

concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide between 1958 and 2000 that, "This is one of the most wonderful things I've ever seen. In it you can see our planet breathing," (21) combines his breathless enthusiasm with a startling and elegant image of science. Flannery's thorough and engaging introduction to the science of climate change, and to science more generally, is the great strength of this book. Personal conviction and an obvious presence in the text are becoming the hallmark of scientific writing aimed at a non-specialist audience, and Flannery's warmth is engaging, his optimism is almost a sufficient antidote to the picture he presents of the way human activities have damaged the planet and of the environmental damage that is unavoidable in the future, even if worse yet can be averted.

The book is an interesting marker of the way in which discussions on climate change have shifted recently. With the release of the Stern Report in late 2006, climate change has been recognized not as a matter of conscience in the treatment of other species and of humans living in the regions worst affected by rising sea levels but as an economic issue that may have severe impacts on the economies of wealthy nations. This book by Flannery, updated and revised from the 2005 book *The Weather Makers*, combined with his position as Australian of the Year 2007, must surely contribute to the discussion that has now commenced in earnest. Even the now widespread

use of the term "climate change" rather than "global warming" (evoking, as Flannery points out, images of comfort rather than disaster (214-215)) is a significant shift in public discussion. This book, balancing neatly between the global scale of human impacts and the particular situation of Australia, is engaging, thorough, and the image it presents of potential catastrophe on a global scale is made almost enjoyable through Flannery's boundless enthusiasm and optimism.



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### AND THE WORD WAS "QUEENSLAND"

Patrick Buckridge and Belinda McKay, eds. *By the Book: A Literary History of Queensland*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007. 390 pp. AUS \$45.00. ISBN 978 0 7022 3468 2.

In a brief Introduction to *By the Book: A Literary History of Queensland*, editors Patrick Buckridge and Belinda McKay ponder whether such a study risks reifying the notion of the strange, perhaps even quirky Queensland of old, either as a physical space or as a construct. The state, they argue, is now far more like the rest of Australia than is often recognised and even catchy

slogans like "Queensland, the Smart State" speak more of a marketing image than of any real differences from the rest of Australia. However, they conclude that such a study is justified, especially if its aims are clearly set out. Their second concern is that the book covers the whole of a Queensland which Janette Turner Hospital is quoted at the beginning of the book describing as "too big a place to be contained in the one book" (1). Despite their trepidation and its ambitious scope, the book is held neatly together by the theme of "change," either in the way writers have related to Queensland as a physical or imaginary place, or in the context of a rapidly evolving society.

*By the Book* offers thus a portrait of the changing nature of Queensland, both as a physical space but most of all as the imaginative motif that has allowed writers as diverse as Frank Jardine, Jean Devanny, Judith Wright, David Malouf, Thea Astley, Lionel Fogarty, Venero Armmano, Nick Earls, Melissa Lucashenko and Rita Huggins, among others, to create a body of writing that is recognizably associated with a set of common ways of being, of seeing, and of writing about and relating to landscape. The editors state in their Introduction that "it seemed that our best option might be to see if we could use the literary history of Queensland not to boost and consolidate Queensland's image of itself as a whole and distinct entity but to scrutinize that image, to look beyond it, to question it, even to

ignore it if that seemed the right thing to do. Instead of writing a history of literature *for* Queensland, we resolved to write a history of literature *in* Queensland" (5).

The book succeeds in delivering a history of literature in Queensland that encompasses the arrival of the White man (and the gendered language seems apt here), rampant urbanization, the (ongoing) dispossession of Indigenous peoples and how the latter themselves are "biting back," in the title of Maggie Nolan's essay on Indigenous Australian writing. While each chapter adds something new to the understanding and study of Queensland writing, the approaches adopted by the various authors vary greatly. Some of the authors have provided fairly exhaustive bibliographies of texts written or published in the periods or categories they address, others opted for a more judicious reading of what they see as texts key to their discussions. Buckridge's exploration of a body of texts recognizably concerned with and inflected by a relationship with place as both geography and imagination, "Roles for Writers: Brisbane and Literature," is weighted towards the former approach by its quasi-foundational nature. Focusing on the period between 1859 and 1975, the essay addresses some of the ways in which many of the earlier writers both responded to the strangeness of their new environment and created a vocabulary to describe it.

Other authors, such as Cheryl Taylor and the late Elizabeth Perkins, highlight in their essays either individual writers or a corpus of texts that share in common political, geographical or aesthetic concerns. While their discussion of Far North Queensland writing also includes a detailed bibliography, the essay undertakes a closer critical analysis of issues of historical context and literary merit. Similarly, Maggie Nolan's chapter on Australian Indigenous writing shows how today it is not possible to talk of Australian literature without attending to the voices of those whom earlier variations of Australian literature sought to silence, to erase. As Nolan notes at the start of her chapter:

An analysis of the reception of Indigenous literatures tells us a great deal about the shifting and contradictory nature of race relations in Australia, with their concomitant assumptions, anxieties and stereotypes. Certainly, recent interest in Indigenous literature has almost as much to tell us about white guilt and desire, the politics of authenticity, and the complexities involved in the assignation of cultural value, as it does about Indigenous cultural and literary expressions (259).

At times *By the Book* feels a bit like a *grand tour* of sorts: we begin our journey in a nameless setting from which the editors write, though perhaps that is their obvious base in the academe; we move on to Brisbane, soon across to the Gold

Coast, over the Hinterland, deeper into the Bush, up into Far North Queensland and back again. Two essays address children's literature and travel writing. It is a pity that the work does not devote greater attention to the dialogue between regions, through closer focus on similarities and differences between them, setting out in relief the overall qualities that make it possible, indeed critically rewarding to speak of "a literary history of Queensland." The editors note rightly that a single-authored book would have been unfeasible but perhaps a stronger introduction outlining a framework for the various essays, would have given the work a greater cohesion and purpose — the sense of *gravitas* one may expect from "a literary history." Yet, *By the Book* is undeniably an invaluable and exciting resource for literary critics and students of Australian literature, and indeed for anyone with an interest in the way writing has been inextricable from the creation of an Australian identity.

