

## ON HEDGING

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“Riches, like insects, when concealed they lie,  
Wait but for wings, and in their season fly.”

—Alexander Pope, *Of the Use of Riches, An Epistle to the Right Honorable Allen Lord Bathurst*

What debt does the High Line, the endlessly written-about public park built on a (as of this writing) 1.45-mile-long elevated freight viaduct on Manhattan’s West Side, owe to the legacy of enclosure? In a narrow but nonetheless widely expansive historical sense, enclosure refers to the consolidation of common land and open fields for the proprietary benefit of landholders. The attendant realities of dispossession were transfigured in the eighteenth-century concept of the picturesque, with its promotion of an autonomous subject receptive to a multiform experience of a landscape carefully parceled into pictorial foreground and distance. What lies in between? It is not a question of aesthetic conceit; to be considered are hedges, including emergent and abandoned infrastructure and the patterns of interference they produce. The Inclosure (Consolidation) Act of 1801 provided an expedient and cost-effective “mode of proving the several facts,” each and always locally contingent, required by the legislative procedure that was enclosure itself. It called for the “survey, admeasurement, plan, and valuation” of land to be “divided, allotted, and inclosed,” expressed in “acres and decimal parts of an acre, in statute measure.” Surveying the plan, the plot, the ploy of the High Line requires a perspective from a remote orbit and unfiltered attention to whispering satellites that provide earthbound receivers with [their own] terrestrial coordinates. It means to uncover a system of allocation and assignment verging on potential collapse.

Here are the facts as represented by Joshua David and Robert Hammond in *High Line: The Inside Story of New York’s Park in the Sky* (2011), its perfume of self-elation faintly nauseating. Lisa Falcone was scheduled to visit the construction site for the first time in March 2008, even though she and her husband Philip Falcone had already made a “very generous gift” to help build the stairs at Fourteenth Street. Evidently, she was not immediately taken by the site’s unlikely “capacities.” She just walked along, looking around, taking it all in, David notes: “I had the impression she was underwhelmed.” A founder of Friends of the