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The cultural representation of the farming landscape: masculinity, power and nature

Lise Saugeres

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Abstract

This paper explores ideas of masculinity and femininity as articulated in the representation of the rural landscape among farm families in a community of Southern France. It is shown that the local discourses of the farming landscape emphasise the embodied inherited relationship between the farmer and the land. In these discourses, the good farmer is one who has an innate understanding of nature. This sympathetic feel for the land is associated with traditional peasant farming. In contrast, the alienated and exploitative attitude of the bad farmer towards nature is associated with modern agriculture. It is argued that this rhetoric of landscape and identity reproduces patriarchal ideologies which exclude and marginalise women from farming. The real farmer can only be a man because only men are seen as having this natural connection with the land. Women in contrast are defined by their lack of connection to farming and the land. Through an analysis of discourse, it is shown how an imagery of earth and blood

constitutes a cultural idiom which legitimates men's mastery over nature and women.



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