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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Landmarks by Robert MacFarlane

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In *Spatializing Blackness*, we come to understand why the quiet constructs of a segregated landscape, or the confinement of housing towers, assert the same terrors as the rallying cries of marching White supremacists in public spaces. Let us not be fooled into thinking the removal of statues honoring racists is what it means to construct a socially and politically equitable landscape. It is only a most obvious step.

NOTES

1. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 6.
2. *Ibid.*, 27–28.

Landmarks

BY ROBERT MACFARLANE

London: Penguin Books, 2016

JOANNA A. MACGUGAN

Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks* examines the intimate relationships between language and landscape. It is an intensely personal tribute to the linguistic experience of landscape, rather than an academic exercise in theorizing place. Macfarlane weaves multiple projects together in this book, which makes it difficult to classify its genre. *Landmarks* is a persuasive piece urging deeper, more satisfying communion with the landscapes we inhabit. It is memoir and travelogue, as Macfarlane seeks to experience for himself the specific landscapes beloved by his literary heroes and to understand these authors' personal connections to them. It is also a word-hoard in which book chapters alternate with place-word glossaries. The author's primary geographical focus is Britain, with a few detours to North America. Throughout his work, Macfarlane laments the disruption modernization has brought to humanity's sense of place, and he adopts an original angle on this time-worn grievance by framing it in terms of the loss of language.

Macfarlane, a Cambridge professor and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, bridges academic and popular audiences with his best-

selling works on travel, writing, and the environment. His books are connected by their focus on humanity's perception of and experience with wildness in nature. Although his earlier works exhibit a playful infatuation with poetic language and deep appreciation for the writers who have inspired him, *Landmarks* is the first to focus specifically on the linguistic dimension of the human-landscape relationship.

Landmarks charts Macfarlane's pilgrimage to understand the "literacy of landscape," the nuanced, localized vocabularies employed to describe natural features (3–4). He characterizes himself as a word collector aspiring to "re-wild" our contemporary language for landscape (9). Macfarlane's central project is ambitious: to rescue vanished or vanishing language and build a master word-hoard from it. Whether his goal is ultimately attainable or not, it is undertaken with an honorable compassion for endangered or misunderstood landscapes and a commitment to recording the specialized language derived from them. The words he collects may never gain common usage, but Macfarlane ensures they will be memorialized by bringing them to a broader reading public.

Each chapter centers on a writer who has profoundly changed the way Macfarlane views landscape and explores that author's distinctive brand of topophilia, or "place-love" (323). His pilgrimage begins in chapter two on the Hebridean Isle of Lewis. Here he joins Finlay McLeod to explore the Brindled Moor, a *terra nullius* threatened by a massive wind farm project. From there he travels to northeast Scotland to pay tribute to Nan Shepard's "precise and particularized knowledge" of the Cairngorn Mountains (58). Chapter four explores the watery worlds inhabited by Roger Deakin, whose Suffolk farmhouse is surrounded by a labyrinthine network of moats. The next chapter introduces the reader to Essex birdwatcher John Alec Baker, whose obsession with the peregrine falcon brings him to the brink of feral madness. Macfarlane focuses his attention on the grimmer aspects of Cumbria's "funerary landscape" in chapter six. His guide through the Ulpha valley's underworld tunnels is Richard Shelton, a haunted man and "keeper of lost words" (181, 191). We learn in chapter seven what it means to be "north minded" as Macfarlane honors the work of writers Barry Lopez and Peter Davidson on the landscapes of arctic Canada and remote northern Scotland. Chapter eight is Macfarlane's most autobiographical chapter, in which

he plays with ideas of peripheries, margins, and fringes, identifying himself as an “edgeland” in the process, through Richard Jefferies’ work on the “wilderness of London” (254). In chapter nine Jacquetta Hawkes’s writing on the language of stones inspires Macfarlane to reflect on unexpected connections between his lifelong affinity for rocks and his own writing process. Chapter ten honors John Muir’s unique writing style and praises his role in creating America’s national parks and monuments. Finally, in chapter eleven, we are introduced to Deb Wilenski and her research on “childish,” the language of children.

Landmarks’ organization—book chapters punctuated by thematically-organized word-lists—disrupts Macfarlane’s narratives to some extent, but not enough to overshadow his key messages. Each glossary focuses on a specific category of landscape (flatlands, uplands, waterlands, etc.) and draws attention to the subtleties of language employed to describe those landscapes. Most of this vocabulary consists of local idiom gleaned from Britain and Ireland, augmented with terminology borrowed from geology, geography, archaeology, agriculture, forestry, and speleology, to name just a few featured disciplines. The integration of poetic language brings a romantic flair to the word-lists, and a sprinkling of Old English terms highlights the antiquity of British place-language. The vocabulary is quaint for the most part, and sometimes silly, but also lyrical and deeply moving. Macfarlane presents a remarkably precise language that illustrates his argument that words function as topograms, “tiny poems that conjure scenes” (6). We learn from the North Sea coast, for instance, that someone who is “broached” has been knocked sideways by the sea, and on the Orkney Islands “grimlins” are “the night hours around midsummer when dusk blends into dawn and it is hard to say if day is ending or beginning” (169, 224). Although these glossaries build on Macfarlane’s chapter narratives, they can also be appreciated independently of the book’s chapters. Any reader who delights in word-play will find them worth reading more than once.

Macfarlane’s preference for lived experience over academic study to grasp the power of place-language is *Landmarks*’ most persuasive argument. Understanding the literacy of landscape requires being present, being mindful, and returning to childish delight in the natural world. It means “taking part in the existence of things” and allowing our minds to be shaped by our bodily experience of being in the world (74, 106).

His book was written in response to our modern disposal of nature, a lifestyle marked by “the indoor and the virtual” instead of “the outdoor and the natural” (3). Macfarlane’s concluding chapter articulates these themes at the heart of *Landmarks* better than any other chapter, highlighting how the language of children counters what he views as the devastating loss of wild play, imagination, and curiosity in modern adults. The authors who inspire and motivate Macfarlane are united in their childlike wonder over the landscapes they study, a wonder that he embraces in his own writing as he contemplates these same landscapes. He remarks in his opening chapter that the word “landmark” originates from Old English *landmearc*, meaning “an object in the landscape which, by its conspicuousness, serves as a guide in the direction of one’s course” (12). Books are the landmarks that guide Macfarlane through his pilgrimage in *Landmarks*. The work he undertakes in honor of cherished authors’ landscapes reminds us that achieving a more profound connection with our own environments comes from knowledge of the language they give us.

Just Sustainability: Technology, Ecology, and Resource Extraction

BY CHRISTIAN Z. PEPPARD AND ANDREA VICINI, EDITORS

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2015

CAROLINE R. REDICK

As a contribution to environmental, theological ethics, *Just Sustainability* endeavors to address the unsustainable treatment of the environment that has resulted in such problems as species extinction, poisonous pollution, resource scarcity, and growing impoverishment. Since these issues offer a serious threat to humanity as a whole and to our common home, they require a global response. Thus, the volume is comprised of essays by various scholars from places ranging from North America to Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America, all of whom argue for sustainable practices within their concrete contexts. As a result of this geographical diversity, the volume approaches sustainability from a “thick set of descriptions” and employs “an understanding of justice