remain the kind of default thinking in the world today, apparent in the concept of 'global cities' and official versions of the European 'green city', where smart buildings, technocratic control of waste and multiculturalism have now displaced the old classical and colonialist understanding of urban landscape; the new version is an even more encompassing imperium than the old. The US contribution, as suggested above, was the conception of the 'technological sublime': seen from a height and broadcast by Hollywood around the world, modern New York became the quintessential urban-centred landscape with tall buildings and bridges visually competing with the landform – the harbours, rivers, hills and coastlines – and subordinating it to shapes of human invention (Nye 1996).

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While the Americans developed the skyscraper and pioneered the use of the suspension bridge, thereby making critical contributions to twentieth century urbanism and the conception of the urban-centred landscape, in many respects the US remained on the side lines: in the US the option of developing European style urbanism, and therefore of maintaining the city as the visual and cultural focal point, was foreclosed by the limitations on state planning imposed by the US Constitution and equally the pressures for expansion engendered by the emerging American form of capitalism that made the creation of established urban system very difficult. Thus, the historical conditions for the development of US urbanism remain relevant to this day; the consequence was that a rather different style of urbanism emerged in the nineteenth century that made it difficult to produce liveable cities (a theme to be explored in Chapter 5); a second consequence was the interest in developing an exurban landscape tradition. Suffice it to say here that any conception of landscape has much to do not only with the social organisation of space, but with its territorial form as well; as space is organised and conceptualised, it entails different facets of the 'environmental unconscious' (Buell 2001: 25–26). As we saw in Chapter 2, tendencies set in motion by rapid territorial expansion of the US created, in effect, a different environmental orientation. Downing's work reflected an early, and never fully discarded, synthesis between republican political values and an exurban environmental orientation that belies New York's influence for all of its spectacular displays of technological prowess.

The historical dimensions of the shaping of landscape as a normative ideal are relevant to the theoretical statements about landscape that have, in my view, mired the term in unnecessary ideological confusion. The question of what the interest in landscape represents is a vexing problem and one must certainly consider the social aspirations of the viewer. Nonetheless, I am not particularly convinced of positions such as that put forth by Allen Carlson for whom landscape is a 'model' that reads over environment and separates the viewer from the environment (2002). We can trace the origin of this perspective back to John Barrell, who published his great work on eighteenth century poet John Clare in 1972. Barrell understood landscape representation in purely structural terms as an abstract model of classical derivation imposed on the land to the detriment of the understanding of and identity with particular places. He must be correct in asserting that landscape cannot be worked out purely in aesthetic terms – as if the perception of the object could grant the perceiver a subjectivity independent of the social world and its political appropriations. That is impossible, an illusion of the same sort that defines social groups as

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possessed of an independence from the social world that they do not possess. On the other hand, we should not be so easily dismissive of landscape aesthetics, assuming that the position of the viewer is determined by a single set of coded meanings.

It is all too convenient to suppose that landscape is a closed semiotic system that determines the experience of the viewer. Not an original thought to say the least: it impels the idea of landscape as an object of a hybrid nature-culture or 'second nature' produced through and incorporating human agency (Latour 1999). This approach can be defined in relation to an older, and not unrelated, German concept of the 'cultural landscape'.[9] The advantage is that the solutions it represents must always be grounded in various anthropologies of culture-nature. The disadvantage of the perspective is its essentialism: landscape is qua landscape, but landscape also responds to external forces. It seems to reflect a 'European' view in the sense that it is written from the perspective of people with a long settled way of life in a relatively geologically stable region. Neither of these conditions applies to North America, especially North America west of the Mississippi River.[10] Indeed the confusion of time frames, as well as denial of the impact of geophysical variation, is inherent in this perspective. An anthropological conception of culture-nature ('longue dureé') must be made consistent with an historical one, as Braudel well understood. Today we might put it in slightly different terms. What happens to landscape when nature walks on the stage of history as the Little Ice Age (1400–1800) or the effects of the explosion of Krakatau at the end of the nineteenth century? One cannot gauge these prospects politically as long as they are locked in deep time. They must also be accounted for in historical time and, as culture becomes ever more embedded in the structure of nature, due to the increasing impact of human activities, nature-capitalism walks on the stage of history as global warming.

Therefore I would argue that landscape's associated aesthetics and meanings are also subject to the changing conditions, political and geographical,

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9. The German for landscape, 'landschaft' generally refers to the forces, both physical and social, that are land-shaping or land-forming. Olwig 2002: 23–24 has traced the word 'landschaft' to a social practice of community identification and self-governance. The *landschaft* was a woodland community given legal status. The word was extended then from society to setting; generally a 'landschaft' consisted of a few scattered dwellings enclosed by a rude fence. This concept is important, but historically it must be contrasted not only with the ideological interpretation of landscape, but also with the ecological-social conception of landscape developed in this chapter.

10. One well-known theme of American nature writing is the transformation of assumptions about nature in the move from the East to the West.

of landscape itself. We have already seen that landscape is territorial and that national territoriality differs in its effects from the urban territory. One does not supersede the other, but the shift to national territoriality on a continental scale was extremely important to the changing character of landscape in the US. The second point is that landscape reflects geological and biological aspects; it is as much a geo-physical entity as a political one. Knowledge of landscape changes through science, but science is impelled to look for new explanations in response to new experiences: the impacts of desertification, volcanic activity, soil sterility, flooding, fire and a dozen other conditions that arise with the collision between human use and natural systems.

As landscape changes, it generates varying and then layered interpretations of space as political metaphor. Thus landscape became invested in shifting and conflicting understandings of the political. Landscape can become associated with open space, which becomes freedom from contingency, freedom from external threat (Crozier 1996, cited in Ch. 2). I have already laid out the basis for this process of conflicting meaning by suggesting that in the US the place of landscape began a century-long shift outward from the increasingly difficult urban to the more hopeful 'exurban' landscapes, a process that began really as soon the gaining of independence. The impact is two-fold. Questions of the politics and identity, of policy and imagination – civic awareness, obligations to the commonweal and questions of fairness and equality, as well as the possibilities for individual development and creativity – are played out in terms of the environmental sphere. The second aspect reflects attempts to interpret and frame this broader environmental sphere. As the opportunity for urban people to travel outside the cities pulled people from the burgeoning cosmopolises of London or New York to the 'wilderness' of New York State, the possibility of seeing the surround in a new way was opened. What precisely, besides inchoate longings of the environmental unconscious, were they experiencing? This question invited, indeed required, the reframing of the environmental sphere. In this process concepts of both landscape and nature became important. Indeed late eighteenth century English artists and writers had already reframed the meaning of picturesque landscape in more democratic terms and in light of an emerging understanding of nature, as we shall see. This process continued in the Romantic period in Britain (Bate 1991) and would carry on in the US through the concept of park and wilderness. In all of this, the invention of 'nature' as a sphere of creativity and imagination in which biological processes are understood as deeply intertwined with human consciousness was essential. 'Nature' was the key to the development of a new environmental awareness.

English Picturesque

The picturesque aesthetic reflected a shift in the imagination toward landscapes outside the city, associated with Arcadian themes, but also with the general exurban orientation that came as one response to eighteenth century urbanisation (massive urban growth). 'In its initial phase the aesthetics of nature pointed toward the traditional landed values of the country against the city' and was associated with country Whig politics. But by the early nineteenth century the rise of picturesque landscape gardening resulted in a change: 'the landed gentry increasingly appeared as the representatives of luxury against the working poor' (Townsend 1997: 367). Natural-appearing clumps and belts of trees, the irregular topography of the field, the curvilinear shorelines of lakes created by impounding streams and the importance of vistas were wedded to classical architecture and statuary. Innocuously referred to as 'landscape furnishings', they actually played an extremely significant role, linking picturesque to the continental 'idea of landscape' through symbolism. The appeal of landscape as idea, Denis Cosgrove tells us, is its ability to project geographical balance and cultural continuity, despite what amounts to underlying incommensurate elements. Indeed landscape is best understood as a *Zusammenheng* – that is, a sphere or field that holds together heterogenous phenomena through a general organising scheme. The schemes vary (Cosgrove 2006: 52). The landscape architect, 'Capability' Brown's landscape park at Blenheim (begun in 1764) is an excellent example of the adaptation of the classically-inspired urban landscape to a rural setting; it is heavy on symbolism and makes strong use of the picturesque beautiful in place of classical beauty. Given the setting on a private estate with an emphasis on classical reference as symbolic of cultural authority, the early picturesque was clearly Tory in its implications (Townsend 1997: 367). It was this version of picturesque and its linkage to the gentrification of the English countryside that prompted Raymond Williams to conclude that picturesque participated in a myth of 'natural economy' organised around the seasonal rhythms, perpetrated by an upper class to cloak a process of systemic depopulation and reorganisation of the actual working countryside through enclosure acts; John Barrell made Williams's observations the basis of his study of landscape (see above). Williams's critique of the natural economy must be read in the actual spatial context of the picturesque landscape garden itself, namely the rise of the country estates of an old aristocracy reinvigorated with middle class money.

A second picturesque, however, arose at the end of the eighteenth century, finding expression in the writings of William Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Richard

Payne Knight. The rise of a new middle class, the ability of larger numbers to travel and the marking of the 'national space' are the primary contexts for its development. Gilpin's travels were to overlooked regions – overlooked at the time because they were not considered worthy of wealthy travellers who strongly preferred the continental Grand Tour. Picturesque appealed to the emerging middle classes, both to their pocketbooks and their patriotism. The effect was a popularisation of the British landscape (Humphreys 2005: 7). In this respect, picturesque was inextricably connected to middle class tourism and, as Ann Bermingham points out, its popularity 'was suited to the pockets and moral sensibilities of the middle classes' (quoted in Townsend 1997: 365). What's critical here is that Gilpin and Price were after something quite unlike the first picturesque: the green swathes of the great estates that were English versions of Florentine landscape architecture for the design of a beautiful countryside. By contrast, Gilpin's aesthetic was designed in large part to preserve those aspects of the landscape left aside and make them a 'place of value' (Smith 2002) by developing an aesthetic ethos that refers not to classical and continental culture, but to the folk past. Indeed picturesque already entertained the motif of anti-modernisation; at the very least it can be stated with certainty that Price was motivated by the felt need to protect the landscape from destruction wrought by landscape architects of the estate building craze (Price 1796: xi).

In general, the new picturesque occupied a middle ground, pulling together a number of unlike aesthetic and social impulses, between 'pleasurable' and 'benevolent' feelings elicited by classical beauty and adumbrated by the first picturesque, a democratic sensibility toward the occupiers of the land and a tendency toward the 'awe' and even 'privation' of sublime (Conron 2000: 18). I shall examine these elements in some detail, but first I do not wish to give the impression that somehow picturesque after Gilpin and Price was reliably democratic. Indeed, I would say that, while landscape – however conceived – implies community of some sort, it is an unstable measure, because the aesthetic and social implications of landscape ideals have always been in danger of running away from one another. It is this instability that permits reductive readings.

Picturesque aesthetics were strongest when tied to description; weakest when concerned with abstract principles that drew attention to perception in itself. William Gilpin was an 'explorer' of places, as his little book, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc., Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (2005/1782), shows. In part the purpose was mimetic: a reflection of a geographic landscape that is both open and varied, a landscape that is one of the least wooded of Western Europe with only six per cent of the

land forested, though these trees are rarely in forests proper: 'The eye seems ever on the verge of a forest, which is, as it were by enchantment, continually changing into enclosures and hedgerows' wrote an eighteenth century observer of the Norfolk area (quoted in Lowenthal 1964: 311). Openness in landscapes reflects the ubiquity of scenery. It is an inhabited landscape in which very little land is in the public domain and to an American eye it may appear 'altogether so tamed, trimmed, and humanised as to give the impression of a vast ornamental farm' (325). One could well say with Lawrence Buell that 'it may be the case … that "in most countries the countryside has become the embodiment of the nation" at least of its traditional essence' (2001: 143). Picturesque, then, was perhaps less the creator of the countryside than a medium of its transmission.

In the link between valued place and public (national) identification, picturesque proceeds in virtue of our affections, building an emotive attachment to the seen world defined in terms of line, form and light (Conron 2000: 3). This affirmative attitude was weakened by an often-tedious attentiveness to a set of 'rules' for picturesque observation and representation. In itself rock 'bleak, naked and unadorned' lacks beauty and interest, but 'tint it with mosses and lichens … adorn it with shrubs and hanging herbage' and it becomes picturesque (Gilpin 2005/1782: 27). Formal adherence to picturesque rules, e.g. the use of 'screens' to frame the picture and the anticipation of further scenes around the river's bend, has the effect of conveying a real interest leading toward an intimacy with the earth, an opening that draws us ever deeper into its mysteries. Gilpin tells us he is not interested in remoteness and isolation, per se, and he certainly is not interested in the Georgic, i.e. livestock, crops or agricultural labour and livelihood. His rules also *proscribe* wild scenery if such scenes amount to little more than a 'shapeless waste' lacking the 'form of landscape' (56); cultivating interest in landscape requires depicting 'sidescreens', observed or created, that focus attention on a prospect, creating layers of perception necessary to pique the curiosity of the viewer (25). By all means, avoid the 'heaviness' that arises from too much 'continuity' created by the lay of the land itself (27).

Seen from another perspective, Gilpin's rules actually refer to moments of perception. It is a view that is not so far removed from old empiricist theory that attempted to explain observation as a movement of stimuli from the object perceived to the human brain, a theory which may be philosophically naïve but retains the power of the real. It might also be likened to the relation between perception and the attainment of gestalt. After glancing at specific scenes, the subject suddenly realises an overwhelming feeling of wellbeing, balance and inclusion. The world – inner and outer – pulls together. It is in this later sense

that picturesque representation, and theory, began to move toward what Buell calls the structuring of the 'environmental unconscious' in which the 'domain of the consciously "noticed"' is brought into relation to the '"domain of the unnoticed"' (2001: 25). The unseen text of connectivity of self and world, if you will, is concealed by topos. Continuity of the land conceals variety; the land's openness conceals intricacy. If we can say that Gilpin is unintentionally opening topos to the environmental unconscious by drawing attention to the hidden aesthetic qualities of landscape, we might also see that picturesque could entail a number of connections between aesthetics and an ecological understanding of environment, between tameness and wildness and, most importantly, between perception and reflection. For what does reflection on the environmental unconscious entail if not the conscious development of an ecological subjectivity or, to use the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss's term, an 'ecological self'.[11] For ecological understanding to emerge, it helped enormously that landscape could be seen reflecting the geo-physical real and more than a reflection of human organising principles, just as it helped to understand that there was a relation to landscape that was sensed, not viewed: a knowledge that begins with the senses and not the mind. Finally, 'nature' meant that the topos and the flora of 'unimproved' areas were worthy of aesthetic contemplation: that is what 'wild' meant. Changing tastes reflected change in perception: 'Until the middle of the eighteenth century, English connoisseurs preferred landscapes well domesticated', but after 1750 there began a shift toward wildness (Myers 1988). As Isis Brook puts it, picturesque developed an aesthetic for wildness, converting smooth landscapes into rough ones, marking ruins as evidence of 'nature indifferent to human likes and dislikes and just doing its own thing' (Brook 2008: 115–116). To conceive of wildness engages a reappraisal of human perspectives. For example, as long as landscape was measured solely in human terms it was difficult to understand that principle of limits. When picturesque grants the aesthetic attribute of grandeur it is expressing nature as a principle of value and power: 'When water is exhibited in *small quantities* it wants the agitation of a torrent, a cascade, or some other adventitious circumstance to give it consequence; but when it is spread out in the *reach of some capital river*, in a *lake*, or in an arm of the sea, it is then able to support its own dignity: in the former case it aims at beauty; in the latter at grandeur' (Gilpin 2005/1782: 53–54, emphasis in Gilpin's text). Grandeur is the principle of sovereignty beneath the attributes of the sublime: size as in the seeming (then) infinity of the ocean, uncertainty in a bank shrouded in mist (30) and energy of a verti-

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11.   My thanks to Linda Rugg 2015.

cal cliff (33) – all could impart the impression of singularity and power. These reflect the raw, elemental forces of the geosphere (earthquakes, volcanoes) and the biosphere (plagues) that are beyond human control, but more specifically beyond the control of the elite classes that dominate decision-making.

American Landscape View Books

Not surprisingly, given the urban audience for landscape appreciation, picturesque was an 'import' brought in through the port cities of the old Atlantic America. It was intended as recognition of the country's passage into the ranks of the 'civilised world' as an aspect of national identity: 'In no quarter of the globe are the majesty and loveliness of nature more strikingly conspicuous than in America. … Striking however and original as the features of nature undoubtedly are in the United States, they have rarely been made the subjects of pictorial delineation. Europe abounds with picturesque views of its scenery … while America only, of all the countries of civilized man, is unsung and undescribed' (Hill 1820: np). Its product at the time was so-called 'landscape view books' which took the form of a bound volume consisting of series of prints accompanied by text. Customers often bought the books on subscription, receiving the prints as a series followed by the completed volume at the end. The first of such books published in the US, *Picturesque Views* (1820), though beautifully drawn and printed, reflected difficulties in finding suitable subjects. Landscape was promoted in the book's introduction as a cultural heritage, but that ran head on into the dynamism of American environmental and civic spaces.

Natural scenery served as a backdrop for the national drama, particularly two aspects of nation creation: the American Revolutionary war and the drive for settlement of the continent. Prints included a camp scene at night gathered around the fire near Fayetteville, Arkansas; the 'Burning of Savannah' (Georgia), in all likelihood a depiction of the cataclysmic fire of 11 January 1820 when a sizable proportion of the city burnt down, and a series of views of rivers, falls, ports and dams from New York and Boston to Virginia that represent what the artists deemed noteworthy scenery. There is really very little in the way of identifying the natural geography as a system, natural or aesthetic – rather a collection of prints representing important scenes scattered across the country. This might be contrasted with the far more successful English picturesque as exemplified by *Observations of the River Wye,* which investigates and represents

a watershed and an old region distant from modern commercial Britain. Gilpin draws the traveller back into a countryside that locates the nation.

Picturesque Views isn't anything like that, even if the idea of framing the national through landscape representation was shared with English picturesque. The first print, entitled 'Washington's Sepulchre Mount Vernon' was accompanied by the following note: 'this rude and decaying tomb of the most pure and faultless of patriots has long been the subject of reproach to his countrymen. … The true monument however of the patriot is his country' (Hill 1820: np). Washington symbolised the American project, but the effect of the Revolution was to forget the past and to replace monuments with dreams of golden spires – even the recent past was of little interest. The Hudson Valley was something of an exception in this regard, as we shall see. *Hudson River portfolio* was a commodity that participated in these broader commercial and cultural contexts, but it stood at the beginning of a process by which 'landscape tourism' became a setting for turning a commiodity into a cultural artefact produced to satisfy the aspirations of an educated audience (Bedell 2002: 87). Within this contested context, the aesthetics of picturesqueness made possible a conceptual landscape through which a visual order becomes a commentary on the development of abstract space.

One sees it not only in the *Hudson River portfolio*'s prints, but especially in the accompanying narrative by John Agg. There is a strong concern with national identity, and with geo-historical and aesthetic meanings of the landscape. Landscape narrates a past, both historical and poetic, and its aesthetic is very much concerned with embracing as well as contextualising wildness. It is a response not merely to the tastes of its viewers for consumption but the contradictions in the quest to turn landscape consumption into a visual order in the context of the forces of abstract space transforming the river into a highway of commerce and industry.

Down River

Landscape's first important emergence as an aesthetic ideal in New York grew in response to a consumer demand – a demand predicated on the increased mobility of the middle classes as transport became more effective and cheaper. It might also been seen as increasingly compensatory as the process of urbanisation transformed towns into proto- and then full-blown industrial cities. The 'highway' takes us from a world dominated by a city that had become an important workshop and chief port of a vast and growing nation-state, a city

that had grown from a population of 23,000 in 1786 to 123,000 in 1820 (Lewis 2005:153), into its vast hinterlands; the first of these 'highways' were waterways. If cities could not develop a visual identity for the citizens, the city-region remained nonetheless the driver of space and spatial innovation, as vast networks of economic interdependency were being woven across the continent. This changed everything about relation to the visible world, except the long-standing wish to find a stable relation to it – now through an idea of landscape.

Drawn by William Guy Wall[12] and engraved by John Hill,[13] *Hudson River portfolio* made picturesque relevant to American conditions. It really was the first successful American landscape book, opening new ground for understanding American identity. The book was also technically brilliant; it used the very popular aquatint technique which combined the advantages of engraving, permitting the production of multiple prints, with the visual qualities of watercolour.[14] The book took the form of a serial, that is to say that the prints were released to subscribers sequentially between 1821 and 1825. There are 22 prints with accompanying text by John Agg. The book is more than a

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12. Wall was born in Dublin and received formal training in watercolours there; he emigrated in 1818, was active in artistic circles in New York and worked continuously in New York until 1828, before moving to New England and returning to Ireland in 1836 or 1837. The sketches for the *HR Portfolio* were composed on a trip he took in the summer of 1820 (Myers 1988: 188–90).

13. English-born, John Hill emigrated to US in 1816 at the age of 46, settling in Philadelphia; he was accomplished in the aquatint method of printing. He started with a series of magazine plates of Richmond and York Springs, PA, moving on to 'Picturesque Views of American Scenery' after paintings by Joshua Shaw. Much coarser, more open grain technique reflects his work at its best (according to Frank Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art*, 1912). He relocated to New York for the *Hudson River portfolio* work based on watercolors by W.G. Wall. The popularity of aquatint waned and Hill was forced to an early retirement in 1836 on a 'lonely upland farm' (Malone 1943: 41).

14. 'An aquatint is created by etching sections, rather than lines, of a plate in order to create areas of uniform tone. An aquatint is prepared by applying resin or a similar ground to a metal plate, which is then heated, thus adhering the ground to the metal. This gives a roughness or grain to the plate which adds texture to the image. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath, which bites or etches the plate and creates areas that hold the ink. The design is created with gradations of tone achieved through repeated acid baths combined with varnish used to stop out areas of lighter tone. Aquatint is an intaglio process, so prints made in this manner will have a plate mark. Aquatinting, with its areas of tone, was often used to duplicate the feel of a watercolour. Some etching was frequently used in an aquatint print to create linear elements in the image. Aquatints were invented by Jean Baptiste Le Prince around 1768, but became especially popular among British printmakers in the first part of the nineteenth century' (Philadelphia Print Shop 2008).

collection of scenic views. *Hudson River portfolio* is arranged sequentially in accordance with the river as its flows downstream toward New York. Presumably to the subscribers to the series, if not the authors themselves, the relation of landscape to national identity is of concern, or at least provides an expected backdrop to the presentation of the art.

'At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Hudson Valley was defined not just by the landscape, but by a series of localities where people lived and worked' (Schuyler 2012: 3). It is these locales that *Hudson River portfolio* turns into a series of scenes consisting of farms, milldams, towns, but also forest edges, waterfalls and groves given a narrative unity as a journey or passage southward from the upper reaches of the river to the sea. It is perhaps the first significant American expression of a regional landscape, identifying a bio-geographical and cultural watershed – and in this sense can be seen as an exercise in place-making, though the sensibility of place takes the form of a travelogue accompanying a collection ('portfolio') of prints. Movement as perspective on surroundings opens a set of relations between people and places grasped only unreflectively in the drawings and accompanying text, that become, upon consideration, the basis for the development of ecological understanding, especially within the twentieth century framework of bioregionalism developed by writers like Peter Berg, Raymond Dasmann, Gary Snyder and Robert Thayer, among others. The reciprocal relations in biology point to the movement of plants and animals along corridors, between edges and within watersheds; in human terms it is human settlements that unconsciously mirror their environment, and are able later to adapt to and complement the topography, watershed and natural flora and fauna of the region. Interestingly enough, despite the modern pressures toward the homogenisation and denaturing of space whereby intensive land use has transformed the corridor between Boston and Washington, D.C. into what the geographer Jean Gottman famously called 'megalopolis', the Hudson Valley, though facing increasing development pressures of its own, seems to have had the capacity to retain its own identity. For reasons of its geology and physical geography, the Hudson Valley is a perfect region in this sense: large enough to be viewed from afar and isolated enough to be distinct from surrounding areas. Beneath the veneer of bioregional affectation expressed in the apparently seamless transitions between wild and acculturated nature, between indigenous species and cultivated ones, between rural and urban landscapes, lie

a set of binary oppositions: (1) wildness versus cultivation and (2) the sensual landscape versus the civic landscape.[15]

Beauty and the Beast

*Figure 3.1. **The Falls at Luzerne**, plate 1 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), engraving, (engraved in 1820 and published in 1821–1825) from The Library Company of Philadelphia. 'The large house on the rock belongs to Mr. Rockwell, a gentleman of property, and a magistrate; the buildings on the edge of the Fall are two saw mills, which bear about them the marks of considerable **antiquity**.'*

The first plate depicting the 'Little Falls at Luzerne' is of interest chiefly because it establishes the picturesque character of the book as a series of attractive scenes suitable for framing or leafing through, but also identifies a subtext often present in landscape as setting for dwelling. This may be formulated as a question addressed by the unnamed narrator, John Agg: what does dwelling

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15.   The goals of biological restoration and human inhabitation often clash. The tendency in the US to favour the former against the latter has been problematic, to say the least. For an exploration of the attempt to de-historicise exurban watersheds, see Kringle 2010.

imply about the character of the people who constitute this interesting and significant American region?

Waterfalls were clearly manifestations of visual interest and contrast in the picturesque iconography, but their modesty was such that Agg felt the need to explain their significance in terms of the larger setting: 'The interest which these Falls are calculated to excite, is not awakened by their magnitude … but by the picturesque character of the scenery by which they are surrounded'. The scene introduces us to both the geographic landscape and the aesthetic grammar of picturesque through which that landscape will be made, more or less successfully, into works of picturesque art. We are looking upstream and the author has made us aware of the physical geography of the area, which he characterises as mountain ridges broken by areas of more open and ascending ground and surrounded on both banks by deep forests. The bend of the river at this juncture obscures the view to the north and the contrast between the rocky foreground and the gently undulating landscape upstream develops visual interest by imparting a sense of mystery (the unseen) and interesting contrast to the scene. The river, in this place, also narrows very perceptibly; and by depicting the calm clearness of the water above the falls, the artist has finely and very effectively interposed the river's tranquil beauty with its agitated, bubbly and turbulent picturesqueness.

In Figure 3.2, *The Junction of the Sacandaga and Hudson Rivers*, the aesthetic concern of balancing sublime and beautiful, well executed in plate 1, is here complicated by the need to represent the true condition of a scene that comes very close to appearing to what it likely was: a working landscape, characterised by scattered farms with significant areas of recently cleared forest. In the engraving these features are partly disguised. According to the accompanying text, we are at this point 224 miles/400 kilometres north of New York City in a stretch of 'considerable rapids' which are merely 'dignified by the name of Little Falls'. Remembering the aesthetic task at hand, the writer goes on to define the scene almost entirely through the engraving's background: 'the character of the scenery is a wild, ferocious and solitary sublimity; lofty and irregular activities, covered with the gloomy verdure of interminable forests and glens, over whose terrific depths unchanging darkness lowers.'

While there is bit of forest gloom if we look at the background of misty woodlands merging with impressive clouds, its sublime effect is muted by the rounded hills that dominate the middle frame of the engraving. What we see for the most part is a denuded landscape where the resources are being stripped out and rafted down the river to market; this is suggested by the stumps to the

*Figure 3.2. **The Junction of the Saradaga and Hudson Rivers**, plate 2 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. The gloomy, mysterious forest hovers under thick clouds in the background while axes clear the pine forest*

extreme right of the engraving. Onto this isolated landscape, an area in which, as the narrator tells us, passage is difficult due to the steepness of the terrain and numerous rocky outcroppings that block the road, we see a carriage, a genteel accouchement that almost certainly would not have been there. Indeed 'the wooden picturesque bridge' at the centre was 'introduced' into the scene, admits the narrator, based apparently on a similar bridge that crossed the Sacandaga River upstream from this scene. The main purpose of these embellishments seems to be to provide décor for the fields and buildings; perhaps the painter wishes them to take the place of antiquities and other picturesque objects that complete an English scene. The bridge also performs a visual function in helping to link the pastures and fields that run across the middle of the frame.

What we are seeing is common to many places of the United States at the time, as more and more land fell under the reign of the axe. Land that had

been under the aegis of Amerindian tribes lost its protection as land hungry settlers poured into territories, encouraged by a pro-expansionist policy in Washington. Agg's text exhibits a typical Federalist suspicion of the role of the locals in the destruction of the forest: 'The inhabitants of Luzerne are generally indisposed to agricultural employment. Through the open months, the major part of the population is scattered amongst the successive fleets of rafts which convey the products of their forest to distant markets.' During the Revolution land redistribution occurred in some (limited) parts of the Hudson Valley on account of specific landowners' loyalty to the Crown (Lynd 1962). Land redistribution had the effect of democratising the Hudson to some extent – though it was akin to the newly settled areas in the West where the established social hierarchy had been disrupted in favour of the dominance of the class of small owners. One criticism of the system of encouraging small-scale land ownership, a policy closely associated with Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party (as we saw in Chapter 2), was the lack of stewardship of the land. Agg is referring here to the doubts of the eastern conservative establishment about the capability of a restless class of farmers to care for the land.

Picturesque's emphasis on the aesthetic appreciation of landscape framed environmental issues rather narrowly, though Agg's text is more forthright noting deleterious practices and suggesting a cause for them. The artists' treatment of the landscape in Figure 3.2, however, suggested the general approach of picturesque in dealing with working landscapes: incorporate them into an aesthetic framework as much as possible. Where aspects of a working landscape such as water-powered sawmills were shown, they were rusticated and submerged into the structure of the picture, as for example the depiction of two mill houses tucked away under a hillside in Figure 3.1. Thus picturesque landscape offered a vision of salubrious cohabitation and social cohesion, and social conflicts are barely visible beneath the façade.

In the meantime, what we gain from picturesque is evident in Figure 3.3: a gorgeous rendering of biotic themes such that the growth of the organism provides the metaphor for the landscape. The tree that occupies our attention is that organism, and the landscape that might otherwise simply be taken as a wood complete with paths for walking, becomes instead an expression and extension of the tree itself, reflecting Simon Schama's insight that Arcadia meant finding the ancient groves, a landscape imbued with 'the fecundity of nature' (1996: 527). The fecundity and the beauty of nature emerges out of typically irregular and uncultivated landscape. Wildness finds its expression in irregular shapes and the massive tree that dominates the print. There is no

Beauty and the Beast

Figure 3.3 ***View from Jessup's Landing****, plate 3 of* ***Hudson River portfolio****, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library: 'beyond the influence of tides and tempests, [the Hudson's] currents are comparatively gentle and its surface is frequently smooth as glassy waters of the crystal lake'.*

wilderness here, but there is an Arcadian grove, to the left: an open woodland, reminiscent of an English landscape garden but also quite possibly a wooded pasture opened originally by the Algonquin tribes who were known to set fires to encourage grazing wildlife.

These intimate spaces are neither profound nor portentous; they reflect the picturesque aesthetic values of irregularity, variation and surprise – and in this case an excellent example of picturesque enhancing the beautiful.[16] Wall enhances the tree to a symbol by magnifying its size in comparison with an almost identical sketch made a few years earlier by Jacques Gérard Milbert; now the tree becomes a centrepiece of the scene.[17] The tree's curvilinear forms

16. Classical beauty aimed at the creation of perfect round forms, while picturesque beauty adapted roundness and curving lines within the irregularity of natural forms.

17. On Milbert, *Itinéraire pittoresque du fleuve Hudson* (1818–29), see Dunwell ; The Corinth Museum and the Hudson River Mill Historical Society, The Hudson River

are echoed in the rounded hills, and serpentine courses of the river and the road to the left. The path, the river, the trees are all curvilinear, soft, serpentine, feminine: we are at ease; comforted, we sense continuity.

Dwelling on the River

It should be noted that Agg's account of Jessup's landing (Figure 3.3) is, for the most part, at odds with the artists' rendering of the scene. Instead of an Arcadian grove, we have a landscape that is 'rude, woody, and mountainous': 'human industry has done little to soften and qualify the rugged asperity of nature'. The Arcadian nature-culture holds little interest for Agg, who is more concerned with a landscape that demonstrates human improvements. In this sense picturesque is about the representation of a way of life deemed worthy of human culture and expressed in and through nature. The depiction of culture in a setting bespeaks a picturesque concern with the character of place, very much akin to William Birch's engravings of everyday life in Philadelphia.

As we move down the river, inevitably the human presence increases in importance; there are cities, which must be accounted for. Cities like Troy and Newburgh are pictured as typical picturesque objects, in this case rusticated by carefully chosen images. A team of oxen is shown pulling a cart on the opposite shore from a rural-looking Newburgh and strolling gentlemen provide the foreground for a placid Troy shown in the distance, this despite the fact that, as soon as work had begun on the Erie Canal in 1817, Troy was among a number of small cities in the area that developed rapidly as manufacturing sites for iron and brass foundries as well as textiles (Dunwell 2008: 112). This was, in fact, the beginning of the Hudson's industrial age, though the conventions of picturesque representation precluded any but the most indistinct indication of the grit and grime that surely accompanied the founding of such industries.

The river and its surroundings as the 'confluence of nature and people', as Frances Dunwell so nicely puts it, becomes more and more the artists' theme (2008: xv). Reciprocity is mediated by the technologies of the fisherman, the farmer and the carpenter. It is necessary to point out that the achievement of picturesque cannot reflect the subjectivity of those engaged in the work depicted. In the 1850s Ruskin points to the exquisiteness and misery of picturesque. Looking at a drawing by Prout, he remarks: looking at the man 'pushing his

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Mill Project, 'Greetings from Palmer's falls', has set the Milbert and Wall pieces side by side; see http://www.hudsonrivermillproject.org/pages/theme07a.htm; accessed 21 July 2009.

Dwelling on the River

*Figure 3.4. [Town of] **Hudson (detail)**, plate 13 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. An idealised regional scene: the town's form is defined by a rill at the river's edge and by the river itself. Fishermen harvest the river's bounty and the river becomes the frame of the town's environmental sphere.*

load of peats along the ditch, and of the people, men and women, who sat spinning gloomily in the picturesque cottages, I could not help feeling how many suffering persons must pay for my picturesque subject' (quoted in Landow nd). Townscapes of the emerging industrial cities of Newburgh and Troy are included, but the most interesting of these is the town of Hudson, (Figure 3.4). Founded by New Bedford men as a whaling port in the seventeenth century – it was in effect a colony of New England in New York State. In picturesque, towns were often considered mere 'furnishings' to embellish the landscape,

but in this case the artists' depiction of the fisherman shown hauling shad in enormous nets suggest a lived space and a way of life, seen here near the end of the whaling age.

Associations of pastoral in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 reach their culmination in Figure 3.5. The scene takes place at the beginning of the highlands as we move south toward New York. Indeed the civic and the historical will come to dominate the remaining engravings and especially Agg's text. Depicting two bays or elbows of the river before it descends into the narrows made by the highlands, the engraving imparts a sense of peacefulness and calm, an Arcadia marked by harmony between man and environment: one farmer brings the cattle to drink, while another holds his scythe. The river is calm and reflects soft vegetation and gentle light of the late afternoon. Soft smooth pastures on both banks flank it. Soaring mountains and ragged cliffs along which the main current of the river is flowing, help to enclose the scene, giving it intimacy, but the mountains also direct the viewer's eye to the river's main channel, recalling the passage to our present that awaits the traveller downstream. The rays of light casting an eternal glow alleviate the roughness of the mountains; only then do we notice that the foreground is strikingly wild rock onto which a few plants are hanging onto life. To the right is a scraggly and partly dead tree – adding sublime depth, the drama of life and death, to the scene. At the same time the lighted surface of the water attracts our gaze upward and the hidden bend in the river propels us to the distant horizon which we cannot see as it lies behind the bend in the river. There is an airy feel, the reflection of the opposite bank in the still river waters; we are focused on the cloud formations that point to a sense of sublime awe.

Here sublime frames a sensibility of the beautiful, hence the sense of calm and the reference to the feminine. But there is also the reference to classical pastoral: the *boukolos* – herder of cattle, who sings of the pleasures of the countryside (the bucolic).

Time has no coherent past to refer to: no ruins to find, no clear symbol of the people, no historic marker (as in Gilpin's ancient arch at the end of his book on the River Wye that bridges the past and the present): we are forced instead into the prospect of the future, as the river brings us south to its terminus at New York. The tidal flow of the Hudson – moving us north – is a geographical force and a literary device representative of the hope to discover a 'usable past' as Van Wyck Brooks would have it (Brooks 1915). We have been launched on an imaginative investigation, but we have found only a few fragments of a distant past (in Europe) accessible through canonical texts, but only tenu-

Dwelling on the River

Figure 3.5. **View From Fishkill**, *plate 15 of* **Hudson River portfolio**, *by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. The glass-like cove of the river mirrors its soft surroundings, just before the river plunges ahead into the narrows of the Highlands making the transition back to the present.*

ously supported by experience: towns, fields, valleys that hint at a landscape of (moral) value amidst the transformations of space wrought by capital. The river's flow south is inevitable: it will bring us back to history, to the present, to America's place in the world, to New York at the centre.

The Arcadian retrospective is in part 'an urge to withdraw from civilization's growing power and complexity' (Marx 1964: 9) expressed in landscape that brings reconciliation, peace and holism. The poet flees the problems and corruptions of the city (civilisation) in favour of Arcadia, where he makes acquaintance of pastoral (peaceful and contemplative) scenery and simple shepherds who remind him of man's golden age where simplicity and truth reigned. In Figure 3.4, Arcadia is decidedly garden-like, a retrospective that locates the settlement of this valley in North America in mythic time and a justification of the European settlers' transformation of the land through agriculture, even

the presence of the 'machine in the garden' or in this case the steamboat on the river should not disturb our momentary reverie. But in this case at least Leo Marx is wrong: there is no myth that we have revealed to be false or 'simple' minded. The narrator is the voice of the American nation, his is the national narrative and he will permit us no respite from our appointed task. The singer of bucolic beauty at the edge of the river is merely a 'rough husbandman' whose 'daily labour' is so encompassing that it leaves him immune to the beauty that surrounds him. Keep the eyes on the prize – the appointed task of transforming and peopling a continent.

The Civic River

Picturesque was subtle: it contextualised pastoral dreams in culture-nature; it contained sublime subjectivity in a discourse of order and civilisation. It also expressed the sublime, which in the case of the Hudson River series was necessary, given the prevalence of wild, uncultivated landscapes. Figure 3.6, Hadley's Falls (later Palmer's or Jessup Great falls), is easily the most sublime scene in *Hudson River portfolio*. For the narrator,

> Towering and massive rocks are, perhaps, the most striking images of solitude and sublimity. … In this view of the Rapids, the peculiar character both of the rapid and broken stream, and of rocks and foliage, is most happily preserved, and cannot fail to strike those who have studied the scenery in all its original wildness and sublimity (Wall and Hill 1821–1825: np).

In his book on the River Wye, Gilpin refers to the 'violence of the stream' and the 'roaring of the waters' as productive of a momentary shift subjectivity that 'impressed a new character on the scene': 'all was agitation and uproar; and every steep and every rock stared with wildness and terror' (38).[18] Gilpin quickly pulls back from the edge of a gestalt; the interests of composition and order meant that repose and proper framing would always diminish the power of raw sublime in picturesque representations. Similarly, the framing of Hadley's Falls diminishes its subliminity by softening it around the edges with clouds and mists and by providing far more extensive and more mature vegetation than probably existed at the site at that point in time. Picturesque irregularity is retained and a touch of serenity confines the raw power of falling water.

The artists try to make up for this by exaggerating the height of the falls, but while this adds visual interest it certainly did not submerge the viewer in

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18. Sublime landscapes often used the falls as well. Niagara Falls was one of the great sublime landscapes for tourism.

*Figure 3.6. **Hadley Falls**, plate 5 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. A thoroughly wild scene and a bold, expressive composition that feels somewhat stylised, perhaps in part because it follows picturesque rules: a side screen frames the falls; bald rock is softened by vegetation and these configurations contain the falls' explosive power. A sublime rendering might put us at the base of the falls thereby emphasising its dangerous power.*

the terror of the falls – as later sublime paintings often did. In contrast to later sublime representations of waterfalls that put the viewer right in the midst of the fall water – Frederic Church's *Niagara* (1857) comes to mind – Wall and Hill place the viewer at a considerable distance from the scene, making it possible to frame the falls on three sides by rock formations. Even though human figures are placed within the scene to give a sense of immensity, the effect of power and majesty is sacrificed to the triangular structure of the cliffs that border the scene. Furthermore Wall makes sure to follow Gilpin's advice to 'cloth' rock in plants to provide ornament. This has 'civilising' (humanising) effect, which is magnified by the highly pictorial manner of the trees that form the painting's

background. The trees shown in multiple fall colours appear very much like flowers, providing an ornamental border to the work.

The containment of sublime within a picturesque frame does not satisfy the agenda of the narrator, nor quell his suspicions. Steamboats stopped at this point allowing passengers to disembark. Agg mentions travelling on a road that is 'scarcely visible' through a 'wild tract of country' – a perfect place for those who would 'linger amongst the uncouth rudenesses [sic] of nature'. It interesting and significant that in a book designed to sell by appealing to the tastes of the emerging American art and nature tourism markets, the narrator chooses to play up the isolated disposition and largely unknown qualities of the falls:

> The remoteness of this spot from the main northern road, and the menacing attitude of the rugged mountains which lie between; added to the frightful descriptions of the roads which every tavern-keeper and rustic seem to have learned by rote from some discontented traveller or guide; may in some measure account for the indisposition of travellers to visit this scene, and the very inconsiderable degree of curiosity which the existence of these Falls appears to have excited (Wall and Hill np).

Its remoteness adds the romantic illusion of first discovery, helping to invest the sublime with the significance of romantic isolation. At the same time, Agg makes it clear that this 'romantic disposition' toward wilderness must be understood as a mere pastime, devoid of poetic and cultural significance. He laments that the 'eye finds no beauty to rest upon – no cultivated farms, nor spreading gardens, nor inviting mansions "nor flocks, nor herds, nor human face divine"' (Wall and Hill np). Here the narrator is following the English practice of defining aesthetic effect through association by reference to poetry or the past (Cronon 2000: xviii). The phrase is from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book III, lines 40–55.

> Thus with the Year Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summers Rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
> But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men
> Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
> Presented with a Universal blanc
> Of Natures works to mee expung'd and ras'd,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather thou Celestial light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers

> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.

A landscape shut off from the 'cheerful ways of men' and the beauties and fe-
cundities of Nature is the fate of a blind poet who must find knowledge directly
and intuitively rather sensually and experientially. A sublime is thus acknowl-
edged in the landscape book, but having recourse to its luscious illustrations,
its readers are spared the struggle of understanding why the poet might need to
find 'things invisible to mortal sight'. Agg reveals his own distaste for wildness:

> even in the vicinity of Hadley's Fall, the wearing tone of solitary wildness which
> marks the character of a country which has not yet become familiar with the
> stranger, man, is but imperfectly subdued; and he who delights to linger amidst
> its uncouth rudeness of nature, will here find ample scope and abundant materi-
> als for enjoyment (Wall and Hill np).

Like most other nineteenth-century Americans of the privileged classes, Agg
clearly preferred his wildness as an occasional tonic to relieve the monotony of
the tamed landscape. His text accompanying plate 7, 'A View near Sandy Hill'
a prospect with a gentle stretch of the river in the foreground and a panorama
of rolling pasturage stretching to gentle hills in the background (not pictured)
summarises his perspective:

> To the eye accustomed to dwell on the calm and cultivated beauty of a Eu-
> ropean landscape, if the scenery of the annexed engraving appear defective in
> some of those features which lend grace and animation to a picture, it affords,
> at least, a cheerful and striking contrast to the rude and solitary grandeur of
> the [Hudson] Highlands (np).

According to Kenneth Myers: 'His warmest rhetoric was reserved for the sub-
limity not of nature but of human industry' (1988: 189–190). But it wasn't
technological sublime that *Hudson River portfolio* juxtaposed to sublime nature,
but the projection of the national will expressed through the arts of statecraft
manifested by the austerity of West Point (Figure 3.7) and the commercial nexus
of New York (Figure 3.8). Indeed, as we make our way down river toward the
pole of civilisation the appreciation of landscape is ever more closely tied to
historical memory and civic sites. Agg's text shows little sensitivity toward the
strong feelings toward nature engendered by many of Hill's engravings. He
showed much more concern that the commercial present and the civic past
come to fruition in economic growth and development.

*Figure 3.7. **West Point** [US Military Academy buildings and grounds], plate 16 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. The austerity of the architecture matches the flat hills of the grounds.*

Accordingly, 'John Agg similarly waxed poetic over the history as well as the setting of West Point: "Every spot rendered sacred by association with times and circumstances which … now live only in memory, or rather, in history"' (Schuyler 2012: 13). But we can rightly ask, where does the republic, as Agg has presented it, lead us? In particular, how can we take for granted the durability of the agrarian landscape?

In Figure 3.8 we see New York in the distance, pictured from Governor's Island: still a port city with its warehouses and church steeples and docks. A port city protected from the sea by a lone man-of-war that protects the city from ocean-borne attack and marks the landscape and its region as 'American' – a passing nod to American territory with little acknowledgement of the real landscape that national sovereignty has brought. The text, however, focuses on the theme of demographic and economic growth of the city: the very growth

*Figure 3.8. **New York from Governor's Island**, plate 20 of **Hudson River portfolio**, by William Guy Wall (artist) and John Hill (engraver), 1820, engraving, from The New York Public Library. A man of war stands between the choppy outlet to the sea and the harbour of New York.*

that threatens the values discovered on the voyage. The civic, even if we mean by that word simply the traditional values of statecraft, is only a way station. The civic meant a commercial republic that would be willing to sacrifice the agrarian landscape that Agg had assumed to be safeguarded as an important partner to technological progress.

It is the development of a new liberal doctrine that linked enlightenment to technological progress and economic growth, all of which required territorial expansion. The doctrine also required obliviousness to republican principles. Thus the old agrarian critique of capitalism was overturned. The even older classical critique of empty space (as evident in John Adams's writing) was forgotten as both the Whigs and the Democrats rushed to embrace territorial expansion. The calm, low-keyed, contemplative naturalism *Hudson River portfolio* positions the text as a lever of transition between republican and liberal worldviews. By 1821

the United States was already beginning a process of radical transformation.[19] It also turned an expression of Hudson Valley 'regionalism' into an expression of the national (Schuyler 2012: 1). Conditions driving the geopolitics of national developmentalism are one reason for the triumph of the national. 'New York's commercial energy – empowered by a great natural harbour and river which made the canal project possible … – stimulated appreciation of the natural landscape' and led ultimately to the launch of the famed Hudson River school of landscape painting (Avery 2001: 109). But I would add that New York's commercial energy was America's commercial energy, and the growth of the port of New York was the single most important development in the growing commercial success of the new United States. Furthermore, New York had become the most important national centre for tourist excursions to countryside resorts, drawing Americans from all regions and foreigners, and could be understood as the centre of a 'landscape culture' that encompassed literature, urban parks and suburban living (109–110). The contemporary river, seat of industry, avenue for commerce and gateway to commercial agriculture is on the way to overwhelming the intended narrative of the piece – the passage of the imagination from ancient Arcadia to the new American picturesque landscape. Landscape as the expression of this new American visual order would soon be threatened by its appropriation.

The Erie Canal: Abstract Space and Developmentalism

Former Congressman and New York establishmentarian, Cadwallader Colden's 1825 published and mistitled 'memoir' of the events surrounding the celebration of the Erie Canal provides implicit commentary on the *Hudson River portfolio* as well as establishing an important bridge between the early national and antebellum periods (Colden 1825). This appeared at that point of time in which the early hopes and economic struggles of the Republic had faded into a new era of rapid economic growth and expansion, which itself fell victim to the contest between the developing versions of the capitalist market, and those of the slave and free states (or agrarian versus commercial capitalism).

Colden picks up the theme of political independence married to economic development noted in Agg's text, but greatly magnifies it, linking growth to the development and exploitation of the entire continent. Indeed economic

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19.   Picturesque prints were revived for a mass audience after the Civil War, reaching a peak of interest with the publication *Picturesque America* (1873) and later with the very popular Currier and Ives print series.

developmentalism was more than a regional or even a national expression; it was a nascent imperial one, the beginning of global abstract space, expressed in this case through the desire to expand throughout the North American continent.[20] From the beginning the theme of the *Memoir* is the conquest of savagery/poverty by economic development/progress: in which the theme of the wild landscape is completely subordinated to economic developmentalism. The survival we see in Agg's text give way to the triumph over wildness and cultivation by the values of instrumentalism and commercialism. Nature, he tells us, consists of 'great objects' including 'the seas – the beautiful bays – and our magnificent river', but these deserve something greater than the 'huts of savages'; instead 'we shall have the abodes of a civilized, opulent, and a free people' (4). It is not that Colden overturns picturesque, but rather that certain aspects of picturesque aesthetics take precedence. The 'great objects' are picturesque ornaments, but they cannot be judged in relation to the past, to the ruins that point to the origin of culture, for origin is only 'savage'; these ornaments can only be contextualised by the future to be achieved by great projects of engineering and development. Picturesque is now completed by 'the great work of improving or creating inland navigation in the United States' – a project which has 'just commenced' (4).

The second theme is American republicanism, now taking a new form by absorbing nationalism and developmentalism. 'All here was wild and savage' (5) and unworthy of our attention; that has now given way to a bright future. At the occasion of the opening of the Canal we learn of the Americans' motivations, or at least those prescribed by the organisers of the celebration:

> We are desirous to attract the attention of foreign nations, – They have told us that our government was unstable – That it was too weak to unite so large a territory – That our republic was incapable of works of great magnitude – That these could only be performed where corporal labor might be commanded and enforced, to where it must be voluntary, But we say to them, see this great link in the chain of our union – in the great bond which is to bind us together irrefragably and for ever. – It has been devised, planned, and executed, by the free citizens of this Republican State (5).

The third theme is the role of geography and infrastructure in state-building. In many ways it is a remarkable account of the role of geo-economic development

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20.   Cadwallader was a Whig; he thought of incorporating Canada into the American enterprise and working with the British rather than the hope of driving the British off the continent expressed in the land fever of the war of 1812 and later in the idea of Manifest Destiny.
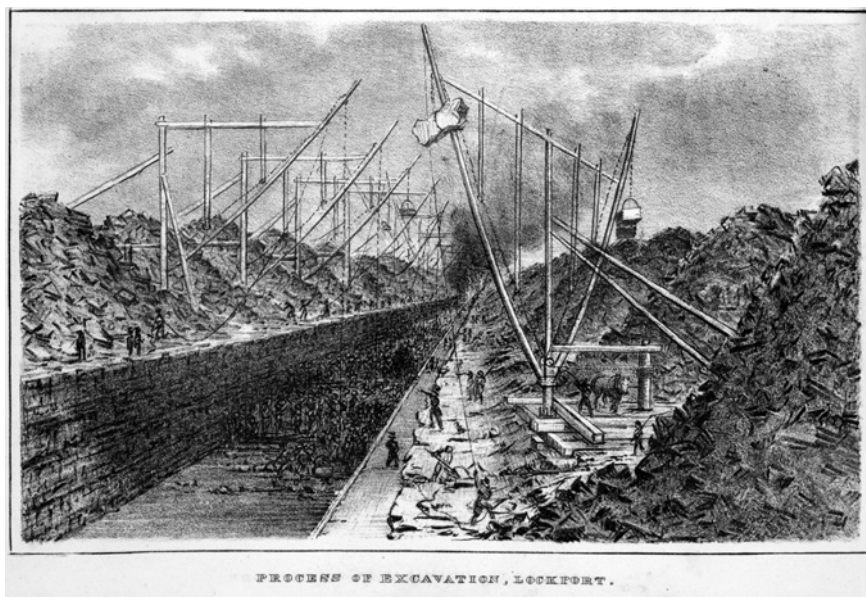
*Figure 3.9. **Process of Excavation, Lockport**, George Catlin (artist and lithographer) published in C. Colden, **Memoir at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals**, lithograph, 1825, from The New York Public Library. In building the canal lock, technique takes precedence over aesthetics.*

in the life of nations, specifically the impact on international relations (7, ff). The fourth theme is a theory of anti-territoriality, arguing that the linkages and flows of trade diminish the impact of political absolutism and aberrance, thereby creating diminishing the chance of war (95–96). The fifth point is urbanism; this text is not about westering but about city building – where its connection to landscape defines the geographical city, just as connection to the national narrative defines the cultural city. The city is now virtually continental in scale and defined by its commodity flows (52). The building of networked space is the most important aspect of abstraction of space from its local, urban and cultural moorings. Territory is less important than commodity flows: Colden understood this principle of commercial linkages in remaking the world of individual states and various cultures into a single globe driven by theoretically limitless expansion of the capitalist market. It is no longer the story of towns and cities, regions and countrysides, but of networks and flows of resources and

*Figure 3.10 **Buffalo from the Lighthouse**, George Catlin (artist and lithographer), published in C. Colden, **Memoir at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals**, lithograph, 1825, from The New York Public Library. Commerce tamed by Victorian fashion: a landscape suitable for strolls by gentlemen and ladies.*

commodities. New York is the centre and this system and its growth provides the rationale of the celebration.[21]

In this development of the infrastructure of global economic development, aesthetics are not neglected, but they are 'properly' situated in their own sphere, secondary to the world of public affairs, which itself, as we have seen, is the world of business. Instrumentality in a world in process can be juxtaposed to the security and delicateness of specialised places. Picturesque in Figure 3.10 has become a trope of gentility. Thus the *origin* of the disabling dualism that is supposed to be the cause of our problem in coming to terms with our destruction of environment has nothing to do with sublime landscape or nature parks or Henry David Thoreau. It is the appropriation of these by the commercial spirit indicative of the Canal celebration book.

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21. The Appendix is an official record of events of the celebration of the opening of the canal – 'demonstrations of respect' being military salutes at various points along the Hudson and 'grand processions' through New York City. Every union 'Society' or 'association' from ropemakers to painters was represented in the procession and in the text.

The Transcendentalist Turn: 'Nature' Idealised

Into this world of picturesque in the service of capitalism emerged sublime nature as noted in this work by an earnest young traveller on the very same Hudson. Robert J. Vandewater's *The Tourist, or, Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River* describes the view from Table Rock in the eastern Catskills near the already famous Catskill Mountain House one of the first of the great rural hotels that provided a retreat for the well-off urban classes:

> The view from Table Rock has been compared, by those who have seen both, to that from the summit of Vesuvius over the Bay of Naples and the adjacent coasts. In features they are unlike; but in character the same. From this lofty eminence all inequalities of surface are overlooked. A seemingly endless succession of woods and waters, farms and villages, town and cities, are spread out as upon a boundless map. Far beyond rise the Taghkanick [Taconic] Mountains, and still further the highlands of Connecticut and Massachusetts. A little to the left, and at a still greater distance, the Green Mountains of Vermont stretch away to the north, and their blue summits and the blue sky mingle and melt together. The beautiful Hudson, studded with islands, appears narrowed in the distance, with steamboats almost constantly in sight; while vessels of almost every description, spreading their white canvass[es] to the breeze are moving rapidly over its surface, or idly loitering in the calm. These may be traced to the distance of nearly 70 miles by the naked eye; and again at times all below is enveloped in dark cloud and rolling mist, which, driven by the wind, is continually assuming new, wild and, fantastic forms. The whole produces an effect on the beholder unequalled by that of any scene in this country. The gazer turns from the sight, compelled to acknowledge that all is beautiful and all is new. Visiters [sic], who have here assembled from various motives, all depart satisfied and delighted. The student [himself?], pale and exhausted with study and confinement, has for a while forsaken his books [the American Scholar], and found new vigour in the 'medicinal freshness' of mountain air. The idler and the invalid have been rewarded for their toils; the one by the ascension of health and strength, the brightened eye and quickened pulse, and the other by obtaining excitement, exercise, and pleasure, in exchange for the irksome monotony of the world below. All are for a while freed from the idle ceremonials of life, and permitted to hold unrestrained converse with Nature and her works (1836: 33–34).

Vandewater begins by establishing his pedigree: associating the Hudson with famous Italian scenes of the Grand Tour. But there is a fundamental difference here: 'All is beautiful and all is new' – a paean to an American landscape that takes its lead, the 'beautiful', from European sources, but quickly transforms them into something different. The informed tourist can go beyond pictur-

esque – without quite transcending it. This is the grand landscape, a sublime framed now not by European memory but by American possibility defined in divine terms. It reflects the agenda of *The American Landscape*, a landscape book project of the engraver/painter Ascher Durand and the printer E. Wade with text by William Cullen Bryant: 'Foreigners who have visited our country … have spoken of a far spread wildness, a look as if the new world was fresher from the hand of he who made it' (Bryant quoted in Avery 2001: 227). Bryant may have given expression to the full 'germination of the New York landscape culture' as Kevin Avery tells us, but he also certainly presaged New England's takeover of that culture and its moulding of it into a national landscape idea expressed in terms of transcendence and exceptionalism (223–225).

Vandewater had found sublime landscape, transcending picturesque's aesthetic code to embrace the enormity of space. Landscape here is almost purely spatial in its essence, as when he looks out over a vast area to see the 'inequalities of surface' disappear. Vandewater touts the 'seemingly endless succession of woods and waters, farms and villages, town and cities' and describes them 'spread out as upon a boundless map'. That map is North American space and its boundlessness, its indeterminacy, is the fundamental point. Indeterminate space could be a chaotic and fearsome sublime or a grand nature by design. Vandewater chooses the latter, using Emersonian language to describe 'a landscape close to nature' as clouds and mist 'driven by the wind' become a landscape 'continually assuming new, wild, and fantastic forms'; as it appears to an observer from a 'lofty eminence'. When Vandewater, the exhausted student of his own narrative, describes turning from books to experience, from Europe to America, from cities and libraries to mountains and rivers, he is anticipating the themes of Emerson's 'American Scholar' by two years.

Chapter 4

MAINE: THE WOODS

Maine has been to New England what New York State has been to the middle and southern states: a vast reserve of forestlands. It should not be at all surprising that Henry David Thoreau, resident of Concord outside of Boston, should have chosen Maine for his exploration of wild nature. Its accessibility to Boston by coastal steamer and the presence of family connections warranted the trip and rather limited finances restricted his choices, but Maine was very suitable to his purposes nonetheless. Thoreau mentions the 'fashionable travel' of his New England compatriots, but he was far from being able to afford the luxuries hotel resorts afforded, nor was he interested in what he undoubtedly thought of as an indulgence. He preferred an excursion into the backcountry helped along by his cousin, Edward Hoar, resident of Maine, who appears as Thoreau's unnamed 'companion' in the text. It is a commonplace observation even today that Maine is really two different states: the highly scenic and wealthy coastal areas and the poor and far less scenic interior. Thoreau was determined to push into the interior, abandoning the coastline for the realm of hunters and lumberjacks, but also of white-throated sparrows and other denizens of the north, who undoubtedly enjoyed a 'glorious time in that wilderness, far from mankind and the election day' (2004/1864: 193). Maine's chief asset was its remoteness from the major population and commodity flows and its 'northernness' that quality of ruggedness and isolation. It had become a state only in 1820, having constituted Massachusetts's reserve lands throughout the colonial period. It remained a part of Boston's hinterland, a vast forest reserve for the provision of lumber. I believe that Thoreau intended his investigation of Maine, its landscape, the way of life of its human inhabitants – Amerindian and white – to be an investigation both of wild nature and of the frontier society and thus an examination of the prospects of America itself.

Thoreau's trips began with the coastal streamer that linked Bangor to Boston; the book first took the form of a series of magazine articles and they are travelogues, descriptions of events, people and places, though nature remains always the subtext and often the point of his observations. Still Thoreau's

Maine: The Woods

Maine differed sharply in form and tone from the nature essay, exemplified by Muir's *Mountains of California*, which opens with the line: 'Go where you may within the bounds of California, mountains are ever in sight, charming and glorifying every landscape' (Muir 1894). No grand peaks or charming valleys: along Maine's Appalachian ridge it is difficult to get above the tree line. Interior Maine is not mountainous in a picturesque sense; it is dominated by a vast rolling upland cut by streams, dotted by glacial lakes and dominated by a thick and vast forest: profuse, impenetrable, wet and difficult to negotiate, both on foot and visually or symbolically. Maine was a resource region (timber), land of hunters and frontier of settlement. And this is exactly the point: Maine when Thoreau visited in the 1840s and 1850s, although already a state in the union, remained a backwater that had been absorbed as a resource supply region. Vast quantities of timber had already been harvested and the hydrology of the region had been altered to speed the flow of logs to the gaping mouths of the 250 sawmills which, according to Thoreau, were or had been operating on the Penobscot River and its tributaries just north of Bangor (5).

Like much of eastern North America at the time of the arrival of Europeans, rivers provided the only means of travel over vast distances. But the two main rivers, the Kennebec and Penobscot, were navigable for only a few miles into the interior. Settlements along the coast found difficult access to the sea. The coastline was formed by rising sea levels invading the land so it lacked the bays and inlets and plains of much of the Atlantic coastline. Consequently settlement along the coast was difficult and much settlement came overland, proceeding west to east. The Kennebec River extends 170 miles, providing a gateway for shallow draft boats into the interior. Much seventeenth and eighteenth century settlement was concentrated there. The Penobscot, 109 miles long with major branches, was also serviceable for transport, but it formed the eastern border of British territory and passed through the lands of the Wanabaki Confederacy whose claims were supported by the French. Only after the French gave up their North American land claims (1763), could the Penobscot region be settled. The river is navigable by ocean going vessels only thirty miles upriver, where the city of Bangor, incorporated in 1791, lies.

The rivers were the key to transport and resource exploitation. What's interesting about this is that in many respects the further development of the northern forest wilderness followed the same transportation infrastructure utilised by the Amerindians. Their hunting skills and mastery of the means of travel by canoe and portage had made them indispensable to the fur trade – the leading industry of the North American north. Further south along the Connecticut

and Hudson rivers, clearance of the forest began almost immediately to make room for agriculture. Lands along the Hudson, we have seen, were granted to feudal lords who proceeded to import workers to clear them and build agricultural estates. In southern New England, settlement advanced by granting tracts collectively to settlers organised to create towns. By contrast, during the colonial period, interior Maine, like much of New York State north and west of Albany, was a vast forest reserve dominated by various Amerindian tribes. After the successful breaking away of the United States from British control, New York State stood squarely in the path of settlement to the west, an exodus the State moved expeditiously to encourage canal building. By contrast, Maine was rather isolated to the far north and east of the main lines of exodus; it was a territory of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, its border with Canada still disputed. Hunting was still an occupation in the 1840s when Thoreau took his first trip, though it had been replaced by the lumber industry as the primary occupation. The preservation of the great forest reflected a change in migratory patterns. Northern New England (Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine) had been an important frontier of American expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the opening of the West had drawn off much of the population. Much better land for agricultural purposes was available to the west. While interior Maine escaped the outflow of population, it didn't escape the attention of timber companies, which quickly claimed the land and began to extract its most important resource. A vast network of lumber camps and supply houses made logging possible. As for the fur trade, rivers and lakes were the key, though now dams and occasionally canals were constructed to aid the flow of logs down from the vast web of lakes and rivers of the glacial north to the Penobscot River where mills awaited, and from there on to Bangor and other towns to be shipped anywhere around the world. On his last trip, Thoreau described the Telos Canal as being a mile long and about seventy feet (21 metres) wide, running from Telos Lake (headwater of the north-flowing Allegash River) to the East Branch of the Penobscot, thereby defeating the natural drainage of the watershed north to Canada (Thoreau 2004/1864: 244–245). Hence the 'wilderness' of Maine was even more integrated into the world economy than it had been a century earlier and, having become a link in the chain of the world commodity system, it was more important than the dying agricultural towns of eastern Massachusetts. Maine could answer to the imagination's wish for wilderness because the forestry practised there avoided the clear cut. Lumbering was highly selective; the vastness of the Maine woodland reserve was being tapped but mainly to provide the best of

the softwoods – white pine. This meant that most of the forest remained. The second important point is that settlement proceeded very slowly for reasons mentioned above and consequently there was no real land pressure. Timber companies could continue their slow but methodical exploitation of the forest while the old colonial-era occupation – commercial hunting – remained intact. Much of Maine remained unsettled. Timber companies preceded agricultural settlement in many parts of the American frontier, but Maine's atrophy meant that settlement did not follow in the wake of timber exploitation – and the vastness of the resource relative to available transportation and demand meant that most cutting at that time focused on a single species – the mighty white pine. Maine had been shaped into resource-extraction region and fitted into a growing world economy.

The 'Frontier' as American Space

Frontiers are a phenomenon of world history; they are territories for resource exploitation made possible by the settlement of new populations and by specific policies undertaken by states to enable markets. But 'the frontier' in America is also a myth that presents settlement from the perspective of the settlers and the endogenous development of the way of life. As a social space, the frontier is arguably more dependent on external influences than most territories within the modern state. All modern frontiers are the outgrowth of an expanding capitalist economy set in motion by the State. Land patterns in frontiers were subject to administrative edict from outside the territories themselves – and certainly the agrarian communities of the Middle West were as much created by the Northwest Ordnance – as by the social characteristics of the settlers (see Chapter 2). I would classify the frontier as a form of abstract space attended to an expanding global capitalist system. As such 'every settler frontier in the early modern centuries depended heavily on linkages to the wider world'; frontiers 'required the active political, military, and fiscal support of an aggrandizing state'; and finally the frontier 'rested on human energy and tools mobilized by means of capital investment and by market demand for frontier products'.[1] In this respect, the northern Maine region was typical. 'Frontiers of settlement' then would be identified by the impact that new settlement has on the use

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1. I have followed Richards (2003: 4) in defining frontier as the organisation of settlement by state and market. By contrast, much recent work has defined 'frontier' as borderless and 'intercultural', outside of state purview, until the imposition of 'artificial' borders creates a 'borderland': Adelman and Aron 1999: 815–816.

of land and resources. This involved intensification of land use, resulting in a decline in biomass and biodiversity, which inevitably changed the ecology of the affected region. Typically this most often meant, 'obliterating earlier forms of cultivation and hunting and gathering in favour of more productive modes of sedentary agriculture' (Richards 2003: 4–5).

The representation of the American frontier, like all myths that gain traction, had some basis in truth, in some part because it was not just a story of the imagination or an ideological conceit, but a considered reflection of material processes. On the other hand, the criticism of frontier as an ideology is justified in that mythology becomes reified as an instance of *genius loci;* consequently, national development is understood as exclusively internalised, obscuring the implementation of external forces and influences. As Thomas Hallock points out (2003), there was no established link between culture and physical terrain of the frontier; and one could well argue that the ideology of the American Revolution had projected itself through pastoral images that had little to do with indigenous conditions of frontier life.

The argument may be taken as a correction of the old standard view, but it also risks swinging too far in the opposite direction, reducing the significance of autonomous developments. It is interesting to note, to begin with, that the origin of the 'frontier' as idea drew on a materialist theory of culture, specifically Crevecoeur's framing of physical geography. Crevecoeur likened American geographical conditions – the distance established economies and polities – to a force that broke down European cultural and social integrity. Democratic individualism was presented as a plausible outcome of this process of cultural disassembly and reassembly and evidence was marshalled for its support, especially in the most famous chapter of the book, 'What is an American'? Crevecoeur did not present this as an entirely self-directed process, but one that had an integrity based on the availability of resources and the willingness of the population to modify their ways of thinking and living – in the interest of forming a new kind of society: flexibility, pragmatism, cooperation and wellbeing were the key values that Crevecoeur saw developing as an outgrowth of the settlers' inherited cultures. Furthermore, Crevecoeur admits to many doubts; he is by no means certain of the outcome of this process of culture-formation. The plenitude of American space and the willingness of the people to let go of established identities can lead and has led to degeneracy of isolated populations. Autochthony is a powerful metaphor and indicator of the environmental sphere, but historically it often meant sequestration from

scientific feedback systems, starting first and foremost with agriculture, that could rectify social and environmental imbalances.

Writing one hundred years later in a period of nation-building and after a long training in the development of the frontier as essential to American political thought,[2] Frederick Jackson Turner restated Crèvecouer's argument by linking it to a political outcome: democracy as developed by the Americans actually depended on frontier conditions. He marshalled support from the Italian economist Achille Loria who had observed that shortages of land lead inevitably to social inequality. To that theory of geographical determinism, Turner added an evolutionary anthropology: the frontier was a form of devolution, i.e. advancement first requires a step backward to conditions of harsh struggle against adverse natural conditions. The continuity is the essential link between geographic isolation and a democratic ethos as well as an inclination to remake institutions rather than accept inherited ones. At least this formulation acknowledged the fact that the pioneers were not natives, but colonists whose personal ambitions were in line with the cherished goals of the western modern: liberty and equality. The thesis was posited, however, without regard to the negative consequences of frontier settlement suggested by the American historical record.

In effect Turner turned an ambiguous social space into a conceptual one. The frontier had become a conceptual space generating its own values in contradistinction to metropolitan values. In this sense, the frontier was a return parallel to the recovery of value in the Arcadian return to the land of origin. But Turner's conception of frontier likened its social process of stripping away of the layers of civilisation to returning to the conditions, material and psychic, of the primitive; the reference is to the early perception of nature and

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2. Vernon Parrington 1954/1927: 349 saw Jeffersonian Enlightenment philosophy and Jacksonian populism as a fusion of 'English and French liberalisms, supported by the conscious influence of the American frontier'. By defining liberalism thus, he laid the foundation for the emergence of the environmental sphere in American letters and politics; however, the progressive political conclusions he drew from his reading were largely displaced from their political implications by a generation of mid-twentieth century critics including Henry Nash Smith, R.W.B. Lewis, Sherman Paul, Alfred Kazin and Leo Marx. For Smith (1971/1950) the frontier meant the emergence of the western hero, for Lewis (1955) it was the impossible quest for the restoration of innocence, for Paul (1958) it is connected to the consciousness of the artist attuned to the inner voice arising from experience, for Leo Marx (1964) it was encounter with an illusion, an idyllic myth made more powerful by its appropriation of industrialisation in the form of a 'machine in the garden'. With Leo Marx's work the American environmental space became the ideology of pastoralism.

freedom as the key to happiness of the aboriginal cultures first encountered by European settlers.

I have moved ahead in my historical narrative by examining Turner, whose work lay in the future of the present story, for a very specific reason. With Turner we see the perfection of the frontier as an ideology. Previously the frontier was really akin to a hypothesis, contested more or less openly by the old Federalists as we saw in Chapter 2, and by no means uncontested as the settlement of new territories became embroiled in the political controversy over the extension of slavery and revolutionised by the growth of the national capitalist market. Slavery cast a stain on settlement, while the frontier as a way of life had become radically altered by what Charles Sellars calls 'the market revolution' (1994). Politically the transformation from eighteenth to nineteenth century thinking was marked by death of the Federalist Party during the War of 1812, followed by the rise of the free trade Whigs and the transformation the Democratic Party to an expansionist party linking the interest of the great planters with the yeomanry, north and south. The Young America Democrats 'reoriented their party to become more economically progressive, hungry for prosperity and trade, and no longer so worried about monopoly and corruption' as had been the case with Jeffersonian party (Eyal 2007: 36). Critical here is the change in the perception of agriculture. American agriculture has an export orientation, but the new emphasis on trade, the beginning of the long period of peace following the Napoleonic Wars, meant not only access to the world market, but the opening of new markets for agricultural goods; this threatened to undo the balance between market and subsistence that had been the underlying assumption of eighteenth century agrarianism and a cornerstone of the frontier idea.

In 1834, an oppositional party, the Whigs, the party of the powerful eastern business interests[3] was organised. Meanwhile, the Democrat 'big tent' party encompassed provincial business interests, wealthy planters, yeoman farmers and urban workers. The Whigs were closer to liberals in the European sense of the term, emphasising rule of law and protection of rights, both property rights and human rights, while the Democrats were majoritarian and populist in outlook. But these differences in general outlook did not translate into fundamental differences in terms of policy. Indeed the Whigs were the 'me-too'

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3.   The Whigs were created in opposition to President Jackson's financial policy, specifically his veto of the charter of the Bank of the US. The result of Jackson's action was that the US went without a national bank until 1913 when the Federal Reserve System was established.

party[4] of their age, which is to say they were consonant with the Democrats regarding the market revolution and supported efforts at commercial expansion. The difference was that the Whigs but were increasingly reticent about territorial expansion if that meant extending slavery, which is why a number of Whigs were unhappy about the war with Mexico (1846–1848) that many saw as an unjust exercise in imperialism. This certainly affected Thoreau's estimation of American prospects, as we shall see. Partly as a consequence, a faction of the party emerged as the 'reform Whigs', organised around human rights issues – particularly the question of slavery.

The upshot is that I think it very unlikely that Thoreau was in the least bit curious about the condition of democracy in frontier Maine. At least if we take his statements at face value, and in consideration of his defiance of local authorities because of the war with Mexico, he had already soured on American democracy. His concern in Maine was with the way of life of the peoples, as part of his curiosity about the impact of nature in its pre-agrarian form on people's understanding of life. With the presence of the natural world, as he saw it, so strong an aspect of everyday life what does it mean about the environmental unconscious. Is it possible that nature, more than a classical myth of return to origin, is cure to the ailments of modern arrogance and stupidity? To look at these questions we need first to look at Thoreau in the context of the invention of nature in his own era.

'Nature' and the Frontier

Perry Miller's Emersonian portrayal of America as 'nature's nation' has become a lightning rod for contemporary environmental scholars anxious to expiate their guilt about the sins of the fathers; the talk of nature originating in Transcendentalism and continuing with the twentieth century myth and symbol school of literary scholars has been likened to an 'environmental evasion' founded on an 'abstract and imperialist' cant (Landers 2011). In reality, over the course of the development of the modern West, writers are faced with the difficult moral choice of opposition or engagement with forces over which they have less and less control. But the more significant question raised by the charge of the 'environmental invasion' is to consider whether the turn to nature that

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4. 'Me-too' a charge levelled in the early 1960s by then new 'conservative' movement against the Republican Party establishment; it led to Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign slogan: 'a choice not an echo'.

arose in relation to Romantic poetry and landscape painting actually hindered our awareness of the surround or not.

I would prefer to argue, along the lines of Andrea Wulf, that 'nature' was invented as a mode of thinking as a result of science and exploration and as such was actually an advance over earlier mechanical views of the universe. It certainly was a response to the contradictions that arose from applying picturesque principles as a means of reading the significance of landscape. Indeed, one may argue that, under conditions of capitalist societies, 'nature' is subject to continual reinventions as technologies of transport, communication and infrastructure offer the possibility and necessity of redrawing our relation to the earth's four spheres (biosphere, atmosphere, geosphere and hydrosphere). Wulf locates one moment when Alexander von Humboldt looking down from the top of Mount Chimborazo in the Andes had a sudden realisation that nature was 'a web of life and a global force' and that 'everything is interwoven with 'a thousand threads' (2015: 87). This embrace of 'nature' was idealising but it also emphasised the ecological and particular ground for rethinking interaction with environments. The invention of 'nature' in the early nineteenth century was an expansion of interest in the larger environment that grew out of the interest in and representation of landscape. 'Nature' came to express and extend those feelings of *biophilia* and *topophilia*, as suggested in Lawrence Buell's concept of the 'environmental unconscious' which forms part of our larger understanding of the visible universe (2001: 24–25).

'Nature' as an idea attempts to represent the global and universal aspect of life through a set of related values that are tailored to particular cultural contexts. In both British Romanticism and the American Transcendentalism of the 1840s and 1850s 'nature' was understood as a direct source of inspiration leading to defining certain types of landscape as marginal places, the very marginality of which permits the writer or artist to conduct a revaluation of all values (in a pastoral mode of thinking) that framed opposition to the creation of the industrial regime. In an American context, marginality took its greatest expression as 'wilderness', as a realm or field, both real and imaginative, that stands for a critique of the frontier (and of abstract space): wilderness is actually a space of alterity.

'Nature' as a set of interlocking images, concepts and values could only emerge, however, only in relation to other current concepts of space. To make 'nature' relevant in the US, Emerson had to deal with the legacy of both Puritan intellectual tradition and the ongoing projects of nation building and the transformation of the surround from wilderness to civilisation. 'Frontier'

encapsulated these two processes. The two were related; after all transformation of the wilderness was an old Puritan project, launched well before the Puritans' descendants began referring to themselves as Americans. In the 1950s, Perry Miller located this New England push in Samuel Danforth's 1670 sermon about an 'errand into the wilderness'. Following Danforth in 'stressing the "errand" more than the "wilderness"', Miller sees the task of settlement, first and foremost as a dilemma, as the advancing settlement pulled the Puritan fathers further and further away from their hope and stated purpose of establishing a religious model for English society. Settlement into the interior separated them from the Atlantic World, presenting the possibility of becoming 'lost' to locale and of losing engagement with the world, i.e. with Europe and with history. The problem was that the transformation of the wilderness that made possible settlement and the establishment of a model Christian community, or later a model nation, was a distraction from a larger purpose of continuous moral transformation necessary to appease a righteous and jealous God who demanded that the chosen people bear witness to the triumph of providence over history. 'The westward movement of the Americans could not be realised with the … found[ing of] the United States of America nor even the New England conscience. Actually, it would not perform its errand even when the colonists did erect a due form of government in church and state: what was further required for this mission to be a success was that the eyes of the world be kept fixed upon it in rapt attention' (1964: 12). Settlement could never come to terms with the conflict between the sacred and the profane: 'American self-recognition [is] essentially an irreconcilable opposition between nature and civilization – which is to say between the forest and the town, spontaneity and calculation, heart and head, the unconscious and the self-conscious, the innocent and the debauched' (208). Not surprisingly the processes of settlement are seen as unending: the frontier is a crucible, a process of that gives us neither home nor hearth, but rather the continuous metaphysical moments of the fresh start. The secular version takes the form of Jefferson's concept of 'the sovereignty of the living' given expression through the concept of popular sovereignty or the rule of the people, who have retained the right to overthrow any state that becomes odious to their wellbeing. By formulating it politically as manifestation of the American people, the frontier was nationalised, in effect. Taken together, an American ethos was created, which took the form of an 'argument against institutional continuity' (Lewis 1955: 15), but also against the possibility of significance given to the environmental sphere, which can only be a shadow of a transcendent moral drama.

Maine: The Woods

Emerson, typically Puritan in his preoccupation with the moral errand, embraced territorial expansionism, but he sought a means of changing the conception of the environmental sphere as a frontier by the cultivation of a new 'sentiment' or consciousness (Emerson 1983: 213). This was the message of 'The Young American' address given in February 1844 to businessmen of good intention, otherwise known as the Mercantile Library Association of Boston. Engaging national developmentalism, Emerson argues that the American commercial revolution, manifest in the 'rage for road building' (213), is inspirited, a contribution to the American mission, an opportunity for a revolution of mind. But at the same time, Emerson began to speak of the environmental sphere as intrinsically valuable: 'every American should be educated with view to the values of the land' (214). The idea of land could be seen as an expression of the *genius loci* reversed the Puritan's loathing of the particularity and profanity of places. By contrast the idea of place runs through Emerson's address, as does the notion that locality is part of a process of nation building that necessarily encompasses the sacred and the profane – 'nature' and the commercial revolution. Emerson's solution is that the revolution of self-determination in the social and economic sphere should be accompanied by a revolution in the moral understanding centred on the environmental sphere. Addressing the young Americans,[5] he calls for their energies to be directed at realising the latent 'nobility of this land' and through its development relaunch the American project (226).

Much is made of Emerson's idealism and his discourse of nature. Certainly his work reflected the German *naturphilosophie* as a vitalist philosophy that corresponds mind and body and invests all aspects of being with both significance and agency (Sullivan 2016: 8). In R.D. Richardson's reading, Emerson finds in 'nature' the '"the creative efflux from which all these celebrated things spring"' (1995: 132). Significantly, however, the turn to 'nature' was not so abstract when it came to Emerson's concern with the structure and character of what he hoped was an emerging environmental sphere. Indeed he framed 'nature' in terms of landscape. Richardson tells us that during his 1832–1833 Grand Tour Emerson's 'favorite spot of all was the Villa d'Este, outside of Rome, where house, ground, gardens, and fountains all fitted together into a splendid whole'. Emerson's own account emphasises the sensibility created by a cultural achievement that seems to come through and, at the same time, into relation with nature: 'the piazza, with its vast prospect, the silver river, the sun that shone, and the air that blew' (Richardson 1995: 137). Here the poetry of insight into nature

5.　Both the young generation and the political and literary movement

had long ago transformed the landscape and cityscape, leaving a legacy that compels Emerson to ask: 'Why should not we have a poetry and a philosophy of insight and not of tradition?' (Richardson: 226). Emerson complains that the lure of the city in America has grown unabated and he applauds 'the moral sentiment which … had interrogated every institution, usage, and has naturally … [inclined] you men to withdraw from cities, and cultivate the soil' (214). But the Americans could not inherit countryside, from England or Italy, any more than they could inherit the Italian piazza or Renaissance estate. He might have proceeded to consider landscape as a process of reworking old forms or creating new forms out of the old, but here he resorts instead to greater abstraction, invoking 'nature' as a force above landscape, a potential influence that appeals directly to the individual's moral sensibility. In these passages we have yet to see what the contribution of 'nature' to the re-imagination of landscape should be, but the direction toward the representation of sublime wilderness already underway in painting has received a powerful voice.

While the sublime wilderness is often seen as an apology for the frontier and American national developmentalism, I notice a sense of cultural displacement in Emerson – not only his doubts about the progressive model of urban-industrial society then beginning to be articulated, but his insistence on a moral discourse linking landscape to ethics. He withstood the instrumentalist view by which history is driven by economic development, landscape shaped by infrastructure alone. At the same time, he resisted retreating to the Kantian position on landscape in which sublimity is a purely aesthetic and disinterested judgment of science, a matter of aesthetic categorisation: 'If … we call anything … without qualification, absolutely, and in every respect (beyond all comparison) great, that is to say, sublime, we soon perceive that … It is a greatness comparable to itself alone. Hence the sublime is not to be looked for in things of nature but in our own ideas' (Kant quoted in Wilton 2002: 13). In this sense, aesthetics justifies its own judgments, i.e. art is its own quality. Emerson must have accepted that aesthetic qualities are separable and worthy of contemplation, but he believed that the purpose was 'to articulate the complexities of affective experience . . . in the context of an emerging new understanding of the construction of the subject. This new subject, the site of various appetites and desires, was increasingly cut loose from the old certainties, those which grounded and provided guarantees for the subject in a predominantly religious culture' (Ashfield and de Bolla 1996: 2). In moving in this direction, Emerson found himself in midst of a dilemma: having imbued the environmental sphere with a sense of the sacred, but not having forsaken belief

in the drama of Christian salvation, meaning and value was played out not in reference to the certainties of the Word of God, but amidst the confusions and distractions of the profane world. Little wonder that Emerson was wont from time to time to refer to nature as the font of moral certainty (Peck 2005: 694).

In linking to environment to American national identity, Emerson draws on the one indisputable American advantage, which, not surprisingly, is also its disadvantage: the lack of a deep history, of a powerful, enchanting past. In doing so however he permits classification to trump careful and nuanced observation. England he tells us in 'English Traits' has produced a landscape where 'art conquers nature'. 'Nothing is left as it was made. Rivers, hills, valleys, the sea itself, feel the hand of a master. The long habitation of a powerful and ingenious race has turned every rod of land to its best use … so England is a huge phalanstery, where all that man wants is provided within the precinct' (1983: 784)). The town of Concord is similar in the 'charm' of its countryside to England, and in his little book, *Nature* (1836), Emerson notices a familiar pattern of inhabitation: it is 'indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodlot beyond' (1983: 9). What then is different? Unsettled American space, which Emerson terms 'the landscape' but discusses in territorial and romantic terms: 'There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet' (9).

In the famous transparent eyeball passage, Emerson seamlessly blends naturalness of the forest and *logos* or the order of the universe, laying the foundation for his understanding of the sublime: 'In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the visitor sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel nothing can befall me in life, – no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my own eyes,) which nature cannot repair' (10): 'No disgrace, no calamity' can transpire: a language that appears to dissolve or transcend social obligations in favour of a tranquil and private moment of restoration. But there is another reading: landscape as a mirror for American aspiration which will drive Thoreau, among others, to take the encounter with environment very seriously indeed.

Thoreau and Ecocriticism

Thoreau's thought consisted of two dispositions: an assertion about 'nature' as organising and moral principles in line with *naturphilosophie* and the second

disposition of negation. In this second moment, so very different from Emerson's direction to an ever 'higher nature', Thoreau began to see biological powers as one sort of 'green space': a force that fills out his concept of nature and animates his understanding of landscape – a force with which right-minded citizens and seasoned republics might cooperate.

Nonetheless, much of Thoreau sounds Emersonian to my ears. Thoreau is interested in the mythic dimensions of culture (cardinal directionality) and consciousness as it arises in the increasing understanding of the life force or 'nature'. Nature's nobility provides a prospect for the elevation of the human condition, a recompense for the evident limitations of social and political revolution. What, then, separates Thoreau from Emerson? I shall take that question up in more detail shortly, but let me introduce the question here by suggesting that Thoreau could not countenance Emerson's Whiggish view of history. Emerson's idealism over-writes observed contradictions of the environmental sphere that he either does not see or will not acknowledge. I refer to the conflict of ideas between, on the one hand, the growing confidence in the market, in technology and in reason to control human destiny, and, on the other hand, learned experience that technical and instrumental reason have simply magnified the misuse of power by humankind. For Thoreau, history teeters on a fulcrum. Before us lies a tragedy: self-destruction, modernisation gone mad and the imposition of a vast imperialism of over-specialisation that runs counter to nature as the web of life. If 'nature' reflects the correspondence of humanity and organic life through art and experience of the lifeworld, then modern human endeavour has become a techno-environmental sphere mimicking the geosphere's power of life and death.

I think we can see an origin of the Thoreauvian viewpoint in Edmund Burke's discussion of aesthetic polarities in landscape: 'the chief visible characteristic of sublimity – its "source and root" – is a power capable of destruction, such as that of storms, waterfalls, "a man or animal ... of prodigious strength", "kings or commander"' (Conron 2010: 18). According to Burke, strength and power must be contrasted with delicacy and beauty: 'sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great rugged and negligent … beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure' (1996/1759: 140). The sublime, then, contemplates power that imposes itself on us, that takes our attention by storm, requiring us to contemplate a fate

imposed against our will, or, alternately, to face our fears in heroic resistance and assertion of our humanness (as in the classical sense). By contrast, the sublime as sensuousness invites contemplation, drawing close, an act of appropriation, an act of consumption, as the primitive consumes the heart of his foe in order absorb his courage into himself: this is the theme of Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* (1851) in which self-destruction is courted as a quest to absorb the power of the sea through one of its mythological creatures.

As environment has replaced nature and ecology as the key concept in ecocriticism,[6] there has been a tendency to remove Thoreau from his historical context and align him with the rise of the late twentieth century environmental movement. In highlighting the 'environmental turn', scholars framing the abuse of the surround as an object of knowledge apart from social and political perspectives; thus the danger is in seeing environment in isolation. I can understand John Elder's reading that sees Thoreau innately moving in the direction of conservation; that surely is a part of his legacy. But Lawrence Buell (1995) argues that the concern with the organised assault by industrialism on the environment requires a break with inherited understandings of pastoral. For Buell, Thoreau spearheaded the shift from pastoral tropes to the concreteness of 'environment'. Similarly environmentalism, as the naturalist John Muir argues, implies rejecting the institutionalisation of conservation of 'resources' that occurred in the nineteenth century. The basic point is that concern with environment could only emerge when a new discourse served as an ideological corrective to the earlier ideas of instrumental conservation, on the one hand, and pastoral retreat, on the other. 'Environment' as a framing device corrected idealising tropes and misplaced instrumentality of earlier discourses. By contrast what I have argued is that the environmental sphere as an object of concern has been with us since the beginning of modernity and that it involved imagination *and* planning. It did not 'emerge' in the nineteenth century; it evolved in relation to the struggle to enlarge and relocate its meaning and value in the context of both public and private life and in the face of a continuous revolution in the structure and uses of space. Thus environment is embedded in, not separate from, specific social and political concerns, including the concern with finding a common.

Ultimately mainstream ecocriticism has fallen into an ideology that favours what Buell calls 'naturism' as opposed to earlier human centred con-

6. As a field, ecocriticism dates from the 1970s; Glotfelty and Fromm (2006: xx) attribute the term's origin to a 1978 essay by William Rueckert , 'Literature and ecology: an experiment in ecocriticism'.

cerns. While he avoids the attacks on humanism and 'homocentrism' that account for environmentalism's radical element, Buell nonetheless argues for the 'ecocentric repossession of the pastoral' which requires a 'shift of representation of nature as a theatre for human events to representation in the sense of advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake' (1995: 52). The key point is that somehow environment is sphere or field of representation (culture) and action (politics) that can stand on its own, separate, though perhaps parallel, to other spheres. In effect this formulation makes difficult putting humanised and 'naturist' fields or spheres into relation. Perhaps this reflects the current political climate and structure in the US. The key term of the current political is 'advocacy', i.e. the construction of politics of environment as a cause pushed forward by campaigners and lobbyists. In the US this is politics through the courts, bankrolled by organisations whose members see their relation to the political almost entirely in terms of their group identities and special causes. This makes environmental politics into a judicial process: we file our briefs for advocacy in the court of special pleading, sacrificing *civitas* and neglecting the practices and memory of the commonwealth.

How does Thoreau's actual work fit into this existing framework of environmental politics? Not very well, I would say. In saying this I am not suggesting that Thoreau had a fully developed politics; I don't think he did. My point is that Thoreau's concern with the environmental sphere was broad and connected to the issues of the common life, which is a larger and more fundamental meaning of the political than that which has emerged in our era of identity politics. Thoreau's cultural and political critique has been reduced in scope to the protection of the surround (Oelschlaeger 1993: 170–171). Of course, as Daniel Peck argues, Thoreau's turn toward observed landscape, given the vivid description in his journals from the early 1850s, represents an advance in terms of direct interest in the environment (Peck 2005: 690). I would not disagree, though I would not assume that Thoreau's interest in the phenomenal world meant that he favoured 'environment' over 'nature' as a means for sensing and conceptualising the surround or explaining its significance. I would rather say that Thoreau is an Emersonian, significantly moved by the discourse of nature to closely observe it as both natural and anthropological phenomena. That work leads him to consider the relation of nature to history and culture. And contrary to what Leo Marx says (1988: 151), Thoreau is very interested in remaking history. Pastoral in America is strongly connected to the hope of building a new or revising an old civic and political order and therefore to transforming the very process of nation-building. Surely Thoreau

shared 'a traditional, holistic, non-metropolitan, nature attuned myth … in reaction to and in critique of a more urbanised "artificial" European order' (Buell 1995: 64), but what makes Thoreau interesting is how he tested this pastoral theory in the light of an organic and vital theory of nature and in regard to the unfolding social construction of space. Terry Gifford (1999) comes close to what I mean when he argues that environmental discourse cannot be corrected by critical reinterpretation in the interest of cleansing the text, as for example by separating and praising concrete descriptions of environment from places where the text falls down in relying on pastoral tropes. Idealisations by writers inevitably generate negations, which he chooses to call 'counter-pastorals'. We arrive, Gifford tells, us at a mature 'post-pastoral' only through this process of pastoral assertion and counter-pastoral negation. I am not concerned here with pastoral classification or with the idea of establishing a mode of literary analysis we could call 'post-pastoral', but I take from Gifford the idea that 'nature' eventually generates its own negation in the process of its absorption into the political sphere. I would argue one finds that in Thoreau's work. Furthermore, the negation and its reassertion cannot be represented by the term 'environmental' because environment refers first and foremost to the surround. The chief conceptual advantage of 'environment' is juxtaposition, measurability and capacity to institute rules to control and correct practices. It lacks the social dimension of the term 'space' as I have used it in this book and it lacks the political conception of territory. Much of what is wrong with contemporary environmental theory is apparent in the epistemological origins of the term 'environment'. Environment is an object of knowledge; 'nature' is a perspective on knowledge that draws on environment/space/territory. 'Nature' like 'conceptual space' and 'ecology', should be understood as an extension of thought through time and space; it has the capacity of being understood through various organising principles and it interacts with other human extensions in space and in time such as the organising principles of polity or the technological processes that organise production. For Thoreau, as I shall argue, there is a continuing concern with nature in light of civic humanism and the purposes of American nation building.

It is of course highly problematic to assert a single putatively 'correct' understanding of any writer's position on abstract critical, philosophical or sociological matters. One finds many directions in Thoreau's work, but surely there is much to sustain the view that Thoreau engaged with the traditional conception of pastoral and the early nineteenth century reinvention of nature, which he revised in light of his own experience. In effect, the *naturphilosophie*

gave warrant to Thoreau's hermeneutics of space, his linking of geography to myth, on the one hand, and the cultivation of place on the other, and those engagements of geography and place required him to face up to the contradictions of his age – which are still very much the contradictions of ours.

Thoreau would be concerned with reformulating the pastoral retreat and social marginalisation in productive ways, both to engage in a Romantic sense of self-authorisation and to contemplate cultural and social renewal. Certainly rebirth of self is a common Romantic theme; the Romantic reception of nature frees human creativity, Eagleton tells us. For the poet, visible nature is thing-in-itself; its importance rests not on its metaphysics, but rather on its apprehension. Creativity is the dialogue between self and the selected world of organic life (nature) created by, and largely for, the poet, ever since Emerson: the romantic self-standing outside of community, the horrifying sense of a culture given to proliferating uprooted subjectivities. It is precisely this sense of becoming-self-through-world that becomes self-referential, even leading, perhaps, to self-absorption (Eagleton 2002: 247–248). The question, then, is whether Thoreau made a 'fetish of interiority' isolating himself from 'the collective, symbolic dimensions of human experience' (Eagleton 2001: 63, 35).

Clearly Thoreau engages a Romantic subjectivity, but something keeps him from falling into the indulgence of subjectivity; he is rather taken with finding continuities and projecting an alternative future. His recollection of old New England, his invocations of the lives of Amerindians and his sour notes about American democracy are cases in point. Thoreau is about 'nature' very clearly when says in 'Walking' that nature invokes 'absolute Freedom and Wildness' – and in *Walden* when he grounds the ancient imaginative link between nature and political freedom on careful observation and analysis of what we would have called 'the natural world' a few years ago, but can more safely call 'organic processes and animal behaviour' today. Both aspects of his experience were attempts to 'wrest meaning for Nature' as Sherman Paul puts it (1958: xiv); both meanings were a Romantic outgrowth of Puritan moral individualism and an attempt to return to the commonwealth that preceded it. In his last important work, the essay 'Walking' published a month after he died, we see the geographical Thoreau – the Thoreau who sought an alternative space, where culture is greatly influenced by nature as force and guide.

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Thoreau's Spatial Turn

To speak of a 'spatial turn' in Thoreau is a bit of a stretch; after all, his interests in personal transformation, the philosophy of nature mark him as a Romantic. But I wish to insist that he was also a geographer – one interested in the effect places and systems have on culture. Geography and the possibilities – actual and metaphorical – of recognising spatiality leads to a very interesting juxta-position of agency and determinacy. This can be seen in his essay 'Walking', which is simultaneously an epic of America, a treatise about the origins and prospects of human culture and an apology for cultural and social reform. It was published posthumously, just one month after he died in 1862. This is a work that sums up much about his lifelong project, but also leaves us with more questions than answers. In the work, Thoreau feels compelled to present European civilisation as culminating in the creation of the United States, and to simultaneously object to that outcome. Dissent[7] is deployed against myth, pastoral sensibility against epic narrative. But there are no clear sides taken and the outcome is not even hinted at; we are left really with a layered landscape of outcomes.

The essay connects the West with wildness – the 'West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild' (644) and westering with the forward move-ment of time: 'Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free. Thither no business leads me. It is hard for me to believe that I shall find fair landscapes, or sufficient Wildness and Freedom behind the eastern horizon' (1992: 638). We 'must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe' for 'that way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind progress from east to west' (638). But the perfect equivalence between westering and the American myth of freedom, on the one hand, and wildness and renewal, on the other, becomes more tenu-ous as the essay proceeds. This establishes the tension and indeed problematic of the piece. Does a nation dedicated to movement toward the West/wild encompass Thoreau's own expressed sensibility – 'I believe in the forest, and in the meadow, and in the night in which the corn grows' (644) – or does it reflect an iron cage of history that seeks to snuff out the new life trying to be born? If crossing the Atlantic is akin to crossing the river Lethe, opening an 'Heroic Age fulfilled by the simplest and most obscure of men', why have the Americans, who are no less 'favourably situated' than Adam in Eden, so soon permitted their renowned love of liberty to become at least in part 'a fiction of the present' (643, 651)?

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7.   Thoreau's penchant for dissent follows from the strong currents of antinomianism in Puritan culture.

Thoreau's Spatial Turn

The potential of human culture can only be realised in moments (even an age is a moment in the life of nature) and depends on recovering the possibilities of our own character. Wildness is Thoreau's framing for that process, understood as an evolutionary process affected though the fund of the lifeworld that encompasses and shapes all living things, including the human character. This is geographical, also, because culture goes back to nature and culture goes stale when it loses such contact: 'the civilized nations – Greece, Rome, England – have been sustained by the primitive forests which anciently rotted where they stand. They survive as long as the soil is not exhausted … little is to be expected of a nation, when the vegetable mould is exhausted, and it is compelled to make manure of the bones of its fathers' (648).

Thoreau's struggle between alterity (wildness) and conformity (culture) are evident and reflected in his utopian hopes burdened by a sense of world weariness and the weight of history (Otterberg 2014: 247). But in the context of space, the critical point is that there are three spatial orientations in the essay. One is that of the tragic space, which might well be equated with abstract space since it is less a story of a people than the triumph of the disembodied mechanism of history itself. The second is epic space in the classical sense of the resurrection of a people – the Europeans – in a new circumstance, the new world. The third is green space – for alongside the reference to epic triumph and tragic mistake that is the opening of the environmental sphere for revision, renewal and reintegration: not pastoral as myth, but nature as a moral guide. The difference between the second and third spaces is that between experience and myth. One cannot have one without the other – Thoreau, after all, wishes for both the direct influence of wild as expression of nature-in-culture and the conservation of wild places by which wildness passes into memory – but there is a difference between making a push and gathering a myth. The linkage between prospect and retrospect is inherent in the idea of saving and drawing wildness from development: the inspiration for the future he writes lies in 'the impervious and quaking swamps' rather than the 'fields, towns and cities' (648). The critical point is that conservation is a necessary precondition for cultural renewal. 'In wildness is the preservation of the world' (644), is a statement that both acknowledges the inherent power of self-determining and interacting life-forms (ecology) and the encouragement of a human attitude of respect inherent in the conservationist ethos. Thoreau seems to suggest that being-in-the-world and responding to an ethos of respect and acknowledgement are inherent in nature, which he is 're-inventing' (re-interpreting) through the motif of wild-

ness. The realisation that humankind's institutionalised endeavours, especially of modernity, have been generally oppositional to nature, is of course the essence of a Romantic perspective. But it is not a simple-minded romanticism because, for one thing, it accepts a state of anxiety which underlies Thoreau's life and some of his work. Thoreau knows what he is going up against: advanced social organisation with its hierarchies, inanities and flaccid cultural productions. It has to be challenged by wildness which is a culture as much as it is nature: 'give me a wildness whose glance no civilization can endure' (644). But what is the purpose of such stark negation? This remains the difficulty for Thoreau and he could only say that the greatest product of wildness is literature and its second greatest product is myth. His task remains that of the inspired outsider like the poets of old who 'nailed words to their primitive senses' (650). Still his Romantic sensibility should not obscure his geographic intent. Thoreau is taken up by the search for new geographic sources that make reinterpretation of the old myths possible; that is the meaning of 'America' – north and south – to him. The sources of truth and insistences of nature are not metaphors; they are real, specific to spaces. Here he writes of the river valleys of the old world and of his expectations for the ongoing exploration of the valleys of the new world.

David Harvey sees nature writing as a manifestation of Romanticism, one piece of a long-standing tendency in capitalist culture to project nature as a counter-discourse against money as the source of all value: 'the advantage of seeing values in nature is that it provides an immediate sense of ontological security and permanence' and provides 'meaning to otherwise fragmented and ephemeral lives' (Harvey 1996: 157). Thoreau might well have been writing to save his own life from meaninglessness, an existential aspect of all 'saying' and 'sayers', including David Harvey, but his nature discourse is not about locating values in 'nature' (as object), but about exploring values, metaphorically and *analytically* through the development of an ecological self who finds sustenance in the observed and felt inter-relations of living beings sharing a common lifeworld. That commonality may be defined in many ways, but it would include common and defined spaces – a fully formed environmental sphere that draws inspiration from the nature's endowment. As I shall argue, he did not find that space, but what really matters is that he understood the need to look for it.

Civic Lament

David Foster has made a study of 'Thoreau's Country', demonstrating the command Thoreau had over the geographic landscape of the area surrounding Concord, including observations that illustrate its historic transformations from largely forested landscape to open agricultural and pastoral land and back again to the reforested landscape of today (1999: 14). Foster's work shows Thoreau as an ecological geographer – classifying woodlands, explaining biological processes and describing environmental forces at work. The concept of forest succession was his greatest contribution to ecological study, but there was much other useful observation as well, including raising questions and developing techniques – forerunners to the 'reconstructive studies' of contemporary ecological conservation.[8] Equally important was the development of his understanding of human geography of the region. This knowledge ranged from the impact of ancient Amerindian management practices to the contemporary effects of industrialisation and farm abandonment. Thoreau was witness to an area that was reforesting as farms were abandoned in the face of a general restlessness and agricultural competition from western farmers:

> In 1850 [Thoreau] could walk deserted country roads marked only by cellar holes and crumbling fences; he could follow abandoned cowpaths crowded with dense young birches as he tried to relocate the old apple orchards that they had engulfed; and he could recognize a major shift in his old Hosmer's neighbourhood as all the old farms were bought up by one individual, and the blacksmith, goldsmith, tavern keeper, and store keeper packed up, leaving a deserted country (Foster 1999: 126).

It was such a landscape that provided the context for Thoreau's interest in wildness; in effect the wild was an abandoned farmstead and lands marginal to agriculture that attracted his interest – swamps, steep hillsides and rocky pastures. Thoreau understood abandonment well and found a virtue in its reclamation by native plants. For Thoreau the wild places suitable for sauntering provide the foundation for an imaginative geography for which he provided his own names: 'the Boulder Field', 'the yellow Birch Swamp', 'Black Birch Hill', 'Hog-Pasture', 'White Pine Grove', the 'Easterbrooks Place", the 'Old Lime-Kiln', 'Spruce Swamp' and 'Ermine Weasel Woods'. These are among the wild places Thoreau names in a 'large wild tract' near Concord that he wrote about in 1853. It was a walker's 'paradise', he tells us, and 'would make a princely estate

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8.   This included notes on woodland typology, forest growth, tree species location and ancient environmental forces. Foster: 80, 186–193

in Europe'. The reference to Europe is telling of the importance of a landscape aesthetic, even if the aesthetic has been reshaped by different geography and altered subjectivity of the viewer. Thus his sense of place benefits from what 'Gilpin says about copses, glens etc. … the different places to which the walker resorts' (Journal entries 1852 and 1853, quoted in Foster 1999: 80, 20–21). Picturesque serves to frame a regional landscape that is also biotic, lively to the senses, pleasing to the eye and the ear. The biotic region becomes akin to home – a place of biological rootedness and aesthetic appeal, but it is lacking in the memory of significant human inhabitation that provides continuity and, consequently, the ability to project a future.

In his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (2004/1849), Thoreau went searching for that lost past. The difficulty in finding it is evident in the cultural and social disruption that came with colonisation. From a bio-geographical perspective, Concord should be known by its Amerindian name, the Musketaquid or 'Grass-ground' or 'Meadow River': it 'creeps through broad meadows, adorned with scattered oaks, where the cranberry is found in abundance, covering the ground like a moss bed' (2004/1849: 9–10). Musketaquid: the name brings us to commodious savannahs swept by gentle breezes, framed by trees and shrubs, a landscape of natural abundance. 'A row of sunken willows borders the river on one or both sides, while at a greater distance the meadow is skirted with maples, alders, and other fluviatile trees, overrun by the grape vine, which bears fruit in its season, purple, red and white and other grapes' (10). The sense of openness and flourishing of life made possible by the broad *fluvius* is tangible. Yes, it is paradisiacal, sensuous, but despite the 'irresolute pastiche' of his narrative (Conron 1980: 145), Thoreau's rendition of paradise is linked to biogeography on a scale that dwarfs human measures of place but also slips underneath the sublime landscapes of *logos*. Sailing out onto a broad part of the river he glanced back to imagine the vastness of the geographic landscape and he comments a 'hundred brooks' and thousands of farmsteads have been left far behind upstream. Wildness begins at that point where 'many waves are … agitated by the wind … the spray blowing in your face, reeds and rushes waving; ducks by the hundred, all uneasy in the surf, overhead in the raw wind, just ready to rise … gulls wheeling on the wind, muskrats swimming for dear life, wet and cold with no fire to warm them … such healthy natural tumult proves the last day is not yet at hand' (2004/1849: 7). Thoreau lauds the *Italian Travels* by pointing out that Goethe is 'always mindful that the earth is beneath and the heavens are above him'. Beneath the ruins of the

Roman landscape school, Goethe gives us 'solid turf-clad soil, daily shined on by the sun, and nightly by the moon' (326).

Recovering the biological and aesthetic significance of the Musketaquid does not release us from the historical fact that when European settlers began to populate the region around 1635, as Thoreau tells us, they renamed the river 'Concord' and thereby secured it a place in history – a history from which we cannot walk away. The spirit and harmony of the biological river were still recoverable in 1839 when Thoreau and his brother took their trip, but what of the fate of a society once founded as a farmers' peaceable commonwealth? Thoreau notes it 'will be the Concord River only while men lead peaceful lives on its banks' (5) and as he and his brother sail from Concord past the famous 'North Bridge' which carried the British troops on their mission of suppressing the growing insurrection. Thoreau praises his fellow citizens:

> Ye were the Grecian cities then
> The Romes of modern birth
> Where the New England husbandmen
> Have shown a Roman worth.

> But he soon must admit:
> But since we sailed
> Some things have failed
> And many a dream
> Gone down the stream. (18)

He associates the natural river with the lifeworld of the farmers, a natural community or environmental utopia, in which common lands, like the 'Great Meadow' (5), were collectively managed for use and also preserved to retain aspects of their wildness. One hundred years later, Aldo Leopold writing in *Sand Country Almanac* tells the story of a lost Wisconsin wetland, drained turned to farmland and now lost in the vast fields of monoculture – a wetland that once supported lively communities of settlers and wildlife at the same time. Arcadia could be defined as both a natural and political ecology. As farmers consolidated their hold on the biosphere, however, the new industrial economy strengthened its hold on them, sinking many a dream.

Did Thoreau understand the political ecology of the river basin he travelled? It is undoubtedly very easy for a critic to argue that Thoreau does not meet people, but rather 'monumentalises' the farmers and river men as symbols of Arcadian pastoralism (Conron 1980: 156–157). I am not going to contest this point directly, except to say that I think there is failure to understand that Thoreau's formulation reflects his attempt to encompass transcendence and

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immanence, and in the process come to terms with a range of human motives and understandings, including the understanding that human activity can turn against the integrity of the environmental sphere. That awareness takes the form of a sensibility of loss, an aspect often associated with pastoral tropes, but I hasten to add the loss is very real; it is expressed in geographical, environmental and political terms. The republican undertones survive in memory induced by the old landscape of the Concord, but is challenged when Thoreau and his brother make passage to the Merrimac, a transition to modernity. He uses this occasion to chart the passage into modernity in which the break between landscape and the agrarian republic is complete: (rivers are no longer central; railroads have displaced them; old farming is gone). After all, rivers, Thoreau tells us, are the 'natural highways of nations, traversing through the most interesting scenery, the most populous portions of the globe, and when the animal and vegetable kingdoms attain their greatest perfection' (9). The lament for the old social and techno-environmental orders is thus undercut by a willingness to take the measure of the world he finds.

The dream of an agrarian republic stands behind him and cannot be revived; but, while he has no clear political statement to make, Thoreau cannot forget the political – and its weight is a burden that he might have easily shed. He takes solace in what remains: nature, not nature as an abstract essence, but nature as manifest in an imaginative and geographical landscape, or, if you will, the bio- and geo-spheres found and represented in a specific geographical landscapes – or, in another formulation, in a region organised around a watershed, witnessed by the passage of a river. The biology of the river, its flora and fauna are the chief concern of 'Saturday' (Chapter 1 of *A Week*). Having devoted much of it to a discussion of the various fish species of the river, he calls out attention to the threat to their survival posed by the Billerica dam. Thoreau raises his voice against the transformation of the Merrimac into an avenue for the disposal of waste; he dreams of the day when the dams will go, but the vision there is less nostalgic than critical and forward looking. Clearly the same forces responsible for the loss of the republic are also at work degrading the natural river. Can the Americans ever find the measure of them by returning metaphorically to New England roots (Mumford 1926)? Perhaps the slowness of Maine's infrastructural development meant that Thoreau imagined he might find a wilderness rather than a frontier:[9] in this project attention to

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9. The term 'wilderness' has come into disrepute and has lost favour to the term 'wildness'. The two are not interchangeable but they can be complementary. 'Wilderness' came to mean primeval and untouched, a condition that environmental historians argued

biogeography was crucial. In effect Thoreau was in search for an alternative space emerging out of the contradiction between the conceptual and social spaces of the frontier.

The Maine Woods

The book consists of three parts, each representing an 'excursion' made to the backcountry of Maine in 1846, 1853 and 1857. Thoreau died in 1862, only five years after completing the third trip. Originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* as a series, it appeared as a book posthumously. As we have seen, northern New England had been a great frontier of American expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the opening of the west had drawn off much of the population and quelled the enthusiasm for acquiring land there. Much better land was available to the west. In fact Maine, especially interior Maine, escaped heavy interest from settlers engaged in what Lewis Mumford called the first great American migration (to the frontier), but Maine did not escape the attention of loggers and then well organised timber companies; by the early nineteenth century they had laid claim to the land and began to extract its most important resource. This history of resource exploitation and light settlement, broadly representative of the north – European and North American – deviates a good deal from the American national narrative of dense waves of settlement and the triumph of agriculture, and as such served Thoreau's purposes very well. Not only because much of the forest remained in a primitive state, but also because it was not a pristine sublime forest. Thoreau referred to its treatment at the hands of lumberjacks as the 'gnawing' away of its grandeur.

One is tempted to read the book through the shifting mood of its various parts which may be interpreted as an ascent in 'density' from the relatively light romantic travel journalism in the first piece, 'Ktaadn', to a stronger emphasis on natural history and anthropology in the latter two pieces (Buell, 1995: 116). This could be interpreted, I suppose, as the development of Thoreau's environ-

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could not and did not exist in light of Amerindian management of the natural ecology through fire, for example (Cronon 1983). Roderick Nash (1967) points out, however, that wilderness also refers to a specific geographic landscape that was not primarily devoted to the human food chain and thus very poorly exploited and sparsely populated. This is important because, as I interpret it, wilderness is a geographical concept: it is an area, unlike a frontier, that is not really 'under-developed' or 'developing' but rather at the extreme periphery of the world economy; it's a sphere outside, or largely outside, state or market.

mentalism ascending over an earlier Romanticism, but I tend to see Thoreau as a juggler. So many inter-lapping but also contradictory themes characterise his writing that one cannot make a conclusive argument about the development of a line of thought, as noted earlier. Indeed Lawrence Buell also says of Thoreau that all his work was characterised by the 'same partial and ragged exploratory questing' one comes across in his Journal (1995: 125–126).

The Maine Woods can be read simply as a series of excursions, which Thoreau undertook for two closely related purposes: to quench an aesthetic-moral desire for wildness and to experience wilderness as space. As an experience of vast distances, monotonous continuities and staggering plenitude, interior Maine disoriented Thoreau, whose measure of wildness was the left-over spaces of a humanised agricultural landscape: chiefly the woodlots, fallow fields and swamps of eastern Massachusetts. The prospect of vast stretches of the wild (wilderness) fills him with excitement, and dread, and leaves him to grapple with the forces of geography and history. Thoreau chose to explore the interior – neither the coast, nor the 'shores of America' (81), nor the countryside, but rather what Gary Snyder later called the 'backcountry'. This reflects an obvious development of a society that owed its roots and its place in the world to its colonial situation. For, while the Euro-Americans have inherited a place in history through the achievement of building their republic, their culture was very slow to take measure of the interior of the continent they presumed to inherit. The source of the rivers and the strength of the land remained largely to be explored.

At first thought rivers represent precisely the conjoining of biogeography and culture Thoreau is looking for. But, he tells us, Maine's rivers fall short of the standard of the Concord and Assabet Rivers of his native Massachusetts when it comes to variety of fishes. He sees riverbanks, he mentions the Thames (which he never visited), as what we would call 'ecological edges', the sites of productive ecologies, natural and human. Maine lacks such complexity – not just the lack of people, but the lack of long productive relationships between people and landscape. Maine is not his hometown of Concord – an oft-repeated mantra, seen frequently in terms of the geographical landscape: Concord's humanised countryside fringed by spots of wildness must be contrasted with Maine's endless forest. Scale was thrown asunder: the Maine trips immersed him in vast distances, monotonous continuities and impressive volumes that completely disoriented Thoreau's sense of landscape, so much so that he came to long for the occasional openings provided by lakes; water is light, scenery, beauty and civilisation, he tells us.

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Thoreau structures his narrative as one of growing disillusionment that falls into a sense of sublime dread. At first, Maine had a touch of the exotic: 'hardly had we gotten out of the streets of Bangor' that 'I began to be exhilarated by the sight of wild fir and spruce tops, and those of other primitive evergreens, peering through the midst in the horizon. It was like the sight and odour of cake to a schoolboy' (112). But his experiences soon dampen his enthusiasm. Wilderness is monotony; the lack of variation: 'What is most striking about the Maine wilderness is the continuousness of the forest, with fewer openings or glades than you had imagined': 'damp and intricate', 'grim and wild' and often 'wet and miry'. 'The aspect of the country, indeed, is universally stern and savage, excepting the distant views of the forest from the hills, and the lake prospects' (80). I am struck by the number of references to savage and primitive conditions bereft of all grace: were the 'sombre fir and spruce woods' (218) a sign of Thoreau's despair or simply a reflection of his and his companion's grief at being lost on a path that led them 'through an arbour-vitae wilderness of the grimmest character' (213)? What was he doing there totally without bearings and waking up morning after morning to be greeted by the sight of 'a damp and shaggy forest'? 'The most you knew about it was, that on this side it stretched toward the settlements, and on that to still more unfrequented regions' (200). One is reminded of the dialogue in the film *Into the Wild* (Penn 2007) in which the protagonist having determined for his Alaska sojourn – 'You know big mountains, rivers, sky, game … Just be out there, in it. In the wild' – is asked by his somewhat perplexed new friend: 'Yeah. [But] what are you doing when we're there?' Like the protagonist in the film, Thoreau's first sense of wilderness is abstract.

As a naturalist, Thoreau was happy enough to go 'botanising' and to pontificate on the relation of the Amerindians to the land, but the dark, gloomy, severe woods cast a chill – an opening to his sense of irony: 'I arrived upon a side-hill, or rather a side-mountain [to Kataadn] where rocks, grey silent rocks were the flocks and herds that pastured, chewing a rocky cud at sunset' (61). Here Arcadia consists of stones. Nor is Maine in any sense an unspoilt, innocent landscape. He often 'paints' a sublime landscape in the Burkean sense. They were crossing Moosehead – a large lake that served as entrée to the northern woods. Unlike his earlier trips, the little party proceeded, not by steamer that regularly ran there, but rather in a canoe; Thoreau sets a sublime tone by asking us to imagine their 'little egg-shell of a canoe tossing across that great lake, a mere black speck to the eagle soaring above it' (171–172). The sense of being vulnerable to forces that dwarf human scale is an important aspect of the

sublime. On occasion Thoreau manages to take in a sublime prospect, as when he and his companion climb Mt Kineo. Immersed in cloud at first, a sudden opening provides 'a glorious wild view ... of the broad lake with its fluctuating surface and numerous forest-clad islands, extending beyond our sight both north and south, and the boundless forest undulating away from its shores on every side, as densely packed as a rye-field and enveloping nameless mountains in succession' (174). It captures a sense of immensity and transcendence, relieving the all too familiar feeling of being enclosed that echoes throughout *The Maine Woods*; but the prospect 'was only a transient gleam, for the rain was not quite over' (175). They soon lose the 'civilising sky' (198) over the lake – the beauty of the atmosphere and the visual enjoyment of prospects – to enter the 'dark, deep, sluggish river' (200) that transports them once again into the interminable forest.

In the absence of the imaginative capacity, wilderness is place-less; space is empty, dreary, monotonous, lacking aesthetics and disorienting. Indeed, it might be said to have all the qualities of the abstract social space we have created under the globalisation regime. Thoreau is not above describing the wilderness as – well, to be frank – visually boring. He remarks time and again about the emptiness of the forest. It's impenetrable, often disappointingly lacking in wildlife and unvarying in its topography. It lacks the visual quality of picturesque landscape, the political boundaries of the famous American grid, or even the solidity of the road system of southern New England founded on pathways of the Amerindians: all are absent leaving the traveller as disoriented as the European traveller to the Asian steppes. At times he resorts to sarcasm: 'It is remarkable how little these important gates to a lake are blazoned. There is no triumphal arch over the modest inlet or outlet, but at some undistinguished point in or out through the uninterrupted forest, almost as through a sponge' (227–228). The 'uninterrupted forest' was the sponge that oozed water, a small portion of which flows through streams and lakes. But with the exception of very large lakes, the water features are never really distinct from the forest itself. One is left, on several occasions, immersed in a vast boundary-less world that has no particular place for (a) man, and consequently subject to the power of inhuman dimensionality – the awful extensiveness of space. Despite my ruminations here, I think Thoreau knows what he wishes to find in wilderness. The basis for rebalancing the two principle streams that influence human culture: cosmopolitan versus indigenous, trade versus native resources, globality versus *genius loci*. At the end of the first of his three voyages, Thoreau's proverbial Indian looks out from the interior of Maine toward the sea:

The Maine Woods

> There stands the city of Bangor, fifty miles[10] up the Penobscot, at the head of navigation for vessels of the largest class, the principal lumber depot on this continent, with a population of twelve thousand, like a star at the edge of night, still hewing at the forests of which it is built, already overflowing with luxury and refinement of Europe, and sending its vessels to Spain, to England, and to the West Indies for its groceries-, and yet only a few axe-men have gone 'up river' into the howling wilderness which feeds it … and, sixty miles above, the country is virtually unmapped and unexplored, and there still waves the virgin forest of the New World (82–83).

This formulation may well be understood as the classic quest for pastoral return, but it reflects pastoral toward the issue of the character of civilisation with its cosmopolitan commitments and neglect of its surroundings – an issue even more pressing today than in the nineteenth century. The choice of Bangor as a nascent metropolis and of interior Maine as a wilderness left over in the leap to California begins the question of how the biosphere should relate to the urban forms, for proximity is key to Thoreau's formulation here. The question, which vexed him and drove him and that defined his 'errand', was how to capture something from those unexplored recesses and bring it back to Bangor and to the attention of the world.

The Umbazookskus, a ten mile long canal-like stream connecting a lake of the same name with Mud Pond, means 'Much Meadow River' in Algonquin (207); it reminds Thoreau of the Musketaquid (Algonquin for the Concord): slow moving and fecund; peaceful and reflective, a landscape given to contemplation. Along its banks, Thoreau locates an 'extensive' grove of larch, a very beautiful and delicate coniferous tree that sheds its needles in the winter; a tree that displays its architecture in all seasons. It was rare: 'though it was the prevailing tree here [at this spot], I do not remember that I saw any afterward' (209); its rarity provided a discernible and unique moment on his excursion. Over the course of three pages he paints a sensual landscape around the 'tall and slender trees with fantastic branches' (209) framed by an expressionist colours: the dark, rich brown waters of the Umbazookskus contrast with the golden meadows; the waters are still and reflect the sky above. There is light enough and perspective enough for a glance at the forest, but just barely enough space; behind the little opening the gloomy and extensive forest looms, an overwhelming external force that forces our visual attention back to the small picturesque opening. That enclosed opening reframes perception; we see the larch grove as an entity distinct from the forest, which has implications for

10. Actually, thirty miles by air.

*Figure 4.1. **Kindred Spirits**, by Asher Durand, 1849, oil on canvas, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK. The theme of intimacy between culture and nature is expressed in the friendship of the two figures in the painting. Although the setting offers a prospect that Thoreau often evades, the narrow space, the sense of stillness, the reference to the Arcadian grove are commonalities.*

social ecology. Thoreau remarks that trees have a 'social habit' of growing in 'clumps' or groups. They are 'communities' (275) he tells us, communities of plants that are very much garden-like in their 'sociality'. In this way, ecological order suggests visual order and the visual of the landscape provides space for reflection about community. There is also the theme of intimacy that arises with a sensibility of place. If such intimacy is better found in the woods than in social space, one has an indication of the theme of transference.

In 'Chesuncook', (the second of the narratives that comprise the book) he offers us a painterly guide for discerning individual tree species; one could easily distinguish the 'hard wood', especially the rock maple and birch, from 'the soft', fir and spruce, as the later constituted a 'black growth' that may been seen 'at a great distance' (92). Thoreau might very well have known that Ruskin advocated such species-specific representation in order to create a greater symbiosis between landscape art and nature (Wilton and Barringer: 129). Landscape art thus provides a point of departure, but also serves as a means of 'return' to culture. Wilderness in itself could provide only the 'raw material' or a 'resource and a background' necessary to the sculpting of civilisation (155). The larger point is the humanisation of land stands as the basis of asserting a common destiny, but it serves also as an opportunity to recreate culture. The theme of 'topophilia' is appropriate here, for love of the *topos* is identification with culture embedded in nature and draws on the sense of home making.

But this convergence is all too cosy, all too comfortable, for Thoreau's old Puritan bones. In any case, he did not come to Maine to recreate his home region, but to find the underlying sources of its vitality and discover its resources for the recovery of humankind. He wished to find a connective tissue, a deeper relation between nature and culture. As a naturalist, Thoreau was keen to identify places with particular cultures. Perhaps the Maine woods can tell us about the local Amerindians, about the relation of character to place: the single most important aspect of his search takes the form of etymological analysis of Amerindian place names in search of the relation between the Amerindians and the geographic landscape. But there was also his interest in woodcraft and other material practices. A standard interpretation is that Thoreau's dismissive and Puritanical attitude toward the local Amerindians for their lack of achievement generally gives way to admiration, especially for his guides and the Penobscot people in general (Theroux in Thoreau 2004/1864: xvi-xvii; see also Sayre 1977). But Thoreau did not find the reservoir of strength in character of the primitive in the face of modernisation; he discovered it neither in the natives, nor the whites, generally: 'There is in fact a remarkable

*Figure 4.2. **The Course of Empire: The Savage State** (detail), by Thomas Cole, 1834, oil on canvas, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. Primitivism is culture associated with nature and origin, but also with savagery and a brutish 'state of nature' that justifies the present human condition. Thoreau quickly moved beyond this idea of nature.*

and unexpected resemblance between the degraded savage and the lowest classes in a great city. The one is no more a child of nature than the other. In the progress of degradation, the distinction of races is soon lost' (78). The ironic use of the term 'progress' tells us much about Thoreau's feeling that, the greater the complexity of civilisation with its networks of trade and migration, the more entrenched the class system becomes. This judgement is applied with equal ferocity to the subaltern and middle classes alike; his discovery that his first guide had been to New York and Philadelphia and was well invested in the stock market is at least as problematic for Thoreau as the drunken demeanour and squalid conditions suffered by many Amerindians he observes. The point

is not limited to observations of character. Thoreau initially admires his guides for their ability to negotiate between preservation of woodcraft and the modern commercial world, but he also discovered that 'they knew but little of the history of their race' (135–136) and he was acutely disappointed when their guide, Joe Aitteon, refused to even imagine how his ancestors managed their expeditions without supplies. Aitteon's response to a declarative form, 'I shan't go into the woods without provision, – hard bread, pork, etc.' (107), clearly indicating his identity with civilisation over heritage. Later, on his third excursion, when Thoreau and his companion felt compelled to explain the concept of a loan on a property to Joe Polis, another of their guides, they were shocked to learn that, as a substantial property owner, Polis understood it all too well. With the idealising illusion of 'authenticity' dispelled, the sense of foreclosure by civilisation must have been very dispiriting for Thoreau, who surely turned back on his thought of Maine as an anthropological investigation. His search for cultural survivals – for primitive traditions and ways of living as a source of culture-in-nature – sprang a dry well.

'Pure Nature'

In the oldest myths of the western culture, the groves of Arcadia were places where human beings had liaisons with beasts. Thoreau's imagined liaisons were of a more auditory nature: 'I was ready to echo the growl of a bear, the howl of a wolf, or the scream of a panther; but when you get fairly in the middle of one of these grim forests, you are surprised to find that the larger inhabitants are not at home commonly, but have left only a puny red squirrel to bark at you'. 'Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveller that does the howling' (219). No need for additional reference; Thoreau often satirised the seriousness of his quests. Animal life fails to meet Thoreau's expectations, but, while animals were scarce, he found what he was looking for in the forest itself:

> Humboldt has written an interesting chapter on the primitive forest, but no one has yet described for me the difference between the wild forest which once occupied our oldest townships and the tame one which I find there today … The civilized man not only clears the land permanently to a great extent, and cultivates open fields, but he tames and cultivates to a certain extent the forest itself. By his mere presence, almost, he changes the nature of the trees as no other creature does. It has lost its wild, damp, and shaggy look, the countless fallen and decaying trees are gone, and consequently that thick coat of moss which lives on them is gone too. The earth is comparatively smooth and dry.

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> The most primitive places left with us are the swamps, where the spruce still grows shaggy with usnea.[11] The surface of the ground in the Maine woods is everywhere spongy and saturated with moisture. I noticed that the plant which cover the forest floor there are such as commonly confined to swamps with us [in Concord](151–152).

Finally he realises that sense of organic power and fecundity in wetness and shagginess of the forest as a whole – not in tree species, but in the interacting web of life in an uncut forest that adds up to something quite unavailable in the managed woodlots of Massachusetts. I would say that Thoreau's wilderness is biological, as much as primitive: in the present as much as the past, not bound by human measures of origin, but evident in the biosphere. Indeed, like sublime landscape paintings, 'pure nature' is devoid of human presence. They share Humboldt's lush descriptions of the biota of Latin America,[12] and in Thoreau's rendition wilderness is biocentric. It is less a position that should be seen in isolation than a part of a dialectic which will return to the question of human influence on the biosphere.

'Pure nature' – a concept that would bring derisive laughter and mockery today – is a means of inserting contradiction into the reading of landscape. Modernity (and post-modernity) assigns priority to human influence and then presumes to proclaim how national societies (or now some even more abstract idea of the global society) should interact with 'nature' or operate in 'the environment' while simultaneously announcing the death of nature and the irrelevance of the past, but Thoreau, being perhaps a bit more modest, wishes to know what nature is – and even though the question can never be answered once and for all, he wishes to at least describe what it is he sees and understands. I think his answer is that nature is power and nature is beauty; and the 'nature' of the philosophers tends to emphasise the latter, while ignoring the former. Thoreau wishes to see that 'forever untameable *Nature*' (69) or 'pure Nature' which reflects what lies beneath nature: a 'region' of the imagination that is 'vast and drear and inhuman, though in the midst of cities', i.e. nature as the power of creation underlying all physical existence that sense of 'nature' as a global force capable of sudden and unpredictable transformation of the environmental sphere. He proposes 'this was the Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man's garden, but the unhandselled globe. It was not

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11. A lichen.

12. Cañizares-Esguerra 2006: 153–154 points to the influence of Humboldt on the Hudson River school, in part to contrast North American and Latin American conceptions of landscape.

lawn, nor pasture, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land … It was Matter, vast, terrific – not his Mother Earth' (70).

Hiking to the top of Mt Katahdin[13] over two days, he takes up the question: can we see power through beauty (or, is the sublime a two way mirror)? They begin by poling up the Penobscot River. At the end of the first day they camp alongside the Sowadnehunk dead-water, a flooded part of the West Branch of the Penobscot, named after a nearby stream which means 'running between the mountains'. The camp lies near the outlet of a mountain stream, the Aboljacknagesic, a location, Thoreau tells us, approximately twelve miles from Katahdin's summit. There the party fishes out of their bateaux in the still water, past the last of the Aboljacknagesic's rapids. Thoreau, charged with catching the fish as they were pulled from the river, becomes an observer of nature, in this case the purity of the waters, the ruggedness of the landscape and extraordinary beauty of the trout. While he describes the scene, he continues his musings about origin, about primitive cultures – but primarily about having been witness to the trout's beauty: 'While yet alive, before their tints had faded, they glistened like the fairest flowers, the product of primitive rivers; and he could hardly trust his senses, as he stood over them, that these jewels should have swum away in that Aboljacknagesic water for so long, for so many dark ages; – these bright fluviatile flowers, seen of Indians only, made beautiful, the Lord only knows why, to swim there!' (54). Beauty must be inherent in nature, having lain there through so many 'dark ages' of ugliness, which means that Kant is (partly) wrong; beauty cannot possibly be a category of the human mind alone. But perhaps the fish are only imagined – as Arcadia is imagined but never to be achieved? Like the protagonists in the fable of Proteus, Thoreau tells us that he and his companions are attempting to seize beauty. But Proteus is adept at changing forms, presenting the epistemological problem of where beauty lies. Are the fish like a landscape, a gilded 'surface' that does not reach to the 'core' (quoted in Boudreau 1973: 366)? Or, even worse, are they merely an illusion of time past projected forward, part of a myth seen only by the ancient ones?

That night Thoreau dreams of trout fishing[14] and awakening suddenly senses the looming presence of

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13. Also spelt 'Ktaadn'; at an elevation of 5,267 feet (1,605 m), the highest point in Maine. In Penobscot it means 'the greatest mountain'.

14. In *Walden* Thoreau goes 'midnight fishing from a boat by moonlight' and reflects on enacting the vertical dimension linking sacred and profane: 'it seemed as I might cast my line upward into the air, as well as downward into this element which was scarcely less dense' quoted in Peck 2004: 92.

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> Ktaadn with distinct and cloudless outline in the moonlight; and the rippling of the rapids was the only sound to break the stillness. Standing there I once more cast my line into the stream, and found the dream to be real, and the fable true. The speckled trout and silvery roach, like flying fish, sped swiftly through the moonlight air, describing bright arcs on the dark side of Ktaadn, until moonlight, now fading into daylight, brought satiety to my mind, and the minds of my companions, who had joined me (55).

The mountain loomed there amidst the streams and woods, visible in the moonlight but not entirely knowable, certainly not through vision (and its metaphorical extension, intellect); Katahdin is being, looming there in the darkness: its mere presence might be 'more worthwhile in … effect upon … the spiritual depths of man, then all its properly picturesque views' (Templeman 1932: 881).

The next day finds the little party ascending Katahdin, following alongside the streambed of Murch Creek. While his companions search out a suitable place to make camp, Thoreau presses on, climbing up a gorge alongside a considerable torrent. The ravine was very steep, 45 degrees he estimates, and consisted of a series of steps, each shelf of which was twenty to thirty feet high forming what amounted to a 'giant's stairway'. Driven by his quest to find the origin of beauty, Thoreau claws his way up, belly to the earth, pulling himself up by grabbing on to whatever stones and roots present themselves: 'The torrent was between fifteen and thirty feet wide, without a tributary, and seemingly not diminishing in breadth as I advanced; but it still came rushing and roaring down, with a copious tide, over and amidst masses of bare rock, from the very clouds, as though a water spout had burst over the mountain' (60). The scene was a powerful sublime representation inside the narrow ravine; it is reminiscent of Thomas Cole's *Clove at Kaaterskill Falls*, a sublime landscape that confirms the generating forces of the geosphere.

Pausing to reflect on the Cole-like landscape, Thoreau makes use of both sublime and picturesque visual tropes in his narrative of ascent, but he relies on metaphor to make his point: ascending to the top of the mountain is journey of discovery for what lies beneath the aesthetic, a quest to find the roots of life.

Scrambling on all fours, he discovers ancient black-spruce trees, (*Abies nigra)* 'old as the flood, from two to ten or twelve feet in height, their tops flat and spreading, and their foliage blue and nipt with cold, as if for centuries they had ceased growing upward against the bleak sky, the solid cold' (60–61). Reaching the top of Katahdin, he finds a vast plain, a tundra-like plateau with scattered stones near, a primeval treeless landscape of the North. I've seen a

*Figure 4.3. **The Clove at Kaaterskill Falls**, by Thomas Cole, 1836, private collection. A gorge carved by the Kaaterskill creek, resembles, albeit on a much larger scale (note small figure near ledge), what Thoreau describes as a 'stairway for giants': the ravine he discovers on his assent of Katahdin. Cole mitigates the river's raw power by lighting the foreground and by emphasising the wispy leaves displaying their fall colours. The authenticity of the scene lies in its accurate and powerful representation of nature's power to carve rock and cast logs and boulders about in a reckless and whimsical fashion: the painting therefore captures a powerful sense of the sublime aesthetic as an expression of environment as physical force. Cole uses visual tropes of the picturesque and sublime to hint at deeper and real geological logos beneath landscape. Such powers of visual description harness aesthetic appetite for encounter to grasping the significance of the earth.*

similar landscape at 3,000 feet (1,000 metres) in Norway: an alpine tundra of rock, virtually devoid of soil, shaped by wind and ice, a landscape that resembles much of northern Europe and North America as it emerged from beneath the glaciers of the most recent Ice Age. By all appearances, Thoreau had found life close to the elements, a tableau scraped clean of vegetation, soil and fauna, a sphere consisting of rock, sun, air. It is in response to this desolation that Thoreau is inspired to write the passage cited earlier about finding 'Matter, vast, terrific'. Matter makes for one sense of wilderness, a space that is 'vast, inhuman, titanic', a place 'such as man never inhabits' (64). It is terribly lonely up there, frightfully cold and its aesthetic is one of clean raw power, even the life-generating capacities of the biosphere seem weak juxtaposed to those of the geosphere, to the raw power of the universe. Here, with the nurturing biosphere, a memory we are completely alone and confronted with existence. Thus Thoreau lifts the veil; it is not quite the equivalent of Captain Ahab's 'pasteboard mask' that obscures God's nature as the force that has 'maimed mankind' throughout our history as a species. No, Thoreau's mask is closer to a transparent veil; the veil is the surface of the earth – soil, rivers, the trees, animals that like us are (mere) inhabitants at behest of an unstoppable force: not evil, but inevitable, and inevitability can also bring tragic consequences. Gazing at the power of the geosphere does not reassure us of our place in the world. We certainly do not see it as handmaiden to the *naturphilosophie*. Yes, human life corresponds to the organic order and life intersects culture through the lifeworld or environmental sphere, but these are not eschatological relations. They are potential relations of culture to nature that co-exist in a social world where human power is wont to mimic the powers of the geosphere: the restless drive to replicate the power of life and death, a process of technological mastery just beginning in Thoreau's time, but well advanced in ours. When Thoreau returns from his encounter with 'pure nature' he cannot replicate the classic pastoral return from Arcadia where the sojourner is all the wiser regarding the ethical and natural order of *Georgia*. Instead, upon return, Thoreau poses a dilemma that may be stated as follows: beauty draws us in relation to the whole of existence; it transcends the mundane and it shows the unity of life. But beauty is a terrible truth because it must coexist with the universe's absolute power over life and death. 'Nature' is thus not only something to which we are attracted through the aesthetic-moral sense, eager to intertwine human life with the environmental sphere. Nature is also global force operating most dramatically through the geosphere – a force that cares not about our destiny. Nature is not God. The geosphere expresses a force counter to human wishes

expressed in nature philosophy and in the concept of 'nature'. In this sense Thoreau finds what Hartman (2016) calls a 'counter-nature' to our expectations of the potential of the environmental sphere.

Prognosis: From Republic to Ferity

Our version of the pastoral return requires revisiting questions of culture and politics raised in the opening of this chapter and along the way appraising Thoreau's hope of finding a lived space in the frontier that might revive his old republican inclinations. It is very interesting to me that *The Maine Woods*, a book which contemplates 'pure nature' – nature alone – manages at the same time to say quite a bit about the people who inhabit the woods in a new social space.

On his first excursion, Thoreau arrives at the vast Moosehead Lake and imagines it as a settled area with towns, villages and farms along lines of early New England. Do town life and growing trade foster a new civic humanism? To answer this question Thoreau describes Maine's infrastructure and the peoples' (white and Amerindian) ways of life in great detail: the encroaching farming districts, the roads, river passages and portages that were the means of transport, the implements of travel from stage-coach to bateaux to Indian canoes, the (often abandoned) lumber camps and pioneer cabins, the man-made waterways and dams, the life of the solitary hunters and Indian hunting parties, and the woodcraft of the Indian guides.

Thoreau recounts a story of how he and a 'very good' white hunter, having chased a moose around the woods in circles for hours, were then faced with the problem of finding camp. The white hunter was so disoriented that he pointed in the wrong direction, while Joe Polis, his guide, simply picked up and led them straight back to camp without having to retrace their steps. When asked by Thoreau how that was possible, Polis tells him: "'O, I can't tell you … Great difference between me and white man'" (185). This remark provides an occasion for Thoreau to ruminate on the 'sharpened sense' of the Amerindian that we call 'instinct in the animal' and in the process of his reflections come as close as he ever does in *The Maine Woods* to a fundamental question about nature's influence on culture: what would it mean to follow in the footsteps of the Amerindian and, having no use for 'knowledge, all labelled and arranged', rely instead on oneself 'at the moment' (185)? Thoreau takes the theme of improvisation at face value. He finds strength in rude pioneer houses and logging camps that although 'drear and savage' in setting and 'submerged completely in the woods as a fungus at the foot of a pine [… and possessed] of no outlook

but to the sky above' (19–20), were carving out a new culture. The apparent rejection of civilising light and prospect, the crafting of buildings with an axe rather than the carpenter's square, the acceptance of curvilinear forms rather than the pure geometries of Archimedes, suggest pragmatism and flexibility as foundations for a different kind of ethos.[15] Individuals stand out as exemplars of these American virtues. The party stopped at the cabin of 'Uncle George' McCauslin, a Kennebec River man who had been a waterman and who owned a sizable backcountry farm that often hosted travellers. Thoreau was so impressed with McCauslin's 'dry wit' and 'general intelligence' that he proposed him as a kind of 'new man' of the forest: 'The deeper you penetrate into the woods', Thoreau explains, 'the more intelligent, and in one sense less countrified do you find the inhabitants; for always the pioneer has been a traveller, and to some extent a man of the world' (22). The frontier is far closer to the intelligence that is 'thought to emanate from cities', he adds, than that exhibited by inhabitants of the 'old-settled country' in towns like Concord around Boston (23).

Thoreau is not so sure, however, that he can endorse the way of life of the inhabitants. Indeed, he is quite disturbed at the waste of resources: the abundance of wood meant that supper was prepared on a fire that 'would have roasted an ox' and several whole logs four feet (one and a quarter metres) long 'were consumed to boil our tea kettle' (23). He remarks sardonically that the pioneer is a whole new man: he uses the whole log, while the citizen uses a 'mere sliver or board' (125). But waste wasn't simply limited to wood: to read Thoreau one might be forgiven for thinking he had unlocked the source of America's future obesity epidemic. To the 'produce of the farm' – eggs, ham and potatoes, must be added the 'bounty of the forests and streams' – mountain cranberries, shad and salmon. 'Everything here was in profusion, and of the best kind', he adds (23).

Even if Maine should have succeeded in some future of Thoreau's imagination in producing a new cuisine based on the union of farm and field – a new way of bringing culture and nature into relation – the context troubled Thoreau. Specifically, the new man of the frontier opened one set of doors, that of indigene, but seemed to close another set, that of citizen.

In truth I found more questions in Thoreau than answers. There is an experience of community Thoreau describes on the trail familiar to today's

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15. This observation resonates with the emerging American national myth. Crèvecouer in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (2013 / 1782) in asking 'who is this new man, the American' noted that the national character was largely the consequence of a willingness to dispense with inherited culture and the openness to embrace the material conditions and opportunities of newly settled lands.

backcountry hikers: nothing better sums up the idea that there is something inestimable in finding and creating alternative spaces that generate novelty and creativity in the response of their (effectively temporary) inhabitants. Indeed, by breaking down the rigidness of the built environment, the frontier provided conditions essential for improvisation of a public sphere, he muses. Houses were spread so far apart, they became well known waysides: private space became public. Perhaps the 'wild and adventurous' life of a solitary hunter he meets at Telos Lake exceeds the quality of the life of the 'hunter in Concord woods who gets back to his house and mill-dam every night!' (244). Solitary life frees us from the town gossip at the mill dam. Thoreau is humorous, but the sense that a sea change has occurred that will bury Concord is palpable in his work. Migrating to Maine, so as to 'begin life as Adam did' (14), like following the westward tilt in 'Walking' seemed inevitable and therefore in line with history, but are they an advance in humanism?

The point of reference for the shape of American politics is the triumph of the geopolitics of expansion that we first discussed in Chapter 2. In early 1817, Representative (and later Senator) John C. Calhoun of South Carolina gave a speech on the floor of the House in favour of federal expenditure for roads and canal construction, saying: 'Let us bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals. Let us conquer space.' The proposal was an outgrowth of nationalism that arose during the War of 1812 when a 'National Republican' political consensus[16] overcame party divisions for a brief period in what became known to American history as the 'era of good feelings'. The speech and the motif of economic nationalism signify a new kind of rhetoric that by reversing the oratory of citizenship and liberty, linked national politics and American political destiny directly to economic growth. President Madison, a good Jeffersonian, vetoed Calhoun's bill because the Constitution did not authorise federal expenditures for what was clearly meant to be a matter for each state to decide. But Calhoun had made his point and funding was established later in a piecemeal matter. Besides, infrastructural improvement was but one part of the new nationalist programme of aggressive territorial expansion that would change the map of the US. Even the rise of sectionalism over the slavery question did not prevent the perpetuation of the mantra of growth, for the link between destiny and economic development had now been made.

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16. Not to be confused with the Republican Party, which was founded in the 1850s, the National Republicans are seen as combining Jeffersonian-Republican agrarianism with the Federalist (Hamiltonian) idea of federal support for economic growth.

Maine: The Woods

Thoreau confronts the growth mentality symbolically in the wilderness of Maine. Indeed one could see his nascent environmental politics as a response to one of the most famous episodes in the book: the moose[17] hunt. Thoreau had preceded his recounting of the hunt with sympathetic descriptions of the real life of the Maine woods; the 'solitary and adventurous' lives of the advance scouts who found stands of valuable stands of trees for the lumber companies (100). He then takes us deeper into the forest: the party ascended the Moosehorn, a 'very meandering stream, only a rod[18] or two in width … it was bordered here and there by narrow meadows between the stream and the endless forest' (102). They made their way up a half a mile 'as through a narrow, winding canal, where the tall dark spruce and firs and arbour-vitae, towered on both sides in the moonlight, like the spires of a Venice in the forest' (102). Darkness adds the necessary elements of obscurity and surprise to create a picturesque scene, undoubtedly pleasing to his readers; the reference to the spires of Venice suggests something of the grandeur of the setting: its tall trees. We feel a sense of ill ease which is realised when, finding nothing on the Moosehorn, they paddle up similar nearby stream; when they spotted the moose they reminded Thoreau of 'great frightened rabbits … the true denizens of the forest' (110). The moose – cow and her calf – were shot and the cow was tracked down; the task of skinning was completed 'between two lofty walls of spruce and firs a mere cleft in the forest which the stream had made' (116). The ghastly business prompted Thoreau to remark, 'what a coarse and imperfect use Indians and hunters make of nature!' (120). He had a few pages earlier remarked, in an anticipation of core-periphery geographical theory, that there is no separating the economies of Boston and Maine.

The Maine forest was a peripheral region, linked to the national economy, exchanging raw materials for finished goods (108–109). Thoreau was quite right to make this point for it was a process that began as soon as the fur trade required the labour of the Amerindians. Thoreau's emerging concern was commodification of culture: we go to the wilderness to admire what is alive, not to process what is killed into just another commodity-form. This new ethic of conservation is linked to civic virtue, for Thoreau points out that the commoditisers also benefited from the widespread thievery of timber from public lands (145). At that point, I would say that Thoreau introduced or anticipated the wise use theme of conservation, which interpreted correctly, should still be seen as a fundamental foundation of environmental discourse. What Thoreau

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17.   Algonquian for elk

18.   A rod equals 15 feet or approximately 5 metres.

did was to link conservation to civic-mindedness in the face of the exploitation of environment for private gain. The interweaving of a political good with the environmental good in a common sphere reflects Thoreau's deepest principles.

By contrast the actually existing frontier is an order shaped by applying market principles and preferences and achieved at the cost of abandoning the hope for community's potential engagement with the environmental sphere. Marketisation was also a 'counter nature' but one in which social intent for the shaping of space transformed the biosphere into what Thoreau sees as a feral landscape.

For the sake of historical accuracy, it is important to move away from Thoreau's text for a moment, to note that the frontier actually incorporated two quite distinct social spaces. The first frontier – as described over one hundred years later by the Swiss architect, Siegfried Gideon, in his magisterial history of mechanisation, and later rehearsed by William Cronon – was essentially a space defined by technological transformation under the auspices of marketisation. It was, from a European perspective, a 'leap from a primitive, colonial mode of living into a highly organized mechanization' characterised by the transformation of the sleepy prairies of the Middle West into a dynamic rural economy networked to the cities of the East and Europe. Gideon observes that this 'sudden leap' to a technological landscape 'is typical for the whole American development' (2014/1948: 144; see also Cronon 1992). This is the frontier of the genteel sort, as seen in the technological picturesque drawing in Colden's canal book.

The second frontier was its polar opposite: it never developed, economically or otherwise. Situated in the Appalachian uplands particularly south of the Mason-Dixon Line, but also in the North and in areas of the West such as the Ozark Mountains, the second frontier was lawless and disorganised. There was hardly a trace of the ordered agricultural society that Jefferson had been so instrumental in planting in the American Midwest. The social consequence of frontier life here was isolation often followed by impoverishment. Modern agriculture, whether at the level of family operations or in modern agribusinesses, requires investment and innovation – and that was beyond the means of hard-pressed farmers on the Appalachian frontier. Anthony F.C. Wallace describes what becomes of the pioneers of eastern North America in the early nineteenth century. The Indians restricted to their reservations found themselves encircled by 'a peculiarly dilapidated and discouraged brand of European culture' (Wallace 1969: 208) brought on by land hungry survivors of rocky New

Maine: The Woods

England hillsides and desperate Scots-Irish immigrants driven from Ulster by the development of weaving technology:

> The men came with golden dreams, but the dreams quickly faded. Villages were built and abandoned, roads were cleared and then grew up in brush, and the forest took the clearings again. These pioneers were almost a lost legion, more primitive in material standard of living, and perhaps socially as well, than the Indians on their reservations. … The small isolated farmer, up to his ears in debt to some land company, scratched the soil with a hoe, planted an acre or so of corn and potatoes, shot a few deer, and then sat back to helplessly watch his horses and cattle run away and flood, frost, windstorm and drought ruin his crop. Dietary deficiency diseases were common: goiters plagued the settlers about Pittsburgh, rickets and jaundice were common, complexions were pasty; fleas infested the cabins, flies bred in refuse about the yard, mosquitoes spread an endemic malaria; skin diseases, respiratory diseases, cholera, and typhoid epidemics came and went with the seasons (Wallace 1969: 208–209).

Thus, even before Perkins Marsh's great study of 1864 turned attention to mining and lumbering companies' ravaging of resources, hard-pressed farmers were locked into a cycle of poverty and attempting to escape it by fleeing to ever more remote lands. People fleeing poverty in the under-developed regions to the east fuelled frontier settlement further west. Under such conditions they could neither be expected to make ideal stewards of the land or, as we have seen, to establish a long-standing and traditional presence on the land. Those who didn't flee, and there were millions, experienced the poverty of the upland South, a region caught in the grip of a growing crisis that peaked in the 1930s. This is frontier of the second type, where the perpetrators were among its greatest victims. Conditions were such that finally the federal government was forced into action. Then conservationism linked ecological sustainability to economic development.

The historical development of rural regions in the US casts some light on Thoreau's observations in light of spatial theory. Social space is but a dimension of tri-spatial interaction that includes environmental and conceptual spaces as well. Although the 'wilderness' was conventionally defined as the 'empty land' prior to European settlement, what made the Maine woods a wilderness in the 1840s was the fact of its 'unsettlement' – it had become abstract social space, a part of economic network consisting of trails and dams and cabins that led to the falls at Bangor; but it was a region defined by its environment conceived for exploitation and abandonment, not settled, not made to respond to human care (or cultivation). Abandoned. Empty. Skipped over and nonetheless 'plugged

Prognosis: From Republic to Ferity

in'. But it was still available to reclamation as a cultural space or a conceptual space. This was Thoreau's project.

Thus, in one sense wilderness may be defined as the lack of cultivation – if we take that word widely to connote the human engineering of the geosphere to suit human purposes – and virtually the entire surface of the earth has been cultivated at one time or another. Maine was a grand project that has slipped into decline and decay:

> They have dammed … all the larger lakes, raising their broad surfaces many feet … thus turning the forces of nature against herself, that they might float their spoils out of the country. They rapidly run out of these immense forests all the finer and more accessible pine timber and then leave the bears to watch the decaying dams. Not clearing, nor cultivating the land, nor making roads, nor building houses, but leaving it a wilderness as they found it. In many parts only these dams remain, like deserted beaver dams (228).

Wilderness, he suggests, existed before men came to occupy the land, though it remains a question as to when that pre-anthropological history occurred. What strikes me as most significant is that wilderness of Maine is a feral one; a project in engineering that can at that moment no longer be supported by the market. Thoreau is glad of that: the loggers have acted as 'vermin gnawing at the base of the noblest trees' (228) and reflect a culture of the frontier and a civilisation that 'admires the log, the carcass or corpse, more than the tree' (229). The contradiction between its civic ideals and commercial practices is reflected in the treatment of the natural world. The thesis of abundant resources and limitless space is played out over the early part of 'Katadn' as Thoreau seems determined to evaluate the consequences of a kind of post-scarcity, a theme of subsequent writers about America.

Maine is a feral landscape, a strange kind of abstract space that can re-emerge as green space. The network is there to be activated again when the need arises but in the meantime, he tells us, we are left along with 'the bears to watch the decaying dams' and contemplate what isn't there – chiefly: cultivation, care, and culture. Thoreau's feral landscape reflects the empty space of the America most often in our minds with the West. It connects environmental degradation, political failure and cultural dilution in the face of the growing social contradictions of the failing republic. Seeing a white pine, Thoreau is reminded that it is a straggler, a material survival of what was once a thriving grove, leading him to remark that trees have their own 'social habit, growing in … "clumps", "groups" or "communities"' (210). The transformation of environment to commodity is a process never complete and traces of non-human interaction will

survive. But this does not relieve Thoreau of a deep-seated wish: 'I would have liked to come upon a large community of pines which have not been invaded by the lumbering army' (275–276). The value of the land resides in some great measure in memory: testament to what we have altered for the sake of commercial gain. The value of the wild is as an imagined world, not necessarily free of commercial motivations, but at least living alongside of them. The fact that these lands had been exploited – and that there are traces of this human presence when one looks under the surface of the unending forest – contributes to another kind of wilderness: the feral landscape. We are left again with 'the bears' to contemplate our ruins, the 'decaying dams'. In the process, perhaps, we are brought back around to remember what is not there – agriculture, the cultivation of the land, which is in so many ways the genesis of culture and an expression of human concern for the biosphere.

There were many moments of wonder and amusement with nature, but Thoreau was struggling to come to terms with the Maine wilderness. And I think that this 'something else' had a lot to do with the complexity of a land that was enormous in scale, but also used and abandoned and very different from Thoreau's developed sense of the pastoral in *Walden*, which had equated wild nature with themes such growth, interdependence, friendship, spontaneity, etc. 'Think of the denseness of the forest, the fallen rocks and trees, the windings of the river, the streams emptying into it and the frequent swamps to be crossed. It made you shudder' (275). This observation comes near the end of the book at which point Thoreau has driven home the point that wilderness brings us face to face with the power of nature, a power that Burke tells us is most aesthetic when viewed safely from a distance. Thoreau had breached that coda.

Those ecocritics who are anxious to create neat categorisations and see thinking about nature in terms of periodisation – from pastoral to wilderness to ecology and finally to environment – would be gladdened by Greg Garrard's reading of Thoreau: '*Walden* can be regarded as the terminus of Old World pastoral' while *The Maine Woods* can be 'highlighted as an early example of the wilderness tradition that borrows the ancient rhetoric of retreat and applies it to the endless miles of sublime landscape in America' (Garrard 2004: 66). Thoreau's response to American spaces is so rich in description and suggestion as to make Garrard's comment seem preposterous. Garrard is correct to point out that American cultural confidence and technological aptitude proved too much for Thoreau's powers of imaginative reconstruction. It also true that Thoreau could not bridge the realms of politics and environment; his insights about the loss of self-sustaining civically-oriented communities in the process of

American state-building was largely displaced onto his reading of space. Linkage between space, nature and politics was not developed. But Thoreau did face up to one of the greatest contradictions and dilemmas of modern technological civilisation as seen by its pastoral discontents: 'the dream of managing the environment opposes the dream of submission to it. One road leads to Gifford Pinchot [and managerial environmentalism], the other to John Muir [i.e., ecocentrism]' (Buell 1995: 78). The first holds you in appropriate relation to landscape, nature's controller. The second may lead you to try to respond to the landscape in its own terms, to try to get to know – and if you are a writer, to articulate – its mysterious physiognomy in a more intimate, fine-grained way.

Defined in terms of these alternatives, there can never be a resolution (however temporary) to the environmental crisis and the accompanying crisis of culture. But while this has become a commonplace of ecocriticism and environmental history today, it often leads to attempts at the denaturing of ecology, shibboleths about seeing culture as a 'part of nature' or the attempts to articulate a neo-environmental position that accommodates the current social-political structure. Thoreau's experience already far exceeds these assumptions. The problem he found was that there was no language to link these issues – no language and no institutions. He made use of everything available – picturesque art, the romantic travel narrative, as well as classical myth to enchant us; he used sublime and frontier tropes to alarm us. His influence as filtered through others was great. Most of the designated wilderness areas that have been preserved by the Department of Agriculture after authorisation by the Wilderness Act of 1964 have been assembled in the manner of Thoreau's imaginative repossession of the Maine woods: they have been recalled from memory and assembled from fragments of the continent that escaped the major streams of human population; they are places that have been abandoned because they no longer suit the needs of the economy. The designated wildernesses sometimes exist right alongside other spaces, as in the southern Appalachians, that are equally abandoned by people but occupied by enormous machines dedicated to the destruction of entire mountainsides.

One possible point of departure with which Thoreau leaves us takes us back to memory and culture formation. At the end of Chesuncook, he resorts to a pastoral motif: 'Perhaps our own woods and fields [in Concord] … with the primitive swamps scattered here and there in their midst, but not prevailing over them, are the perfection of parks and groves, gardens, arbors, paths, vistas, and landscapes' (155). This is the larger context that Sherman Paul identifies as '*the human legacy of our culturation*, the immemorial affair of land and life,

of the culture that once respected agriculture' (1992: 10, emphasis added). Thoreau left us with a plea for the necessity of memory; we cannot afford to throw away his testimony out of a benighted notion of 'political relevance', particularly since we lack, still, a politics of any significance when it comes to these questions. Thoreau takes us through wilderness and wildness as necessary parts of our education, even more relevant today as we live in a world that has moved even further along with the agenda of technological transformation of the environmental sphere. Thoreau then leaves us on the same vein with Terry Gifford's post-pastoral, Paul's 'legacy', Guha's discussion of Indian rural regions – remnants of old discourses, old historicisms – for now mere fragments looking for a new narrative that can revive a sense of who we are in relation to the earth and its particular spaces.

Chapter 5

NEW YORK: THE EMERGENCE OF GREEN SPACE

By the time Thoreau had completed his Maine travels and dreamed wistfully of the gardens and groves of Concord, New England with its capital in Boston had already reduced to an economic province. In his travels published in 1821, Timothy Dwight, who preferred the rectangular and relatively open street plan of Philadelphia, thought of New York as an overgrown 'fishing and trading village' whose streets were only slightly less 'crooked' than those of Boston (1969/1821, vol 3: 449). Dwight admired views of the New York region which he quite rightly saw as a group of islands and shores best seen from the perspective of the area's waterways: the city and its 'environs' is a delight to see and 'together with the Hudson, the East river, and the bay; form a combination of objects, alternately beautiful and magnificent' (478).

This watery picturesque seemed entirely compatible in Dwight's mind with the city of commerce and 'prosperous energy'; a city growing rapidly and continually in the process of rebuilding itself: '*New-York almost everywhere wears the appearance of an entirely new city.* Indeed, a great part of what was old has been either pulled or burnt down; and wherever this has been the case, has been rebuilt in a handsomer manner' (470–471, emphasis added). Dwight already foresaw the ascendancy of its great port.[1] New York has many advantages attendant to its location: a fine harbour, access to the Hudson as the most important natural waterway into the interior and a location in the middle of the Atlantic seaboard, almost as good as Philadelphia's but much better than the New England port cities.

But it was a greatly expanded infrastructure – created by the Erie Canal's completion in 1825 – that permitted New York to bypass all of its urban competitors in the race to access the produce and markets of the western states. From that point on, the city's dominance in respect to total American trade was 'staggering' (Wilenz 2004/1984: 108). Between 1825–1850 a threefold growth in population – a rate that was one of the highest in the world at the time –

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1.   'New-York is fast becoming, and to a great extent has already become, the market town for the whole American coast' (467).

New York: The Emergence of Green Space

resulted in a population explosion as the city went from 166,000 inhabitants in 1820 to 515,000 in 1850 (Wilenz 2004/1984: 110).

The extensiveness of New York's transformation from a seaport town still clustered around the streets laid down by the original Dutch settlers to an expansive industrial metropolis may be symbolised by the emergence of Times Square as the centre of commerce and entertainment. The 'square', actually only a crossroads of three thoroughfares, was named after the *New York Times*, which had moved its headquarters there in 1904. Times Square was created from publicity and the fact that its nominal origin lies with a powerful newspaper seems appropriate. After all, publicity made Times Square into a place in the mind of a national public, though its qualities were the antithesis of place. Times Square created the qualities, that became the 'cultural wrapping' necessary to the redefinition of abstract space in terms of electronically mediated mass culture: frenetic mobility and glitz, commercialised amusement or 'schmaltz' and gaudy 'attractions'. While Times Square has been remade by academic critics into a 'carnivalesque' source of cultural alternatives, its real significance was as the launching point of the mass culture – a commercialised culture driven by amusement and functioning through the American idiom – that came to define 'America's' cultural alternative. The variety shows and musicals of Broadway became the basis for Hollywood's stylisation of American life, but beneath this was the vibrancy and energy of New York, whose Times Square was the commercial centre of the city of commerce, more recently reduced to another example of the 'Disneyfication' of urban space.

A rear guard battle has been fought over the commercial landscapes for decades. The City Beautiful movement in the early twentieth century was probably the height of resistance to what has actually occurred, viz the emergence of Times Square, a commercial crossroads, as the greatest symbol of the American urban landscape and a reflection of its living landscape – a symbolism now endorsed by many urban critics.[2] It reflects the failure of American urbanism in general to encourage true centres to reproduce its political democracy, its common values; or, to put it somewhat differently, it reflects the elevation of commerce as its central statement.[3] The failure of American urbanism was as evident in New York's lack of public spaces suitable to democratic expression,

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2. Critical opinion shifted in its favour, however: the tawdry commercial character and vibrant energy of generated by the movement of vehicles and pedestrians is seen as the generative force behind a distinctive American urbanism, described as 'a kaleidoscopic mixture of residential and commercial' elements (Knapp 1991: 120).

3. According to Hammack 1991: 37, the decision for 'a single central marketplace for commercial culture' … 'was determined by the nation's revolutionary hostility to

as it had been in the landscape turn. Indeed a common Victorian era held that 'wilderness' in the sense of a chaotic, dangerous, and artless space could really be found in the city far more than somewhere out in the provinces. The endless lack of grace and visual interest resulted in the famous Commissioners plan of 1811, which had anticipated commercial growth of the city. The plan used a grid with narrow streets and avenues creating a system of rather small blocks; there was no provision for public space and no visual or spatial access to the waterfront. Indeed its only real virtue was the maximisation of street frontage enabled by platting very narrow cross streets that lack alleys; this meant all services required for commercial and residential buildings are forced onto the already inadequate streets (Schyler 1986: 19).

In this sense New York after the Commissioners plan reflected one pole in a binary of early American cities between 'monumental civic space' of Washington and the commercial grid of New York (Schyler 1986: 21–23). But as postmodern architect Rem Koolhaus points out, the grid was far more dynamic. It made 'the history of architecture and all previous architecture irrelevant'. A city designed for commerce forced architecture into a narrow straitjacket and the result was the emergence of the block as the 'maximum unit of urbanistics Ego' (Koolhaus quoted in Esperdy 1999: 11) The face of the 'official' New York we know today, with its shrines to modernity and progress, was very much the creation of the moguls – the Vanderbilts, Woolworths, and Rockefellers – who arose to power during America's 'Gilded Age'. It was a city built on architecture adapted from European sources and imposed on what was an uninspiring street plan. Architecture meant to be seen from the street, as in the great European capital, never really worked in New York. The civic monuments represented by the great Beaux Arts railroad terminals did not fit into the city's spatial design, although they provided magnificent internal space – enormous living rooms of modernity, and like hotel lobbies, a strange cross between public and private space exploited in Hollywood films. Neither their symbolic nor social uses were appreciated enough to save from demolition in 1962 the greatest of these buildings, The Pennsylvania Station (McKim, Meade and White, architects, opened 1910), arguably the most impressive civic structure in the US outside Washington. It was replaced by a cramped utilitarian structure. By then Manhattan had become a vertical space – 'an exhilarating spectacle of the sublime and uncanny' (Lidner 2015: 28). The great skyscrapers' verticality compensated for the lack of vistas and the city's famous zoning laws

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strong, active government, then by the commitment to national unity after the Civil War.'

(first passed in 1916) made possible the creation of a patchwork of semi-public plazas on private property – the most famous and extensive of which was skating rink on the grounds of the Rockefeller Centre. The visual New York is best seen from above or from across the river in New Jersey. The making of New York as an architectural masterpiece offers some solace and offers support to the judgment of many that New York is one of the world's great cities, but its visual splendour is actually a phenomenon of vertical and horizontal space; it is appreciated at great distance and not from the street level. Skyscrapers and bridges helped make the city into a 'technological sublime', which served to mythologise technological achievement (Nye 1994.)

The City of the People

There was once an alternative and it occurred before modernism – for the modern has never been a popular form of expression. I have in mind Walt Whitman's 1856 poem *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, written just a few years before the opening of Central Park, a stirring representation of places as living landscapes. The occasion of the poem is the daily commute back to Brooklyn from Manhattan. Whitman is the one writer (loosely) associated with the Transcendentalist group recognised by critics to have a 'special attachment to urban life' (Thomas 1982: 362). Whitman's strong democratic sentiment underlies his belief in the city, or his wish to believe in the city – the New York of immigrants, the New York of the masses of humanity. The opening stanzas describe his emotive response to the 'flood-tide' of humanity; the flood refers directly to the migration of hundreds of thousands brought to the Port of New York on the in-flowing tide; they were the immigrants he sees, noting their 'unusual costumes' that struck him as 'curious' (1991/1856: 39, stanza 1). He registers the discord, what does it mean to this son of old *Manhattos*: 'myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated' but immediately apprehends that the apparent destruction brings with it a larger unity: 'yet part of the scheme: The similitudes of the past, and those of the future'. The picturesque aesthetic of asserting unity within diversity is evident, but its assertion requires a proclamation of the meaninglessness of historical time – 'the similitudes of the past, and of the future' (1991/1856: 39, stanza 2).

Whitman articulates a second meaning for the 'flood-tide'; the same flood that has overwhelmed the stable historical city and brought the boatloads of newcomers proffers the sustaining powers of nature, lending a sense of continuity: 'A hundred years hence ... others will see them, Will enjoy the sunset,

the pouring in of the flood-tide, the falling back, to the sea of the ebb-tide' (1991/1856: 40, stanza 2). For Whitman the ebb and flow of the tide reflects a city whose human activities coincide with natural ones and the 'fixtures of landscape can be absorbed into the deepest urges of our being' (Kazin 1991: 132). Casey Blake tells us that Lewis Mumford updated the same sentiment three generations later: "'Here was my city', Mumford wrote, "immense, overpowering, flooded with energy and light"; and he reveled in its magnificence – the huge sweep of New York harbor, the "relentless tide" of trains and trolleys, and the "dazzling mass" of buildings "against the indigo sky". The scene is unique in Mumford's memoirs, *a moment that recalls ... mystical euphoria but surpasses [it] in Mumford's profound love for the particulars of his urban environment*' (Blake 1992: 47–48, emphasis added).

Particularism notwithstanding, the 'euphoria' arises from a sudden influx of wellbeing that comes from sensing that the city is alive: it lives in and through the mobility of its people; the city is best understood as movement; that mobility rather than reflection is its most important 'natural' attribute – it is a force of nature much like the effluvial flow. Writing even before the industrial revolution, Whitman senses the same powerful force and he realises that it becomes a foundation of communal identity. He feels himself hurried along in the same 'swift current': he is with the people who, 'refresh'd' by what they see, know better the meaning of what is transpiring in the city, both nature-as-culture – 'the gladness of the river and the bright flow', the gulls 'floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies', the ' shimmering track of beams' of light reflecting off the water; and also the culture-in-nature – work 'the sailors at work in the rigging' on ships 'swinging' in the current, and the implements of work – the hay boat, the steam tugs pushing the barges, the fires from the foundries in the distance that 'flicker . . . black, contrasted with wild red and yellow light, over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets' (1991/1856: 40–41, stanza 3). Whitman claims knowledge of, indeed intimacy with, the 'ample hills' of once small town Brooklyn as well as 'the streets of Manhattan', of the sea and the land, of the tide, the animals and the people:

> Ah, what sight can ever be more stately and admirable,
> to me than my mast-hemm'd Manhattan?
> My river and sun-set, and my scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?
> (1991/1856: 43, stanza, 8).

From his vantage point on the East River, Manhattan could appear as a landscape framed by the masts of ships in its harbour; its 'exuberance and beauty' a far cry from Whitman's journalistic accounts that complained of the filth gener-

ated by farm animals left to roam freely along the city's ill-lit, poorly paved and unplanned streets (Reynolds 1995: 108–109). Whitman painted a picturesque landscape to offer his vision of the city. Perhaps a bit idealistic for our times, unless it is read in the full context of his ideas, but in every other sense I am struck by how much Whitman got right according to contemporary thinking about environment: culture in nature and nature as part of the culture. No separation into built and natural 'worlds' – no pastoral retreat and return, no contemplation of purities urban or rural, no conceptual landscapes, without their furnishings. It was all so right, and all so wrong, or, to be more precise, it would turn out wrong:

> 'Thrive, cities! bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers;
> Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual;
> Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting'
> <div align="right">(1991/1856: 44, stanza 9).</div>

Were these turns of phrase and images of the lifeworld a cheap 'romanticisation' of the city? Not really, because the inclusiveness of the vision was ultimately destructive to self: it would scatter self to the winds, to the conflicting demands of the life scene Whitman has painted for us. A doctrine of immanence made such a faith possible: the relations of people and place constituting an environmental sphere is not exclusive, he tells us. It is not about a specific race, generation or era of historical time. It is not about the particular but rather about the universal. He identifies the universal as a 'film' – an interesting choice for the power of an inherent order has conventionally been understood as the centre, the core. For Whitman is it rather plasma that encompasses all and 'envelopes the Soul for a proper time' and that humankind is now prepared to 'plant … permanently inside us' (1991/1856: 44, stanza 9).

Whitman thus universalises his experience. He sees phenomena from his own perspective, but he brackets the question of his own subjectivity and speaks for the people; the problem of democracy seemed, for the moment, self-evident. It was a matter to be decided on transcendental grounds: the transcendence granted by rebirth. As the poet, Whitman is of the people: he knew 'what it was to be evil' but he has enjoyed rebirth. In his self-identification with 'body' he sees the agreement of matter and spirit; he can speak from self-consciousness, idealistically, even programmatically. D.H. Lawrence knew it better: Whitman's unity of mind and body is founded on self-sacrifice. Whitman finds in the giving of the self, 'the ecstasy of his own reaping and merging with the other'. But he seems unaware that such a 'sacrament' must always raise its binary 'the other sacrament … [of] pride, where the communicant envelops the victim and host

in a flame of ecstatic consuming, sensual gratification and triumph' (Lawrence 1969/1921: 157). Whitman would proclaim an America of love that Ginsberg renames the 'lost America of love';[4] but his proclamation of the 'lovable archaic myth' of a 'true community made by the future as well as the present' (Kazin 1991: 131), which Santayana ridicules as 'the promise of a future [that] was in reality the survival of the past' – the traits of localism, family life and of a 'crude and primitive democracy' – was unable to cope with a world of growing institutional complexity (Santayana 1969/1911: 132).

The political implication of Santayana's observation is that the complexity brought about by modernisation requires the development of bureaucracy and technique, a position that should be familiar enough since that is precisely what has happened: we have the substitution of management for democracy and policy for vision. Not a particularly attractive outcome, it will ultimately exhaust the social fabric, making substantive change impossible. Nonetheless Santayana's critique of Whitman is important because it identifies the (post) modern problem of projecting affect directly into the political realm. If affect, mood, association and memory are coupled to the expression of the lifeworld in the poem, Whitman *could* be read as elevating aesthetic orientation as politics, as opposed to taking an aesthetic stance and finding its implications within a social-cultural field that includes dealing with the art of the political. That latter alternative is not really the concern of the poet, but it certainly has something to do with the role of the critic. American literary criticism's turn toward the 'new historicism' reflects and reinforces the idea that subjectivity – symbol, narrative and awareness – constitutes the foundation of a 'new politics', but it does so in a more complicated way than Santayana's reading suggests. Santayana's representation of Whitman's poetry as a forlorn attempt at 'the survival of the past' in age of modernisation was symbolised for Henry Adams in *The Education* as the image of the Virgin, of a near-mystical attraction to the centre, convergence with the one, the principle ethos of the thirteenth century. For Adams that force was spent. But he didn't count on the late twentieth century's resurrection of symbol as a new kind of social space. Today that space is globalism and it operates not through primitive instinct, as Santayana feared, or through symbolic force but through the techno-bureaucratic apparatus: the new class that creates and is spawned by global space. We operate in order to refashion space in line with abstract principles that draw us inextricably toward 'convergence'

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4. Not that Whitman was unaware of what he had taken on. 'The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to the certainties suitable to me', presumably to the country-side that has always been an attraction. Quoted in Thomas 1982: 371.

of all peoples and all places. What compensates us – or so we think – for this frankly imperialistic vision is the multiplication of subject identities, justified as a politics of identity, but premised on ever more adulterated cultural expressions rooted in our common culture of consumption. It is a politics that elevates subjectivities, forbids conflict and criticism, and favours tolerance of everything and everyone, while implicitly accepting the purposes of the state and of the most powerful elements that comprise the capitalist society.

I feel compelled to examine Whitman in terms not of his subjectivity but specifically in terms of the space he describes, which orients us to the physical environment and thence to the constituted public sphere. There are two aspects of place perception that belong rightfully to the public sphere – gazing and walking. Looking at Whitman's scene in *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry* I
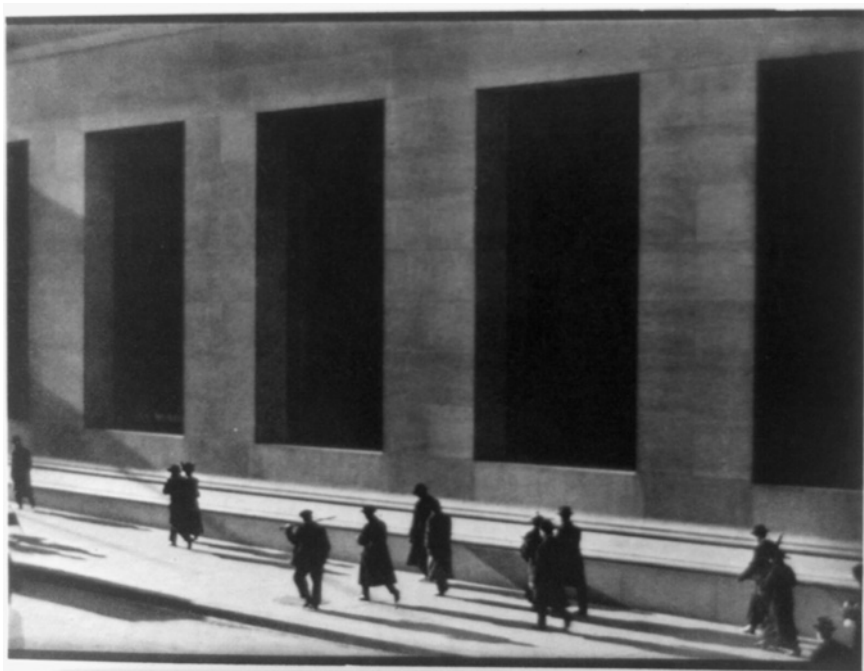
*Figure 5.1. **New York**, by Paul Strand, 1915, photogravure, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. 'New York' is Strand's title, though it is often called 'Wall Street' in reference to the subject matter. Setting exposure on the white marble building in the background produces shadowy silhouettes walking. They walk as a group that is not a group, stoic isolates who lack cohesion and under the aura of powerful corporate presence.*

The City of the People

feel compelled to ask very specific questions about the future of what he sees in 1856. What happens when the workshops close to be taken over by factories? What happens when the vistas afforded by walking are closed in by buildings? What happens when the participation of the people is foreclosed? Who are the people – how could they express themselves? What Waldo Frank says of Hart Crane's attempted epic of America seen through the symbol of the great suspension bridge between Manhattan and Brooklyn, *The Bridge* (1933) – 'He began, naked and brave, in a cultural chaos: and his attempt with sound materials, to achieve poetic form, was ever close to chaos' (1970/1933: xx) – could apply equally to Whitman's ferry crossing. Whitman's poetic voice 'by turns atomised and omniscient, observer and participant, unitary and fragmented into a social collage, interchangeable with others' (Buell 2001: 91) – could not be sustained in the light of the New York that would emerge through the unstoppable process of urbanisation. The Art that mattered would take the form of a commentary on alienation, at times in rebuke (see Figure 5.1) or alternately in mystified silence (see Figure 5.2).

The energy of American cities may have been expressed in the arts – in jazz, in poetry, in painting – but its driving force was trade and its sustaining

*Figure 5.2. **Nighthawks**, by Edward Hopper, 1942. Oil on canvas. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL. Set on a New York street, the brilliant light and large picture windows overcome the cloak of darkness and transcend the urban space, placing a set of shady characters on display in the eerie airiness and functionality of the empty drug store counter.*

force was commercial amusement. And the assimilation of commerce into art, which must at least have some artistic merit, was far less problematic than the attempt to assimilate commerce into politics.

The Limits of Democratic Politics in Nineteenth-Century New York

Sean Wilentz calls the making of New York a case of 'Metropolitan Industrialisation'. His use of the term is not casual; it denotes the remaking of urbanism as a machine. The consequence is the displacement of the republic from the city, which in effect is a confirmation of what happened in Philadelphia in the early national period discussed in Chapter 1. It meant the eclipse of civic humanism as the key principle of urbanism and its replacement with a system of organised chaos, competitive and often vicious, given an almost expressionist reading in Martin Scorsese's film *The Gangs of New York* (2002). The film, though hyperbolic and highly stylised, reflects something of the social dynamics of the 1840s. Set in the Five Corners area of Manhattan, it depicts a brutal contest between rival ethnic gangs for control of the streets and access to employment. While conventional wisdom holds that the US is measured for better and worse by the (twentieth century) myth of the American dream machine of individual striving and liberal achievement, *The Gangs of New York*, like Wilentz's *Chants Democratic*, presents a dysfunctional society, riven by ethnic division and rife with corruption. In the meantime, an upper echelon had very little to do with the society it was making: 'As New York dominated the nation's commerce, so its mercantile bourgeoisie of merchants, financiers, and lawyers dominated the metropolis, setting the standards of taste and refinement and holding the critical positions of power in both political parties' (Wilentz 2004/1984: 108–109). As the accumulation process proceeded there was a 'general deterioration' of living standards and conditions in poor and middle level neighbourhoods (109). By 1830 the source of migration had shifted from the British Isles and New England to Germany and Ireland: within twenty years from 1830 to 1850 New York had been transformed from Dwight's overgrown seaport town to an industrialising metropolis in which half the population had immigrant origins (110). Conditions were poor and 'overcrowded, unsanitary and unsafe housing' prevailed in a milieu characterised by the wide prevalence of disease, impoverishment and crime (Ernst 1949: 181–183).[5]

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5.   By 1890 density for the city south of 14th street and east of Broadway approached eight hundred persons per acre, surpassing the densities of Mumbai. 'Despite repeated reform efforts, the Lower East Side was also one of the most densely built, its standard city

The Limits of Democratic Politics in Nineteenth-Century New York

Employment went from craftwork and trade (as in old Philadelphia – Chapter 1) to a growing white collar class drawn from the American-born overseeing an army of unskilled labourers in many occupations, including domestic service, which was a particularly important employer of women. Indeed domestic servitude in New York, as in London, became one of the largest occupational categories. New York was an enormous market for consumer products supplied from Europe, New England and New Jersey, but it also had a massive surplus labour force that could be exploited. Consequently the city's manufacturing, in particular the production of finished consumer products, mushroomed. Skilled labour did not disappear but it was submerged into a process of increasing subdivision of the manufacturing process and the reliance as much as possible on various types of underpaid workers; the resulting 'dilution' of the craft trades changed the nature of work and the status of the worker (Wilenz 2004/1984: 110–113): 'Overturn, overturn, overturn is the maxim of New York. The very bones of our ancestors are not permitted to lie quiet [… before the next] generation of men seem studious to remove all relics of those who precede them' (quoted in Wilenz 2004/1984: 108).

What it made possible was a 'bastard artisanal system' consisting of 'machineless' small-scale factories of twenty workers or fewer scattered throughout the working class neighbourhoods of the city; but only the skilled labour was performed in the factories, the rest was farmed out to individuals or families working in extremely cramped quarters throughout the city. For every skilled worker in a workshop there were ten workers scattered elsewhere (115). Thus the 'manufacturing cityscape' was a complex of shops and enterprises divided throughout the city.

The character of the emerging industrial system might have been altered as a result of decisions taken in the political sphere. The growth of industry provided the backdrop to the employment of both artisans and sub-artisanal workers – workers who found their voice in the rise of the Democratic Party. Though the Democrats developed a strong agrarian base and ideology, it was really cities such as New York and New Orleans that provided the most favourable setting for the re-emergence of democratic republican ideas from the doldrums of the early national period. Urban public spaces provided settings for civic buildings which featured grand assembly halls; streets were sets for

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lots of 25 by 100 feet so packed with tenements, row houses, and back buildings that frequently only a few inches of space remained between structures. The worst blocks boasted land coverage as high as 90 percent.' Esperdy 1999: 16.

marches and civic ceremonies; this became a kind of 'public realm' for democratic culture (Fairfield 2010: 40–43, 71–73). Political life began to return to the issue of citizenship. Reform-minded people in the business party, the Whigs, relied on a genteel civic code to overcome the abuses of private power; but it came across as paternalistic and was ineffective. On the left side of the spectrum, Jacksonian Democrats pushed for real democratic participation in exercising and asserting citizenship rights. Among the Democrats, the so-called 'Loco-Focos' constituted a radical faction that stood for equal participation of all men regardless of race or national origin. They founded a newspaper, *Young America*, and nationalism led to occasional cross-class alliances. Several Whig/LocoFoco joint candidates ran for office (Wilenz 2004/1984: 294), but the price to garner the support of reform Whigs was too high and the campaigns suffered from the contradiction of linking democratisation and civic unity to laissez-faire economic policies that included privatisation and the defeat of public initiatives by the federal and local governments. In the end it was these economic polices carried out by other political actors that 'fractured civic unity and paralysed civic agencies' (Fairfield 2010: 78).

The Loco-Focos chief competitor for control of the Democratic Party was Tammany Hall, a semi-secret political organisation whose members learned to be adept at the 'art' of patronage. Tammany rewarded Irish loyalty with 'many minor offices' and in turn the Irish showed a great aptitude for tactical politics based on organising and marshalling enormous blocks of votes; this was aided by the Irish experience with clandestine or 'underground' organisations as well as by a consensus of anti-English sentiment among the Irish people, which could be easily exploited by 'orators and demagogues' like 'Slippery Dick' Connolly (Wilenz 2004/1984: 165).

The Germans were less successful, on the other hand, because they were divided by religion and handicapped by language (165). When 'dissident Germans' failed to organise their own political party and Tammany was unable to control them, they rather vaguely appropriated their platform of 'land and industrial reform' and persuaded one of the German leaders to endorse the Tammany candidates in the election of 1846 (170). To the divisions among immigrants was added the 'nativist' sentiment organised by the Know-Nothings, which was not a party, but rather a clandestine organisation opposed to immigration and to Irish-American clandestine organisations. One of the greatest of the Tammany leaders, Fernando Wood, infamous for trading votes for citizenship papers to newly arrived immigrants, was actually a secret Know-Nothing , who managed to hoodwink immigrants and natives alike

(170). The immigrants lacked 'lacked cohesiveness', most importantly in terms of social class (176). In general people were divided against one another on the basis of a set of oppositions: immigrant versus native and Protestant versus Catholic; in addition there was the inherited European ideological conflict between right and left (177). Unionism too was divided by ethnic difference, as between English-Scottish-Welsh trade unionism on the one hand and German socialist unionism on the other. An English worker expressed his frustration: 'Money is the be-all and end-all in the States. With it you are everything, without it nothing. The working man is as much hemmed in the iron circle of his class as with [us English …] the "dignity" of labour is both disbelieved and ridiculed. I assert that in no country in the world are social distinctions more rigidly enforced' (quoted on 177).

Olmsted and the Three Modernities

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) became famous in the US and elsewhere for the landscape architecture of Central Park in New York and for his writings on landscape and cities. His projects were extensive, including three additional parks in New York, Morningside, Prospect and Riverside; an integrated park system for Buffalo, NY; the famous 'emerald necklace' surrounding Boston; entrances and camp areas for Yosemite National Park in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California; the campus of the University of California at Berkeley; the grounds and layout of the Columbian World Exposition in Chicago; and the garden suburb of Riverside, IL, among others. At mid-twentieth century Olmsted was received as a heroic social reformer, working toward the fulfilment of America's democratic destiny, though hobbled somewhat by his putative association with Jeffersonian agrarianism (Fein 1972). His broader interest was political reform, to which the design of cities was an important adjunct. This statement should be self-evident, though the association of Olmsted with aesthetic landscape is so strong that his early career as a journalist is forgotten. Indeed his first work had nothing to do with cities: it was journalistic exposure of southern society, focusing on the living conditions of the slaves (1856). As the codifier of American green space, Olmsted was both a powerful propagandist and talented designer of landscape, an aptitude developed through his association with Calvert Vaux, the co-designer of Central Park.

Olmsted has been a central figure in a pantheon of social reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century lionised by scholars after the Second World War. Central among them was Richard Hofstadter whose

masterwork, *The Age of Reform* (1955), pegged Olmsted as first and foremost a social reformer, an exemplar of what Hofstadter chose to call the 'mugwump type', a representative of a segment of the middle class who became politically progressive 'not because of any economic deprivations but primarily because they were victims of an upheaval in status that took place in the United States during the closing decades of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth century' (1955: 135). The mugwump, a term Hofstadter takes from a reform caucus inside the Republican Party of the 1870s, was a product of a displaced social class, the victims of industrialisation: a nation that had fought a war for independence, in large part, to diffuse power was now undergoing a massive economic and social centralisation under the influx of British capital. Of course, there were many rebellions fought in different arenas against the centralisation and industrialisation of American life: perhaps most notably the Civil War may be interpreted as a fight on the part of the South to prevent it from happening, and long rear guard actions in the South and West have been fought to slow it down, actions that are still ongoing today. But the 'mugwump' or northern progressive type was different. The idea was not to defeat or abandon industrialisation, but to reform it.

The development of New York as a metropolis represented the new America – a society centred on large industrial cities forging a national economy dominated by new wealth. Mugwump leaders were the descendants of the reform Whigs of the antebellum period who, as we have seen, attempted civic reform in concert with the working class Loco-Foco political faction. The mugwumps originated with provincial elites – small businessmen, professionals and local/regional civic leaders – whose power and authority was in the process of displacement. Status anxiety must have been a necessary accompanying process. Olmsted's family is typical: shop owners from provincial New England (Hartford, Connecticut), local civic leaders and oriented toward learned culture. 'Culture' here means aesthetic appreciation and place-sensibility as well as interest in the attainment of the classical 'good life' and a picture of cultural attainment (*bildung*). As Hofstadter mentions, many reformers were New Englanders and there was a tendency to look to New England's past 'for literary, cultural and political models and for examples of high moral idealism' (140). Plenty of evidence confirms Hofstadter's judgments. Olmsted's notion of the park is a spatial sphere that brings back the framework of the New England town – that is to say, the framework of the landscape (park, as with the landscape painting) becomes a commons, a new kind of village green. The notion of the community having control over disposal of its joint assets, the

common method of settlement in New England, informs Olmsted's critique of the treatment of landscape and resources: 'our public lands have been divided into square plats, so as to discourage the closer agricultural settlement which long and narrow divisions favor … a plan well adapted to induce a scattering of the settlement [in the interest of rapid territorial expansion] … but also calculated to encourage waste of resources' (1997: 174). The reference to a commonality and common destiny – 'our public lands' – is a commonplace of nation-building talk: a seemingly forgotten mode of addressing common concerns, perhaps less a discourse of cultural nationalism (Hutchinson 1994: 127) than one of nation building in respect to modernisation and reform. There is also the clear statement, for those who might be able to read it, of Olmsted's New England regionalism. The settlement he favours was precisely that adopted by the New England town fathers as they cleared and settled the forested lands of colonial Massachusetts and Connecticut (Powell 1970), while the pattern Olmsted criticises was the Roman solution to quick land distribution proposed by Jefferson and adopted by the new federal state. Olmsted's reform proposal then was to nationalise an older regional pattern.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of Olmsted's linkage to his provincial origin is evident in how he came to be hired as the superintendent of the Park. Here a family connection was critical. His association, only informal, with the local Republican Party was similarly the result of family contacts. Of these connections, the New York Parks Commissioner Charles Elliot, was the most important. He too hailed from Connecticut and had known Olmsted's brother at Yale. He recommended Olmsted for the job of superintendent (Rosenzweig and Blackmur 1993: 128). Olmsted's appointment was approved by the Democrats, despite his Republican affiliation, in some large measure because of his gentlemanly demeanour and lack of demonstrated political self-interest; he was perceived as a man that could be counted on to be above the partisan fray.

By this time the Republican Party had emerged as a new 'progressive' capitalist party that began by taking the pro-business positions of the old Whig Party and combining that with support from labour and free farming interests. Indeed Olmsted's letters from the South published in the *New York Times* at the invitation of Henry Raymond, the *Times*'s founding editor, were quite influential in forming the 'free labour' ideology of the Republican Party (Bender 1987: 196). The Republicans were a party with very little support in the South as they took an uncompromising position in regard to the extension of slavery. At the time that was a view that caused enormous antagonism and ultimately led to secession by the southern states. Olmsted's interest in political

partisanship (as opposed to political principles) was largely informal, rooted in family background and social connections and, as we have seen, concerned with social reform. He belonged to that social class that oriented itself to the Republicans, but his intellectual commitments and lack of position insulated him somewhat from the corresponding social space. Thus Olmsted was part of the reform side within the Republican Party – which is to say that he thought that a programme of social and labour reform and good taste exercised by a cultured elite could overcome the nasty repercussions of capitalist modernisation. His attitude toward conservatives was entirely negative, as evidenced by his view that parks must remain open to all social classes; he rejected flat out the idea that only the leisured elite could appreciate art or the aesthetic life.

Historians generally feel secure in their judgments because we often mistakenly work from the assumption that the past exists to (re)produce the present, to tell the present's story. 'Olmsted' stands before us as a man of the world who was a part of his times, a proponent of adding a particular spatial dimension to the formation of modern industrial society, a vision in which some peculiar conceptions of the past and of nature could be judged as harmless epiphenomena in a larger and very constructive public project. One approach, then, is to argue that what matters are the projects. Much as an architect's buildings speak for the architect, Olmsted's parks speak for him. Others might well argue that his legacy, especially as interpreted by media and the general public, is really what matters. In that case, what Olmsted contributed is the idea of the park-like landscape as a setting for living which cast a spell of 'anti-urbanism' on the American middle class (a topic I shall take up shortly). My approach is different. I feel compelled to ask whether there were multiple 'Olmsteds', as judged by the implications of his ideas and his architecture. I think it is at least as significant to understand the multifaceted implications of his work, rather than to simply fit his aesthetics and social philosophy to the world of harrowing circumstance that he was required to confront.

One such version of Olmsted is as a mediator between the aesthetic and social spheres, or between the conceptual space of landscape and the social space of urbanism. Could Olmsted have been a figure leading us out of the dilemma posed by the building of subjectivity – that is, a movement from a constructed 'ecological self' (*vita contemplativa*) to an active 'ecological citizen' (*vita activa*)? Did Olmsted rectify Thoreau's retreat to memory of old Concord, was Olmsted the one man among the pantheon of writers and visionaries we have discussed who understood that the consciousness of an ecological self doesn't amount to much without the development of ecological citizenship?

Olmsted and the Three Modernities

The ecological citizen has little choice but to participate in an agnostic public sphere marked by contestation of fundamental principles in which those who teach modernisation and 'progress' have the upper hand. What is called for in that case is a man engaging in political struggles, rather than an almost academic landscape architect recollecting old forms. Where is the urban activist contesting the spaces of the city and the policies of the New York republic? It is true that in his early career as a journalist Olmsted seemed headed in that direction with his book on slavery, but he soon found more verdant pastures.

A second version of Olmsted is closer to what he became: the man of principle operating above partisanship whose absolute integrity could be trusted. This Olmsted was non-partisan in principle, a position which freed him in practice anyway from representing the excessive class privileges of a society organising itself increasingly around private property. It also distinguished Olmsted as a consensus-oriented civic republican as against the liberal construction of polity designed to reflect and replicate a variety of human interests: a society by definition fragmented by class and position. That Madisonian aspect of the Constitution of the US has always been used to further ideological agendas of the left and right, both of which seemed constitutionally opposed to any project that would attempt to elucidate a common interest and good – outside that 'common' agreement to provide individuals with the maximal opportunity for liberty. The tradition of the old republic implicit in the ideal of the commonweal and the common life that we saw in early Philadelphia had been defeated by liberalism after the Revolution. Here the target is the way of life accompanying urbanisation and industrialisation; this could be conducted by reading New York as a prescient environmental sphere, as Whitman has done, but Olmsted is too wary to go that route. He knew very well that old New York would disappear and with it the link to the harbour, to the ships and to artisanal craft – the very stuff of *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*. Less the observer, Olmsted hoped to be the architect of the environmental sphere of the future he wished to secure. In its achievement he was true to his Puritan roots – instructing people how to live, he saw himself as countering regressive tendencies found in the commercialism, expansionism and utilitarianism of the American metropolis; all this was anathema to him.

The third reading of Olmsted is to see his interest in the land as force, a force that can be steered by what Benton MacKaye would later call 'geotechnics', but a force that is not easily humanised, even though Olmsted might not have been particularly cognisant of that limitation. This reflects Olmsted's 'spatial unconscious', for I don't think he was really aware of the extent to which his

parks and park systems were biogeographical: they opened the way for the consideration of green space as a force of nature operative within the emerging metropolitan region. In this sense there is a dimension of green space that has the power to over-ride the human will to shape the land, which points to the power of nature to impose unfavourable outcomes on humankind, to overwhelm the human will. It was an idea introduced to the Anglo-American world in a very specific and limited context by George Perkins Marsh with the publication of *Man and Nature* in 1864, a book Olmsted would have certainly read and which had much to do with his interest in conservation of resources and protection of the viability of lands in resource extraction regions. Nonetheless, linking Olmsted to bio-determinism is a strange position to take when you consider his primarily aesthetic and social orientation toward landscape. There was really very little to point directly to material conditions. Lawrence Buell links such pessimism to despair, quoting the nature writer John Burroughs' reference to 'feeling homeless and orphaned in a universe where no suggestion of sympathy and interest akin to our own comes to us from the great void' (Buell 2001: 146). The turn to seeing the material conditions as a requirement we must meet, which is really the essence of the environmental turn, not only reflects a better understanding of how ecosystems work and the underlying geological and geophysical forces that sustain life, but also reflects a growing uncertainty about the course of modernity. What we have learned is that modernity may not be neatly delimited (or redefined or redirected) by cultural nationalism, economic developmentalism or social progressivism. Actually, modernisation and the celebration of modernity occasions the self-negation of the ecological self. I share much with Jackson Lears's interest in anti-modernism as a theme in American culture, and specifically in anti-modernisation. A cultural and intellectual historian, Lears's interest in the anti-modern perspective is actually in its resistance to the tides of history. He sees that 'an antimodern outlook might help us define liberation in larger than individual terms by preserving structures of meaning outside the self' (Lears 1994: xi). What stands behind his statement is the need to find a means of counteracting a particular strand of modernism that combines the discourse of absolutist individualism in its two primary forms (the free market utopia of the right and the human rights sermon of the left) with the perfection of abstract space dominated by a digitalised corporate capitalism striding across the globe. Reading Olmsted in terms of the implications of physical environment of green space seems to me to be a possible extension of his cultural politics into a realm of what Vico calls 'ingenuity'.

Aesthetic Beginnings: The Park as a Work of Art

If the age of liberal capitalism then dawning in the US and elsewhere was the beginning of an era of barbarism leading to the twentieth century wars on humanity and nature, the memory of landscape and its imaginative recreations might well be counted as a cultural resource. Central Park incorporated aspects of the beautiful and picturesque: lush greenery and curvilinear forms combined with variation and surprise built visual interest, while touches of sublime grandeur suggested the creativity and power of nature. The 'Ravine' section of the park referred to the deep interior of the Adirondack Mountains. Like poetics of imagination in Vico's schemata, recreating the past as 'wilderness' is meant to defeat the literal mindedness of narrow utilitarianism and open new contexts for ingenuity.

The first great misconception of the park is that it was meant as some sort of 'imitation' of a wilderness, which in itself never existed. Actually the 'wilderness' of Central Park was a picturesque representation of the mountainous interior of New York State; it reflected both culture and nature. Central Park was designed in a variety of landscape styles; the wilderness section in-

Figure 5.3. Central Park: bridge and pond, 2012, photograph by the author. The merging of art and landscape frames an aesthetic of the beautiful in the presence of the 'civilising' affect produced by water features.

dicates primitive origin, crude beginnings with which culture must maintain connection. This is precisely why Olmsted was also interested in nature parks. Olmsted was not crystal clear about the qualities of the parks he designed, which is understandable considering their dialectical character; they were both biophilic creations and works of art at the same time. Writing in 1891, the noted critic of American architecture art, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, counted pleasure grounds – the term Olmsted's predecessor A.J. Downing used for naturalistic gardens – as artifice: 'No matter how rural in character a park may be, or how pure and undisturbed the sylvan charm of some of its remoter parts, there is no place where the work of man ought to be done with greater skill, more perfect finish, or (using the term in its best sense) a franker artificiality' (1996: 51).

Olmsted's sense of the park as an art form reflected the picturesque tradition of landscape painting and design, but applied in a democratic context and embedded in an urban setting. This contextualisation gives us an opportunity to re-evaluate the critique of picturesque.

We recall John Barrell's suggestion that 'landscape' became a projection of art, in which the representation of a scene or 'prospect' creates a distance between perceiver and perceived. The landscape scene is 'detached' from the viewer; the scene is removed because the position of the viewer is 'fixed' (2011/1972: 21). Olmsted's parks are certainly designed to produce a series of scenes or prospects, but the effect of the park on the observer exceeds that suggested by Barrell's reduction of landscape design to a picturesque technique. Actually I shall argue that the park was meant to unmoor the viewer and thus deepen environmental experience as an expression of 'nature'.

Of course, it is undeniable that **structure** was important – that is to say, the making of the park considered the views the public would enjoy. Indeed structure is not largely a mental construct but a physical/material one: Central Park was an immense project of architecture of landform. To achieve its perspectives, the park must, therefore, screen out anomalous elements – in other words, the city itself. In their original plan for Central Park, Olmsted and Vaux proposed that any potential views of the city be walled off by a line of trees to be planted around the park, separating it from urban streets; admission to the park was limited to a few entrance gates. These were simple enough solutions; after all, using trees as a screen is hardly ingenious. But Olmsted and Vaux went well beyond this to actually conceive of engineering the park as a geometric plane separated from the city. It is true that as a massive landscape garden at the city's edge, Central Park had its own integrity that gave it some protection.

Aesthetic Beginnings: The Park as a Work of Art

Nonetheless, it lay well within the planned extension of the city grid, bounded by avenues and intersected by streets. Many of these were removed, but others could not be, particularly cross-town streets. Olmsted and co-planner Calvert Vaux conceived of the park sitting on its own spatial plane uninterrupted by the movement of vehicles and the rhythm of urban life. To make this possible the cross streets were sunk, relegating wheeled transport onto a separate lower plane from that of pedestrians enjoying the park. It would become a major principle of garden-type planning in the twentieth century.

When I first viewed Olmsted and Vaux's drawings of grade separations in Central Park, I got a strong sense that the park seems to be floating on top of the street grade and below the architectural city. Olmsted and Vaux did all possible to protect the integrity of the park from the city, to create it as a separate sphere. The best analogy for this sense of spherical integrity came years later with the great railroad terminals of New York, Grand Central and the Pennsylvania Stations. Reading John Stilgoe's book, *Metropolitan Corridor*, one is reminded that the great terminals, existing as they did apart from the city because of the intricate below-grade engineering, became cities in themselves and 'model of the future city ... the city efficient' (38). Olmsted and Vaux's Central Park made use of the same kind of technology of grade separation to create the park, a garden within the city, but not of the city – the foundation of the future City Beautiful. That required an amazing inversion of Roman technology; the Romans engineered long surface planes through the use of bridges and tunnels to bring water by aqueduct into the city to make a city of squares and fountains. Olmsted used grade engineering to keep the city at bay; city roads that pass through the park were built as sunken highways, walled off from the park; carriage roads and trails cross over them; even within the park, trails and carriage roads are often on separate grades that are not noticed by the casual observer – a transparent technology given the opposite task assigned to the technology of transformation which gave rise to the 'technological sublime': here the technology of creating landscape is meant to undo the triumph of modernisation, as symbolised by the unquestioned saliency of the visible infrastructure – the technological city sublime.

But there were other aspects of the park than prospects. It is a scene meant for the rituals of citizenship – especially informal social intercourse and promenading. The park provides a context for informal social intercourse. At the same time, the design of its more remote areas, permits people to walk along the winding paths and find, even, a measure of solitude. We approach what Michael Crozier calls the freedom from 'the constraints of cultivation …

where the complexity of nature is quite happily encountered "chaotically" and where an individual can be absorbed into the marvellous' (1996b: 76). Olmsted engaged the wild through the picturesque sublime, while not giving up the multi-faceted character of the park. The inclusion of picturesque elements in his parks, along with Olmsted's assertion of the primacy of the beautiful open meadows indicates Olmsted's creation an engaged environmental sphere that expressed beauty, variation and wildness. As we have seen, picturesque replaced continuity and harmony of an overall structure with surprise and contrast in a composition of several focal points. Wildness in landscape with its irregularities changed the cultivated landscape (the landscape of *campagna*, the countryside). Olmsted made use of this 'picturesque', but, like the landscapes he saw on his trip to England and in accordance with the recommendations of Downing, he wanted to subordinate it to the larger purpose of creating a 'beautiful' landscape, reflecting the soft gentleness of meadows, which could be suitable for social gatherings and invite a feeling of communion with the land. The 'beautiful' aesthetic should predominate and is clearly central to the larger purpose of creating a common, and he reflected this by arguing that the beautiful would be the primary element: the landscape should be composed, like a garden, even while containing wild contrasts to the overall composition. Olmsted wanted to ground the environmental sphere of his parks in an Arcadian framework; hence the importance of public rituals of 'pleasure-seeking', of 'gregariousness': spontaneous but socially-grounded expression.

Ten years after the opening Central Park, while in the midst of his greatest project of all, the building of Prospect Park in Brooklyn, he gave an address on the psycho-physiological effects of park scenery. Here he argues that the design of the picturesque park actually reflects important aspects of the psyche, including the inherent choices people made during settlement: people seek out water, pasturage, wood, seclusion (for protection), wildlife for game and beauty for its own sake. 'In fact we found that wherever the pioneers were settling in this country, they were selecting just such places & plainly because the less artificial wants of man were in such situations more conveniently provided for' (Olmsted 1997: 149, 151). The park as Olmsted saw it was linked to memory (culture) and instinct (nature) through landscape art; in an argument that anticipates E.O. Wilson and other psychological studies of landscape and, at the same time, points towards the idea of anti-modernisation incumbent in green space.

Decades later, Henry James remarked that the park's 'many smiling presence […] to be thrilled at every turn' is a relief from the 'discipline of the streets' (1946/1905: 177). From a pedestrian's perspective the park becomes an
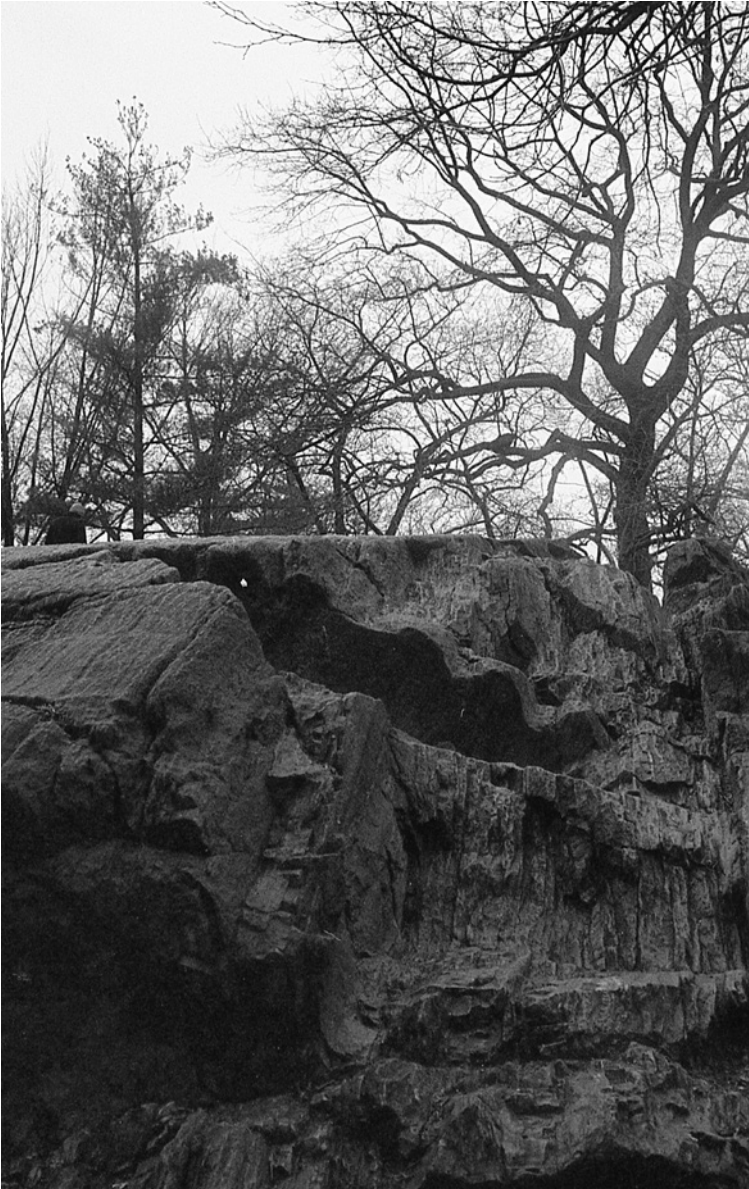
Figure 5.4. Central Park: moraine and trees, 2012, photograph by the author. Stony debris left from the Ice Age (geosphere) meets the current biosphere (trees). Landforms, old and emerging, underlie all geographical and imaginative landscapes.

alternative to the crushing crowds; and Central Park could even be understood as a virtual world that recreates the humanist city – in the limited sense that the park was the sphere of the pedestrian (apart from the limited provision for carriages). The alternative – deserting the city streets for suburban gardens – would emerge later.

Green Space and the Problem of Urbanism

The importance and visibility of Central Park leads us to the second common misconception about Olmsted: that Central Park represented a singular, even penultimate, achievement. For Olmsted, however, Central Park was really only a starting point in his much larger project of assembling and codifying all the aesthetic elements necessary to produce green space as the key to urban redesign. David Schuyler (1986) has shown that the idea of landscape as a principle for the launching of a 'new urban form' was blossoming at the turn of the twentieth century. Olmsted was a key figure in this larger project.

Schuyler was thinking of a particular of kind of city and urban vision that led to the development of university campuses and towns, state capitals, garden suburbs as well as the implementation of City Beautiful design in large cities and aspects of contemporary New Urbanism or neo-traditional architecture and town building. To a large extent these developments in town planning are associated with middle class residence and the building of private housing estates, but may also be considered the founding moments of 'landscape urbanism' as a new 'lens through which the contemporary city is represented and a medium through which it is constructed' (Waldheim 2006: 15). Olmsted was certainly interested in developing landscape urbanism to renew the aesthetics of urban form, as suggested by his later interest in the City Beautiful project, but as I have argued here, he was also involved with landscape as a process of a physical design that engages the imaginative reassessment of fixed ideas of space. Consequently Olmsted's concern with landscape as a resource for humans could easily be seen to embrace a more contemporary concept of greenways or a system of paths through corridors leading from and through urbanised areas into parklands and rural reserves (Fábos and Ryan 2004). Engaging with the findings of landscape ecology on the movement of fauna and flora through corridors, greenway development responds to the spill over of city into countryside by extending protection to animals and plants throughout the human domain, while providing accessible pathways for walkers and hikers – an extension of

landscape urbanism to ecology suggested by Olmsted's planning of a series of park and pathways around Boston – the so-called 'emerald necklace'.

Much of this rich line of cultural and imaginative development has been missed, or remains poorly articulated, in the debate about environmentalism and the future of cities and suburbs, which often focuses on restoring urbanism without specific articulation of green space. An influential 'urban party' among American academics has taken it upon itself to advance a far-reaching critique of Olmsted and landscape urbanism. In the 1960s the decline of American cities, seen as both the consequence of the rise of suburbanisation and the 'anti-urban' sentiment that seemed to mandate suburbanisation, contributed to reassessments of the parks movement and of modernist urban planning, two quite separable movements that occupied a similar space and time frame. The argument originated in the post-war sociological and popular cultural criticisms of suburban life and was given a serious treatment by Morton and Lucia White in their book on anti-urbanism as an aspect of American intellectual life (1963). But assessments of the legacy of Central Park and of Olmsted's career turned increasingly negative later and even then there was strong resistance from the landscape architectural profession and the general public. The critique of the park as 'pastoral' imposition onto to an otherwise vibrant city might have much to do with Leo Marx's criticism (1964) of the 'simple pastoral' mentality in the US, but its most important origin reflected the launching of an American hyper-urbanism and that was made possible by the publication of Jane Jacobs's prescient and by now very famous book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), which made it clear that the planning profession's encouragement of the diffusion of urban populations to suburban and periurban areas had not reckoned on the effect on the urban centre. Hyper-urbanists searched out and continue to search out symbols of what they allege is anti-urban. Central Park seemed fair game. Not only was its design motif linked in their mind to a simple-minded pastoralism, but the park stood forth as an entity in itself separate from the city. The very qualities that made the park depended, as we have seen, on its separation from the city, while the hyper-urbanists asserted the need to integrate smaller parks into the urban fabric. Given his wide-ranging projects and massive normative influence, Olmsted seemed a fit subject to explain a shift away from the existing urban landscape to what became allegedly a suburban one. Furthermore, as the construction of Central Park depended on the displacement of a shanty-town of squatters, which was all too similar to the clashes over the clearing of neighbourhoods for large public and private concerns, there is the question

of social justice: the displacement of people for trees. These critiques clearly reflected (and continue to reflect) the specific planning and housing agendas of the hyper-urbanists for densification and re-centralisation. The criticism of the large picturesque parks was a part of a larger, and often deserved, reaction against the entire arsenal of planning solutions levelled against existing cities – everything from federally-financed slum clearance, to Corbusier-influenced public housing projects, the new motorway systems and federally-subsidised suburban housing.

The most important criticism, however, concerned the idea that cities ought to be looked upon as a landscape. Jacobs's analysis of the city in terms of its parts, her attention to streets and sidewalks, housing arrangements and the layout of shopping areas was a startlingly different approach. She emphasises the functional separations of the city into private, semi-private and public spheres; the fundamental importance of the domestic sphere and its interaction with the public; and especially the importance of the street as the oldest public space. Jacobs was interested in how social interaction shaped public space and did some careful observation of how citizen surveillance could control crime and combat decay. I shall not provide a complete summary of her arguments here; suffice it to say that, for Jacobs, despite industrialised urbanisation, despite commercialisation, the city must still be seen as a little republic, a polis made up of different but potentially complementary spaces/peoples. Perhaps Jacobs's characterisation of New York paralleled J.B. Jackson's thinking when he wrote in response to what he saw as the failed conception of reform through landscape. He asserted that, at bottom, the American landscape in form and thought is a republican one; it is a landscape 'produced by simple spatial reorganisation' that divides space into spheres of public and private in order to define and create citizenship through everyday life. The visual landscape as a 'natural feature of environment' adds a discordant element in Jackson's view by misplacing the everyday and encouraging a passive reception of sensory stimuli.[6]

(Finally) Jacobs's work reintroduces the question of the city: not the landscape, not the park, not the tenement structure – but the city as a living organism. In effect, her work raises the question of whether the vast changes in urban form that we have tracked in this book, whether instituted by political

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6. Jackson's argument (1986: 7–8) might be seen to resemble John Arg's warnings in *Hudson River Portfolio* (1820: Plate 5) about dissolute mountainsides: 'even in the vicinity of Hadley's Fall, the wearing tone of solitary wildness which marks the character of a country which has not yet become familiar with the stranger, man, is but imperfectly subdued; and he who delights to linger amidst its uncouth rudeness of nature, will here find ample scope and abundant materials for enjoyment'.

revolution, industrialisation or urbanisation, actually necessitated what everyone had assumed they did: a new theory of space and a new approach to handling the problems of cities. Rather than seeing urbanism – the culture and structure of the city in and of itself – as outmoded, Jacobs imaginatively restored a republican cityscape: a city of articulated spaces balanced between private and public, residence and business, leisure and work. Her work went right back to Philadelphia before the War for Independence – to the city as its own world, its own universe. Furthermore, the 'balance' she contemplates is not that of a functionally differentiated urban form (which became the commonplace of urban planning in the early twentieth century), but rather that of a city of intricately linked and connected spaces and functions operating on the scale of the block, the length of a street, the organisation of a neighbourhood – in other words, measured in terms of urban spaces themselves as social spaces. Urbanism, Jacobs tells us, requires intricacy and can only function by maximising the principle of proximity. It was a startling shift in doctrine for both planners and political scientists of the era of modernism, for Jacobs was also asserting that the politics of a republic requires antagonism, not consensus. The intricacy of what we might call 'classical urbanism' finds expression in agonistic spaces – places of competition and contest between ideas. With Jacobs's attention to the interaction of public and private space as the foundation of urban planning, we are forced to ask not so much whether green space is necessary but whether the greening of public space has meant the loss of the public – perhaps landscape urbanism has been a misstep in the direction of privatisation? If not, how are we to understand the relation of green to public space?

Clearly, then, Jacobs's perspective challenged many of Olmsted's assumptions, but as she published her work more than one hundred years after Central Park was opened, the reader, and particularly the historically minded reader, may wonder why I am introducing such a perspective into this historical narrative. Jacobs's work is essential because it has become pretty close to planning orthodoxy today. The two fundamental principles that urban planning is concerned with the making traditional urban design work and that planning is fundamentally concerned with the city and not what lies beyond it (region) both stand square against Olmsted's concerns. In consequence, although Olmsted continues to attract his defenders among planners and particularly among landscape architects, his concern with what was once called 'urban pastoralism'

have been pretty written out of the conversation by hyper-urbanists bent on defending the American city from its detractors.[7]

     Hyper-urbanists such as Stephen Conn (2014) and Paul Knox (2008) are rather anxious to pretend that the 'back to the city' movement has been about restoring sobriety, avoiding escapism and opening the door for racial and ethnic diversity. In this context Olmsted has become a convenient target for radicals determined to contrast 'the city' (minorities) with 'the suburbs' (whites). Even if we were to decide that Olmsted was essentially a suburban visionary (Lessard 1999), one should at least examine his idea of suburbs as well as his conception of metropolitan regions. 'Suburb' has become a term of disapprobation that often conceals more than it reveals. Olmsted did not contemplate industrial suburbanisation of the type that occurred after the Second World War; nor did he suggest anything remotely similar to Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Broadacre City' of dispersed houses where every man has his own acre. As suggested earlier, Olmsted was a conservationist and he was specifically concerned with using infrastructure to create true centres and develop what would be seen in North America as dense suburban housing (1997: 178).

     Though I am using the term 'hyper-urban' I do not discount the importance of what Jacobs said in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs wrote at a time when Frank Lloyd Wright's vision of post-urban world was very popular and widely respected. Since she wrote her book, there have been many positive developments in restoring city centres and the lustre of urban life, at least in those 'global cities' such as New York and London directly linked to the world economy. As one of the first and strongest voices of the 'back to the city' movement, she deserves at least some credit for these developments, though there have been many other important influences, of course. The main point, as I see it, is that metropolitan areas cannot ignore their centres; the notion of a post-urban metropolis is not desirable from both a social and environmental perspective. We are witness to the advent of American style 'automobility' and the displacement of a multi-modal transport system; the availability of cheap housing at the periphery; the flight of the middle and working class from contact with underclass populations trapped in poverty – conditions so long-lasting and profound that they often frustrate planners' efforts to restore urbanism.

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7.   Machor (1987) formulates important urban contexts for pastoral, but the general direction has been hostile reassertion of the old charge of a tradition of anti-urbanism that dates back to White and White (2012/1962). Conn (2014) provides a recent restatement of the idea. Fishman (2001) provides the most sophisticated attempt to synthesise landscape urbanism and neo-urbanist planning.

Green Space and the Problem of Urbanism

Is it possible then to effectuate a refounding of urbanism? Well if that is formulated in terms returning industrial era urbanism within the confines of market-oriented initiatives, it has little chance of success. After four or five decades of pretending that the trend toward the periphery is unsustainable we must face the fact that periurban and suburban areas are still expanding rapidly. There are many, many people who are not willing or financially able to reoccupy the old city cores, or to move to urban areas that benefit from the main flows of global capital. The idea that preservation and reoccupation of the urban cores could even begin to address the environmental issues around cities and mobility has been shown to be inadequate thinking. Similarly, the hope that an alternative urban-oriented culture could displace the suburban ethos has given way to the recognition by geographers in the new field of suburban studies that North American urbanites, at least, are strongly influenced in lifestyle and expectations by memories and images of suburban living. These and many other issues suggest the complete inadequacy of a city-centre preservationist-oriented strategy for the regeneration of urbanism.

I see the hyper-urbanist critique, however, as an opportunity both to discuss the wider implications of urban space at that moment and for providing an opening to alternative meanings and directions of green space, through a reflection on Olmsted's legacy. Before I discuss these alternatives at some length, I should wish to consider Jacobs and hyper-urbanism within its social and historical context., i.e. the rise and decline of the industrial-commercial city of the nineteenth century, for this is the urban tradition that Jacobs is defending. Decline was not an insubstantial part of the picture that influenced Jacobs, even if she did not recognise it as such. After all, the New York that Jacobs, who was not a native New Yorker, found in the late 1950s and 1960s had already been partially depopulated by out-migration. The parts of the city where she lived and which she valued were the virtually picturesque Italian-American inflected neighbourhoods of Manhattan. The gregariousness of the immigrant people fit with her wish to find an alternative to the small town and suburban dullness of American life. New York then was lost to American time; for the beat writers it was the city of the cheap cold water flat – a city somnambulant, but soon to experience the pressure-cooker years of racial strife that tore it apart, leading to white flight and the bankruptcy of the city government. American urbanism was and still is a boiling pot of commercialism, ethnic strife and physiologically deleterious conditions. It still produces flight – and not just 'white flight': minority populations also flee the problems of crime and social dysfunction, on the one hand, and high costs of living on the other. When restorations do

take place they most often focus on preservation of buildings. In *Naked City*, ironically subtitled *The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Sharon Zukin considers the outcome of the movement back to the city Jacobs chronicled and helped empower. In the book Zukin explains how Brooklyn was remade as the centre of industrial chic by people in search of an authenticity they could not find (2009). There is no basis here for a radical new urbanism.[8]

Certainly, one might say in response that, whatever its faults, the legacy of nineteenth century urbanism is still with us and we should endeavour to make it better. Fair enough, but then it could be just as well be defined to include the parameters of Olmsted's social and environmental project for creating urban regions infused with landscape parks and open spaces, a synthesis that some have embraced (Fishman 2001, Beatley 2011). Indeed the most interesting and significant experiments that have taken place are probably those that occur in the direction landscape urbanism. I am thinking, to cite one example, of the conversion of Davis in California into a city of bicycles. One cannot deny, however, that these developments toward landscape urbanism have been most advanced in university towns and regional cities due to their smaller size, wealthier population and youthful constituents. Actually the 'return to the city' theme found its social origin in youth culture and has had its greatest impact outside the 'great cities' that Jacobs touted. Portland in Oregon is perhaps the hippest and most publicised of these 'environmental utopias' touted by today's youth.

That said, my larger purpose here is not to serve as an apologist for Olmsted, though I have done my best to do so; I am not convinced that we have established a clear spatial alternative to some of the ideas Olmsted promoted. On the other hand, though I have lived in them for most of my life, I am not convinced of the superiority of leafy suburbs or garden cities over more interesting urbanisms. The point here is directed to a reform agenda:

8.　One must question whether European cities have escaped this dynamic. Certainly some have come very much closer to the radical reinvention of urbanism that many of the ecological left hope for. But the continued expansion of European metropolitan areas and the rise of social tensions makes me wonder whether these changes are sustaianble. The expansion of global cities (the old metropolis) as opposed to other cities – though most developed in North America – appears to hold for both sides of the Atlantic. Sitting here in award winning 'Green Oslo' with the benefit of strong state mandates for public transport and limitations imposed on motorcar access to the city centre, expansion of periurban areas is continuing, abetted by counter-indicative state policies aimed at expanding the highway net. A major construction project for expansion of motorways in the Oslo area is due to start within the next five years. Even Copenhagen, the city of the bicycle, is now considering building a tunnel under its port to handle the increased cross-town motor traffic.

in brief, a good case can be made that if we are to attempt the metropolitan environmental reform necessary to reducing carbon emissions the reshaping of suburban areas around centres and parks with new infrastructure is a necessary part of the solution. Nonetheless, the pattern of continued disruption to the principle and economic impulse toward centrality necessary to reform the metropolitan space has affected the whole globe, in large part because the revolution in mobility continues unabated and the potential for using electronic communication to substitute for transport has not been properly exploited. Indeed electronic communication seems to function largely as an incentive to still greater elaborations of mobility that focus on a relatively few spaces, leaving vast numbers of cities, regions and nations in a state of decline. These are not surprising outcomes considering the power of global market forces today. Dramatic solutions require dramatic political changes, but, since anticipating such changes seems in my experience a bit like waiting for Godot, it might be useful to consider in response to our dire circumstances to look again at green space through Olmsted's work, noting its forms of engagement with the world economy as well as its oppositions.

Green Space: Coda 1 (Memory)

In our world nothing is more oppositional than the attempt to create social memory in a culture determined to drive endless oppositions based on social identities. I find recompense in searching out early modern perspectives that provide some hope. An excellent starting point for this project is the work of the eighteenth century Neapolitan scholar, Giambattista Vico. In his investigation of the relation between knowledge, body and environment, he notes that poetic wisdom is built on the strength the body and the body brings us in direct relation to environment. The aborigines of the Mediterranean world were called 'autochthones' in Greek or 'indigenae' in Latin. Self-determination is associated with strength, with being a giant, and the earth is called 'the mother of giants' (1999/1725: 141). There is no return to strength, but there is the poetic return to understanding the significance of the link between body and earth through memory and imagination: 'While such faculties belong to the mind, they are rooted in the body and derive their power from it. This is why memory is the same as imagination, and in Latin both are called *memoria*'. Imagination also denotes ingenuity. 'During the medieval return of barbarism, an ingenious man was called in Italian imaginative, *fantastico* … Thus memory has three distinct aspects: memory when it recalls things; imagination when it

alters or recreates them; and ingenuity or invention when it orders them in a suitable arrangement or context' (369).

Following Vico's scheme, we can say that Olmsted was firstly a poet of landscape recalled. Even before he imagined green space, he drew on the work of the landscape artists, nature writers and philosophers we have examined in this book to recall a landscape drawing from inherited traditions but fitted to the American situation. It was certainly rooted in picturesque, but it drew from the American formulations of the pastoral farm and wilderness area, from the picturesque sublime to picturesque beautiful. It drew also directly from the Hudson River valley which had been so important in America's landscape turn.

The landscape recalled was optimistic and bold, but also comforting in its aesthetic patterns, emphasising beautiful and picturesque aesthetics. One could call Olmsted a visionary reaching back in time to locate a source of power and strength necessary to draw on and recreate a visual language that could be readily applied to the shaping of space. Washington Irving's project of enchanting the place and folk ways of the Hudson area, Fenimore Cooper's connection of that enchantment with the aboriginal inhabitants of the region, Thoreau's attempt to recapture the strength of the body in his anthropology of the Maine Indian tribes: these were and remain the most obvious basis for the creating of green space, though there is no question that a less obvious source was the Puritan vision of a fresh start by carving communities out of the wilderness. The relation between the memories of settlements that shared without exhausting natural ecologies may be found in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, as I have shown. We could consider the park as a source not simply for recreation but, as Benton MacKaye would later put it, for 're-creation'. The contest between this broader nature and nature is understood as a set of resources and a means for developing an infrastructure: infrastructure and the access to resources comprise opportunity, a theme which we saw played out and celebrated in the 1820s around the completion of the Erie Canal. Thoreau's exploration in Maine critiqued impermanence as a way of life in a space increasingly determined by exploitation and abandonment. Olmsted's catalogue of memory included both visions and nightmares; his imagination tended, however, to restate the hope of reframing social space.

Green Space: Coda 2 (Imagination)

If imagination means invention (as Vico puts it), perhaps Olmsted's parks could be seen as 'invented green space'. If so, the invention is both a reading out from

the ideas of landscape discussed previously and the production of a space as a new kind of artistic and social experience. After all, Olmsted's conceptualised green space began as an attempt to carve out a new social space, in particular a social space of reform designed in response to the social and physiological needs of urban populations. Thomas Bender (1982) goes so far as to suggest that Olmsted's work must be seen in this context as a democratic impulse. After all, he fought against restrictive practices to keep the public out and he wanted the park to attract people across class and ethnic lines. Olmsted's New York of 1860 suffered from overcrowding, filth from animal dung, contagious disease and physical and social strife.

In an address entitled 'Public parks and the Enlargement of Towns', Olmsted writes: 'Consider that the New York [Central] Park and the Brooklyn Park are the only places in those associated cities where ... all classes are represented, with a common purpose … all helping to the greater happiness of each' (1997: 186). In the hoped-for 'prevailing expression of good nature and light-heartedness' family was central: the 'joyous collections of people' directly or indirectly reflect the 'close relation of family life, the association of children, of mothers, of lovers' (187). Much of the park was given over to areas where picnicking and informal sports could take place. In this context, landscape was restful and peaceful – a peacable kingdom – in which the purpose of walking sounds very much like a Puritanical version of the Italian habit of the evening walk-around-town:

> A Promenade may, with great advantage, be carried along the outer part of the surrounding groves of a park … here and there a broad opening among the trees discloses its open landscapes to those upon the promenade … the object of the latter for the time being should be to see *congregated human life* under glorious and necessarily artificial conditions, and the natural landscape is not essential to them; though there is no more beautiful picture, and none can be more pleasing incidentally to the gregarious purpose, than that of beautiful meadows, over which clusters of level-armed sheltering trees cast broad shadows, and upon which are scattered dainty cows and flocks of black-faced sheep, while men, women, and children are seen sitting here and there, forming groups in the shade, or moving in and out among the woody points and bays (189, Olmsted's emphasis).

Landscape inspires sociality. As they walk along the *Promenade*, Olmsted hopes to encourage, a common 'gregariousness' enabled by the 'more tender sympathies' (187) integral to a pastoral setting. Olmsted's first great green vision may be likened to the 'social peace' of the Ebenezer Howard's garden city idea or later the conception of European social democracy; however, although it shares a broad

view of the social sphere to be created by the amenities of the park, the vision is expressed in the 'private language of care' rather than the 'public language of citizenship' (Meyer 2015: 152). The second objection (noted above), that the great parks detracted from rather than added to specifically urban space, reflects a failure to understand the historical and political conditions under which Olmsted laboured. Still, the idea that Olmsted's great parks diverted attention from the city is wildly popular, echoed for instance in Lawrence Buell's endorsement of Jane Addams's understanding that 'proximity counted for more than size [an attitude which anticipated] the modern design principle of "accessible green"'. This attitude, Buell tells us, should be contrasted with Olmsted's instinct to 'sequester big parcels of land' (2001: 12). Addams worked much later than Olmsted; Chicago is not New York; but, most importantly, Olmsted was responding to what he understood as a systematic problem that could not be combated under the prevailing political conditions, namely the destruction of urbanism under the conditions created by rapid urbanisation. We know this because Olmsted was very much in favour of retaining existing parks and informal green spaces as well as lowering densities in new urban districts in order to provide openings for green areas as remnants of older land-scape, as well as in the forms of parks, promenades and parkways. The general problem, exacerbated in the specific case of New York, was that the premium placed on concentration of population put enormous pressure on urban space. This meant the rise of horrific densities in the poorest parts of the city, as we have discussed, and it also resulted in encroachment on existing open spaces.

In his plan for Central Park (1858), Olmsted gives a litany of complaints about specific losses of green space for buildings and for the widening and straightening of streets. Since he characterised these demands as 'pernicious' I think it safe to assume that these were consequences of urban growth that he deeply regretted (120–121). Indeed, both the building of large parks at the urban edge (such as Central Park) and the planning of new urban infrastructure to include green space were presented as the only alternatives possible under conditions dictated by an urban growth machine. The course of American urbanism, with its minimal planning, enormous growth rate and competition among cites and lack of forethought meant the continual diminishment of open space as the city was filled in and up. Skyscrapers had yet to be developed but tenement building had already arrived. Olmsted knew the consequences all too well. When planning the parks to be built on the lakefront of Chicago in connection to the World's Fair, in a letter (18 August 1890) to Lyman Gage, president of the board of directors of the Exposition, asserting the importance

of visual egress to Lake Michigan, he asserted that it was probable that many of the park visitors 'never have seen a broad body of water extending to the horizon, will never have seen a vessel under sail, nor a steamship … and will never have seen such effects as reflective light or of clouds billowing up from the horizon, as are to be enjoyed almost every summer's day on the lake margin of the city' (Olmsted 1777–1952: Box 47). A few months later (7 January 1891), he wrote a letter to Clarence Pallen pleading for the aesthetic integrity of the park. It is necessary, he asserted, to 'forbid and prevent [the Lake's] being occupied by advertising boats' even if it requires an act of Congress to do it (Olmsted 1777–1952: Box 47).

There is no question that Olmsted was drawing, directly or indirectly, on a poetic thread that rested on memory as a means to envision culture through the land, apart from its economic and functional use. He sought to return wilderness to the tropes of the picturesque sublime from which it originated and utilise it as a format to humanise and aestheticise the emerging social world. To do this, Olmsted turned directly to cultural precedents, to picturesque landscape that arose out of Hudson Valley tourism – reaching far north into the mountains of the Catskills and Adirondacks for an important part of his inspiration for his first important park in New York. His use of picturesque predated the later wilderness sublime, in effect returning to an earlier conception of wild. He meant to apply it as a new commons that would break down the distinctions of social class by defining a common conceptual space in landscape parks.

Green Space: Coda 3 (Invention)

If invention were to follow from imagination and were hitched to humanist ends we should have every reason to feel confident in the forthcoming projects meant to define environmental reform. What I shall argue here is that, although green space as invention projected as the progression of memory and imagination as in Vico's humanist scheme is right and true, we seem more likely now to see the re-invention of anti-humanist and counter-natural green space: a green space as force of its own making.

I found an interesting commentary on the relation of landscape to urban form in Paul Shepheard's 1997 account of his approach on foot to a medieval cathedral at Ely, in the English fens:

> in the distance, the cathedral spires have a sort of gusty flat presence, like the mirage of greatness. But then, at about one and three-quarter miles out, the cathedral suddenly jumps into full detail and seems instantly to be much bigger

– the greatness made real. At that critical distance all the finials and carving and buttressing of Gothic detail suddenly become clear, and the mass is swapped for detail. I think that is the distance Gothic buildings are set up for. They are pitched for people walking toward them in the surrounding countryside. There is a pull to it, like wind catching the sails, which puts excitement into the last three thousand yards of the journey (Shepheard 1997: 13).

Shepheard then approaches Ely on a modern highway, re-evaluating the subject`s visual orientation toward the centre. The difference, he says, is between a web and a net: 'fast-traffic highways are connected like a huge net across the country and are laid over an older net of smaller detail, which consists of market towns like Ely, with their dependent villages and surrounding farms'. He decides to call the older net a 'web' – a particular kind of network that has a point of focus. It is what urbanists, social and architectural, have been clamouring for since the dawn of the metropolitan diffusion. But Shepheard describes old webs with their duly restored 'authentic' focal points absorbed in the networked landscape (1997: 14). Surfaces and styles do not recreate functions; they become nicely preserved artefacts, a point made by Sharon Zukin in her examination of the new urbanism that has remade formerly industrial cities like Brooklyn (2011). Thus the problematic is clear: we advocate pushing to the centre in an urban environment defined by rapid and expanding transport. What strikes me here is the now rather quant idea that there would be a correspondence between structure and culture; form and invention. Or, to put it in Olmstedian terms, that there might be a relation between the order of the past recalled and imagined and the invention of a new order that is more than a reprise but at the same time no less than a restatement of the past. All such notions of renewing require a narrative unity, perhaps not blindly restated, but rather reinvented, as David Nye (2003) suggests in his discussion of the narrative reinventions of American technologies as 'second creations' meant to bring human life in harmony with God's creation (nature). I think it is possible to read Olmsted as the engineer of green space (the park) as a second creation, meant to transform an earlier second creation, the city, into a way that augments and responds to the nature.

Narrative can be a somewhat problematic as a concept of social change, though. We probably should ask whether a narrative becomes generally ac- cepted and institutionalised, if we are thinking about making a change in built forms. The political (territorial) space that helped birth Olmsted's ingenious parks scheme was not the republic of New York, which, as we have seen, was dysfunctional and defined increasingly by capital, but rather a small republic of letters. Fundamental change in a democratic society requires a number of

Green Space: Coda 3 (Invention)

linked narratives emerging together – in this case not only one regarding the creation of parks, but the alteration of urban form generally, including attention to housing conditions, transportation solutions, water supplies and more generally to working conditions (Gottlieb 2005). Such unified narratives require a public space from which to emerge – which is precisely the reason why republican conceptions of citizenship (however they may differ between consensual and agonistic interpretations), and *not* the liberal principle of autonomy, are the *sine qua non* of coming to terms with the environmental crisis. Lacking such a broad-based citizen action, Olmsted proceeded as part of a community of writers. At least creativity exists at the margins, is the way I approach such developments.[9] When he moved to New York City, after a go as a gentleman farmer on Staten Island[10] outside New York, Olmsted was introduced to George W. Curtis, Parke Godwin and Charles A. Dana (Olmsted 1983: 3). In 1855, when Olmsted became managing editor of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, he became part of this little 'literary republic' (Rosenweig and Blackmur: 128) in New York City. In this social milieu Olmsted was encouraged to think that his ideas might have concrete applications.[11] Thus the republic of letters became the crucible of Olmsted's ingenuity. Once he became Park Superintendent he reflected more and more the narrowness of his job description. It true that he was a great publicist and the idea of the park became widely popular, but the linkage of parks to a broader narrative of urban re-creation was slow to transpire and never drew on a critical mass of movements and institutions when it did occur (see Luccarelli 1995).[12]

To return to Shepheard's text, I find something else, something about the visuals of the landscape forms he describes. Landscape is shaped not only by movement, but by the force of the built environment – centripetal but also centrifugal. We are looking here at activity that uncovers design measured by the competing forces of centre and periphery. While we all wish to think about green space in terms of urbanism, urbanism has been so radically transformed

9.   Another example of marginality in the service of the imagination: the idea of natural ecology as a metaphor for reinstating human ecologies (Steiner 2002).

10.   Then a rural township, now a part of New York City.

11.   It is interesting to compare the earlier and more radical Young America movement associated with the urban Democrats and organised around the *Democratic Review* to Olmsted's more sedate and genteel Republican circle. See Fairfield 2010: 81–82.

12.   It would require a broader sharing of power, which met very little success; indeed the situation was worsening as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, though there was the beginning of an opening in the so-called Progressive Era 1900–1917, until the First World War put an end to that.

that the conditions for basing space on existing urban form are greatly diminished, effectively lost. Nineteenth century New York was indicative. Today the process of urban displacement through improved transportation and electronic communication over huge distances, the migration of peoples to cities around the world, the spreading sense of insecurity in urban places, the continued growth of the periphery, the decline of many regional cities, makes urbanism more a consequent condition than a casual factor – in this reading, New York was simply ahead of a process that now affects the whole world.

Thus, if we can, for metaphorical purposes, give green space an agency of its own, we may consider the following logic: as constructive ingenuity green space is so severely curtailed by conditions, political and social, which have been inflicted upon us and which we have inflicted upon ourselves, it must by its own nature find another outlet. What I am suggesting is that green space becomes a form of negation directed at the present built environment. That is to say, the creation of green space will increasingly reflect the forces of nature man has unleashed (or to link with earlier formulations we may call it the counter-nature of the new anthropogenic geosphere). The memory of affirmative landscapes charted in this book stands in danger of being overwhelmed by new discoveries of the geographic landscapes of climate change that are presently buried in the historical record.

In one way this kind of green space as negation was latent already in the idea of greenbelts developed at the turn of the twentieth century – the next phase of inventive green space that built on Olmsted's legacy. Greenbelt follows along with the replicating of the values in the land most sought after by man, but it also has a side of negation: the idea of creating a counter-force in land designed to limit the spread of the city. Considered part of an effort to give cities form and shape, green belts may also be seen as part and parcel of the re-imposition of limits; the creation of borders around an ecological system in imitation of nature. It requires legal authorisation and political will to accomplish, but today negative green space is emerging as a (human) force of counter-nature. The limits of the city (and the city is now the zone of man) have emerged in hurricane, flood, fire, drought fuelled by anthropogenic climate change – the progenitors of the new zones of green space in the process of being reclaimed. Once the inventor of kindly 'nature' based on nature's generative powers, humankind now lives with a counter-nature of its own generation, a green space minted in the 1950s as the precipitous increase in carbon emissions began. Like the geosphere, invented green space is focused on creation through

destruction. The third coda is merely ironic, unless we can use the negative spaces to forge a new ingenuity in Vico's sense.

Ripeness and Decline

In my reading I have sought to define green space as the outcome of cultural memory applied to the reading of the emerging modern space represented by urbanisation. We have as the theme the shaping and codification of green space in response to the possibilities of landscape imaging in relation to social and political space. I have considered this in terms of linking landscape to the idea of 'ecological citizenship' through the 'ecological self' and found the local political sphere incapable of response, considering the lack of a shared citizenship and the reliance on the part of political actors from both sides of the divide on increasing the reach of the social sphere. I identified an alternative, seeing green space as human-shaped space that draws on the powers of nature. I believe that this was implicit also in Olmsted's work, but it soon fell by the wayside. I believe the typology of green space should not be taken as a rigid description of what is actually a highly interdependent set of variables. The question is more in the order of how to formulate and present a case for environmental change.

As for Olmsted, as his fame grew he became an establishment figure. Ironically, the principle most admired in Olmsted today because it reflects the principle of embeddedness of nature in culture, was the very principle that led him to become a pillar of late nineteenth century thinking. Olmsted became the principle landscape designer for the Chicago World's fair in 1893, which established the Beaux Arts building craze in the US and lead directly to the City Beautiful movement. By this time Olmsted was an old man and his reaction to the geographic landscape of the Midwest shows a determined aestheticism and disregard of the visual possibilities of adaptation to a very different landscape, as indicated in his 1893 *Report upon the Landscape Architecture of the Columbian Exposition to the American Institute of Architects*:

> The country immediately around Chicago is flat and mainly treeless, except that in a few places there are small areas of dense woods. Its sub-soil generally, and its surface soil largely, is a tenacious brick-clay. The climate in the spring is severe under successive alterations of northerly and southerly winds. The latter sweeping over the icy Lake from the semi-arctic regions north of Lake Superior, the demand upon energy of vegetation is apt to be peculiarly trying. Accordingly the choice of a suitable site was necessarily to be a choice of difficulties. Of the seven sites to which our attention was called, there was not one the

scenery of which would recommend it if it had been near Boston, New York or Philadelphia (1777–1952: Box 47).

This statement is testament to Olmsted's effective canonisation of picturesque as the basis of landscape appreciation. There was little here to suggest a willingness to conform to the biogeography or ecology of the prairies. At this point Olmsted was nearing the end of his career. The World Exposition went forward as a statement of architecture and the City Beautiful movement and as an expression of high Victorian taste and manner.

There was a brief attempt, beginning in the 1890s, to make of American cities European-urban-landscapes; they called it the 'City Beautiful' and its chief practitioner – Daniel Burnham – had some success in adding what they called 'civic' and non-commercial features to the landscape of American cities. Great parks were laid out, civic building and monuments were constructed. Axials were planned and perimeters of green were laid out – most famously Chicago's great forest parks. But Burnham's greatest success was in Washington, D.C. – not surprisingly because Washington had been originally conceived as the kind of city the City Beautiful movement had envisioned. Under the Macmillan commission, the Mall – a national pathway – was restored. The grand spaces of the nation's capital were finally realised. Criticised for being imitative and safe – a restatement of late Victorian culture, City Beautiful reflects in many ways the separation of aesthetics from life, a kind of formalism. The park now became attached to the heavily decorated, often flatulent and eclectic buildings of the period.

The most important lesson to take away from Olmsted's experience is that the idea of a postmodern 'turn' toward embedding nature in culture and culture and nature that will putatively 'correct' earlier 'misconceptions' derived from the pastoral or 'pastoralism' is a baseless ideologically charged statement driven by the libertarian imagination. Embeddedness was long a feature of the nature and landscape tradition discussed in this book. Olmsted clearly sought to create an Arcadian impression, but at the same time he was dedicated to reading the social and aesthetic spheres in strong relation to one another. The closer he came to achieving that, the closer he came to settling for a formalist and formulaic response to the world. Not surprisingly, the postmodern understanding that a 'unitary' understanding of nature and culture is a means of moving forward (Solnit 2007) has become highly formulaic and rests on the fiction that life follows thought.

If the early Olmsted was akin to Ruskin's attempt to experimentally conjoin aesthetics with the social and political, the later Olmsted, like the City

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Beautiful movement he came to support, was decidedly Arnoldian. Landscape became a film spread over and embedding cities in an aesthetic impression. The field reflected a continuation of Hellenistic naturalism, according to Matthew Arnold who understood the linkage between visualisation and naturalism: 'Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature'. Art in this sense must at first be granted autonomy, as Arnold tells us, from the dictates imposed by the 'strictness of conscience' in order to enjoy the 'spontaneity of consciousness' (awareness), keeping in mind the idea that 'things cannot really appear intelligible, unless they are also beautiful' (1869: 171, 175,182, 195). Landscape became a frame for the city – and increasingly so – and developed a means of creating stability, achieved at the price of reinforcing the hierarchies of that age that, at the same time, stood no chance against the progressive powers of corrosion generated by modernism and then by post-modernism. It left us unable to tackle the question of how to make centrality and green space in a world of hyper-communication and movement.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: THE REINVENTION OF GREEN SPACE?

I was in graduate school in American Studies in the 1970s when I was first seriously introduced to Fredrick Law Olmsted, together with other 'representative Americans' like the architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Henry Louis Sullivan, the naturalist John Muir and of course Franklin, Emerson and Thoreau. Olmsted's popularity owed to his conjoining of social and environmental concerns that occupied many of us at that time, as well as his framing a peculiarly 'American' ethos toward landscape and cities. That made Olmsted a 'safe bet': an intellectual source for reform that remained well within the national mythological structure essential to American Studies in those days, and still functioning in the civil society as a kind of national glue.

What I did not know at the time was that the man more responsible than anyone for bringing Olmsted out of the isolation of his late Victorianism and into the modernist light of mid-century culture was not an academic, but rather a journalist and public intellectual who in the 1920s and 1930s wrote a series of books on American figures. Lewis Mumford's book, *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America, 1865–1895* (1931) reintroduced Olmsted as a national figure, but rereading his chapter on landscape today tells me a different story from the one I had learned. Olmsted was an 'inventor' and had engaged in a contest to change the course of American history. The backdrop for that contest was the consciousness of environment: 'The influence of the land is sometimes looked upon as significant only in primitive conditions of life … As a matter of fact, the importance of land increases with civilisation: "Nature" as a system of interests and activities is one of the chief creations of the civilised man' (55). The fundamental contribution of Olmsted was 'using nature creatively. By making nature urbane he naturalized the city' (88). The other important contribution: enjoyment; if nature could be enjoyed, a healthier perspective on human existence could be achieved. Mumford fully acknowledged the dangers of idealisation: 'romanticism of the most touching sort was not, apparently, incompatible with bad farming and the general desecration of the

wilderness' (64). But he saw enjoyment of landscape and its proper use and development as a part of a broader opening to 'nature' implicit in the growth of realistic and scientific understandings of environmental destruction and ecological sustainability against the older ethos of rapine and plunder.

Lewis Mumford seems to have discovered some eighty years ago what postmodernists have touted as their invention (Cronon 1995). Few contemporary commentators have bothered to consult Mumford, in some measure because he sought to arrive at a synthetic perspective, and furthermore his synthesis demanded a sociological and political critique of the structures of the power as well as an understanding of the environment as a sphere encompassing both reason *and inspiration*. That attempt to create an encompassing environmental sphere that enhanced rather than over-rode the qualities of places was a project that could not go forward in the contemporary atmosphere of scepticism and in the context of the development of an ideology that fetishises social fragmentation. Permit me to quote one of the leaders of the postmodernist charge: 'There is a certain plaintiveness in this catalogue of Thoreau's, a romantic's lament for the pristine world of an earlier and now forgotten time. The myth of a fallen humanity in a fallen world is ever far beneath the surface in Thoreau's writings' (Cronon 2003/1983: 4). The idea that a list of lost species and an expression of the discomfort with modernisation of the world should ipso facto characterise someone as a 'lost romantic' has done enormous damage to the environmental cause. The problem continues and it is not limited to Mr Cronon. The arrival of 'environmental criticism' from the earlier formulation of 'ecocriticism' reflects the need to separate the specific issues of environment sustainability from the multiple and entangled concept of nature (Buell 2005). This has helped to highlight problems of environment as fundamental to human society and to the substance of all lifeforms, but it has also narrowed the implications of environmental reform and helped create the over-emphasis on global space and the control of climate change as virtually the one and only environmental issue in the public's mind. By contrast, Mumford held forth Thoreau and Olmsted as projecting a creative force which helped bring green space ('landscape') into 'the American's consciousness' (105). The context for Mumford was that the solution to environmental problems required the rebuilding of urbanism as a synthesis of civic humanism, modernist technology and conservation. Its chief virtue was finding a link between a state-planned economy and the thorough rebuilding of the infrastructure along regional lines and secondly the parallel transition from the old nineteenth century identity to a new American identity that transforms republicanism to civic humanism and federalism to regionalism.

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The programme[1] gained headway in the 1920s and 1930s but was derailed by the slipshod character of the New Deal and especially the War's resurrection of industrial capitalism.

In summary, this work has approached environmental literature and art in a broad geographical and political context. I have been particularly interested in the relation between expressions of the environmental sphere and conceptions of space, territory and citizenship. I reached the following conclusions:

1. The urban environmental sphere was consciously elaborated in Philadelphia, but it did not survive the increasing pressure against it brought to bear by the overbearing weight of the world economy and the reorganisation of political territory during the American War for Independence.

2. The problem for Philadelphia then and for 'green cities' today is the overwhelming weight of social inequality, which leads inevitably to the political demands and the loss of urban sovereignty. The rise, and current reassertion, of the nation state means that cities are viewed primarily as a means of capital accumulation, regardless of the environmental consequences.

3. Arcadian images of an ideal environmental sphere are an inevitable part of environmentalism because they capture a deeply held aspect of the environmental imaginary that links human destiny to a larger sense of life. This is experienced in the lifeworld as an 'environmental unconscious' which takes the conscious form in green space. Of course it will be expressed initially as an idealisation, for without idealisations there can be no confrontation with current structures.

4. Pastoral as a narrative form recurs over and over again because retreat from urbanism was an inevitable response to the value placed on capital accumulation and instrumental values that underlie modern life and are concentrated in the city. Hence we see the pastoral 'retreat' to the periphery expressed in landscape representations and in the development of parks and suburbs. More recently, as the capitalisation of suburban and exurban areas began to increase from the depths of the 1970s, urbanism was reinvented as an environmental sphere containing new accessible green space only to suffer the fate noted in point 1.

5. Expressions of aesthetic value are useful because they produce the pos-

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1.   Mumford's programme was developed in association with the Regional Planning Association of America. See Luccarelli 1995.

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sibility of innovations necessary to carry forth with the project of linking green space to the commons. But art, literature and criticism are also subject to hollowing out and appropriation. Transformations require social movements and organised efforts at political reform.

6. Finally, the evolution of the environmental awareness as a sphere of creativity and imagination in which the environmental sphere is understood as deeply intertwined with human consciousness stands in double relation to us. It has become a realm that reflects civic awareness, obligations to the commonweal, questions of fairness and equality, and possibilities for individual development and creativity. But environment is also earth forming processes that we have discovered bear no eschatological structure. These biological and geological forces are not lost to time but break through into historical time and into our present. Constituting a counter-nature to our imaginary, we have only recently begun to come to awareness that we have repeatedly set in motion these episodic counter-natures. The sense of nature as 'counter' to the idea of 'nature' as a web of life that respects all life has been made as a system of mutual respect and perpetuation has complicated environmental discourse. We have discovered, furthermore, that our manipulation of the techno-environmental sphere has now set in motion the most powerful counter-nature we could probably imagine: climate change. Inevitably this will come to structure the meaning of green space and change our sense of the environmental sphere and what it means to citizenship and the commons.

In this book I have rooted the rise of green space as a response to the destruction of an urbanism that cannot be returned to us, but also in the context of the choices we might aspire to again. In that regard, despite the social and cultural fragmentation and political loss of nerve that we in the US and in the West generally have suffered through over the past forty years, it is not too difficult to see that the first version of Olmsted's green space is still very much alive in green city concepts, park planning and neo-garden city development. Political ecology takes its cues from radical urban politics of the 1960s and operates in many large urban centres. But in a future in which human control through the techno-environmental sphere takes the form of unstoppable global climate change, the advancing tide of water and wind may shape the most important 'greening' of all – the rise and rise of green space 3: a new counter-nature on top of all the others we have experienced, from deforestation to chemical toxic-

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ity. The response must be to concede change and to argue over how to shape change and to what ends. Are we simply looking to be 'resilient' to environment (externality) or does counter-nature demand new means for reimagining and reinventing sustainability of our human ecologies? In the case of the later solution we will inevitably draw on the concepts, images of the past re-invented in new contexts.

I recall that Mumford's 'landscape' in *The Brown Decades* is taken directly from Olmsted and by it he means green space 3 – the power and influence of landforms. Cities and towns owe their form and development to the physical landscape that lies (temporarily) unnoticed or misunderstood beneath, but now becomes more apparent as a result of the advance of climate change. In a future world, when landforms and their ecologies can no longer be forgotten, green space 3 will make itself felt and the need to work with within the resultant processes at the local and regional level might re-engage the green legacies that shaped the culture and alternative thinking of an earlier era.

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Z

## Conceptualising Space and Re-Engaging the Common

In this book Mark Luccarelli pushes past unproductive mind/body debates by rooting the rise of environmental awareness in the political and geographical history of the United States. Considering history in terms of the categorical development of space – social, territorial and conceptual – he examines the forces that drove people to ignore their surroundings by distancing culture from place and by assiduously advancing the dissolution of social bonds. Thus beneath the question of the surround, and the key to its renewal today, is the quest to re-engage the common. The latter is still a part of the approach to space, its arrangement and disposition, and has a necessary environmental dimension.

Concepts of urbanism, place identity, picturesque landscape and nature are part of a larger Western intellectual and cultural context but, by examining the imaging of cities and landscape, Luccarelli links particular American geographic settings – as well as the political ideals and practices of the republic – to the application and aesthetic reading of these ideas. The advocates of these various perspectives shared an aesthetic orientation as a means of redefining or recovering the common. The book looks at various American urban and regional contexts, as well as the work of artists, writers and public figures.

'Mark Luccarelli has written a trenchant analysis of why environmentalism has suffered a political decline in the United States since the 1960s, even as the problems it confronts have become more urgent. By linking his argument to the ethics of place, he moves beyond simplistic explanations and develops a global and historical understanding of this American paradox.'

David E. Nye, author of *America as Second Creation* and *Technology Matters*

MARK LUCCARELLI was born in Princeton, NJ and attended schools there. He holds a doctorate in American Studies from the University of Iowa and taught at Rutgers University before his appointment as Senior Lecturer in American Civilisation at the University of Oslo. Author of *Lewis Mumford and the Ecological Region* (1995), he is co-editor of *Green Oslo* (2012) and *Spaces In-between* (2015) and principal founding member of the NIES, the Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies.
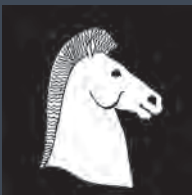
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