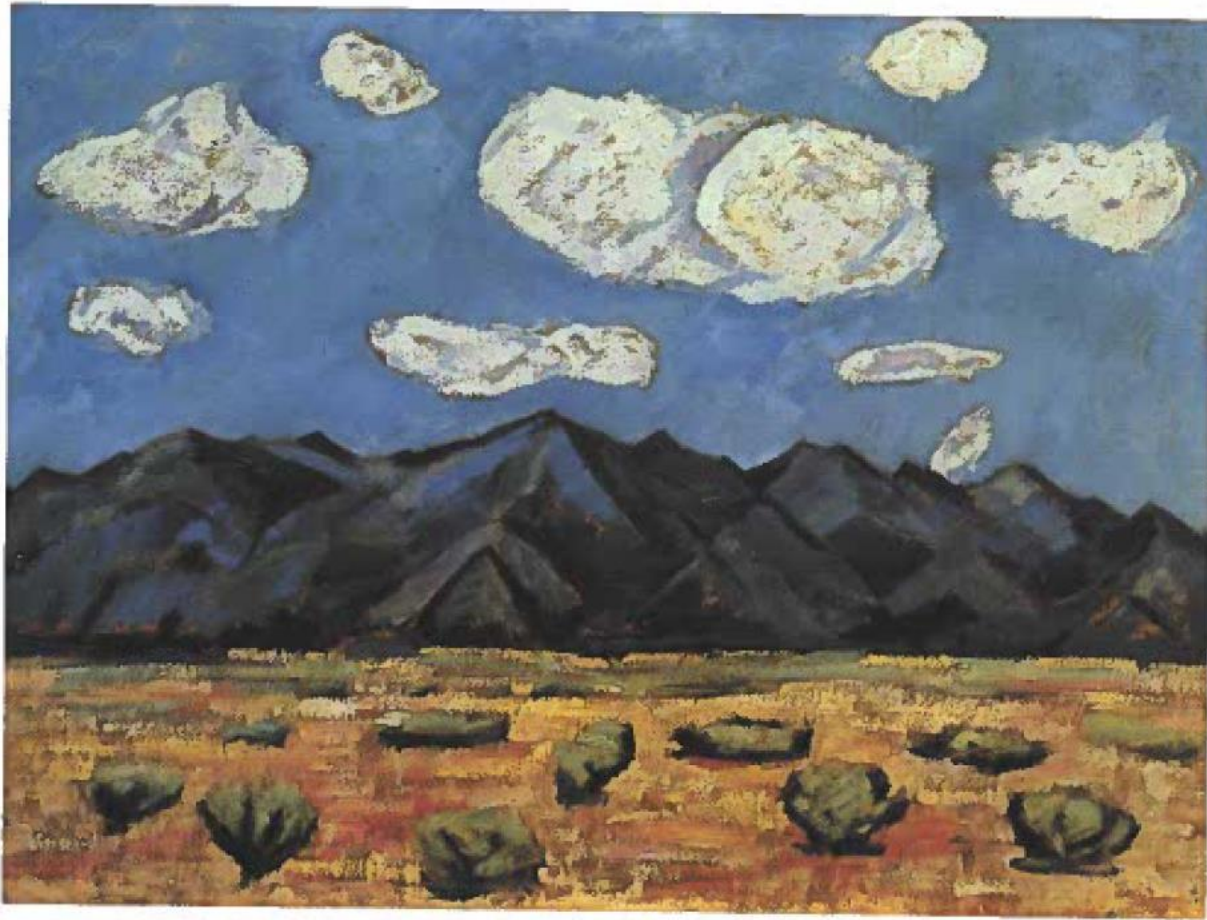


# GEOG 220/4A

February, 2022

*Topophilia* and the love of “place”

# Just a nice picture to start with



Marsden  
Hartley *New Mexican Landscape*, (1918)

# Optional Reading

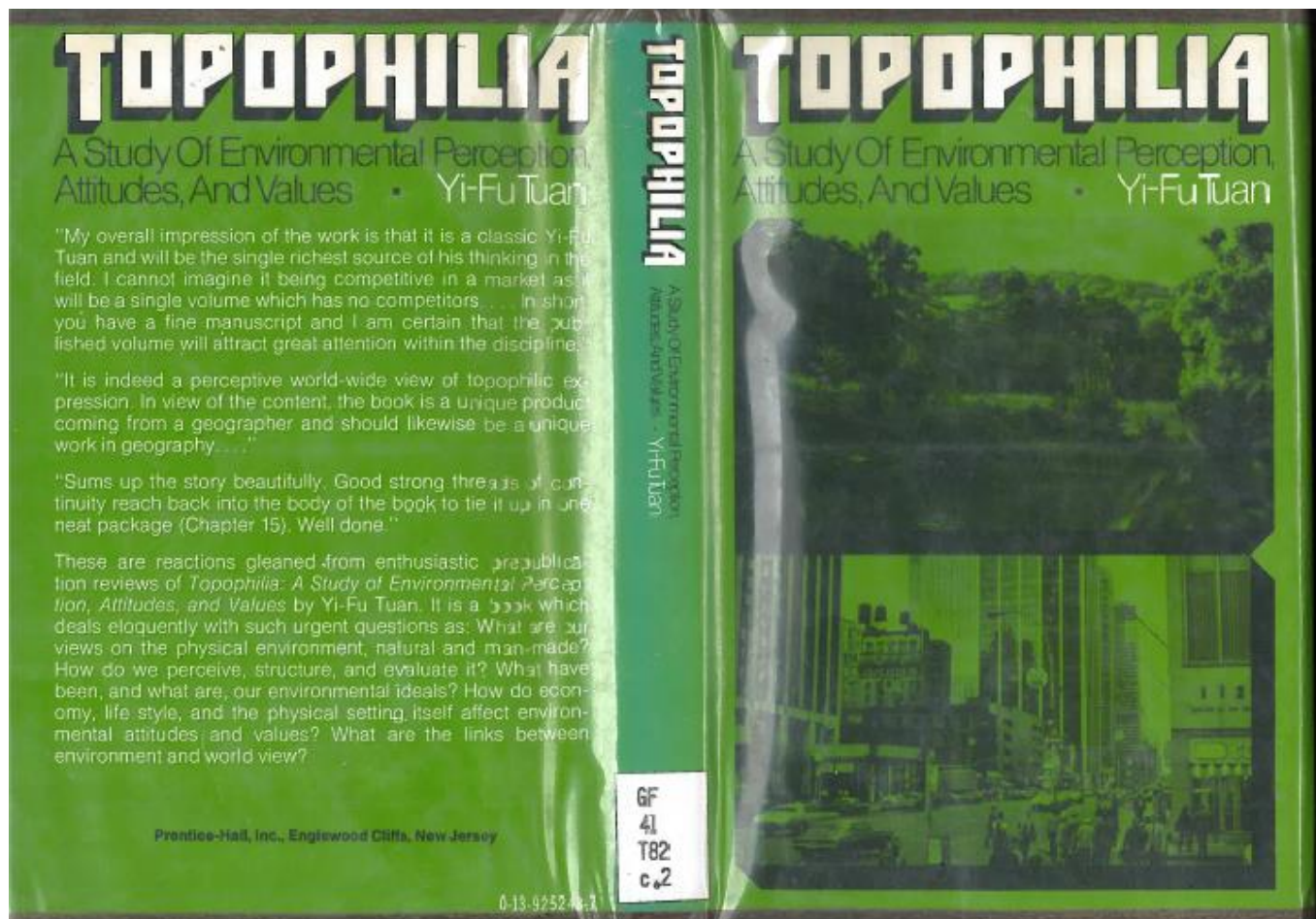
- If you are interested, In the International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift) there are these three very useful entries:
  - “Place”
  - “Sense of Place”
  - “Space 1”

You can find these through the Concordia library – use the SOFIA search engine

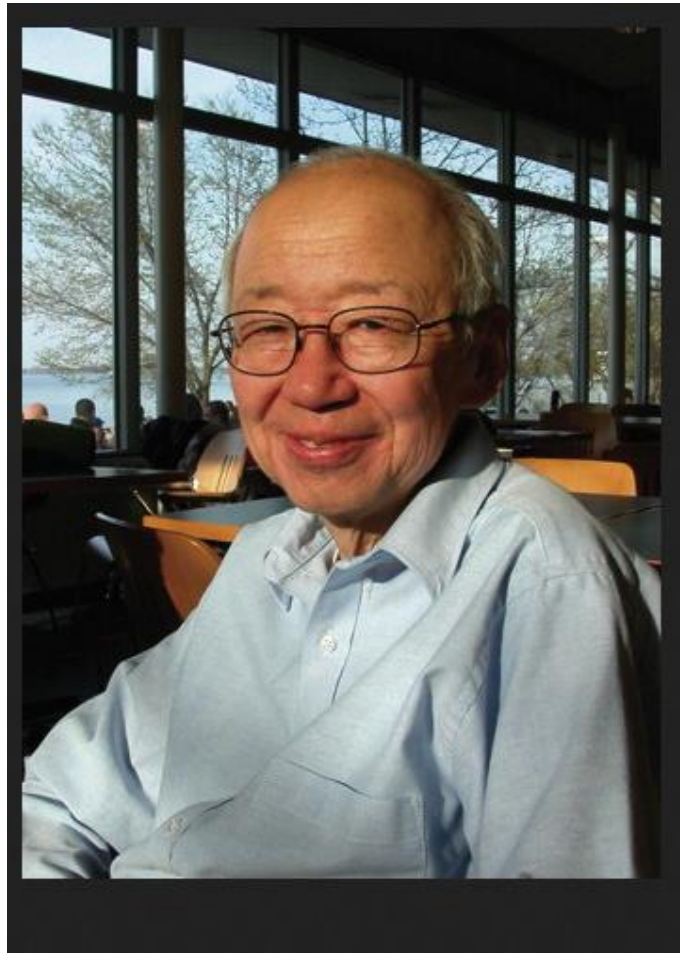
# Today, I want to talk about the idea of “Topophilia”

- Topophilia = defined as “love of place”
- Recall that “place is space filled with meaning” (Yi-Fu Tuan).
- Lets look at the key book on this topic – by Yi-Fu Tuan

# Yi-Fu Tuan 1974



# Yi-Fu Tuan 1930-



# He has his own entry in the Encyclopedia



International Encyclopedia of Human  
Geography

2009, Pages 499-500



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Tuan, Y.-F.

T. Cresswell<sup>1</sup>

—

# The first paragraph of his bio...

Yi-Fu Tuan was born on 5 December 1930 in Tientsin, China. He was the son of a Chinese diplomat who formed part of a small middle-class cohort of well-educated and well-travelled men in China at the time. In 1941 his family moved to Australia and Tuan attended an English-speaking school modeled on an English public school. In 1946 the Tuan's were posted to London. Yi-Fu Tuan was admitted to Oxford in 1948. In 1949 the People's Republic of China was established and the Tuan family – supporters of Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China (Taiwan) – found themselves effectively exiled. In 1951 Tuan moved to Berkeley to begin his postgraduate career. Here he was exposed to the work of, among other people, Carl Sauer. He received his PhD in 1957. Tuan's first academic job was at Indiana University (1956–58). This was followed by stints at the Universities of Chicago (as a postdoctoral fellow in statistics), New Mexico (1959–65), and Toronto (1966–68) before arriving at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis in 1968 where he was to spend 15 years before moving to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1983. In 1985 he became both Vilas Research Professor and John Kirkland Wright Professor. He retired in 1998 and became Professor Emeritus.

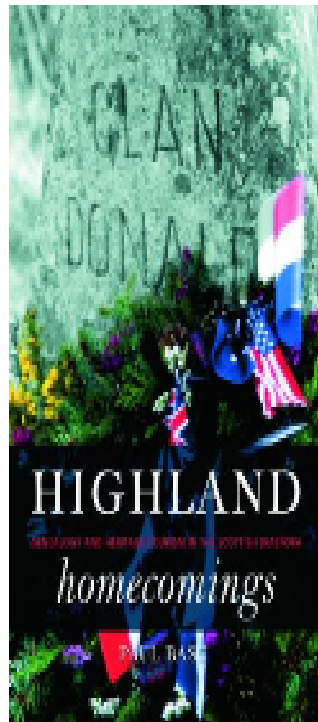


# So what does the book say?

## “Topophilia” – an individual love of place

- Yi-Fu Tuan argues that we develop our affection for place for 4 reasons:
  - 1. Home:
  - 2. Memory
  - 3. religion
  - 4. imagination

- 1. Home: our love of “home” is very powerful
  - The place we grow up in ... nostalgia...
  - A nice recent example is growth of “heritage tourism”-- Individuals – interested in their own family background [genealogy] through *Ancestry.com* go back to ancestors’ homelands and gravesites ... example: Scottish diaspora studied by Paul Basu – the clans are tied to the land



# Highland Homecomings

Genealogy and Heritage Tourism in the Scottish Diaspora

*By Paul Basu*

Edition

1st Edition

First Published

2007

eBook Published

12 March 2007

- 2. Memory: place is a way of concretizing memory; a way of capturing time
  - Examples –
  - “ghost bikes” and roadside crosses
  - Marlene Creates uses “memory boxes” to show that memory and place are gendered..

# Ghost bikes



Source: Wikipedia entry "Ghost bike"

# Creates' “Memory boxes” in Newfoundland

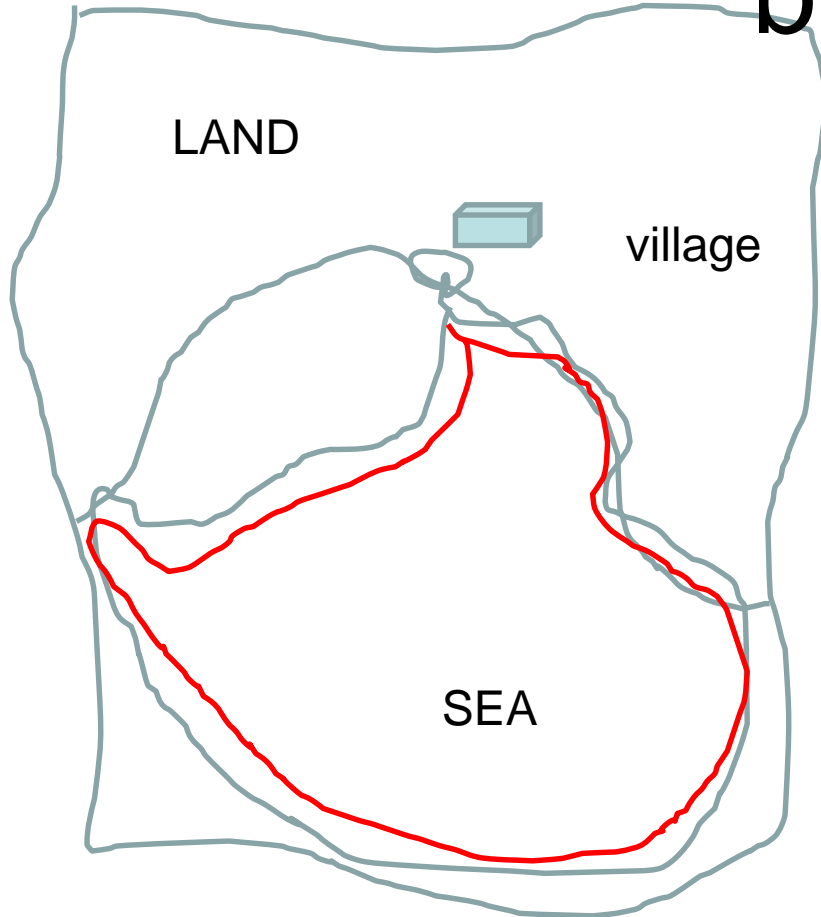
## **Male**

- Knew and described in great detail the shores and fishing grounds offshore – i.e. away from their house

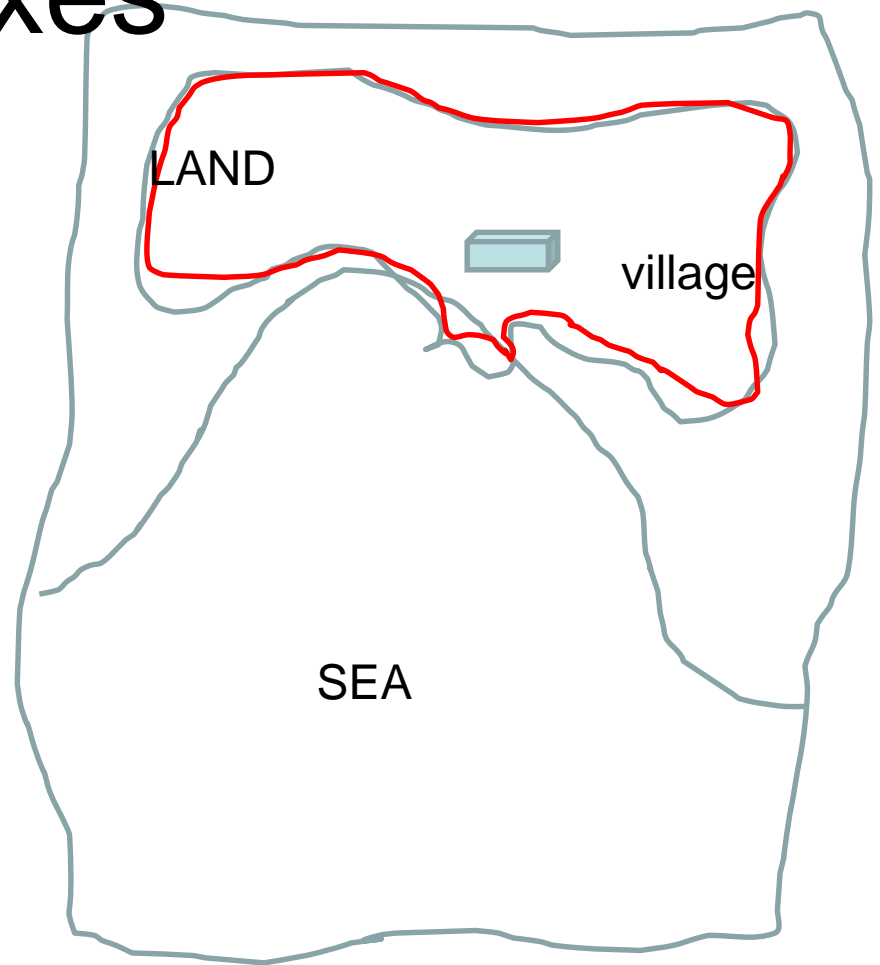
## **female**

- Knew and described in great detail the layout of their village, and their visits to neighbours, school etc

# Marlene Creates – memory boxes



Memory maps - male



Memory maps: female

# Marlene Creates

- A Canadian artist and poet whose latest project has been a cycle of poems and photographs that relate to a specific area of forest in Nova Scotia





Here she tries to capture a scene from that area by multiple photographs



# Marlene Creates: latest book

place ....not as a geographical location but as a process that involves memory

Susan Gibson Garvey, Andrea Kunard 🍁

## **Marlene Creates**

204 pages

Published: September 5, 2017

Non-Fiction / Art & Architecture

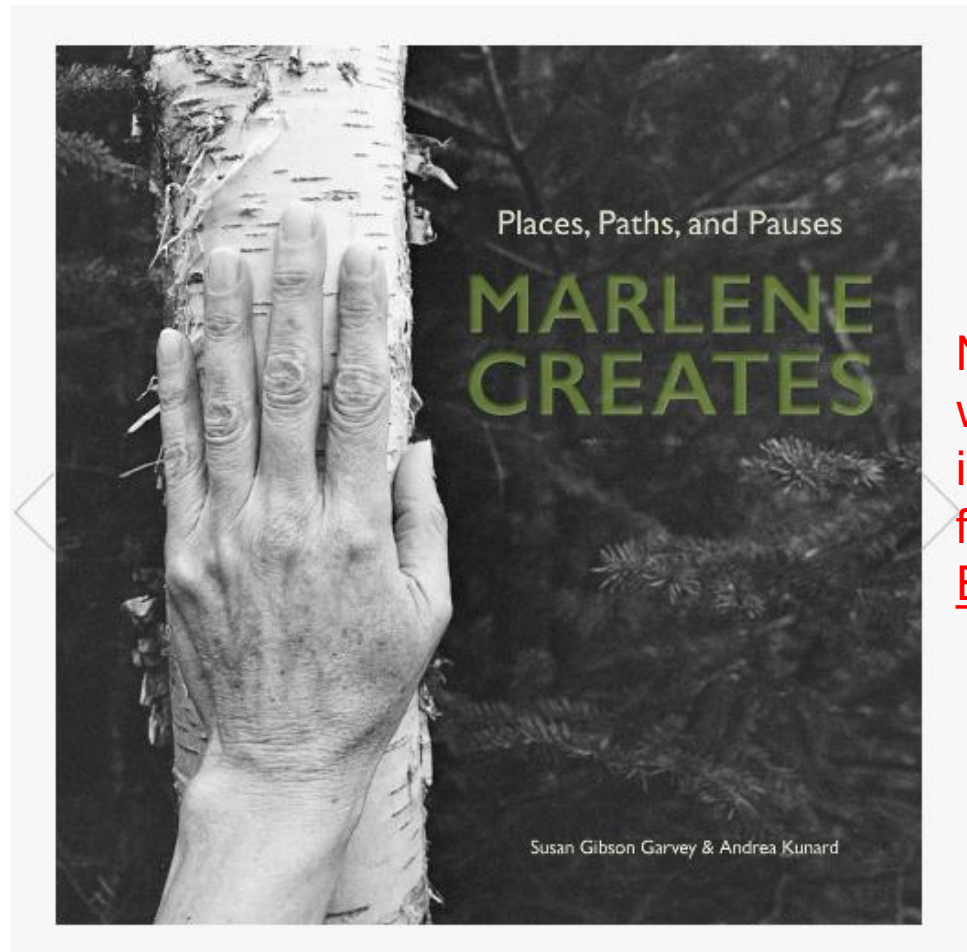
Hardcover: 9780864929976 \$50.00

"... I was able to make a simple gesture which left no permanent mark on the land."

In 1979 Marlene Creates signaled her intent. In contrast to the monumental earthworks of that time, she revealed that her interest in the intersection of art and the natural world was with the ephemeral, the small scale, and the non-monumental, and with *place*, "not as a geographical location," she writes, "but as a *process* that involves memory, multiple narratives, ecology, language, and both scientific and vernacular knowledge." Supplementing the impermanence of her artistic gestures with the technology of photography, Creates found an audience and created a body of work without peer.

Interest in: (1) The intersection of art and the natural world on the level of the small-scale, non-monumental (2) and with *place* – "not as a geographical location, but as a process that involves memory, multiple narratives, ecology, language..."

# Marlene Creates: latest book

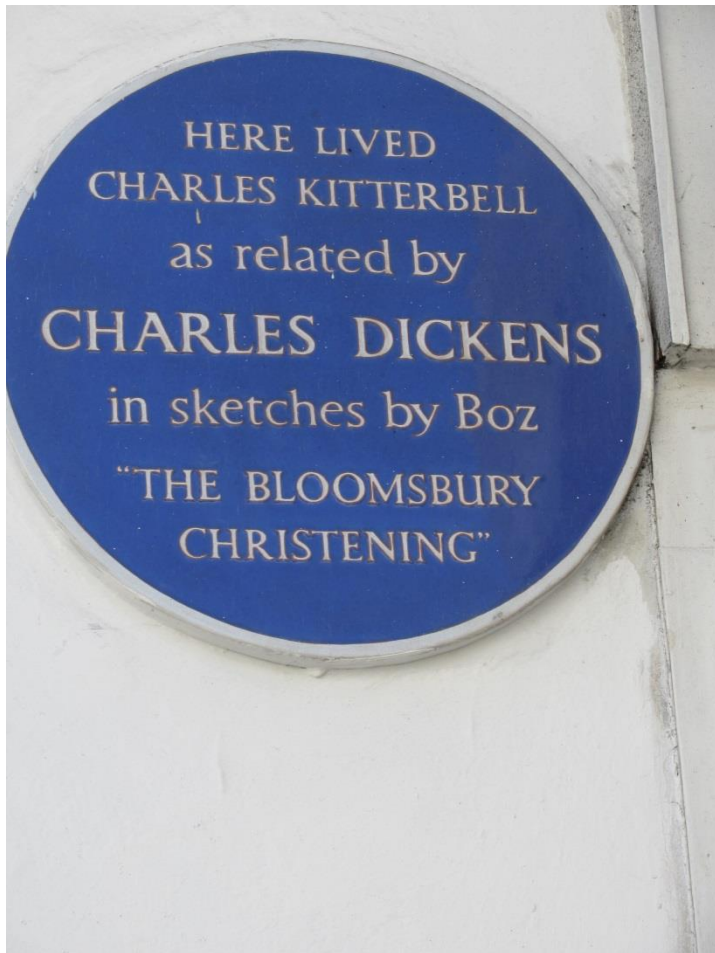


Note: this type of work  
is becoming part of a  
field known as  
ECOCRITICISM

# Back to ...Topophilia

- 3. Sacred: places have a deep spiritual meaning for people
  - Shrines
  - pilgrimage
- 4. Imagination: physical places become the anchor for the mind's creations
  - Tolkien....Games of Thrones ... Disneyland
  - Las Vegas

# The place of the imagination



- Now lets see what we can do with these basic ideas about Topophilia

# Affect

- Recent cultural geographers have added the important idea or concept of “**affect**” as an additional insight into the power of topophilia:
  - ***Affect*** = an emotional, almost unconscious, reaction to the environment
    - Emotion= could be shivers or a feeling (*frisson*)
    - Environment = could be social, cultural or physical environment
    - These emotions may result in, or enable some type of action

# “Affect” in the non-human world?

- Some writers have even suggested that if we agree to believe that plants, animals, rocks -- or the natural landscape itself -- has some sort of **agency** [“the ability to make things happen” then they too possess some power of **affect**
  - In this way, for example, some argue that a picturesque landscape somehow triggers our perception and actively seeks our engagement (Example – see next slide)
    - » It is not passively letting us look at it and decide whether it is worth looking at or not strictly on our own assessment of its aesthetic qualities (we will consider this idea in a later class)



# Example: John Wylie's walk



 Full Access

## A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path

John Wylie

First published: 01 July 2005 |

<https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2005.00163.x> | Citations: 287

# Summary of John Wylie's paper

## Abstract

This paper tells the story of a single day's walking, alone, along the South West Coast Path in North Devon, England. Forms of narrative and descriptive writing are used here as creative and critical means of discussing the varied affinities and distanciations of self and landscape emergent within the affective and performative *milieu* of coastal walking. Discussion of these further enables critical engagement with current conceptualizations of self-landscape and subject-world relations within cultural geography and spatial-cultural theory more generally. Through attending to a sequence of incidents and experiences, the paper focuses upon the distinctive ways in which coast walking patterns into refracting orderings of subjectivity and spatiality – into for example, sensations of anxiety and immensity, haptic enfolding and attenuation, encounters with others and with the elements, and moments of visual exhilaration and epiphany.

# An “affecting” view



**Figure Plate 7**

[Open in figure viewer](#) | [↓ PowerPoint](#)

## **Smoothlands**

The shelving promontory is marked on the maps as Damehole Point, the first of a series of headlands knifing out into the waves. And behind the apparently nameless, faceless cliff, gathering the sunlight and becoming the configuring centre of the landscape, there is the ‘strange, lonely, wild little valley’ (Tarr 1996, 106) of Smoothlands. Lofty scenes are commonly supposed to inspire lofty thoughts. This one seemed peculiarly affecting and archetypal. It looked somehow too good to be true, as if it had been digitally enhanced and cleaned. It was spectacular: I was all eyes.

# And – Wylie says - the pain of walking can be seen in as “a resonance of things as a whole”

The pain of footsore walking is neither wholly internal, nor a splitting of self and body, but rather a resonance of things as a whole, an architecture of refrains, stones, footfalls, refracting forces anterior to the subject-object distinction. 'I am in pain' - not that a pre-given 'I' experiences pain, but that a certain corporeality-in-pain emerges as a problem and

SECTIONS

PDF



TOOLS



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the horizontal body (1998, p. 2).



Figure Plate 9

[Open in figure viewer](#)

[PowerPoint](#)

Halo

None of this is particularly easy - but

if we follow all this (1) we obviously are seeing humans and nonhumans as equally important in shaping the world (this is Bruno Latour's idea of **actor-network theory**) – but we also recognize the unconscious levels of perception....

# A tree and a gravestone: central Quebec City



Actor-  
Network  
Theory?

A web of  
Human,  
Nature,  
And  
stone  
objects

August  
2018



(2) To see more lies below the surface

- Non-representational theory (NRT)

- This tries to compensate for ANT's neglect of human emotion by looking at what is happening outside of conscious thought, the moments of precognition.
- Emphasizes affect {defined as “emotions that are embodied reactions to the social or physical environment”}
- Some good examples have considered role of music or dance



16. Thomas Cole, *Dream of Arcadia*, ca.1838. Oil on canvas,  $39\frac{1}{4} \times 63\frac{1}{8}$  in. (99.7 × 160.3 cm.). Denver, Colo., Denver Art Museum.



# Can places reach out to us?

- All of this makes me think that just as we can create or construct our own “places” through topophilia
- Are “places” able to reach out to us...?
  - And how would they do that?
  - Some of what we have just looked at helps us here.
  - My net slide sketches my current attempts to think this one through ..... Any help welcome!

# People creates place//place “calls” to people??

## Topophilia

Individual

- Home
- Memory
- Religion
- imagination

Place

We  
CREATE a  
sense of  
place for  
ourselves



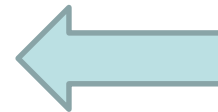
## Genius loci/spirit of place

Individual

Place

[Semi]Agency  
Affect  
Public religion  
Public  
imagination

Place can create  
an attachment  
among us



# From individual to group

- So far we have tried to think about
  - Home
  - Memory
  - Sacred
  - Imagination

from the perspective of an individual

- BUT if we realize that a town is made up of a whole group of people each with their own individual responses to place, we can see that those places are actually a whole bundle of individuals' "topophilias" and
- that "place" itself provides a focus for very fluid collection of responses, and
- That topophilias can change over time
  - As people die and their memories fade
  - As we change how we wish to evaluate or memorialize individuals (street name changes, demolition of monuments)
  - As settlers erase the landscape and names of indigenous groups

# A group's love of place?

- Yi-Fu Tuan recognized that it was difficult to generalize from each person's unique experiences of "place".
- But he did suggest that we can generalize if we look at how each culture creates its own "place" or "region".
- Which will take us to Vidal de la Blache on *genre de vie*, and Carl Sauer on the "cultural landscape".

# Group

- Cultural geographers examine the features of the cultural landscape that make each cultural region unique and are typical of that region i.e:
- Folk (“vernacular”) architecture
- Folk music
- “ethnic” or “regional” cuisine
- Regional accents and dialects

# What is a “Cultural landscape”?

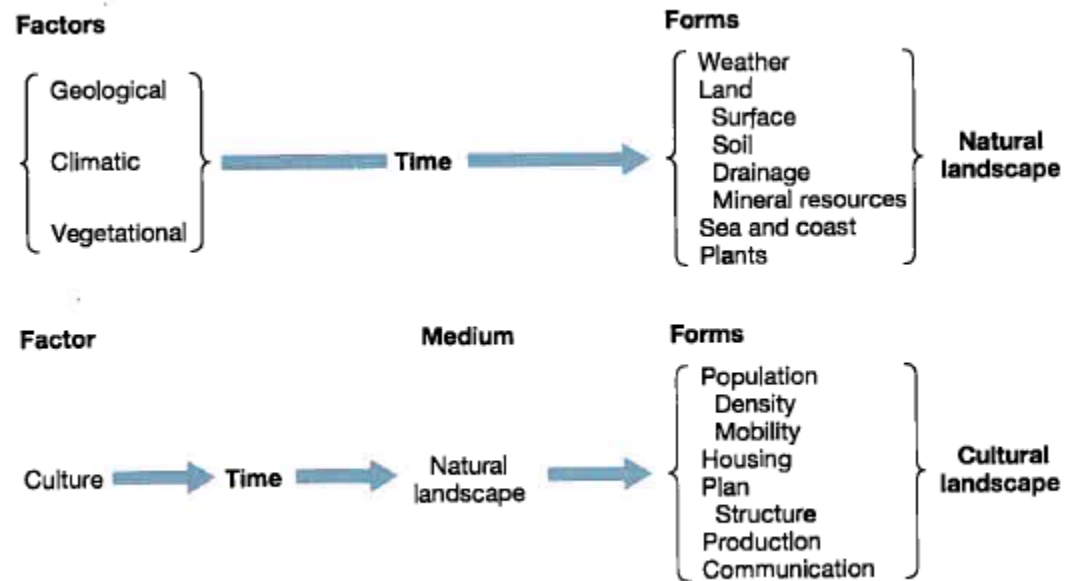
- So far we have mentioned individual love of place
- And group love of place
- But in the last slide I talked about how group love of place is used to make a “cultural landscape” so lets spend a moment on this idea...

# “Sauer’s cultural landscape

THIS IS SAUERS OWN DIAGRAM – IT IS TOO COMPLICATED

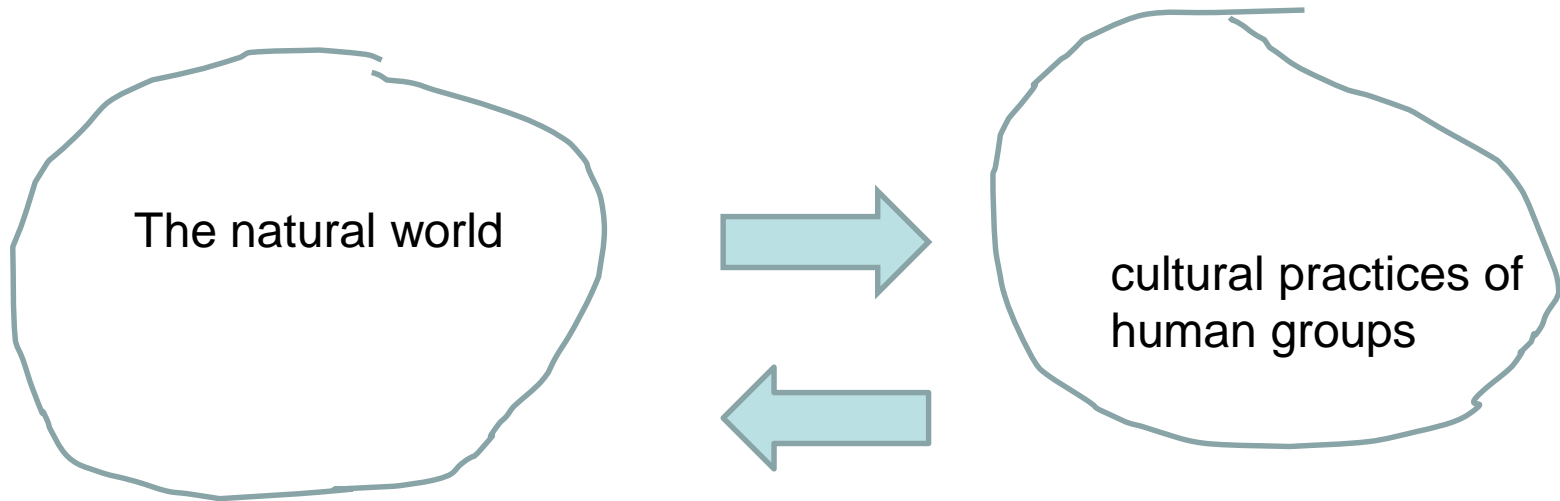
**Figure 5.5 Sauer’s cultural landscape**

This illustration is a graphic representation of the ways in which the natural landscape is formed and then transformed into a specific cultural landscape. First, physical factors shape the natural landscape. Then people—through culture—reshape the natural landscape into a cultural landscape that meets their needs. This reshaping creates specific cultural forms (such as population distributions, patterns, and housing) that together make up the characteristics of a cultural landscape that is specific to a particular group of people. (Source: Adapted from C. Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape.” In J. Leighly [ed.], *Land and Life: Selections from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1964, pp. 315–50.)



SAUER'S idea of the "Cultural landscape"

I HOPE THIS IS A BETTER DIAGRAM



Over time, the natural world  
and the cultural practices  
of humans shape each other,  
and together create the  
**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**



- In the words of Carl Sauer – ‘geography must take the risks of interpreting the meeting of natural and cultural history’
- (quoted in S.W. Wooldridge, “The Spirit and Purpose of Geography 1956: 297).

# A Note: “Sauer’s cultural landscape”

- That diagram is not really the easiest way of showing Sauer’s basic point
  - Essentially, a “*cultural landscape*” would be the result of the activities of a particular *culture* working over *time* to reshape the existing *natural landscape*

# Sauer and De la Blache

- These two geographers argued that each culture uniquely shapes, and is shaped by its physical environment, and produces its own unique cultural landscape that reflects and interacts with the physical environment and the culture in question.
  - Recall Vidal de la Blache's metaphor of the snail and its shell to describe this process

# An example:

- A nice example would be to think of today's Caribbean – there we have two basic natural landscapes – one based on volcanoes (lava), the other on coral (limestone)
- And a whole set of different cultural landscapes as the Europeans colonize the islands – Spanish, French, Dutch, English – each with different laws, language, food habits which create visibly different cultural landscapes
- And that is Sauer's basic point – just as we can see a physical landscape, so we can see a cultural landscape:  
-- and that, by the way, bring us to the origin of the world “landscape” (from the Dutch “landskip”) – an area of land “improved” through human efforts.

**We can also think of how our cultures create regions or places as “Ordinary” or “Spectacular” landscapes**

- **Spectacular**
  - All of us are attracted, in our contemplation of “place”, to the spectacular – mountains, lakes, landscape gardens,
  - Geographers who have worked on this issue show that our sense of the spectacular is a created *aesthetic*, which changes over time and is culturally-based. {we will look at this in a later class}
  - Example: the Grand Canyon

# The spectacular landscape



6. Frederic Edwin Church, *Andes of Ecuador*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 48 × 75 in. (121.9 × 190.5 cm.). Winston-Salem, N.C., Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

# The ordinary or everyday landscape



13. George Inness, *The Lackawanna Valley*, ca. 1856. Oil on canvas,  $33\frac{7}{8} \times 50\frac{3}{16}$  in. (86 × 127.5 cm.). Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art.



Q: Does “**Art**” promote the *Ordinary* or *Spectacular* to make us see afresh?



Franklin Carmichael's Northern Silver Mine, above, featured in 'A Like Vision': The Group of Seven at 100, acknowledges the complicated reality of natural landscapes the Group of Seven made famous.



# “Ordinary” vs “Spectacular” landscapes

- Ordinary
  - Most geographers would say we study the everyday world of people, the ordinary landscape, the “vernacular”
    - “vernacular” means “native” or “from the land of one’s birth” – derived from the Latin word *vernaculus*, “a slave born in his/her owner’s house”)
  - Examples: Geographers such as Terry Jordan, Wilbur Zelinsky. Much of their work deals with issues such as folk housing and we can look at some of this as an example.
  - Examples: a growing number of non-fiction writers on landscape, place and personal attachment
    - Tim Robinson (Aran Islands of Ireland)
    - Robert Macfarlane

# Tim Robinson: Aran Islands of Ireland

- <https://digital.library.nuigalway.ie/islandora/object/nuigalway%3A10957>
- This is a wonderful website for exploring his map of the Aran Islands
- The key to his work is that he identified the original name in Gaelic of every rock, path, landscape feature on the islands



BOOKS

AUTHORS

EVENTS

BOOKSTORE

BLOG

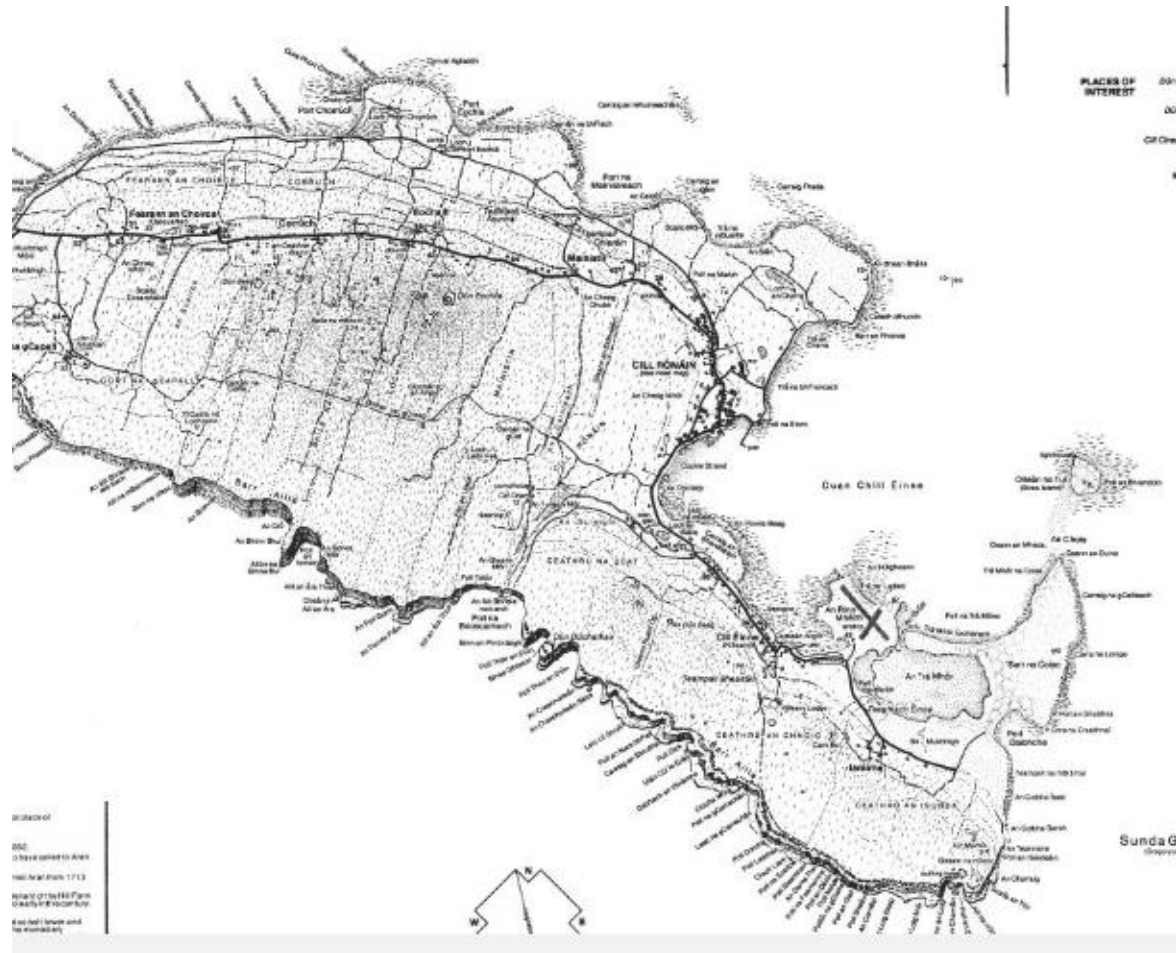
OUR STORY



# Tim Robinson



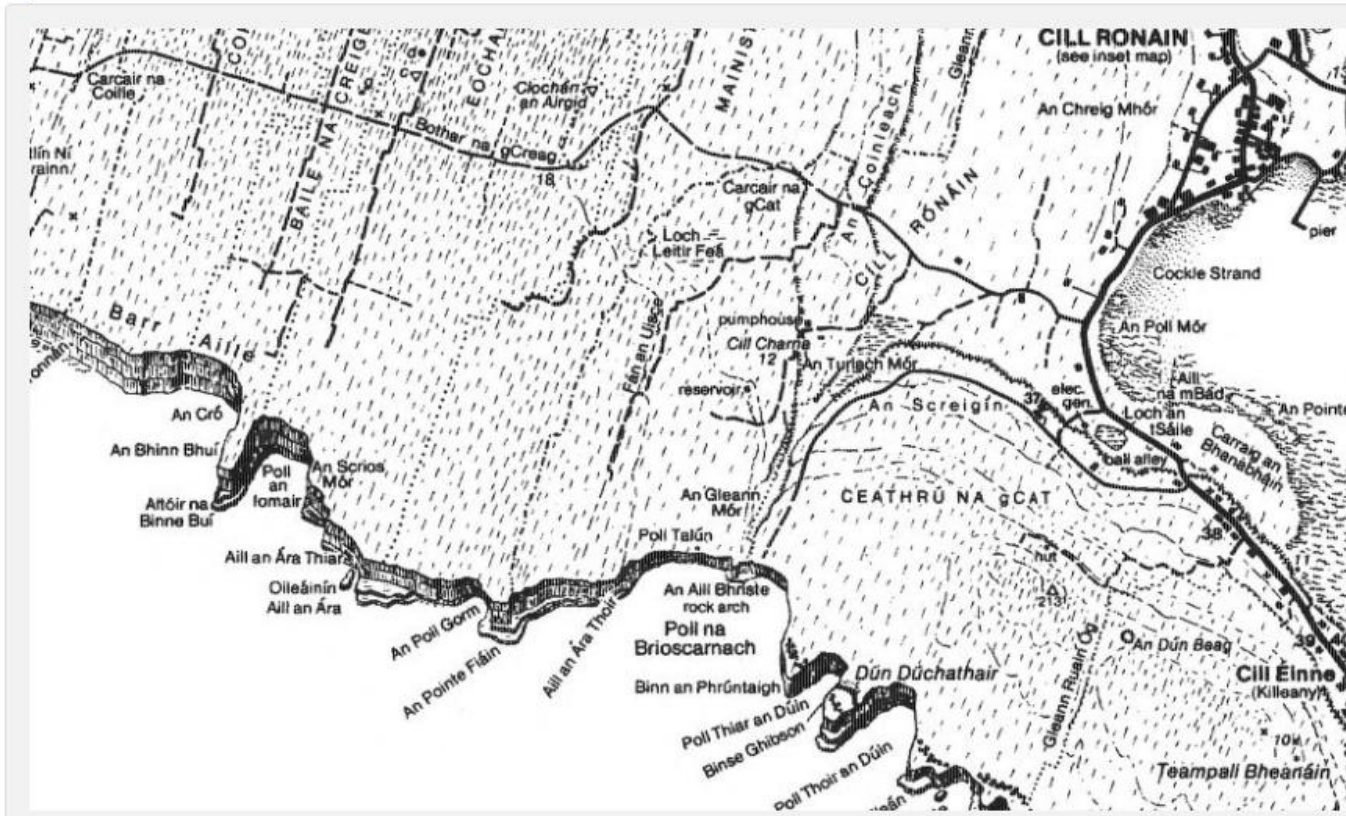
# Tim Robinson – map of the Aran Islands



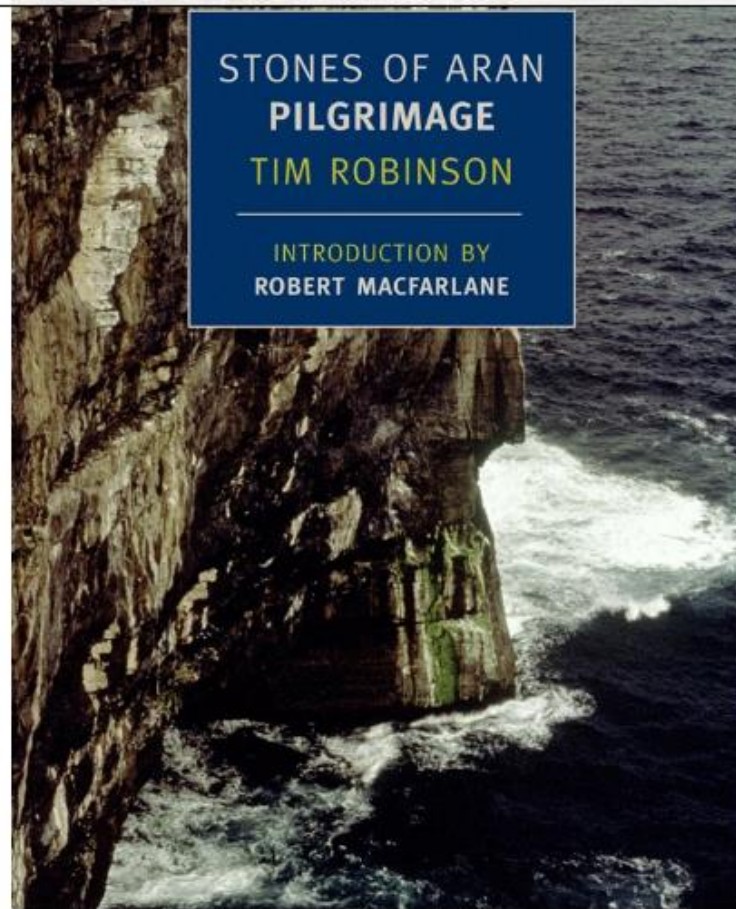
# Tim Robinson – map of the Aran Islands {detail}

## Aran Map

Share L



# Tim Robinson: Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage



# Tim Robinson: Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage

From the *New York Review of Books* blurb:

The Aran Islands, in Galway Bay off the west coast of Ireland, are a unique geological and cultural landscape, and for centuries their stark beauty and their inhabitants' traditional way of life have attracted pilgrims from abroad. After a visit with his wife in 1972, Tim Robinson moved to the islands, where he started making maps and gathering stories, eventually developing the idea for a cosmic history of Árainn, the largest of the three islands. *Pilgrimage* is the first of two volumes that make up *Stones of Aran*, in which Robinson maps the length and breadth of Árainn. Here he circles the entire island, following a clockwise, sunwise path in quest of the “good step,” in which walking itself becomes a form of attention and contemplation.

Like Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia*, *Stones of Aran* is not only a meticulous and mesmerizing study of place but an entrancing and altogether unclassifiable work of literature. Robinson explores Aran in both its elemental and mythical dimensions, taking us deep into the island's folklore, wildlife, names, habitations, and natural and human histories. Bringing to life the ongoing, forever unpredictable encounter between one man and a given landscape, *Stones of Aran* discovers worlds.

In a personal encounter with the landscape and its folklore, Robinson circles the entire island in clockwise, sunwise, fashion in search of the “good step” in which walking itself becomes a form of attention and contemplation”

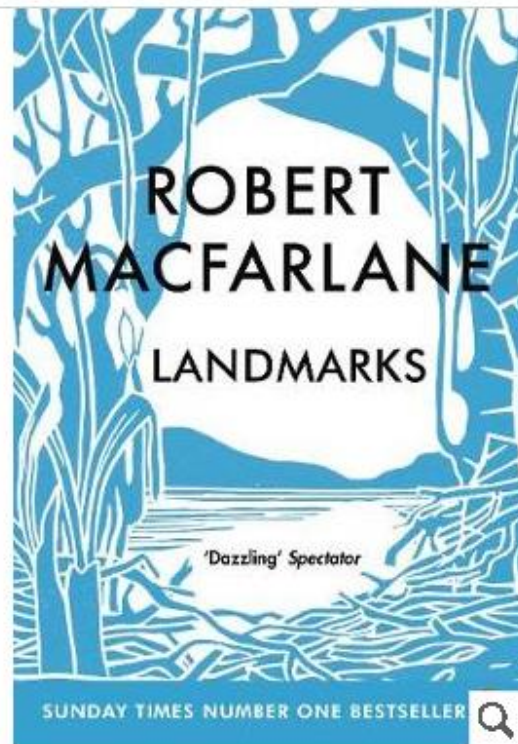


# Robert Macfarlane





COMING SOON | BESTSELLERS | FICTION | N



# “the power of language to shape our sense of place”

*Landmarks* is Robert Macfarlane's joyous meditation on words, landscape and the relationship between the two. Words are grained into our landscapes, and landscapes are grained into our words.

*Landmarks* is about the power of language to shape our sense of place. It is a field guide to the literature of nature, and a glossary containing thousands of remarkable words used in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales to describe land, nature and weather.

Travelling from Cumbria to the Cairngorms, and exploring the landscapes of Roger Deakin, J. A. Baker, Nan Shepherd and others, Robert Macfarlane shows that language, well used, is a keen way of knowing landscape, and a vital means of coming to love it.

Source:  
Penguin  
Books website

...”[a] meditation on words, landscape and the relationship between the two ..”

# Lieux de mémoire

- Idea from French historian, Pierre Nora
  - so we can take from History and use this idea in Geography
- Lieux de mémoire = “sites of memory” = places that are important to a group (i.e. battles)

# 1759: Battle of the Heights of Abraham: Quebec City



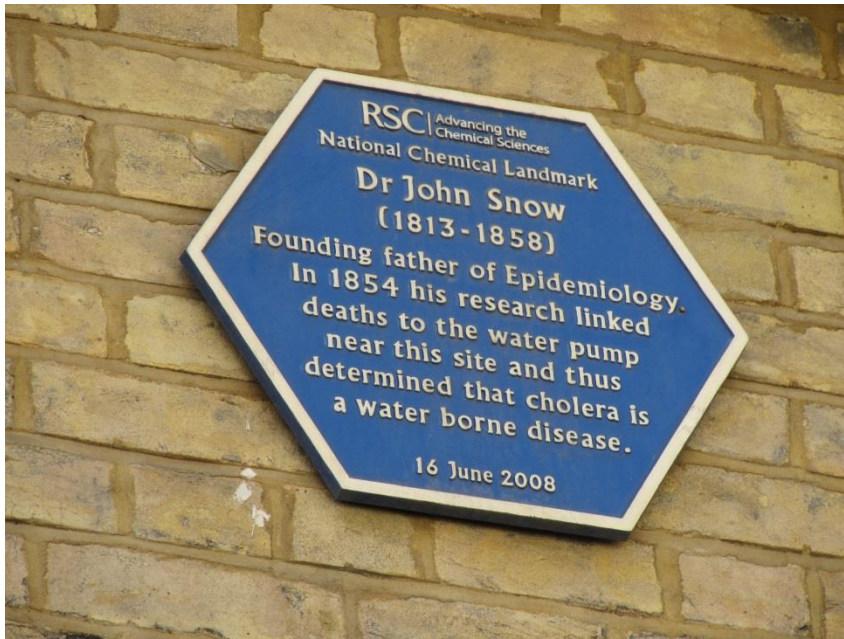
**Inauguration of the Plains of Abraham Trail:  
Last phase of the Gilmour Hill redevelopment project completed**

May 5, 2016 – Québec – The National Battlefields Commission

- eventually we can see plaques or statues used at a place to commemorate the site of memory – why? – so it is not lost.
  - Again, we see how “Place” and “memory” for a group can become intimately related in this way {remember the Scottish clans ...}
- But is it important if that memory is lost?  
.... Or if that memory changes...?



This plaque in London commemorates the place where John Snow identified the cause of cholera



# Non-places

- Just as we can talk about “places” and topophilia
- We can talk about “non-places” and a sense of “placelessness”
  - The geographer who has most written about this is Ted Relph (Univ of Toronto) [student of Yi-Fu Tuan]
  - What types of places are “non-places”?
  - Why these might be “unmemorable”
- Idea of “*topophobia*” [fear of places]

# “Place marketing”

- Knowing a little about the love of place also helps us understand how place is used in selling things
  - “place marketing” (a great example is the selling of Niagara Falls, Ontario, as a tourist destination.
  - Heritage tourism (the Scottish diaspora)
- Can you think of examples where “ideas of place” are being used to sell you something.....?