If I were given the chance to retitle *Landscape and Power* today, some years after its first appearance, I would call it *Space, Place, and Landscape*, for two reasons. The first is that the point about power has been made abundantly, and is thoroughly contested in these pages. If one wanted to continue to insist on power as the key to the significance of landscape, one would have to acknowledge that it is a relatively weak power compared to that of armies, police forces, governments, and corporations. Landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify. This indeterminacy of affect seems, in fact, to be a crucial feature of whatever force landscape can have. As the background within which a figure, form, or narrative act emerges, landscape exerts the passive force of setting, scene, and sight. It is generally the “overlooked,” not the “looked at,” and it can be quite difficult to specify what exactly it means to say that one is “looking at the landscape.”

This peculiar indeterminacy reveals itself as a kind of redundancy when one rephrases the landscape imperative as we do in everyday parlance: “look at the view.” Not “look at the mountain” (or the ocean, the sky, the plains, the forest, the city, the river), but “look at the view.” The vernacular expression suggests that the invitation to look at landscape is an invitation not to look at any specific *thing*, but to ignore all particulars in favor of an appreciation of a total gestalt, a vista or scene that may be dominated by some specific feature, but is not simply reducible to that feature. (A similar problem could be traced when the mandate is to *paint* or *depict* a
landscape.) The landscape imperative is a kind of mandate to withdraw, to draw out by drawing back from a site. If a landscape, as we say, “draws us in” with its seductive beauty, this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance, a kind of resistance to whatever practical or moral claim the scene might make on us. Raymond Williams’s remark still holds true: “a working country is hardly ever a landscape.” The invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing—or more precisely, to look at looking itself—to engage in a kind of conscious apperception of space as it unfolds itself in a particular place.

This leads me to the positive change I would make in the title of this book. What happens to landscape when its effects are gauged in relation to space and place? How do these three terms resonate together? In many contexts, of course, we use them interchangeably. A landscape just is a space, or the view of a place. In both the phenomenological and historical materialist traditions of this subject, space and place are the crucial terms, and landscape is taken for granted as an aesthetic framing of the real properties of space and places. David Harvey’s work may be taken as exemplary here. Harvey attempts to synthesize the phenomenological and experiential tradition exemplified by Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger with the Marxist tradition represented by Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault. Despite the many differences between these traditions, they agree on the primacy of “space” and “place” as the fundamental categories of analysis. Landscape remains relatively underanalyzed. It has been left primarily to art historians interested in painting or landscape architecture, or to cultural geographers such as J. B. Jackson. To my knowledge, no one has really attempted to think the three terms together as a conceptual totality.

Perhaps the most straightforward beginning would be provided by Michel de Certeau, who divides the “field” between space (espace) and place (lieu) in terms of a whole series of binary oppositions. Place is associated with “stability,” “the law of the proper,” and the specific, definite location. Space, by contrast, exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. This space is composed of intersections of mobile elements.... In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a “proper.”

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.
David Harvey echoes this sort of distinction when he exemplifies a place as a gated community that has to be “secured against the uncontrolled vectors of spatiality” (292) in the form of invading pressures from poor black neighborhoods. Indeed, he sees the central dynamic of capital as a “tension between place-bound fixity and spatial mobility” (296). One can glimpse here a whole set of familiar oppositions extrapolated from the distinction between space and place. De Certeau aligns the terms with the differences between operations and objects, itineraries and maps, parole and langue, transgression and law, action and immobility.

Space and place make an attractive dialectical opposition in ordinary language as well. Space has connotations of abstraction and geometry, while place resonates with particularity and qualitative density. There is outer space, but “outer place” sounds odd. For something to “take place” is radically different grammatically from “taking space” (or should it be “taking up space”? ) Place is an intransitive verb that takes an object: “I placed a jar in Tennessee.” “Space” only becomes a predicate as a metaphor for displacement and disorientation (one can be “spaced out” or “space” objects by widening the distance between them, so that the verb “to space” seems directly counter to the action of placing). To some extent these vernacular connotations reverse de Certeau’s oppositions, insofar as they link space with number, negation, measurement, surveillance, and control, while place retains a concrete, complex, and sensuous existence beneath the spatial codes of mapping and depiction. An empty space is not the same thing as an empty place. An empty place is filled with space, as if space were the negative void that rushes in when a place is vacated. It is the spectral absence that “fills” a hollow shell or a clearing in the forest. A place, however, is basically the same thing as “a” definite, bounded space, while space as such, without the definite article, becomes abstract and absolute. There is no absolute place, however, except in Borges’s “The Aleph,” where the mystical Hebrew letter is the place that contains all other places.4

In contrast to this dyadic approach to the field, Henri Lefebvre’s classic Production of Space insists on a relentlessly triadic conceptual organization, based in the differences between what he calls perceived, conceived, and lived space.5 Perceived space corresponds roughly to what de Certeau calls “spatial practices,” the daily activities and performances that “secrete” a society’s space, like the pathways that spontaneously appear on a greenward as a result of habitual walking patterns. Conceived space is the planned, administered, and consiously constructed terrain of engineers, city planners, and architects, as expressed (Lefebvre notes) in “numbers” and “intellectually worked out” verbal signs. Lived space (what Lefebvre also calls “representational space”), finally, is mediated through “images
and symbols” addressed to the imagination. It is the province of “inhabitants” and “users, but also of some artists and . . . a few writers and philosophers who describe and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (39).

As will probably be evident, Lefebvre’s three categories roughly correspond to what I have been calling “space, place, and landscape.” I’m less interested, however, in forcing a correspondence of this sort, than in taking Lefebvre’s more general advice to triangulate the whole topic, and to resist the temptation to binarism. More concretely, the language of space, place, and landscape offers a vernacular entry into our field that perhaps none of these terms can provide in isolation or in tandem. What I propose in this second edition of Landscape and Power, then, is not just some important new material—the essays by Edward Said, Jonathan Bordo, Michael Taussig, Robert Pogue Harrison, and myself—but a new reading of all the essays provoked by an attention to this more capacious and differentiated theoretical field.

One might think, then, of space, place, and landscape as a dialectical triad, a conceptual structure that may be activated from several different angles. If a place is a specific location, a space is a “practiced place,” a site activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs, and a landscape is that site encountered as image or “sight.” Central Park in New York City is thus located in a specific place on the earth; it is the site of innumerable activities and practices; and it is consumed (and was designed to be consumed) as a series of picturesque tableaus or “landscapes” derived from European landscape painting. No one of these terms is logically or chronologically prior to the others: one could speak of spatial activities as producing or modifying a place, or of the properties of a place making possible some spatial activities and preventing others (thus, place may be seen as having a kind of agency, despite de Certeau’s notion that space is the active and dynamic term). Landscape could be seen as the first cognitive encounter with a place, and an apprehension of its spatial vectors (thus, an appreciation of landscape may well include a reading—or an inability to read—its narrative tracks or symbolic features).

Perhaps the most important of Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s insights is the expression of power in the landscape as a manifestation of law, prohibition, regulation, and control—the whole sphere of what Lacan calls “the Symbolic.” This is Lefebvre’s “conceptualized space,” the administered or shaped space produced by the landscape architect or engineer, the taboo or sacred space declared off-limits by the shaman, or the conquered territory named, claimed, and controlled by the colonial administrator. To this notion of space as the dimension of the Symbolic (as law or negation) I would
then add the notion of place as the location of the Lacanian Real, the site of trauma or the historical event. We say, “this is the place where this happened,” while it would seem slightly odd to say “this is the space (or landscape) where this occurred.” The memorial or monument is erected to mark a place. Spatial practices (rituals, pilgrimages, tourism) may then activate the place, and it may become the object of imaginary renderings (postcards, descriptions, son et lumière spectacles, fantasies, memories).

My point, however, is not to rigidly identify space, place, and landscape with Lacan’s symbolic, real, and imaginary, but to activate the dialectical resources of this conceptual triad. The aim is to release the vernacular resources of theory embedded in these terms, to “listen to our metalinguage,” as Heidegger might have put it. We need to do this because we do not know, quite literally, how to name the “field” or “topic” (much less the discipline) subtended by these terms. Are we talking about cultural, or humanistic geography? About landscape architecture, environmental studies, or deep ecology? About the history of art, literature, or media? About the sociology, anthropology, or phenomenology of locations, regions, and territories? Any attempt to stabilize the inquiry around one of these terms, to establish “space,” for instance, as the foundational concept and to treat the other two as derivative modifications, tends to reify and impoverish the discussion. Better, in my view, to begin (as Lefebvre insists) with a triangulation of the topic. This gesture may actually be a reflex of some fundamental process in cognitive mapping as such, a way of orienting ourselves in any perceptual or conceptual field whatsoever. Our “topic” (understood literally as place) then dictates a process of thinking space/place/landscape as a unified problem and a dialectical process.

The new contributions to this edition all evoke this triad in various ways. Edward Said’s “Invention, Memory, and Place,” written as the keynote address to a memorable 1998 conference on “Landscape Perspectives in Palestine” shows the way a host of mediations (writing, memory, imagination) produce a “human space,” that is, a space/place/landscape complex, specific in its location and history, scarred and traced by spatial vectors and movements across its face. My own contribution (written for the same conference) on “Holy Landscape” in Israel/Palestine and the American West is, similarly, focused on the way an imaginary landscape is woven into the fabric of real places (e.g., the desert of the western United States, the desert areas of the West Bank) and symbolic spaces (territories as subject to legal and military authority). The specific site at which these papers were first delivered, Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, is moreover a crucial aspect of their meaning, as is their sense of double locatedness in an American setting so deeply tied by symbolic, imaginary, and real bonds with Israel and Palestine.
Jonathan Bordo’s essay on the wilderness is, similarly, a site-specific intervention into a North American and Canadian imaginary of “untouched” or “virgin” landscape, coupled with a real history of destructive spatial practices and regimes of symbolic control. Michael Taussig’s meditation on “The Beach (A Fantasy)” is, as the title suggests, an exploration of those imaginary shores where “the beginning of man” from the “salt sea” is traced, but also of the very real destruction of the “port” as public space in our century, and the symbolic resonances of a specific place such as the surfing beach of Bondi in Sydney, Australia. Robert Pogue Harrison’s “Hic Jacet,” finally, reopens the Heideggerian question of place as simultaneously determined by and determining our “being in the world,” Dasein. Do we make places, or do they make us? The shifting valences of this question, attributing agency to living human subjects, or to the places of their burial, seems to bring the whole question of space, place, and landscape back to “the ground,” as it were. Whatever the power of landscape might be, and of its unfoldings into space and place, it is surely the medium in which we live, and move, and have our being, and where we are destined, ultimately, to return.

Notes

6. See Edward Soja, Thirdspace (Blackwell, 1996), especially his discussion of “the trialetics of spatiality.”