

2007

## **Review of *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, edited by D. Trigger and G. Griffiths**

Christina E. Dando

University of Nebraska at Omaha, [cdando@unomaha.edu](mailto:cdando@unomaha.edu)

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### **Recommended Citation**

Dando, Christina E., "Review of *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, edited by D. Trigger and G. Griffiths" (2007). *Geography and Geology Faculty Publications*. 13.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/geoggeolfacpub/13>

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*Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies.* DAVID TRIGGER and GARETH GRIFFITHS, editors. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003. Pp. 316, illustrations, index. \$49.50 hardbound and \$21.95 paper. ISBN 962-209-648-4.

The phrase “disputed territories” can represent a great many things,

from actual land to the metaphor of academic turf. The landscapes of Australasia and southern Africa have long been, and continue to be, disputed territories. This volume developed out of a year-long program of interdisciplinary seminars entitled "Land, Place, Culture, Identity" at the University of Western Australia, which explored the intersection of history, representation, and identity in Australasia and southern Africa. The volume's ten essays explore the "imaginative possession" of the land (p. 3), and cover a range of topics in both historical and contemporary settings. The contributions roam widely, focusing on texts and images, settlers and natives, textual studies and social inquiry. By crossing boundaries and deconstructing binaries, the editors hope to find a fruitful common ground in a region that, by nature, requires interdisciplinary research. The result is a set of engaging essays that raises important questions about the interdisciplinary research presented in the volume.

It is difficult to group the essays, for they truly are interdisciplinary and do cover an extraordinary amount of ground. To provide a sense of the collection's breadth, though, it might be helpful to summarize a few of the essays. Catherine Nash's "Genealogy, Geography, and Identity," the sole contribution penned by a geographer, explores the "diasporic identities" of Irish immigrants as they return to Ireland to "reconnect" with their heritage (p. 31). As genealogy tourism increases in popularity, Nash calls for a rethinking of identities from static and singular in definition to forms of identification that are inclusive, fluid, and multi-located. Michèle Dominy takes us to the historical landscape of New Zealand, examining the cultural and biological encounters that took place as European settlers transformed the landscape from a Maori rainforest to a colonial environment dominated by grasses. Bringing insights from environmental history into a textual approach, Dominy examines the significance of place in relation to biogeophysical and cultural components, mapping the encounters at the colonial, postcolonial, and global levels (p. 75). Ian McLean's "Landscape and Ideology: Picturing Sydney Cove 200 Years Ago" uses art to examine the relationships of the settlers and the indigenous population to the landscape of Sydney Cove (p. 109). McLean contrasts a convict's portrayal of Sydney Cove with that of a professional artist, and suggests that their social positions are revealed in the different portrayals of this landscape and its people. In "The Art of Country: Aesthetics, Place, and Aboriginal Identity in North-West Australia," Valda Blundell explores the role of art in Wandjina culture, which serves to locate their identities within a specific cultural landscape as well as to transform the production of their art over time (p. 158). Drawing upon fieldwork, historical and ethnographic materials, and textual readings of the art, Blundell describes how rock art functions in this society, tying the place to the people and the people to a particular place, while arranging the related tribes into a meaningful spatial

array. Repainting the rock art, in short, maintains ties to the land. So while today's rock art is depicted on bark or board for sale in the tourist trade, it can be read as a means of maintaining artistic traditions and conventions amid rapid global change. While tourists fail to recognize how the art connects people to place, the Wandjina still recognize this essential feature, and "by mapping their identities on to the lands of their ancestors, individuals implicitly paint against the idea that at Mowanjum they are 'settled at last'" (p. 174). The last essay in the collection (and by far the most theoretical in stance), Paul Carter's "Ground Designs and the New Ichnology," is a sustained meditation on mapping and movement. He calls for a new conception of migration that shifts the focus from binary relationships to a multiplicity of experiences that come together in "a dance-like discourse" (p. 292). In this way, Carter's essay offers a means of understanding the widely divergent threads of the collection.

Geographers will find much of interest in this book, with fascinating evidence and thoughtful analysis. I particularly enjoyed the unexpected resonances within the text, such as that found between the contributions of Nash and Blundell, whose ideas of ancestry and nationhood echo one another in surprising ways. Who knew that people of Irish descent exploring multiple national identities would share common ground with contemporary Aboriginal peoples who are similarly exploring manifold territorial identities? In other ways, though, in its exploration of the intersections of landscape, representation, and ideology, *Disputed Territories* covers issues well-trodden by geographers. Although southern Africa and Australasia provide terrain generally less familiar to American geographers, the results are somewhat predictable in that they reflect work done in cultural and historical geography over the last thirty years. Despite the editors' statement that "this volume seeks to illustrate the value of cross-disciplinary interaction" (p. 4), and despite repeatedly referring to current work in cultural geography throughout the text, the contributors nonetheless come mostly from history, English, and anthropology. Works by geographers are hardly even mentioned, and then only vaguely, in the book's pages. Particularly striking is the essay "Genocide by Cartography: Secrets and Lies in Maps of the Southeastern African Interior, 1830-1850," an exploration of the colonial mapping of eastern South Africa, which contains not a single reference to works by geographers or historians of cartography. While discussing "genocide by cartography," the author, a historian, misses the contributions made by J. B. Harley, G. Malcolm Lewis, and other historians of cartography whose work has obvious relevance for the chapter's topic.

As someone who regularly engages in interdisciplinary work, as many geographers do, I appreciated the attempt to bring disciplines together, and I enjoyed reading many of the essays in the volume. I would, however, have expected a little more than a halfhearted gesture to geography's presence in

these “disputed territories,” especially when they have already been exploring aspects of this terrain for quite some time.

—*Christina Dando*  
University of Nebraska-Omaha