

# Bookshelf

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## IN SEARCH OF WONDER

**WANDERLAND** by Jini Reddy (Bloomsbury, £16.99)

Every nature writer needs a quest: a mountain to conquer, a desert to cross, an island to circumnavigate. But when Jini Reddy sets out from her home in south-west London, it is in pursuit of something less tangible. 'I wanted something more than to walk through an alluring landscape and admire its beauty. I wanted somehow to be more porous... I wanted something else, something a bit "Other".'

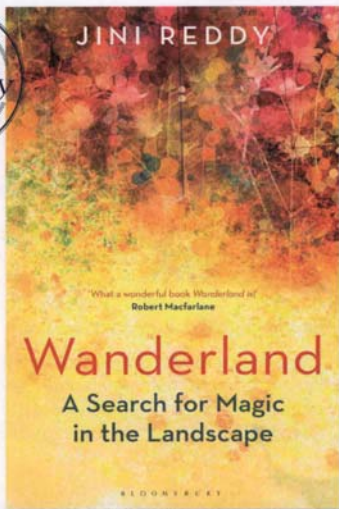
So begins her candid, soulful and uplifting search for natural magic, for the enchantment that most of us have felt at certain times in certain locations but perhaps failed to acknowledge or dismissed. She negotiates labyrinths in Cornwall, learns about 'land zodiacs' in Glastonbury, and seeks out a shaman in Wales with mixed, but always entertaining, results.

Here is, she acknowledges, an unconventional goal, but accusations of eccentricity are water off a duck's back. Born in Britain to Indian parents and raised in Canada, she is used to being regarded as 'Other' herself. 'If I live in the cracks, if I fall between camps... I'll make the outlier world my home, a desirable place to be.'

Easier said than done. Seeking refreshment along St Michael's Way in Cornwall, she pauses before entering a pub. 'In rural pubs mine is often the only non-white face and I always cross the threshold of one with slight trepidation,' she writes. Later, on Iona, she agonises over her walking gear: too flashy and she's pegged as a Londoner; not flashy enough and she's an 'Asian woman... out of her depth.'

Yet while the magic that Reddy yearns for sometimes eludes her, at other times it arrives miraculously on cue. Ultimately, she realises, the secret is to slow down and listen: to herself, and to the land.

*Stephanie Cross*



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