

# LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

## Buried Cities: Introduction

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In 2015, the conference ‘Literary Second Cities’ took place at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland. The conference led to a book with the same title (Finch, Ameal and Salmela 2017) and it was in the process of shaping that book that the need for this special issue emerged. The scope of *Literary Second Cities* was restricted to representations of real-world cities beyond ‘first’ cities, like London, New York and Paris. This special issue focuses on a notion not included in the book: the former city ‘buried’ under the present city. Research which takes account of city history as layered, and research, which emphasizes a quality of thickness, of vertical (archaeological) multiplicity in city identities is of particular importance here. This goes back to Henri Lefebvre’s classic account of multiple spatial pasts existing together in a way that is ‘stratified and tangled’ (Lefebvre 1991[1974]).

Existing work in recent cultural geography and urban studies takes account of several relevant areas. Geographers outline vertical urbanisms (Harris 2014); consider the intersection of historical geography and archaeology (Hill 2014; McGeachan 2015), work volumetrically (McNeill 2020), and investigate waste disposal (Millington and Lawhon 2018; cf. in literary urban studies Salmela 2015). Literary reading has been applied in urban studies of verticality (e.g. Hewitt and Graham 2015), but only rarely (e.g. Romanillos 2015) has burial, with its implied reference to subterranean space, explicitly figured in such research.

In this special issue, the layered city is mobilized by a sense of differing pasts being felt and activated by different city users – or disappearing from daily life while preserved in texts. Mobilised accounts of culture have been known in literary studies – notably in studies of travel writing and postcolonial literatures – well before the ‘New Mobilities

Paradigm' emerged in the social sciences during the 2000s (Merriman and Pearce 2017). As scholars from various subfields have argued, investigations of literary texts provide insights into dimensions of mobility otherwise hard to access (Murray and Overall 2017; Pearce 2020). Here, the particular dimensions unveiled include overlapping and multiple memories as represented in texts which, potentially or actually, impact the city's futures.

### Scope of this Special Issue and Introduction to Individual Articles

The contributors to this special issue have applied varied theoretical frames of reference, using a range of terms and aspects of the urban environment to interpret the varied acts of burial and disinterment they survey. These include renaming (Englund; Talivee), translocality (Mattheis and Gurr), stratigraphy (Finch and Kelly), subterranean infrastructures (Woods), excavation and disinterment (Borch; Finch and Kelly), deep mapping (Borch), temporality and its relationship to the build-up of layers and disappearances (Englund; Finch and Kelly; Mattheis and Gurr), entanglement and paths (Hansen), spatial metaphor applied to emotion or personality (Norrman; Woods), urban pluralities as linguistic or cultural (Talivee), and collective memory (Woods).

The issue begins with 'Superpositions: A Typology of Spatiotemporal Layerings in Buried Cities', by **Lena Mattheis** and **Jens Martin Gurr** (both University of Duisburg-Essen). Using Walter Benjamin's concept of superposition, the authors sketch a typology of layered representations of urban history, and discuss how texts activate different strata beneath the cityscape. Mattheis and Gurr explore how the layering of meaning and time work in both city and text, from diachronic and historical approaches to the archaeological and synchronic. The matrix for layering proposed in 'Superpositions' provides a detailed outline of the textual strategies used to access, make visible or construct buried layers of spatialised, palimpsestuous urban memory.

Following Mattheis and Gurr's 'Superpositions' is 'Buried Dublin: Redeeming Urban History and Collective Memory in James Joyce's *Ulysses*' by **Maxwell Woods** (Adolfo Ibáñez University). The Dublin of *Ulysses* is a modern urban space composed of the sedimentation of its layers of pasts, its landscape a cemetery of past events, buildings, and monuments. The past city forms the present cultural, social, and material landscape, but distinctive for *Ulysses* is the reframing of this representation through nightmares and redemption.

In 'Entangled Lines of the Embodied Self: Archie Ferguson's Urban Experience in Paul Auster's *4 3 2 1*' **Ira Hansen** (University of Turku) explores how the protagonist of Auster's novel, Archie Ferguson, is created through his embodied spatial experience in New York City. The article draws on Tim Ingold's notion that all life is realized as a series of entangling lines, a meshwork of random occurrences. Rather than sediments layered under one another in the passing of time, Hansen notes in Auster's fiction how layers merge, creating both the protagonist and the New York that surrounds him on multiple parallel levels.

In 'Buried Cities and Buried Dreams in Raymond Carver's *Beginners* and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*' **Eva Norrman** (Åbo Akademi University) surveys city toponyms to explore the premise that Carver's short stories are set in an 'Anywhere,

USA'. The article suggests that the two collections can be broadly situated in the West, specifically the states of Washington, Oregon and California, and that *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* is slightly decontextualized compared to its manuscript *Beginners*. However, the 'placeless' quality of the stories is apparent in both, whether because the narrator's setting is often left anonymous and shallow, or, drawing on Edward Relph's (2008[1976]) definition, they contain characteristics of 'placelessness'.

The evolving identity of the city and the excavation of temporal layers is the focal point in **Lena Englund's** (University of Eastern Finland) article. In 'Temporalities of (Re)Naming: The Zimbabwean City Past and Present in Petina Gappah's *Rotten Row*', Englund examines the renaming practices of cities, streets and other locations as part of nation-building processes, showing how renaming marks a concrete shift from a colonial past to the present moment in Pettina Gappah's *Rotten Row* (2016). Englund draws on Finex Ndhlovu's research into Zimbabwean place names as well as temporal perspectives from the fields of philosophy and human geography.

**Adam Borch** (Åbo Akademi University) excavates city identities in his article "'An Ancient City Is a Glorious View": Urban Identity and Antiquarian Visions of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century'. Drawing on Deep Mapping and Lefebvre's suggestion (1991[1974]: 402–03) that a study of human interaction with a given place should have an excavating dimension, Borch examines William Godwin's poem *A Poetical Description of Bristol* (1712), and Andrew Hooke's history of the city, *A Dissertation on the Antiquity of Bristol* (1748) to bring to light Bristol's historical layers and the connection of the texts to Bristol's urban identity.

**Elle-Mari Talivee's** (Under and Tuglas Literature Centre, Estonian Academy of Sciences) 'Layers of the Past in Tallinn: The Case of Balthasar Russow' discusses how Jaan Kross's novel sequence *Kolme katku vabel* (*Between Three Plagues: The Story of Balthasar Russow*), published in the 1970s, differs from earlier fictional treatments of the Baltic-German past of Tallinn: Kross was inspired by Balthasar Russow's *Chronika der Provintz Lyffland* ('Chronicle of the province of Livonia', 1578) and 'Katsumus' ('An ordeal', 1947) by Gert Helbemäe. Kross's literary work unearths long-buried earlier phases of Tallinn's ongoing multicultural identity.

Finally, **Jason Finch** (Åbo Akademi University) and **Jessica Kelly** (University for the Creative Arts) explore how 1930s slum clearance led to the death of small neighbourhoods in London's maritime East End. Finch and Kelly combine methodologies from literary studies and design history to unearth these neighbourhoods. By reading the text of an appeal hearing alongside a novel of transnational migration, Simon Blumenfeld's *Phineas Kahn: Portrait of an Immigrant* (1937), they develop a fresh perspective on urban imaginative place.

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