

GPS-mapping the Public Commemoration of Australian Literature

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<http://:wordsinplace.net>

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GeoHumanities

Space, Place, and the Humanities

Editors
Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon

GeoHumanities

Art, history, text at the edge of place



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Literary Mapping in the Digital Age



Edited by
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‘Google Maps and Google Earth have been used in a plethora of digital projects which range from the mapping of unprecedentedly large corpora (*Spatial Humanities: Texts, GIS, Places*) to individual canonical texts (*LITMAP*), and from the geospatialisation of the literature of a nation (*Cultural Atlas of Australia*) to quotidian reading practices (*Placing Literature*) ... from the desktop to the smartphone and, by extension, from the study to the street (*Cardiff Plotlines*).’

(Cooper et al, ‘Introduction’ 12)

Australia - criticism

- 1987 Peter Pierce, gen ed. *Oxford Literary Guide to Australia*
- 2000 Jill Dimond, Peter Kirkpatrick. *Literary Sydney: A Walking Guide* (UQP)
- 2005 Todd Barr and Rodney Sullivan, *Words to Walk By: Exploring Literary Brisbane* (UQP)
- 2013 Brigid Magner. 'Finding Furphy Country: Such is Life and Literary Tourism', *JASAL*
- 2018 Toby Davidson and Donna Houston, 'Mapping Australian Literary Commemoration', *JASAL*

Styles of Aust. digital lit maps

Literary geography: Map of fiction/film locations (incl. app)

www.australian-cultural-atlas.info/CAA/index.php

Memorialisation incl. literary (excl. text-based sites)

www.monumentaaustralia.com.au

State/Civic public art, eg. ACT Public Art mapped database

<http://www.arts.act.gov.au/arts-in-the-act/public-art>

Google Maps Literary Map of Australia – 24 sites, esp. children's lit

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1_Au_xCqp8de-mjlQx-pbu9dj3Ug&hl=en_US

The Brief

Words in Place interactively maps 60 **permanent public spaces** (excluding graves) which commemorate Australian writing or writers in Sydney (35), Melbourne (15) and Canberra (10) utilising archival, visual, textual, oral, and geocoding methods to produce a digital map accessible from any desktop or mobile device.

Once you zoom in on the map and click on a marked site, **photographs, site descriptions, categorisations and hyperlinks** will appear. 10 selected sites also feature de-identified audio and transcript interviews with community members who discuss the local significance of the site. You can **filter** by author (A-Z by surname), genre (e.g. novel, children's literature), commemorative style (e.g. statue, writers' walk) or state (eg. ACT).

Stats at a Glance

- **89 authors** (60 sites, incl. multi-authored)

Henry Lawson (8), Miles Franklin (4), May Gibbs (4), Patrick White (4), Judith Wright (4), A.D. Hope (4) Dorothea Mackellar (3), A.B. “Banjo” Paterson (3), Norman Lindsay (3), Christopher Brennan (3)

- **16 genres:** poetry (25), novel (15), children (8)
- **16 site types:** plaque (10), statue (10), walk (4)

Initial Observations

- Key 'surge' dates: 1988, 2000/01, post-2005
- Female representation better than expected (roughly 40%)
- Division between 'old' static sites (eg. 1931 Lawson statue in Domain with bio details) and 'new' interactive, text-based, oft. living ones (eg. 1999 Veil of Trees 100m away)
- Melbourne, UNESCO City of Literature, poorer at public commemoration of writers than (post-Stanhope) Canberra: scattershot, less innovative, less visible in built env't.



Veil of Trees, 1999



Mary Fortune Bar, Melb

The Twisted Players

"But I didn't turn in, not I. I had other objects in view, if one may be said to have an object in view on one of the darkest nights of a moonless week – for dark enough the night in question became..."

Traces of Crime – Mary Helena Fortune

The Innocent Blonde

\$24

Tanqueray 10, Amaro Montenegro, Fee Brothers Orange Bitters with a pink grapefruit twist.

The Smoking Villain

\$20

Bombay Sapphire, Campari and Martini Rosso which have been given a light Hickory Smoking.

The Detective

\$24

Glenfiddich 12yr, Green Chartreuse, Peach liqueur and Fee Brothers Orange Bitters stirred down as an Old Fashioned with an orange twist.

The Foreign Beauty

\$26

Victor Gontier 1999 Calvados, Grand Marnier, fresh lime juice, gomme and Angostura Bitters.

The Narrator

\$24

Herradura Reposado, Maraschino liqueur, pink grapefruit juice, fresh lime juice, gomme and Fee Brothers Orange Bitters.





But not multicultural?

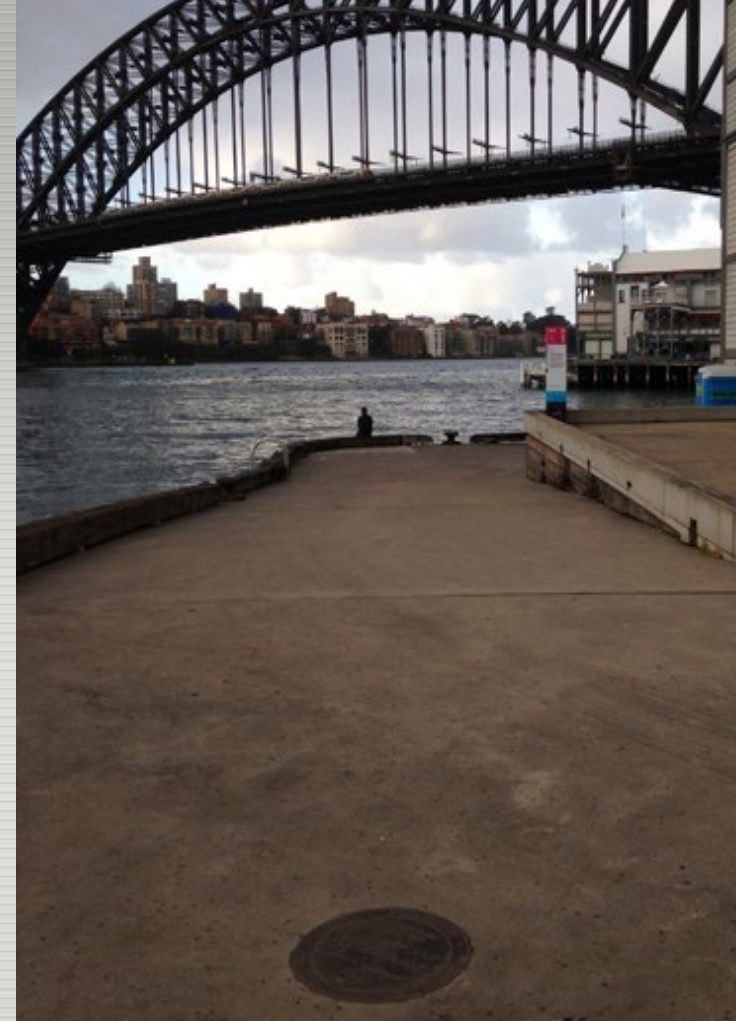
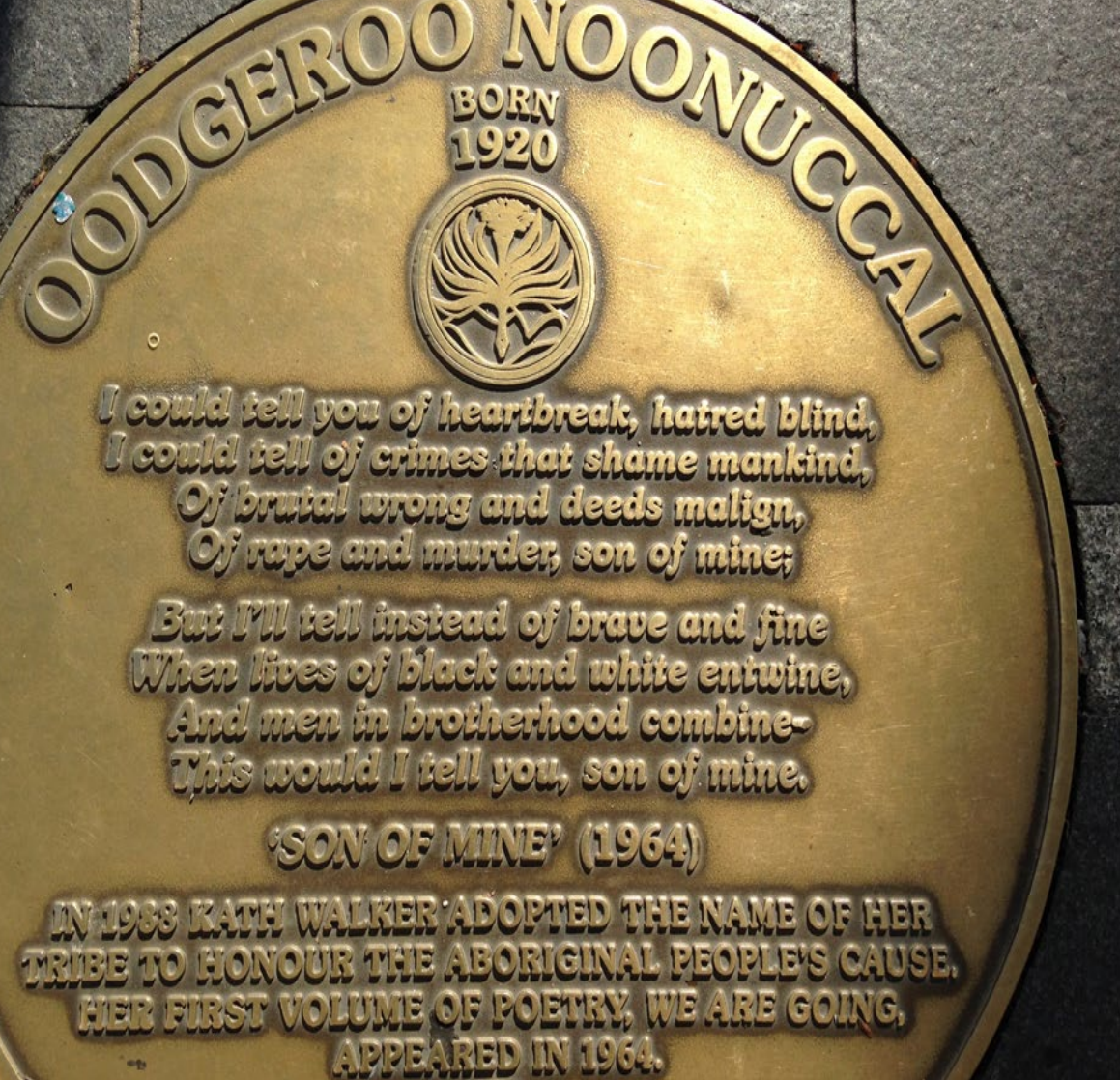
Multicultural writers fair poorly, with three sites (5%), and less in stand-alone single-author dedication than larger collectives in the Circular Quay Writers' Walk (David Malouf), The Veil of Trees (Malouf again) and Canberra's suburb of Franklin (Alex Buzo).

If one (somewhat dubiously) includes Australia's most commemorated writer, born Henry Larsen to a Norwegian father he hardly knew, the multicultural representation jumps to twelve (20%) and fifteen (37.5%) for Kenneth Adolf Schloesser – aka Kenneth Slessor. Irish, Scotch, Welsh...?

Malouf most prominent author of non-European background (Lebanese, Sephardic Jewish)

Indigenous authors

- None represented prior to 1991?
- Four sites (6.6%), always as part of a series
- 1991 Circular Quay Writers' Walk
(Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Faith Bandler)
- 1992 Street names in ACT suburb of
Ngunnawal (David Unaipon)
- 2007 Franklin (Oodgeroo, Lisa Bellear)
- 2010 Walsh Bay Theatre Walk (Bob Maza)



Trends

- More intersections of public sculpture and written text (sometimes the one person, eg. sculptor-poet Michael Snape); both factual, imaginary localities
- Living authors included = increases likelihood of Indigenous and non-European representation
- Interactive cities, literary precincts: Wheeler Centre/Walsh Bay etc
- Interactive use of physical environment: sun, wind, tides, rock, shadow, eco/geo-text, solar-powered
- Digital: GPS literary tourism, scannable sites (eg. Garema Pl Canberra), international scholarship of literary mapping – Anglophone and beyond



Kim Scott, Fremantle Writers Walk



Late one summer
day I leave the
sails and clanging
rigging, and jog
the sea's edge
heading south.

A rising moon,

heading south.

A rising moon,
gold and bloody,
jolts on my
horizon; and then
I smell death.

Moonlight shows

“... I smell death. Moonlight shows the dark and breeze-chopped ocean, a viscous froth and bile spilling on the sand.

A gust lifts me, sweeps me back from entering the sea, past wire fences and abattoirs, houses, people huddled in pools of yellow light.

I tunnel from unformed darkness, my feet pattering up the steps to a great round prison, its walls like moon or bone.”

Someone's ancestor crept
here, called over
these same walls
of rough stone to
a brother within.
Listen.

Kim Scott
2004

Someone's ancestor crept
here, called over these
same walls of rough stone
to a brother within.

Listen.



Shaun Tan, *Hours to Sunset*, sundial/installation, UWA, 2013



