PLIX
Spatial Poetry

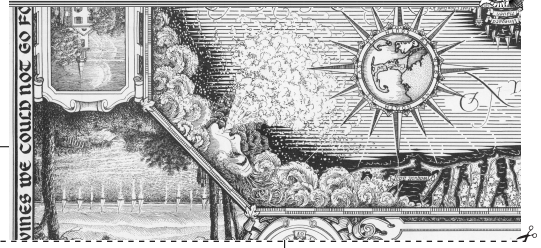
Poetry and Place

The language of places has inspired and informed poets—from Homer to Langston Hughes. By writing poems about a landscape, they made sense of what it meant to live there.

sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of strange speech

let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed – let it be that great strong land of love...

— PHILLIS WHEATLEY



A Hymn to the Evening *(excerpt)*

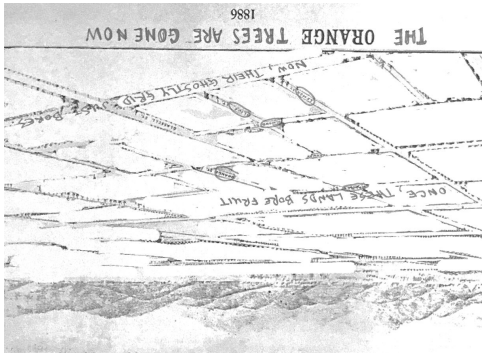
Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring.
Soft pant the streams, the birds renew their
notes, And through the air their mingled music
floats. Through all the heav'ns what beautiteous
dies are spread!

Poems capture how people think and feel within a place. Poets often describe places, making them almost legendary.

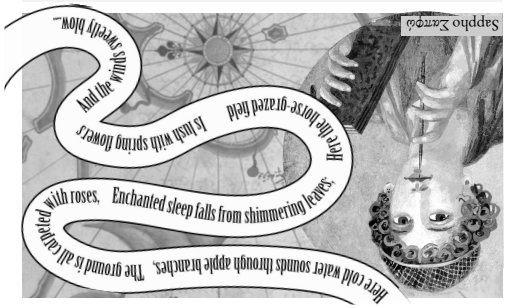
Shaping Space

Some poets simply reflect on a place and their own thoughts and feelings on its name.

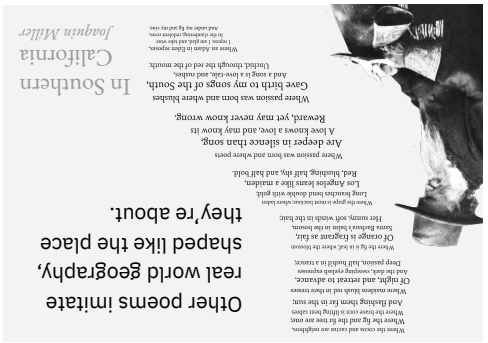
Maps can be poems. Words in them can be highlighted or erased to make a story or idea—or to ask about the landscape depicted.



Some poems are derived by the landscape in a variety of ways—imitating its twists and turns, taking inspiration from a long walk or drawing from the language on a map.



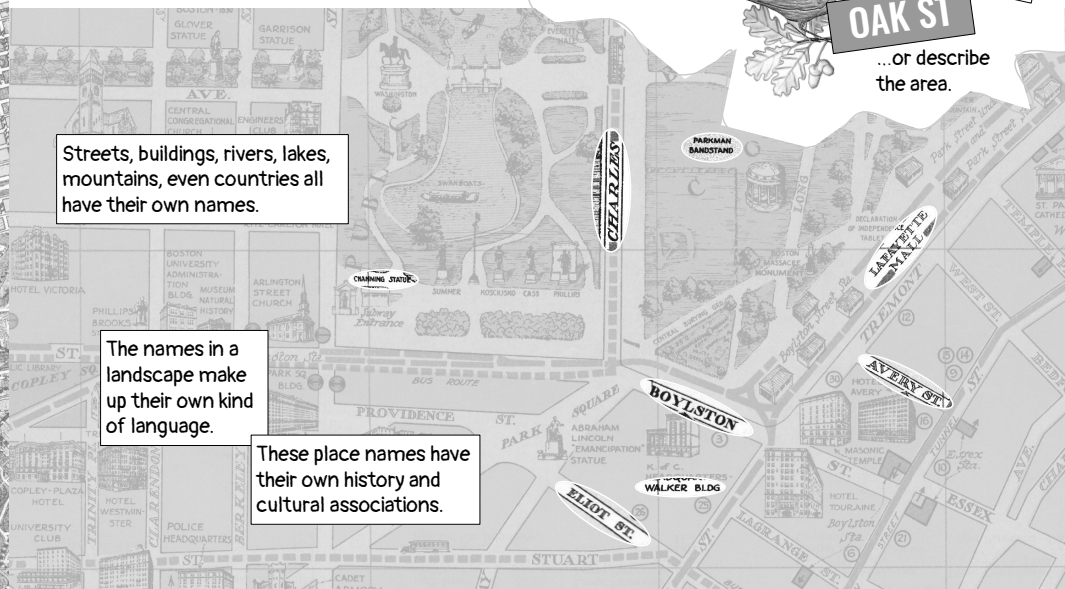
Other poems imitate real world geography, shaped like the place they're about.



In Southern California
Joaquin Miller

Finding Your Way

Look at a map of where you live.
What do all the words mean?
Are the words easy to pronounce?
Where do these names come from?



Streets, buildings, rivers, lakes, mountains, even countries all have their own names.

The names in a landscape make up their own kind of language.

These place names have their own history and cultural associations.

Place names might reflect the values of a society...

or memorialize a historical figure...

...or describe the area.

This zine was created by the MIT Media Lab Public Library Innovation Exchange (PLIX) and Hua Xi of the Spatial Poetry Project.

Display your spatial poems on its website—visit **spatial-poetry.com** for more details.

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