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Preface

Hayden Lorimer

Through the exercise of biography, landscape can be considered anew. An opening observation as bold as this demands some prefatory justification.

'Landscape biographies' might usefully be conceived of as an adaptive form of portraiture; personhood serving as the lens through which to view changes made to the natural or built environment, to its social purpose or cultural imagination. Pitched in these terms, portraiture performs broader duties than the standard depiction of an individual life as an arc of existence stretching from cradle to grave. Instead, it would attend carefully to a person's association with, or influence upon some identifiable place.

The orders of person who are influential in the shaping of place are as diverse in character as is topography in its forms. Operating as principal agents of landscape change, the biographical subject could be a mapper or a maker, architect or author, farmer or forester, traveller or tourist, interpreter or imaginer. They may be permanently resident, or on the move and simply passing through. She: a geo-engineer in the business of moving earth. He: a lyric poet whose words inscribe with a lightness of touch. But by a combination of actions and ideas, individual agency is attached or anchored, and a mark is made.

What does such a person leave? On occasion, evidence of authorship exists to such depth and degree, that landscape seems somehow fashioned in the author's own image. A kind of likeness between landscape and landscaper that is hard to ignore, and one narrated according to major standout features, judged posthumously as well worth remembering. Such strong biographical legacies can produce landscapes as ongoing, re-readable phenomena. Readability being a quality derived from direct experience, among those variously in search of a subject for artistic appreciation, a site of special scenic value, or exposed to endlessly recycled mediations in text and image. In other instances, past forms of landscape modification may be more minor, or the speed of transformation less dramatic, and thus individual interventions are gradually forgotten; until being rediscovered through the happy accidents or patient labours of formal research investigation.

And what of the places impacted by such active protagonists? This might be landscape conceived of at the smallest of scales, no more than

a patch or parcel of ground. Or, a landscape considerably greater in geographical extent: delimited according to cultural and ethnic traditions; a territory, whose extent can be charted along geo-political borders; or, what amounts to a scientific bioregion, understood in terms of floral and faunal particularity. And so, a sense gradually emerges of landscape as a phenomenon that can easily exceed the stamp or signature of any one author.

Configuring the relation between biography and landscape in these greater terms is, by implication, to acknowledge a different measure for existence in the living world. A 'biography of landscape' can long outlast the span of a single human life. Landscapes can be understood to have a biography that has accumulated across centuries, or aggregated over millennia. This stretched temporality is significant, and in tandem with it, the researcher's attunement to the multivariate agencies that co-produce landscape. Generosity shown to the 'more-than-human' demands a certain pliability of thinking, not only about the kinds of lives that might be subject to study, but also about what can be recovered of a life. The results can be generative and liberating: presencing the lifeworlds of animals and birds, plants and trees, objects and structures, and many other "beings" besides these. By the application of close and careful attention, each can be said to have a life history (not simply as a species or a multitude) but as individualized biographical subjects.

Both of these kinds of portraiture – 'landscape biographies' and 'biographies of landscape' – have their play in this excellent book. Its contents are an occasion for convening – critically and creatively – around interests shared by geographers, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists. In the recognition of authorial difference, one further twist on portraiture is made possible. This is to question the rightful register and pitch for authorial voice in landscape studies. Should it be detached, as academic tradition demands? Or reflexively embedded and enfolded inside the narrative? If so, then what style should we determine as most effective? Circumstances prevail, of course. And a spectrum exists, running all the way from explicit reportage to the recessed, spectral presence that speaks of literary invention.

As this volume's contributors make plain, landscape studies continue to have the great merit of being a genuinely interdisciplinary area of scholarship. The field methods, and interpretive techniques, employed by practitioners in a range of terrestrial and archival settings may well reflect intellectual differences in disciplinary history and contemporary theory, sometimes to quite categorical degree. But here evident are also

areas of significant overlap and real rapport, suggesting how ideas about the relation between landscape and biography are sharpened through the company they keep. Moreover, as this collection of chapters so ably demonstrates, tensions between disciplinary traditions need not be overcome. Instead, a trade in sensibilities and mentalities is enabled. Landscape is, above all, a subject that demands the skills and appetite of the polymath.

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Landscape and Heritage Studies

Landscape and Heritage Studies (LHS) is an English-language series about the history, heritage and transformation of the natural and cultural landscape and the built environment. The series aims at the promotion of new directions as well as the rediscovery and exploration of lost tracks in landscape and heritage research. Both theoretically oriented approaches and detailed empirical studies play an important part in the realization of this objective. The series explicitly focuses on:

- the interactions between physical and material aspects of landscapes and landscape experiences, meanings and representations;
- perspectives on the temporality and dynamic of landscape that go beyond traditional concepts of time, dating and chronology;
- the urban-rural nexus in the context of historical and present-day transformations of the landscape and the built environment;
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- the conceptualization and musealization of landscape as heritage and the role of 'heritagescapes' in the construction and reproduction of memories and identities;
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