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On Landscape Criticism and Literary Criticism

Jorge D. Goldfarb

Abstract This article explores the adoption of notions and methods of literary criticism to the criticism of non-designed landscapes. As a position paper, it argues that attempts to organise and structure the vast multiplicity of landscape instances should follow the path laid by literary criticism when dealing with the multiplicity of literary works. The case is presented for the adoption of genre, as understood by contemporary literary critics, to serve as a categorisation tool for instances of non-designed landscapes. A distinction between primary and secondary, along the lines proposed by Bakhtin for speech genres, appears promising for organising the variety of landscape genres that can be envisaged. A number of separate landscape discourses may be constructed from individual or from closely related landscape genres; further progress of landscape criticism requires a common ground on which otherwise autonomous discourses could meet and clash.

Introduction

In its present stage the field of landscape criticism may be described as poorly structured and organised and precariously supported on general principles. Given such a state of affairs it may be of interest to explore whether general principles developed for other fields of criticism, which have arrived to a more advanced stage, can be of help. Of those fields, the literary one is widely considered as the best developed; hence the intention of the present paper: to explore the question of whether borrowing from theoretical insights of literary criticism can help to advance the theoretical basis of landscape criticism.¹ By no means am I intent in arguing for similitude between landscape and literature as fields of enquiry. My contention, as discussed below, is simply that, since both fields appear to confront a common problematic of criticism, the approaches

and methods used successfully in one field may be adopted to the advantage of the other.

It should be kept in mind throughout this position paper that I am not setting forth to prove but rather to argue the point that landscape criticism may considerably benefit by adopting notions and methods proposed for and used in literary criticism. The approach followed is thus argumentative and, as such, engrained in rhetoric, particularly the New Rhetoric as expounded by Perelman (1982).² Moreover, since the ways of literary criticism are many and varied, the term, as used in the following, should be understood as of the kind propounded by the literary critics quoted below.

Yet another aspect which must be clarified at the start is that the considerations of the present work are restricted to non-designed landscapes, thus excluding those which result from purposeful design, usually with aesthetic aims. Designed landscapes are authored works whose

criticism usually follows well-threaded guidelines of art criticism. The question of authorship leads to fundamental differences in the critical approaches applied to each of those two categories. The criticism in cases like those of the grounds of Versailles, the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, the Temple Gardens at Kyoto, NY Central Park, or of a vast shopping mall, is centered in the design; one of the main issues being whether the designer(s) was successful or not in achieving effects of composition or style or of any other landscape feature that should have been considered in the plan; the possible meanings of the resulting landscape are traced, by the critic, to the designer's intentions. The materials may differ but the sorts of questions posed by the critic are similar to those posed when confronted with a painting or a sculpture.

Not so in the case of non-designed landscapes, be they urban or rural. An old village perched on a hill, overlooking well-tended fields in the valley below, may make a beautiful man-made scene but the locals surely did not place the village on the hill to achieve aesthetic effects on the observer. There is not much point for the critic to ponder the effects of an added lake or of a wooden bridge; the whole scene must be taken as a given, not only for aesthetic considerations but also for possible meanings related to a peasant's exploitation or to the virtues of rural life. The Semantics' slogan 'words don't have meanings; people do!' may, at least for non-designed landscapes, be turned into 'landscapes don't have meanings; critics do!'

The common problematic referred to above may be succinctly described thus: in both cases the critic is confronted at the general, all-comprehensive, level with a vast multiplicity of instances; in one case, the various (innumerable) literary works that have been recognised as such and, in the other, the various landscapes recognised for study. In order to deal with such multiplicities the critic may choose one of these two alternatives: a) to consider its subject as an indiscriminate aggregate of autonomous

instances or b) to focus its attention on interrelations between the instances and/or between them and other cultural manifestations. A consequence of choosing the first alternative is that, at the individual level, each instance is paid critical attention only on its own merits. Similarities or differences with other instances, the influences of historical or economic conditions or of particular psychological or political views are brought to play a role by the critic who has chosen the second alternative. It should be stressed, to avoid misunderstandings, that what is at issue is not the ontological question of whether or not the particular instances are or not autonomous; pragmatically, the issue is whether the critic chooses to deal with a particular landscape or a literary work according to one of the two alternatives. Landscape criticism, being a relatively new comer, has so far been spared the debates between *Old Criticism*, *New Criticism* and *New New Criticism*, debates in which the virtues and shortcomings of the first or the second alternative have been contrasted.

A historical survey of 20th century literary criticism is out of the scope of the present work; the interested reader is referred to valuable works such as those of Gunn (1987) or Habib (2002). What follows are rather some sketchy historical notes intended merely to situate the question at hand.

The prevalent school of literary criticism up to the middle of the 20th century was the one labeled as New Criticism; what is relevant for our purpose is that its adepts tended to approach literary works as autonomous and thus resolutely excluding extrinsic considerations which could influence their content, be they ethical, historical, political, religious, etc. The analysis and interpretation of individual non-designed landscapes are largely connected with those very same extrinsic influences that the New Criticism chose to ignore. Thus, as long as New Criticism held sway, literary criticism of that sort had little to offer to its landscape counterpart.

A radical change in that situation took place after the sixties with the wide resonance accorded within literary circles to Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye's call for action in this quote:

I suggest that it is time for criticism to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing, or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems to be badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole.
 (Frye 16)

Anatomy of Criticism was first published more than 50 years ago and the program formulated by Frye to supersede that state through 'a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literature field' (7) is yet to be fulfilled. Whatever its shortcomings and inconsistencies, well pointed out by Lentriccia (in particular, 8-25) Frye's book was instrumental in effecting a radical turn in literary criticism so that the focus of attention shifted now towards relations between literary works, mainly through new understandings of genres and discourses, and between literature and other cultural or social manifestations. A search for interrelations implied proposals for *frameworks, structures* or *systems* and, throughout the last decades of the 20th century, the efforts of a number of outstanding literary critics like Abrams, Bakhtin, Culler, Fowler, Jaus, and Todorov, to mention just a few, resulted in substantial progress towards that goal.

On the landscape side, Human Geography also experienced a radical turn about those years; this was largely because a new generation of geographers was receptive to the influence of thinkers like Barthes, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault and others. Thus, by the end of last century, the ground was prepared for landscape criticism to meet and take advantage of notions and methods developed for literary criticism. Literary criticism has experienced large leaps forward since Frye's

call for action quoted above, but his call remains acutely relevant for the state of landscape criticism in our days.

A factor that compounds the problematic in the landscape field is that while in literature and the arts in general, criticism can claim a long-standing tradition, the term 'landscape criticism' is conspicuously absent from the published literature on landscapes, (this at least within the Anglophone landscape literature; in France and Italy the situation is somewhat different).³ Not that landscape criticism is not performed; it is just that landscape scholars seem reluctant to claim for themselves the appellative landscape critic. This reluctance is perhaps partly due to the stereotypes associated with critics as fellows 'looking for what is at fault in this or that'. Since finding what's wrong about a non-designed landscape would be an idle pursuit...nothing much is left for such a critical activity. A related reason for that reluctance may be a lack of awareness of the wider connotations of criticism as expounded by literary critics such as those quoted above.

This notwithstanding, there are in current landscape publications many substantial contributions which may be properly considered landscape criticism in the sense adopted in this paper. Editors of books including studies from various authors surely act as critics when selecting the topical articles which may be included under the book's title and by putting forward what they propose to be the core motifs and the boundaries of the discourse. To cite just a few of many, this is the case of Bender and Winner's *Contested Landscapes*, Charmichael et al.'s *Sacred sites, Sacred Places*, Malpas' *The Place of Landscape*, Mitchell's *Landscapes of Power*, Scott's *Mapping the Sacred* and Kemal and Gaskell's *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*.⁴ Additionally, a number of individual papers written on selected landscape topics may be considered works of landscape criticism at its best.⁵

Returning once more to the said common problematic: for Todorov (1997) 'the fundamental problem of literary theory' arises from that 'possibility of choice' between the two alternatives; he stresses that 'they can never do without each other' (xxii) and that criticism finds itself in permanent oscillation between one and the other. That same 'possibility of choice' may be taken also as a fundamental problem of landscape theory and landscape criticism has yet to find the way to accept that 'they can never do without each other'. I tend to agree with Todorov in that exegesis (in our context: interpretation of individual landscapes) 'always presupposes a theory, however unconscious' and in that 'theory depends on exegesis to make contact with the substance that serves as its point of departure' (xxii). Peter Brooks said of Todorov that his kind of criticism refers us from the specific instance to the general category it illustrates, seeing the individual work as part of a class of works and, 'this in turn, as part of the larger network of the signifying processes' (xviii). Following humbly his lead, I intend to explore in the present paper two general categories of landscapes: genre and discourse. These two closely intertwined categories may open a path to a 'larger network of the signifying processes'.⁶

On Landscape Genres

Classification is justified only by the critical illumination it produces, not by the neatness of the classificatory scheme. (Campbell and Jameson 333)

Grouping of individual examples of landscapes into genres may be considered a basic step towards establishing a framework for landscape studies. As a classificatory scheme a grouping into genres appears to be anything but neat; however, the 'critical illumination' they can produce is, in the case of landscapes, far superior to the more formal truth-conditional categories.⁷

The notion of landscape genres appears to have received scarce attention within the literature on non-designed landscapes (as opposed to the case of designed landscapes and, of course, of landscape painting).⁸ The notion of genre is seldom mentioned explicitly in the scholarly work on such fields of study as the historical, sacred, mythical or contested landscapes and others of the kind. Obviously the authors of such studies admit the distinctions as valid categories of landscape which delimit particular fields. What is here proposed is to treat those landscape categories as landscape genres, whilst borrowing from contemporary literature criticism its understanding of genres.

As to the question of what sort of categories landscape genres might be, I envisage them very much along the lines of Fowler's ideas on literary genres as presented in his book *Kinds of Literature* (1982). Fowler's ideas about genres are not markedly different from those of Frye, Culler, Todorov, and other critics related between themselves through connections outlined by De Bruin (1998: 82), but Fowler's are presented with rare clarity and lucidity. To say that there is a great diversity of *kinds of landscape* and that genres are just one of those possible kinds, amounts to stating the obvious, but when it comes to characterise what sort of kinds those landscape genres might be, the task is plagued with obstacles mainly arising from the novelty of those genres (most dating back to two or three decades). In this respect, I propose to consider Fowler's notions of literary genres, as outlined in the following quotes, as applicable without much further ado to landscape genres:

Some have concluded that genre theory, being unhelpful in classification, is valueless...If literature is generically organized, genres are likely to have some taxonomic application. But it (this view) turns out, as we shall see, to be unexpectedly limited. The main value of genres is not classificatory (37)...With modern genres, boundaries are even more

*indistinct and shifting, overlapping and allowing intricate mixture. Necessary elements (or defining characteristics) are sparse (39)... [moreover] genres at all levels are positively resistant to definition. Definition is ultimately not a strategy appropriate to their logical nature... The undefinability of the type will be seen as a potential strength, if one considers the fertility of literary invention (42) (Fowler *Kinds of Literature*)*

The question of undefinability is quite significant in the case of landscape genres; in the absence of a formal definition, the criteria for deciding whether a particular landscape example may or may not be included as a member of a given genre cannot be truth-conditional. This affords considerable latitude to the critics in charge of the inclusion into or exclusion from the genre; it liberates them from formal logic and allows them the use of quasi-logical arguments (Perelman 26).

The scarcity of 'necessary elements common to all' members of a genre leads Fowler to consider a candidate's inclusion or exclusion in terms of what is known as the Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' approach to categorisation, (Wittgenstein §66-§71). For Fowler, 'literary genre seems just the sort of concept with blurred edges which are suited to such an approach. Representatives of a genre may then be regarded as making up a family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having any single feature shared in common by all' (44). Landscape genres, like literary genres are, as well, the sort of 'concepts with blurred edges' (and, we may add, with vague concept's intensions) which are well suited to Wittgenstein's approach.

Taking as a test case the category 'sacred landscapes', it is hard to come by a definition of it that wouldn't show obvious loopholes and hence a truth-conditional criterion for membership is not available. Instead, we can think of this as a landscape genre; as such it would amount to a

collection of landscape exemplars, each of which shares only some features with others, while sharing with other exemplars some other features. It may well be the case then that there is no single feature shared in common by all genre members. For instance, the landscapes of Mount Sinai may share some features of sacredness (an eminently vague term) with those of Mount Hua in China and yet others with those of Shiprock of the Navajos, or of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer; not to mention the fact that sacredness might have quite differing connotations for the peoples of such different cultures.⁹ What may justify to include such landscapes into one single category is that they all induce (or have induced) a particular kind of experience, one called in the West a religious experience; this with the proviso that only particular peoples that share a common divinity, or common notions of the supernatural, are liable to undergo that experience in their encounter with a particular landscape. Boundaries between the genres sacred and mythical and historical landscapes are rather blurred and any of the landscape exemplars quoted above could be included in one of the three according to the perspective or politics of the critic doing the generic thinking (Bender 11). Since, moreover, genre membership is not mutually exclusive there will be no objection in principle to place an individual landscape as a member of all three genres. For Saunders, 'sacred landscapes are a manifestation of world-views which populate a geographical area with a distinct array of mythical, religious or spiritual beings or essences' (in Carmichael et al. 172). This quote highlights some of the problems sketched above; for Saunders, acting as a critic, the sacred encompasses the religious, mythical and even animist; that a 'geographical area is populated' serves to distinguish sacred landscapes, as extended areas, from sacred sites or places; 'world-views', acting to populate the area points to sacredness as not being an intrinsic feature of a landscape 'but rather what a particular culture has decided to make of them' (173). Saunder's quote highlights also the difficulties that would be faced when attempting to give a formal

definition of such a genre; 'a family resemblance approach' may then be a far better practical strategy for construal of this genre.

The 'family resemblance approach', as applied to genres, may be considerably refined by using the so-called 'prototype theory of concepts' of cognitive science. Succinctly, an exemplar showing most of the features associated with a particular genre is considered as a 'core example' or prototype (an ideal example showing all the features is denoted as the 'best example' or archetype), the rest of the exemplars will be radially distributed away from the prototypes according to the number of (weighted) features they share with the 'best example'. The notions of 'typicality' and 'graded category membership' may then be introduced to reduce the vagueness of the membership status of each landscape exemplar.¹⁰

As to the question of how landscape genres come to be conceived and constructed, in answering the question I tend to side with the so-called pragmatic-rhetorical approach to (literary) genres proposed by Rosmarin (1985) which characterises genres as a heuristic tool of the critic. Genre is thus related to the interpretative needs of the critic to be able to communicate with 'readers' within a context proposed by her. In our context, it would be up to the critic to devise a new landscape genre by grouping together instances of landscapes that suit criteria for selection that she has herself proposed. For Rosmarin, an 'expressly deductive genre criticism' is 'fully pragmatic and rhetorical, deliberately argued from purpose to premise to particular text' (25). The genre, as a critic's heuristic tool, reflects her chosen way of persuading her audience to see the literary text in all its previously inexplicable fullness and next to relate this text to those that are similar or, more precisely, to those that can be similarly explained.¹¹

Frow (2005) proposes a somewhat similar view, which paraphrased in the context of landscape genres, may read as something like: classifying a

landscape into a genre category is as much pragmatic as it is conceptual, a matter of how we wish to contextualise these landscapes and the uses we wish to make of them (54).¹² It should be noted that those uses may be far from innocent, as in the case of marketing idyllic landscapes for tourism or in the use of national landscapes to promote nationalism or exacerbate patriotism (Hayrynen 5-7).

Towards a Framework: Primary and Secondary Landscape Genres

Confronted with the large number of landscape genres that can be envisaged and with the prospect of new ones being proposed every year, a natural reaction is the search for frameworks or schemes that could introduce some measure of order into what may be perceived as a disarrayed multiplicity of genres.¹³ Bakhtin confronted a similar situation in the case of speech genres and he diagnosed it as:

The wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible and because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiates and grows as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex" (Bakhtin 60)

Faced with this situation Bakhtin proposes to take into consideration 'the very significant difference between primary (simple) and secondary (complex) genres'. The primary speech genres are relatively simple and grounded in everyday life whilst the secondary or complex genres 'arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication' (61).

In the case of landscape genres the critic is similarly confronted with a similar boundless 'wealth and diversity' of genres arising from the varied possibilities of activity of humans in their

encounters with landscape. It appears then of interest to explore to what extent Bakhtin's distinction between primary and secondary may afford a convenient way of grouping the diversity of landscape genres. What emerges from a survey of the numerous landscape genres that might be discerned in the specialised literature is that, indeed, certain landscape genres could be considered as primary ones whilst those considered as 'thematic genres' (the mythical, pastoral, conflictual, sacred, etc.) could be taken as secondary ones.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, in his insightful book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979) proposed a typology of natural places, which, in a modified form, amounts to the incorporation of individual landscape exemplars as members of either a cosmic, a classical or a romantic genre. Although his choosing of genre names is somewhat unfortunate, his proposal amounts to a highly ambitious attempt at encompassing the infinitude of landscape exemplars within just three categories.¹⁴ An inspection of the list of characteristics detailed by Norberg-Schulz for the classical, romantic and cosmic (46-47) reveals that most, if not all of them, correspond to landscape features which may be directly perceived by the viewer and are apparent without resorting to extrinsic considerations. Among these features are the relative proportions of earth and sky, the intensity of ambient light and its periodical changes, the diversity of component places and the ways in which places are delimited from each other. Hence the association with simple and 'grounded in everyday life' which may justify labeling them as primary genres. When saying that those features 'may be directly perceived' I do not mean at all that they are obviously perceived. As Wittgenstein (2001:129) aptly noted, 'the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity'. In the light of this remark, the originality of Norberg-Schulz approach resides in bringing forth those aspects of landscape that may be 'hidden for us because of

their simplicity and familiarity'. It is in this sense that it may be said that Norberg-Schulz originated a 'prosaics of landscape'. For Morson and Emerson (1990), who coined the term, *prosaics* carries various meanings; the one relevant here is 'a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the prosaic' (15). The insistence on the prosaic aspects of a landscape may be said to characterise these primary genres, and the discourse in which they are embedded may be termed 'landscape as prosaics'.

Primary genres do not exclude the secondary (complex) landscape genres but form the basic ground on which the latter may be structured; Bakhtin's characterisation of secondary genres as those that 'arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication' may be taken merely to mean that they are more complex and developed than the primary genres, representing another conceptual plane which may be superimposed on the primary ones without at all invalidating them.¹⁵

On the other hand, landscape genres such as the poetical, mythical, colonial and others of the kind, correspond to groupings of exemplars on the basis of associations with various kinds of themes; hence the label 'thematic genres' may be proposed to name them. The association is possible only when the person encountering a landscape is familiar with, or knowledgeable of, those themes; that's why they arise only in the circumstances of what Bakhtin calls a 'highly developed and organized cultural communication'. Those landscape exemplars which, for instance, may induce or evoke associations with particular myths may be included as members of the genre 'mythical landscape'; again with the proviso that this association is liable to occur only in those persons familiar with the particular myth. In the case of 'poetical landscapes', associations with particular poems are conditional on the person's familiarity with them; thus, a landscape of Mont Blanc may evoke Shelley's poem or landscapes of

Machu-Pichu that of Neruda, only in persons who happen to be well acquainted with them.¹⁶

That landscapes can evoke or induce such associations, and even that their appreciation can be enhanced because of them, is a view that was, to my knowledge, first expounded by Archibald Alison as far back as 1790 in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*.¹⁷ Although today we may rely on the Associationism theories of psychology and related abstruse fields, Alison's prose is so charming and forceful that it is hard to avoid the temptation of drawing from him instead:

...Thus, when we feel either the beauty or sublimity of natural scenery – the gay lustre of a morning in spring, or the mild radiance of a summer evening, the savage majesty of a wintry storm, or the wild magnificence of tempestuous ocean – we are conscious of a variety of images in our mind, very different from those which the objects themselves can present to the eye. Trains of pleading or of solemn thought arise spontaneously within our minds; our hearts swell with emotions, of which the objects before us seem to afford no adequate cause (18)

These 'trains of solemn thought' may be associations with particular historical events or with works of music, poetry or painting, or with myths. His acute observations are at the root of what in our times we may call historical, musical, poetical or mythical landscape genres. The following excerpts from his essay, chosen among many others, illustrate the point: 'There are scenes undoubtedly more beautiful than Runnymede, yet to those who recollect the great event which passed there, there is no scene, perhaps which so strongly seizes upon the imagination' (28); or induced associations with Music as in: 'The natives of any country, that possesses a national or characteristic music, need not to be reminded how strongly the performance of such airs brings back to them the imagery of

their native land' (34).¹⁸ Associations of 'natural scenery' with poetry occupy a prominent place in Alison's *First Essay*; one senses that the topic was particularly dear to his heart. Not to overextend myself I'll only quote here two passages: '...It is nature embellished and made sacred by the memory of Theocritus and Virgil, and Milton and Tasso; their genius still seems to linger among the scenes which inspired it' (50) and, in a wider perspective 'Nor is it only in providing so many scenes of association, that the influence of an acquaintance with poetry consists. It is yet still more powerful in giving character to the different appearances of nature, in connecting them with various emotions and affections of our hearts, and in thus providing an almost inexhaustible source, either of solemn or of cheerful meditation' (50).

Alison dealt exclusively with pleasing associations, others, not so pleasing ones, are brushed aside; in his times, to dwell on unpleasant connotations of landscape would have been surely considered of doubtful taste. Two hundred years from him the not so pleasing associations of landscape with imperialism, war, and social conflicts in general appear to be in the mainstream of landscape scholarship; however, considering them as thematic genres, the principles are very much the same as those of Alison's: associations with a particular theme likely to be induced in persons familiar with that theme.

The distinction between primary and secondary landscape genres should not be taken to imply two separate, well-defined categories; in many cases we can ascertain a considerable degree of overlapping or interpenetration. Such is the case, for instance, of the three primary genres of Norberg-Schulz which, when considered in terms of how they may affect the peoples that dwell may acquire characteristics of the secondary genres.¹⁹ In the case of the secondary genres, the dissimilar ways in which insiders and outsiders may experience a particular landscape should be taken into account; this is particularly so for mythical landscapes and for contested landscapes which

insiders may experience more directly and as more 'grounded in everyday life' than outsiders.²⁰ The encounter with a sacred landscape entails a radically different experience for the insider (in this case the devote believer), than for the outsider, which may even merge religion and myth. Since genre criticism is predominantly done by outsiders (the critics) the interpretation and categorisation of individual landscape exemplars may be skewed towards the "more highly developed and organized cultural communication" which characterizes the 'secondary genres'.

Moreover, a form of 'cultural communication' which is 'developed and organized' is often considered as a characteristic of discourses, so that the distinction between 'secondary' landscape genres and landscape discourses is not a sharp and well defined one. In this respect the following, from Culler is relevant:

What we speak of as conventions of a genre or an 'écriture' are essentially possibilities of meaning, ways of naturalizing the text and giving it a place in the world which our culture defines. To assimilate or interpret something is to bring it within the modes of order which culture makes available, and this is usually done by talking about it in a mode of discourse which a culture takes as natural. (Culler 161)

Accordingly, the question of landscape discourses is in a way a natural continuation of that of genres and it is to them that we must turn now our attention.

Landscape Discourses

...I propose to treat social theory as a series of overlapping, contending and colliding discourses that seek, in various ways and for various purposes, to make social life intelligible. (Gregory 18)

Gregory's view of social theory seems to me particularly appropriate to landscape theory.²¹ Reading for instance the excellent reviews of the intellectual history of landscape by Cosgrove (1985) and Whyte (2002), the complex interaction of discourses that has always been at play in the unceasing transformation of landscape is illuminated. This interplay of discourses makes landscape appear as a plane or, better, a 'discursive terrain':

...discursive terrain across which the struggle between the different, often hostile, codes of meaning construction has been engaged, and it is only one step away from forging links between landscape and identity, social order and power. (Jaworski and Thurlow 5)

It may follow consequently, that one of the main tasks of landscape criticism should be to scrutinise the ways in which the various landscape discourses 'overlap, collide and contend'. A necessary preliminary step in this task should be that of identifying or discerning individual landscape discourses within the plethora of studies about landscapes. If, following Gregory, the aim that landscape discourses have in common is to make landscape "intelligible,"²² a further task of criticism should be to look for a common ground on which those discourses could meet so that some sort of synthesis of differing understandings could be achieved. This may appear as an over ambitious program for landscape criticism; the most we can reasonably expect at present is to make modest forays into the area while keeping the broad program in mind.²³

The following quote may offer a starting point for an exploration of how landscape discourses originate:

Landscape is a broader concept pertaining to how we view and interpret space in ways that are contingent on geographical, social, economic, legal, cultural and emotional

circumstances, as well as our practical uses of the physical environment as nature and territory, aesthetic judgments, memory and myth, for example drawing on religious beliefs and references, historical discourses, politics of gender relations, class, ethnicity, and the imperial projects of colonization...[my italics] (Jaworski and Thuborg 3)

When studies about landscapes are grouped according to one of the italicised terms above as its primary concern, the result could be a landscape discourse labeled as *geographical, legal, or mythical*, etc. Each of those discourses would then represent an attempt of the critic to expound critically and coherently *what has been said* on the chosen subject.²⁴

Since the Greek *logos* is usually taken up for *what has been said* of a subject, the term *landscapology* could be an apt umbrella term under which the variety of landscape discourses that may be discerned from the scholarly literature may be collected.²⁵

Genre and discourse are instances of constructed and generalising categories; since both are closely intertwined, and in order to avoid further confusion in an already confusing field of enquiry, it may be convenient to make explicit a working distinction between the two adopted in this paper. Landscape genres reflect argued attempts to group individual landscape exemplars whilst landscape discourses reflect argued attempts to group texts about landscapes.²⁶ It may often be the case that a discourse includes several landscape genres as its subject material. For instance, a concern for relations of landscape and power may draw on imperial, political and historical landscape genres (Mitchell). By including yet other genres, like landscapes of war or of globalisation this concern may generate a more general discourse on *'landscape as conflict'*. On other cases no particular genres need be selected; such is the case, for instance, of

relatively abstract or philosophical discourses such as 'landscape as aesthetics', 'landscape as place/space' and 'landscape as phenomenology'; this mainly because, by their nature, philosophical discourses are aimed to all landscapes (see endnote 26 for the terminology used here).

It would be too lengthy to deal here in detail with most of the landscape discourses that may be envisaged at the present stage of landscape studies. What follows are a few comments on some discourses selected because of their importance within landscapology.

The aesthetic discourse has been the one that has received uppermost attention since the *invention* of landscape in Western culture (Cauquelin). Landscapes have been, and still are, valued primarily for their beauty and it was natural that the discipline of aesthetics was called up to explore and systematise the sensations of beauty that landscapes arouse. In our times a renewed interest in this discourse is apparent from seminal books such as those of Carlson (2002), Nasar (1988), Kemal and Gaskell (1993) and Berleant (1997) (for a complete, although not updated bibliography, see Dearden). Some sharp critical reading of the above works is required though in order to distinguish a concern with landscape from that of the wider term *environment*.

During the later decades of the 20th century this nearly absolute dominion or, in Gregory's terms, a 'discourse that gathered to itself privileges and closures' (19), started to be contested. This turn started perhaps with John Barrel's insinuation about a 'dark side' of picturesque landscapes and cristalised in works like those of Mitchell (2002), Thurston (2002) and Bergdorf (2007). At present we have a political discourse which may be termed 'landscape as conflict' (Bender). Such a discourse considers landscapes as the stage where all sorts of conflict, be it racial, gendered, socio-economic or cultural, are *in-place*.

Another prominent subject of discourse is 'the sacred'. Although sacredness as a way of seeing

landscapes may be traced back to the beginnings of history, discourses on 'landscape as sacred' together with 'landscape as myth' started to take form in the West only in the last century by including, besides the traditional associations with Christian sacred landscapes, the religions and myths of many other cultures (Lane 2007; Ashmore 2003; Benvenisti 2002). Such a discourse is markedly trans-disciplinary, crossing the borders of anthropology, archeology, sociology, etc. and is closely interlaced with the one on mythical landscapes (for the simplest reason that what is sacred for some may be mythical for others). Both discourses partly overlap with 'landscape as text' in that they reflect person's responses to oral or written narratives which run the entire range from canonical sacred scriptures to vague traditions orally transmitted through generations.

Since its proposal, by Duncan (1988) and Barnes and Duncan (1992), the landscapes as text metaphor has exerted a considerable influence on cultural geography studies and may be considered now a landscape discourse. Succinctly, if a landscape could be considered as a text, theoretical approaches for the interpretation of literary texts could be extended to those of landscapes. Since a written text may be read in multiple ways by diverse individuals or social groups, a landscape would also admit different readings, a powerful argument for advocating the idea that multiple meanings may be assigned to a landscape and, furthermore, that those meanings are inherently unstable, susceptible to change with changing cultural states of affairs. Although admittedly attractive for the interpretation of individual landscapes (and to bolster the arguments given here for borrowings from literary criticism) a good measure of caution is called for, a worrisome problem being that landscapes, as opposed to written texts, are unstable over time.²⁷ Another cause for concern is that an overestimation of texts leads to an underestimation of the material circumstances under which a landscape is produced, Mitchell (2002).

A distinction that is quite relevant to our subject between 'a specialized audience' and "a universal audience" has been introduced by Perelman (16). The majority of the works cited here as instances of landscape discourses may be considered as argumentative discourses intended for restricted audiences whose members are well acquainted with the theses and methods of a particular field of enquiry like, say, human geography. Although the authors, presumably, might wish to reach a wider audience, this is somehow prevented by their lack of familiarity with the premises and methods of that particular field and, notably, by the special kind of language used. By contrast, some discourses 'are addressed to everyone, to a universal audience composed of those that are disposed to hear him and are capable of following his argumentation' (17). Examples of these discourses are found in philosophical writings which 'are supposed to compel the agreement or the assent of every sufficiently enlightened human being' (19). In our context such is the case of 'landscape as place/space', 'landscape as aesthetics' or 'landscape as phenomenology'.

Instead of a Conclusion

This being largely a position paper, I feel myself free to dispense with conventional summations.²⁸ Instead, in the light of the considerations presented above, I'd like to reiterate which ones, in my view, appear to be the main tasks of landscape criticism in our days.

Recent turns in human geography have highlighted the potential of using interpretative approaches similar to those deployed in interpreting novels or poems. But as J. Culler keeps on insisting, there is more in criticism than mere interpretations of individual works; no less or even more important is the search for relations between them and their setting into a wider cultural structure. The use of landscape genres, as opposed to the traditional typologies of physical geography, allows us to take the matter

of interpretation of individual landscapes one step further, namely, of grouping those interpretations on the basis of themes like:

...those awkward, sometimes frighteningly powerful motivating passions of human action, among them the moral, patriotic, sexual, and political. We all know how fundamentally these motivations influence our own daily behavior, how much they inform our response to places and scenes... (Cosgrove 2008: 178)

Landscape as a field of enquiry was described here as being made up of a collection of contending, colliding and overlapping discourses. The ways in which discourses contest, collide and challenge each other are relatively easy to discern but, while respecting alterity, landscape criticism should seek ways of engaging discourses with each other. I consider discourses as dialogical, not only regarding speaker-audience, but also regarding dialogues between a particular discourse and others. On adopting this attitude I find myself humbly dissenting from Ingold (1993) who seems intent on stressing what landscape 'is not', instead of accepting that discourses cannot be proved true or false and that each one has something to contribute to the overall conceptuality of landscape.

A necessary condition for engagement is to find possible areas of overlap or agreement, no matter how meager they may appear at first sight; if they are found, the next step should be to look for ways of enlarging them (Bohm 8-10). What Abrams had to say about Art theories is acutely valid for Landscape as a field of enquiry:

The fact is that many theories of art cannot be compared at all because they lack a common ground on which to meet and clash. They seem incommensurable because stated in diverse

terms, or in identical terms with diverse signification, or because they are an integral part of larger systems of thought which differ in assumptions and procedure. As a result it is hard to find where they agree, where disagree, or even what the points at issue are. (Abrams 4)

The challenge is, again quoting Abrams, 'to find a frame of reference simple enough to be readily manageable, yet flexible enough so that, without undue violence to particular discourses ...it will translate as many of them as possible onto a single plane of discourse' (5). Abrams' proposal for such a frame of reference seems amenable to adaption to landscapology; I'll deal with his framework and others in a forthcoming publication.

The vast proliferation of landscape discourses that we witness in our days is not a phenomenon to be deplored, quite the contrary; it is a sign of the interest in landscape nowadays within broad academic circles. But this same proliferation should press landscape criticism in the direction of devising structures through which the diverse genres and discourses could be compared and contrasted; the strategy being to strive not so much for an all-containing general system but for a poetics of landscape.

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Notes

¹ Borrowing from more developed fields of enquiry is by no means uncommon in intellectual history and amounts to pragmatic short paths for advancement. History, for example, according to LaCapra "has much to learn from disciplines such as literary criticism..." (9). Throughout his entire book, *History & Criticism*, LaCapra relies extensively on notions and debates within literary criticism to criticize historiography. The term borrowing is from Santaella (2007) who writes: "When a special science has not yet developed its own nomological level, it borrows it from a more abstract science. At the beginning of last century, for instance, literary criticism, biography, and history borrowed their principles from nomological sociology and psychology..."

² The question of 'argumentation', as contrasted with 'proof' or demonstration, and its worth in human sciences and philosophy, is extensively discussed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971) and in a condensed version in Perelman (1982).

³ In Italy, an active interest into landscape criticism has been mainly centered on Rosario Assunto's ideas, published first as *Introduzione alla critica del paesaggio* (1960) and in following books; for more on Assunto's ideas on criticism, which have a strong emphasis on aesthetics, see Milani (1999) and Brunon (2008) below. In France the subject is receiving renewed attention through the publication *Projets de Paysage*. Brunon (2008) has written an 'archeology' of landscape criticism, modeled after Foucault's and proposing lines of research for building a history of the subject. Chomarat-Ruiz (2008) is pursuing some very interesting work on landscape criticism in the context of a meta-science of landscape (*paysagetique*).

⁴ See Bender and Winner (2001), Charmichael's et al. (1994), Malpas (2011) Mitchell (2002), Scott (2005) Kemal and Gaskell (1995); as said, the list is not exhaustive and reflects some typical examples of what may be properly called landscape criticism. It should be noted that not all the individual Essays in those works deal with landscapes, rather, particular landscape discourses may be extracted from the overall themes.

⁵ Again, as in the case of the books above, the list is far from exhaustive; the items have been chosen as good examples of how landscape criticism may be performed. Rose (2002), proposes an alternative landscape discourse based on Bataille's concept of labyrinth. Ingold (1993) presents a well argued criticism of prevalent landscape meanings and, through temporality, engages landscape with social life. Schein (1997) attempts a conceptual framework for interpreting (American) landscape and links it with *discourse materialized*. Mitchell P. (2010) presents an interesting connection of landscape and literature criticism, for the particular case of a mountain landscape and one of R. Hall's novels. The article of Cosgrove (1985) may be considered as a veritable archeology of Landscape (in Foucault's sense). Mitchell W. (2000) discusses the 'holy landscapes' genre through the examples of Israel/Palestine and the American wilderness. McAleer (2004) discusses how the Sublime in African landscapes, was a convenient way of seeing by Colonial eyes. Burenhult and Levinson's *Landscape and Language* (2008) together with others in that Issue of *Language Sciences* opens-up the cross-linguistics approach which is bound to have a deep impact on landscape criticism.

⁶ Jabereen (2009) presents a methodology for building conceptual frameworks for phenomena "linked to a multidisciplinary body of knowledge". The present stage of landscape studies may correspond to what Jabereen calls "lack of a skeletal framework" (50).

⁷ Various classification systems based on *formal or classical* categories have been proposed for non-designed landscapes; see for example Meeus (1995) and the recent European LANMap. These formal categories are truth-conditional in the logical sense and hence are based on some form or other of metric properties (landforms) The classes thus obtained are "exhaustive and mutually exclusive, so that no individual landscape example falls into more than one class or type. These categories are largely ignored in the present paper, not because they are unimportant (they play a central role in Physical Geography) but because, on account of their scientific basis, they may be said to be outside of the scope of landscape criticism. Criticism admits a permanent plurality of views while science does not or only as a transitory situation to be superseded by experimentation. Nevertheless, categories like 'mountain landscapes' or 'prairie landscapes' may be the subject of discourses in which case they may be considered as genres. See Mitchell P. (2010) or Calder and Wardhaugh (2005)

⁸ It seems that Anne Spirn should be credited for first introducing the notion of genres into modern landscape studies. She proposed a number of them (landscapes of memory, of play, of worship, etc.) applicable to both, designed and non-designed landscapes, Spirn (1998):55-75. Her proposals were apparently not followed up in the landscape literature.

⁹ On this see Jane Hurt's: *Sacred beliefs and beliefs of sacredness*, in Carmichael et al (1994): 9-18; the book, by the way, carries a number of learned Essays quite relevant to 'sacred landscapes'. Other, , equally learned Essays on the matter, are found under the title *Archaeologies of Landscape*, in Ashmore and Knapp (2003).

¹⁰ An extended treatment of Landscapes Genres by PTC would take too much space here. For a more in-depth treatment, based mainly on J.A. Hampton's extensive work on prototypical categories, see Goldfarb J. D. (2011)

¹¹ In both Rosmarin (1984) and Rosmarin (1985) one finds some rather unkind remarks about Frye, Fowler and Todorov's notions of genres. I am of the opinion that one can retain, without falling into contradiction, Rosmarin views on how Genres are built together with the views of the other three authors on genre characteristics.

¹² Frow, in *Genre*, presents, through a process he calls Genrification, a more detailed account than that of Rosmarin on how genres *come to be*, become established and outmoded. See Frow (2005):137-44.

¹³ In addition to those genres mentioned in the text we find for instance in Part V of *A Companion to Cultural Geographies*, Duncan et al (2004) articles on Economical, Political, Religious Landscapes plus Landscapes of Home, of Childhood and Youth; add to this: Landscapes of Capitalism (Herod), of Privilege (Duncan and Duncan), of Globalization (Kelly), of Settlement (Roberts) ...in fact the list seems endless and, moreover, getting longer every year with the sharp increase of articles devoted to landscapes.

¹⁴ See "The spirit of natural place" in Norberg-Schulz (1979): 46-49. I have proposed elsewhere to assimilate Norberg-Schulz 'archetypical categories' to genres and to discard his fourth category, 'complex' landscapes, because it is rendered superfluous within a prototype theory-approach. For further see Goldfarb J.D. (2001): July. I'd call N-S terminology *unfortunate* because the terms 'classical', 'romantic' and 'cosmic' carry, in common-language use, denotations far removed from the connotations given by N-S. Since no stipulative definitions can be given for these category names, considerable confusion ensues among readers unfamiliar with the original texts.

¹⁵ Frow (2005) devotes Section 2. (29-45) to "Simple and Complex Genres" applying Bakhtin's distinction to case examples.

¹⁶ See Percy B. Shelley *Mont Blanc. Lines Written in the Vale of Chamonix* (1817) and Pablo Neruda *Alturas de Machu-Pichu*; in Canto General (1950).

¹⁷ See Alison (1830), a publication "with Corrections and Improvements" by Abraham Mills. For Alison through contemporary eyes, see for example, Townsend (1988) and Jauss (2006).

¹⁸ In his times Alison had mainly 'airs' to draw upon; more than a century later associations of 'natural scenery' with Music theme becomes common through composers such as Sibelius, Smetana, Dvořák or Villa-Lobos.

¹⁹ Norberg-Schulz tells us that his book *Genius Loci* is very much influenced by Heidegger's writings. Furthermore, for each of his landscape categories he explores the connection with religion and myth, thus going from 'simple' to 'complex' genres.

²⁰ The notions of 'encounter' and 'insiders and outsiders' are drawn mainly from Seamon's phenomenological approach as in his *Geography of the Lifeworld*. See Seamon (2007).

²¹ With the proviso that 'landscape theory' is, admittedly, more of a project, a theory- in-the-making so to speak, than a proper theory.

²² It may be of particular importance in the case of landscapes to explore whether the "making intelligible" of Gregory and the "naturalizing" and *vraisemblance*, discussed in Culler (2002) in the Chapter on "Conventions and Naturalizing" amount to a similar operation.

²³ That landscape discourses "reflect grouping of texts about landscapes", should not be taken as implying that the individual texts that are grouped cannot be considered themselves discourses. There is hardly any serious critical work on landscapes (or any other subject) which does not integrate views formerly expressed by others. I write '*argued*' in italics to emphasize that inclusion of an instance within a particular genre is the result of an argumentative operation (in contrast to inclusion of an instance within a formal, truth-conditional, class).

²⁴ The "coherently" may seem a too stringent requisite...but one could surely say that an incoherent discourse is hardly a discourse. For Coherence in Discourse see Bulbitz et al. (1999)

²⁵ "Landscapology" is an umbrella term used mainly in the Eastern European and Russian literature and including also studies from Natural Sciences (see Frolova M.). Although the word has an awkward ring to it (less than Landscapeology though) I have chosen it because it may be set alongside *Topology* in the sense used by Malpas (2006):34 and :206. Another reason being that, according to Brisson, Plato thought of *logos* as 'argumentative discourse'.

²⁶ A Note on Terminology: A brief incursion into syntax is called for in order to clarify somewhat possible meanings of the names of the various discourses. Throughout this work individual landscape discourses are denoted as hyphenated 'Landscape as *Theme*', where *Theme* stands for contextual terms such as Power, Myth, Place/Space, Tourism and others. Placing Landscape as a first term is taken to indicate that the primary concern of the discourse is Landscape and not the *Theme* itself. This terminology stems from considerations of R. Fowler (1981) who, in *Literature as Social Discourse* reflects on the difference between 'Literature as Discourse' and 'Literature and Discourse'. For him the later combination implies accepting "the meaning of the two words as stable, unanalyzed"; by contrast, in the former one the connective as implies that the juxtaposition of the two noun terms is "an examination of the nature of the first term in the light of the meaning of the second" (80). What Landscape may mean is then different when we consider 'Landscape as Power' than when considered 'as Myth' or 'as Poetry' or 'as Commodity' or 'as Prosaics'.

²⁷ Although a written text may be subject to varying interpretations over time, it is preserved as a material object; the original always available for fresh interpretations. Not so with landscapes; they are dynamic entities undergoing unceasing transformations with the passage of time. The landscapes of Mount Sainte Victoire obsessively scrutinized by Cezanne are no more (the whole place being destroyed by a fire in 1928); the Lake District landscapes of Wordsworth's walks are nowadays filled up with the ubiquitous presence of tourist buses as their most prominent feature... and so on and on, *ad nauseam*. Actually, one of the most serious challenges that landscape theories have to face is that its objects of study are inherently unstable. Jussim and Lindquist (1985) is an interesting example because it contains, as chapters, various discourses in-the-making like: "Landscape as Artistic Genre", 'Landscape as Fact', 'Landscape as Popular Culture', 'Landscape as Concept', 'Landscape as Politics and Propaganda'.

²⁸ I borrow that sentence from Rimmon-Kennan (2006). In any case, since my intention was to argue in favour of the thesis that landscape criticism has much to gain by adopting certain notions and methods of literature criticism, the concluding judgment is left for the audience to decide.