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"Cabbages and Kings: The Ethics and Aesthetics of New Forestry"

MacQuillan, Alan G.

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The advent of new forestry in the United States represents a traumatic shift in the philosophy of national forestry praxis, a broadening of values to include aesthetics and sustainability of natural ecological process. The ethics of traditional forestry are shown to be "Stoic utilitarian" and positivist, while the ethics of new forestry adhere closely to the "land ethic" of Aldo Leopold. Aesthetics in traditional forestry are shown to be modernist, and to have developed from, and in opposition to a Romantic aesthetic of the late nineteenth century. This transition is traced from the first US landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., to the first US-born forester, Gifford Pinchot. The language and precepts of new forestry are shown to parallel those of postmodernism, and the possibility of a broadened aesthetics of forestry, developed through postmodernist criticism, is outlined. The language of gardening is used as a model of forestry praxis, with traditional forestry adhering to the principles of vegetable gardening, while new forestry offers an opportunity to flesh out an entire spectrum of gardening genres.

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