

BOOK REVIEWS

Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths, eds, 2002, *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney. ISBN 0 86840 628 7 Paperback 263pp RRP \$39.95

Bronwyn Davies, 2000, *(In)scribing Body/Landscape Relations*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek CA. ISBN 0 7425 0320 8 Paperback 276pp RRP US\$24.95

In *Ecological Pioneers*, a recent social history of Australian ecological thought and action (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), Mulligan and Hill (2001) quote from a 1961 essay by Judith Wright:

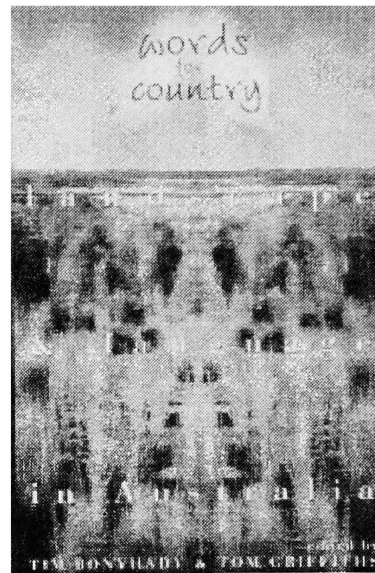
Australia is still, for us, not a country, but a state – or states – of mind. We do not speak from within her, but from outside: from the state of mind that describes, rather than expresses, its surroundings, or from a state of mind that imposes itself upon, rather than lives through, landscape and event... We are caught up in the nineteenth-century split of consciousness, the stunned shock of those who cross the seas and find themselves, as the Australian ballad puts it, in a 'hut that's upside down' (p. 96).

Each of the books reviewed here illuminates the desire and struggle to express in words the kind of intimacy with landscape to which Wright refers. *Words for Country* is a collection of essays by geographers, anthropologists and environmental historians, edited by Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths, that celebrates and critiques the languages and literatures of place in Australia. *(In)scribing Body/Landscape Relations* is an (almost) solely authored collection of essays by Bronwyn Davies that explores the implications and possibilities of thinking and writing bodies and landscapes together rather than in binary opposition.

Most of the essays in *Words for Country* deal in some way with the problem of how to inscribe Australian landscapes authentically in the English language. As the editors explain, before European colonisation, 'Aboriginal Australia was a constellation of languages, a jigsaw of inscribed landscapes of meaning' (p. 2). These voices that lived through landscape have been muted as European place names have erased or displaced Aboriginal 'words for country'. As a result, contemporary place names often point to ambiguous and complex acts of possession, dispossession and repossession. This ambiguity is particularly apparent in Rebe Taylor's stories of Lubra Creek on Kangaroo Island. She notes that 'the name Lubra Creek is not mapped; it exists only in the memories of a few and on a box [of stone tools] amongst hundreds of others' (p. 18) in the South Australian Museum. However, archaeological studies suggest that Kangaroo Island had been uninhabited for a period of between 4000 and 10,000 years prior to European settlement, and the name Lubra Creek,

despite its gesture to indigenous inhabitation, is a European imposition – a signpost to a much more recent history of the abuse and derogation of Aboriginal women. Similarly, Michael Cathcart's story of the political contest over naming Uluru, and Tim Bonyhady's account of the debate over Kutikina Cave (also known as Fraser Cave) on the Franklin River, offer focal points for critical debates in racial and environmental politics.

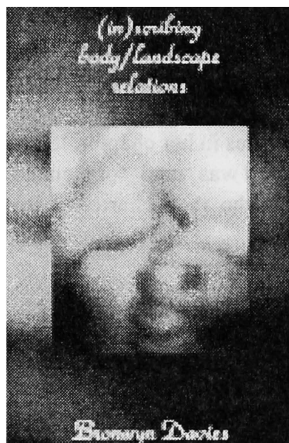
I was reminded again of Wright's 'hut that's upside down' in Heather Goodall's 'The River Runs Backwards', an expression used frequently by the residents of Bourke and its environs – townspeople, graziers and Aborigines – to describe the impact of irrigated cotton on the Upper Darling River. Indeed water is a theme that flows through many of the essays in the book, despite the relative absence of such flows in the landscape. As Kirsty Douglas writes in her chapter, 'Scarcely any Water on its Surface', the land was 'read' for signs of water by early European explorers who then charted it in terms of their disappointments.



Most of the words in *Words for Country* are written by academics, and although they may, in Judith Wright's terms, describe rather than express the landscapes they consider, they demonstrate convincingly that studying this country's indigenous and exotic nouns, adjectives and verbs is no less important than collecting and classifying its plants, animals and soils – and that very often these practices are inextricably intertwined.

(In)scribing Body/Landscape Relations very clearly signals its academic credentials (or pretensions, depending upon your point of view) by insisting that readers decipher not only the words in its title but also its punctuation: the parentheses and backslash invite readers to be suspicious of (and even disrupt) conventional relations among and between words, bodies and landscapes. Bronwyn Davies explores ways in which language

– words inscribed in texts and voiced in speech – might trouble (and even collapse) the binary of landscape and body. Most of the chapters have been published previously in academic journals or other edited collections, and they can for the most part be read as stand-alone essays rather than as a continuous series. The essays include: an account of an experience of ‘collective biography’ in which a group of women congregated to read and write about experiences which linked land and body; an exploration of North Queensland men’s experiences of environmentalism; an account of Japanese experiences of landscape; and textual analyses of how four works of fiction (by Yasunari Kawabata, Sam Watson, Rodney Hall and Janette Turner Hospital) create relationships between characters and their environment.



Davies challenges the mind and body binary most directly through collective biography, where participants learn that the mind inhabits not only the brain, but the whole body, by writing in a language that recovers the ‘feeling, poetic body’ (p. 168). Her aim is to show bodies in landscape, bodies as landscape (such as the maternal body), and landscapes as extensions of bodies, all being ‘worked and reworked, scribed and reinscribed’ (p. 249). She adopts a writing style that seems inspired by Hélène Cixous, whose *écriture féminine* inscribes embodied knowledge by using different styles of writing (such as poetry alongside conventional exposition) to fuse experience and subjectivity with analysis. Like Cixous, Davies juxtaposes personal vignettes, textual analysis, poems, and social commentary, but the overall effect is more like patchwork than fusion, with each chapter seeming more coherent than the book as a whole.

One of the most interesting and persuasive chapters in *(In)scribing Body/Landscape Relations* is cowritten with Hilary Whitehouse, whose work also appears elsewhere in this issue – and, not surprisingly, it is also one with considerable relevance for environmental education. Davies and Whitehouse re/present ‘Australian men talk[ing] about becoming environmentalists’ (p. 63) in ways that demonstrate the generativity of poststructuralist approaches to understanding body/landscape relations. Their study explores the take-up of environmental discourses by a small group of men living and working in far north Queensland and analyses the complex relations between the discourse of

environmentalism and specific landscapes as they both constitute and are constituted by these men. Davies and Whitehouse note that the environmentalists in their study found a variety of strategies for ‘troubling the surface of rational dominant masculinity and of coming to (be)long in landscapes in embodied ways’ (p. 84). But they also caution that:

‘nature’ has many meanings, as does ‘masculinity,’ and there are many contradictions between them. One way of managing these different meanings is to make discursive and bodily practice specific to particular folds in time and space (such as ‘the pub’ and ‘Kakadu’). Another way is to merge and meld elements of one discourse and the related set of practices with other discourses and practices. These men constantly *separate themselves out* from other, lesser men, who are macho exploiters of women and environments. But the individualistic hero image is not easily let go of. Each man escapes from culture and other men in a journey of renewal and return. Each one finds himself vulnerable to the practices and discourses of the culture he finds himself in – vulnerable to becoming ‘like them’ (p. 85, emphasis in original).

I hope that in a future issue of *AJEE*, one or both of the authors might take the analysis offered in this chapter one step further – to focus explicitly on the implications of such deconstructive readings for environmental education. For example, their analysis suggests to me that it is possible to ‘read’ popular media texts such as TV’s *The Crocodile Hunter* not only as banal entertainments but also as complex inscriptions of body/landscape relations. 🐊

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David Hicks, 2002, *Lessons for the Future: The Missing Dimension in Education*, RoutledgeFalmer, London and New York. ISBN 0415276721 Hardback 145pp UK £55.00

David Hicks draws on his research in futures studies (including children’s views of futures) over the past decade to provide insights into ways of helping both students and teachers think more critically and creatively about futures for themselves and wider society. He stresses the crucial role of education in helping young people to understand anticipated local and global change and the social and environmental impacts such changes might have on their futures. He provides a clear educational rationale for promoting global and futures perspectives in education, and offers realistic and effective examples of futures-orientated classroom activities.

A new publication by David Hicks is always welcome. For more than two decades, Hicks has consistently produced eminently readable accounts of research, and teaching resources grounded in research and practical wisdom, focused