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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

From Field Walking to Phenomenology: A Review of Recent British Landscape Historiography

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Abstract

This review identifies three major traditions in British landscape historiography: material/environmental, cultural, and phenomenological. The continuing vitality, methodological rigour, and popular reach of the material tradition is emphasized, notwithstanding persistent questions about the adequacy of its theoretical foundations. Its close cousin historical ecology has meanwhile developed into a broader environmental history, increasingly sensitive to ideological and institutional influences. The development of the cultural tradition, originating in art historical analysis of the 'landscape idea' as a culturally specific 'way of seeing', is traced through a rich proliferation of studies connecting landscape with memory, national identity, and governance, and through feminist, postcolonial, and history-from-below perspectives. The pervasive influence of the spatial, mobilities, and material turns is highlighted but phenomenology's focus on experience perhaps challenges the cultural tradition's premises more fundamentally. Although historians were slower than anthropologists and archaeologists to adopt phenomenology, medievalists and early modernists have applied it rewardingly to topics such as the settings of elite buildings, peasant landscape perceptions, and collective landscape memories. Few modernists have yet embraced phenomenology but it has great potential here given the abundant life-writing sources available. While scope remains for further convergence between research traditions, British landscape history is therefore in an exciting phase of methodological renewal.

It is customary to recognize two principal research traditions in British landscape history, one concerned with identifying and describing landscape change, the other more preoccupied with what landscape does: the power relations inscribed in it, and the consequences of this inscription. These traditions (sections I and II of this review) have been described in many ways, with little terminological consistency. Richard Muir, writing in 1998, wanted to reserve the term 'landscape history' for the first tradition, equating the second with 'historical geography', and suggesting it was characterized by a 'subjective

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approach'. The two traditions, Muir believed, had 'different languages' which were 'mutually incomprehensible'; they 'appeared to attract different types of personality'.[1] Five years later, Denis Cosgrove expressed himself more moderately but drew an equally sharp distinction: one tradition adopted a mimetic, realist approach to landscape (perhaps naively so, he implied), while the other construed landscape in symbolic, even semiotic, terms.[2] In a wide-ranging overview of landscape studies in 2007, John Wylie contrasted the belief that 'landscape may be defined in terms of an objective world of physical features that can be empirically accessed and described', which he attributed to the doyen of British landscape historians, W. G. Hoskins, among others, with what he regarded as a 'revolution' in landscape studies between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s under the aegis of the 'cultural turn', whereby landscape came to be understood as a particular, culturally specific way of seeing or representing the world.[3] Offering a French perspective, Magali Watteaux observed in 2009 that since the 1990s, British landscape history had been characterized by two major strands, one concerned with researching 'physical evidence in the landscape' and the other rejecting the 'obvious positivism' of this in favour of 'subjectivist and interpretative perspectives'.[4] Nicola Whyte's 2015 review endorsed this contrast, while again using slightly different terminology: 'It has long been noted that the field of landscape history and archaeology in Britain is a divided one. Fault lines separate proponents of the traditional, "empirical" school from those who advocate more theoretically informed landscape research.'[5]

None of these definitions is entirely satisfactory. Since geographers (not to mention archaeologists) have made notable contributions to the first tradition and historians to the second, Muir's attempt to map them onto a disciplinary distinction does not seem viable. Cosgrove's contrast between a realist and a symbolic approach is more persuasive but downplays the awareness of many scholars working in the first tradition of the symbolic charge landscape features may carry, while understating the readiness of many in the second tradition to acknowledge that landscape is a real, not merely symbolic, ordering of space. Similarly, Watteaux's characterization of the second tradition as 'interpretative' hardly does justice to the often wide-ranging interpretative frameworks developed by historians like Hoskins (his celebrated, if contentious, claim that a 'great rebuilding' occurred in rural England between 1570 and 1640 springs to mind), while it would be misleading to describe the second tradition as 'subjectivist' in its methods, despite its rejection of positivism. Whyte's description of the first tradition as 'empirical' somewhat belies the sophistication and range of scientific methods it has increasingly deployed;

[1] R. Muir, 'Landscape: a wasted legacy', *Area*, 30 (1998), pp. 263–71.

[2] D. Cosgrove, 'Landscape: ecology and semiosis', in H. Palang and G. Fry, eds., *Landscape interfaces: cultural heritage in changing landscapes* (Dordrecht, 2003), p. 15.

[3] John Wylie, *Landscape* (London, 2007), p. 13.

[4] Magali Watteaux, 'Settlement and landscape in English historical studies: a French view', *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report*, 24 (2009), pp. 20–30.

[5] Nicola Whyte, 'Senses of place, senses of time: landscape history from a British perspective', *Landscape Research*, 40 (2015), pp. 925–38, at p. 925.

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nor is it quite satisfactory to describe the second as 'theoretical' given the depth of empirical research it has often manifested.

Nevertheless, in practice the differences between the two traditions are plain enough, in sources and methods, focus, disciplinary orientation, and chronological remit. For the first tradition, material culture has been crucial whereas for the second, graphic and textual representations have played a larger part. Field walking, excavation, and architectural recording have been indispensable to the first, close reading and critical discourse analysis to the second. As Christopher Taylor and others have pointed out, there has also been a distinction in subject matter, between an interest in sites in their own right on the one hand, and as evidence of wider spatial configurations and processes on the other.[6] There has been a disciplinary contrast too, though a more complex one than implied by Muir: the first approach has mainly attracted social and economic historians and archaeologists, while the second has drawn art historians, historical geographers, and cultural historians. The centre of gravity of the first tradition has lain in the medieval period and of the second in the modern, although again there has been much overlap.

In the interests of clarity, consistency, and brevity, I think it would be useful to reduce these terminological differences to a lowest common denominator, recognizing the loss of nuance this necessarily involves. In what follows, I have adopted the term 'material' to refer to the first tradition, and, more hesitantly, 'cultural' to the second. 'Material' seems appropriate for the first because it has always been centrally concerned with the materiality of landscape, even though it has not restricted itself to that, and 'cultural' for the second because its core preoccupation has been how landscapes have been represented or constructed, and the ways in which they reveal and often reinforce power relations. However, the cultural tradition has been more diffuse and diverse than the material tradition, and has often attended closely to material landscapes and landscape objects as well as their representation.

While these research traditions have proved immensely rewarding and fertile, one major dimension of landscape history lies largely outside their field of view. What each leaves out, quite strikingly and fundamentally, is the human experience of landscape. It is here that a third, still emergent, approach, referred to in what follows as the phenomenological tradition, has a vital contribution to make. Phenomenology is the study of the subjective content of consciousness. A phenomenological perspective directs attention to our immediate apprehension of landscape, rather than the way we shape it materially or represent it culturally. This gives rise to a very different research agenda, at the core of which is lived experience. Materialists have rarely regarded this as germane to their concerns, while much work in the cultural tradition has been implicitly underpinned by the social constructivist assumption that experience is constituted by discourse, and is therefore of little interest to researchers in its own right. There is indeed, as Catherine Ward pointed out in a review of perceptual and psychological approaches to landscape in 2018,

[6] Christopher Taylor, pers. comm., cited in Muir, 'Landscape', p. 264.

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a 'major theoretical divide' between phenomenology and social constructionism. Whereas phenomenology takes a bottom-up approach, emphasizing the 'rich array of stimulus information from the world out there', Ward saw social constructionism as a top-down paradigm, since it regards perceptions as predominantly shaped by pre-existing mental concepts and interpretations.[7] For phenomenologists, the social constructionist distinction between culture and environment is misleading and illusory: we are part of our environment and develop with it in a single process of becoming. However, phenomenology poses as much of a challenge to materialists as to culturalists. Just as, from a phenomenological perspective, the cultural tradition errs in attempting to understand mind apart from matter, the material tradition errs in attempting to understand matter apart from mind.

Phenomenology has had a transformative impact on non-historical landscape studies, notably in anthropology, prehistoric archaeology, human geography, and rural sociology. In the third section of this review, I will outline the ways phenomenology has begun to influence landscape historians, considering the conceptual advantages and difficulties of applying it in a historical context and the wide field of new research questions and themes it opens up. The final section emphasizes the considerable convergence that has occurred between the material and cultural traditions over the years and, more recently, between the material and phenomenological traditions. However, I will suggest there is still scope for fuller integration within landscape history, especially between the cultural and phenomenological traditions, and abundant opportunities, above all for modernists, to pursue the biographical and experiential research agenda phenomenology has brought into view.

It has often been argued that the analytical value of the landscape concept derives from its encompassing character. It resists precise definition and readily embraces personal and social, practical and aesthetic, human and natural dimensions. One consequence is that the boundaries of landscape history have never been clear. Where does it shade off into landscape archaeology, historical geography, environmental history, rural history, urban history, garden history, or art history? No definitive answer is possible, but to keep this review within limits, I will venture into territory shared with other disciplines only where they have made critical contributions to British landscape history (and similarly with the historiography of landscapes outwith the UK).

I

The material approach has its roots in the antiquarian and archaeological tradition but this mainly concerned buildings and monuments. Important steps towards a more holistic understanding of landscape were taken in the interwar period by figures such as W. G. Clarke, one of the pioneers of field walking, and O. S. Crawford, among the first to recognize the potential of aerial photography

[7] Catharine Ward Thompson, 'Landscape perception and environmental psychology', in P. Howard, I. Thompson, E. Waterton, and M. Atha, eds., *The Routledge companion to landscape studies* (2nd edn, London, 2018), pp. 19–38, at p. 19.

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for revealing past landscape features.[8] It was only after the Second World War, however, that geographers and historians made attempts to achieve a synthetic understanding of landscape change over extended periods. The key figure in the development of British historical geography in this period was H. C. Darby. His article 'The changing English landscape' (1951) challenged the assumption then prevalent among geographers that, in practice, the pattern of the landscape could be understood through physical geography alone, attending to landforms, soil types, and the geological and climatic forces that shape them. On the contrary, Darby insisted, landscape was profoundly shaped by human relationships too.[9]

More than any other figure, however, it was Hoskins who established landscape history as a recognized academic subdiscipline in the UK, and whose work and influence has dominated the material approach to landscape history ever since. Hoskins was the first to attempt an evidenced, analytically rigorous historical synthesis at the scale of a whole country and the book that came of this, *The making of the English landscape* (1954) remains in print seventy years later, one of the few works of landscape scholarship to have achieved a genuinely popular readership.[10] Hoskins may have reached a still wider audience through his TV series *Landscapes of England*, blazing a trail subsequently followed by other gifted communicators like the archaeologist Mick Aston, leading light of the long-running *Time Team* show (1994–2014).[11]

Even landscape historians with less flamboyant personalities working in the material tradition typically felt a responsibility to engage a wider public, often through adult education classes and publishing books and articles aimed primarily at readers outside academia. This applied, for example, to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst, pioneers of research on deserted medieval villages, the prolific Muir, author of widely read handbooks such as *The Shell guide to reading the landscape* (1981), and Taylor, noted for his contribution to understanding nucleated settlements and medieval gardens, and celebrated by Susan Oosthuizen, herself a prominent contributor to the material tradition, as the pre-eminent landscape historian of his generation.[12]

[8] Watteaux, 'Settlement and landscape', pp. 20–30; Kitty Hauser, *Shadow sites: photography, archaeology, and the British landscape, 1927–1955* (Oxford, 2007).

[9] H. C. Darby, 'The changing English landscape', *Geographical Journal*, 117 (1951), pp. 377–94; M. Williams, 'Historical geography and the concept of landscape', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 15 (1989), pp. 92–104.

[10] W. G. Hoskins, *The making of the English landscape* (London, 1954).

[11] Christopher Dyer, 'Vernacular architecture and landscape history: the legacy of "The rebuilding of rural England" and "The making of the English landscape"', *Vernacular Architecture*, 37 (2006), pp. 24–32.

[12] Other landmark contributions to the material tradition in its early years included W. R. Mead, 'Ridge and furrow in Buckinghamshire', *Geographical Journal*, 120 (1954), pp. 34–42; F. H. W. Green, 'Ridge and furrow, mole and tile', *Geographical Journal*, 141 (1975), pp. 88–93; P. D. Wood, 'Strip lynchets reconsidered', *Geographical Journal*, 127 (1961), pp. 449–59; and J. M. Lambert et al., *The making of the Broads: a reconsideration of their origin in the light of new evidence* (London, 1960). On Beresford and Hurst, see Robin Glasscock, 'Maurice Warwick Beresford 1920–2005', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 161 (2009), pp. 19–38, and Lawrence A. S. Butler, 'John Gilbert Hurst, 1927–

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Taylor spent almost his entire career working for the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments. As this suggests, the ongoing influence of the material tradition is attributable to its close engagement not only with the public but also the heritage bureaucracy. A significant step here was the ratification of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2004, and in the UK, the ensuing, albeit contested, adoption of Historic Landscape Characterization (HLC) as a methodology and policy tool. The ELC brought regulatory practice into closer conformity with research by recognizing that landscape 'evolves through time as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings', rather than being static (at least over human timescales) and entirely natural, while HLC aimed to provide a means of operationalizing this perspective in the context of planning guidelines and decision-making, although it has been criticized for its doubtful conservation efficacy and specious show of objectivity.[13]

Two years after the ratification of the ELC, English Heritage published its 'England's Landscape' book series (2006), summing up half a century of research in the material tradition since *The making of the English landscape*. The eight regional volumes demonstrated the diversity and complexity of the processes that have formed English regional landscapes, and in many cases the fragility of the features that give them their distinctive character. Making full use of methods such as place-name, boundary, and soil analysis, they showed that far more evidence of the prehistoric landscape survived than was once recognized, and emphasized the previously neglected contribution of the period between the end of the Roman occupation and the Norman Conquest to the shaping of the medieval and modern landscape.

As well as benefiting from its association with the 'heritage state', the material tradition has drawn strength from a network of academic institutions that supported its work, among them the Medieval Settlement Research Group, the Society for Medieval Archaeology, the English Place-Name Society, the Society for Landscape Studies, and the University of Leicester's Department of English Local History. Three journals have also been particularly significant, above all *Landscape History*, which remains centrally concerned with classic questions in the material tradition: continuity and change in settlement patterns, place names, land use, and field systems. Although mainly non-historical in its remit, *Landscape Research* has provided a valuable outlet for landscape historians in the material tradition too, especially for those working on modern themes, for example contemporary urban and military landscapes. It has also featured wide-ranging conceptual pieces, and articles on landscape management, heritage, and planning. A more recent addition to the field,

2003', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 138 (2006), pp. 147–67. On Taylor, see Susan Oosthuizen, 'Christopher Charles Taylor 7 November 1935 – 28 May 2021', *Landscape History*, 42 (2021), pp. 5–22.

[13] 'The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000), www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/the-european-landscape-convention (accessed 22 Dec. 2023); John Belcher, 'Historic landscape characterisation: an exploration of the method as a means of understanding enclosure', *Landscapes*, 9 (2008), pp. 26–44. John Barnett, *Reading the Peak District landscape* (Liverpool, 2019), published in conjunction with Historic England, exemplifies the influence of HLC on British landscape history research.

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Landscapes covers much the same ground as the other two journals but with a distinctive interdisciplinary focus.

Among the most frequent contributors to these journals has been the author of the West Midlands volume of 'England's Landscape', Della Hooke. Her studies of charter boundaries and place names were critical in establishing a post-Hoskins orthodoxy emphasizing social and cultural continuity from the fifth century CE to the late Anglo-Saxon period, although she also highlighted changes within this overall pattern of continuity, for example with respect to woodland regeneration.[14] Hooke's findings resonated with research by, for example, Oosthuizen, who argued that the place names and field boundaries of Anglo-Saxon fenland suggested the disruptive effect of migration in the post-Roman period was limited.[15] It has become clear that the two most striking changes in the landscape of early medieval England, the emergence of nucleated settlements and collectively managed open fields in the 'central province' (approximately corresponding to the Midlands and North-East), occurred much later than early researchers in the material tradition had assumed, and that monocausal explanations of these changes, such as Joan Thirsk's hypothesis that they were driven by population pressure and an ensuing shortage of pasture, are difficult to sustain. Christopher Dyer, Richard Jones, and Mark Page's Whittlewood Project, for example, demonstrated that nucleation in this part of the central province emerged from the interaction of numerous micro-decisions rather than a few simple macro-causes.[16]

Despite the impressive body of scholarship the material tradition has generated, it has not been without its critics. Questions have been raised, for example, about its central metaphor of landscape as a 'palimpsest'.[17] It perhaps implies a present-centric view of landscape, concerned only with what remains visible, or can be made visible, to contemporary observers, arguably reifying these material traces as significant in themselves, rather than recognizing them as carriers of symbolic meaning or as echoes of the lives of previous inhabitants. Some have pointed out that palimpsests consist of distinct layers, one on top of the other, and that this denies landscape's continuity, and the way elements of past landscapes remain active in the present. That may be more questionable – few writers have evoked the ongoing presence of the past in contemporary landscapes more powerfully than Hoskins. Given the focus of the material tradition on fields, settlements, and vernacular architecture, landscape elements shaped by and reflecting the lives of peasants and the

[14] Especially more recently, Hooke has also explored less familiar themes in landscape history, including attitudes to wildlife, water in the landscape, and soundscapes. See, for example, Della Hooke, 'Water in the landscape: charters, laws and place names', in Maren Clegg Hyer and Della Hooke, eds., *Water and the environment in the Anglo-Saxon world* (Liverpool, 2017), pp. 33–67.

[15] S. Oosthuizen, 'Culture and identity in the early medieval fenland landscape', *Landscape History*, 37 (2016), pp. 5–24.

[16] Richard Jones and Mark Page, *Medieval villages in an English landscape* (Macclesfield, 2006).

[17] Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, 'Introduction: iconography and landscape', in Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, eds., *The iconography of landscape* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 1–10. Oosthuizen, however, highlights Taylor's rejection of the palimpsest metaphor, and understanding of landscape as 'in continuous change'. Oosthuizen, 'Christopher Charles Taylor', p. 6.

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'middling sort', criticisms of it for prioritizing the activities and perceptions of elite landowners also seem a little unfair. More pertinent is the observation that the material tradition, at least until recently, has had little to say about the 'quotidian, everyday, cyclical and contingent', especially the lives of the most economically and socially marginalized, who left few material traces behind them.[18]

As the most prominent standard-bearer of the material tradition, Hoskins has unsurprisingly been subject to close scrutiny. The most compelling critique has come from David Matless, who argues that Hoskins presented a 'melancholy' backwards-looking view of English history, in which everything 'done' to the landscape in the twentieth century damaged it, and the only hope was to seek refuge from modernity in rural backwaters such as Rutland which might still be saved from the inflictions of big business and authoritarian bureaucracy. Matless argued that this anti-modernism was not the only way English landscape history could have been written. Planner-preservationists like Dudley Stamp, Patrick Abercrombie, and Thomas Sharp, for example, believed that a landscape aesthetics of order, tidiness, and appropriate design could harmonize new construction with the best elements inherited from the past. Had landscape historians in the post-war years responded more sympathetically to this perspective, Matless implied, a more open, optimistic, and forwards-looking understanding of the relationship between landscape and national identity might have developed.[19]

Critiques such as this put some on the defensive. In 1998, Muir penned a philippic against the post-modernist and cultural turn influences he believed had come to dominate human geography. One-sided though this was, it gave expression to wider fears that the material tradition was in danger of becoming marginalized within the academy. Had the hostile tone of Muir's response prevailed, there might have been some danger of this, but fortunately most landscape historians preferred to take their cue from his more constructive observation that the 'two approaches [i.e. the material and cultural traditions] would benefit from greater cross-fertilization'.[20] Over the intervening quarter of a century, the cross-fertilization Muir called for has become much more apparent, notably, for example, in Tom Williamson's extraordinarily wide-ranging, often iconoclastic and always stimulating studies of regional landscape change, the origins of fields and field boundaries, 'ancient' woodland, parks and gardens, orchards, water meadows, rabbit warrens, and much besides.[21] As this indicates, despite persistent questions about the adequacy

[18] Dianne Harris, 'The postmodernization of landscape: a critical historiography', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 58 (1999), pp. 434–43; Whyte, 'Senses of place', p. 925.

[19] David Matless, 'One man's England: W. G. Hoskins and the English culture of landscape', *Rural History*, 4 (1993), pp. 187–207. For a parallel, if more polemical, critique, see Matthew Johnson's *Ideas of landscape* (Oxford, 2006).

[20] Muir, 'Landscape', p. 263.

[21] Among Tom Williamson's most significant contributions are: *Polite landscapes: gardens and society in eighteenth-century England* (Stroud, 1995); *The transformation of rural England: farming and the landscape, 1700–1870* (Exeter, 2002); *The countryside of East Anglia: changing landscapes, 1870–1950* (with Susanna Wade Martins) (Woodbridge, 2008); *The origins of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2010);

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of its theoretical foundations the material approach remains vibrant and is no longer, if indeed it ever was, in any sense in crisis.[22] It continues to draw on a wide range of rigorous and well-established methodologies, among them excavation, field walking, aerial photography (and recently LiDAR), use of GIS, settlement plan analysis, toponymy, dendrochronology, and pollen analysis.[23]

Recent work in the material tradition has been characterized by the diverse range of sources it utilizes. Nigel Everett's *The woods of Ireland* (2014) is a good example, assembling as it does material from political tracts, literary works, estate papers, topographical drawings and paintings, letters and correspondence, legislation, and military memoirs.[24] This is particularly apparent in the University of Hertfordshire Press's admirable 'Exploring Local and Regional Landscapes' series, which also underlines the extent to which the material approach is becoming more open to influences from other intellectual traditions within the humanities and social sciences, evident in the use studies such as Ronan O'Donnell's *Assembling enclosure* and Sarah Holland's *Communities in contrast* make of Actor Network Theory.[25] While much research in the material tradition continues to focus on well-established themes, ongoing research and new methodologies and approaches have clarified many long-standing questions, resulting in a shift in emphasis from the origins of nucleated villages to a wider range of settlement types and regions, from deserted villages to settlement evolution, and towards a larger scale of analysis often encompassing multiple parishes.[26]

Space permits only a brief summary of the extensive overlap between landscape and environmental history. In origin, environmental history was strongly materialist, construing nature as separate from, albeit liable to damage by, human interference. This 'realist' historical ecology has been particularly pronounced in the UK. Oliver Rackham's study of Cambridgeshire

Champion: the making and unmaking of the English Midland landscape (with Robert Liddiard and Tracey Partida) (Liverpool, 2013); 'The ancient origins of medieval fields: a reassessment', *Archaeological Journal*, 173 (2016), pp. 264–87; 'How natural is natural? Historical perspectives on wildlife and the environment', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 29 (2019), pp. 293–311; and *Humphry Repton: landscape design in an age of revolution* (London, 2020).

[22] Watteaux, 'Settlement and landscape', pp. 20–30; Keith D. Lilley, 'Review article: The Victoria County History and the landscape of towns: a review and critique', *Landscapes*, 13 (2012), pp. 70–4.

[23] Jon Hoyle, *Hidden landscapes in the Forest of Dean* (Swindon, 2019). LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) uses light pulses to image objects, including those underground. GIS (Geographical Information Systems) allows archaeologists to merge and process large, often disparate spatial data sets.

[24] Nigel Everett, *The woods of Ireland: a history, 700–1800* (Dublin, 2014).

[25] Ronan O'Donnell, *Assembling enclosure: transformations in the rural landscape of post-medieval north-east England* (Hatfield, 2016); Sarah Holland, *Communities in contrast: Doncaster and its rural hinterland, c. 1830–1870* (Hatfield, 2019); see also Anne Rowe, *Tudor and early Stuart parks of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2019); and Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson, *The orchards of eastern England: history, ecology and place* (Hatfield, 2021).

[26] Richard Jones and Della Hooke, 'Methodological approaches to medieval rural settlements and landscapes', in Neil Christie and Paul Stamper, eds., *Medieval rural settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800–1600* (Bollington, 2011), pp. 31–42; Stephen Rippon, 'Review article: understanding medieval settlements and landscapes: the state of the art', *Landscapes*, 13 (2012), pp. 87–91.

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coppices (1967), the formation of the Historical Ecology Discussion Group in 1969, Max Hooper's hedgerow dating methodology (1976), and Rackham's magnum opus, *The history of the countryside* (1986) were among the early landmarks.[27] Rackham was wary of 'grand theories' and as late as 2000 was prepared to assert that '[L]andscape is an objective reality that can be studied scientifically.'[28]

But this notion of 'nature' as existing unproblematically in its own right was challenged by a generation of environmental historians influenced by the cultural turn from the 1990s onwards, notably Donald Worster, whose *Nature's economy* demonstrated that however neutral and objective they purported to be, ecological ideas were always deeply imbued with moral values.[29] William Cronon brought a more socially contextualized approach to environmental history, emphasizing the crucial role that class, race, gender, and religion had played in mediating the relationship between people and environment, while Richard White foregrounded ideological influences.[30] These perspectives remain influential, often now seen through a postcolonial prism, for example in the work of Richard Grove, John MacKenzie, and more recently Dale Tomich, underscoring how ecological transformation and transfers were integrated into global trade and empire, with an awareness of the way colonial and settler landscapes were shaped by highly asymmetrical, but never completely unilateral, power relations between indigenous communities, settlers, and the environment itself.[31]

Scholars who continue to work in the historical ecology tradition have increasingly absorbed culturalist perspectives of this kind. A good example is Ian Rotherham's *Eco-history* (2014) which drew attention to the 'cultural severance' that has grown up between ecosystems and the local land management systems that created and had once sustained them. This, Rotherham argues, left ecosystems such as woods, moors, marshes, and commons dependent on 'outside' management by conservation organizations and government subsidy and regulation.[32]

Rotherham's interest in the tension between officially sanctioned, top-down conservation and customary traditions and practices was taken further in an illuminating paper by Carl Griffin and Iain Robertson. Drawing on Karl

[27] Oliver Rackham, *The history of the countryside* (London, 1986); Watteaux, 'Settlement and landscape', provides a useful overview of the historical ecology tradition.

[28] Oliver Rackham, 'Prospects for landscape history and historical ecology', *Landscapes*, 1 (2000), pp. 3–17.

[29] Donald Worster, *Nature's economy: a history of ecological ideas* (Cambridge, 1994).

[30] William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon ground: rethinking the human place in nature* (New York, NY, 1996); Richard White, *The middle ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, NY, 1991).

[31] Richard Grove, *Green imperialism: colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, 1995); John M. MacKenzie, *Empires of nature and the nature of empires* (Manchester, 1997); Dale W. Tomich, Reinaldo Funes Monzote, Carlos Venegas Fornias, and Rafael de Bivar Marquese, *Reconstructing the landscapes of slavery: a visual history of the plantation in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2021).

[32] Ian Rotherham, *Eco-history: an introduction to biodiversity and conservation* (Cambridge, 2014); see also Hadrian Cook, *New Forest: the forging of a landscape* (Oxford, 2018).

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Jacoby's concept of 'moral ecology', Griffin and Robertson examined how state-imposed conservation schemes in the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds delegitimized and ultimately crushed local environmental practices underpinned by customary ecological values. In the Dean, a discourse of resource depletion undergirded the state's imposition of silviculture from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, enabling the forest to be reimagined as an 'unpeopled space'. Decades of resistance followed.[33] Similarly, on the limestone commons of Cranham and Sheepscombe, the customary practice of grass burning, abandoned in the mid-twentieth century due to the disapprobation of official conservationism, had in fact been informed by 'deep engagement with, sensitivity towards and, indeed, affection for life on and with the common'. Echoing W. J. T. Mitchell's insistence on the impossibility of separating nature and culture, Griffin and Robertson argue that through the discourses and regulatory practices of modernizing science-legitimated conservation, 'nature was enrolled to perform acts of exclusion by class'.[34]

It was in the light of studies like these that Esa Ruuskanen and Kari Väyrynen concluded in 2017 that neither 'simple environmental determinism' nor 'the absolute autonomy of social and cultural aspects' any longer provided a viable intellectual grounding for environmental history. Instead, historians should recognize 'a logic of parallel opportunities in the co-evolution of culture and nature'.[35] Hence, whatever distinctions may once have existed between landscape and environmental history would appear to be rapidly eroding.

II

For materialists and historical ecologists, landscape exists 'out there', as a physical reality, even though it may be profoundly shaped by human action. While landscape historians working in the cultural tradition do not necessarily deny the objective existence of landscape, their work is marked by a decisive shift in attention from the description of landscape's external features to elucidating the social meanings and significance with which it was freighted. Hence, the cultural approach has been centrally concerned with the representation of landscape, and it was no accident that art historians and critics played a key role in its emergence in the 1970s. Although he himself wrote scarcely any formal landscape history, the libertarian Marxist art critic John Berger's insistence that landscape does not just exist but was a 'way of seeing', one that came into being through specific historical processes and that could not be divorced from the political and social assumptions implicit in it, was the starting point for much of what followed.[36] As Malcolm Andrews later put it:

[33] Carl J. Griffin and Ian Robertson, 'Moral ecologies: conservation in conflict in rural England', *History Workshop Journal*, 82 (2016), pp. 24–49, at pp. 31, 32–3.

[34] Ibid., p. 44.

[35] E. Ruuskanen and K. Väyrynen, 'Theory and prospects of environmental history', *Rethinking History*, 21 (2017), pp. 456–73, at p. 470.

[36] John Berger, *Ways of seeing* (London, 1972).

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> A 'landscape', cultivated or wild, is already artifice before it has become the subject of a work of art. Even when we simply look we are already shaping and interpreting. A landscape may never achieve representation in a painting or photograph; none the less, something significant has happened when land can be perceived as 'landscape'.[37]

The central task for cultural historians and geographers of landscape was to trace the historical processes that made this possible and hence lay bare the ideological work done by the landscape way of seeing – what Daniels later termed the 'duplicity' of landscape.[38]

One of the first in-depth studies to adopt this approach was John Barrell's *The idea of landscape and the sense of place*. Barrell traced the influence of the early modern 'Roman' landscape painters Nicholas Poussin, Gaspard Dughet, Salvator Rosa, and above all Claude Lorrain in forming the 'idea of landscape' amongst the eighteenth-century English rural elite. Barrell saw an analogy between the 'commanding' vantage point from which these Roman landscapes were typically painted and the determination of elite English landowners to subordinate land to their aesthetic, intellectual, and ideological control. The practical counterpart, in Barrell's eyes, was the way in which the same landowners transformed the landscape physically through enclosing and fencing commons and open fields, constructing new roads, and straightening watercourses. Like the Claudian landscape, the material post-enclosure landscape was ordered relationally and hierarchically. Barrell contrasts this outsider's way of seeing with the labouring poet John Clare's experience of the landscape, which he argues was affective and participatory rather than cognitive and appraising (Clare had 'a sense of place'; Claude an 'idea of landscape'). But according to Barrell, Clare's insider awareness is no longer available, because the locally bounded worlds that gave rise to it have been comprehensively interpenetrated by accelerating flows of global capital.[39]

In the early 1980s, Denis Cosgrove picked up on Barrell's concept of landscape as an idea, Berger's emphasis on the dominant traditions within Western art as a 'way of seeing', and the distinction between insider and outsider experiences of place to which both they and the US geographer Edward Relph had drawn attention. In an ambitious and influential synthesis, he correlated the emergence of the 'landscape idea' (the isolation from its other attributes of land's aesthetic qualities, and the reification and celebration of these) with the development of early capitalist social relations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century northern Italy. The crucial innovation, he argued, was the invention of linear perspective. This enabled a range of representational techniques that were fundamental to early capitalist appropriation, control, and management of land. The distanced, overwhelmingly visual way of seeing

[37] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western art* (Oxford, 1999), p. 1.

[38] Stephen Daniels, 'Marxism, culture, and the duplicity of landscape', in R. Peet and N. Thrift, eds., *New models in geography*, II (London, 1989), pp. 196–220.

[39] John Barrell, *The idea of landscape and the sense of place 1730–1840: an approach to the poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972).

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that Cosgrove took to be inherent in the 'landscape idea' established a distinction between subject and object that paralleled the relationship between Renaissance science and a nascent bourgeois social order. This way of seeing was then adopted by English landowners, who replicated it in their landscape gardens, and by artists such as Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt the other side of the Atlantic. Thus, in Cosgrove's view, was 'land' converted into 'landscape'.[40]

Barrell's and Cosgrove's analyses of the way the 'landscape idea' served English agrarian capitalism was developed further by Ann Bermingham, who perceived an inverse relationship between the tamed, orderly landscapes of enclosure and agricultural improvement and the purportedly wild, 'natural' landscapes the eighteenth-century English aristocracy increasingly adopted for their parks and gardens.[41]

Others explored alternative ways of attempting to 'read' landscape, drawing on literary rather than art historical analytical techniques. James Duncan and Nancy Duncan construed landscape as a text, inscribed with meanings which it was the critic's responsibility to interpret and deconstruct.[42] Robert Mayhew took this discursive approach further, chiding historians from a stringent Skinnerian position for imposing anachronistic interpretations on historical landscape representations rather than attending to the range of meanings available to contemporaries.[43] More recently, the 'landscape as text' metaphor has been critiqued for focusing attention on the meanings attributed to landscapes by its 'authors', while underestimating the potentially much more complex and multifaceted responses of its 'readers', although recent work in this and the related semiotic tradition has sought to develop more open and flexible interpretations of landscape-as-text.[44]

Since its origins in the 1970s and 1980s, the cultural approach to landscape history has developed and ramified richly. One prominent theme has been landscape's power as a carrier of social memory. Pierre Nora's vast project *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–92) and Simon Schama's *Landscape and memory* (1995) were especially important here. Nora was concerned that a professionalized, analytical, institutional 'History' was driving out a social, collective, unselfconscious 'Memory'. By recording 'sites of memory', places imbued

[40] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social formation and symbolic landscape* (London, 1984). Cosgrove's interest in the ideological role of distancing and abstraction in structuring spatial power relations finds an echo in some postcolonial scholarship: see, for example, Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing imperial power: colonial subjects in eighteenth-century British painting* (Durham, NC, 1999).

[41] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and ideology: the English rustic tradition, 1740–1860* (Berkeley, CA, 1986).

[42] James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, '(Re) reading the landscape', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6 (1988), pp. 117–26.

[43] Robert J. Mayhew, *Landscape, literature and English religious culture, 1660–1800: Samuel Johnson and languages of natural description* (London, 2004), pp. 26–38.

[44] F. Bellentani, 'Landscape as text', in C. J. Rodriguez Higuera and T. J. Bennett, eds., *Concepts for semiotics* (Tartu, 2016), pp. 76–87; Kati Lindström, Hannes Palang, and Kalevi Kull, 'Semiotics of landscape', in Peter Howard, Ian Thompson, and Emma Waterton, eds., *The Routledge companion to landscape studies* (London, 2013), pp. 115–25.

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with still-surviving, and often intense, local historical associations, Nora hoped to preserve, even perhaps regenerate, something of this vanishing shared sense of the past.[45] Schama's aim was also in part restorative. Through a vast and varied exploration of European and North American landscape myths, he sought to rebut claims that Western civilization was foundationally hostile to nature, emphasizing, in accordance with the cultural turn's social constructionism, that '[b]efore it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind'.[46]

Another major line of development has been the articulation of a distinctively feminist landscape history. In the 1990s, feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose argued that landscape in the Western tradition was constructed by and for a 'masculine gaze'. Rose construed this gaze in psychoanalytical terms as both distancing and desiring. Landscape and nature, she claimed, were coded female, and the masculine gaze sought to achieve a separate, objectifying control over this feminized landscape, while paradoxically also being drawn towards it. The only positions available to women (or non-heterosexual men) within these terms were to identify either sadistically with the active, dominating male gaze or masochistically with its passive object. Hence, the crucial move for feminist geographers was to disrupt the normativity of this gaze.[47]

One attempt to do so was Catherine Nash's study of two feminist representations (or reclamations) of landscape, 'Abroad' and 'Inis t'Oirr/Aran Dance'. Nash argued that they challenged patriarchal power relations through destabilizing the representational traditions in which they were rooted.[48] More recently, feminist landscape studies have begun to look not only at the gendering of landscape representation but also at how women themselves have shaped landscape. Briony McDonagh's Joan Thirsk Memorial Prize winning study of elite women landowners, for example, bridged the gap between the material and cultural approaches by demonstrating how these women, sometimes constrained by but often challenging gender expectations, played an active role in managing and transforming the commons, woods, fields, and villages on and around their estates, through promoting enclosure and other 'improvements'.[49]

[45] Pierre Nora, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past* (Chicago, IL, 1998). The influence of Nora's work on British landscape historiography is apparent in the proliferation of studies of landscape as local heritage. Emma Waterton, 'Whose sense of place? Reconciling archaeological perspectives with community values: cultural landscapes in England', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 11 (2005), pp. 309–25, is an outstanding example.

[46] Simon Schama, *Landscape and memory* (London, 1995), pp. 6–7. Compare ibid., p. 9 ('[e]ven the landscapes that are supposed to be the most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection to be its product'), p. 61 ('[l]andscapes are culture before they are nature'), and p. 14 ('[o]ur entire landscape tradition is the product of shared cultures').

[47] Gillian Rose, *Feminism and geography: the limits of geographical knowledge* (Cambridge, 1993).

[48] Catherine Nash, 'Reclaiming vision: looking at landscape and the body', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 3 (1996), pp. 149–70, at p. 167; see also Barbara Bender, 'Subverting the Western gaze: mapping alternative worlds', in Peter J. Ucko and Robert Layton, eds., *The archaeology and anthropology of landscape: shaping your landscape* (London, 2003), pp. 58–72.

[49] Briony McDonagh, *Elite women and the agricultural landscape, 1700–1830* (London, 2018).

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A further emphasis within the cultural approach since the 1980s has been a Foucauldian interest in the discursive regulation and governance of landscapes. The pre-eminent work in this tradition has been David Matless's *Landscape and Englishness* (1998). This deployed the concept of 'moral geographies' in relation to citizenship, conduct, and bodily dispositions (defined by contrast with 'othered' anti-citizens). Matless focused on two competing mid-twentieth-century discourses of Englishness, which he designated 'planner-preservationist' and 'organicist'. Planner-preservationists embraced aspects of modernity enthusiastically. Their antipathy was reserved for messy unregulated development, epitomized by the title of one of their key publications, *England and the octopus* (the octopus being 'urban sprawl'). Their openness to orderly, appropriately sited, fit-for-purpose modern design enabled them 'to achieve a position of cultural and political power during and after the Second World War'.[50] Organicists, by contrast, looked to landowners and the soil rather than 'experts' and government to regenerate rural England. Initially, their association with fascism and hostility to the social democratic state limited their influence, but Matless argues that planner-preservationism's top-down modus operandi fostered an anti-modern populist reaction from the 1950s, exemplified by the rise of 'heritage'. This corroded planner-preservationism's ascendancy, and by the 1990s the organicist vision had greater popular and political purchase.

Matless's attention to moral geographies and discursive regulation inspired other scholars to explore related territory, notably Catherine Brace's work on class and contested constructions of twentieth-century English regional identities.[51] More recently, K. M. Brown considered traces left in the Cairngorms National Park by walkers and mountain bikers, arguing that bike tyre tracks, unlike walkers' footprints, are discursively constituted as 'damage'. In this way, 'a process of informal zoning is identified whereby walkers belong in mountains but mountain bikers do not'.[52] Similarly, Oliver Dunnett's study of the moral geographies of light pollution identified a discourse opposing the 'astronomical sublime' to the 'problem' of urbanization, and connected this to previous protests against urban sprawl, while Kirsten Tatum, Nicole Porter, and Jonathan Hale examined competing discourses of aesthetic landscapes and the rural in relation to housing development in Dartmoor National Park.[53]

Prompted by postcolonial critiques, notably Edward Said's essay 'Jane Austen and empire' (1993), cultural historians, like historical ecologists, have

[50] D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998).

[51] On scales of local belonging, see also Keith Snell's definitive *Parish and belonging*, and his and other studies of regional fiction. Keith D. M. Snell, *Parish and belonging: community, identity and welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2006).

[52] K. M. Brown, 'Leave only footprints? How traces of movement shape the appropriation of space', *Cultural Geographies*, 22 (2015), pp. 659–87.

[53] O. Dunnett, 'Contested landscapes: the moral geographies of light pollution in Britain', *Cultural Geographies*, 22 (2015), pp. 619–36; K. Tatum, N. Porter, and J. Hale, 'A feeling for what's best: landscape aesthetics and notions of appropriate residential architecture in Dartmoor National Park, England', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 56 (2017), pp. 167–79.

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also become more aware of the intimate connection between British landscapes and exploited (paradigmatically colonial) landscapes elsewhere.[54] As Ludger Gailing and Markus Leibenath pertinently observe, 'the seemingly beautiful, more or less bucolic, and "unspoiled" landscapes in the global north often have their dark sides in other parts of the world in landscapes of resource extraction…and intensive agrarian production'.[55] Among the most significant interventions here have been a suite of studies seeking to expose, interrogate, and publicize the imbrication of British country houses in histories of colonialism and slavery: English Heritage's 2007 (Kaufmann) report on slavery connections to its historic sites, Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann's ensuing collection *Slavery and the British country house,* Jonathan Finch's research on estate landscapes, the National Trust's report on the connections between its properties and colonialism and slavery, and Corinne Fowler's associated study *Green unpleasant land*.[56] Some of the most innovative work in this tradition has explored diaspora and migration landscapes, for example Divya Tolia-Kelly's research on British South Asians, many of whom came to Britain as refugees from East Africa. Tolia-Kelly considers the role of the East African curios many keep in their homes, arguing that they provide a way of retaining access to landscape heritage.[57] In subsequent work, she uses Avtar Brah's concept of 're-memories' (indirect memories derived from parents or friends that become incorporated into identity and selfhood) to explore the way material objects can mediate the landscape identities of postcolonial migration.[58]

Although the cultural approach has always attended closely to processes of ideological displacement and domination, it is only more recently that what could be described as a 'landscape from below' perspective has emerged. A pioneering study here was Harvey Taylor's *A claim on the countryside*. Taylor showed that working- and lower-middle-class ramblers and cyclists had played a pivotal role in the campaign for access rights to the English countryside.

[54] Edward Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London, 1993), pp. 80–96.

[55] L. Gailing and M. Leibenath, 'Political landscapes between manifestations and democracy, identities and power', *Landscape Research*, 42 (2017), pp. 337–48.

[56] Miranda Kaufmann, *English Heritage properties 1600–1830 and slavery connections* (London, 2007); Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann, eds., *Slavery and the British country house* (Swindon, 2013); Jonathan Finch, 'Three men in a boat: biographies and narrative in the historic landscape', *Landscape Research*, 33 (2008), pp. 511–30; S. A. Huxtable, C. Fowler, C. Kefalas, and E. Slocombe, eds., *Interim report on the connections between colonialism and properties now in the care of the National Trust, including links with historic slavery* (Swindon, 2020); Corinne Fowler, *Green unpleasant land: creative responses to rural Britain's colonial connections* (Leeds, 2020). See also Jonathan Finch, 'A transatlantic dialogue: the estate landscape in Britain, the Caribbean, and North America in the eighteenth century', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 84 (2021), pp. 491–515.

[57] Divya Tolia-Kelly, 'Locating processes of identification: studying the precipitates of re-memory through artefacts in the British Asian home', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29 (2004), pp. 314–29.

[58] Avtar Brah, 'The scent of memory: strangers, our own, and others', *Feminist Review*, 61 (1999), pp. 4–26; Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, *Landscape, race and memory: material ecologies of citizenship* (London, 2016).

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They worked together with sympathetic politicians such as James Bryce, but their ruralism was generated from within their own ranks.[59] As John Walton put it in a subsequent study, arguing that the origins of rural leisure walking lay in early industrial northern England, 'we can identify a deeply rooted popular attachment to landscape and countryside...[which] might connect with..."high culture"...[but] had a prior and an independent existence'.[60]

One of the key influences on the 'landscape from below' approach was the 'spatial turn' in the humanities, especially the work of Doreen Massey on the geographical unevenness of power relations ('power geometry'). Massey argued that the uniqueness of any place was at least partly constituted by a specific mix of social relations always extending beyond the place itself, and in constant flux. Hence, the identities of place were 'always unfixed, contested and multiple'.[61] Attempts to stabilize place meanings, for example by the imposition of boundaries, necessarily involved an ideological denial of socio-economic realities.[62]

Massey's work posed a sharp challenge to the distinction between 'insider' experiences and 'outsider' constructions of landscape animating the work of Berger, Barrell, Relph, Cosgrove, and other landscape theorists of the 1970s and 1980s. It was also an important source of the 'mobilities turn' from the late 1990s – the increased awareness across a range of disciplines, including landscape history, of the significance of movement in forming, reforming, and dissolving social relations and identities. Jan Birksted's attempt to construct a coherent disciplinary foundation, in his view previously lacking, for (designed) landscape and garden history based on movement through an environment as a distinctive aesthetic experience is an interesting example.[63] Taking the mobilities turn in a quite different direction, Veronica della Dora looked at how landscape representations (which she terms 'landscape-objects') can themselves circulate. Whether as paintings, photographs, postcards, souvenir images, printed T-shirts, or any of the myriad other forms of landscape reproduction, they travel from place to place, carrying meanings that affect and are themselves affected by their shifting contexts.[64] There are parallels here with the Dutch concept of landscape biographies, whereby landscape is understood as an object handed over repeatedly from one generation of

[59] Harvey Taylor, *A claim on the countryside: a history of the British outdoor movement* (Edinburgh, 1997).

[60] John K. Walton, 'The northern rambler: recreational walking and the popular politics of industrial England, from Peterloo to the 1930s', *Labour History Review*, 78 (2013), pp. 243–69. On the less-studied southern tradition of popular ruralism, see Mark Gorman, *Saving the people's forest: open spaces, enclosure and popular protest in mid-Victorian London* (Hatfield, 2021).

[61] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, place, and gender* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 5.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Jan Birksted, 'Landscape history and theory: from subject matter to analytical tool', *Landscape Review*, 8 (2003), pp. 4–28. The specialist literature on gardens and parks is too extensive to be summarized here but, in addition to scholars mentioned elsewhere in this article, the wide-ranging contributions of Mavis Batey, John Dixon Hunt, and David Jacques should be acknowledged.

[64] V. della Dora, 'Travelling landscape-objects', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33 (2009), pp. 334–54.

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users to the next, undergoing not only physical changes, but also changes in value and meaning.[65]

While the mobilities turn suggests that attempts to fix durable and hegemonic landscape meanings may be less viable than Barrell and Cosgrove, for example, believed, landscape historians continue to be interested in historical conceptualizations of landscape. Perhaps the most significant contribution in this area since Cosgrove's *Social formation* has been Kenneth Olwig's *Landscape, nature, and the body politic* (2002), which demonstrated that the word 'landscape' had deeper etymological roots than Cosgrove had recognized. In north-west Europe, cognate terms such as 'landskab' and 'landschaft' referred, in the middle ages, to local polities defined by shared laws, customs, and practices. 'Landscape' was therefore a social and political term before it became an aesthetic one. Cosgrove's 'landscape idea' was an elite appropriation and narrowing of pre-existing usages. Yet, the older understanding of landscape as local practice was never completely vanquished, and Olwig argued that it remained available as a tradition through which a more just, inclusive, and grounded relationship between people and their environment could be reconstituted.[66] Other scholars, most prominently John Stilgoe, have since extended Olwig's approach, emphasizing the material foundations of early conceptions of landscape, although the geographer David Crouch has criticized 'historicist claims to fix or narrow definitions of landscape' of this kind, seeing them as a denial of the 'radically contingent openness' of landscape as a continual process of remaking.[67]

Rewarding research also continues at the interface between landscape and national identity, following the tradition established by the cultural historians Martin Wiener, Alun Howkins, and Patrick Wright and extended in a different direction by Matless.[68] Paul Readman's *Storied ground* stands out here. Readman convincingly challenges several long-established historiographical orthodoxies, such as the assumption that modern English national identity is fundamentally rural, that lush, conflict-free representations of 'South Country' landscapes became hegemonic in the late nineteenth century, and that such representations exerted a conservative cultural and political influence. His central contention is that through linking past and present, landscape became

[65] This usage should be distinguished, on the one hand, from Samuels's (1979) concept of landscape biography, concerned with 'authors' of landscape such as property developers, architects, and planners, and on the other from recent research on landscape experience influenced by the 'biographical turn'. M. S. Samuels, 'The biography of landscape: cause and culpability', in D. W. Meining, ed., *The interpretation of ordinary landscapes* (New York, NY, 1979), pp. 51–88. See also J. Renes, 'Layered landscapes: a problematic theme in historic landscape research', in J. Kolen, J. Renes, and R. Hermans, eds., *Landscape biographies: geographical, historical and archaeological perspectives on the production and transmission of landscapes* (Amsterdam, 2015), pp. 403–21.

[66] Kenneth Olwig, *Landscape, nature, and the body politic: from Britain's renaissance to America's new world* (Madison, WI, 2002).

[67] John R. Stilgoe, *What is landscape?* (Cambridge, MA, 2015); D. Crouch, 'Flirting with space: thinking landscape relationally', *Cultural Geographies*, 17 (2010), pp. 5–18.

[68] This research tradition is reviewed in J. Burchardt, 'Agricultural history, rural history, or countryside history?', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), pp. 465–81.

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a key vector of continuity during the industrial revolution, even perhaps an enabling condition for sustainable modernization.[69] This echoes recent work on preservationism that critiques earlier studies construing it as an obstacle to modernization.[70]

Studies such as Readman's demonstrate that cultural histories of landscape can still make a compelling contribution to overarching historical questions such as the relationship between landscape, heritage, and modernity. However, even in carefully considered work like this, the cultural approach's focus on the way landscape meaning is constructed and represented tends to direct attention to the agency of the powerful: as Tadhg O'Keeffe pointed out, readings such as Cosgrove's effectively 'reduced non-elites' engagement with landscape to acts of compliance…or resistance'.[71] As Don Mitchell observed, this leaves a significant gap: 'Much less well studied – perhaps because methodologically so much more difficult – is the way landscapes are received, understood and used by ordinary people.'[72] Filling this gap is among the prime aims of the third major tradition in landscape history research, the phenomenological approach.

III

The origins of phenomenology lie in Heidegger's rejection of Descartes' mind–body dualism. Heidegger argued that existence precedes essence: we are in the world before we can seek to understand it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty added to this an emphasis on embodiment, insisting that all perception and awareness arises from our bodily immersion in and movement through a world of which we are already part.[73] These ideas had a profound influence on twentieth-century continental philosophy but it was not until the 1990s that they were applied systematically to landscape studies. The key figure here was the anthropologist Tim Ingold, who argued that phenomenology offered an escape route from the 'sterile opposition' between the 'naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, external backdrop to human activities' and the 'culturalistic view that every landscape is a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space'.[74] He recommended that we adopt a Heideggerian 'dwelling perspective'

[69] Paul Readman, *Storied ground: landscape and the shaping of English national identity* (Cambridge, 2018).

[70] Astrid Swenson, *The rise of heritage: preserving the past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge, 2013).

[71] Tadhg O'Keeffe, 'Landscape and memory: historiography, theory, methodology', in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan, eds., *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity* (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 15–30.

[72] D. Mitchell, 'The lure of the local: landscape studies at the end of a troubled century', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25 (2001), pp. 269–81. Compare Jonathan Finch, 'Historic landscapes', in Howard, Thompson, Waterton, and Atha, eds., *The Routledge companion to landscape studies* (2nd edn, 2018), pp. 166–75, at p. 172: 'Attempts to recover the significance of everyday landscapes are much harder to come by.'

[73] Lindström, Palang, and Kull, 'Semiotics of landscape'.

[74] Tim Ingold, 'The temporality of the landscape', *World Archaeology*, 25 (1993), pp. 152–74, at p. 152.

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to achieve this, understanding landscape as 'the familiar domain of our dwelling', a part of us just as we are part of it.[75]

Ingold has a vivid, even mystical, sense of the ongoing flow of life, with everything continually influencing everything else, and nothing set apart:

> For in the final analysis, everything is suspended in movement. As Whitehead once remarked, 'there is no holding nature still and looking at it'. What appear to us as the fixed forms of the landscape, passive and unchanging unless acted upon from outside, are themselves in motion, albeit on a scale immeasurably slower and more majestic than that on which our own activities are conducted. Imagine a film of the landscape, shot over years, centuries, even millennia. Slightly speeded up, plants appear to engage in very animal-like movements, trees flex their limbs without any prompting from the winds. Speeded up rather more, glaciers flow like rivers and even the earth begins to move. At yet greater speeds solid rock bends, buckles and flows like molten metal. The world itself begins to breathe. Thus the rhythmic pattern of human activities nests within the wider pattern of activity for all animal life, which in turn nests within the pattern of activity for all so-called living things, which nests within the life-process of the world.[76]

In another essay, Ingold contrasts this profoundly monist sense of the unity-within-diversity of life with the culturalist stance paradigmatically exemplified, in his view, by Schama. Where Schama maintains that it is 'culture, convention and cognition' that allow us to find beauty in what would otherwise be formless and meaningless sense impressions, Ingold, drawing on Merleau-Ponty and the environmental psychologist James Gibson, argues that we perceive the world with our whole bodies, as we move through it, rather than just with our minds. No prior cultural or conceptual frame is required: on the contrary, each organism, human or animal, perceives a real world through its perceptual apparatus and situated materiality.[77]

Ingold's advocacy of a phenomenologically inspired dwelling perspective has been highly influential among geographers, anthropologists, and rural sociologists. Initially, however, it was prehistoric archaeologists who embraced it most eagerly, most productively perhaps Christopher Tilley, who sought to recreate, or even relive, the experiences of the builders and users of the great neolithic monuments of southern England by moving along the same paths they would have done.[78] For Tilley, a landscape was 'a set of relational places

[75] Ibid., p. 154.

[76] Ibid., p. 164.

[77] Tim Ingold, 'Introduction', in M. Janowski and T. Ingold, eds., *Imagining landscapes: past, present and future* (Abingdon, 2012), pp. 1–3.

[78] Christopher Tilley, *A phenomenology of landscape: places, paths and monuments* (Oxford, 1994), p. 27.

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linked by paths, movements and narratives'; a phenomenological retracing of these paths and movements could disclose the narratives and meanings they inscribed.[79]

Another prehistoric archaeologist (and anthropologist) who played a key role in applying phenomenological perspectives to landscape was Barbara Bender. Building on Ingold and Tilley, she maintained that the paths and routes people follow as they go about their everyday lives differ according to finely graded distinctions of class and gender.[80] Furthermore, as people move, they affect the landscapes of those being moved through, and of those left behind.[81] Even people who live in the same place for generations are constantly aware of other places, whether real or encountered through stories and imagination. Hence, as Massey had argued, people's sense of place is always 'contingent upon a larger temporal and spatial field of relationships'.[82] In this way, Bender added a political perspective to landscape phenomenology, one that it has sometimes been criticized for eschewing.[83]

The imprint of Bender's determination to mobilize and politicize phenomenology is apparent in much subsequent work. A special issue of *Landscape Research* edited by Jo Vergunst and Arnar Árnason in 2012, for example, aimed to 'address political aspects of landscape, such as access, administrative designations and land use conflict, in terms of the experiential landscape, such as perception of time, wayfinding and identity', while the following year Wylie argued that phenomenological attention to individual lives could bring questions about the cultural, historical, and political significance of landscapes into sharper focus.[84] In other work, Wylie extended phenomenology in the opposite direction, through close analyses of the fleeting experiences of being in and passing through landscapes.[85]

Although phenomenology has transformed landscape studies, its influence on historians has hitherto largely been restricted to the pioneering work of

[79] For a thoughtful critique of Tilley, see Joanna Brück, 'Experiencing the past? The development of a phenomenological archaeology in British prehistory', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 12 (2005), pp. 45–72.

[80] Barbara Bender, 'Introduction', in Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, eds., *Contested landscapes: movement, exile and place* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 1–14, at p. 3.

[81] Ibid., p. 13.

[82] Ibid., p. 6.

[83] Ibid., p. 9; see also A. Hornborg, 'Relationism as revelation or prescription? Some thoughts on how Ingold's implicit critique of modernity could be harnessed to political ecology', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 43 (2018), pp. 253–63.

[84] Jo Vergunst and Arnar Árnason, 'Introduction: routing landscape: ethnographic studies of movement and journeying', *Landscape Research*, 37 (2012), pp. 147–54; John Wylie, 'Landscape and phenomenology', in Howard, Thompson, and Waterton, eds., *The Routledge companion to landscape studies* (2013), pp. 72–83. See also Gailing and Leibenath's incisive review of landscape's inherently political character, Gailing and Leibenath, 'Political landscapes'.

[85] John Wylie, 'A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30 (2005), pp. 234–47; see also J. D. Sidaway, 'Shadows on the path: negotiating geopolitics on an urban section of Britain's South West Coast Path', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27 (2009), pp. 1091–16.

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a few early modernists and medievalists.[86] This is regrettable since, as Finch observed in 2018, phenomenology 'appears to offer enormous potential for historic landscape studies'. In his view, the material, documentary, and oral sources available to landscape historians lent themselves particularly well to answering phenomenological questions, which could lead to a better understanding of the role of landscape in everyday lives.[87] Here, he was echoing comments made by Whyte in 2007 about the failure of scholars outside archaeology and anthropology to take on board a phenomenological awareness of landscape as 'an essential component in the everyday structures of local life'. Conversely, in her view, in most writing on rural social history landscape featured only as a backdrop to social interactions and the construction of identities.[88] She returned to the fray in a 2015 review article, arguing that 'phenomenological scholarship…has immense potential for opening up current research and debate' in landscape history.[89]

Whyte's own work, while rooted in the historiography of early modern rural England, has become increasingly imbued with phenomenological perspectives. Her studies of oral witness testimonies, for example, highlight the role of everyday knowledge of the landscape as a vector of social relationships and identities.[90] Ingold's sensitivity to the temporality of landscape is apparent in much of her research over the last decade, looking at the enduring but continuously reworked significance of trees, springs, wells, wayside crosses, barrows, and gallows in social memory.[91] Inherited features such as these, she maintains, had an active social function in the present, rather than, as might be the case today, being segregated off as 'heritage'.[92] In her most recent work, Whyte brings together a phenomenological awareness that landscape is apprehended temporally and through movement with a close biographical reading of the travel journals of Celia Fiennes.[93]

Bender and Whyte both argue that phenomenology can challenge elitist landscape narratives. For Bender, phenomenology democratizes landscape experience by prompting us to recognize that we all necessarily perceive the environment around us the whole time: Cosgrove's 'landscape idea' was just one among a plethora of ways of perceiving landscape, available to a narrow elite over a particular temporal and spatial range. Whyte suggests that

[86] Finch, 'Three men in a boat', p. 511: 'Such [phenomenological] approaches have failed to make a significant impact upon the interpretation and understanding of the more immediate historic landscape.'

[87] Finch, 'Historic landscapes', p. 168.

[88] Nicola Whyte, 'Landscape, memory and custom: parish identities c. 1550–1700', *Social History*, 32 (2007), pp. 166–86, at p. 167.

[89] Whyte, 'Senses of place, senses of time', p. 926.

[90] Whyte, 'Landscape, memory and custom', p. 167.

[91] Nicola Whyte, 'Norfolk wayside crosses: biographies of landscape and place', in T. A. Heslop, Elizabeth A. Mellings, and Margit Thøfner, eds., *Art, faith and place in East Anglia: from prehistory to the present* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 163–78; Nicola Whyte, 'An archaeology of natural places: trees in the early modern landscape', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 76 (2013), pp. 499–517.

[92] Whyte, 'Senses of place, senses of time', p. 931. Compare Renes, 'Layered landscapes', p. 404.

[93] Nicola Whyte, 'Landscapes on the move: the travel journals of Celia Fiennes (1685 – c. 1712)', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 78 (2022), pp. 173–81.

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recognizing the significance of apparently quotidian landscape elements in everyday life allows us to 'reclaim common landscapes as heritage' and 'remember the agency of people in marking, claiming and making landscapes'.[94]

This was a view echoed by Stephen Mileson, who argued that rather than by studying 'particular features' – an implicit acknowledgement of the imaginative use historians such as Oliver Creighton have made of phenomenology in reconstructing the environs of medieval castles – 'the greatest advances (in understanding how past inhabitants perceived their environment) will…be made by studying the landscape as a whole'.[95] Mileson and his co-author Stuart Brookes duly delivered on this in their remarkably ambitious *Peasant perceptions of landscape*, a study of Ewelme hundred in Oxfordshire over more than a millennium. Through careful consideration of personal and place names, settlement morphology, terrain, vegetation, agricultural practice, and patterns of social and spatial interaction, the authors demonstrate it is possible to recover far more about even 'ordinary' inhabitants' perceptions of landscape from this early period than we might suppose. Group and individual rights to particular parcels of land seem to have been most important, expressed in relation to often long-lasting social features in the landscape such as churches, springs, wells, and roads. A key change during the study period was the emergence of the village and the parish as units of belonging, in addition to the household. But there were also more regionally distinctive contrasts, notably between the more abundant collective resources in the vale villages, which the authors argue promoted a stronger sense of shared belonging, and the lack of such resources (and hence perhaps reduced identification with the landscape) on the Chiltern Hills above.[96]

Some of these themes are echoed in Susan Kilby's research on peasant perceptions of landscape and environment in eastern England between 1066 and 1348. Kilby's concerns are with how peasants viewed, moved through, trespassed over, and contested land and landscapes. She uses minor place names (of fields, for example) and topographical family names to good effect, arguing that unfree tenants were more likely to carry the latter, although it is difficult to be sure how this affected their sense of place. By linking architectural, archaeological, documentary, and minor place name evidence, she is also able to

[94] Whyte, 'Senses of place, senses of time', p. 936.

[95] Stephen Mileson, 'The South Oxfordshire Project: perceptions of landscape, settlement and society, c. 500–1650', *Landscape History*, 33 (2012), pp. 83–98, at p. 83; O. H. Creighton, *Designs upon the land: elite landscapes of the middle ages* (Woodbridge, 2009); Robert Liddiard, ed., *'Landscapes of lordship': Norman castles and the countryside in medieval Norfolk, 1066–1200* (Oxford, 2000); Robert Liddiard, *Castles in context: power, symbolism and landscape, 1066 to 1500* (Macclesfield, 2005); Matthew Johnson, ed., *Lived experience in the later middle ages: studies of Bodiam and other elite landscapes in south-eastern England* (Southampton, 2017); Audrey M. Thorstad, *The culture of castles in Tudor England and Wales* (Woodbridge, 2019).

[96] Stephen Mileson and Stuart Brookes, *Peasant perceptions of landscape: Ewelme hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500–1650* (Oxford, 2022).

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gain some purchase on peasant perceptions of wildlife and nature in and around medieval villages such as Castor in Northamptonshire.[97]

In contrast to the rich use that medievalists and early modernists have begun to make of it, modernists have until recently almost entirely ignored phenomenology.[98] This is ironic and perplexing, since medievalists and early modernists face much greater challenges in applying phenomenological perspectives due to the scant survival of pre-modern personal records, leading them into creative reconstructions that 'go beyond the evidence'.[99] Conversely, as Finch notes, the rich data available to modernists should allow them to avoid these pitfalls.[100] Part of the explanation is undoubtedly the closer ties medievalists and early modernists have with archaeology where, as we have seen, phenomenology has been a powerful influence. The evidential challenges confronting medievalists and early modernists may also have forced them to be more innovative methodologically, while modernists continue to revere the documentary footnote as the warrant of their professional authority.[101] But possibly the greatest barrier has been the enduring hegemony of social constructionism among modernists. Phenomenology can work alongside moderate social constructionism, where, for example, representations are recognized as intertwined with the ongoing flow of lived experience, but is difficult to reconcile with a 'hard' social constructionism for which experience is wholly produced by discourse.[102]

Although few modernists have yet explicitly embraced phenomenology, there are encouraging signs of increasing interest in landscape experience. This may in part reflect what has been heralded as a 'biographical turn' in History, Historical Geography, and allied studies, driven by a greater awareness of the complexity of individual motivation, a concern to avoid imposing preconceived 'grand narratives' on this and a recognition that life trajectories can only be traced through longitudinal study.[103] Landscape historians have drawn on biographical evidence in a variety of ways, perhaps most effectively, where sources permit, using life histories methodologies, an approach

[97] Susan Kilby, *Peasant perspectives on the medieval landscape: a study of three communities* (Hatfield, 2020); Susan Kilby, 'Fantastic beasts and where to find them: the Romanesque capitals of St Kyneburgha's church, Castor, and the local landscape', *Church Archaeology*, 19 (2019) pp. 53–72.

[98] See, however, Paul Readman, 'Walking, and knowing the past: antiquaries, pedestrianism and historical practice in modern Britain', *History*, 107 (2022), pp. 51–73, at pp. 52, 56, and 67, and Jeremy Burchardt, *Lifescapes: the experience of landscape in Britain, 1870–1960* (Cambridge, 2023).

[99] Andrew Fleming, 'Post-processual landscape archaeology: a critique', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 16 (2006), pp. 267–80, at p. 267.

[100] Finch, 'Three men in a boat', p. 514.

[101] Readman, 'Walking, and knowing the past', pp. 51, 69.

[102] An interesting attempt to integrate phenomenology with moderate social constructionism is C. Brace and A. Johns-Putra, 'The importance of process', in C. Brace and A. Johns-Putra, eds., *Process: landscape and text* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 29–44, which seeks to 'show how landscape representations are created in practice, and made powerful through their affective qualities' (pp. 39–40).

[103] Hans Renders, Binne de Haan, and Jonne Harmsma, eds., *The biographical turn: lives in history* (London, 2016). See also Cheryl McGeachan, 'Historical geography II: traces remain', *Progress in Human Geography*, 42 (2018), pp. 134–47.

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advocated by researchers from across the spectrum of landscape studies.[104] The rewards it can offer historians are apparent in three very different recent monographs.

Kerri Andrews's *Wanderers* explores the walking lives of ten women writers with sensitive care, concluding that they found walking essential to their creative processes and their sense of self. Walking for them was, variously, a means of communing with the dead, of defying convention, of self-discovery, of relief from pain and connecting with a larger world. Although they experienced restrictions on their ability to walk, this did not stop women from walking. But, Andrews maintains, women move differently, see differently, and write differently about their experiences than men. Their omission from the literature on walking denies us part of our history.[105]

Matthew Kelly's *The women who saved the English countryside* is also a collective biography, in this case of four female preservationists (Octavia Hill, Beatrix Potter, Pauline Dower, and Sylvia Sayer). Kelly argues that their often behind-the-scenes role in 'saving the countryside' has been insufficiently appreciated. Perhaps the most innovative section of the book is a virtual walk along the Greensand Way in Kent, reprising a real walk the author took linking properties associated with Octavia Hill. Kelly succeeds in rendering the experience of his walk vividly, in a manner reminiscent of Wylie's walk along the South West Coast Path. He describes his emotional responses and the extent to which his walking experiences corresponded to the pro-access and open-air goals that inspired Hill. At times, for example, he felt squeezed between high hedges screening wealthy private property on one side and a fence on the other. In the way Kelly intertwines biographical information with accounts of landscape preservation, legislation, management, and change, and uses his own personal landscape encounters as source material, *The women who saved the English countryside* exemplifies the methodological innovation and creativity characteristic of biographical and phenomenological landscape scholarship.[106]

The third book, my own *Lifescapes*, seeks to achieve an in-depth understanding of landscape experience in modern Britain through close study of eight middle- and working-class diaries. It questions the assumption that private

[104] E. White, D. Uzzell, N. Räthzel, and B. Gatersleben, 'Using life histories in psychology: a methodological guide', *RESOLVE Working Paper Series*, no. 01–10, 2010, pp. 1–18, https://openresearch.surrey.ac.uk/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/Using-life-histories-in-psychology-A/99511129802346#file-0; Maria Lewicka, 'Place attachment: how far have we come in the last 40 years?', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31 (2011), pp. 207–30, at p. 226; Thompson, 'Landscape perception and environmental psychology', pp. 19–38, at p. 32; D. Harvey and T. J. Wilkinson, 'Landscape and heritage: emerging landscapes of heritage', in Howard, Thompson, Waterton, and Atha, eds., *The Routledge companion to landscape studies* (2nd edn., 2018), pp. 176–91, at p. 180; Andrés Di Masso, Daniel R. Williams, Christopher M. Raymond, Matthias Buchecker, Barbara Degenhardt, Patrick Devine-Wright, Alice Hertzog, Maria Lewicka, Lynne Manzo, and Azadeh Shahrad, 'Between fixities and flows: navigating place attachments in an increasingly mobile world', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 61 (2019), pp. 125–33, at p. 131.

[105] Kerri Andrews, *Wanderers: a history of women walking* (London, 2020).

[106] Matthew Kelly, *The women who saved the English countryside* (Newhaven, CT, 2022).

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experiences of landscape marched hand in hand with its public representation, suggesting that character structures formed in childhood and youth were usually more decisive than discursive influences. Four major patterns of engagement are identified: 'Adherers' valued landscape for its continuity; 'Withdrawers' as a refuge from perceived threats; 'Restorers' as a means of sustaining core value systems; and 'Explorers' for self-discovery and development. In each case, family structures and relationships and the psychological dynamics they generated were crucial, although over a shorter timescale a wide range of socio-economic circumstances played a part too. Seen in this holistic, lifetime perspective, landscape can be understood as a mirror reflecting the psychological, situational, and cultural influences pervading our lives, as we variously absorb, resist, and accommodate ourselves to them.[107]

IV

Landscape history in Britain is in a flourishing condition, with a wider range of approaches than ever in evidence and new methodologies currently emerging. The material tradition continues to yield rigorous, technically proficient studies, typically based on a site or group of sites, while retaining its capacity to appeal to a non-specialist readership. There have also been impressive studies in recent years of core themes in the cultural history of landscape such as its discursive regulation, its multifaceted relationship to national identity and its gendering, both in relation to the 'male gaze' and women as agents of landscape change themselves. A mutually enriching convergence between landscape and ecological history is taking place, fostering rewarding new perspectives like the 'moral ecology' paradigm, and a recognition that 'conservation' is itself a contested and historically contingent category. There is a growing awareness of how inextricably entangled British landscapes are with histories of colonialism and imperialism, reflecting a wider realization, partly inspired by Doreen Massey's work, that landscapes are, to a much greater extent than was once recognized, constituted by intersecting global flows, with differential effects on class, gender, and ethnicity.

Landscape studies over the last thirty years have also been profoundly shaped by phenomenological perspectives. Ingold's emphasis on the temporality of landscape has been absorbed by historians like Whyte and Readman, both of whom foreground the prominent role the past plays in how landscape is experienced in the present. Phenomenology has also transformed castle studies and, with the publication of Mileson and Brookes's remarkable study, peasant perceptions of landscape. There are encouraging signs that modernists are now beginning to dip their toes in phenomenological waters too, in the context of a developing interest in landscape experience, typically using a biographical and sometimes life histories approach. What has been published in this area so far, however, is just the tip of an iceberg: in comparison to our extensive knowledge of landscape representations, informed by half a century of research, we know next to nothing about how landscape was experienced by

[107] Burchardt, *Lifescapes*.

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individuals and groups historically, or about how this varied spatially, temporally, or across other domains. In-depth biographical research on landscape experience is time-consuming and can be difficult to generalize but should be a high priority because it holds the key to understanding how landscape affected people in the past and why it did so in such different ways.

The three major traditions of landscape history research have influenced each other substantially over the last half-century and are now much less distinct than they were. However, there is still scope for further convergence, especially between the cultural and phenomenological traditions. Most representational studies are implicitly predicated on the assumption that the symbolic meanings encoded in designed landscapes and landscape representations successfully projected hegemonic ideologies. But such studies are almost invariably silent about how these landscapes and landscape representations were actually received. Hence, we have little idea how *effective* they were. To Cosgrove, for example, the great lawn at Rousham, sweeping down to the River Cherwell, served to naturalize aristocratic authority and property ownership. But to generations of children it is more likely to have signified an irresistible opportunity to play roly-poly. Unless we know how much was lost, and what was added, in translation between designer and visitor (or viewer), it is impossible to gauge the cultural 'throw' of designed and represented landscapes. Studies of visitor responses to designed landscapes, and viewer responses to landscape representations, would therefore be of great value. There are many other opportunities for convergence between, and ongoing development within, the historiographical traditions surveyed in this review: at the time of writing, British landscape history appears to have a bright future.

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