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NYC WTC 9/11  
*The Healing Gardens of Paradise Lost*

Lorna McNeur

*The author, a native New Yorker, explores some of the complex cultural and symbolic issues surrounding the development of Manhattan's landscape and grid, and discusses how things changed after 9/11.*

Death is a part of life, just as winter is a part of spring . . . death means change. We can't expect one gift from the Creator without accepting the other. We can't live forever, or prevent anything from changing. We can only prepare ourselves for change. Nevertheless, it is tragic that so many who had so much to share with the world died so quickly . . .<sup>1</sup>

Following the destruction of the World Trade Center, these haunting words hold as true today as they did for the Native Americans when they were written about 350 years ago, following the desecration of their people, land and culture on Manhattan island, on the same soil as the Lower Manhattan Financial District, location of 'Ground Zero'.

In this text, I explore transformations in the Manhattan landscape. Beginning with the once-sacred island of the ancient Native New Yorkers, through the battles for land and life between the Native New Yorkers and the European Settlers, I then look at the gridding of the landscape and erasure of natural conditions. Investigating the messages emitted and the quality of life ensuing in the midst of a productivity- and efficiency-minded gridded urban landscape, I then discuss the essence of this urban-scape ethos as it was embodied in the World Trade Center. Throughout, I am looking at the imbalances that can occur when

there is superimposition rather than integration and appreciation for the interrelationships between culture, politics, landscape and lives. I conclude by making proposals for green public space throughout the city, based on an understanding of the soul of the city.

#### ANCIENT NATIVE NEW YORKERS

##### *Manhattan Island and Paradise Lost*

There are many historical documents written about Manhattan as an island of paradise that was once sacred to New York's Native Americans, who I refer to in this text as the ancient Native New Yorkers, to make both the connection and distinction with contemporary Native New Yorkers. In his book, *Native New Yorkers*, Evan Pritchard tells us that for at least one thousand years before the seventeenth-century European occupation, the 'Real People' of the Manhattan Lenape tribe (a tribe of the Algonquin nation), 'lived in a beautiful garden like paradise surrounding what is now called New York Harbor. They were well aware of their destructive potential as human beings, and strove to interact gracefully with their environment and humans without causing permanent damage whenever possible.'<sup>2</sup>

Prior to European contact, there were Algonquin farming communities with highly developed farming methods that assumed deep respect for the land and were in harmony with the seasons and nature's cycles. There was well-drained soil and good water; planting, hunting, fishing in the Spring; wild flowers perfuming the air; and travelling for trade and adventure. Manhattan was a meeting place to 'exchange goods, share knowledge, give thanks, and show respect to the Spirits. When the leaves changed colour, there was harvesting, hunting and collecting of food for the winter. During the cold moons of long nights they made objects for trade, repaired tools, told lesson stories, and celebrated festivals.'<sup>3</sup> Johannes de Laet, one of the first

Dutch historians to describe the region, wrote in 1626, 'The land is excellent and agreeable, full of noble forests, trees, and grapevines. [Working it well will] render it one of the finest and most fruitful lands in that part of the world.'<sup>4</sup>

Pritchard also tells us that the Lenape tribe had long established the 'great trading center' in what would become the Wall Street area. 'The southern tip of Manhattan . . . was a well-known trading spot. Goods were plentiful, and fur traders travelled from hundreds of miles around to make deals there.'<sup>5</sup> Following on from this, the first European trading post was established in Lower Manhattan in 1613, just a few blocks from what was to become the World Trade Center site.

#### ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEAN SETTLERS

The arrival of the white men was foretold by the elders at least one year in advance. With anticipation the Native Americans waited, not quite knowing whether the arrival would be a blessing or otherwise. However, they were prepared to greet who they thought might be the gods from the east, coming from the direction of the sun, and to welcome them warmly and generously, offering food, clothing, hospitality and land. However, once they arrived, over a period of time it became painfully clear that the agendas of the clashing cultures were worlds apart.

Wars waged on the Native Americans by the white settlers aimed at annihilation. Thousands of Native American men, women and children lost their lives, history, culture, land and spirit – all on the soil that is the foundation of the city of New York. In 1647, one of the worst massacres on North American soil took place at Pound Ridge, New York, and was carried out with religious zeal with one account stating that 'the scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents'.<sup>6</sup> This single story epitomises much of the Native American experience of genocide and devastation.

Between five and seven hundred Algonquin were ambushed and killed as they were gathering for the important spiritual celebration *k'mo'hok ki'coy* or 'hungry moon', often called Maple Sugar Dance. Arriving at midnight at Pound Ridge on foot, the white colonists (some say 200 of them, some 130) found three rows of well-constructed houses, each seventy paces long (some say eighty), made of square logs. One hundred eighty Lenape came outside to see what the noise was and were killed where they stood outside the houses. Others tried to escape but were driven back into the houses. General Montagne gave the order to burn them inside the houses. Soon the many long houses were torched. Eight men escaped. The people inside preferred to die by fire than be killed by whites, so they sat inside and didn't make a single sound. Not one Lenape among the many hundreds who were burned alive screamed.<sup>7</sup>

In speaking of the councils of Native American wisdom teachers, Pritchard explains that, 'The ashes of those council fires are still buried beneath the New York streets, the bones of those saints still rest encased by cement. All of them spoke of the earth as if she were their own mother.'<sup>8</sup> And 'the spirits of the Native American Land Keepers still keep silent watch over the terrain.'<sup>9</sup>

#### NATURE AND THE GRID-PAN LAYOUT OF NEW YORK

Over the succeeding centuries, New York developed rapidly and successfully established itself as an international urban centre. In the early nineteenth century, three commissioners were assigned the task of establishing a layout for the fast growing city. In their highly pragmatic approach they operated as economists and traffic engineers, reducing the potential richness of New York to a minimal instrumental structure, promoting efficiency and productivity. While this solution may have met the requirements of

the city as an urban system it failed to address the multitude of needs relating to levels of human interaction of a social, cultural, political and spiritual nature.

The superimposition of the gridded street plan on to Manhattan island led to the levelling of the landscape, with little consideration for the existing hills, valleys, rocky outcrops, cliffs, overlooks, ponds, hamlets and farmsteads, thus eliminating rich possibilities for reciprocity between urban topography and natural geography. The abstract character of the grid creates a self-referentially human-made world in which the inhabitants experience minimal contact with nature. For those New Yorkers connected to the city as a machine, the continuity of the seasons is rarely acknowledged, except in severe weather conditions like snow storms, hurricanes and heat waves when nature is experienced more as an inconvenience and a disruption to productivity, rather than appreciated for its replenishing qualities.

Like busy beavers, the business (busyness) of the commercial world disconnects people from natural conditions, causing both harm to themselves and other living beings and plants around them. There is an old Algonquin story that tells of the industriousness of beavers and their busy goal-oriented way of cutting down all the trees. Their obsessive work ignores the existing ecosystem so much that they leave no trees for birds to nest, there is no shade, and all the other animals are unhappy. Losing touch with the natural world around us can have devastating effects, not only for ourselves, but also for all people, plants and animals.

#### DEMOCRACY AND THE GRID

The grid street system first appeared in Greek antiquity, representing a democratic mapping of the city because it set out a fair and equal block and street structure. Additionally, the grid was orientated according to the four directions of north, south, east

and west, thus assuring success and longevity for the city because it was connected into the larger cosmological order. However, the role of the grid in contemporary society concerns the logistics of commercial productivity as a mechanism of machine-minded efficiency.

In theory, the grid can promote democracy by nullifying particularly advantageous natural conditions, giving equal opportunity to all and privileging none. By levelling nature, literally and metaphorically, to an undifferentiated and homogenous state, it allegedly levels the classes by giving the majority of people more equal starting points. However, to the Native Americans, erasure of topography was synonymous with cultural and racial genocide. Manhattan island, once a beautiful 'island of paradise' for its native inhabitants, is now a dense, urban, gridiron city. Frederick Law Olmsted, the architect of Central Park, wrote disdainfully about the grid in 1877:

Some two thousand blocks were provided, each theoretically two hundred feet wide, no more no less; and ever since, if a building site is wanted, whether with a view to a church or a blast furnace, an open house or a toy shop, there is, of intention, no better place in one of these blocks than another . . . The clerk or mechanic and his young family . . . is provided for in this respect not otherwise than the wealthy merchant . . .<sup>10</sup>

Here is democracy taken to its extreme. The creation of equal spaces, represented by the grid, required the elimination of special places. With the natural conditions of the undulating hills and valleys erased, the buildings became the reference points, thus reinforcing the self-referential nature of this self-contained island city. With nature and history essentially eliminated, a specificity of place was lost with the result that inhabitants were distanced and alienated from their own environment. Here, the grid was not only superimposed over the natural conditions of the island but also on the nature of the lives within it.

Richard Sennet explains that the city grid plan can have profoundly numbing effects on the inhabitants. He writes: 'gridded space does more than create a blank canvas for development. It subdues those who must live in the space, disorienting their ability to see and to evaluate relationships. In that sense, the planning of neutral space is an act of dominating and subduing others.'<sup>11</sup> The very structure of the city breeds a mentality that can be both highly productive and deeply destructive. The combination of the gridded plan on the finite condition of Manhattan as an island creates a concentration that engenders a work mentality of the highest order. All of these conditions and many more, contribute to a competitively hostile environment with very little time to spare for human frailty, and the tragedies that arise from such conditions.

The obsession with technology, efficiency and productivity that has seized society in the past few centuries, has reached its zenith in international cities like contemporary New York. Such environments engender patterns of living that are predominantly diagrammatic. We are born into this and assume it as reality, rather than choice. This reminds me of an Algonquin children's story that illustrates how the Lenape felt about the European settlement of their land.

There are many stories about snakes among the Algonquin. One story tells of two Native American children, a boy and a girl, who find a harmless little snake . . . wriggling in the forest. They take it home as a pet. They feed it leaves and other odds and ends, only to find that it grows at an amazing rate. The more they feed it, the more voracious the snake's appetite becomes. It eats the dog, then the cat, then all the surrounding squirrels and rabbits. It even tries to eat the baby, but is stopped in time. However, from that point on, the boy and girl are occupied every waking minute with finding meat for the snake so it won't eat them. The snake turns into a

monster and begins devouring the land and everything on it. It is said that the snake is still alive today, but no one will say what form it has taken.<sup>12</sup>

### NYC WTC 9/11

The World Trade Center towers represented, among many things, the essence of New York: financially orientated professions and people encased in gridded vertical 'islands'. Here was the grid taken to its ultimate extreme. Reaching the intellectual heights and structural limits of the abilities of humankind, these two buildings stood as far removed from nature as is humanly possible.

The hard drive of Manhattan was epitomised in the World Trade Center buildings. Every day these buildings were full of people, earnestly 'beavering' away, caught in the wheel of the urban machine that we all take for granted as reality. In order to support our lifestyles we have to earn more and more, taking precious time away from family and friends. Working to live has become living to work.

The underlying ethos and normal mode of operation of New York City has been crisis management. This machine-minded city ground to a halt on September 11, 2001, now referred to as 9/11, the same number as the United States crisis phone number for emergency services, 911. This was the day that New York was thrust upon the world stage, in its moment of ultimate crisis.

Death always puts life into perspective. 9/11 put life into perspective for New Yorkers on a multitude of levels. Only something as huge as this could stop in its tracks the larger-than-life urban machine that is New York. After experiencing the destruction of buildings, lives and families on 9/11, millions of New Yorkers have reassessed the quality of their lives. Many have

moved out of the city to bring up their children in a more forgiving, nourishing environment, simultaneously changing lifestyles, attitudes and expectations.

September 11 has changed significantly the nature of daily life within the city as well. In 2003, two years after the attack, the after-effects were still extremely noticeable. Pedestrians were not fighting frantically for survival amongst the heavy flowing river of yellow cabs, delivery trucks and cars that ruled the city. What was once taken for granted (the traffic seemed as permanent as the buildings) had been significantly reduced, and pedestrians could relax. They could breathe more easily, literally and metaphorically.

The lower frequency of noise, movement and frustration meant that it was safer to experience being in the environment, rather than constantly racing through it. There was not the usual rushing about from pillar to post, creating a frenetic, fast-paced environment that was baffling but exhilarating to people visiting the city from afar. New Yorkers were actually walking, even strolling! They seemed to be more present in their environment and were absorbing their experience of it, rather than constantly escaping it, through rushing.

Was the World Trade Center disaster New York's healing crisis? Have we all been caught in a machine so large that it took an equally huge tragic force to stop it and make us see the senselessness of the lives that we have been living? The film *Koyaanisqatsi* (a Native American term meaning 'life out of balance') prophetically portrays this phenomenon.

The foundations of the Manhattan Financial District were built in sacred soil and on the tragic misfortunes of others, rising ever higher above the ashes of the ancient Native New Yorkers. Is it really wise to build ever higher again, this time on the ashes of contemporary metropolitan martyrs? What has been learned from the tragic events of 9/11? What have we learned from the fall of these two mighty oaks of civilization?

There is a famous Cree saying that expresses the way many Munsee, and Native Americans in general, feel about what has become of their island, Manhattan: 'Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.'<sup>13</sup>

#### FOREST FOR THE TREES IN PARADISE LOST

Precious few trees and public spaces exist on the grid-locked island of Manhattan. For the puritanical mindset of the early nineteenth-century commissioners, the words 'public space' and 'loitering' were synonymous in an environment that assumed work and success as its highest priority. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, New Yorkers are discovering that the few urban piazzas and squares that they do have are welcome restful places; not only contrasting and complementing the preconditioned structure of the city grid but also offering solace to an entire city suffering the after-effects of devastating trauma. The New York Public Library gardens are brim-full with lunchtime office workers, and easily overheard conversations between tables find the words '9/11' crop up at almost every third table.

Carl Schorske evokes the beliefs of the Austrian architect and town planner Camillo Sitte in his hope for the return of street life when he writes: 'In the cold, traffic swept modern city of the slide-rule and the slum, the picturesque comforting square can reawaken memories of the vanished Burgher past. This spatially dramatic memory will inspire us to create a better future, free of philistinism and utilitarianism.'<sup>14</sup>

Green urban spaces are places where people can express and celebrate their humanity in all its diversity. Without spaces like these, human beings are denied their individuality and creativity and the opportunity to connect with others on a multitude of levels ranging from the quietly intimate to the international;

from contemplations or conversations in the company of others to international cultural celebrations and political demonstrations.

The gridded road pattern has left too few squares and parks to meet the needs of the millions of inhabitants who could be benefiting from the presence of urban public spaces of reflection and replenishment. Central Park does provide for this need in New York but its location hinders its ability to do so for all. Nevertheless, this grand green space contains clues to places for green public space to be integrated elsewhere into the existing fabric of New York City.

#### CENTRAL PARK AND BROADWAY

##### *Prevailing Spirits of Native New York*

##### *Central Park*

Central Park is an oasis in an otherwise mechanistic environment. It is an island of nature, a green reservoir in the centre of the city, of the island of Manhattan. The park plays its role in softening the many tragedies of urban life and offers respite for those who cannot afford to leave the city. Paradoxically, one turns inward to the centre of the city to escape the urban intensity. Here is a landscape designed to protect the citizens from their own urban environment.

We have seen that, rather than creating a cityscape that integrated some natural conditions, the city was levelled and gridded. In the centre a rectangle of space for a park was retained as a way of counteracting some of the consciously perceived negative effects that the grid would have on daily living. It is ironic that the grid destroyed the majority of the landscape of the island but the remaining area in the centre was encased as a gem within a rectangle of space, an island of green within the gridded urban-scape. However, despite the democratic intentions of being centrally located and therefore accessible to all, in practice, Central

Park has proved to be too far away for most city dwellers to reach in their daily routines. One large space in the centre of a huge city primarily serves those who live or work around it, whilst others must simply do without. Other than Central Park, Manhattan offers surprisingly few public spaces for rest and replenishment, amidst the high-stress New York world of urban intensity. For the sanity and dignity of the whole city, integrated public space throughout is essential.

The landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted began the design of the park in 1850 by organizing the park's major road systems according to the overall road structure of New York.<sup>15</sup> A formal analysis of the plan of Central Park reveals some striking parallels between the park and the city:<sup>16</sup>

1. Manhattan is a long and thin island with proportions of 1:5. Central Park is a long and thin 'green island' with proportions of 1:5.
2. Broadway in Manhattan is at a diagonal to the grid, oriented almost due north. The Grand Promenade in Central Park is at a diagonal to the grid, oriented almost due north.
3. At the centre of the island of Manhattan is the rectangular 'green lung' reservoir called Central Park. At the centre of the 'green island' of Central Park is the rectangular reservoir of water.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the location of the rectangular reservoir at the centre of Central Park parallels the position of the rectangle of Central Park within Manhattan. In these mirror relationships between the city and the park are lessons to be learned from the park about the city. Ironically, Central Park gives clues to the possibilities for green public space throughout the city that are grounded in the long history of transformation of New York's original landscape, gridded cityscape and park landscape. This

progression from the island, to the city, the park, and the reservoir, describes an inward spiralling theme of profound dimensions:

1. The natural island of Manhattan once existed as a sacred green island of paradise.
2. This island was then gridded.
3. In the centre of the gridded island was retained a portion of landscape, Central Park.
4. The plan of Central Park parallels much of the plan of New York City.
5. In the centre of the park was retained a rectangular reservoir (removed in the twentieth century).

#### Proposal:

To reinstate the rectangular reservoir in Central Park.

To place into the reservoir, a small-scale version of the original natural island of Manhattan.

To plant this miniature Manhattan with the original seeds of the island and let them grow naturally.

Walking on this island in the heart of Central Park could provide a more tangible sense of Manhattan's paradise lost.

This inward spiralling theme reveals primordial aspects of Manhattan and Central Park. The long and thin island of Manhattan, with the space at the centre, is strikingly anthropomorphic in the sense that it is like a body with a womb at the centre. Metaphorically, the urban inhabitants turn to the sacred oasis of nature at the centre of the city for replenishment and respite from the very world that they have constructed, after destroying the surrounding landscape. The once sacred island of

Manhattan is paradise lost and Central Park is the reinstatement of this lost natural landscape. Central Park is New York's reconstruction of paradise lost.

In other words, the island that was destroyed was then recreated metaphorically in New York's 'garden', Central Park.<sup>18</sup> This interchangeability between garden and city is reinforced by historical notions of paradise, which is referred to simultaneously in both Medieval and Renaissance writings as the Garden of Eden or the Heavenly City.

Another example of this interchangeability between city and garden can be seen in the parallel relationship between the Grand Promenade in Central Park and Broadway in New York:

The Grand Promenade is the only formal element in the romantic landscape of Central Park.

Broadway is the only large-scale natural condition in the rational grid of New York.

Hence, both the Grand Promenade and Broadway are related as opposites; both are anomalies in their own contexts and both sit at diagonals to the grid.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Broadway – The Grand Promenade*

Originating as a Native American trail on the once sacred island of Manhattan, Broadway embodies the stories of both the Native and European inhabitation of the island. Like Central Park, Broadway holds a highly significant place in Manhattan. This is so in its diagonal orientation to the grid as well as its distinctive context as a spine running almost the full length of Manhattan island. As such, Broadway is singular in its orientation, eccentric in its configuration and historical in its age. In contrast to the numbing effects of the grid, the creative spirit of Broadway has always been alive with passion throughout its Native American, European and American history. The history of theatre in New

York is synonymous with Broadway. As the city moved its way up the island, so too did the theatre district make its way up Broadway.

Whether promenading in the park or parading along Broadway, the experience of seeing and being seen is the essence of this urban theatricality. For these reasons and many more, Broadway could easily be described as New York's Grand Promenade. Here again we find the interchangeability between the Grand Promenade of the park and the sacred way of Broadway, in the city. There are six squares along Broadway (Union Square, Madison Square, Greeley Square, Herald Square, Times Square, and Columbus Circle), three of which are actually little more than traffic islands. However, there is great potential for these squares and the length of Broadway to be developed further into integrated green space journeying through the city.

This scale of green space would serve the needs of New Yorkers on many levels: as a calming spirit to ease the turmoil of the recent and distant past and to help to achieve a healthy balance between the active and contemplative experiences of urban living.

#### HEALING GARDENS IN PARADISE LOST

New York is a much loved and admired international city. Although millions have never been to New York, many feel like they know the city well because of having 'visited' it through a multitude of plays, films, books and television programmes. Indeed, many cities internationally now have numerous towers that together recall the sense of the famous New York skyline. As a high-profile international city, it is no coincidence that the crisis of 9/11 occurred not only in New York but in the World Trade Center.

The twin towers were filled with people from many international cultures and, like New York, these towers were places of



interest to millions of family members, friends, colleagues and business associates, the world over. Above and beyond the specific intentions of the terrorists who effected this extraordinary act, there may be a higher agenda than politics and fundamentalist beliefs. Is it possible that what New York has experienced is also an awakening for the rest of the world about how we treat ourselves, each other and the precious planet that we seem to be destroying?

This self-destruct instinct is an ironic phenomenon of humankind. Why is it that we can destroy existing conditions only to subconsciously recreate them on our own terms? We can see this in the destruction of the Manhattan landscape and the recreation of it in Central Park. It can also be seen in the New York urbanscape, where there is an interesting relationship between the geology of the land and the height of the buildings. Manhattan is comprised of granite, primarily, enabling tall towers to be constructed where the depth of stone permits. Consequently, the cityscape mirrors the geology of the landscape in that the towers are tallest and most crowded where the rock is strongest and deepest. The landscape might have been destroyed but the hidden geology of the island inadvertently continues to make its presence known.

Is it too late to try and reconnect with these natural elements and energies that persistently return despite our ability to destroy the very environment that sustains our lives and continuing existence? Do these larger-than-life forces, which seem to be appearing and reappearing in different forms, occur to remind us of what we have lost? These are the sorts of issues that have given rise to the international awareness of the need for a worldwide sustainability agenda.

To quickly rebuild a new World Trade Center tower is akin to simply levelling the island of Manhattan. In other words, quickly rebuilding the World Trade Center towers with what could end up being a token gesture towards a memorial garden at the base

and too little regard for the victim's lives, families, friends, and all of the New Yorkers who suffered the 9/11 attack and its after effects, is akin to constructing the rational grid across the Manhattan landscape, with no regard for the lives of the ancient Native New Yorkers, their culture, animals and once beautiful land.

Letting gardens grow on the long-time traumatized island of Manhattan is to let the spirit of the island return to heal the long history of human neglect of both ancient and contemporary Native New Yorkers. Consequently, along with all the other green initiatives already in process, like the Fresh Kills project and others, I propose green public spaces throughout the island of Manhattan in order to gain a healthier balance of active and contemplative spaces throughout the city. The overall proposal would include the World Trade Center site as a memorial garden; Broadway as a green journey through the city, meeting the grand space of Central Park; and the continued development of the perimeter of the island into a string of green public spaces and places.

More specifically, this proposal would include:

1. *World Trade Center Memorial Garden*

The six-storey deep World Trade Center site to be left as a sunken site with cliffs and plateaux for trees and plants to grow upon amidst the exposed granite and soil and for water to collect into a reflective pool or pools at the base. This could be a beautiful garden to either walk into and experience from within or to view from above at street level or further, from the heights of the surrounding buildings. It could prove to be as powerful as the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington that sits embedded in the earth, which has the effect of bringing tears to the eyes of most who visit and read the long list of names of fallen heroes, etched into stone walls.

## 2. *Broadway as a Green 'Sacred Way'*

With astonishingly few green and/or public spaces integrated throughout the city, Broadway could be developed as a green 'sacred way' for ancient and contemporary Native New Yorkers. This could be a green journey of a promenade with public squares travelling through the city, not only commensurate with the scale of Central Park itself but also leading up through the city and into Central Park. The ancient way of Broadway is New York's truly grand promenade, the sacred way upon which to acknowledge with architectural dignity the joys and sorrows of its inhabitants. This could be a peace offering and memorial to paradise lost, the Native American spirits and the victims of 9/11.

## 3. *Manhattan Island Perimeter Gardens and Public Spaces*

Manhattan has been rediscovering its waterfront in the past forty years and is still enjoying an awakening to nature in this way. Once-hardened New Yorkers marvel at the sense of freedom and life that they feel as they stroll or roll along the river's edge. The Lower Manhattan Financial District, densely populated within by office buildings and the work-oriented masses that inhabit them, is surrounded on three sides by developing waterfront parks, museums and cafés. Further development could include more river-front piers transformed into sandy urban beaches, and other creative interpretations of urban public space like the elevated highways that have become rollerblading and cycling routes where people can enjoy the breadth of space experienced at the edges of the island. The water's edge around the whole perimeter of Manhattan could be further developed into a sequence of gardens and public spaces acknowledging the elements in ways that New Yorkers rarely afford, celebrating nature and the meeting of the land, the water and the sky.

## THE SOUL OF THE CITY

With such little green space throughout, the city can breed and reinforce the hard-nosed mentality commonly associated with New York. But with the introduction of the spirit of hope and life that green spaces and squares can give to urban life, the city's inhabitants would also be given the experience of not only mutual healing for the current aftermath of crisis but could also benefit from the sustaining spirit that the presence of nature brings in urban replenishing spaces.

This is a precious moment in time when the wounds of the past have met those of the present, exposing the rocky cliffs, deep soil, and soul of the city, in the World Trade Center site. This is a rare opportunity for the acknowledgement of the spirit of the island and the people who have lost their lives tragically in the past and present. We are all learning this the hardest way possible and the World Trade Center victims are metropolitan martyrs whose lives were stolen in the process of these painful lessons.

Allowing a garden to grow in the depths of the World Trade Center site would symbolically represent the growth and healing so deeply needed for New Yorkers to return to levels of human health so necessary in an unforgiving urban environment. Daniel Libeskind's tower design proposal, which includes the incorporation of the World Trade Center excavation site as a memorial garden, comes closest to a respectful integration of commercial concerns and meaningful issues. Healing gardens and public spaces throughout New York could contribute to the creation of an environment that encourages continued interaction between peoples, time, and spirit of place, celebrating the beauty of so many different cultures in the deeply rich world of New York City.

## NOTES

1. Evan T. Pritchard, *Native New Yorkers, The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York*, Council Oak, 2003, p. 143.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 166–67.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
10. Albert Fein, *Fredrick Law Olmsted, Landscape into Cityscape*, (from the Olmsted and Croes document of 1877), New York, 1968.
11. Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities*, New York, 1990, p. 60.
12. Pritchard, p. 155.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
14. Sennett, p. 176.
15. Olmsted writes in his section entitled 'The System of Walks and Rides' within Central Park, that 'it must be necessary to lay out all the principal drives, rides and walks of the Park in lines having a continuous northerly and southerly course, nearly parallel with each other and with the avenues of the city . . .' *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, p. 378. See also, Charles Capen McLaughlin (ed.), *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume III, Creating Central Park, 1857–1861*, Baltimore, 1983.
16. For a full description of the Central Park analysis that reveals the plan of New York City embedded within Central Park, see L. McNeur, 'Central Park City', the AA Files no. 23, July 1992.
17. This rectangular reservoir existed before Olmsted came to the site and he chose not to remove it from his design.
18. The English landscape design of Central Park is made to appear to be a natural (romantic) landscape, but is, of course, 'artificial nature'.
19. Broadway and the Grand Promenade are both oriented about 3 degrees off due north.

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE CRITICS GONE?

Anne Wareham

*This powerful polemic is directed at unambitious garden writers, unengaged garden owners and timid garden editors on magazines and newspapers. The author calls for a sea change in our attitudes to gardens, and a sharpening up of the discourse.*

I would like to see more great gardens. I think they would enrich our culture. You can express things through the use of land, water and plants that no other art form provides scope for, especially because time and weather are inevitable and dynamic partners in the process. This combination of natural forces and our work upon them has immense resonance, echoing our work in making a living on this planet in partnership with the land.

A great garden requires a site and a person willing and able to transform that site. In order to do that they have to have time, sensitivity, imagination, courage, taste, ruthlessness, a spatial sense and response to pattern, and an ability to learn, especially about their own limitations. And it requires a culture that takes gardens more seriously than we do. We need garden critics and garden criticism. No art can thrive without the serious discussion and dialogue which criticism offers: it raises standards, informs, educates and promotes intelligent debate. It is the lifeblood of any high art, and our gardens are suffering for lack of it. I am not referring here to the garden where the kids play football or that which is devoted to a collection of special plants: I am referring to gardens that open to the public for money.

I think it is possible that the dual sense of the word criticism creates a problem. The dictionary clarifies the ambiguity:



# VISTA

**The culture and politics of gardens**

Edited by

Tim Richardson & Noël Kingsbury

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