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2. Histories of Space, Spaces of History

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Words in Place: Mapping Australian Literature

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Résumés

English Français

This article considers literary mapping as an instance of the contemporary construction of space through digital networked technology. Digital cartography – mapping with the means of digital technology, internet and GPS technologies – represents space as a virtual layering of information. The digital cartography project *Words in Space* is discussed as a case study of digital literary mapping. Analysis of the data contained in this literary map reveals significant aspects of literary commemoration in Australia.

Cet article examine la cartographie littéraire comme un exemple de la construction contemporaine de l'espace au travers de la technologie numérique en réseau. La cartographie numérique – la réalisation de cartes avec les outils de la technologie numérique, l'internet et les technologies de géolocalisation – représente l'espace par la stratification de l'information. Le projet de cartographie numérique *Mots dans l'espace* est traité comme une étude de cas de la cartographie littéraire numérique. L'analyse des données contenues dans cette carte littéraire est révélatrice d'aspects significatifs de la commémoration littéraire en Australie.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : cartographie littéraire, cartographie numérique, stratification virtuelle, littérature australienne, commémoration

Keywords : literary mapping, digital cartography, virtual layering, Australian literature, commemoration

Texte intégral

1. The Layering of Space

1 In his book *The New Time and Space* (2015), John Potts contends that the contemporary orientation to space has been transformed through the medium of recently developed technologies. These technologies – the digital computer, the internet, GPS (Global Positioning System) and the smart mobile phone – are components of the networked society, which superimposes a virtual network onto territorial space. Potts argues that “the physical world is increasingly overlaid by the virtual network sphere: space is an overlapping of the virtual onto the geographical” (51). The experience of urban public space, as well as the conceptualisation of space, have been altered due to this persistent mapping of virtual space onto geographic space.

2 GPS, the internet and the digital computer all have military origins, as technologies for the storing of information and the surveillance of space. Satellites were used for the military purpose of surveillance during the Cold War; when the United States government lifted military restriction on the use of satellites in 2000, the civilian use of GPS escalated over the next decade. The satellite navigation (or satnav) of road journeys became a standard feature of new cars: the Dutch company TomTom sold 65 million satnav boxes in 2011 (Potts 55). Google Earth proved so popular that its launch in 2005 over-burdened the Google system and needed reinforcement servers. Potts remarks that Google Earth “fused satellite and internet technology in the ‘zoomable’ rendering of geographic space” (55), from the territory of the Earth itself down to the very house and street occupied by the user. Smartphone use proliferated in 2007, with the launch of Apple’s iPhone, and in 2008, when Google launched its Android operating system.

3 From 2008 onwards, then, the networking of information and communication contained in the internet has been put to mobile use, as smart phone users carry virtual organisations of the world around with them in their mobile phone devices. Many theorists have analysed the changes to conceptions of place, community and communication in the wake of the networked mediation of public space. For Varnelis and Friedberg, writing in 2008, public space is now networked space. Their study of “networked publics” found that the “always-on, always accessible network” has altered our concept of place, “linking specific locales to a global continuum and thereby transforming our sense of proximity and distance” (15). In her 2011 study of the use of social media, Sherry Turkle characterised the users of mobile phones, especially teenagers, as perpetually “tethered” (to their phones) and “marked absent” (to physical space) (155). Turkle observes groups of mobile phone users in a public space as “alone together”: they may physically reside in the same communal space, but “they do not speak to each other” – they are on their phones (155). In instances such as these, the virtual network opened up by the smart phone is super-imposed onto the public space, with the result, as one of Turkle’s respondents remarks, that “No-one is where they are. They’re talking to someone miles away” (227).

4 The overlaying of the virtual network onto the physical space of cities has forged a new “hybrid” form of space, as Scott McQuire described it in 2006. For McQuire, the twenty-first century public domain is composed neither of “material structures such as streets and plazas” nor the purely “virtual space of electronic media.” Instead, the new public domain can best be understood as “the complex interaction of material and immaterial spaces” (qtd. in Miranda 1). This hybrid space, with components both virtual and physical, has been navigated and explored in various contexts: by artists working

with “locative media”; by “augmented reality” as a form of popular culture; and by literary mapping, in which the experience of a public space can be enhanced by knowledge of its literary significance.

2. Locative Media

5 Potts notes that in the early twenty-first century, artists were quick to explore “the potential of location-based media technologies” (62). In 2002, a media art workshop in Latvia proposed the term “locative media” to describe artworks that are “spatially localized, and centred on the individual user.” The new “geospatial” art, using mobile network technologies, aimed at “a collaborative cartography of space and mind, places and the connections between them” (62). Artist and theorist Maria Miranda remarks that electronic artists in this period were concerned that their innovations should not be co-opted for corporate entertainment technology, as “R&D for a new generation of entertainment spectacle” (Miranda 4). Locative artworks have, as a result, generally avoided the game-playing or entertainment aspects of the technology, creating, as Potts observes, “more oblique or enigmatic interplay between virtual space and the surrounding material space” (62). Reference is often made, in such art works, to the history of specific sites, so that the “user of handheld mobile devices may experience aspects of the site’s formation that may have receded from view” (62).

6 One such work is *After Bahnhof Video Walk*, by Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, which premiered at Documenta 2012 in Kassel, Germany. This work was available to be downloaded onto smartphones or media players; users walked with the artists – as a virtual presence – through the Kassel train station. The audio-visual material provided on the player overlapped onto the immediate environment of the station, so that the work hovers in “the intersection of worlds in hybrid mediated space” (Potts 63). The user is in two worlds at once, as the dual aspects of public space – the material and the immaterial – are combined and confounded in this artwork. The experience of public space is enhanced, even confused, by the overlaying of the virtual in this artwork, which draws on the character and the history of the site. The resultant “physical cinema”, as this artwork has been described, is a creative realisation of hybrid public space.

7 Other artists have used the possibilities of networked digital technologies and GPS to explore environmental themes. Nigel Helyer has developed forms of “digital cartography” in works such as *Ecolated*, a 2011 project. In this work, water quality data taken while sailing across the North Sea and Irish Sea was visualised and sonified on an online interactive map. Environmental data was mixed with oral history material, “all of which was geo-located in a multilayered composition” (Helyer and Potts 4). The result was an environmental portrait of the sea and of Belfast. A more recent 2016 project, *When Art Meets Science*, takes environmental readings of the Shoalhaven River Valley, in NSW, Australia, and makes them available to users through hand-held GPS devices, allowing users to experience an environmental and cultural portrait of the place as they walk through it.

3. Augmented Reality

8 If artists have avoided the game-playing possibilities of mobile technology, this potential has been fully exploited by the Pokemon Go “augmented reality” app. Launched to enormous success in 2016, Pokemon Go “augments” reality by digitally

overlaying features of the Pokemon game onto physical locations. Pokemon locations such as “Gyms” are situated in real-world locations; the Pokemon Go player traverses the city and surroundings, guided by the demands of the game. The hybrid aspect of contemporary public space is evident in the wild popularity of this game. Media reports have documented instances where users are so engrossed in their mobile phone screens that they have temporarily ignored their physical surroundings, at times to their detriment. One such user outside New York was reportedly so intent on chasing virtual creatures that he became stuck in waist-deep mud and needed to call 911 (Baird 31). The pernicious side-effects of the game have been demonstrated in several reported real-world mishaps or accidents resulting from users’ focus on the virtual world. The New York Police Department was motivated by the Pokemon craze to issue a safety advisory in July 2016 stating: “As you battle, train, and capture your Pokemon, just remember you’re still in the real world, too!” (Schulman 16).

9 One feature of the Pokemon Go app that has occasioned critical media commentary is the commercialisation of space as a result of this “augmented reality”. It has been reported that McDonald’s has completed a deal with Niantic – the game’s creator and a spinoff company from Google – to sponsor Pokemon gym locations in Japan (Iveson 17). Henri Lefebvre’s well-known thesis in *The Production of Space* (1974) was that social space is a social product, and that each society, or each mode of production, produces “its own space” (31). For Lefebvre, advanced capitalist societies have produced “abstract space”, a space “founded on the vast networks of banks, business centres and major productive entities...and information lattices”. Lefebvre also associates the city with accumulation, stating that “the town – once the forcing-house of accumulation, fountainhead of wealth and centre of historical space – has disintegrated” (53). Urban space today is saturated as well as augmented, causing people, unable to process such huge amounts of information, to forget physical space.

10 Augmented reality games such as Pokemon Go may herald the next stage in the development of this abstracted space founded on commodification. This commodification relates not only to the real-world location of “gyms” such as McDonald’s, but to the virtual sphere, in which “in-app purchases” within the free Pokemon Go app generate more than \$1 million per day in revenue (Iveson 17). The urban geographer Kurt Iveson, in a critical media article on Pokemon Go, has pointed out that the most lucrative revenue stream opened up by the augmented reality game is the acquisition and sale of data collected from the users of the game. This includes not only personal data but “aggregated spatial data about urban activity patterns” (Iveson 17). This “geo-spatial data”, on the movements of millions of users, concerns detailed information on the distances people travel during game play, the kinds of places at which they stop, the groups they travel with, the connections they make, and many other factors. This data is “harvested” from the millions of Pokemon Go players, and could potentially be sold to parties for the purpose of targeted advertising. The user’s “geo-spatial” habits may be used for customised advertising targeted back at the user. In this manner, the virtual space becomes a site of commodification, in which the user unwittingly provides the means for a new form of consumerism.

4. Literary Mapping

11 All maps are selective representations of space. Potts describes the map as a “technology of space”; it is also “an interpretation of space that bears the imprint of the world in which it is made” (19). A map represents territory according to the knowledge and world-view of its period and its specific culture; the historian Brian Harley has

stated that cartography “belongs to the terrain of the social world in which it is produced” (qtd. in Pickles 12). Medieval *mappaemundi* depicted the world according to the dominant religious perspective: they were imaginative constructions of space according to the religious understanding of the time. Renaissance mapping, by contrast, was conducted through the means of quantification and measurement: terrestrial space was depicted in geometrical and mathematical – rather than symbolic – terms. World maps – filling with detail as more of the world was “discovered” through exploration – were based on the “predetermined spatial grid”, the “empty, homogeneous graticule of latitude and longitude”, in the words of Jerry Brotton (75).

12 Digital cartography inherits the mathematical dissection of territorial space developed in Renaissance mapping, adding a virtual dimension rendered by networked technology and GPS. The historian of mapping Simon Garfield remarks that the electronic mapping freely available on the internet and smart phones places each user “individually, at the centre of our own map worlds”. Users plot a route on a smartphone or in the car from ourselves – “current location” – and distance is measured from “where we stand” (19). Where Jerusalem was once placed at the centre of European maps, or Youzhou stood at the centre of Chinese maps, Google-maps inserts the user as origin and centre of space – a form of “Me-Mapping” – as represented through the technology of virtual mapping.

13 Digital literary mapping may be considered a utilisation of virtual mapping that has more in common with locative media artworks than with the new commodification of Pokemon Go. It is less an instance of “Me-Mapping” than an attempt to enrich users’ knowledge of particular sites or sections of geographical space. Literary mapping has emerged as a manifestation of “geohumanities”, or “the rapidly growing zone of creative interaction between geography and the humanities” (Douglas et. al. 3). As David Cooper et. al. have observed in their recent study of literary mapping, “mapping technologies constitute an innovative means through which individuals can orient themselves, and in the process, renegotiate their relationship with their surroundings” (2). Literary mapping, deploying digital technologies and GPS, enhances the user’s understanding of specific urban spaces, often by revealing historical knowledge of the site. A temporal as well as spatial dimension is often involved with literary mapping, as aspects of literary history are layered onto the geographic site through online means across different platforms from desktop to tablet and mobile.

14 *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age* (2016), part of Routledge’s Digital Research in Arts and Humanities series, attempts to document what Cooper et. al. call a “transitional moment” of “new theoretical frameworks and fresh critical paradigms” as digital literary mapping is still emerging and diversifying (18). Contributors to the collection examine a wide array of mostly UK and US mapping projects (*Litmap*, *Mapping the Lakes*, *Cardiff Plotlines*, *Rebecca Harding Davis-CAVE*), but two limitations regularly stifle their critiques. The first is a limited understanding of the range and possibilities of literature itself, often misdirected by Franco Moretti’s hugely influential *Atlas of the European Novel* (1998) into a false assertion that literature is more or less limited to Anglo-European fictional prose. Cooper is the only scholar in the collection, for instance, to extensively investigate poets, while playwrights, children’s authors, non-fiction travel writers, essayists and others are neglected. Even realist literature such as W.G. Sebald’s *Rings of Saturn* needs to offer its “imaginative” maps to geo-unlocated readers who are assumed to have no reading history of their own.

15 The second limitation, one of place, springs from the first. As Bushell observes, Michael De Certeau’s conceptions of space and place in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980, translated 1984) have led literary cartographers to see “place” as the material book/ebook platform itself which produces the imaginative “space” of reading (130).

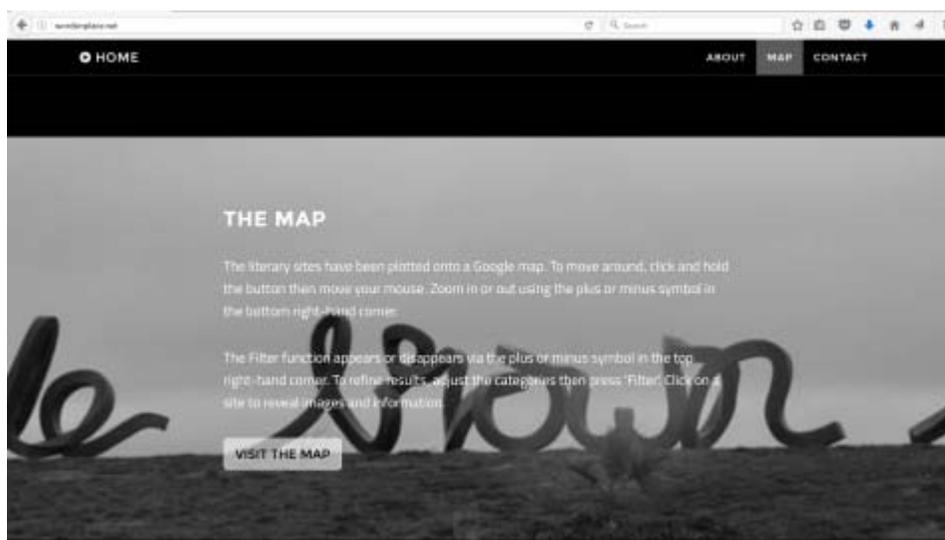
Bushell advocates a more nuanced understanding of landscapes of the actual world and public involvement, while Anderson and Harris et. al. consider the text/territory entanglements and the “geospatial tourist” respectively, but none conceives of the unique presence of commemorative literary sites (Bushell 142, 144; Anderson 165; Harris et. al. 222). Possibly this is a transdisciplinary side-effect, with literature-cultural geography intersections less inclined to include commemorative practices more likely to be pigeonholed under ‘heritage’, a sub-discipline of history. Yet the limited conceptions of both literature and space/place are equally restricting. Writers’ walks, writer’s houses, statues,

Words in Place website



<http://wordsinplace.net/> © Macquarie University

Words in Place: The Map portal



<http://wordsinplace.net/> © Macquarie University

- 16 plaques, public artworks re-envisioning lines of poetry or prose, suburbs and roads and parks named after writers: all these public, permanent sites invoke the literary, and represent a sophisticated interaction between author’s afterlives, the built environment, landscape and cultural memory. It is the mapping of commemorative sites dedicated to writers and writing which is still largely missing from the literary digital mapping field.

5. Words in Place

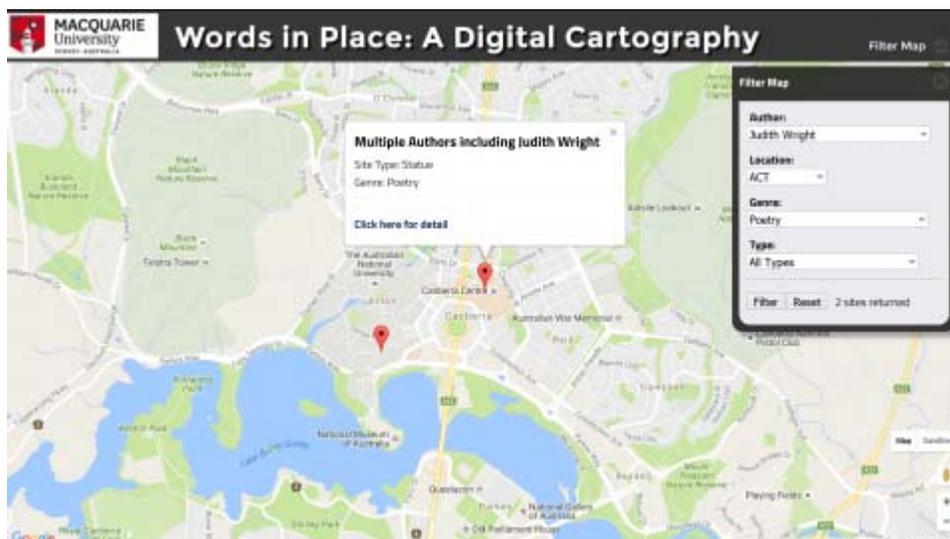
- 17 *Words in Place: A Digital Cartography of Australian Writers and Writing in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra* (2015) is the result of a two-year transdisciplinary project at Macquarie University between literature, geography, media and cultural studies scholars. It catalogues and digitally maps sites which recognise or represent Australian writers or their works, excluding graves. An initial sample of sixty sites in Sydney (thirty-five), Melbourne (fifteen) and Canberra (ten) has been photographed, documented and GPS-located in the field. *Words in Place* users can filter searches by author (A-Z by surname), genre (e.g. novel, children's literature), commemorative style (e.g. statue, writers' walk) or state (e.g. New South Wales). Google Maps technology allows users to zoom in on the map and click on a marked site, opening relevant photographs, site descriptions, categorisations and hyperlinks. Ten selected sites also feature de-identified audio and transcript interviews with community members; these interviews discuss the local significance of sites such as Manning Clark House in Canberra and the State Library/Wheeler Centre precinct in Melbourne. While still at a pilot stage, this scholarly and community resource will expand over time to include rural sites. These sites are often more innovative than Melbourne, largely focused upon the Wheeler Centre and its living literary culture.
- 18 Analysis of the data sets contained in *Words in Place* reveals significant aspects of literary commemoration in the three urban centres. Ashton and Hamilton observe in "Places of the Heart: Memorials, Public History and the State in Australia Since 1960" that there is a powerful trend toward "participatory memorialisation" and away from singular, official histories to more open-ended, localised ones (10). Although all located in the South-East corner of Australia, the three cities are vastly different in their approaches to literary commemoration. Sydney, the oldest city, has the 1991 Circular Quay Writers' Walk, a considerable number of statues and plaques, and a recent upsurge in public sculpture incorporating textual samples, such as the 1999 Janet Laurence sculpture *Veil of Trees* near the Art Gallery of NSW. Melbourne, Australia's only UNESCO City of Literature, is poorer at public commemoration of writers than Canberra which, since the 2001 Centenary of Federation, has embarked on a remarkable program of installing public spaces dedicated to Australian writers. These either have their own dedicated sites or can be scanned and thus have an interactive digital component.
- 19 As a created capital habitable from the late 1920s, Canberra had a slow start, largely restricting itself to writer-themed suburbs such as Garran. It was not until the 1970s that an "efflorescence" of local writers could be identified, as Pierce (27) does for the impressive number (and calibre) of poets connected to A.D. Hope's tenure at the Australian National University from 1950. The university now houses the A.D. Hope building, an A.D. Hope sculpture and the Judith Wright Court. The conflict between national duties of the capital can be seen in its paradoxical relation to literature and film: while it boasts the National Library of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive, it is equally the home of the historical censorship, financial blacklisting and ASIO surveillance of writers, particularly those suspected to have communist or activist sympathies (Capp 1993). In recent decades, Canberra has also become a focus for "anti-memorials" (Ware 2008) which often originate in resistance to government or civic policy, for example the 2006 memorial to the 353 refugees who perished in the SIEV X maritime disaster. The *Words in Place* Canberra data set also reveals what is missing. The Australian War Memorial features writers in temporary exhibitions and in its extensive archives; yet nothing permanent has, to date, been ventured, even for the 2014-2019 Centenary of World War One.

20 The alignment of national dates such as the 2001 Centenary of Federation, the deaths of a series of key literary figures such as poets in and around the year 2000 including Judith Wright and A.D. Hope, and the support of the Stanhope ACT Government led to a surge in literary-themed sites: Manning Clark House (c.2001), Judith Wright Courtyard at Australian National University (2002), Dorothea MacKellar's iconic poem "My Country" at the National Arboretum (2005), Peter Latona's sculpture *Tree of Knowledge* (2010), Anne Ross' statue of the Michael Salmon children's character Alexander Bunyip (2011) and Rosemary Dobson Park (2013). Poets' Corner in Garema Place (2012) is especially significant for its

collection of three bronze busts by Cathy Weizmann of Canberra focussed on Australian poets Judith Wright, A.D. Hope and David Campbell. Poet's Corner highlights the importance of these poets and creates a space where people can reflect upon, recite and enjoy poetry. A sample of each poet's work is presented on the granite plinths supporting the busts. (artsACT)

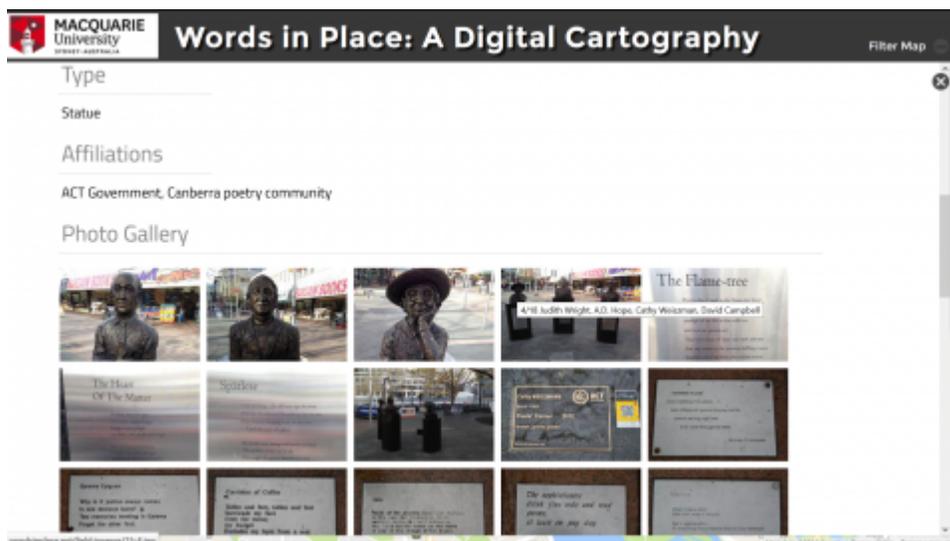
21 The small granite block for the sculpture's plaque is also raised before the three plinths, potentially serving as a poetry-reciting platform. The title Poets' Corner invokes its namesake at Westminster Abbey, where only one Australian poet, the English-born Adam Lindsay Gordon, lies with the likes of Wordsworth and Tennyson, the latter owing a good deal of his fame to his power to memorialise with poetry itself (Campbell 87). The contrast could not be greater between the ancient sepulchral solemnity of Westminster Abbey and an inner Canberra plaza populated by food outlets, bargain book and shoe stores. This juxtaposition between the sacred and the profane, a centuries-old English tradition and freshly-minted Canberran one, adds an extra layer to the meaning of the site, from English origins to the local, lived dimension. Hope and Wright, in particular, have long associations with the nearby Australian National University, which contains further sites dedicated to each writer. Poets' Corner is Canberra's most successful attempt at creating a literary precinct, although not yet on the scale of Melbourne's State Library or Sydney's Walsh Bay precincts. To put matters in perspective, Canberra's population is roughly a tenth of that of Melbourne's, but its commemorative sites of Australian writing almost outnumber Melbourne, and are far more innovatively integrated into the built environment with digital support and augmentation.

Words in Place map n°1: Judith Wright, Canberra



http://wordsinplace.net/ © Macquarie University

Words in Place map n°2: Poets' Corner, Canberra



<http://wordsinplace.net/> © Macquarie University

- 22 Poets' Corner further expands its spatial engagement through a series of ground-level plaques installed around the plaza. These plaques contain poems by local, contemporary Canberra poets including "Garema Place" by Michele Crosthwaite, "Garema Epigram" by Geoff Page, "Corridors of Coffee" by Anonymous, "Late" by Steven Evans, "Untitled" by Lesley Fowler, "This Place" by William O'Cooper, "Untitled" by Linette Bone. These poems concern Garema Place itself, unlike the three poems on the plinths, thereby creating interactions between the displaced older famous works and the sense of place of the newer, lesser known ones. To use one example:

[Ground plaque]

Woman took tiny,
tight steps, waters broke, baby born
Garema Place was blest.

Linette Bone
(A true story)

[Plinth plaque]

Spätlese

A late picking – an old man sips his wine
And eyes his vineyard flourishing row on row
Ripe clusters, hanging heavy on the vine,
Catch the sun's afterglow.

- 23 Here, a matter of steps away from one another, Bone's untitled poem records the apparently true birth of a baby at the site, while A.D. Hope's 'Spätlese' speaks to the other end of the human experience in a vineyard location well outside of Civic's built environment. The local, lived heritage of the area is preserved by Lynette Bone, but the literary heritage of the area is served by Hope more convincingly, as he is a major figure in Australian postwar literature and criticism, one of the first to be included in wider English-language anthologies.
- 24 Poets' Corner also exemplifies more recent commemorative trends with its emphasis on a blend of digital and physical interactivity. The site can be scanned and further details extracted from the CityArt app, a Creative Partnerships Australia/Canberra CBD Ltd joint initiative launched in 2013 to provide an interactive digital map of public art.

This map also employs users' GPS co-ordinates to locate nearby artwork and participatory features such as the small rock platform upon which to step up to recite the poetry. The plaza itself is a larger amalgam of restaurants, art works and recreational initiatives such as a public roller rink. The (non-)utility of poetry in the area is even parodied by poet and artist Richard Tipping's 2012 installation, a street sign which declares: "PRIVATE POETRY / TRESPASSERS WELCOME". Canberra's Poets' Corner is an example of a digital era commemoration of Australian cultural heritage. It is integrated into its urban environment by providing a participatory and sensory visitor experience with textual and hypertextual features, enriching the experience of Australian national literary heritage and its contemporary, localised significance.

25 At the other end of the spectrum, switching off from the digital age is the aim of Paddington Reservoir Gardens in Sydney. Like *Veil of Trees*, which augments its physical presence with images, descriptions and maps on janetlaurence.com, Paddington Reservoir Gardens has a sophisticated online presence, and both sites feature in the Sydney Culture Walks app. The historic Paddington Reservoir was converted into a community park between 2006 and 2009. Architectural firm Tonkin Zulaikha Greer describe their winning design as "an accessible sunken garden and pond ... inserted within the conserved ruin of the western chamber of the former reservoir ... The Victorian tree-fern garden hints at the era in which the Reservoir was originally built." (Greer et al. 25). This statement echoes Boyer's claim in *The City of Collective Memory* that cities physically reflect the fragmentation of collective memory. Gaps in city planning are "tokens or hieroglyphs from the past to be literally reread, reanalysed and reworked over time" (9). Literary mapping further facilitates this re-reading.

26 Located at the busy inner city conduit of Oxford Street, this crucial piece of colonial infrastructure on the state heritage list freshly nourishes its population through its quietude in quarried stone, complete with ferns, ponds and deckchairs. The former colonial engine-room is now an intentional gap in its hectic motorised and pedestrian traffic. The Indigenous heritage of the area is explicitly acknowledged in the information panel on Oxford St, while the City of Sydney website also invokes antiquity:

Hailed as a blend of the ancient Baths of Caracalla in Rome and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Paddington Reservoir Gardens opened in its current form in 2009 [...] Original brick, timber and iron fixtures were salvaged and the site is fused with contemporary and sustainable elements [...] The roof-top features a stunning sunken garden, and vibrant graffiti art has been preserved in the eastern chamber. Hang around until the sun sets if you can, as the lighting detail transforms the space once again.

27 The visitor experience is subject to daily and seasonal cycles in stark contrast to the reality of the twenty-four hour globalised economy. A full storey below street level, the stone and brickwork exude a cave-like solemnity. Janet Laurence and Peter Tonkin's 2003 article "Space and Memory: A Mediation on Memorials and Monuments" provides further insights into what they call the greatest acceleration in memorialisation "since the age of the dictators". This development also reflects changes in public religiosity and "art's shift from representation to abstraction to a kind of alchemic transformation of image and material into a work of meaning" (20). The traditional statue figure has now been supplanted by a utilitarian, sometimes experimental, provision of space for different viewer experiences. This shift in focus from observed to observer imparts a more subjective distillation of meaning. For Laurence and Tonkin:

Once, this materialization of memory and the spirit was evoked by religious building, spaces where memory and the spirit were housed, eloquently and enduringly in architecture. With the re-evaluation of religion and the marginalization of most church design, it is now secular spaces that have this

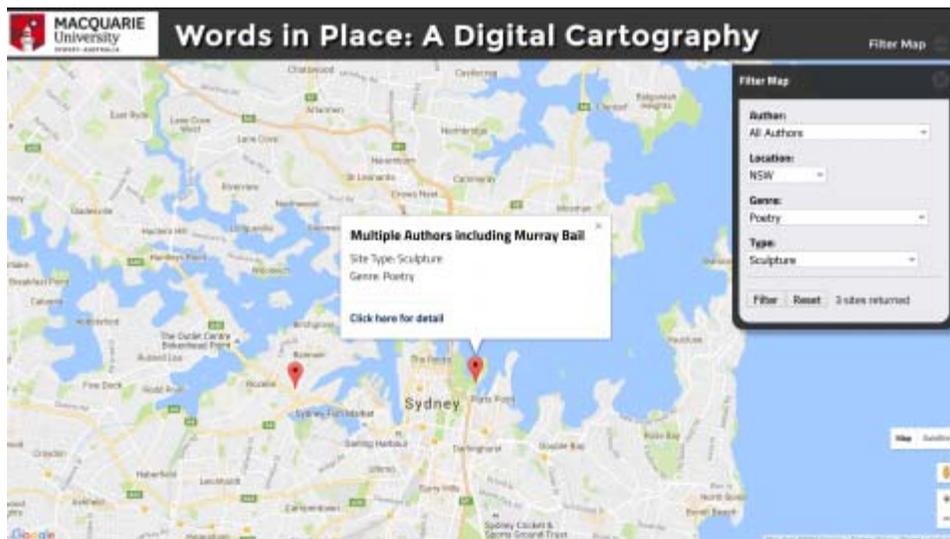
crucial function ... new memorials go beyond iconography to create spaces where this memory is housed and evoked, places where the body, space and time enfold into one another. A language of matter as a carrier of memory, material that evokes memory, and an elemental language of nature's transformative processes unite to memorialize and commemorate the fragility of life. (21)

- 28 The preservation of street art within the reservoir is arguably one kind of commemoration of fragile art and it has also been a site for 'moss poetry' in Popper Box collective's *Modern Day Mossages*. In 2012 Haline Ly, Wil Leong and Sonya Gee drew inspiration from the adjoining former John Thompson Reserve, which includes a fountain dedicated to the Paddington poet. Sonya Gee, an aspiring poet, scoured Thompson's poetry and anthologies before composing her own one-line piece for translation into wires upon which moss was grown. As Gee told ABC radio's Off Track programme:

The final poem is "Standing in the warmest light" and, to me, it's just the idea of being in a place, either physically or emotionally, where you can flourish or just feel stronger than you would any other place and I think one of the loveliest things about the poem is that a couple of weeks after it went up, there are certain words of the poem that get more light than others and they're much furrer and [more] luscious than other words who are kind of blocked out by shade. So, I mean to me it's really nice that the poem is quite fragile and it won't always be there because the sentiment of the poem is exactly that, it's about just finding a moment and finding a place in time where you feel safe and comfortable.

- 29 This piece of moss poetry on the southern wall of the main garden has now been removed, and it is difficult to tell which words were emphasised by the elements from the Popper Box's digital archive. Two of Gee's other one-line candidates were "Assembling hopes in quiet spaces" and "Being here where small things breathe", both suggestive of contemplation and immanence (28). Although ultimately temporary, the moss poetry project shows how the literary, organic, historical and virtual can combine. It also suggests an Australian capacity for more permanent forms of "geopoetry" such as Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta* in Edinburgh or Robert Haass' *Poetry Sculpture Garden* at SOMA in San Francisco. Kenneth White, the Scottish poet and academic who founded the International Institute of Geopoetics in 1989, stated in the Institute's Inaugural Text that "the richest poetics [come] from contact with the earth...from an attempt to read the lines of the world". Australian instances of geopoetry testify to White's conviction that poetry grounded in earth has a special resonance in an age of concern for the environment.

Words in Place map n°3: Poetry and Sculpture, Sydney



<http://wordsinplace.net/> © Macquarie University

Words in Place map n°4: Paddington Reservoir Gardens



<http://wordsinplace.net/> © Macquarie University

6. Literary Commemoration: Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra

30 Interpreting the *Words in Place* data set reveals that across the three cities there are key 'surge' dates such as the Bicentenary in 1988, the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2001 Centenary of Federation. These have created a division between 'old' static sites such as statues and plaques and 'new' interactive, text-based sites more likely to feature living authors.

31 Pre-World War Two authors, however, still dominate. From *Words in Place's* initial data set of sixty sites totalling ninety writers, only 1973 Nobel Prize-winning novelist-playwright Patrick White (four sites) and poets Judith Wright and A.D. Hope (four apiece) can match the domination of their pre-WWII counterparts, in particular short story writer and poet Henry Lawson (eight), novelist Miles Franklin (four), children's author May Gibbs (four), poet Dorothea Mackellar (three), poet A.B. "Banjo" Paterson (three), children's author and novelist Norman Lindsay (three) and poet Christopher

Brennan (three).

32 The ethnic and gender demographics are especially revealing. Female writers fare better than expected (roughly 40%), while multicultural writers fare poorly, featured in three sites out of sixty (5%), with David Malouf the most prominent author of non-European background (Lebanese-Jewish). Indigenous writers appear only at four sites (6.6%), always as part of a series, such as the 1991 Circular Quay Writers' Walk (poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal) and the 2010 Walsh Bay Theatre Walk (playwright Bob Maza).

33 To date, there is not one commemorative urban site devoted to a single Indigenous author, unless the definition of author is expanded to include activist figures such as Bennelong (Sydney) or Sir Douglas Nicholls (Melbourne). For Ian McShane, text-based commemoration, including plaques, facilitates the "legibility of cities" (17). Unfortunately, what is implied by the current state of literary commemorative sites is that an Australian author is more or less white. Now that living authors are increasingly 'in play', this legacy of discredited Assimilation and White Australia policies is no longer excusable and has seen shifts in other sectors, notably for Aboriginal artists and sportspeople (Osmond and Phillips).

34 The existing lack of diversity demonstrates that local and state governments, heritage experts, arts and planning bodies, community groups, benefactors and other stakeholders can be unaware of absences and new forms of public interface and digital platforms. Quantified research such as that supplied by *Words in Place* can thus be used to advocate for digitally-augmented public interactions with the national literature, as Australia's literary precincts and interactive urban spaces continue to grow and transform.

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	Titre	Words in Place website
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	Fichier	image/png, 508k
	Titre	Words in Place map n°1: Judith Wright, Canberra
	Crédits	http://wordsinplace.net/ © Macquarie University
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	Fichier	image/png, 1,6M
	Titre	Words in Place map n°2: Poets' Corner, Canberra
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	Fichier	image/png, 1,2M
	Titre	Words in Place map n°3: Poetry and Sculpture, Sydney
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	Titre	Words in Place map n°4: Paddington Reservoir Gardens
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