

W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscapes"

What is Mitchell's argument? In the space below, paste quotes from his essay in which he defines his argument.

↻ "...that there is a "dark side of the landscape" and that this dark side is not merely mythic, not merely a feature of the regressive, instinctual drives associated with nonhuman "nature" but a moral, ideological, and political darkness that covers itself with precisely the sort of innocent idealism Clark expresses." (page 7)

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↻ "The aim of this book is to change landscape" from a noun to a verb. It asks that we think of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed." (Pg 1)

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↻ "Landscape, understood as the historical 'invention' of a new visual/pictorial medium, is integrally connected with imperialism (pg 9)"

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↻ landscapes are both a cultural medium and symbol of power: "Landscape, we suggest, doesn't merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power, perhaps even an agent of power that is (or frequently represents itself as) independent of human intentions." (Mitchell 2)

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↻ "Landscape might be seen more profitably as something like the 'dreamwork' of imperialism, unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance" (pg 10).

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↻ "Is it possible that landscape, understood as the historical "invention" of a new visual/pictorial medium, is integrally connected with imperialism?" (page 9)

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↵ "Landscape as a cultural medium thus has a double role with respect to something like ideology: it naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world."
(Pg 2)

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↵ Landscape might be seen more profitably as something like the "dreamwork" of imperialism, unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance. pg 10

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↵ " These semiotic features of landscape, and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of "culture" and "civilization" into a "natural" space in a progress that is itself narrated as 'natural.'" (p. 17)

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↵ Landscape represents an intersection of cultural ideas and values. It acts as "verb" in the sense that it also naturalizes those ideas and values.

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↵ Landscape is a cultural creation used to impress and showcase power. It is a tool of imperialistic forces, to control the narrative and admit the fantasies of the colonizer.

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↵ Landscapes can be understood as both an instrument of cultural power and a representation of imperialism, providing an artificial world as it "naturally" expands and contracts

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↵ Landscape is a natural occurrence across all cultures that shapes the identity, values, and motives of a society.

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↵ In our own words, Mitchell's argument seems to hone in on the belief that landscapes are not just simple paintings of the environment but, in truth contain cultural aspects that symbolize imperialistic power, European ideals, and man overcoming nature. A double-edged sword of loving the natural landscape but wishing to control it.

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Why is Gilfillan's "A Native Council of War" significant within the scope of his argument? Paste quotes from the text below.

How is Augustus Earle's "View of the Bay Islands" different from Gilfillan's painting, according to Mitchell?

