Carmen Flys Junquera, Irene Sanz Alonso, Montserrat Lopez Mujica, Esther Lao y Leone (eds), 
*Paisajes Culturales : Herencia Y Conservacion / Cultural Landscapes : Heritage and Conservation*

Françoise Besson
Carmen Flys Junquera, Irene Sanz Alonso, Montserrat Lopez Mujica, Esther Lao y Leone (eds), *Paisajes Culturales : Herencia Y Conservacion / Cultural Landscapes : Heritage and Conservation*

Françoise Besson

REFERENCES


This DVD, composed of seventy-five papers in addition to two plenary lectures by Linda Hogan and John O'Keefe (coordinator of the Harvard Forest Fisher Museum of Forestry, who speaks about the way of “presenting landscapes to Museum audiences”), as well as five presentations, contains the proceedings of the third EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) conference *Cultural Landscapes: Heritage and Conservation*. It also includes one hundred and two photographs and a videoclip with the beautiful title “Dancing Landscapes”. The proceedings appear as a volume of 621 pages of academic papers in PDF format, to which are added 21 pages of presentations about the situation of landscape in Spain. Those articles are written by academics from all over the world, most of them in English but with some in Spanish and in French; they cover a wide range of topics, from the representations of the concept of
landscape by land agents or landscape atlas makers to Saint Teresa de Avila’s interior landscapes.

2 This academic sum tackling important subjects in several disciplines (geography, history, literature, art, ecology, politics and law) opens with a warning and appears as a guide concerning our relationship with the planet, as it is beautifully summarized by Linda Hogan: “I learn from the earth. My human journey here is one of understanding and learning and living within the greater terrestrial intelligence. There is an intelligence beyond human. Plants speak to each other, warning there is danger, and it is a language of hormones. There are constant communications all around us, a cosmos of knowledge at work. Once we held treaties with the land and with other animals. We have broken many of those laws that go beyond and go deeper than human laws” (2).

3 The diversity of the approaches provides the reader with a great range of perceptions making that DVD a very interesting tool for all researchers who work on landscape representation, ecocriticism and also on the link between human constructions and nature preservation. “Conceptual realities [with the distinction] between Space, Place and Landscape” are evoked in a useful paper (Guy Achard-Bayle). Some articles deal with landscape as linked with iconography (Sarra Belhassine; Juan Antonio Diaz-Lopez; Carlos Garrido Castellano); one can mention a very interesting link established between painted landscapes and fictitious written landscapes, through a parallel between Turner’s painting and Conrad’s work (Juan Antonio Diaz Lopez). One can also note an original article about the construction of identity in contemporary Indian painting (Carlos Garrido Castellano). Among the studies of fantastic landscapes, one can quote “Supernatural Landscapes: From Poe’s ‘The Domain of Arnheim’ to the Ethics of Earthcare” (Hannes Bergthaller), “The Figure in the Landscape: Landscape and Character in Ann Radcliffe’s Fiction” (Audrone Raskauskiene) and “The Redemptive Role of Nature in Melmoth the Wanderer’s Tale of the Indians” (Alfredo Moro Martin).

4 All kinds of landscapes are studied: the wilderness, the garden, underwater seascapes, frontier landscapes, urban, colonial and cultural landscapes; landscapes from all over the world—from the Alps to Brazilian landscapes—appear together with all forms of representations: painting, sculpture, cinema, atlases, literature—novels, drama, poetry, short stories and comics. The variety of approaches goes together with the diversity of writers whose works are analysed in connection with landscapes: American literature—Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, Paul Auster, Truman Capote, Annie Proulx, Peter Matthiessen, an article about Nabokov’s Russian novels—English and Irish literature—Ann Radcliffe, Mathurin, Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, Tom Stoppard, Elizabeth Bowen—Canadian literature with Margaret Atwood, French literature—Guy de Maupassant, François Mauriac, Marguerite Yourcenar and literature from all over the world give a great range of perceptions of humans’ link with Nature.

5 From the memory of landscape and landscape representation in art to environmental preservation, this DVD is much more than an academic work allowing the proceedings of a conference to be known. It asks fundamental questions about humans’ relationship to the world and the role of art and literature in the awareness of Nature’s preservation. To give but one example of the political reflection meant to associate the preservation of natural areas with urban development, we can quote John O’Keefe speaking about an interesting project at Harvard Forest: “Published in 2005, Wildlands and Woodlands recounts the history of our landscape, presents the greatest current threat to this landscape—the rapid conversion of large areas of forest to suburban development though
uncontrolled, automobile-driven sprawl, and proposes concentrating future development within designated regions while conserving half the land in Massachusetts as protected forest or farmland” (O’Keefe 14). Human construction is seen here politically in its relationship with nature, and elsewhere the city is seen from a literary point of view, “as character” in some of Paul Auster’s novels “Nature, both inside and outside the human mind, was there to remind us how garden and wilderness, like order and chaos, could be so close to one another” as S. Iovino put it in “Redeeming Nature? The Garden as a Moral Space” (283). We can even learn how to read Beatrix Potter’s comics through the lens of ecocriticism and to see how Potter’s literary ecology, including her engagement with nature and the sources of her inspiration, lie at the roots of today’s ecocritical theory and can be read through an ecofeminist perspective” (L. Kerslake Young 285). The attempts at preserving nature thanks to sustainable management are not new and in an article entitled “Butchered Trees, Expelled Gods” (reminding us of Wole Soyinka’s words in The Road, where a character also expressed the dangers of wood exploitation by linking it to the supernatural world) in which A. Kramer studies a German novel speaking about the crisis of landscape in a biocentric approach to nature, we learn that “sustainable forest management … was practiced as early as the 14th century (298). We must learn from “the psychology of the tree” which is beautifully analyzed in a paper evoking “living essence and conscience” through the works of a Georgian poet, Giorgi Léonidzé, and of Federico García Lorca.

For those who would see literature as an ideal representation detached from the reality of the world, B. Wanning answers: “It is not literature’s task to idealize nature through fictional representation. Rather, literature should aim at raising a consciousness for how endangered natural woods are, it should create an awareness for this insight which is often not seen in theoretical reflection and concrete perception” (579). This DVD offers a very stimulating pluridisciplinary sum of papers asking questions and opening our eyes on the close relationship existing between Nature and culture while showing how art and literature may help nature to be preserved.

INDEX


Mots-clés: préservation, développement, écocrítique, écologie, géographie, patrimoine, paysage, littérature, mémoire, nature

Keywords: conservation, development, ecocriticism, ecoliterature, ecology, geography, heritage, landscape, literature, memory, nature