

The Literary Geography of Brisbane in Sam Wagan Watson's Poetry

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In his collection *smoke encrypted whispers*, Sam Wagan Watson introduces his readers to poetic representations of the city of Brisbane and thus writes his version of a literary map of Brisbane. While his poems deal with easily recognizable spatial landmarks and entities, they also add historical and cultural dimensions to these geographical facts. Therefore, Watson's poems go beyond a simple description of land- and cityscape and instead offer a new perspective on the urban environment. As such, they are prime examples of what Jane Stadler, Peta Mitchell, and Stephen Carleton argue - that “[r]epresentations of landscapes [...] do far more than frame the environment as a background against which narrative action plays out; they [...] produce cultural meaning” (1). This, however, can only be a starting point, as Sam Wagan Watson's writing is poetry, not narrative. As such, it is perhaps much closer to Indigenous Australian Songlines. I will therefore argue that Watson creates a spatial representation of Brisbane which reflects the hybridity of his own heritage of mixed Aboriginal and European descent and thus sings into being a very different urban space of Brisbane.

Bio

Katrin Althans holds a degree in English literature and language from the University of Muenster as well as a German law degree. She teaches English, American, and Postcolonial literature at the University of Cologne and will take up a post-doc research position at the University of Duesseldorf. She earned her PhD from the University of Bonn with her thesis *Darkness Subverted: Aboriginal Gothic in Black Australian Literature and Film*. Her research interests include Postcolonial, and particularly Indigenous, Studies, the Gothic, and law and literature. She has published essays on Aboriginal literature, the Gothic, and videogames and is currently working on a post-doc project on refugee stories in contemporary Anglophone literature.