

Victoria Park

Emma Green

University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, PO Box 123, Ultimo NSW 2017, Australia. emma.green@student.uts.edu.au

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I had walked past Victoria Park several times, seen it through the window from the bus on City Road, and sat on the grass at its edge just opposite Glebe Point Road, but never actually walked around it until the Aboriginal Political History Introductory Week excursion.

From the outside it had not seemed as big as it really was. I'd had no idea what it was called either, or even that it had a name. It was just part of the landscape up the road from UTS, before the University of Sydney. This is a new frame of reference and Victoria Park is a new name for a place on Gadigal land that has existed in its own way for longer than one can easily imagine. I had never properly considered the depth and layers of history contained in the park. This was the theme I took from our tour: history and time contained in the endurance and steadfastness of the land.

In one of the early tutorials we talked about timelines and the conceptualisation of time. Time looks different on paper, and time on paper is based on knowing events and numbers and years so that history can be stretched out along a line. Visiting Victoria Park helped me grasp an understanding of time and history that doesn't need timelines or dates. In this place that has been reshaped and revisited, rebuilt, fenced and bordered – under this angularity there are the same contours of land, the dip in the centre of the park that insulates you from the sound of traffic on the roads, the trees, the waterway that have all seen countless people come, walk, sit, meet, stay, and leave. There is a layering of time, as though everyone who has ever been there is still there, if you just look over your shoulder.

I have thought of this layering and merging of history at other times, mostly when I go back to places where I spent a lot of time in my childhood. Places of repetition that carry layers of uncountable afternoons walking down the same path to the beach or running around my best friend's backyard, as though the past is hiding just under reality. But I've been alive for just over two decades, and in the span of history you don't even have to blink to miss such little time.

Visiting Victoria Park as an Aboriginal site developed this nostalgic sense of merged time and still-real memories into a better comprehension of the significance and power of over 60,000 years of layered history, a history that is here and kept in the land.

What stays in my mind most is the lake in the park. It's the natural waterway that flows out, underground now, north to the harbour. Water is often tied to ideas of continuity and circularity, so



perhaps it's no surprise that I make this link. The lake and the water's path are still there, developed and changed in different ways yet always watching, and waiting, and holding the history.



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