



## A Note from the Editors

*The Polish Journal of Landscape Studies* is a periodical whose chief aim is to initiate a broader discussion on landscape as a phenomenon and as a concept recurring in the discourse of the humanities. We further aim to create a space for the exchange of ideas and a meeting place for researchers interested in landscape, regardless of the specific disciplines or fields they individually represent. *PJLS* aspires to provide a singular venue where the confrontation of diverse research perspectives may yield an approach we would like to call cultural landscape studies.

It is our conviction that the existence of a platform for bringing various domains together and fostering joint discourse is indispensable if landscape is to be studied within the humanities where it is still underestimated as a subject. Thus far, studies into landscape have taken advantage of the humanities in an ancillary capacity—we would like to expand the humanities' role to become the thought leader of inquiry.

Among the varied disciplines of science for which landscape has become a key issue, such an integrative role would—in our opinion—be performed most efficaciously by cultural studies, which nevertheless has much to learn here. Thus, the development and enhancement of humanities-based reflection on landscape will benefit most when cultural studies assumes the leading role in defining the directions of inquiry and issues which the individual, integrated disciplines delve into.

We assign this role to cultural studies as we believe that the nature of landscape is unequivocally cultural. It is culture which determines its identity and specificity. The fundamental duality of landscape—expressed in the aesthetic and cultural dimensions—makes landscape both a fragment of reality and a medium in which reality is manifested to us. The cultural dimension of landscape is again twofold: on the one hand it is a reality experienced via the categories provided by culture, while on the other it is nature transformed by culture. Therefore, as we see it, culture is a dynamic factor which produces or reshapes landscape in the course of a historical process, enabling one to distinguish (which does not mean to separate) landscape construed as a reality experienced either individually or collectively in the light of cultural categories from landscape approached as a fragment of reality that has been transformed by culture. At the same time, we presume that landscape is

endowed with agency, both with respect to the formation of cultural tradition and the moulding of individual modes of sensory experience of the world.

Previous attempts to tackle landscape, undertaken within specific interested fields (aesthetics, geography, history of art, history, cultural studies, anthropology, archaeology, architecture) demonstrate the breadth of its connotations, extending from artistic substance, through geographical meanings to metaphorical signification. This multiplicity of senses that landscape has yielded, led previously to a division between the notion of landscape and the notion of cultural landscape, splendidly reflected in Mieke Bal's idea of "travelling concepts". *PJLS* intends to facilitate a reconceptualization of landscape while taking its wandering nature into account; this necessarily entails going beyond the previous, one-sided concepts which perpetuated the aforementioned divisions. Cultural landscape studies would therefore be an interdisciplinary project mediating between fields which have traditionally been interested in the issue and integrating various scientific approaches. This is the only way to fully appreciate the multifaceted character of landscape and thus enable it to be viewed and explored as a process. This is all the more important given the profound and acute changes to landscape resulting from civilisational development.

In adopting the premise that the character of landscape is cultural, we invoke Stanisław Pietraszko, a classic of Polish cultural studies whose essay opens the first issue of *PJLS*, thus literally launching the journal and inaugurating the debate on landscape as a cultural phenomenon. This is no accident, as Pietraszko has raised a number of weighty issues in the discourse surrounding landscape. According to Pietraszko, the essence of landscape, and hence its concept, should be sought in the realm of the human universe. It is there, by virtue of association with values, that landscape acquires its cultural dimension: aesthetic values, bound to landscape by default, as it were, allow its manifestation, but only ethical values fuse the aesthetic with the environment of human life. This is the sense in which we speak of landscape as a cultural *good*.

The essay by Pietraszko and another by Henryk Elzenberg, also featured in this volume, are in a sense an example of what we set out to do. The subsequent issues of the journal will also include texts by Polish researchers for whom landscape, the relation between nature and culture, the aesthetics of landscape or landscape art have been an inspiring object of inquiry. In this respect, we intend to promote Polish thought on landscape, historical as well as contemporary.

This particular edition is also made up of answers submitted by researchers who responded to a questionnaire we had sent out. These have been divided into two parts in which we present answers (in alphabetical order) in a twofold form: that of a paper and a standard response to a survey. The latter was intended as a tool with which to analyse the current status of landscape in the Polish humanities. However, we will neither summarise those nor formulate an unequivocal diagnosis, as any

analysis on our part would be arbitrary and essentially imperfect. The questionnaire was sent to researchers representing distinct disciplines and varied scopes of research which do not necessarily place landscape at the core of their interest. We asked about: (1) the role landscape plays in the scholarly interests of our respondents; (2) whether there is a need for interdisciplinary studies in landscape, and if so, what major issues they should address; (3) what role the humanities play in studies into landscape? and (4) the prospects of landscape education and its principal premises.

The responses by contemporary researchers are preceded by the answer provided by Henryk Elzenberg—our inspiration in fact—to the *Questionnaire Concerning Nature-Related Human Experience*, that we present to the Reader in this issue.

We would also like to express our tremendous gratitude to all authors who have responded to our survey and found it worthwhile to share their reflections regarding the issue.

Beata Frydryczak, Mateusz Salwa

**Fig. 1**

By Marianna Michałowska.

