ect in San Jose, California, which used bus posters to critique the effects of the mission system—and, inevitably, offended the Catholic Church. "Who owns history?" another project asked point-blank, at a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, monument already commemorating "Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the United States."

Among Heap of Birds’s more controversial projects were billboards commenting on the centennial of the 1889 Oklahoma land rush from which the "Sooner State" took its name; one had the text "Sooner run over Indian Nations, Apartheid?" with the word “Sooners” written backwards. In 1992, Heap of Birds recalled,

All of the state of Oklahoma is Indian Territory. They changed the treaties and took the land away and gave it to the settlers and that’s why they had the land run. So every April they have an incredible reenactment which goes throughout all the school system. All the grade school kids come to school and they have a little red wagon and they dress up like pioneers and they bring their sack lunch and they run across the school yard and put a stake in the ground and take away Indian land . . . So I made a series of billboards that just try and turn the Sooners away and run them [in] the other direction . . . and just try to remark about this kind of practice of racism really. So we had the billboards up and then I made some t-shirts and then people started wearing them and then the day was coming when the city was going to have its big celebration, so we made more t-shirts and then people marched from the Native American Center in Oklahoma City to the State Capitol and had a forum on the steps of the Capitol and followed the path of the billboards, so it was a very, very positive kind of way to bring people together and focus people on this other part of the history.

You could call Heap of Birds’s works counter-monuments: they speak to excluded people of erased history; they revise, but they don’t reconcile or conciliate.

The gestures of conciliation and recognition are due elsewhere. Those fighting to deny recognition of the presence of Native Americans then and now and the atrocities suffered are cultural Custers, caught up in a doomed assault on truth, justice, and even awakening government bureaucrats. But the conflicts they stirred up are not yet over.

In 1989, I went to a demonstration at United Technologies in San Jose, a company making fuel components for Trident II missiles, which carried nuclear warheads. The corporate headquarters was nothing special, just another glass-walled box with a Pizza Hut–style mansard roof, a parking lot full of late-model cars, and nobody in sight but security guards. It was in a business subdivision so new that much of the earth was still exposed, with raw compacted clay and gravel up to the curving suburban sidewalks; and there was a fruit orchard just behind the offices, where one of the protestors escaped when chased by a guard. This, the visible landscape of military technology, was bland, closed-off, a mask. There were other United Technologies landscapes. Some were even more invisible, or only potential: the military bases where the Trident missiles were stationed; the targets they were intended for in this, the late rococo phase of the cold war; and the workplaces where they were manufactured—we were at design and corporate headquarters. (Nuclear weapons are traditionally pork-barreled all over the country, so that almost every state has an economic interest in their perpetuation and no one is responsible for making weapons.)

Another United Technologies landscape was underground, that of the colossal fuel plume which was (and is) leaking toward the reservoir that holds most of
San Jose's drinking water. Although Silicon Valley's industries are often thought of as clean for their lack of industrial-era smokestacks and other such visible emblems of poisons, they are full of such high-tech toxins in the workplace and in storage tanks leaching underground into the water table.

The most visible UT landscape at the time of our protest was an ostentatious show of American painting, mostly landscapes, from the Manoogian Collection in Detroit, underwritten by this corporation which was destroying so many landscapes out of sight. The works in this show at San Francisco's M. H. de Young ranged from the Hudson River School of the 1830s to American impressionism at the turn of the century, mostly heroic and idyllic landscapes, images of glorious possibility and pleasant interlude. This was what UT chose as its public face.

Finding the landscape of Silicon Valley isn't as easy as getting lost among the subdivisions and freeway exits and industrial parks. When Langdon Winner wrote a profile of Silicon Valley a few years ago, he reached for the Winchester Mystery House as its emblem. It's an obvious one in a region whose other landmarks are scarce. The Stanford Linear Accelerator, cosponsored by the Atomic Energy Commission; Paramount's Great America amusement park, with its Top Gun military flight simulator ride; Moffet Air Field; the off-limits Blue Cube missile control center next to Lockheed (officially called Onizuka Air Force Base after one of the Challenger's victims); Mission Santa Clara—all contain something of the valley's character as well, but Mrs. Winchester's paranoid maze in San Jose sums it up best.

Sarah Winchester moved west after she became the widow of the man whose repeating rifle was the definitive weapon in western expansion—"the gun that won the West." Frightened of the souls of the Native Americans killed by the Winchester repeating rifle, she sought spiritual advice and was told that as long as her house was being built, she was safe—and the result is the 160-room chaos of architecture that has been a local tourist attraction since 1922. The house had no overall plan, so that doors and staircases lead nowhere, windows open onto rooms added later, architectural details clash, and floor levels and design scales are inconsistent. Workers were kept busy twenty-four hours a day so that construction was always in process. Perhaps the house can be seen as a mad monument to mechanized capitalism. In the words of Capital itself: "If machinery be the most powerful means for increasing the productiveness of labour—i.e., for shortening the working time required in the production of a commodity, it becomes in the hands of capital the most powerful means for lengthening the working-day beyond all bounds set by human nature. It creates on the one hand, new conditions by which capital is enabled to give free scope to this its constant tendency and on the other hand, new motives with which to whet capital's appetite for the labour of others."

The invisible counterweight to the elaborate uselessness of this monument to wealth and fear is the ruthless efficiency of the rifle that paid for it: between the two of them—military technology and diversionary folly—the valley might begin to be defined. The rifle's pursuit of death in open, contestable space; the house's sequestering from death and the dead in sequestered interior space. The implications of Mrs. Winchester's acts are interesting: that guns do kill people; that technology does have a moral dimension; and that perhaps she could buy her way out of the implications, fend off the spirit world with unending consumption, build a literal nowhere in which she could become lost to the spirit world.

What other stories can provide a thread through the labyrinths of Silicon Valley? The problem of understanding it seems to be the inadequacy of its stories and images. There's the arcadian story, of paradise lately become limbo, of the world's greatest prune orchard paved over to become the world's greatest technology center; and there's the utopian one, of the glorious future opened up by technology, the old Crystal Palace—World's Fair rhetoric, which has become less credible for most people about most technologies. The two stories have some interesting things in common. The arcadian nostalgia of Wendell Berry or Jerry Mander has its counterpart in the feckless utopian enthusiasm of the Wired and Mondo 2000 consumers for a brave new world of cyberspace and techno-wonders. Mander's In the Absence of the Sacred is among the most recent attempts to assess technological progress, but the book bogs down in a refusal to engage social issues (as well as
in a romanticization of his own early years, in which the Great Depression becomes Edenic). Technology becomes an inevitable march toward consolidation, control, ecocide—a kind of Big Brother Godzilla. By making technology autonomous, rather than literally and historically a tool of power, Mander avoids most questions about the social forces that control the development and use of machines and the social changes that might detour us from the current trajectory. What begins as a radical critique ends as a refusal to engage the powers that be. In this, Mander is not much different from the more widespread enthusiasts for the new technologies, who also imagine technology as autonomous and also leave out any social analysis, except for happy projections of empowerment through information access. Both these arcadian and utopian analyses insist on a straight line, backward or forward toward the good; but in a maze, straight is the quickest route to immobility, and the route may call for lateral moves, shifting perspectives.

The maze becomes an inevitable metaphor for the moral tangles of technologies and social change; for the equivocal gains and losses; for arguments that can only lead deeper in, not outside the problem; for the impossibility of plunging straight forward or backing out altogether—that is, for simply embracing or rejecting the technologies and the visions of futures that accompany them. And the maze's image is echoed in the circuit boards and silicon chips, in the suburban sprawls of curving residential streets and industrial parks, of centerless towns that melt into each other, in the limited choices of computer games, perhaps in the rhetoric of technological progress that avoids social and teleological questions. Silicon Valley itself is an excellent check on the technophiles' enthusiasm, since the joyful liberation of the new technologies is so hard to find here, in a place known for its marathon work schedules, gridlock traffic, Superfund sites (twenty-nine, the greatest concentration of hazardous waste sites in the nation), divorce rate, drug consumption, episodes of violence, and lack of corporate philanthropy and organized labor.

Certainly the orderly grid of fruit trees is more appealing than the jumble of mismatched corporations and assembly sheds, and certainly the most familiar story about California, even about America, is of a paradise that fell sometime not long ago, the story Mander tells. But the paradise of the orchards is partial at best: they are themselves workplaces for immigrant and migrant laborers, whose poor working conditions and exposure to pesticides foreshadowed the sweatshops of microchip manufacture. And the first of these fruit trees came with the Spanish missionaries in 1777, who established Mission Santa Clara as a slave labor camp for the Ohlone and nearby indigenous people. (Santa Clara County is named after the mission and includes San Jose and the southern half of Silicon Valley; the northern half extends up along the San Francisco peninsula into San Mateo County. The term valley is something of a misnomer for this sprawl.)

When the missionaries came on their double mission for salvation and empire, the whole peninsula was a vast expanse of live oaks maintained by the Ohlone. As the explorer Sir George Vancouver wrote after a visit in 1792, "For almost twenty miles it could be compared to a park which had originally been planted with the true old English oak, the underwood . . . had the appearance of having been cleared away and had left the stately lords of the forest in complete possession of the soil, which was covered with luxuriant herbage and beautifully diversified with pleasing eminences and valleys." The planting of the orchards represents a reduction of a complex ecology into the monocultural grid of modern agriculture, and the transformation of a complex symbiosis with the land into the simpler piecework of agricultural labor for surplus and export. It may be that the orchards even have something in common with the Winchester repeating rifle as symbols of frontiers of conquest and rules of order. But they also represent sustenance and continuity, two things hard to condemn out of hand, and I have been told that the sight of the valley in bloom was exquisite.

By the 1820s, the slave population—which included members of tribes from farther away as well as locals—had begun to escape, raid their former prison, and liberate their comrades. One successful raider, Yoscolo, carried out many such missions until he was caught; his head was nailed to a post near the church as a disincentive to the remaining workers. This is the not very edifying early history of European civilization in Silicon Valley, and the anticolonial raiders here have their successors in contemporary Vietnamese gangs who steal vast quantities of...
silicon chips for the gray and black markets. Perhaps the missions, too, are prototypes of Silicon Valley, of information colonization. The neophytes, as the mission captives were called, were required to memorize and recite long lists of saints, prayers, and so forth, which they were unlikely to have understood; salvation was a matter of having the right information.

In between the missions and the corporations, a golden age is hard to find and a fall is hard to postulate. Leland Stanford, one of the Big Four railroad barons whose government-subsidized rail monopoly made him a millionaire many times over, founded Stanford University in 1885 as a memorial to his dead son. The photographer Eadweard Muybridge invented high-speed stop-action photography here in 1877, often considered the crucial precursor of motion pictures, to confirm Stanford’s belief that all a horse’s feet were off the ground simultaneously at some point during a gallop. Around that time, the Bing cherry was bred here by Seth Lewelling, who named it after his Chinese cook—according to legend, in lieu of back wages. (It’s worth remembering that the Silicon Valley region is now also a capital of genetic engineering, with giant Genentech headquartered in South San Francisco and Stanford University again deeply involved.)

Technological innovations continued in the region, including Philo T. Farnsworth’s invention of the iconoscope tube, a crucial TV component, in the 1920s, when the valley had nearly 125,000 acres in orchards; Charles Litton’s San Carlos labs, which did war work, laser research, and more; and the refinement of magnetic tape recording technology for Ampex and ABC soon after World War II. Moffet Air Field opened up in the 1930s and was for sixty years an important aviation research center. Silicon Valley environmentalist Ted Smith calls the place the greatest concentration of military-industrial sites in the country. Later, Stanford University became an ally of the electronics industry in much the way that nearby UC Berkeley took on nuclear weapons research and lab management; Stanford Research Park was built on university land in the early fifties as Stanford Industrial Park. Stanford electronics engineering students William Hewlett and David Packard invented the audio oscillator in 1938 and sold their first one to Walt Disney for Fantasia. Long before Robert Noyce invented the integrated circuit—the silicon chip that gave the valley its name—military technology and entertainment technology were already aligned on parallel paths.

In 1958, the Santa Clara planning department published a report that jumbled its metaphors interestingly: “Santa Clara County is fighting a holding action in the cause of agricultural land reserves. We are a wagon train, besieged by the whooping Indians of urbanization, and waiting prayerfully for the US Cavalry.” The cavalry had already arrived, in the form of defense contracts that supported much of the research and development in the technology field, a connection that doesn’t fit with the image of the independent inventor or with the images of the planning department. The fruit orchards of Santa Clara, like the citrus groves of Orange County and the San Fernando Valley, are vestiges of a cleaner environment and lower property values. In a place such as Cupertino, with land prices up to a million dollars an acre, hanging onto farmland is difficult (though some farmers became wealthy enough by selling some of their land to cultivate the rest of it for pleasure). By the 1980s, more than four-fifths of the agricultural land had become industrial or suburban space, and only 8,000 acres of orchard stood, much of it between office buildings and clearly doomed. The peninsula and San Jose were developed with little more foresight than Mrs. Winchester’s house.

In this, Silicon Valley is not unique but typical in contemporary America, a decentralized, diffused region: postindustrial, postcommunal, postrural, and posturban—postplace, but for the undeveloped western slopes and the undevelopable bay. As Langdon Winner writes, “Perhaps the most significant, enduring accomplishment of Silicon Valley is to have transcended itself, and fostered the creation of an ethereal reality, which exercises increasing influence over embodied, spatially bound varieties of social life. Here decisions are made and actions taken in ways that eliminate the need for physical presence in any particular place. Knowing where a person, building, neighborhood, town, or city is located no longer provides a reliable guide to understanding human relationships and institutions.” As much as specific products—for the military, for business, and for entertainment,
I went to another demonstration at Lockheed Missiles and Space Corporation, the region's biggest employer and the prime contractor for Trident missiles, where there were no sidewalks, no focal points, no public spaces. In some sense, protest and community had been designed out of the place, and the workspace too had been suburbanized. Interestingly, many of the Silicon Valley corporations are based on "campuses," attractive, diffused, pseudodemocratic spaces that belie the traditional corporate structure within most of them, a design that originated with the not very parklike Xerox PARC. Diffuseness seems to have become an irreversible condition, in which both the consciousness and the place for consolidating individuals, for community, are virtually impossible. Suburbia represents an early triumph of such diffusion, and the new technologies often seem to further it. Suburbia is a landscape of privatized space, of the division of home from work, with the scenes of production both industrial and agricultural (and now informational) separated from those of consumption, a sequestering that has progressed with the shift from the public space of shopping streets to the private space of shopping malls.

There is the decentralization of anarchist direct democracy, in which power is everywhere; and the decentralization of postmodern control, in which power is transnational, virtual, in a gated community, not available at this time, in a holding company, incomprehensible, incognito—in a word, nowhere. Mrs. Winchester's house is also a maze whose center was nowhere, and here it is important to distinguish types of mazes as well. The original myth of a maze centers on the one Daedalus built at Crete to hide the monstrous result of Queen Pasiphaé's union with a bull, the Minotaur. Later mazes, such as those on the floors of many medieval churches, symbolically compress and reconstitute pilgrimage, and the maze functions not as a tangle in which to lose things but a mandala in which to find them (the artist Paul Windsor recently mocked this tradition with a giant sand painting at the San Francisco Art Commission Gallery, which merged Tibetan and Hopi mandalas with the microchip). These mazes often have only one route to the center. The maze at Crete and that of the Mystery House apparently have no center; as such, they are types of the new landscape of the suburb, the multinational, the subcontracted and subdivided, the faces of nowhere, in which it is impossible to get found.

Here it is important to distinguish the actual tools generated in Silicon Valley and its sister sites from the visions of their implementation. Computers and the information they manipulate are the means to many ends; in one of these, they are an end in themselves. In its most dematerialized state, Silicon Valley is a blueprint for a future: in this future, outside has disappeared, the maze has no exit. The world of information and communication online, much hailed as a technological advance, is also a social retreat accompanying a loss of the public and social space of the cities; a loss of the aesthetic, sensual, and nonhuman space of the country; a privatization of physical space; and a disembodiment of daily life. A central appeal cited for the new technologies is that their users will no longer have to leave home, and paeans accumulate lauding the convenience of being able to access libraries and entertainments via personal computers, which become less tools of engenderment than channels of consumption. This vision of disembodied anchors connected to the world only by information and entertainment, mediated by the entities that control the flow, seems more nightmarish than idyllic. Postulated as a solution to gridlock, crime on the streets, the chronic sense of time's scarcity, it seems instead a means to avoid addressing such problems, a form of acquiescence.

There is another maze, another landscape, that has bearing on the tangle of Silicon Valley. The multimedia mazes resemble the maze of Jorge Luis Borges's "The Garden of Forking Paths," in which a Chinese assassin finds out the secret of his ancestor's chaotic novel and missing maze—the two are one.
Ts’ui Pen must have said once: I am withdrawing to write a book. And another time: I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth. Every one imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing. Almost instantly I understood: “the garden of forking paths” was the chaotic novel; the phrase “the various futures [not to all]” suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. . . . In the work of Ts’ui Pen, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forplings.

An extensive but finite number of forks can be represented on an interactive CD or laser disc, but they do not reproduce life, in which the unimaginable is often what comes next. The greatest tragedy of the new technologies may be their elimination of the incalculable—the coincidences and provocations and metaphors that in some literal sense “take us out of ourselves” and put us in relation to other things. To live inside a mechanical world is to live inside plotted possibility, what has already been imagined; and so the technologies that are supposed to open up the future instead narrow it. I am not arguing for existentialist freedom with this difference between inside and outside, only for an unquantifiable number of paths in the latter, a too predictable course in the former.

Much recent attention to the use of interactive media proposes that it makes passive viewing become active engagement. What is interesting about these products is that they map out a number of choices, but the choices are all preselected (and, with the rare exception of work by artists such as Lynn Hershman, the choices have little to do with meaningful decisions). That is, the user cannot do anything, go anywhere the creator has not gone before; as usual with computer programs, one must stay on the path and off the grass (by which analogy hackers do get off the path, a subversive success that keeps them in the park). We could chart the game as a series of forks in the road, in which each choice sets up another array of choices, but the sum total of choices have already been made. Thus, the audience becomes the user, a figure who resembles a rat in a conceptual version of a laboratory maze. The audience-user is not literally passive; he or she is engaged in making choices, but the choices do not necessarily represent freedom, nor this activity thinking. Participating is reduced to consuming. The ur-game, Pac-Man, made this apparent: the sole purpose of the Pac-Man icon, a disembodied head-mouth, was to devour what was in its path as it proceeded through a visible maze.

Perhaps what is most interesting about this form of interactivity is its resemblance to so many existing corridors of American life, in which a great many choices can be made, but all are ultimately choices to consume rather than to produce. About a decade ago, the 7-11 chain of convenience stores ran a series of television ads whose key phrase was, “Freedom of choice is what America is all about.” The ads echoed a pervasive tendency in the culture to reduce freedom to the freedom to choose from a number of products, to the scope of the consumer’s ability to consume. Perhaps it is not surprising that consumption should become the metaphor for democracy in a country that has long had little but representative democracy: that is, the ballot too is a kind of Garden of Forking Paths and not an open plain on which to roam and encounter. By the time the political process has reached the voting booth, all the real choices have been programmed in, and the voter becomes a consumer. Few genuine choices remain, and the act of voting becomes the act of acquiescence, an endorsement of the maze as an open field. The laboratory maze through which the rat moves is one metaphor for it. Another is supplied by the critic Norman M. Klein in an Art issues article on virtual reality: “VR is reverse Calvinism—predestination posing as free will. In that sense, VR may be as old as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a new consumerist form of metaphysical redemption.”

The real landscape of Silicon Valley seems wholly interior, not only in the metaphor of the maze and the terrain of offices and suburbs but also in the much promoted ideal of the user never leaving a well-wired home and in the goal of eliminating the world and reconstituting it as information. Again, what disappears here is the incalculable, this time as the world of the sensory and sensual, with all the surprises and dangers that accompany it. In all the hymns to information, little is said about the nature of that information or the ability to use it; one pictures the empty trucks of metaphor hurtling down that information highway. Thinking
is an aesthetic occupation, a matter of perceiving relationships and resemblances between things on many levels that defeat computerization because they are aesthetic, not rationalistic; the sensual world is necessary to it as grounding and inspiration, and as parallel. Computers can reason, but they will never really imagine, because the incalculable of the body is forever beyond them, though it may be simulated with increasing complexity—toward what end?

Understanding works largely by means of metaphors and analogies—the incalculable relationships between bits of information—and the way those metaphors and analogies are drawn from the nonconstructed world. The most obvious examples are expressions: stubborn as a mule, dumb as two sticks, pigheaded, dog breath, pussy, cock, cuckoo, horse sense, drones, worms, snakes in the grass, aping the gentry, bovine, donkey's years. There are also shared (but fading) fables: the ant and the grasshopper, the tortoise and the hare, the dog in the manger, and a million examples are expressions: stubborn as a mule, dumb as two sticks, pigheaded, dog breath, pussy, cock, cuckoo, horse sense, drones, worms, snakes in the grass, aping the gentry, bovine, donkey's years. There are also shared (but fading) fables: the ant and the grasshopper, the tortoise and the hare, the dog in the manger, and a million examples are expressions: stubborn as a mule, dumb as two sticks, pigheaded, dog breath, pussy, cock, cuckoo, horse sense, drones, worms, snakes in the grass, aping the gentry, bovine, donkey's years. There are also shared (but fading) fables: the ant and the grasshopper, the tortoise and the hare, the dog in the manger, and a million examples are expressions: stubborn as a mule, dumb as two sticks, pigheaded, dog breath, pussy, cock, cuckoo, horse sense, drones, worms, snakes in the grass, aping the gentry, bovine, donkey's years. There are also shared (but fading) fables: the ant and the grasshopper, the tortoise and the hare, the dog in the manger, and a million examples are expressions: stubborn as a mule, dumb as two sticks, pigheaded, dog breath, pussy, cock, cuckoo, horse sense, drones, worms, snakes in the grass, aping the gentry, bovine, donkey's years. There are also shared (but fading) fables: the ant and the grasshopper, the tortoise and the hare, the dog in the manger, and a million

Claude Lévi-Strauss compares speaking of his research to an unresponsive audience to dropping stones down a well, an analogy few would be likely to make nowadays. The majority of figures of speech that make the abstract concrete and the abstruse imaginable are drawn from animals and organic spaces. It's the animal world that makes being human imaginable, and the spatial realm that makes activity and achievement describable—career plateaus, rough spots, marshy areas. And it's the image of the maze that's gotten me through all the aspects of Silicon Valley I've approached thus far, and the approach to a specific landscape in California that's made it possible to articulate some effects.

Computers are significant for their lack of metaphor: their processes don't resemble organic processes, and only the crudest analogies can be drawn. Instead, they provide imaginatively sterile terms that are projected back onto organic life; we can be made to resemble them more easily than they can be made to resemble us. (It's interesting that another machine-age invention, the superhighway, was used as the metaphor for information circulation systems and even more interesting that the information highway already has "gridlock.") I wonder if generations of being without contact with such undeveloped spaces and nonhuman beings will eventually diminish English into a kind of blanked-out newspaper, a machine language, which has already appeared as the shorthand on networks, the disembodied platitudes of electoral politics, and the starkly denatured language of inner-city rap with its license-plate number-letter combos, police codes, and so on.

All those metaphors are ways of navigating the way things span both difference and similarity; without metaphor, the world would seem threateningly amorphous, both identical with ourselves and utterly incomprehensible. The anthropological theorist Paul Shepard writes, "Humans intuitively see analogies between the concrete world out there and their own inner world. If they conceive the former as a chaos of anarchic forces or as dead and frozen, then so will they perceive their own bodies and society; so will they think and act on that assumption and vindicate their own ideas by altering the world to fit them." The loss of a relationship to the nonconstructed world is a loss of these metaphors. It is also loss of the larger territory of the senses, a vast and irreplaceable loss of pleasure and meaning.

Finally, even nowhere has its twin: everywhere. Silicon Valley has become a nowhere in the terms I have tried to lay out—an obliteration of place, an ultimate suburb, a maze in which wars are designed, diversions are generated, the individual disembodied. But the physical landscape of Silicon Valley is now everywhere, not only in the attempts to clone its success but in the spread of its products and its waste throughout the globe, the outside world being ravaged by the retreat to the interior.

If you imagine a computer not as an autonomous object but as a trail of processes and effects and residues, which leave their traces across a global environmental maze, then it is already everywhere. The clean rooms in which poorly paid chip makers were exposed to toxic chemicals are now subcontracted out in the Southwest, Oregon, and the third world, so there's a little of the valley there. The waste that was leaching through the once fecund earth of Silicon Valley is leach-
Some of the chemicals used to clean the chips have been peculiarly potent ozone-depleters (though most Silicon Valley firms have switched over to other compounds), so think of the upper atmosphere too; and the landfill where the packing and shipping material goes; and the electrical generating station your computer is plugged into and its energy sources (coal, hydropower, nuclear, geothermal, natural gas?); think of the networks it may be hooked into; think of the corporations whose pockets it lined—but don’t picture pockets, the money is in imageless cyberspace—and the stock markets where their shares are traded; think of the forests the manuals are printed on; think of the store that sold it; think of where it’ll be dumped when it’s rendered obsolete, as all computers have been.

These are the tentacles, the winding corridors, the farthest reaches of Silicon Valley, and the hardest to imagine. It is the scene of the crime that has vaporized, and resisting an unlocatable and unimaginable crime is difficult. One of the principal challenges for environmentalists is making devastation that is subtle and remote seem urgent to people with less vivid imaginations. Another is finding a site at which to protest (which is why Greenpeace has largely relocated from actual sites to wherever the media can be found). And the ultimate problem of the landscape of Silicon Valley in its most abstruse, penetrating, and symbolic forms is that it is unimaginable.

Apple Computer, which is headquartered in six buildings, indistinguishable but for their security levels, on Infinity Loop in Cupertino, is a key landscape for Silicon Valley, one that apparently displaced real orchards. When I was there, the Olson orchard across Highway 280 in Sunnyvale was selling Bing and Queen Anne cherries, and Latino workers were cutting up apricots to dry. But a third of the orchard was bulldozed this past spring [1994] for housing, and the rest of the Olson orchard is on its way out. What does it mean, this rainbow-colored apple with the bite taken out of it, which appears everywhere on Apple computers and on the many commodities (mugs, key rings, T-shirts) Apple markets, this emblem that seems to sum up the Santa Clara Valley’s change from agriculture to technology? It seems to have been appropriated to connote simplicity and wholesomeness, though apples aren’t rainbow colored in anything but the sloppiest association of positive emblems; and the bite also recalls temptation in Eden: the emblem is denatured, reassuring, and threatening all at once. But more than that, it is forgettable, dead in the imagination, part of nowhere—it has been a decade since I last pondered the Apple logo, which has become part of a landscape of disassociation in which the apple image connotes neither sustenance nor metaphor, only a consumer choice, the fruit of the tree of information at the center of the garden of merging paths.