

Institution: University of Essex
Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature
Title of case study: <i>Memory Maps</i> – A Collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Museum
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p><i>Memory Maps</i> is an online archive of writings and images inspired by East Anglia and especially Essex. The project explores people's relationship with place. It seeks to alter public perceptions of the region and to foster ecological awareness of the natural and the made environment. Developed by Essex literature academics in collaboration with The Victoria and Albert Museum, the <i>Memory Maps</i> project has successfully stimulated amateurs and professionals to practise the genre of psycho-geographical writing. The team has also promoted the project to a wide general audience through public symposia, book festivals, and contributions to international media including a feature-length documentary.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p><i>Memory Maps</i> is a collaborative venture between Professors Marina Warner (CBE) and Philip Terry from literature, and Professor Jules Pretty (OBE) from biological sciences, based on their shared research interests in psycho-geography and the work of East Anglian resident, the late W. G. Sebald. Psycho-geographical writing responds to the distinctiveness of places, things and images, and traverses the boundaries between fiction, history, traveller's tales, anecdote, and memoir. It is a genre which was designed in the first instance to reveal the hidden context of our urban existence (such as in Guy Debord's work in the 1950s in Paris), re-tasked to do the same for the broader environment, here with specific reference to the environment, natural and urban, of East Anglia.</p> <p>What the team have called 'memory mapping' draws on the practice and theory of psycho-geography, inspired by Mass Observation, Surrealism and the situationists, notably Debord. Memory mapping also, however, draws on folklore traditions. Warner's extensive work on folk and fairy tales includes the recent re-edition of <i>The Secret Commonwealth: Of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies</i> (2006b), where she traces the roots of memory mapping in the seventeenth-century British essay tradition associated with Robert Kirk and others.</p> <p>The <i>Memory Maps</i> project is premised on the idea that the physical environment makes itself felt in the behaviours of its people. Warner's work has explored how both imagination and memory are shaped by the material world, including the material media that have historically given a body to the mind's labours: wax tablet, print, screen etc. Warner has argued, for this reason, that the materiality or tactility of the book shapes our imagination differently than immaterial digital media do (2006a, 2009). It is theoretical insights such as these that have informed the content and design of the <i>Memory Maps</i> archive.</p> <p>Terry draws for inspiration on the French avant-garde of the 1960s. His work has sought to employ the practice of the <i>dérive</i> or 'drift': an unplanned wandering through an urban landscape, not taking familiar routes in order to reconnect with one's environment in a new way. Terry's most recent works to deploy psycho-geographical principles are 'A Berlin Notebook' which involved walking the route of the Berlin Wall (part of the collection <i>Advanced Immorality</i>, 2012), and 'Canto XIII' (2011) which uses the palimpsestic strategy of superimposing a map of one place (here Dante's Inferno) onto another (Essex University and its environs).</p> <p>Pretty's research has addressed our lost connection with the land and its detrimental consequences to our surroundings. He has written both on the estrangement between humans and nature (2007) and on the ways we can develop less damaging relations to the land, especially in our agricultural and food production systems (2003). This research has fed into his book, <i>This Luminous Coast</i> (2011), which is a personal narrative of his 400 mile walk around the East Anglian coast, mapping its erosion. The book also includes images of objects, such as stones and shells, which Pretty collected for a 'memory box' of the region's treasures.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3. References to the research

- Pretty, J. (2003) Social capital and the collective management of resources, *Science*, 302 (5652), 1912-1915. DOI: 10.1126/science.1090847
- Pretty, J. (2007) *The Earth Only Endures: on reconnecting with nature and our place in it*, London: Earthscan Publications. ISBN: 978-1844074327
- Pretty, J. (2011) *This Luminous Coast*, Woodbridge Suffolk: Full Circle. ISBN: 978-0956186966
- * Winner of the 2011 East Anglian Book of the Year (Nature and Place category)
 - * Winner of the 2013 New Angle Prize for East Anglian Literature
 - * Shortlisted for the Writer's Guild of Great Britain non-fiction book of the year 2011
- Terry, P. (2011) *Dante's Inferno*, Hunstanton: Oystercatcher. ISBN: 978-1-905885-43-5
- Terry, P. (2012) *Advanced Immorality*, Manchester: If p then q. ISBN: 978-0-9571827-0-7
- Warner, M. (2006a) The Word Unfleshed: Memory in Cyberspace, *Raritan*, 26 (1), 1-13. ISSN 0275-1607 [available from HEI on request]
- Warner, M. (2006b) 'Introduction' in R. Kirk *The Secret Commonwealth: Of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*, New York: New York Review Books. ISBN: 978-1-59017-177-6
- Warner, M. (2009) Out of an Old Toy Chest, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 43 (2), 3-18. [available from HEI on request]

4. Details of the impact

Memory Maps is a living archive of regional memory. It responds to aesthetic, cultural, social and environmental concerns in a distinctive and novel way. Its primary impacts have been (1) to stimulate creative writing in and about Essex; (2) to inspire prominent professional writers and aspiring writers to contribute to the genre of psycho-geography. The *Memory Maps* team has achieved these impacts through the following avenues:

Collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Museum

Warner worked with the V&A to create a website specifically designed to inspire creative activity according to psycho-geographical principles. The website hosts an extensive set of catalysts for writing about place, in the form of paintings, photographs, artifacts, exhibition articles, poems, essays, and songs. Each of the items featured is designed to provoke the visitor's imaginative interaction with the physical environment of East Anglia. The website now contains an archive of over 200 images, including Essex-related paintings from the V&A's own collection by Gainsborough, Constable, Nash, Moore and others (V&A Memory Maps website: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/m/memory-maps/>).

Since 1 January 2008 the website has received over 103,000 views and over 73,000 unique visitors [corroborating source 1].

The most notable result of the project has been the new work produced by prominent writers, who were invited to respond to materials selected for the website from the V&A's collection. It now hosts psycho-geographical works by 19 contemporary writers, among them, Iain Sinclair, Kenneth Worpole, Robert MacFarlane, Ronald Blythe, Michèle Roberts, Lisa Appignanesi, and the singer Billy Bragg. It also features 'memory mapping' writing by current and former University of Essex academics, including by the founder of the department, Donald Davie. The website contains supporting material, such as personal 'trails' and historical contributions, and suggestions for further exploring and reading.

An additional web presence for *Memory Maps*

In addition to the presence on the V&A website, *Memory Maps* has also developed its own distinct presence on the University's domain, with a two-way link between the sites. It was established in February 2013 in order to grow *Memory Maps*, and extend the V&A's call for contributions, specifically encouraging amateur writers to submit their 'memory mapping' work. For this most recent stage of the *Memory Maps* project, two well-known authors were appointed as Genii Loci of the project: Rebecca Solnit, author of thirteen books about ecology, landscape, community, and memory; and Ronald Blythe (OBE), dubbed by *The Independent* as 'England's greatest living country writer', who has spent much of his life in and writing about Essex and Suffolk. Extracts from their works are included alongside contributions from members of the public, vetted by the project team. In the brief period from its inception to the end of the impact period the website received 1584 page views and 484 unique visitors [corroborating source 2].

Public Programme

The *Memory Maps* team has actively sought to promote the project and its ethos in public fora such as book festivals, concert halls, galleries, and through dissemination in the media. Over the last three years the team has collaborated with the organisers of the **Essex Book Festival** to annually host a public conference as part of the Festival. In 2011 Warner, Terry, and Pretty organised '**A Conference of Birds**', which explored the threats from climate change to local birds, and brought together writers and ecologists including Tim Dee, Tobias Hill, evolutionary ecologist Claire Spottiswoode, and Hilary Hunter from the RSPB. In 2012 Warner, Terry, and Adrian May organised '**Trees Shall Be Our Books**', an all-day event that included talks, walks, readings, workshops, and children's activities with poet Hilary Llewellyn-Williams, naturalist Richard Mabey, and artist Miles Thistlethwaite. In 2013 the team organised '**Talking on Water**' as well as a day of talks, reading, films, and music by the Aldeburgh Festival's resident Quartet, and chaired by Lord Philips of Sudbury, to celebrate the 90th birthday of Memory Maps patron: '**Ronald Blythe – A Celebration**' (supported by the Heritage Lottery) at Nayland Church, Nayland, Essex.

Other public symposia and exhibitions co-organised by the team to foster the public's interest in psycho-geography include:

- '**Memory Maps: Image, Place, Story**' (1-3 July 2008), Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities, University of Cambridge in collaboration with Kettle's Yard Gallery. According to its Programmes Administrator the event was 'very well received and the feedback was extremely positive' from an audience of 60 [corroborating source 3].
- '**Margins: Walking Between Worlds**', an exhibition held at Art Exchange, University of Essex (24 September - 5 November 2011), with public talks by the curator, gallery tours, and a public lecture by Warner on Tacita Dean's contribution to the exhibition. Total visitors: 2754 [corroborating source 4].
- '**PLACE: Roots – Journeying Home**' (February 2013), a weekend exploration of the meaning of 'place' with readings, screenings, music, performance, discussion, and walks, at and in collaboration with Aldeburgh Music, Snape Maltings with Ronald Blythe, Ali Smith, Paul Kildea and others (covered in *The Guardian* [corroborating source 5]).
- Warner's numerous public talks, including those to practitioners at the **OPUS Psychotherapy Congress** (21-22 November 2008), paying guests at the mega-event commemorating the tenth anniversary of Sebald's death at **Wilton's Music Hall**, London (14 December 2011), or the Stour Valley Lecture she gave on Saint Helena, born in Colchester, at the Constable Hall, East Bergholt in Essex (15 February 2013), have helped bring the *Memory Maps* project to a variety of different audiences.

In order to reach a wider audience the *Memory Maps* team have also engaged with the press and national and international media. Warner contributed to Grant Gee's feature length 2012 documentary about Sebald's psycho-geographical writing, ***Patience (After Sebald)*** [corroborating source 6]. Warner also wrote and read 'Wild Ecstasy' for the **BBC Radio 3 programme 'Wild Nature'** (8 July 2011), the final in a series of five entitled 'Dark Arcadias'. Pretty's psycho-geographical work, including his book *This Luminous Coast*, has been widely reviewed: *Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, and BBC Radio [details contained in corroborating source 7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact [All sources saved on file with HEI, available on request]

1. Extrapolated from analytics data form 2012-2013 from Victoria and Albert Museum
2. Google analytics
3. Fellowships and Programmes Administrator, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
4. Gallery visitor figures from Art Exchange
5. 'This week's new events', *The Guardian*, 26 January 2013
6. Co-Producer, *Patience (After Sebald)*
7. Internal HEI Communications and Press Office Report