

# Landscape and Englishness

Edited by  
Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl



1

Landscape  
and  
Englishness

**Spatial Practices**  
An Interdisciplinary Series in  
Cultural History  
Geography  
Literature

**1**

General Editors:  
Robert Burden (University of Teesside)  
Stephan Kohl (Universität Würzburg)

Editorial Board:  
Christine Berberich  
Christoph Ehland  
Catrin Gersdorf  
Jan Hewitt  
Ralph Pordzik  
Chris Thurgar-Dawson  
Merle Tönnies

# Landscape and Englishness

Edited by  
Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl



Amsterdam - New York, NY 2006

Cover Design: Pier Post

The paper on which this book is printed meets the requirements of "ISO 9706:1994, Information and documentation - Paper for documents - Requirements for permanence".

ISSN: 1871-689X

ISBN-10: 90-420-2102-0

ISBN-13: 978-90-420-2102-0

©Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam - New York, NY 2006

Printed in the Netherlands

## CONTENTS

The <i>Spatial Practices</i> Series	7
Notes on Contributors	9
1 <i>Robert Burden</i> Introduction: Englishness and Spatial Practices	13
<b>Theory</b>	
2 <i>Chris Thurgar-Dawson</i> Negotiating Englishness: Choropoetics, Reciprocal Spatial Realities and Holistic Spatial Semantics in William Renton's 'The Fork of the Road' (1876)	27
3 <i>Christoph Schubert</i> The Vertical Axis in Landscape Description: Elaborations of the Image Schemas UP and DOWN	47
<b>19<sup>th</sup> Century and Before</b>	
4 <i>Ralph Pordzik</i> England's Domestic Others: The Tourist Construction of Agriculture and Landscape in William Cobbett's <i>Rural</i> <i>Rides</i> (1830)	71
5 <i>Patrick Parrinder</i> Character, Identity, and Nationality in the English Novel	89
6 <i>Bernhard Klein</i> "The natural home of Englishmen": Froude's <i>Oceana</i> and the Writing of the Sea	103
7 <i>Silvia Mergenthal</i> "The Architecture of the Devil": Stonehenge, Englishness, English Fiction	123

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### 8 *Robert Burden*

Home Thoughts from Abroad: Cultural Difference and the Critique of Modernity in D. H. Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy* (1916) and Other Travel Writing 137

### 9 *Ben Knights*

In Search of England: Travelogue and Nation Between the Wars 165

### 10 *Stephan Kohl*

Rural England: An Invention of the Motor Industries? 185

### 11 *Christine Berberich*

This Green and Pleasant Land: Cultural Constructions of Englishness 207

## Contemporary

### 12 *Merle Tönnies*

Foregrounding Boundary Zones: Martin Parr's Photographic (De-) Constructions of Englishness 225

### 13 *Ruth Helyer*

"England as a pure, white Palladian mansion set upon a hill above a silver winding river": Fiction's Alternative Histories 243

Index 261

## **The *Spatial Practices* Series**

The series *Spatial Practices* belongs to the topographical turn in cultural studies and aims to publish new work in the study of spaces and places which have been appropriated for cultural meanings: symbolic landscapes and urban places which have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain, and circulate myths of a unified national or regional culture and their histories, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths. Taking up the lessons of the new cultural geography, papers are invited which attempt to build bridges between the disciplines of cultural history, literary and cultural studies, and geography.

*Spatial Practices* aims to promote a new interdisciplinary kind of cultural history drawing on constructivist approaches to questions of culture and identity that insist that cultural “realities” are the effect of discourses, but also that cultural objects and their histories and geographies are read as texts, with formal and generic rules, tropes and topographies.

Robert Burden  
Stephan Kohl



## Notes on Contributors

ROBERT BURDEN is Reader in English Studies in the School of Arts and Media at the University of Teesside, UK where he teaches modern literature and culture. He is the author of *Radicalizing Lawrence* (Rodopi, 2000), and is writing a book on travel writing, gender, and imperialism.

CHRISTINE BERBERICH is Lecturer at the University of Derby, UK where she teaches 19th and 20th-Century English and European Literature. She has previously published on Orwell, Waugh, Powell, Sassoon, and Englishness. Her manuscript 'Regression and Reaction: Englishness, Nostalgia and the Image of the English Gentleman in the 20th Century' is currently under consideration, and she has started work on two new book projects dedicated to Englishness.

RUTH HELYER is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Teesside, UK. Her research interests are contemporary fiction and culture. She has published articles in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism* and contributed chapters to *Cities on the Margin* (Universitaires Franc-Comtoises Press, 2003), *Transformations in Politics, Culture and Society* (Rodopi, 2006) and *Masculinities in Text and Teaching* (Palgrave, 2007). She is currently editing a collection for South Carolina University Press and working on a chapter for the *Cambridge Companion*, both on Don DeLillo

BERNHARD KLEIN is Senior Lecturer in Literature at the University of Essex. He is the author of two books, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Palgrave, 2001) and *On the Uses of History in Recent Irish Writing* (Manchester UP, forthcoming 2006). He has also edited (or co-edited) several collections, including most recently *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (with Gesa Mackenthun, Routledge, 2004). His current project deals with the ocean as a cultural contact zone in the early modern period.

BEN KNIGHTS is Director of the English Subject Centre which is part of the UK Higher Education Academy Subject Network and based at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is interested in the cross-over between disciplinary and pedagogic research, and the author of *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth Century Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), and co-author (with Dr Chris Thurgar-Dawson) of *Active Reading: Transformative Writing in Literary Studies* (Continuum, forthcoming 2006).

STEPHAN KOHL is Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Würzburg University. He publishes on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century British literature and culture. He is editor of 'Anglistik': *Research Paradigms and Institutional Policies, 1930-2000* (2005).

SILVIA MERGENTHAL is a professor of English and Literary Theory at the University of Konstanz, where she teaches British literature and culture. Her most recent publications include *A Fast-Forward Version of England: Constructions of Englishness in Contemporary Fiction* and *Autorinnen der viktorianischen Epoche* (both published in 2003). She is currently writing a book on Edinburgh as the scene of (real as well as literary) crimes.

PATRICK PARRINDER is Professor of English at the University of Reading, UK. His research interests are H.G. Wells, science fiction, James Joyce and the history of the English novel. He is the author of *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day* (Oxford UP, 2006).

RALPH PORDZIK has taught English literature at the Universities of Essen, Freiburg i. Br. and München, and is now a lecturer in English and British Cultural Studies at Würzburg University, Germany. His most recent publications include *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures* (2001), *Der englische Roman im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (2001) and *The Wonder of Travel: Fiction, Tourism and the Social Construction of the Nostalgic* (2005).

CHRISTOPH SCHUBERT, who is Assistant Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Würzburg, Germany, received his PhD for a thesis entitled *Die Hypotaxe in der englischen Lyrik [The Complex Sentence in English Poetry]* (Lang, 2000). His publications include articles on English and German film titles, linguistic features of ‘fallible focalization’, the productivity of adjective formation types, and the pragmatics of verbal irony and politeness. His *habilitation* thesis investigates types of spatial perception and cohesion in descriptive passages of fictional and non-fictional texts.

CHRIS THURGAR- DAWSON is Lecturer at the University of Teesside, UK. He is researching in the fields of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Poetry and Fiction as well as Critical and Cultural Theory. He also teaches Creative and Critical Writing. Currently he is working on a book project, titled *Active Reading: Transformative Writing in Literary Studies*.

MERLE TÖNNIES is professor of British Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Paderborn / Germany. Her main fields of speciality can be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. She has recently edited *Britain under Blair* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003) and is working on an introduction to British Cultural Studies for Narr Verlag (together with Claus-Ulrich Viol).



# **Introduction: Englishness and Spatial Practices**

Robert Burden

## 1. Symbolic Spaces and Cultural Realities

The papers collected in this volume represent a selection of work from an international network sharing a common interest in the representations of cultural identity, space and place. The papers were first discussed at three conferences: at ESSE Zaragoza (September 2004), where we ran a seminar, “Writing Englishness”; at the University of Teesside (December 2004) where we held a one-day conference, “Culture, Landscape, and Environment 1”; and at the University of Würzburg (June 2005) where we held our next one-day conference, “Culture, Landscape, and Environment 2”. We have organised the papers to reflect the broad discussion of landscape and Englishness, beginning with those that focus on the nineteenth century and before, and then moving on to those focusing on the early and mid-twentieth century, ending with work on contemporary British culture. The first two papers are a measure of our desire to be interdisciplinary, the one (Thurgar-Dawson) an example of cultural geography as text analysis, the other (Schubert) an example of cognitive linguistics analysing the semantics of landscape representation. As we say in the preface to the Series, we are attempting to build bridges between the disciplines: literary and cultural studies, linguistics, art history, history and geography – promoting a new interdisciplinary cultural history.

This volume has been broadly influenced by a renewed and growing interest in questions of cultural identity – its emergence in Victorian theories and fictions of nationality (Parrinder) – and the new cultural geography. The papers cover a rich variety of spaces and places which have been appropriated for cultural meanings: the rural countryside and farmland of the “Home Counties” in the early nineteenth century as Arcadian idyll in Cobbett (Pordzik), and as the land to die for in war propaganda (Berberich), and as nostalgia for a uni-

fied, organic English culture in Lawrence (Burden), Morton and Priestley's travel writing (Knights), but also in the Shell Tourist Guides to motoring in rural England (Kohl); English moorland (Thurgar-Dawson); the "sacred geography" of monuments like Stonehenge in Hardy and others (Mergenthal); the seaside (beaches in Martin Parr's photography) as image of a deconstructed Englishness (Tönnies), and the sea (as English Victorian imperial "territory") and its symbolic breezes in Froude's travel writing (Klein). The English landscape is also a paradigm for landscape description or comparison in foreign travel, as seen in Lawrence's travel writing (Burden), and for the colonial territory itself in Rushdie writing India (Helyer) – examples of the "metonymic displacement of one landscape into another" (Bunn 2002: 139). In each of these many examples, Englishness is reflected in the spaces it occupies, or dwells in.

Symbolic landscapes and places have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain, and circulate myths of a unified national identity, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths as we "think of England". A national cultural identity like Englishness is thus understood as a "discursive effect", a set of signifying practices (Easthope 1999: 32 and 43), an "ideology" because the narrative of a unified culture with its search for origins and traditions implies a false universalism that speaks in the voice of the white tribe (even when its history is full of discontinuities).

There is a history of Englishness as cultural capital. It has been exported through the Empire and its administrators, educators, and missionaries. It has left its traces in the places of its dominion: in Nairobi, New Delhi, Dar-Es-Salaam, wherever education systems, officer training schools, or police forces are still being modelled on British paradigms – and where the idea of civil society was first defined by the imperial power. Englishness is problematised by the new British cultural realities and literatures represented in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, and Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (as discussed by Helyer) and Martin Parr's photography (Tönnies) – in the constructions of "a new postimperial space" (Said 2002: 247). However, this cultural crisis has been emerging over a long period, as the papers in this volume testify.

We have, though, a more recent historical context for the work we are doing. Intellectual impetus for studying the construction of

Englishness emerged with the critiques of Thatcherism (Hall 1983, 1988). The revival of a post-Victorian Englishness in the 1980s demonstrates Simon Gikandi's point that we cannot speak of an English identity "outside the history of Empire and the culture of colonialism" (1996: 213). As he argues, during the 1980s the imperial past was re-constructed as nostalgia and patriotism (see Berberich's paper). And there is still much vain posturing on the terraces at football matches with the visible signs of a revived English nationalism in the flag of St George, of a virulent anti-Euro little Englandism, and best of all a last night at the Proms nationalist sing-song broadcast around the world on TV promoting a residual ideology from the late-nineteenth century of a "land of hope and glory" – and this event is emulated around the country in concert halls and parks. Paradoxically, such powerful emotions are created so that nobody is excluded for the time it takes to sing "Rule Britannia" – even otherwise marginalized ethnic groups. There is no greater myth of national unity circulated once a year than the Last Night at the Proms (curiously popular too with all ages and cultural subgroups, despite it being a classical music concert, which normally has higher class connotations in Britain today and interests fewer and fewer younger people). And now Gordon Brown has called for a public holiday to celebrate Britain as a Nation – which New Labour has been devolving (Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly). It would be called "British Day" and coincide with Remembrance Sunday in November – to celebrate national unity. Not everyone is in favour of using that Sunday; but there is a general approval for the move to take the Union Jack away from the far-right BNP.

Clearly there is a continuing confusion between Britishness – a concept of national unity based on the union of the different cultural and ethnic groups (the passport holders) – and Englishness, as distinct from Scottishness, Welshness. Seen from the point of view of Scottish or Welsh Nationalism, "Britishness is a mask. Beneath it there is only one nation, England" (R.S. Thomas quoted in Bassnett 1997: 101). These calls for separate nationalisms within the one island have a long history. Recent studies of national cultural identity have often taken their cue from Benedict Anderson's seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, where he writes that nationalism commands today "such profound emotional legitimacy" (1991: 4). His work called attention to the ways in which, in the formation of modern identity in the British Isles, as Gikandi (1996, xvii) argues, "the national imaginary was

generated by personal and collective desires whose authority was derived from the narrative and historical forms that they assumed". The crisis of Englishness is in part, then, produced by "a continuous conflict between the centre and its Celtic and colonial peripheries" (Gikandi 1996: xvii). Britishness was an invention "superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and in response to conflict with the Other" (Linda Colley quoted in Gikandi 1996: xviii).<sup>1</sup> Britishness seems to have been invented to extinguish the difference between the English, the Scots, and the Welsh, and this is seen at best in the hegemonic status of the English language.<sup>2</sup>

The papers in this volume offer a historical view of the constructions of national identity. Indeed, the terms of the difference between national character and national identity are argued out in Parinder's paper in conjunction with the development of the novel as a literary genre.

This volume is a contribution to the growing interest in recent history which has become interdisciplinary – a new kind of cultural history of Englishness, with its myths and internal contradictions, now theorised through deconstructive readings. And one of the most productive methodologies is the new cultural geography for analysing the uses of spaces and places. But also, for those who come from literary and cultural studies, there is now a renewed use of Theory (as the term has been understood since the 1960s) – and this, just at the point when an era of post-Theory is being announced around the conference circuit. We now have semiotic readings of maps and monuments, Bakhtinian dialogism and the focus on the chronotope (as spatial representation of history), Barthesian analysis of contemporary myths, a revived use of Althusserian interpellation in theorising identity, and the addition of certain Lacanian concepts – the mirror stage, the Imaginary, the Other, Desire.<sup>3</sup> In all this, there is a general acceptance and promotion of the constructivist approach to questions of culture and

---

<sup>1</sup> See Colley 1992. For a more recent study see Kumar 2003.

<sup>2</sup> A fuller version of this discussion would, of course, include the Irish question. One could do no worse than recall the plays: Brian Friel's (1981) *Translations*, and Harold Pinter's (1988) *Mountain Language*.

<sup>3</sup> As in Easthope's discussion of "national desire" as lack and collective misrecognition (1999: 33-57).

identity, as we all seem to accept – explicitly or implicitly – that cultural “realities” are the effect of discourses.

There is one other aspect of the old Theory debates that is central to what we do: the idea of the Text – that is, cultural objects and their histories and geographies are read as texts, with formal and generic rules (pastoral, georgic, exotic, sublime, picturesque), tropes and topographies. In this sense, Englishness is always “written”, even in visual representations, as the variety of examples in this volume on landscape and Englishness demonstrate.

## 2. Cultural and Literary Geographies

A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation. It is possible and useful to trace the internal histories of landscape painting, landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture, but in any final analysis we must relate these histories to the common history of a land and its society [...] The real history is very much more complicated [...] Parks, originally woodlands enclosed for preserving and hunting game, were made in England from at the latest the tenth century [...] Much of the enclosing land and the building of houses was done at the expense of whole villages and cornfields that were cleared [...] It is into this complex of territorial establishment that we must re-insert the self-conscious development of landscape and what is called the ‘invention’ of scenery [...] For what was being done [in the eighteenth century], by this new class, with new capital, new equipment and new skills to hire, was indeed a disposition of ‘Nature’ to their own point of view [...] to make Nature move to arranged design. (Williams 1973: 121-124)

In his critique of the idealisation of landscape in the Pastoral tradition, Raymond Williams insisted, with his cultural materialist approach, on the separation between art and literature, on the one hand, and “real” history, on the other. He is, of course, in tune with Cobbett (see Pordzik) and his obsession with a land that is efficiently and well worked – a husbanded land. *The Country and the City* is “a necessary starting point for any investigation of the politics of place in the formation of English cultural identity [...] an influential paradigm” (MacLean 1999: 1). But things have moved on, and the limits of Williams’ argument emerged after the development of new kinds of analysis – in Lefebvre (2004), de Certeau (1988), Foucault (1977), Harvey (1989),

Cosgrove (1998), Cosgrove and Daniels (2002), Matless (1998), Mitchell (2002), Thacker (2003) – of the cultural and ideological significance of space and place. Indeed, the work of Lefebvre and others since the early 1970s on space as signifying practice – on spatial metaphors – “has rendered untenable the kind of simple distinction Williams was able to make between the ‘real histories’ of social relations on the land, and mere ideologies on the other” (MacLean 1999: 2). Conceptions of socially and culturally produced space now inform a greater interdisciplinary project for the study of Englishness. The difference between Williams and the newer work on spatial practice is clear to see in the following statement by Lefebvre:

I shall instead be putting the stress on their dialectical character. Codes will be seen as part of a practical relationship, as part of an interaction between ‘subjects’ and their space and surroundings. I shall attempt to trace the coming-into-being and disappearance of codings / decodings. My aim is to highlight *contents* – i.e. the social (spatial) practices inherent in the form under consideration. (2004: 18)

To separate history or social reality and representation is no longer possible:

Social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’) on the other. (Lefebvre 2004: 27)

Space, then, is no longer understood as a void filled by an observation or a representation. It is always already a practice. A place (the English countryside) is a spatial practice (as landscape, scenery, farm, theme park) encoded with aesthetic, cultural, and social relations – including those of class and power. For Lefebvre, space is subject to the laws of production in the classic Marxist sense, with the implications of uneven social relations, minority property ownership and rights, rent – driven by the logic of the market place (“the capitalist trinity is established in space – that trinity of land-capital-labour” [282]). Space is “endowed with *exchange value*” (337. Italics in original), and is a commodity and a resource (agricultural, mineral, leisure and tourist). There are designated spaces of leisure like the beach, the park. Equally land has predominantly had a patrilineal heritage – the fate of

the country estate has been in the hands of the sons of England; its preservation often being seen as symptomatic of the condition of England (Elizabeth Bennet surveying Darcy's Pemberley; Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" – where country life expresses the dominant social and moral values). And in the wider geopolitical field space is annexed or occupied as colonised territory; decolonisation sees the reclamation of territorial rights. There is a "historical relationship between the state and space" (Lefebvre 2004: 378). Thus we have a politics of space. – It is the use (and misuse) of space, above all, that is being analysed (see Lefebvre 2004: 404).

Despite the limits imposed by his classic Marxist reading, social space emerges in Lefebvre's work as "heterotopic".<sup>4</sup> And his study, *The Production of Space* has expanded the ways in which we understand the interaction of space and place. We should agree that this study is "a vital theoretical text for recent cultural geography" (Thacker 2003: 16), as it brings social, political and historical questions to the reading of topography.

Foucault has also discussed the uses of space in history, focusing on the ways in which spatial metaphors and material space interact in power relations (as opposed to Lefebvre's over-insistence on relations of production). Examples range from heterotopias like the cemetery to the design of the Benthamite prison with its spatial practice of effective surveillance.<sup>5</sup>

As, in part, a counter move to Foucault, Michel de Certeau insists that walking in the city can include spatial practices that take us "outside the reach of panoptic power" (de Certeau, "Spatial Stories" in 1988: 95). We can get beyond the "networks of surveillance" that produce disciplinary spaces (96). The lived space of the city is the space of the flâneur / flâneuse, the window shopper casually appropriating that space for the ego's desire. Walking in the streets – the pedestrianisation of urban space – is its own rhetoric, its phatic discourse for chance meetings with passers-by, its own mapping ("the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space

---

<sup>4</sup> In the sense that language for Bakhtin is heteroglossic. See Thacker 2003: 18.

<sup>5</sup> See Foucault 1977.