Histories of Space, Spaces of History

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1   Thirty years on from 'the spatial turn' in the humanities and social sciences, the "recognition that social and cultural life do not happen on the head of a pin but are thoroughly spatial" (Cresswell) has opened up new transdisciplinary fields of enquiry across the borders of geography and history, just as the rapid development of nomadic and networked communications technology has transformed our experience and understanding of time and space (Potts 1). Space and place are no longer seen as the context or outcome of socio-cultural processes, but as vectors of their circulation and flows, structuring networks, constellations and inter-connectivity, raising the prospect of a "global sense of the local, a global sense of place" (Massey 30). Historians have begun to stretch space and expand time, shifting perspectives from the close-up to the broader horizons of trans-national and trans-temporal histories ; in David Armitage's words "where once historians preferred the microscope we are reaching again for the telescope" (210), while geographers and social scientists have applied the tools of critical theory to questioning the "power geometries" in the production of space, place and the lived environment (Massey 25), looking beyond the flat representation of space to examine its social construction, diachronic dimensions, and cultural and geopolitical articulations (Dodds).

2   Taking its title from the seminar theme of the inter-university Critical Geographies network 2015-17 (Aix-Marseille, Dijon, Grenoble 3, Lyon 2, Montpellier 3, Toulouse 2), this issue of *E-rea* examines the temporalities of space and the spatialities of time in the area of colonial and postcolonial Commonwealth Studies viewed through the prism of the Geohumanities[1], with an emphasis on historiographies that transcend the national or underpass it at the infra-state scale of relations, while overflowing conventional timelines and adopting perspectives that lengthen focus and broaden analytical scope, connecting social and cultural trajectories across disciplinary boundaries. The authors draw upon the methodologies of colonial and postcolonial history, geohistory and geopolitics, memory studies, commemorative politics, geopoetics and literary mapping, media studies and the digital humanities. Chorologically, the articles collected here range from the Indian Ocean and subcontinent (Di Costanzo and Deschamps on British India, Tampoe-Hautain on Ceylon/Sri Lanka before and after independence), to the Mediterranean and British *lieux de mémoire* on the French Riviera (Teulié), "Frenchness" in colonial Australia (Bergantz), Australia's European and Aboriginal geographies of remembrance (Rechniewski and Graves), and Australia's literary topographies (Potts and Davidson). Chronologically, the contributions span the 18th to the 21st centuries, from the imperial through the postcolonial to the contemporary epoch.

3   "Armed by now with critical transnational and transtemporal perspectives", write Guldi and Armitage in *The History Manifesto*, "historians can be guardians against parochial perspectives and endemic short-termism" (125). The first section of this issue responds to their call to make the past once again relevant to the public arena by assessing the impact of 'the transnational turn' on our understanding of national histories in a global frame. Reassessing the experience of French migrants in Australia from a transnational vantage point enables Alexis Bergantz to look beyond the 'contribution history' of their 'place' in Australian society to the idea of "Frenchness" as a performative social strategy which "binds migrants to the nation not as an after-thought but as constitutive of it". Avoiding the 'othering' attendant upon the localisation of migrant diaspora, Bergantz considers that French culture (to paraphrase Saïd 2001) is 'on the inside' of Australian national identity from its inception, connecting it to the wider world. Adopting a "global historical perspective" on India's Great War history allows Thierry Di Costanzo to contrast the relative disinterest for the 1914-18 centenary among scholars and state agencies in India, where it is overshadowed by decolonization and partition, with the engagement of the Indian diaspora in commemorative events worldwide (in Marseille, the centenary of the landing of the British Indian Army expeditionary force in France on 25 September 1914 was commemorated in a ceremony organized not by the Indian government, but by the Sikh association of France specifically to mark the arrival of the Sikh contingent). For Di Costanzo, the fractioning of WWI memory belies the importance of India's contribution to the war effort in understanding the course of its postwar international relations and the history of the independence movement in the sub-continent.

4   The transcendence of national history and the subversion of conventional periodisations which flow from the transnational and transtemporal turns (Armitage 211) facilitate the explorations of "connected histories and circulation within empires" (Potter) which are the focus of our second section. Simon Deschamps shows how, from the second half of the 18th century onwards, freemasonry acted as a "transnational force" linking the spaces of metropolitan Britain and British India and interconnecting the flows of people, ideas and trade across the Anglo-Indian world beyond the ambit of company and state agencies. A

recurrent trope for interconnected histories is the "bridge" between cultures to which Vilasnee Tampoe-Hautin lends both geographical actuality and figurative force in *Adam's bridge* linking the spaces of Indo-Sri Lankan cinema in the colonial era and blurring the borders of caste, class, language and religion between Sinhalese and Tamil cultures, before the Sinhala "cultural patriotism" of the 1950s and the "indigenization" policies of the 1960s erected barriers to social and cultural circulation. Viewed from the bridge, the film industry becomes at once a mirror of Sri Lanka's socio-ethnic malaise and a model for postcolonial economic and cross-cultural exchange.

5   The third section is concerned with how memorial landscapes are both shaped by and reshape historical narratives. It opens with two geohistorical enquiries (Teulié, Graves and Rechniewski) into the commemorative politics of what Saïd terms "the struggle over geography" (1994 6), or Withers "place-as-contested-space" (658), and concludes with an Australian case study (Potts and Davidson) in "storified" spatial experience mediated by digitalised literary histories mapping connections/disconnections between the "representational space" of GIS and "absolute space" (White 5). Spatial history is as much about absence as presence, about the missing pieces in the jigsaw of memory, the ghosts in the landscape. Gilles Teulié sees the dialectic of absence/presence in the destruction by occupying Axis forces during the Second World War of memorials to the Francophile British monarchs (Victoria and Edward VII) who 'made' the French Riviera and embodied the Entente Cordiale. He reads wartime iconoclasm and postwar moves by French civil society to repair it as an "iconoclash" over *lieux de mémoire* whereby the belligerents each sought in turn to symbolically erase and rewrite the history of contested space. Absence in a colonial/postcolonial context is also the focus of Graves and Rechniewski's interrogation of the silences in the Australian commemorative landscape and the marginalization or suppression of indigenous histories in favour of white settler narratives. They see the endeavours of a new generation of Australian historians and Aboriginal activists to reconnect with the Aboriginal past, recover the "lost histories" of place (McKenna) and inscribe them in Australia's geography of remembrance, as part of a post-nationalist "rediscovery history" with powerful social and political ramifications.

6   In his groundbreaking essay "What is Spatial History?" Richard White introduces the impact of the new technologies in cartographic terms: "Maps and texts are critical for representations of space, but representations of space cannot be confined to maps for a simple reason: maps and texts [are] ultimately static while movement is dynamic". He argues that, although mobile, digital mapping on smartphones, on the Internet and in GIS continues to operate on the level of representational space, as it is "lived and experienced through symbolic associations" (5). John Potts calls this the "virtual network sphere", where "space is the overlapping of the virtual onto the geographical" (51). Macquarie University's *Words in Place* project, piloted by Potts and Davidson, catalogues sites of significance in Australian literature using digital mapping to navigate this "new hybrid space" and enhance the experience of public space through knowledge of its literary history; the authors focus on commemorative literary sites which they see as missing from the field of digital literary mapping. Recognizing that map-making is an inherently selective and political process, they respond to the rallying call of critical geographers for "alternative cartographic representations to critique normative geopolitical ideas" (Moore and Perdue 892). Analysis of the map data from the sample sites in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne reveals symbolic relations otherwise hidden from the casual spectator: the over-representation of pre-war authors, the severe under-representation

of multicultural writers, and the total absence of single indigenous authors in urban public space – "a legacy of discredited Assimilation and White Australia policies [that] is no longer excusable".

7   In adopting the transnational and transtemporal perspectives of the Geohumanities, the articles assembled here seek to open fresh fields of vision around familiar landmarks in Commonwealth Studies, surpassing the narrow focalisation of nationalist history, which Carter compares to the savant's "satellite eye" (xx) and McKenna to the tunnel vision of the colonial naturalist's telescope that "allows us to see in fine detail what is within the frame, at the same time as it disconnects that detail from its surroundings and cuts off our peripheral vision" (xiv-xv). In their attention to the bigger picture, deep history and spaces of interconnection and circulation, they aspire to place centrefield histories hitherto considered peripheral.

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NOTES

1. In Cresswell's definition "GeoHumanities [is] a new interdisciplinary endeavor with space and place at its heart that links decades of critical thought following the spatial turn to new developments in our digital capabilities".

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