

To my parents and the memory of my grandfather, Willy Russing Simonsen (1900-82)

Jacob Wamberg


Landscape as World Picture

Tracing Cultural Evolution in Images

VOLUME I

From the Palaeolithic Period to the Middle Ages

Translated by Gaye Kynoch

Aarhus University Press | 

Landscape as World Picture: Tracing Cultural Evolution in Images
Volume I: *From the Palaeolithic Period to the Middle Ages*

First published in Danish as *Landskabet som verdensbillede. Naturafbildning og kulturel evolution i Vesten fra hulemalerierne til den tidlige modernitet* by Passepartout, Aarhus, 2005

© Jacob Wamberg and Aarhus University Press 2009

Graphic design and cover: Jørgen Sparre

Cover illustration: Giovanni di Paolo, *Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise* (c. 1445), tempera and gold on wood. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.31) Photograph © 1985 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Typesetting: Narayana Press

Type: Legacy Serif and Legacy Sans

Paper: Lessebo Design Smooth and Hello Silk

Printed by Narayana Press, Denmark

Printed in Denmark 2009

ISBN 978 87 7934 287 3

AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Langelandsgade 177

DK - 8200 Aarhus N

www.unipress.dk

Gazelle Book Services Ltd.

White Cross Mills

Hightown, Lancaster, LA1 4XS

United Kingdom

www.gaxellebookservices.co.uk

The David Brown Book Company

Box 511

Oakville, CT 06779

USA

www.oxbowbooks.com

Published with the financial support of
The Aarhus University Research Foundation
The Danish Research Council for the Humanities (FKK)
The New Carlsberg Foundation
The Novo Nordisk Foundation

Contents

VOLUME I

From the Palaeolithic Period to the Middle Ages

Preface · xv

Introduction An Empirical Visualisation · 1

Interlude Theoretical Setting · 33

Introduction · 33

I. Diachronic aspects · 35

The concept of evolution and its function in a model of culture · 35 | Sociological and anthropological theories on the evolution of societies · 37 | Evolution of the landscape image in a tripartite context · 43

II. Synchronic aspects · 52

The landscape image and Panofsky's model · 52 | Iconology, structuralism – and iconography · 55 | The paradigm in a sociological context: Bourdieu's concept of field · 61 | The dynamic field: Spengler's concept of culture · 63 | Summing up · 64

- III. Towards a fusion of diachronic and synchronic · 65
General systems theory · 65 | *Evolution as universal phenomenon* · 69
- IV. Theory of science reflections and critical dialogue
 with anti-evolutionism · 72
*Three criteria for scientific legitimacy: analytical level, morphological correspondence,
 predictive power* · 74 | *Protectors of the singular: social constructivism and
 positivism* · 78 | *The body of history* · 82
- V. Cracks in the generalisations: reservations
 regarding function and iconicity · 87
Function · 87 | *The iconic* · 89
- VI. Image and sight · 93
- VII. Image and word · 96
- VIII. Concluding remarks: the landscape image in literature · 99

I

“For Good Is a Form of the Limited”

Pre-Modern Pictorial Space between Self-Consciousness
 and World Picture · 103

Introduction · 103

- I.1 An empirical scanning of the evolution of pictorial space up
 until antiquity, with sociological spotlights · 104
From the Palaeolithic period to Assyria · 104 | *Pictorial and landscape space in classical
 antiquity* · 123 | *Pictorial space and social structures in classical antiquity* · 134 |
A lateral glance: pictorial space and social evolution in non-Western cultures · 135
- I.2 The pole of vantage point: pictorial space and evolution
 of consciousness up until antiquity · 138
The legacy of Hegelian philosophy of consciousness · 138 | *Piaget’s ontogenetic model* · 139 |
Psychoanalytical ontogenesis · 143 | *From onto- to phylogenesis: arguments in favour of
 bridge-building* · 144 | *Phylogenesis from the Palaeolithic period to antiquity* · 145 |
Landscape image and numen · 154 | *Concluding comparison: onto- and phylogenetic
 evolution of the pictorial space* · 156

- I.3 The pole of remoteness: pictorial space as world picture up until antiquity · 161
A chronological scanning · 161 | *Antiquity's philosophical legitimisation of closedness* · 170

- I.4 Celestial infinity: pictorial space, consciousness and world picture in late antiquity and the Middle Ages · 181

 2

The First Remoteness of the Depth of Field Rocks in Post-Egyptian Pre-Modern Images · 187

Introduction · 187

Empirical corpus · 187 | *Interpretative considerations* · 195

- 2.1 “There stands a house under the mountain of the world”:
 rocks and their foundation in the underworld · 204
Mother Earth · 204 | *Wilderness and body of the earth* · 208 | *Pictorial rocks* · 215 |
The chthonic wilderness · 222
- 2.2 Chora · 230
Chaos · 230 | *Abysses* · 236 | *Water* · 241
- 2.3 The living rock · 250
Growth of the rocks: the Minoan-Mycenaean landscape images and their cultural basis · 250 | *The growing Paradise mountain: Takht-e Suleiman and Zendan-e Suleiman* · 264 | *Between growth and abyss: the terraced rock* · 268 | *Pre-modern theories of stone formation* · 275 | *The terraced rock in medieval landscape images* · 277

 3

The Second Remoteness of the Depth of Field Skies in Antique and Medieval Images · 287

Introduction · 287

- 3.1 Classical antiquity · 291
The absence of light sources, atmosphere and time in Roman wall paintings · 291 | *Classical concepts of light* · 294 | *Classical concepts of clouds* · 295

- 3.2 Late antiquity and the Middle Ages · 298
Colours, bands, patterns: the sky in medieval images · 298 | *Celestial architecture* · 300 |
Paradise · 304 | *Haloes* · 308 | *Veils* · 316 | *Cloudscapes in Carolingian*
miniatures · 323

4

Sociology of the Middle Distance
 Between Wilderness and Tilled Field in Images
 from the Neolithic Period to the Middle Ages · 331

Introduction · 331

- 4.1 Beginnings · 337
The Neolithic Period and the Early Metal Age · 337 | *Egypt* · 340 | *Mesopotamia* · 346 |
The mapping gaze in Egypt and Mesopotamia and its partial appearance in the Assyrian
pictorial view · 352
- 4.2 Triumph of the Golden Age paradigm:
 classical antiquity – with a view to the Middle Ages · 356
The Golden Age paradigm · 356 | *Between time and space: Golden Age myth and*
evolution, Golden Age field and geography · 365 | *The highlands between hard*
primitivism and demonism · 371
- 4.3 Displacement of rural work in classical images, I:
 visual evidence and poetic parallels · 373
Primitivism · 373 | *Absence of agriculture* · 382 | *Absence of mine-work* · 389
- 4.4 Displacement of rural work in classical images, II:
 cultic, philosophical and political parallels · 392
The displacement of cereal culture from the centre of power · 392 |
Agriculture and work in classical thinking · 393 | *Pictorial space and territory:*
evidence of the agrimensores · 399

5

Forms of Paradise

– in Images from Mesopotamia to the Middle Ages · 405

Introduction · 405

- 5.1 The essence of the wilderness: the Tree of Life
on the Mountain of Life above the Fountain of Life · 406
Mesopotamian background · 410 | *Judaism and Christianity* · 414
- 5.2 *Locus amoenus* · 423
The satyric cave and the garden · 424 | *The place of immortality: from the sacred
grove to the wilderness* · 426
- 5.3 The quantum leap between Paradise and underworld · 429
Ambivalence of the wilderness · 429 | *The split landscape image* · 431 |
The dream of a mountainless earth · 436

6

Probing the Golden Age *Field*

The Sacral-Idyllic Landscape in Roman Wall Paintings · 441

Introduction · 441

- 6.1 Pictorial space, *numen* and human presence · 444
From limited to distant vistas · 444 | *Literary parallels: Statius and Pliny the
Younger* · 451
- 6.2 The character of the landscape · 452
Rocks and water · 454 | *Trees* · 456
- 6.3 The cult · 458
Pictorial evidence · 458 | *The cult beyond the images* · 464

- 6.4 The leisure landscape · 470
Descriptions by Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder vs. extant visual evidence · 470 |
Life in the actual Roman countryside · 475

- 6.5 Origins of the sacral-idyllic landscape · 480

 7

Embryonic Modernity

 Time and Agricultural Work in the Images of
Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages · 485

Introduction · 485

- 7.1 Images of time and agricultural work
in late antiquity – from 0 to 400 AD · 487
Transformation of the notion of time · 487 | *Secularisation of the Golden Age* · 489 |
Formation of the feudal system · 495 | *The landscape paradigm in late antiquity* · 497 |
Seasons · 500 | *Agricultural work* · 505 | *Roads* · 515 | *Mining and quarrying* · 516
- 7.2 Images of time and agricultural work
in the Middle Ages – after 400 AD · 518
Agricultural work · 518 | *Seasonal weather* · 521 | *Weather beyond the seasons* · 523

Notes Volume I · 527

VOLUME II

Early Modernity

8

“‘Tis All in Peeeces, All Cohaerence Gone”

Modern Pictorial Space between Self-Consciousness
and World Picture · 1

Introduction: breakthrough of the modern pictorial paradigm · 1

- 8.1 The pole of vantage point:
modern pictorial space and the emergence of self-consciousness · 6
From world cave to eye socket · 7 | *Hegel's romanticism as imprint of consciousness* · 8 |
The perspectival vista through a Piagetian lens · 9 | *Self-consciousness as nominalism,
I: ramifications in religious and natural philosophy* · 11 | *Self-consciousness as nominalism,
II: the aesthetic ramification* · 14 | *Landscape as expression of urban alienation* · 17
- 8.2 The pole of remoteness: modern pictorial space
and the genesis of the open cosmos · 19
Genesis of the Copernican world picture · 19 | *The image as window on the world* · 24 |
Perspective between intuition and linearity · 27 | *The gaze from above: voyages of
discovery, cartography, perspective* · 35 | *The triumph of sight and colonisation* · 41 |
Petrarch on the Windy Mountain · 45 | *The searching gaze: cross section* · 46

9

Pressure and Counter-Pressure

The Pictorial Paradigm of Modernity
and Its Curbing in the Renaissance · 51

Introduction · 51

- 9.1 Modernity versus Renaissance: a historiographical perspective · 53
The Renaissance – mask or face? · 53 | *Gothic modernity, Renaissance conservatism* · 59

- 9.2 Modernity's pictorial space and its Gothic origins · 64
 Ergon-parergon · 64 | *Northern landscape sensibility in the 15th century* · 67 |
Etymology of landscape · 70 | *Rise of the autonomous landscape image* · 71 |
Origins of landscape space: the Gothic-Romantic axis · 82
- 9.3 Gothic versus Renaissance in Italian 14th-15th-century painting · 89
Giotto and the Sieneese · 89 | *Masaccio and Gentile da Fabriano* · 94 | *Pisanello and
 Guarino da Verona* · 98 | *Alberti's De pictura* · 99 | *Ghiberti and the Sieneese* · 101
- 9.4 Supremacy of the amorphous: naturalism without Renaissance · 104
Landscape imagery between wall stains and hypernaturalism · 104 | *Naturalism in
 recent art criticism: some adjustments* · 108 | *Wölfflin's principles: a reappraisal* · 113 |
The last bastion of neoclassicism: Panofsky's iconography · 114

 IO

 Time, Territory and Wilderness in Early Modern Landscape Images, I
 Before the Paradigm Shift 1420 · 117

Introduction · 117

- 10.1 Capitalism, work and pictorial space · 119
- 10.2 Sieneese beginnings · 123
Trial run for the modern landscape image: Ambrogio Lorenzetti's portrait of Siena · 123 |
Portrait of conquest: Simone Martini's Guidoriccio da Fogliano · 129
- 10.3 Landscape-promoting themes · 132
Time · 132 | *Topography* · 139 | *The encyclopaedic tradition, I: landscape images in
 mirabilia collections and encyclopaedias* · 142 | *The encyclopaedic tradition, II: landscape
 images in animal, medical and health compendia* · 145 | *The forest* · 149
- 10.4 On the threshold to the paradigm of modernity · 151
The Labours of the Months around 1400 · 151 | *The landscape paradigm around 1400* · 157

II

Time, Territory and Wilderness in Early Modern Landscape Images, II
After the Paradigm Shift 1420 · 167

Introduction · 167

II.1 Time as weather and light · 173

Scanning the paradigm · 173 | *Weather between 1420 and 1500: sunshine without sun* · 180 | *Post 1470: overcast skies* · 192 | *Post-1500: nocturnal clouds to the south, diurnal clouds to the north* · 200

II.2 Territory and wilderness · 203

Scanning the paradigm · 203 | *Farm land as park: territory and wilderness in the 15th-century landscape image* · 208 | *The field of work ideology* · 218 | *Paradisiacal rudiments of the landscape image* · 221 | *Return of the chthonic: Mary as earth goddess* · 229

II.3 The Renaissance and the ideal landscape: prelude · 233

Alberti's landscape genres · 234 | *Arcadia* · 236 | *A case story: Pan Saturnus Medicea and Signorelli's School of Pan* · 238

I2

The Architecture of the Underworld
15th-century Pictorial Rocks in a Field of Conflict between
Middle Ages, Modernity and Renaissance · 247

Introduction · 247

12.1 Self-grown architecture · 250

Exposing the tensions of the paradigm-shift: Filippo Lippi's rocks versus those of the Ferrarese · 250 | *Natural architecture* · 256 | *The art-philosophical and alchemical context* · 263 | *Mountain alchemy* · 272 | *Rocks and pictorial space* · 280 | *The mirror image of the abyss: Leonardo's Virgin of the Rocks* · 282

12.2 Hewing, mine-work and quarrying · 290

Between autochthony and cultivation · 290 | *Quarrying and mining* · 296 | *Mantegna I: Camera degli Sposi* · 307 | *Mantegna II: Madonna of the Stonecutters and Christ as the Suffering Redeemer* · 312 | *Mantegna III: Parnassus* · 325

- 12.3 Ruins · 330
- 12.4 Latent images in nature · 345
Images in stone, trees and clouds · 347 | *Mantegna IV: Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* · 353 | *Mantegna V: the Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian in Vienna* · 356 | *The Gorgo gaze of the Po Plain: stone guests in 15th-century painting* · 357
- Conclusion · 365
- Notes Volume II · 383
- Bibliography · 425
- List of terms · 465
- Index · 477

Preface

It would seem to be normal practice that what appears at the front of a book was actually written last. In my case, this tendency to back-to-front hindsight has developed into something approaching a genetic principle, so that the closer we get to the end of this book, the closer we come to its original impetus, and the closer to the beginning, the more we encounter the overarching theoretical control that only gradually emerged during the treatment of the steadily expanding material.

The source of this study goes back to the point during my student days in the mid-1980s when I happened upon a subject which, despite its peripheral status in terms of significance, seemed to me to be just as interesting as it was underexposed in the scholarly literature: the simultaneously artificial and organic rock formations which give so many late-15th-century Northern Italian paintings, especially those of the Ferrara school and Mantegna, a surreal flavour (in my childhood and teenage years I had been fascinated by the desolate rocky surfaces of foreign planets and moons – such as those hauntingly visualised by the Czech ‘space artist’ Ludek Pešek or by Stanley Kubrick in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) – and here, in a completely unexpected context, I seemed to have stumbled across something related). A prudent attempt to set these idiosyncratic landscape formations in a contemporaneous context within the philosophy of nature (Aristotelianism, Pliny revival) did not really satisfy me; and so when, in late 1988, the University of Copenhagen arranged a competition inviting dissertations on the relationship between landscape images and perception of reality in the Renaissance, and I went to study in Florence, I trained my lens backwards in time, towards the Middle Ages and antiquity, where strange rocks proved to be the all-dominant foundation of landscape images. At the same time, I expanded my area of study from earth formations to more general characteristics of the representation of landscape: spatial relationships, the sky, cultivated versus uncultivated.

That I then found it appropriate, indeed necessary, to breach the microhistorical methodology on which I had been reared during my art history studies, was due to a recurrent observation: that a number of the landscape features which interested

me are not limited to iconographic particulars in single images or small groups of images, but are characteristic of whole epochs at a time – regardless of the content. My methodology therefore changed to what I would now, in the light of hindsight, call a more structuralist approach, i.e. it focused on the idiomatic spaces of possibles, the *paradigms*, of given epochs; and at the same time I discovered that these paradigms corresponded quite remarkably to paradigms within the cosmological world picture. Could it really be a coincidence, for example, that the breakthrough of perspectival space and panoramic landscapes in art occurred at the same time as cosmological theory began to operate with a drastically expanded world picture: the one eventually formalised by Copernicus?

The final breakthrough in terms of the thesis to be addressed – and also the justification for expanding the empirical material to the scope presented here – took place in 1992, the year after I had received a PhD research grant (and extended my stay in Florence for a further two years). I now realised that the expansion of pictorial space and world picture I had observed in the cultural development from antiquity to modernity was actually simply a continuation of tendencies that had been active since the earliest Western images – Palaeolithic cave paintings – and that my model of culture would therefore have to be endowed with what is often, in recent and especially New Art History, considered to be a dirty word: an *evolutionistic* dimension.

During the project's second long, self-reflective phase – the second half of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, when I also decided to develop the subject into a habilitation thesis (Danish *doktordisputats*) – I therefore concentrated my energy on devising methodological instruments for the formalisation of this often controversial framework. This has led me, not least, to a rediscovery of various aspects of the thesis in the Germanic tradition pertaining to the evolution of consciousness (Hegel, Riegl, Spengler and Neumann), and also in the work of child psychologist Jean Piaget and his phylogenetically-oriented successors Jürgen Habermas, Suzi Gablik, Sidney J. Blatt and, most recently, Lars Marcussen. Because of this expedition backwards in time and subsequent theoretical buttressing, I have had to forgo another project that could otherwise be seen as overdue: to pursue the development of the landscape image during the period when it actually achieves maturity, the 17th-19th centuries. My only vindication for outlining this period on a merely essayist level here is that it is so saturated with currents and related art-historical considerations that it would require yet another mammoth study to do it justice.

Even though an actual master plan for this project was thus developed late in the day, I had been driven at an early stage by the fixed (possibly slightly megalomaniac) idea that the solution to my problems with the manifold empirical corpus was to be found not in the upright strategy of limiting it but, on the contrary, in expanding

it to the very point where a relatively simple pattern would emerge and arrange the empirical material in a clear order. To put it another way, my aim has not been categorically to choose a framework from which the empirical material would be clarified, but rather that the material itself should reveal which framework would be desirable – or even at all possible. If this strategy has, in places, caused a rather uneven distribution between dense and diffuse empirical material, it is nonetheless my expectation that the anatomy of the thesis, hopefully now clear, will be able to guide the reader through the archipelago of the material and, just as the brain treats the eye's incomplete sense impressions, will also endow the more fragmented areas with contours.

A project so long en route – and even delayed for an extra three years by the scepticism of an adjudicating committee as regards the evolutionistic methodology – has, of course, taxed the kindness and support of countless people and institutions. I would like to offer special thanks to Erik Fischer (for having opened up to the wide vistas by his suggestion that the rock iconology has its roots in antiquity and the Middle Ages), Chris Fischer (for introducing me to Florence), Maria Fabricius Hansen (for many valuable discussions), Jakob and Aage Winther (for a fruitful debate forum in Campiglia) and Anders Michelsen (for inducing a more rigorous theoretical framework). For ideas, critique and/or literature references that have crucially influenced the shaping of the project, I would like to thank: Aksel Haaning, Cathrine Hasse, Hannemarie Ragn Jensen, Søren Kaspersen, Ragni Linnet, Inge Lise Mogensen, Anders V. Munch, Nina Sten-Knudsen, Michel-Rolf Trouillot and Christopher S. Wood. In the hope that anyone I have accidentally left out will forgive my forgetfulness, I would also like to thank those who have in various ways contributed to parts of the genesis: Jan Bäcklund, Jonas Bencard, Sidney J. Blatt, Doris Bloom, Mikkel Bogh, Peter Brix Søndergaard, Stephen J. Campbell, Elizabeth Cropper, Gunnar Danbolt, Charles Dempsey, Angela Dillon Bussi, James Elkins, Ida Engholm, Unn Falkeid, Anne Fastrup, Suzi Gablik, Jeffrey Hamburger, Mogens Herman Hansen, Morten Steen Hansen, Peter Juel Henriksen, Øystein Hjort, Jacob Isager, Bruce Jonas, Hans Henrik L. Jørgensen, Herbert L. Kessler, Lene Koch, Joseph L. Koerner, Patrick Kragelund, Morten Kyndrup, Jørn Lund, Karina Lykke Grand, Klaus P. Mortensen, Keith Moxey, Henrik Oxvig, Bjørn Poulsen, Felicity Ratté, Thomas Rischel, Jesper Ryberg, Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli, Frederik Stjernfelt, Marie Tetzlaff, Jens Toft, Anders Troelsen, Kjerstin Vedel, Marina Vidas, Thulla Christina Wamberg, Niels Birger Wamberg, Daniel Weiss, Mikael Wivel and Peder Worning. Furthermore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the individuals and institutions who have provided financial support for my studies: Carlsberg Foundation (for a study scholarship in 1989 and a research scholarship in 1996), Hannemarie Ragn Jensen and the University of Copenhagen (for a PhD grant

1991-94), Fulbright Foundation (for a grant in 1993); and I am indebted to Frans Gregersen, University of Copenhagen, for giving me permission in 1996 to expand my thesis so that it could be submitted for a habilitation in philosophy rather than a PhD. I would also like to thank the following libraries for allowing me access to their collections: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence; Bibliotheca Herziana, Rome; Danmarks Kunstbibliotek, Copenhagen; Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome; Eisenhower Library, Baltimore; Det kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen; Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence; Metropolitan Museum of Art Library, New York; New York University Library; and Statsbiblioteket, Århus.

Of those who gave assistance to the Danish publication of the book in 2005, and whose work lives on in the English, I want especially to thank Rikke Lyngsø Christensen, Tine Colstrup, Inge Lise Mogensen, and Torben Nielsen. And of those who finally made possible the publication in English, my gratitude goes first to the translator, Gaye Kynoch, who meticulously pursued the tremendous task and enlivened our exchanges about phrasing with fine humour; and also to the American colleagues who gave such useful feedback: Rachael DeLue, Anne Dunlop, David Hays and Herbert L. Kessler who read sections of the manuscript, and especially Shira Brisman who reviewed the whole. At Aarhus University Press, I owe thanks to the director Claes Hvidbak for being so encouraging throughout the whole process, and to Sanne Lind Hansen for supervising the many details. Thanks also to Hjörtur Blöndal, Anne Malene Bonde, Helle Brøns, Mie Kruuse Meineche, Pernille Leth-Espensen, Gitte Lønstrup Jensen and Lisbet Tarp for assistance with the preparation of illustrations, English citations, a full bibliography, and an index. Furthermore, I heartily thank the foundations which generously funded the publication: Aarhus University Research Foundation, the Danish Research Council for the Humanities (FKK), Novo Nordisk Foundation and New Carlsberg Foundation.

Finally, but definitely not least: deepest thanks to my wife Halina, who has endured the many extensions to the project with great patience, while keeping it and me grounded through her steadfast love.

Copenhagen, 17 December 2008

*Specialised research has for decades
piled up vast quantities of material,
and now the irresistible urge
awakens to strive from the narrowness
of the single occurrences to the relieving height
of extensive overviews.*

ALOIS RIEGL,

“Kunstgeschichte und Universalgeschichte” (1898)