

David Lowenthal, 1923-2018

He is remembered as a historical geographer with an analytical view of the role of culture on landscapes and its conservation as heritage. He published extensively in the geographical journals in the US and the UK.

His historical analysis of the ever-changing role of the past in shaping our lives, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), is widely considered to be a classic text. A new book, *The Past Is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, came out in 2015, for which he was honoured with a British Academy Medal in the same year. His other key texts in the field of historical geography include *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1996), *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (2000). When this latter book was published, Professor George Seddon regarded it as the most important book on the history of environmental conservation to date, investigating the roots of our environmental consciousness and how humans have impacted the face of the earth.

Lowenthal earned a B.S. in history from Harvard University in 1944, PhD in history from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and an M.A. in geography from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1950.

I first came across his work when I was a tutor in Geography at the University of Melbourne in the early 1970s. He had a chapter in Pierre Dansereau's *Challenge for Survival* (1970, Cambridge) which opened with a quote from the general manager for state parks in New York City that 'Open space is like virginity. Once lost, it can never be regained.' But David noted that this is not entirely true of either as non -virgins are needed to produce more virgins. This quirky comment set the tone for many interesting and amusing comments and observations over the years. He supported my early investigations of the layers of history in the gold fields. He agreed with the debunking of the 'untouched wilderness' hypothesis and influenced me and others examining cultural landscapes in settler societies.

David was a member of US ICOMOS and at the 1981 ICOMOS general assembly in Rome presented a paper on 'Dilemmas of Preservation.' He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Australian contingent and this continued at the Washington DC general assembly in 1987 where he again presented a stimulating paper 'Where does our Architectural Heritage Belong?'. And he entertained many of us with wild dancing afterwards at the grand party at Woodlawn Plantation.

David first came to Australia in 1974 and then had a long visit in 1988 -touring the Victorian gold fields, then to Canberra – 'new parliament House left me cold...Sydney was splendid, more for the social life than for the talks. Much talk with the law people and began to learn something about environmental law in the Australian context.' Joan Domicelj recalls these spirited discussions. He found Tasmania fascinating and visited Port Arthur. In Sydney he lectured for Dr Helen Armstrong at the Faculty of Built Environment at UNSW and to Institute of Architects at Tusculum. He lectured again for Helen Armstrong at QUT in 1997 and gave a talk at a Planning Conference in Brisbane. In 2002 he again visited Port Arthur, accompanied by his wife Mary Alice, and gave the keynote lecture at the Islands of

Vanishment conference on 'Tragic Traces on the Rhodian shore' with its sections on ignoring, erasing, celebrating, mutation and commemoration. It was published by Australia ICOMOS in the conference proceedings in *Historic Environment* 17 (1), 2003.

He advised international heritage agencies and institutions, including UNESCO, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the International Council of Museums, ICCROM, the Getty Conservation Institute, the World Monuments Fund, the Council of Europe, Europa Nostra, English Heritage, the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Trust of Australia, and the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage. He continued working as an emeritus professor from University College London, lecturing, writing and publishing up until his death. His overall contribution has been enormous in changing the context of heritage assessments and appreciation. His wide view of world affairs and their impact on the sense of place for loved landscapes drove his enquiring mind. The past might be a foreign place but it lingers on in our landscapes.

Over the years he has been a generous host at his residence in London and enjoyed drinking full-bodied Australian red wines over long discursive meals. He will be missed by his many Australian friends as well as his colleagues, and we offer Mary Alice and daughter Eleanor our sincere condolences.

Dr Jane Lennon, M.ICOMOS