Most human conflict is fundamentally about control over land. As the basis for subsistence and society, occupation of landscape determines survival, prosperity, and power over others; it is not merely a symbolic representation but a material fact of dispossession central to colonization and other conflict between peoples. In addition, culturally specific understandings of the past and of landscape are the basis for assertions of collective identity and rights in the present. Archaeological and heritage discourses that give meaning to landscapes are therefore contested by those with differing views of the past, as the basis for opposed interests in the present. Postcolonial critique has shown that the effects of Western imperialism, a historical process predicated on land seizure, remain fundamental within current global geopolitical formations and continue to be expressed and contested within landscape.

In this chapter, I review the historically contingent nature of the Western concept of landscape and, in particular, its complicity with colonialism. I identify the crucial roles of land and archaeological representations of cultural landscape in current identity politics, played out through heritage discourse. Despite the centrality of the liberal principles of equal rights and participatory democracy to heritage discourse, colonial practices and ideas continue to structure heritage regimes that in turn are deeply implicated in current struggles over the ownership and representation of landscape. At the same time, current conceptions of landscape as constructed and fluid are expressed by current attempts within the heritage system to account for intangible heritage and community values.

**Western Constructions of Landscape**

It is now acknowledged that the relationship between physical landscape and culture is interactive: culture and nature shape each other, and all landscapes are inherently cultural. Since the early 1990s, critique of the Western concept of landscape has shown how it emerged within an intellectual tradition that privileged visual and spatial forms of knowledge, coming to “equate the knowable with that which can be visualized and logic, the rules of knowledge, with orderly arrangements of pieces of knowledge in space” (Fabian 1983: 116). Sometimes termed “Cartesian perspectivalism” (Jay 1994: 69–70), this culturally specific method of perception became modernity’s dominant way of seeing, representing space according to the rules of Euclidean geometry, as homogeneous, neutral, and universal. In this way, Western art since the Renaissance has represented landscape as visible, passive, and “natural,” concealing the emergence of this tradition in conjunction with capitalism.
as a historically specific and politicized imagined geography (Bender 1993; Cosgrove 1984; Hirsch 1995: 2). In this realist scopic regime an increasing abstraction of vision separated observer from observed (Crary 1990), positioning the viewer in a transcendental, dominant relation to this field of view.

**Grounds for Dispute**

However, this way of seeing denies difference in perspective and accords primacy to a dominant white male observing subject—as feminist and postcolonial scholars, for example, have pointed out (e.g., Blunt and Rose 1994; Rose 1993). Rather than being neutral and universal, this imagined topography has been shown to express and reproduce the inequalities of Western society. As well as naturalizing the Western social order at home it has also been complicit with imperialism, assisting colonizers to map and control foreign lands and peoples (e.g., Ryan 1997). Many colonial administrators deliberately created landscapes designed to reproduce European hierarchy, as archaeologists have shown: for example, Annapolis, the capital city of Maryland, USA, was designed by royal governor Sir Francis Nicholson to aggrandize central authority at a time when the British crown had weak hold over the colony. Drawing on Renaissance principles of perspective, a baroque street plan was created in three-dimensional space to enhance objects of authority, such as the state house and church (Leone 1984, 1987). But within this landscape, invisible to those who controlled it, operated a secret ritual world created by African-American slaves: impelled by diasporic African beliefs and rebellion against domination, through ritual action slaves encoded space such as underfloor cavities, yards, and gardens with hidden meanings, establishing a crossroads between the everyday and spirit worlds in the struggle to preserve spiritual and family values and to fashion New World identities (Ruppel et al. 2003). Such contestations demonstrate that humans have socialized landscape in diverse ways.

As Barbara Bender has argued (2001), this diversity of perspectives means that landscapes are always tensioned, in process, being made and remade by those who inhabit them. Such differences may be cultural (e.g., see Langton, this volume, on Aboriginal Australia; Küchler 1993 on New Ireland), or aligned along class, gender, or other axes of social difference, and intimately linked to relations of power. A range of archaeological studies of “contested landscapes” have of the Western landscape tradition and its political uses (e.g., Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Bender 1993, 1998; Bender and Winer 2001; Burke 1999; David and Wilson 2002; Fontein 2005; Jarman 2003; Loeffler 2005; Tilley 2006). Archaeologists have also sought to unsettle the primacy of modernist visualism by developing alternative analyses of place that reintegrate subject and lived context in reconstructing past meanings of landscape—for example, drawing on hermeneutic phenomenology (e.g., Ingold 1993; Thomas 1993; Tilley 1994).

**Landscape, Identity, and Colonialism**

One of the key processes that shapes today’s world has been the dismantling of the great world empires of Western Europe that expanded across most of the world from 1492 to 1945. Among colonialism’s consequences have been the dominance of the nation state as a political entity since the 19th century (including the more recent emergence of non-Western anticolonial nationalisms) and the movement of people around the globe on an unprecedented scale. These phenomena have promulgated a modern emphasis on conceptions of identity as linked to bounded territory, home, and belonging. Such claims are founded on representations of the past and its material traces in the present, including archaeological representations of cultural landscape expressed through the practice of heritage. Heritage is a form of historical consciousness that produces meanings from objects and locales by constituting them as a focus of social memory and shared narratives; it has become the primary way in which the past is invoked by cultural institutions, enfolding conflicts within a depoliticized, jointly owned national past. As the concrete processes and procedures implemented by public policy makers to regulate the expression of identity, heritage management constitutes a cultural practice through which social groups contest and expand their power (for accounts of this process see Lydon and Ireland 2005; Smith 2004).

Recent analyses have implicated the discipline of archaeology in sustaining colonial interests, especially in settler nations such as the United States and Australia. As a form of “expert knowledge” (Foucault 1991) within government, critics have shown how archaeology has furthered a nationalist agenda, drawn on to promote a democratic, inclusive view of the state past, while subordinating Indigenous and other marginal peoples (e.g., Ireland 2003; McNiven and Russell 2005). Along with this intellectual critique, since
traditional rights to land and culture have placed archaeological constructions of landscape and the past at the center of identity politics. Native title, for example, has become an important issue in settler nations such as Canada, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, and South Africa (Lilley 2000). In seeking to regain land through the courts, Indigenous peoples have been forced to demonstrate the continuity of their connections to place and to meet expectations of “authenticity” in asserting cultural identity. Representations within heritage discourse that were the basis for conquest persist, such as the rhetoric of “wilderness” that posits the colonized landscape as empty, untouched, and primordial (Adams and Mulligan 2003). Notions of a pristine land and a timeless nature evidences, which may be insignificant or even absent” and may be physical or “mental images embedded in a people’s spirituality, cultural tradition and practice”—such as New Zealand’s Tongariro National Park. Where conquest in the past displaced the defeated from the landscape, often erasing the traces of their experience, as well, associative landscapes potentially represent a more inclusive vision of the past. They also dissolve the Western distinction between natural and cultural dimensions of place by recording the interdependence of spiritual, ceremonial, harvesting, and kinship relations with landscape.

“Cultural Landscapes”

The concept of “cultural landscape” has also become increasingly important over recent decades, partly in recognition of heritage management’s emphasis on material preservation, and its resulting tendency to reify culture, to divorce it from the natural world, and to privilege fabric over the intangible values attached to landscape by living peoples. To transcend such dichotomies between people and place, nature and culture, and tangible and intangible values, cultural landscapes were included on the World Heritage List in 1992 (Fowler 2003). This reconceptualization reflected developing intellectual approaches toward landscape as fluid and interactive, as well as the need to address the marginalization of non-Western, non-elite landscape traditions in an attempt to acknowledge difference and incorporate diversity. An emphasis on the tangible literally overlooks the experience of marginal or displaced groups such as women, children, immigrants, and the colonized, who are less likely to have shaped the visible environment and often leave behind relatively ephemeral traces of their experience (e.g., Hayden 1996). More recently initiatives such as the UNESCO (2003) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage explicitly address the need to embed place within culture. The less substantial material culture of nonindustrial peoples was often overwritten by modern European nations. Regimes that emphasize mask historical conflict and valorize the material culture of the conquerors above the memories and experiences of the defeated, with the effect of perpetuating historical subjugation.

Cultural landscapes are now listed against three categories (UNESCO 1996: clauses 23–24, 35–42, 2005, item 47): (1) designed landscapes, such as parks and gardens, evoke the visible and tangible principles of Cartesian perspectivalism, being “designed and created intentionally by humans”—such as Lednice-Valtice in the Czech Republic; (2) organically evolved landscapes represent “traditional human settlement or land-use that is representative of a culture (or cultures)”—such as the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras; (3) associative cultural landscapes are distinguished by the “religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than the material culture evidences, which may be insignificant or even absent” and may be physical or “mental images embedded in a people’s spirituality, cultural tradition and practice”—such as New Zealand’s Tongariro National Park. Where conquest in the past displaced the defeated from the landscape, often erasing the traces of their experience, as well, associative landscapes potentially represent a more inclusive vision of the past. They also dissolve the Western distinction between natural and cultural dimensions of place by recording the interdependence of spiritual, ceremonial, harvesting, and kinship relations with landscape.

Community Values

In a similar shift toward inclusiveness, it is now increasingly recognized that the meaning attached by communities to places and things is crucial to understanding their significance. Within international heritage management, the “values-based” approach is becoming prevalent, advocating that all aspects of a place’s value, or cultural significance, are assessed as a primary stage in identifying and defining heritage and as a basis for decision making (first codified by the ICOMOS Burra Charter 1999; also see Avrami et al. 2000). The significance-assessment process disaggregates cultural significance into categories of aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and spiritual value. Like intangible heritage (in fact, these technically distinct categories overlap considerably), community ideas and beliefs about places, or their “social significance,” have not always been readily amenable to measurement by western rationalism. In practice, Western heritage discourse has privileged the scientific worldview of archaeology and sub-
Chapter 65: Contested Landscapes—Rights to History, Rights to Place

Byrne (2004), for example, points out that in many Asian countries, the popular investment of monuments and places with religious significance calls for renewal of fabric and so comes into conflict with Western heritage’s conservation ethos (but see Sullivan 2005 for a more optimistic view). Innovative approaches toward “mapping attachment” to landscape are now seeking to recover the life experiences of colonized people that can be mapped spatially, including their segregation, avoidance, and transgression of the colonial cadastral grid (Byrne 2003; Byrne and Nugent 2004; Johnston 1992). In the wake of these radical shifts in heritage discourse, landscapes are increasingly understood in terms of the cultural meanings attached to places by diverse social actors, displacing the visibility, tangibility, and elite values characteristic of Cartesian perspectivalism.

However, although UNESCO policy (e.g., World Heritage Convention 1972) promotes the liberal values of participatory democracy and equal rights, seeking to involve local communities as well as to encourage the preservation of heritage considered to be of “outstanding universal value” to humanity, the benefits of world heritage listing are sometimes ambiguous. It has been argued that the inclusion of cultural landscapes would correct a bias toward the monumental European tradition by making the recognition and nomination of heritage “more accessible to regions currently underrepresented on the World Heritage List” (Fowler 2003: 19, 23; Rössler 2000: 33). However, more recently Labadi (Forthcoming, 2006) shows that despite explicit UNESCO policy, national myths centering on the heroic elite male continue to be promoted and reproduced at the level of implementation by the state, excluding marginal groups and, notably, women. Less than a quarter of nomination dossiers mention the active participation of the local population despite the great emphasis placed on this by the Operational Guidelines, and European Christian sites remain most typical. Some argue that increased management of landscapes and more extensive formal protection within national and regional laws have deprived local communities of interaction with, and control over, their own environments (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006).

Such tension between current interests within heritage management is also linked to a contradiction between the relativist notion of culture enshrined in UNESCO’s cultural heritage policy (UNESCO 1995) and the universal liberal values it espouses (Eriksen 2001). Sometimes, in the discourse termed the “culture versus rights” debate, liberal critics identify a tension between the cultural traditions and a notion of universal human rights (e.g., Cowan et al. 2001). In their reification of culture such formulations of “cultural diversity” risk clashing with individual human rights and imprisoning indigenous peoples within a state-imposed framework rather than allowing them to transform. But identity politics remain unacknowledged in much heritage discourse, which emphasizes universal and shared values in representing a consensual, collective vision of “authenticity” that continues to serve dominant interests. By contrast, the approach represented by the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (1999) is often praised as an example of a code that champions local and indigenous custodians and especially recognizes incommensurable views of the past in managing heritage places (e.g., Meskell 2002; Sullivan 2005). Article 13 states: “Co-existence of cultural values should be recognized, respected and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict.” Acknowledging differences of perspective in analysis and interpretation is imperative.

Conclusions

Increasingly, cultural landscapes are coming to be understood as the site of social action in the present and a basis for community aspirations for the future. Some have suggested that the recent past will therefore come to acquire preeminent heritage significance (e.g., Bradley et al. 2004; Clarke and Johnston 2003). But such immediacy and importance raise some troubling questions: where heritage intersects with anguish, for example, how do we remember? Perhaps “traumascapes” (Tumarkin 2005)—places marked by suffering and loss such as Ground Zero and Sarajevo—become perversely therapeutic heritage, and revisiting them the source of resilience and reconciliation. Perhaps memory is best served by decay, and some landscapes are best left to disappear. In the meantime, aspects of the heritage system that perpetuate past inequalities, whether, for example, those of colonialism, forced migration, class or gender relations, remain the focus of critique and tension. The integral role of landscape in shaping contemporary assertions of identity and culture ensures that archaeological narratives will continue to be contested terrain.

Notes

1. Embodied in international treaty Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, or World Heritage

2. 1. Embodied in international treaty Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, or World Heritage

2. 1. Embodied in international treaty Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, or World Heritage
qualify for inscription on the World Heritage List, nominated properties must have values that are outstanding and universal (World Heritage Criteria www.deh.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage/criteria.html). The purposes of the United Nations are to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these ends (www.un.org/aboutun/basicfacts/unorg.htm).

2. Article 13: Coexistence of cultural values: coexistence of cultural values should be recognized, respected, and encouraged, especially in cases where they conflict. Note: for some places, conflicting cultural values may affect policy development and management decisions. In this article, the term cultural values refers to those beliefs that are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual, and moral beliefs. This is broader than values associated with cultural significance.

References


