

# THE POETICS OF CLAREMONT DISRUPTED

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## ABSTRACT

Redevelopment of the historic shopping district of Claremont started with extensive demolition. The new development, called Claremont Quarter, is characterised by an architecture of non-place and the erasure of much of the old poetics. Visitors are highly directed in how they move around in a heavily planned setting. This is in stark contrast to the remaining old Claremont which is characterised by a rough accretion of walls and buildings constructed over many periods; it offers to visitors many possible ways to use the area. In the redevelopment, the poetics of the district have been entirely disregarded. This paper reflects on the poetics of Claremont arguing that the subtle, dialogic poetics of place is an area of heritage practice which, if it is considered at all, is bracketed under sense of place analysis. Poetics, however, is quite different from sense of place, referring more emphatically to everyday experience; it is open-ended, dialogic, gesturing to the future and bringing place and people together. An understanding of poetics leads necessarily to a richer perception of people's interaction with place than is possible in sense of place analysis. This paper argues that it is time for heritage practice to include poetics as a key aspect of place understanding.

The emerging role of intangible cultural heritage within wider material cultural heritage practice is revealing enormous difficulties for heritage practitioners as they begin to ponder the identification and protection of a world beyond fabric. Understanding material heritage through intangible heritage is likely in the near future to be the preferred way to understand the uses and meanings invested in a heritage place. Understanding intangible cultural heritage has usually been confined to folklore, dance, song, stories and memories. Crucially, these intangible qualities have often been regarded as independent of geography, that is, as transportable cultural elements. As intangible cultural heritage accrues an ever-strengthening role in material heritage assessment and interpretation, it is vital to understand intangible heritage and how it relates to place.

A poetics of the everyday is still mostly absent from heritage inquiry because it does not gesture emphatically to a conception of a fixed past which has been the usual preoccupation of heritage work on material culture. Emerging interest in intangible cultural heritage directs us towards the dynamic and evolving character of people's historic and present day uses of places. An emerging heritage paradigm is debated,<sup>1</sup> focussed on use rather than fabric. As professional heritage interest, however, remains mostly locked into accessing the past, the information about contemporary culture that a study of poetics can reveal remains mostly unexplored.

This paper examines the abrupt loss of a poetics of the everyday in a small and much loved shopping precinct in the historic suburb of Claremont in Western Australia. It is one of the oldest suburbs in the Perth metropolitan area and is sited midway between the central business district of Perth and the port of Fremantle. It was sparsely settled from the mid-nineteenth century, becoming popular with British settlers late in the century.<sup>2</sup> It is characterised by tree lined streets built 1890-1920; the old houses are highly valued and property prices are high. Unlike some of the surrounding suburbs in this wealthy part of Perth, there is considerable housing variety with residences ranging from luxurious mansions with river frontages, to mundane blocks of flats. The municipality is now under considerable pressure from the Western Australian state government to increase its housing density, particularly as it is so well endowed with good public transport, including a heavily patronized train line.

In a two year period, 2009-2010, a huge portion of the built environment of the old Claremont shopping district was demolished and rebuilt. Many old shops on the key streets, Bay View Terrace and St Quentin Avenue, were swept away to make room for a new mall and apartments, resulting in a dramatic change of uses and human movement through the area. People now use the precinct in such a different way that several businesses have been forced to close because of lack of custom. There is a mood of financial crisis and social mourning in the untouched parts of the district. This paper argues that the poetics of the old town centre has

been excluded from the redevelopment. Taking Claremont as the example, it goes on to examine the failure of broad heritage practice to examine and protect the poetics of the everyday. This paper commences by remembering the ways that people once moved through Claremont before turning to a theoretical consideration of poetics.

### LIVING WITH OLD BUILT FABRIC

For many years a messy car park of broken, potholed, blistered bitumen was the link between a rundown discount store, Fosseys, and the up-market David Jones department store in the Claremont shopping precinct. A narrow footpath skirted the car park on the south side and was lined by neglected bottle brush trees which threw little shade. Those wishing to walk between the Fosseys' side of western Claremont and the more easterly David Jones department store usually walked across the bitumen. They could not, however, enter David Jones directly unless they turned right, negotiated turning traffic, walked along St Quentin Avenue past several shops, climbed a steep set of stairs, crossed another arcade and finally entered the department store. Many people seemed to avoid this route, darting instead across the bitumen and jumping down a low, sloping, retaining wall which defined the entrance to the underground car park sited below the supermarket, Coles. Opening onto the underground car park was a major entrance to David Jones. Many people chose the quicker, albeit more risky, route. Having crossed the bitumen and jumped over the low retaining wall, they wove their way through traffic entering the car park which, peculiarly in this particular driveway, was reversed so that cars travelled on the right, not the left. Shoppers then walked around several parked cars before turning right into the department store. Obviously, winding through traffic and jumping over a low retaining wall were not safe ways to move through a busy shopping precinct. The use of the area in this way, however, was a unique aspect of Claremont shopping in a district that had been built over more than a century and reflected many different architectural styles and building codes. Newer suburbs have smoothed out streets and footpaths which implicitly direct the pedestrian. The darting, jumping and weaving of Claremont shoppers were distinguishing characteristics of a district that had grown by accretion.

Another example illustrates the individual quality of the Claremont environment. Until early 2010, an arcade constructed in the 1970s, Claremont Arcade, connected the supermarket, department store and about 30 small shops. It opened onto Bay View Terrace which for more than a century was the main street in the Town of Claremont. Facing the entrance to the arcade was a park bench. People often tied their dogs to this bench and then walked down the arcade, stopping at the various shops before entering either the department store or turning right to enter the supermarket. As they

shopped in the arcade, they could glance back to ensure that their dogs were safe; the dogs watched anxiously as their owners retreated. Surely, the park bench had not been placed there so that dogs could be secured. It is, however, an example of people using the available environment for their own purposes and, in so doing, enriching street life and creating Claremont's everyday poetics.

Both of these are examples of Virilio's<sup>3</sup> "'infra-ordinary', i.e. what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens". Certainly, securing a dog to a bench can be dismissed as merely an adaptation to the environment, but it is also a barely unnoticeable action which composed the poetics of the street. These examples of using the old fabric of the shopping precinct might seem very trivial in light of the 450 million dollar redevelopment of the town centre which has resulted in the complete demolition of the old department store, David Jones; the discount store, Fosseys; the supermarket, Coles; Claremont Arcade, the bitumen and underground car parks and many shops on St Quentin Avenue. This huge project has reoriented the centre of town away from Bay View Terrace to the new Hawaiian and Brookfield Multiplex mall, called Claremont Quarter. Some of the shops on Bay View Terrace have suffered financial losses because of the change of direction of traffic and the reorientation of the district, with most people inevitably going to Claremont Quarter to visit the supermarket. Claremont Fresh, a popular "growers' market" (a mini supermarket specialising in fruit and vegetables) has closed because it could not withstand the competition from Claremont Quarter. In summary, there is huge change to the Claremont shopping district. The intention seems to have been to locate the heart of the town in a new square on St Quentin Avenue, but the reality is that it is little used. Despite some of the negative social and financial outcomes of the redevelopment, designers for the Claremont Quarter, Christou Design Group and Hassell, emphasise only the positives. They describe the integration of existing historic and community aspects of the old town in their brief.

A key design aim of the project was to merge the Claremont Quarter within the understated character of the existing historic Claremont village...The result is a relaxed yet dynamic and flexible urban environment providing the basis for a new shopping lifestyle based on leisure and community first, retail second.<sup>4</sup>

Not only has the community element failed to develop, but the movement of consumers into the mall has gutted the existing streets. Local papers have tracked the collapse of what was once a vibrant shopping district: "Retailers united in bid to revive town centre",<sup>5</sup> "Claims Bay View Terrace

retail outlets drying up"<sup>6</sup> and "'Quick fix' needed here".<sup>7</sup> The Mayor of Claremont, Jock Barker, blamed desperate shop keepers for their own plight saying that they had "tired and unattractive facades".<sup>8</sup>

By comparison to the somewhat dangerous, but highly inventive uses of the streets and lanes of the old Claremont, there are now powerful directions embedded in the planning, for example, in the way that people take groceries to their cars in the basement parking area. Shopping trolley wheels lock onto a traveller ramp. Standing equidistant and mostly immobile, people descend to their cars as the planners and architects intended (fig. 1) There is no doubt that this style of ramp is much safer than the previous fixed ramp which descended from the supermarket to the underground parking area. A common sight on the old ramp was people straining, often comically, to control their heavily laden trolleys. Obviously, the new ramp is a much safer alternative, but it replicates traveller ramps throughout the world. By comparison, the old ramp, although ugly and mundane, enabled a poetics and humour of use that was specific to this shopping precinct. It was part of the character of the district and has been lost in these vast changes.



Source: (Author 2011)

Figure 1. Traveller ramp in Claremont Quarter.

Examination of the obliteration, or disallowance, of some of the old "infra-ordinary" mores of Claremont is important because these changes have altered the poetics of the town. Poetics must be attended to through heritage protective measures with the same commitment that is given to remembering the old built environment.

## POETICS

In this paper I use the expression "poetics" rather than sense of place, spirit of place or *genius loci* to grapple with the changes in Claremont.<sup>9</sup> Poetics of place refers to the ways that a place is lived in, the way we move through it and around it. Poetics of place is drawn from the everyday and, therefore, can be almost imperceptible and very difficult to identify. It embraces both the core elements of a

place and the ways that we understand, use and experience it. Poetics has an imaginative dimension and implies a spatial and dialogic relationship to place.

I differentiate between sense of place and poetics because although sense of place incorporates some aspects of poetics, it pays limited attention to them. Sense of place focuses on physical aspects, meanings, symbols, functions and uses of a place; it does so in order to gesture towards the intangibles in a site and has been significant in heritage work. Sense of place analysis engages with site factors that help us to identify one location from another at a deeper level from what is possible from simple, visual, denotative description. Despite the strengths of sense of place in dealing with intangible qualities of a site, perception of sense of place is from the outside, that is, it implies the stance of an outside spectator who is able to understand a site because s/he is able to look at the site dispassionately.

In contrast to the somewhat aloof spectator imagined by sense of place analysis, poetics, with its emphasis on the practices, processes and dialogics of place and person, firmly places the perception of the experience of a place on the inside of the site. The viewing position is participatory and calls attention to the changing experiences of a place; it is open-ended in comparison to sense of place analysis which seems closed because it attempts to pin down the character of a site rather than enter into a dialogue with it. The difference between the two viewing positions is crucial; Bachelard<sup>10</sup> emphasises the inside quality of inhabiting space in his seminal 1950s text on the poetics of space.

We must go beyond the problems of description - whether this description be objective or subjective, that is, whether it give facts or impressions - in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting.<sup>11</sup>

He argues that inhabited space "bears the essence of the notion of home",<sup>12</sup> such places give us a "community of memory and image".<sup>13</sup> Descriptions of sense of place cannot contain the inhabiting quality of a place, partly because this quality resides in the minute, infra-ordinary experiences of the everyday with which a bureaucratized heritage process does not engage. Bachelard's work links to de Certeau's<sup>14</sup> emphasis on the enunciative function of walking and his description of space as emerging from practice of place. Bachelard and de Certeau, respectively, use the concepts of "inhabiting" and "practice", offering fundamental ways for grasping the poetics of place, and the empowering place of the user of a site that is ever in flux.

Tiwari argues that "experience becomes authentic when the subject and object become one and this [is] made possible due to the "everyday-ness" of the settings.<sup>15</sup> She notes also the importance of liminal and transgressive experiences in a place and urges research into design that enables bodies to have experiences beyond the highly directed planning that is so familiar in many contemporary settings. The old Claremont, as described above, offered such possibilities, but in the new construction that possibility has not been permitted.

Although heritage practice is successfully expanding our view beyond physical description of a site, it is still limited because it is not engaged with the idea of poetics. To date, with the overwhelming emphasis on tangible heritage, it has been under-equipped to deal with the idea of a site in flux and with a trajectory into the future. By adding poetics to heritage vocabulary, such deficiencies in heritage practice can be overcome. Further, the broader heritage ideal of an engaged visitor can be enhanced through the dialogic aspects of poetics. Engagement with poetics, therefore, can move interpretation of heritage sites away from their denotative descriptions and curatorial dependency and open them further to visitor engagement.

#### WALKING AND HERITAGE PRACTICES

The walking of the ordinary person constitutes a major dimension of the poetics of place. Although heritage practice has evolved to focus on the built environment, it is significant that very early heritage preservation efforts in the United Kingdom were focused on the network of footpaths in rural areas. Few aspects of life could seem more mundane than footpaths, and yet it is from this everyday ordinariness that heritage protection has partly emerged. The Association for the Protection of Ancient Footpaths in the Vicinity of York was established in 1824 and other associations followed. Nineteenth century protection efforts were based on the need to safeguard access to rural areas in order for working class people to have a respite from heavily industrialised and polluted cities.<sup>16</sup> The footpaths were thus associated with the rights of ordinary people to walk. Few of these footpaths bore evidence of any remarkable events. They were valued because they were the sites of the everyday experiences of women and men. This simple, and yet sophisticated, appreciation and preservation of everyday heritage has been steadily lost in heritage protection. As heritage practice became increasingly bureaucratised, its emphasis on the built environment as a realm of tangible architectural marks grew stronger. The intangible uses and experiences of the environment were regarded as quite secondary for a long time. Heritage practice in Australia in recent years, however, has begun to develop social and spiritual values to a more complex level thus opening up

the possibility of the everyday being more respected.

By comparison to heritage practice, the aesthetics of walking has been a preoccupation of philosophy and avant garde art for nearly a century. The fact that early heritage preservation focused on footpaths, and that walking was a focus of the Dada Movement, highlights a potential historic link that now underscores a strange gap between heritage practice and emerging art forms and themes. On 14 April 1921 the Dada group met in the grounds of the church of Saint Julien-le-Pauvre in the Latin Quarter in Paris. The group's flyer to passers-by read:

The Dadaists passing through Paris, as a remedy for the incompetence of guides and dubious patents, have decided to undertake a series of visits to selected places, in particular to those places that did not truly have any reason to exist. It is incorrect to insist upon the picturesque, historical interest and sentimental value. The game has not yet been lost, but we must act quickly. Participation in this first visit means answering for human progress, for possible distractions and responding to the need to pursue our action, which you will attempt to encourage by any means possible.<sup>17</sup>

The "picturesque, historical interest and sentimental value" have been major foci for heritage preservation. Further, critique of the apparent obsession with the aesthetics of sites and, therefore, assumed failure of critical potential, was a major theme in late 1980s and 1990s heritage criticism.<sup>18</sup> Ideals of heritage practice necessarily include the implicit value of "human progress", but heritage endeavours have rarely been informed by the understanding that this could be achieved by attending to the poetics of the everyday - indeed, to places identified by the Dadists that do "not truly have any reason to exist". Reasons why there has been a philosophic gap between contemporary art and heritage practice include first, the fact that the focus of much heritage practice has been on the visual qualities of the built environment and second, no doubt, because of the type of people who were interested in both, with heritage work often attracting conservatives.<sup>19</sup>

Examination of the intense interconnectedness of the interocular world<sup>20</sup> - the link between the world of the consuming gaze in leisure, tourism, shopping, computer, cinema and television - suggests that it would have been reasonable to have expected heritage practice to have been more responsive to contemporary art. Heritage is intimately associated with tourism and looking, it is surprising that heritage did not turn to emerging art themes, specifically the poetics of walking, in order to explore fruitful experiential potentials. Heritage

practice could have taken, for example, the extensive walking of tourists at a heritage site as one of its interpretive strategies. More powerfully, however, it could have used the aesthetics of walking to challenge the limitations of its own focus and from there to develop more intensely the complexity of the heritage field. Instead, the implacable irreducibility of the tangibility of sites and objects of most heritage places has dominated heritage thought and action. Indeed, the hegemony of object and site in heritage interpretation has made development of a history of poetics difficult to pursue.

The hegemony is embedded in the western cultural understanding of the inherent meaning of material objects, as opposed to the cultural attachment of meaning to objects.<sup>21</sup> Implicit in that early nineteenth century focus on footpaths was a potential philosophic heritage trajectory that could have led to examination and protection of the everyday, but unfortunately, the early footpath movement did not retain its power in heritage work. Thus, although from the early footpath history of heritage we might have expected that the poetics of place would have been an essential heritage focus, it did not eventuate.

When heritage interpretation has used walking, it has usually been in the development of trails. When following a trail the visitor moves from one place of intrinsic interest to another, with the walking itself relegated to the incidental. By comparison to the neglect of walking by heritage practice, art and sociology throughout the twentieth century increased their engagement with it. For de Certeau, walking has a triple "'enunciative' function" that can be compared to the significance of speech.<sup>22</sup> Paraphrasing de Certeau, walking appropriates a topographical system, it spatially acts out place and "it implies relations among differentiated positions".<sup>23</sup> By insisting on the likeness of walking to speech, we can see how neglected are some aspects of the symbolic power of walking in the western world. Speech holds such weight that key speech utterances we conceptualise as defining political positions, class associations, emotional experiences and even bringing something into being, for example, the lawful rule of a new head of state by taking an oath. Despite walking's symbolism being neglected by governments, ordinary people's recognition of the powerful symbolism of walking grows steadily. Middle Ages pilgrimage-style walking has recently been revived in contemporary culture with new enthusiasms for wilderness trekking and walking to the shrine of St James in Santiago da Compostela in northern Spain. Twenty-first century walking of medieval pilgrimage routes has many different meanings from those of hundreds of years ago, but crucially, it retains symbolic power. Careri examines the symbolic aspects of walking as a sense making action, "walking becomes man's first aesthetic act, penetrating the territories of chaos, constructing an order..."<sup>24</sup> He

speaks of the act of walking as filling a place, with meaning.

The aim is to indicate walking as an aesthetic tool capable of describing and modifying those metropolitan spaces that often have a nature still demanding comprehension, to be filled with meanings rather than designed and filled with things.<sup>25</sup>

For Rosenberg, theorising the place of walking is central to understanding contemporary memorials, for example the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, 1982.<sup>26</sup> She identifies three modes of walking: journey, transformative encounter and everyday urban practice.<sup>27</sup> Her study of the way in which "memory is evoked and mediated by our relationship to physical place to the commemorative practice of walking"<sup>28</sup> highlights the way in which there has been a misrecognition by planners and heritage practitioners of the visceral connection between the apparently mundane act of walking and the affection for, and memorialisation of, place.

It is a great cultural curiosity that walking has usually been ascribed a merely functional meaning in heritage practice when, paradoxically, city authorities go to great effort to control where and when people walk: at cross walks, on the left or right hand side, outside boundaries and maintaining distance from great works of art. The approach to walking is one of control combined with studied refusal to see its symbolic power. Most curious of all is to witness heavy discipline at theme parks such as Disneyland where elaborate crowd control measures are accepted by happy, expectant, but bored crowds for sometimes more than an hour as people wait for a thrill ride. There is, therefore, a disjunction between the neglect of the libidinous and symbolic power of walking in bureaucratic planning and the simultaneous recognition of its dangers. It is in this fraught space, constructed by layers of both denial and recognition, that artists such as the Dadaists have operated. Although it is close to a century since that Dada Paris walk, the symbolic power of walking in the urban environment receives little attention that could foster the development of this rich dimension of life. The experiences at Claremont illustrate walking possibilities - jumping over a low brick wall into odd traffic moving on the right rather than the left side, securing your dog to a bench in a busy street before strolling an arcade - creative possibilities of using the environment that are now severely hampered. There is no doubt that Claremont has been recreated within an idealised frame of community living with its spacious town square derived from romanticised Mediterranean societies, but overall the effect is one of ironing out experiential potential - ironing out the poetics.

Several writers address the question of smoothing out the environment. Highmore<sup>29</sup> uses the concept

of "legibility". He argues that from the nineteenth century, the aim of planners has been to bring cities under control, to make them more intelligible and legible by policing and outlawing certain forms of behaviour. Using the Situationist, Debord, Sheringham argues that it is rationality that undermines the everyday "art de vivre".<sup>30</sup> Similarly for de Certeau, the attempts of planners to rationalise the urban environment can be compared to the efforts of grammarians and linguists in their attempts to create a normative language. He argues that "in reality this faceless 'proper' meaning cannot be found in current use, whether verbal or pedestrian; it is merely the fiction produced by a use..."<sup>31</sup> In Claremont, the redevelopers of the west end have refused to take inspiration from the poetics of the east end. Contemporary planning has replaced Claremont-specific poetics of place with a highly rational set of directions that bear no resemblance to past uses. Although the concept of planning as an instrument of social control is outdated, it is clear that there are vestiges of a controlling ethos still current.

#### OLD AND NEW POETICS OF CLAREMONT

A comparison of the old and new poetics of Claremont reveals startling change and reasons for the collapse of the poetics. The old Claremont is characterised by rough edges, accretion and creative pedestrian movement. Development had occurred over many periods leading to a town centre constructed gradually over more than a century. This means that in the remaining old Claremont, in the east end, old and new constantly abut announcing the longevity of this suburban centre. Most building in Claremont over the twentieth century was not seamlessly incorporated into a harmonious stylistic conformity. The variety of buildings lead to a pleasing architectural jumble, visible, for example, in the retaining walls mentioned above in the drop down to the supermarket underground car park. Similar retaining walls still remain to the north-east of the existing Hungry Jacks fast food restaurant (fig. 2). The town is also characterised by a juxtaposition of styles ranging from old colonial constructions with beloved timber verandas, buildings with decorative upper stories and 1970s pale orange brick shops. There are many shortcuts in Claremont with people able to wind through back lanes and dart through car parks (fig.3). The town has a shopping mix with chic boutiques not far from some of the most basic warehouse-style constructions, for example, the local hardware store which still has its rough hewn jarrah floors and huge timber posts.



Source: (Author 2011)

Figure 2. A retaining wall in the old Claremont.



Source: (Author 2011)

Figure 3. Lanes in the old Claremont.

The new west end of the shopping precinct, by comparison, is characterised by completion, smoothness, stylistic unity, pedestrian direction and, unfortunately, "non-place", the mall could be a mall anywhere, a typical, sterile "non-place" as theorised by Augé.<sup>32</sup> The exterior of the mall is white with few windows on to the street below; opportunities for upper storey balconies were entirely missed. Inside is a typical mall construction, a long walkway is lined by shops upstairs and downstairs. At one end of the mall are two supermarkets and, at the other, a department store, a typical design found in many parts of the world. A huge ghostly image of the face of Mona Lisa over a car park entrance introduces a hyperreal element. The experience of using the new Claremont Quarter is that it is so heavily planned that there are few use options available, evident for example in the highly directed ramp for taking groceries to the car park as described above.

Despite the designers' comments on the desirable integration of the new design into the historic village centre (refer to end note 4), the architects and planners appear to have disregarded the historic nature of the suburb and focused on an idealised, but dehistoricised built environment. This is evident in the construction of a new town square which ironically displaces the historic Claremont

fabric only to gesture to the historic squares of Europe. The only echo of the old is in the word "lane" used to describe a walk way between St Quentin Avenue and Guger Street. It is possible that, in smoothing out the rough edges of the old shopping area, designers were also focused on making the area safer, after all this is the district from which three young women vanished in 1996 and 1997 with two discovered murdered and a third never found. Perhaps the shadow of the "Claremont Ripper" has been one of the determining factors in imagining the new Claremont - small shadowy lanes have been replaced by a brightly lit mall.

#### RECORDING OLD CLAREMONT: FABRIC AND POETICS

In early 2009, just before demolition in Claremont commenced, Claremont Museum undertook intensive oral history recording, some of which reveals a lost poetics. Analysis of what the museum has collected, however, highlights the problems associated with heritage work and its failure to attend in a foregrounded way to the poetics of the everyday. Although the museum focused on the built environment and the people of the areas about to be demolished, it has, on the whole, overlooked poetics.

The museum encountered difficulties in collecting before the demolition started. I spoke to Museum Officer, Lindy Wallace on 10 January 2011 who told me that at first the developers had been very co-operative, but that finally they had offered little assistance to the museum. Wallace said,

We were very limited to what they would give us...Hawaiian seemed fairly co-operative, but did not really want to know about it [ie museum collecting]. The developers painted over shop signs before demolition... We are disillusioned, we didn't get the objects that we wanted.

Wallace said that the big shops, Coles and David Jones, forbade their staff to speak to the museum officers and now the museum is disappointed with its collection. Museum staff were successful, however, in speaking to all the shop owners in Claremont Arcade and undertook extensive recorded interviews with several of them. They also collected examples of shop signs, business cards, boutique coat hangers and examples of take-away luxury carry bags. The most poignant object they collected was the painting of a Buddha from The Sunflower Chinese Restaurant. The owners were not sure whether to give this painting to the museum but, after some days, according to Wallace, they came back to the museum and said that they had consulted the Buddha and that he wished to go to the museum.

The recorded interviews by the museum cover the histories of the small shops in Claremont Arcade and the experiences of the staff in the shops. They

scarcely explore, however, the experiences of customers, but when they do, there are glimpses of an everyday poetics which indicates some of the lost richness of the previous uses of the district. Lisa Lam, one of the owners of The Sunflower Chinese Restaurant spoke in the present tense of a rare Claremont experience offered by their restaurant.

One of the most popular things about the restaurant is the balcony. Lunchtime, dinner time, people just love to come and sit at the balcony 'cause they can see the people walking up and down the street, enjoy the sea breeze from the river, enjoy the lovely weather. So that's one of the most popular things and I think lots of people commented that they're going to miss that part of it once it's demolished because no-one can get a view any more.<sup>33</sup>

A poetics of use focused on food, upper storey view, sunshine and a river breeze are now lost. Other than from the upper veranda of The Claremont Hotel, most experiences of Claremont have been from street level and so it is significant that, in eating a Chinese meal, many people also enjoyed the viewing experience of the second storey looking down over the street, a possibility which does not exist in the new Claremont Quarter.

An interview with Judy Burberry, the owner of the Adam Heath boutique describes an experience for the shop which reveals the high socio-economic status and the stay-at-home lifestyles of many mothers of young children in this financially comfortable area. Burberry indicated an office on the second floor of the arcade which was about to be demolished:

The periodontist [sic] up there has been there for ever, and they were very much part of the arcade. You know, whenever the kids were sent up there to get their teeth done, the mothers would come down shopping.<sup>34</sup>

Of course, mothers will still go shopping while their children are visiting periodontists, but it is the proximity and unexpected interconnectedness between the periodontist and the luxury boutique which is of interest in this paper. A mother comes to Claremont because her child needs to make a health visit, but she takes the opportunity to indulge herself and enhance her own appearance. Good mothering and luxurious self-indulgence thus were often combined in this particular proximity of businesses. Speaking informally to people who have shopped in the district for many years, it is evident that the combination of essential services such as groceries, bakeries and doctors, placed side by side with expensive boutiques, meant that luxury shopping could take place as an apparent

incidental to the more serious work of maintaining health and family life. It is not that this combination is less likely to occur in the re-developed Claremont, but that it will occur in a different way. Specifically, in relation to this example, the cultural and financial link between the periodontist and Adam Heath is now lost. Many families find that dental, periodontal and orthodontic care are very costly, so it is of special interest that placing an expensive professional service close to an expensive boutique was no impediment to luxury shopping in Claremont.

The movement between the periodontist and the boutique is an example of the "infra-ordinary", encompassed in a particular poetics of former pedestrian movement in the district. The new Claremont Quarter has less unexpected juxtapositions of services with the upper floor dedicated to medium priced boutiques of the sort that one sees in most suburban shopping centres in Perth.<sup>35</sup>

#### DEVELOPING HERITAGE RESPONSES TO POETICS

The bureaucratisation of heritage over the last century has been accompanied by a steady increase in sophistication and appreciation of complex recording and preservation of the past. Heritage work has hovered around narrative, oral history and the everyday, it is poised now to look at poetics. By deepening the understanding of the Burra Charter's<sup>36</sup> social value, spiritual value and intangible heritage it should be possible for heritage practice to enhance understanding of poetics of place.

Burra Charter principles are derived from an understanding of the built environment which was at first limited to aesthetic and historic description. These limitations resulted in a failure to see that there is a movement of people at a site which contributes to the totality of the experience. Rich heritage value emerges from the implied stories that emanate from the movement of people at a place. Certainly, this paper does not set out to say that current heritage practice denies the textuality of heritage production, to the contrary, I argue that conceptions of textuality have been locked in an implicit battle with empiricism throughout the history of heritage practice. The two can be understood as twin sides of a door with many practitioners insisting implicitly that heritage is not a text, and that identifying heritage entails attending to its empirically verifiable facts. By contrast, the actions of some practitioners show that they implicitly conceive of each heritage place as a dynamic text.

Burra Charter-driven heritage practices would be enriched by a semiotic stance which conceptualised a site as a text. Disciplines related to heritage practice, for example, geography, literature and Cultural Studies approach places as texts. Heritage practice needs to wrest the focus on everyday experiences from being limited to a type of investigation of social value which has excluded atten-

tion to the poetics of a site. It needs to begin to understand the everyday in relation to historic and aesthetic experiences so that it can build a full picture of use. Too often, oral histories and their revelation of a poetics that might give us access to the everyday are relegated to a mere supplemental role in interpretation of the built environment. It would not be difficult to gather the poetics of the everyday. An invitation by a museum or local council for people to write in with their specific experiences of a place would surely result in a gathering of highly individualised stories. Analysis would soon uncover the poetics embedded in such a revealed environment.

#### CONCLUSION

The finish of the long period of redevelopment in Claremont not only saw the disruption of the town's poetics but was accompanied by further, unexpected, losses. The Council Chambers were gutted by fire on 18 November 2010 and Western Australia's oldest general practice, Claremont General Practice,<sup>37</sup> closed on 4 February 2011 after the practice was unable to negotiate a further rental period from the landlord, the University of Western Australia. Claremont, therefore, has changed even more dramatically than the planners intended. There are now so many losses of the old poetics that to visit the shopping precinct is to feel that the entire experience has changed. Even in the areas which have had no demolition, the patterns of use have been altered as the shopping population has shifted from the east end to the west. In one of the most historic areas of Perth, therefore, the everyday is now entirely different. Conceptually, heritage practice has not been equipped to record most of those experiences.

An economic malaise has descended on what had been one of Perth's premier shopping streets, Bay View Terrace, and at the time of writing, July 2012, the Town of Claremont is undertaking a street renovation in an attempt to revive the street. There is debate around the paving costs associated with this, but tellingly, the Mayor, Jock Barker notes that the "better [ie more expensive] pavers would encourage people to walk out of Claremont Quarter... It will be a seamless walk from the Quarter to Bay View Terrace Mr. Barker said".<sup>38</sup> The Mayor identifies the heart of the missing poetics of the new Claremont - walking. Although the renovation of the street might encourage more people to return to the main street, the fascinating aspects of the district: the odd levels, backtracks, unexpected stairs... are mostly gone.

Ideally, heritage practitioners should have taken a stronger role at the planning stage and insisted on maintaining, if not some of the built environment, at least some of the multiple walking possibilities of the shopping precinct. This could have helped preserve an echo of the old experiences of the district and linked the new to the remaining Claremont. As heritage practice, however, has



paid little attention to such aspects of use it was most unlikely that any heritage practitioner would have had the power to argue against the streamlined, heavily planned shopping district of the planners and architects. It is the duty of heritage workers to ensure that poetics are maintained in the face of economic imperatives and short term planning and architectural trends.

There are some small signs of resistance to the heavy directions set up by planners and architects - most of them common acts of resistance to any spatial control as identified by Cresswell.<sup>39</sup> Young boys walk against the movement of the traveller ramps while supermarket trolleys are abandoned outside the enclosure intended for their keeping. Anecdotally, I hear of people choosing now to shop outside the Claremont area. The reality, however, is that Claremont Quarter is full of shoppers and the bustle of activity, but so are most non-places, they are busy in their functionality. It is the job of heritage to protect the poetics of place precisely because it is so hard to define in the face of streamlined functionality.

<sup>1</sup> See Aaroz G. 2011, 'Preserving Heritage Places Under a New Paradigm', *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol 1, No 1, p. 55; Kenny M.L. 2009, *Deeply Rooted in the Present: Making Heritage in Brazilian Quilombos* in L. Smith and N. Akagawa (eds.) *Intangible Heritage*, London, Routledge, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Bolton G. and J. Gregory 1999, *Claremont: A History*, Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press.

<sup>3</sup> Virilio P. 2001, 'On Georges Perec' in S. Johnstone (ed.) 2008, *The Everyday*, London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel, MIT Press, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> 'Local Buildings Vie For Design Awards' 2012, *The Post Newspaper* 9 June, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> 'Retailers united in bid to revive town centre' 2011, *Western suburbs weekly*, 24 March, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> 'Claims Bay View Terrace retail outlets drying up' 2011, *Western Suburbs Weekly*, 12 April, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> 'Quick fix' needed here' 2011, *Western Suburbs Weekly*, 24 May, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> 'Barker berates Terrace owners' 2011, *The Post Newspaper*, 2 July, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Garnham H. 1985, *The Spirit of Place: A Process for the Preservation of Town Character*, Mesa, Arizona, PDA Publishers Corporation.

<sup>10</sup> Bachelard G. 1964 (first published 1958), *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Beacon Press.

<sup>11</sup> Bachelard G. *The Poetics of Space*, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> de Certeau M. 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press,

<sup>15</sup> Tiwari R. 2010, *Space - Body - Ritual: Performativity in the City*, Plymouth, UK, Lexington Books, p. 141.

<sup>16</sup> www.ramblers.org.uk retrieved 12 January 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Careri F. 2007 (first published 2002) *Walkscapes*, Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Hewison R. 1987, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, London, Methuen; and Walsh K. 1992, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, London and New York, Routledge.

<sup>19</sup> Davison notes, however, that conservative middle class people and radical unionists have at times joined forces on heritage issues, Davison G. 1991, 'A brief history of the Australian heritage movement' in Davison G. and C. McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, p.21.

<sup>20</sup> Appadurai A. and C. Breckenridge 1992, 'Museums are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India', in I. Karp, C. Mullen Kreamer and S. Lavine (eds), *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press.

<sup>21</sup> Bennett T. 1988, *Out of Which Past?: Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*, Brisbane, Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University.

<sup>22</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>24</sup> Careri, *Walkscapes*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Careri, *Walkscapes*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenberg E. 2012, 'Walking in the City: Memory and Place', *The Journal of Architecture*, Vol 17, No 1, pp. 131-149.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenberg, 'Walking in the City: Memory and Place', p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> Rosenberg, 'Walking in the City: Memory and Place', p. 131.

<sup>29</sup> Highmore B. 2005, *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 6

<sup>30</sup> Sheringham M. 2007, 'Configuring the Everyday' in S. Johnstone, *The Everyday*, p. 142

<sup>31</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> Augé M. 1995, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London and New York, Verso.

<sup>33</sup> Lam L. 2009, 'Lisa Lam owner of The Sunflower Chinese Restaurant', interview for Claremont Museum 30 January, p. 2

<sup>34</sup> Burberry J. 2009, 'Judy Burberry owner of Adam Heath', interview for Claremont Museum, 28 January, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> 'Big names line up for the Quarter' 2011, *The Post Newspaper*, January 1, p.9.

<sup>36</sup> Australia ICOMOS 1999, *The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter*.

<sup>37</sup> For discussions on the Claremont General Practice see Tunbridge P. 2000, *The Medical Practice at 328 Stirling Highway Claremont from 1919 to 2000*, unpublished booklet, Claremont General Practice; and, Kamien M. 2011, *Dr William Theodore Hodge: Pioneer Surgeon-*

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*Apothecary in Early Twentieth Century Western Australia* (unpublished).

<sup>38</sup> 'Terrace project blows budget' 2012, *The Post Newspaper*, 9 June, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Cresswell T. 1996, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press.