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Landscape: Representing and Interpreting the World

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Landscape: Representing and Interpreting the World

Karen M. Morin

Definition

In Anglophone cultural geography, landscape tends to refer to a physical area visible from a particular location, as well as an ideological or social process that helps (re)produce or challenge existing social practices, lived relationships, and social identities. Textual representations of landscapes, in paintings, film, advertising, and numerous other media, are key to understanding the processes by which social practices and landscape are mutually constituted.

INTRODUCTION

'Landscape' is a basic organizing concept in Anglophone cultural geography, but is equally foundational in fields as diverse as art and architecture, environmentalism, planning, and the earth sciences. This chapter focuses only on a select number of ways in which the term has been used throughout the twentieth century by Anglophone cultural geographers, that is, those in North America, Britain, and in other English-speaking places (see Chapter 15 on landscape and environment in physical geography). Thus what appears here is as much a *history* as a *geography* of landscape studies. This chapter begins with an historiography of the landscape concept in Anglophone cultural geography. Next it demonstrates the usefulness of the landscape concept to studies of how social and cultural conflict (or consensus) arises and prevails. Finally, the chapter examines the key debates that have taken place in geography over landscape and landscape representation,

around what is loosely categorized as Marxism and feminism. The chapter demonstrates overall the mutually constitutive role of landscape, landscape representation, and social practice.

While it is important to keep in mind that landscape traditions differ across disciplines and places, even within Anglophone cultural geography the concept of landscape carries much ambiguity and complexity, with probably hundreds of nuances to the term. Landscape has been (confusingly) conflated with numerous other geographical categories, such as region, area, nature, place, scenery (particularly the rural countryside), topography or landform, and environment. Nonetheless, cultural geographers have tended to emphasize the visual aspects of the physical world when they use the term 'landscape', defining it as a portion of the earth visible by an observer from a particular position or location. (Of course, the position or location of the viewer – both physical location and social location – is never unmediated, as will be discussed below.) Thus one persistent connotation of landscape is as a particularly visual form of spatial knowledge that can be taken 'in a single view', a definition that derived from sixteenth-century Dutch landscape painting, with its emphasis on scenery. Today, landscape continues to connote this visibility, although it is no longer confined to the single framed view or aesthetic pleasure, and also invokes a greater concern for viscosity and experience (Cosgrove, 2006: 51).

Thus landscape may be thought of in the first instance as a 'thing' – an area or the appearance of an area, and the particular ways component parts of that area have been arranged to produce that appearance. From this vantage point, we can talk about 'agricultural landscapes', 'urban landscapes', 'landscapes of consumption', 'modern' and 'postmodern' landscapes, 'symbolic landscapes', 'corporate landscapes', 'heritage landscapes', and so forth.

But it should be quickly noted that landscapes have *both* material and ideological aspects. Landscapes have physical, material form or 'morphologies' that are literally produced through labour and other lived relationships (Mitchell, 1996). But landscapes are also represented in various media (film, paintings, advertising), and they themselves are representations of lived relationships. Discussions and debates about landscape do not simply rest on what landscape *is* then; they also focus on what landscape *does* in social life. One fundamental aspect of this, as the title to this chapter implies, is that landscape always carries with it a set of 'representational practices'. These refer to how people see, interpret and represent the world around them as landscape, and how that represented landscape reflects and actually helps produce a set of lived relationships taking place on the ground. Over the past 20 years Anglophone cultural geographers have come to recognize how important representational practices are to the production of landscapes, and hence to social relations and social structure (Cosgrove, 1984, 2006; Duncan, 1990; Rose, 1993; Olwig, 2002).

Importantly, then, landscape is not only a 'thing', but is also an ideological or symbolic *process* that has the power to actively (re)produce relationships among people and between people and their material world. In this sense, landscapes carry symbolic or ideological meanings that reflect back and help produce social practices, lived relationships, and social identities, and also become sites of claiming or contesting power and authority over an area. The largest monumental

landscapes in the USA, for example, carry laudatory messages about war heroes and military conquest. We can identify a set of social actors who produce such landscapes – historical and civic societies, town planners, veterans groups, and so on. The messages deployed by the monuments – a particular version of the past that celebrates masculinist values (Monk, 1999) – actively reproduces those values in the present and thus can shape social practice, such as by reproducing a culture of war. Of course such values never go unchallenged and can be undermined in numerous ways. The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC became a site for contesting war as it highlights the suffering and loss of war rather than triumphal conquest.

HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES

Landscape studies were introduced into American geography in the 1920s by Carl Sauer, especially with his 'The Morphology of Landscape' (1963 [1925]). Sauer, influenced by German geographers such as Otto Schlüter and the *Landschaft* school, reacted against the environmental determinism of his day by arguing that it was collective human transformation of natural landscapes that produced what he called 'cultural landscapes'. Sauer's phenomenal influence on geographers' study of landscape over five decades (in the USA at least) cannot be understated. While Sauer himself was more concerned with physical and biological processes set in motion by humans that produced, for example, agricultural practices and patterns, his more enduring influence was on a whole generation of cultural geographers associated with the 'Berkeley School', who used his empirical observation method to study the morphological features of landscapes as evidence of cultural difference. His followers tended to study cultural artefacts such as house types and barn types to trace cultural hearth areas and diffusion of culture groups.

Mid-twentieth-century landscape studies in geography were also greatly influenced by the English historian W.G. Hoskins, who argued for detailed studies of landscape history (1955), and the American geographer J.B. Jackson, who studied popular culture through vernacular landscapes such as trailer parks in the American Southwest (1990). Jackson was founder of the popular *Landscape* magazine, published for 17 years beginning in 1951. In 1979, Donald Meinig edited a collection of works, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, written by some of the most quotable landscape geographers working at the time – himself and J.B. Jackson, David Lowenthal, Marwyn Samuels, David Sopher and Yi-Fu Tuan. This collection demonstrated both the continued interest in ordinary, everyday landscapes in Anglophone cultural geography (such as churches and houses), as well as how landscapes reveal social and personal tastes, aspirations and ideologies. To Meinig, landscapes themselves could be read as collective social ideologies and processes: 'symbols of the values, governing ideas, and underlying philosophies of a culture' (1979: 6).

The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes also demonstrated one of landscape studies' most enduring and ultimately contentious metaphors, that of 'reading' and interpreting landscapes as 'texts'. Just as a book (text) is made up of

words and sentences arranged in a particular order with meanings that we read, so landscape has elements arranged in a particular order that we can translate into language, grasp meaning and read. Interpreting architectural forms and their arrangement, for example, as symbolic interactions among humans and their environment (e.g. the height of skyscrapers as symbols of power, modernity, public protection, etc.) would in many ways structure landscape debates in the 1980s and 1990s.

By the last two decades of the twentieth century, the textual metaphor helped usher in a number of new questions related to not just what landscape is, but how landscape mediates social relations. Informed by critical social theory, geographers first challenged the assumption of their predecessors that cultural groups collectively produced landscapes and read them in the same way. Instead, they insisted on acknowledging the patterns and processes of hierarchical social organization responsible for the morphological features observed. Thus landscape studies began to be focused on the unequal power relations – social, political and cultural – involved in producing landscapes and (in turn) social difference, by both historical and contemporary actors. Denis Cosgrove, for example, in his *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, defined landscape as a 'way of seeing' associated with the rise of capitalist property relations (1984: 13). He argued that the landscape concept enabled an erasure or naturalization of class difference via media such as landscape paintings of landowners and their country property.

The works of James Duncan (1990, 1992) have been instrumental in clarifying the extent to which landscapes contain different meanings to different viewers, and how they act as intertextual media through which often competing interpretations, discourses and knowledges intersect. Other geographers, such as Don Mitchell (1996), argue that landscape studies have relied too much on 'visuality', and advocate, among other things, a focus on that which has been hidden from view, such as the histories of labourers whose work literally produces landscape.

Finally, geographers began rejecting the basic opposition that had persisted for so long in landscape analysis, that between subject and object, the viewer and that which is viewed. Representation in earlier landscape studies had assumed that some unmediated, transparent reality could be detected in empirically observed landscapes. More recent studies have emphasized that there is an inherent inseparability of the represent-er and the represent-ed. Thus the worlds we represent, whether as geographers, corporate executives or graffiti artists, reflect our own positionalities, values, interests, motivations and backgrounds.

The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City in September 2001 highlighted the vastly different meanings that that corporate landscape represented for observers at numerous scales and locations, both before and after the attacks: as emblem of technological ingenuity, modernity, progress, the success of global capitalism and democratic government, and certainly a new wave of American patriotism; to more decentred understandings – US political and economic vulnerability, anti-capitalism, a holy war waged against the USA, just desserts or a wake-up call for unjust American foreign policy and hegemony, and mourning and loss of loved ones and livelihoods in the New York area. The fact

that these various meanings and interpretations all co-existed simultaneously forced a recognition that not only could the same landscape carry vastly different meanings to different observers, but that the landscape itself was also a reference to a much larger set of social relationships, domestic and global, that required attention and contextualization.

Feminist landscape critics have been instrumental in exposing the problems associated with the former dualistic thinking (i.e. that an unmediated, transparent reality existed between observer and observed). Geographers' own embeddedness in the process of landscape interpretation and analysis became central to late twentieth-century geographical studies, with feminists such as Gillian Rose (1993) challenging the masculinist gaze of much landscape geography. Such late twentieth-century advancements in the study of landscape representation warrant a more detailed analysis, which follows in the next two sections.

THE POLITICS OF LANDSCAPE

Representation of landscapes can take many forms – narrative descriptions, drawings, paintings, maps, planning documents, engravings, photographs and films, among others. Trevor Barnes and James Duncan's edited collection, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (1992), examined numerous such forms of landscape representation. These authors asserted that landscape representation and interpretation required contextualization of author and audience, an outline of the rhetorics and tropes (figures of speech) employed to convey meanings, and an analysis of the processes by which readers become convinced that meanings conveyed are the natural order of things in the world.

Anglophone cultural geographers of the 1980s and 1990s emphasized that landscapes are social products, the consequence of how people, particularly dominant groups of people, create, represent and interpret landscapes based on their view of themselves in the world and their relationships with others. While authority lies with those who can 'produce landscapes as property' (in Don Mitchell's words) as well as control their representation, there is always room for contestation of that authority. In this sense, more recent landscape studies include a decidedly political component as they highlight the social and cultural conflicts and relationships, especially unequal power relations based on race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality, that are involved in the creation, representation and interpretation of landscapes (Mitchell, 2003).

Landscapes of graffiti, for example, highlight both hegemonic and subversive representations and interpretations of landscape. Dominant or hegemonic readings of graffiti, by a mayor's office or transportation authorities, might interpret graffiti as simply destruction of property, a crime against the city. But graffiti have also been variously understood as a means by those with no other power to mark and stake out territory, or a means to challenge the existing social order by drawing visual attention to the situation of those marginalized in the city. Alternative readings of landscapes always exist, and landscapes can always be

read in ways not intended. Tim Cresswell (1996), for example, shows that many graffiti-makers think of themselves as creating art – an intention behind graffiti landscapes rarely acknowledged by more powerful voices.

Methodologically, it is important to recognize an 'intertextual' approach to reading and studying landscapes. Duncan (1990) discusses social structures (and their accompanying ideologies) that produce landscapes as signifying systems that can be read as metaphorical texts; and the discourses and systems of language and written works that are involved in their production, representation and interpretation as actual texts. He refers to the transformation of ideas from one medium to another as the intertextual nature of landscapes, arguing that the context for any text is other texts. This provides a frame for conceptualizing relationships among an array of phenomena – social structure, social practices, especially the exercise of different forms of power, the physical landscape and landscape representation, which all work to produce and reproduce one another in an ongoing fashion.

Critical social theorists have tended to highlight the extent to which multiple layers of meaning can be embedded within landscapes and their representations (e.g. skyscrapers, graffiti). This is important because landscape as a site of struggle for challenging the dominant social order often rests with their interpretation. Thus one must recognize that meanings are not inherent in concrete objects or the physical world, but that they are socially ascribed to objects and that they change over time, and with the particular perspectives and social positioning of the viewer. Thus not only is every landscape capable of multiple readings, but every landscape has been produced by multiple actors for whom no single intention can be inferred; nor can everything with causal power be observed and experienced (Duncan 1990: 12–13). The notion that landscapes contain multiple layers of meaning has been challenged by some Marxists (see below). Suffice to say at this juncture that 'good' interpretations of landscapes connect contextualized understandings of social relations and practices (particularly of prevailing discourses and ideologies), with the physical morphology on the ground.

James Duncan's (1992) study of the late twentieth-century redevelopment of the Shaughnessy Heights neighbourhood in Vancouver, British Columbia, demonstrated how social ideologies and practices worked to create, represent and reproduce landscape as a genteel, picturesque reproduction of the English country house and garden. Duncan discusses a successful attempt in the 1980s by a small group of elite, mansion-owning families to zone the neighbourhood against multi-family houses and slip-ins. These property owners managed to appropriate a nexus of interests to their own advantage – the City Council and planning commission's commitment to the preservation of green space and historic buildings, as well as to neighbourhood self-determination. Vancouver's working-class people, whose best interests would not seemingly be served by the preservation of such an elite landscape, nevertheless supported it as well. To them it represented a beautiful space in which all Vancouverans could take pride, meanwhile promising the possibility of upward mobility. Duncan effectively shows how representation of landscape became a way not just of seeing the world but of experiencing it and, indeed, 'making' it.

KEY DEBATES

One of the most significant developments in Anglophone landscape studies was the movement in the 1980s towards approaches advocated by the new cultural geographers, a shift that began first in Europe under the influence of an emerging cultural studies paradigm. The shape this discussion took was not so much a conversation between advocates of different approaches as much as it was a one-sided rejection of the old school by adherents of the new. Little resistance seemed to follow, although many geographers continue to study landscapes in the earlier tradition(s). A more significant debate has ensued between the Marxists and post-structuralists, and another by feminist geographers dissatisfied with the seemingly intractable masculinism of much landscape studies.

The first conversation has at its foundation a difference of opinion as to whether or in what sense landscape contains some sort of reality beyond its representation. Much landscape work in recent years has highlighted questions about what exactly is the relationship between the concrete, physical, material world – the morphological aspect of landscape – and its representation. Geographers such as Don Mitchell worry that landscape studies that are concerned only with representations (e.g. Barnes and Duncan, 1992) seem to leave the real world of landscape modes of production and reproduction behind as objects of study. In this way of thinking, meanings produced in and through language, texts, discourses, iconography and symbolism neglect the 'brute reality' of landscapes and thus represent a 'dangerous politics' (Mitchell, 1996: 27).

Materialist approaches early on in the debate tended to emphasize that linguistic or representational expressions are important aspects of landscapes, but that landscapes are not fundamentally linguistic entities; that there is a world outside the linguistic that is experienced (if not 'seen') and that performs a different function from representations. In a debate published in the *Professional Geographer*, Judy Walton, Don Mitchell and Richard Peet argue the point, and to paraphrase Mitchell, the 'morphology of landscape, no matter how it is represented' has a role in social life (*Professional Geographer*, 1996: 99, emphasis in original). Elsewhere he argues that if landscape 'is indeed a relation of power' there cannot be multiple interpretations of it, since that would defeat its ideological function, that is one that depends on the imposition of a dominant social order (Mitchell, 1996: 27). Mitchell's *The Lie of the Land* (1996) makes an important point about the role of labour within the expanding capitalist economy in California's San Joaquin Valley. Mitchell uses this example to illustrate how relations of production are involved in shaping any landscape; in effect, that we must pay attention to how landscapes 'get made' in addition to how they are then re-presented as landscape. In this case of southern California, that representation is an aesthetic, pastoral depiction of thriving agriculture that is the product of (otherwise invisible, exploited) labour (1996: 16).

Part of the problem with the 'representation versus reality' debate is that it is based on unsupportable binaries and dualistic thinking. In the *Professional Geographer* debate, Walton poses the question, 'Where is the pure materiality or physicality of an object (or landscape) beyond our interpretations of it?' (*Professional Geographer*, 1996: 99). In other words, there is always a cultural filtering process

that brings reality to us through language. We only know landscapes, therefore, through our readings of them. As Denis Cosgrove (2006: 50) explains, 'landscapes have an unquestionably material presence, yet they come into being only at the moment of their apprehension by an external observer, and thus have a complex poetics and politics'. Rather than set up a false dualism, it seems more productive to focus on the necessarily discursive constitution of the material world. Representations, then, are not reflective or distortive images of some real, pre-interpreted reality, but they themselves materially constitute reality. Thus 'reality' is indistinguishable from its representation, and in this sense the much more important question is how representations of landscapes are produced and contested.

The real versus representational debate has subtly shifted in recent years to focus more on landscapes as fields of action, questioning how people are able to shape landscapes and be shaped by them, for instance through control of legal systems. Epistemological differences remain between Marxists and post-structuralists; though both 'sides' have moved beyond considering the question of the binary itself a departure point for analysis, there is little agreement on how to conceptually dismiss it (Dixon and Grimes, 2004: 274). Many political-economy orientated landscape geographers have become more attuned to the contingent and arbitrary mechanisms through which landscapes are produced – by examining relevant race and gender discourses and social relations along with that of class, as well as by rejecting universalist and reified explanations of the causes and effects of capitalism.

A second key debate in recent studies of landscape has focused on 'gendered landscapes'. Everything from homes to downtowns to suburbs to shopping malls to workplaces to national monuments to natural environments as gendered landscapes have drawn the attention of Anglophone feminist geographers since the 1970s, though this work has yet, unfortunately, to fundamentally change the way that the most geographers of landscape pose questions about landscape production and representation. While Mitchell's (1996) work elegantly problematizes the racialization of the California labour force and its politics of landscape production, for example, it does not go far enough in analysing the constructions of gender difference that created unique problems for women labourers trying to negotiate moveable work sites and their domestic and reproductive work in the labour camps.

Much of the feminist landscape scholarship focuses on how landscapes construct, legitimate, reproduce and contest gendered and sexualized identities, or how women's relationships to landscapes (as experience, representation or interpretation) differ from men's. Several analyses of gender differences in the representation and interpretation of western American landscapes have appeared. Janice Monk and Vera Norwood's edited volume *The Desert is No Lady* (1987) provided one of the first attempts at counteracting the masculine landscape tradition in geography. Scholars of nineteenth-century male settlers, industrialists, politicians, military men and railroad boosters had argued that such men viewed western landscapes either as the setting for the 'great male adventure story' or as a platform for large-scale mastery and subduing of the land and accumulation of wealth. Monk and Norwood showed that women did not necessarily

share this masculine (and masculinist) vision of the southwestern desert landscape, and questioned the appropriateness of these images for women. Their collection demonstrates how Hispanic, Native American and Anglo women imaged the American Southwest in a way that was both different from men's and also quite unlike each other's. Women writers, photographers and artists envisaged the desert land not in terms of its material resources to be exploited, a land awaiting metaphorical rape, but as a strong woman, unable to be conquered. The women artists' imagery turns out to be sexual (like men's), though not in terms of domination or suppression but in terms of affinity and connection, of uniting with the productive and reproductive energy of the earth.

Feminist landscape studies in the American West more recently have integrated an analysis of gender constructs with numerous others axes of social identity in their assessments of women's landscape representation. Jeanne Kay Guelke (1997), for instance, demonstrates how women involved in re-creating a Mormon Zion on the Utah frontier were deeply embedded, as faithful religious women, in the economic development of the region. To Guelke (1997: 362), religious constructs pre-empted associations of nature with the female body, which had prevailed as the most common of landscape metaphors: land as Great Mother, enticing temptress, and dangerous or uncontrollable hag or fury. Thus many of these Mormon women perceived themselves as willing and active participants in the subduing and conquering of nature, and transforming wild landscapes into productive agricultural ones. Karen Morin's (1998) study of British Victorian women's travel writing shows that attention to mode of transportation, type of engagement with the land, domestic and imperial social relations, and Romantic literary conventions all converged to produce largely negative representations of the same western American landscapes.

One feminist critique that has found its way into more mainstream human geography is Gillian Rose's (1993) study of geography's traditions in fieldwork and landscape analysis. Informed by a larger feminist corpus which highlights situated and partial knowledges and the positionality of the researcher (or observer) of objects, people and landscapes, Rose argues that geographical representation through fieldwork and landscape analysis reveals deeply embedded masculinist cultural values and knowledge.

To Rose, geography's traditions involve a masculinist way of seeing landscape that is not just one of a relation of mastery or domination, but one of (white, bourgeois, heterosexual) pleasure in looking at landscape that has been constructed as feminine. Part of her commentary revolves around the same painting that Cosgrove deconstructed in his (1984) study, Thomas Gainborough's 'Mr and Mrs Robert Andrews' (c. 1748), which codified a particular way of seeing the land that helped naturalize and celebrate capitalist property and the rights of owners (see Figure 16.1). Rose, however, rightly claims that Cosgrove's interpretation misses the different relationships that men and women had to the surrounding landscape; the painting reminds us that only men were landowners, and women's role was principally reproductive (Rose, 1993: 92-3). In this and other landscape paintings, women appear passive or prostrate, as commodities of the male gaze. Not only do such landscape images themselves associate women with a feminized landscape, but, as Rose points out, geographers reinforce



Figure 16.1 Thomas Gainsborough's: 'Mr and Mrs Robert Andrews' (c. 1748)

sexism and masculinism by their inattentiveness to the impact that an analysis of gender roles and relations plays in landscape representation. These are not innocent, detached representations but they refract and reinforce lived gender roles and relations.

Other feminist geographers have suggested possibilities for other types of homoerotic and female heterosexual gaze on the landscape. For example, Catherine Nash (1996) examines Diane Baylis's photograph 'Abroad' as a representation of the male body as aesthetic nature. Still, Rose's larger observation holds; geographers have not generally problematized themselves as authors of landscape representation or interpretation. For all their success in carefully contextualizing landscape representation, Barnes and Duncan (1992), for example, allow the geographer himself to remain unmarked and disembodied. To Rose, a feminine resistance to such hegemonic ways of seeing is necessary. Such resistance promises to:

dissolv[e] the illusion of an unmarked, unitary, distanced, masculine spectator, [while] permit[ing] the expression of different ways of seeing among women. ... Strategies of position, scale and fragmentation are all important for challenging the particular structure of the gaze in the discipline of geography. (Rose, 1993: 112)

While much feminist work has demonstrated the mutual constitution of gendered landscapes and women's gendered identities, a more recent turn in landscape studies has directed attention to relationships between men, masculinity and landscape. Rachel Woodward (2000), for example, examines the processes by which military masculinity and the landscape of Britain's rural countryside are mutually constituted. Woodward examines five sources of information - Army recruitment materials, general publicity, basic training information and videos, mass market paperbacks about military adventures, and television documentaries on military life. She shows how essential a particular construction of rurality itself is to the construction of 'warrior hero' - it is dangerous, rough and



Figure 16.2 Military masculinity and landscape

hazardous. The rural countryside in the Army documentation is not that of idyllic community and nature in harmony, but is rather a harsh, threatening landscape against which the new recruit is pitted, and out of which his requisite physical and mental attributes will arise through its conquest (see Figure 16.2). Thus this representation of the rural serves the dual purpose of articulating and legitimating one hegemonic type of military masculinity, as well as constructing the rural itself as a legitimate place to bear arms.

CONCLUSION

'Traditional' landscape geographers' attention to ordinary and everyday landscapes, especially in attention to their morphological aspects, has ultimately and justifiably endured. The materialist-post-structuralist debate in landscape studies that raged in the 1990s seems less worrisome today. Materialists seem better attuned to the importance of landscape representation in the construction of reality, and those who have been most interested in linguistic or discursive analysis of landscape representation also seem more attuned to what is 'on the ground'. A focus on those who produce landscapes has been fruitful (e.g. Mitchell, 1996), as has the entire corpus of work that sees contests over representational practices as key to challenging the existing social order (e.g. Cresswell, 1996; Duncan, 1999). The relative contingencies of capitalism and other social relations in the production of landscape, however, continue to be debated. The situation on the feminist front is encouraging, but much work remains to be done. Attention to gendered landscapes within which various masculinities are produced seems a fruitful direction, as does attention to the myriad ways in which landscape helps produce and mediate national, ethnic and sexual difference.

SUMMARY

- Landscapes have both material and ideological aspects; they have physical, material form, are represented in various media and are themselves representations of lived relationships.
- Landscapes carry symbolic or ideological meanings that reflect back and help produce social practices, lived relationships and social identities, and also become sites of claiming or contesting authority over an area. Social practices and landscapes mutually constitute one other in an ongoing fashion.
- While early twentieth-century Anglophone landscape studies focused more on morphological features and cultural difference read through them, later studies argued that landscapes are not collectively produced by culture groups but rather act as intertextual media through which competing authority, interpretations, discourses and knowledges intersect. Both the observer and that which is observed require greater contextualization.
- Understanding the power of landscape to challenge or subvert the existing social order has been of primary concern to many cultural geographers.
- Two key critiques appear in geography's landscape studies: Marxian and feminist. The first takes a materialist orientation to argue that many landscape geographers focus too heavily on landscape representation at the expense of morphology (an ultimately false dichotomy), and suggest more attention to those inside landscapes, those who produce it. A second challenge focuses on the masculinism of landscape studies.

Further Reading

Sauer's (1963 [1925]) paper, '*The morphology of landscape*', is a foundational statement in American cultural geography. It argues for an empirical observation method to study the morphological features of the landscape as evidence of cultural difference. Subsequently, Marxist, post-structuralist and feminist approaches to geography have led to the emergence of a diverse range of ways of understanding landscape. One of the first statements in Anglophone cultural geography that brought a Marxist sensitivity to artistic representations of landscape is Cosgrove's (1984) ***Social Formation and Symbolic Landscapes***. In this book he understands landscape as a 'way of seeing' associated with the rise of capitalist property relations. Duncan's

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(1990) *The City as Text* helped usher post-structural linguistic theory into geography's landscape studies by analysing the creation of the urban landscape of the precolonial Kandyan kingdom in Sri Lanka. In this book, Duncan addresses layers of landscape signification, rhetorical devices, power relations and intertextuality. Rose's (1993) *Feminism and Geography* challenges the masculinist foundation of geography's history and geographical knowledge, including a critique of the 'masculinist gaze' embedded in landscape studies. Some of the tensions between these different ways of viewing landscape are evident in a special issue of the journal *The Professional Geographer* (1996), in which Judy Walton, Don Mitchell and Richard Peet debate the tensions between materialist and post-structuralist interpretations of landscapes. Mitchell continues to wrestle with these themes in his *Progress in Human Geography* reviews (2002, 2003).

Note: Full details of the above can be found in the references list below.

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