

## 2006 Issue No. 13 — Making Badlands

### Making Badlands All Over the World: Local Knowledge and Global Power

By Steve Butler

“And so a remote backwater on the Central Queensland coast finds itself in the sights of the Pentagon’s new global strategy” (*Dirty War* ).

In *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* Ross Gibson suggests that badlands are constitutive of community, a necessary evil enabling good to flourish elsewhere. Bob Hawke’s recent proposal for turning Australia’s “dead heart” into the world’s nuclear waste dump (AM. ABC. 27 Sept. 2005) is a classic example of badland making and a timely reminder of the relevance of Gibson’s book. Closer to my home, on the Capricorn Coast of Central Queensland, several controversies are brewing about the uses to which our lands are put. [1] According to Gibson “Life in Central Queensland is a *direct continuation* of the systems that formed a new society during the frontier era” (54). He argues: “conflict, coercion and dissimulation defined the ‘community’ . . . rather than the integration and stewardship of the land” (106). The more things change, the more they stay the same: several examples of neo-colonialism threatening to turn more of the Capricorn region into a badland will be cited in this essay to show how “the past produces the present” (2-3). I intend to engage with some of the environmental issues facing the region through a prism of texts circulating in the local culture: films, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, web sites and journal articles, in an attempt to foreground the way that social realities are discursively constructed.

Ross Gibson’s identification of the Capricorn region as a badland is both an epilogue and an inauguration. On one hand, the book’s historical focus allows us to reconcile with the horrors of the past; on the other, the explanatory power of its central principles enables people to intervene effectively in contemporary politics. Gibson describes a badland as “a place where evil can be banished so that goodness can be credited, by contrast, in the regions all around” (17). This is a powerful concept but not without political implications. It is especially problematic for people who live in and around the area designated a badland because it implies they must sacrifice themselves and their natural environment for the greater good of the nation. My initial approach to the badlands project was to write about the mythical resonances of the Capricorn region: Rockhampton, where the city lights spell “Hell” and place names like River Styx and Mount Parnassus evoke old world connotations in a strange sub-tropical landscape. [2] I related this to the use of generic figures of speech such as “horror stretch” and “no-go area” (173) in *Seven Versions* and somewhat recklessly hoped to exploit that text’s potential as a site for exploring the fascinating and contentious relationship between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic and specifically what Ross Gibson refers to as a “system of physical and metaphysical interdependence” (63). However, my literary and theoretical interests were soon displaced by a realization that a figurative badland is in danger of becoming a literal one. In terms of academic fields this marks a shift from literary and cultural studies into what Hochman and others describe as Green Cultural Studies: a discipline whose *raison d’être* is

to examine nature through words, image, and model for the purpose of foregrounding potential effects representation might have on cultural attitudes and social practices which, in turn, affect nature itself. (Coupe 187)

A short list of recent environmental crises represented in the local media (not counting controversies surrounding beachfront high-rise developments and water supply issues) includes: the development of a Joint Combined Training Centre (JCTC) in the Shoalwater Bay Military Training Area (SBMTA); a proposed coalmine in a Capricorn Coast rainforest/ water-catchment area [3]; the expansion of existing DPI forestry plantations into the Hedlow Basin wetland [4]; a shire council's use of S.6 herbicides on roadsides and creek crossings. [5] Despite the importance of all these issues and their clear relation to the making of badlands, I intend to focus on Shoalwater Bay - the global significance of developments in that space cannot be understated. [6] Shoalwater Bay has been described by the Commonwealth Government of Australia (1994 p. xxviii) as "the largest coastal area with high wilderness values between Cooktown and southern New South Wales." (Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry p. xxviii). In Alan Carter's recent film *Dirty War*, a local resident describes it as a "huge jewel on the coast of Australia" and points out its proximity to World Heritage listed areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. [7] With a 300 km coastline, Shoalwater Bay is the largest coastal and aquatic wilderness area with large undisturbed habitat areas in Queensland. Its landforms, flora and fauna include: mountain ranges, rainforest, dry open forest, melaleuca woodland, vine thickets, creeks, wetlands, lagoons, parabolic sand dunes, perched lakes, peat swamps, mudflats, mangroves and sea grass beds. The estuarine and marine environments provide a home to dolphins, whales, crocodiles, endangered sea turtles and dugongs and 445 species of fish. Shoalwater Bay's location between tropical and temperate climate zones gives it a high biodiversity value with many animals and plants reaching their northern or southern limits in the area. Over 1000 plant species are found in the area including five nationally threatened species. The area is home to almost 50% of Australia's bird species and offers a sanctuary to large numbers of bats and gliders (Commonwealth; EPA). In short, Shoalwater Bay is a place of great environmental value – "Queensland's Kakadu" is how it is sometimes described in local circles. If such a pristine area of a supposedly enlightened Western democracy can be threatened in the ways I will go on to describe, the world is in trouble – a veritable global badland is in the making.

### **Films, Film Makers and the SBMTA**

Aside from environmental considerations, some people in the local community fear that the SBMTA is becoming (in the guise of the JCTC) an American base. Others suspect that weapons containing depleted uranium (DU) have been or will be used in training exercises. A Federal Government inquiry into the proposed JCTC recently gave it the "green light". Public submissions to the inquiry were invited but strictly limited and the Rockhampton hearing was only advertised in Brisbane and Townsville newspapers. Peter Murray of the Shoalwater Wilderness Awareness Group described the hearing as "a whitewash" (*Capricorn Coast Mirror* 9 Aug. 2006). Given that submissions from local people were actively discouraged in an underhand way, his description may not be inaccurate. In the same article a spokesperson for Friends of the Earth said "Recent incidents in the region show that the community is being kept out of the loop as far as military activity is concerned – sometimes with frightening consequences" (*Capricorn Coast Mirror* 26 July 2006). These comments reflect broader concerns in Australia about new sedition laws and their effect on freedom of speech and right of assembly. Clive Hamilton in *The Age* makes the point that

The Howard Government's willingness to smother dissent poses a threat to the democratic process in Australia. Like individual citizens, community groups are being worn down and are increasingly reluctant to engage in the democratic process because they no longer believe that they can make a difference. (*The Age* 9 June 2004)

Concerns about the use of Shoalwater Bay and the legitimacy of the West's "war on terror" are

highlighted in *Dirty War* and David Bradbury's *Blowin' in the Wind*. According to an ABC news report cited by Bradbury "Australia announced in July [2004] it would build a Joint Combined Training Centre for use with United States troops." Shoalwater Bay is the favoured site for the centre but America's track record with overseas military bases is not encouraging local people to welcome the development. In *Dirty War* environmental attorney Harry Kelso is cited as saying "the contamination on US military reservations, the closed ones, is the uncoded legacy of the twentieth century." Given his estimate that there are around "two thousand US bases in 140 countries world wide" it seems not unreasonable to question the necessity and desirability of the American armed forces setting up in a highly valuable Australian wilderness area. The US military's use of weapons containing depleted uranium is part of the problem, especially as allied forces such as Australia have been encouraged to use it. According to Hansard (February 2003) "From 1981 to 1990 the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] expended 43,000 DU rounds at sea during training ... sourced from the US Navy." Predictably, the Department of Defence will neither confirm nor deny whether this training occurred at Shoalwater Bay but local knowledge suggests that the Raymond and Townsend Island bombing ranges were likely targets. [8] Hansard also records that "There was no ammunition left in the inventory after 1990." A recent statement by the Department of Defence rather significantly makes no reference to whether DU weapons have been used in the past, only that they are not being used now. Either way, it makes little difference. According to Leuren Moret, a nuclear weapons scientist turned whistle-blower interviewed in *Blowin' in the Wind*: "DU particles are so fine that they behave like a gas. Anyone downwind or within a thousand miles of where this is being used will be exposed." The damage may have already been done. In Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere the damage has most certainly been done. [9]

*Blowin' in the Wind*, featuring a number of local people, premiered in what Bradbury describes as the "sleepy little coastal town" of Yeppoon shortly after stage one of joint military operation Talisman Sabre was held at Shoalwater Bay in mid 2005. [10] The film and attendant publicity helped mobilize the local community to seek answers from the Federal Government on the DU issue but so far nothing has been clarified. When stage two of Talisman Sabre begins in 2007, approximately thirty thousand military personnel will arrive in the area. According to a *Morning Bulletin* [local newspaper] report: "Shoalwater Bay resident Keith Jaffray believes protesters will outnumber troops at next year's Australia-United States training exercise" (MB 28 July 06). Meanwhile local interest in the SBMTA has shifted to the impending development of the JCTC featuring an "urban warfare training zone". The fact that the Americans will also use Shoalwater Bay to test laser-guided weapons (the so-called "smart bombs") is also causing concern. Without denying the need for a national defence force, recent developments in Shoalwater Bay involving agreements with other nations can be legitimately contested. Little or no consultation with local people and the broader Australian community has taken place on these important issues. Professor Ross Babbage, a defence consultant says (without a trace of irony) "There should be no concern on the part of the public at all" (*Blowin' in the Wind*).

David Bradbury, like Ross Gibson, has a longstanding interest in the Capricorn region. Perhaps in the way that Ross Gibson sees the place as epitomizing colonial evils and foundational myths, David Bradbury sees it as a frontline in the fight against the creeping fascism of a new world order. Bradbury first came to the attention of the local community back in 1992 when the "fight" was against the sandmining of water-laden dunes in Byfield and Shoalwater Bay. His film *Shoalwater Up for Grabs* featured prominent rock singer and environmental activist Peter Garret as narrator and helped ensure a positive outcome for the environment at the Federally instituted Commission of Enquiry. The sand miners subsequently took their money elsewhere and many people at the time thought the Department of Defence would do the right thing by the environment – they certainly made all the right noises gaining the support of the Capricorn Conservation Council which pragmatically accepted the ADF as an unlikely "white knight" (Commonwealth 141).

Goodwill between environmentalists and the ADF is rapidly evaporating with the recent

Government announcement documented in *Blowin' in the Wind* of a Memorandum of Understanding "outlining future Australian participation in the US missile defence system – otherwise known as Son of Star Wars." The memorandum includes as part of its fine print the provision that no "Environmental Impact Study will be required before or after a military training exercise." David Bradbury observes that "This decision by the Australian government was made two weeks after the deal with Washington" (*Blowin' in the Wind*). Ross Gibson describes the Capricorn badlands as "a 'no-go' area for White Australia, a tract which like the dead centre could be cordoned off from sociability and everyday consciousness; a tract of Australia which was paradoxically and usefully not Australia" (169-170). In light of the recent Memorandum of Understanding and Australia's increasingly close ties with the US, Gibson's statement seems a particularly apt description of Shoalwater Bay. Pine Gap in the "dead centre" is another place with a similarly problematic sovereign status. Recent statements made about the purpose these "bases" serve have been unnervingly frank. US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeldt says: "We don't want to be in a static defence mode, we want to be in a more agile arrangement." Australian Minister Defence Robert Hill agrees: "If there are ways we can assist then we want to" (*Dirty War*). Professor Babbage says "The fact that the United States can access Australia in a crunch, in a crisis, if there were a major crisis in the Indian Ocean for instance then it can swing its forces through this area; that's a useful, very useful thing. (*Dirty War*)

The tenor of this discourse is "we own the game, take it or leave it". Elsewhere Professor Babbage says of the JCTC: "Frankly, what it is going to do is send a signal to anyone who wants to look, is that the ADF is going to be formidable and basically, don't mess with us" (*Blowin in the Wind*). Sounds like he is putting an Australian spin on Uncle Sam's old motto of "Don't tread on me". Babbage's statements dovetail neatly with George W. Bush's 2001 ultimatum: "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make; either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (*Dirty War*). But that is not a decision, it's a threat. Everything in this political climate is presented as a fait accompli. Acquiescence is reflected in a statement made by a local Shire Mayor "It's got to be in someone's backyard, it just happens to be ours" (*Dirty War*). Media reports show that not everyone agrees; they might say, it doesn't *have* to be in "our backyard" or anyone else's. A recent letter to the *Morning Bulletin* (15 Aug. 2006) endorsing the military, describes peace activists as "B.A.N.A.N.A.s (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything)" but this overlooks the fact that Shoalwater Bay is no ordinary backyard; the letter conspicuously makes no reference to the training area's environmental values. As for the US responding to major crises in the Indian Ocean, they did nothing when East Timor needed help or when the "Boxing Day" tsunami of 2004 struck. Despite growing suspicion about the militarisation of Australian culture, *Dirty War* represents Capricorn Coast people as focused on the positives. The mayor of Livingstone Shire, understating the implications of what he calls "military tourism" says: "once every two years for six weeks, troops come to visit, we get to see them, there's some social interchanges, they go home. You know, they certainly do put money into the economy." This puts a rather benign face on the mightiest war machine of all time. And while there are good grounds for an alliance between the USA and Australia, there is nothing to suggest that the US military will respect Australian territory more than any of the other countries it has stationed forces (and let's not forget that DU sourced from the US Navy has been used in Australian territory). The Philippines, Puerto Rico and South Korea are experiencing enormous environmental, social and health problems created by US bases. According to one writer: "The U.S. military is refusing to clean up pollution at bases set to be closed in South Korea, the country's Defense Ministry said Tuesday, in a dispute stalling Washington's handover of the land back to South Korean control" (AP). In a Declaration of Ultimatum to the United States Navy, the people of Puerto Rico "accuse the U.S. Navy of polluting our air, water and land and contributing significantly to the high level of cancer and other diseases related to the degradation of the environment that affect our population" (Vieques Libre).

Not even the environmental integrity of the continental USA is respected by its armed forces. According to John Heilprin of AAP

Thirty-four military bases shut down since 1988 are on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list of worst toxic waste sites – most of them for at least 15 years – and not one is completely cleaned up ... Hard-to-remove contaminants include trichloroethylene, a cleaning solvent linked to cancer, as well as asbestos-tainted soil, radioactive materials and leaded paint. (Helpirrin)

A recent letter to the editor of the *Capricorn Coast Mirror* sums up local opposition to ongoing events at the Shoalwater Bay. The writer mentions (in addition to the DU issue) “A stray military phosphorous bomb washed up on a Cap Coast beach; live firing (that) causes extensive wild fires in the bush [and] a large area of mangroves totally dead, apparently burnt.” The writer also cites a recent survey (<http://aussa.anu.edu.au/>) that assigned the Australian Defence Force “number one ranking for trustworthiness” but the Minister of Defence said the mangrove burnout was “due to the drought.” Local knowledge suggests otherwise and few people on the Capricorn Coast would place much credence in the Government’s cover story about the weather.

### **Depleted Uranium: “the nuclear war you have, when you’re not having a nuclear war”**

But not everybody is so suspicious of the military. One critic of *Blowin’ in the Wind* is Dr John Whitehall whose article “Depleted Uranium and Media Hysteria” appeared in a recent issue of *Quadrant*. Responding to allegations made about DU in the film and elsewhere, Dr Whitehall acts as an apologist for the US military’s use of nuclear waste as a weapon. Ignoring overwhelming evidence from Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo that DU is more dangerous than your average ammunition, Whitehall chooses to launch a counter-attack on David Bradbury, the ABC and Al Jazeera for daring to publicize the issue. He cites a good deal of scientific literature but by the end of his essay is denouncing abortion and radiophobia.

Whitehall sums up his views in the following way: “First, there are grounds to argue that the taxpayer might expect a national media outlet to seek truth, especially on so-called ‘science’ shows.” (20) It’s significant that he puts quotation marks around science but not truth. There is no truth in suggesting DU weapons cause no harm. According to the Department of Defence: “The Navy ceased using the ammunition due to occupational health and safety considerations” (Hansard). If as Whitehead believes, DU is harmless, the ADF would have no grounds to stop using it for reasons of occupational health and safety. A study by epidemiologists Hindin, Brugge and Panikkar reveals a number of health risks associated with DU “In aggregate the human epidemiological evidence is consistent with increased risk of birth defects in offspring of persons exposed to DU.” The authors believe there are “Indications that DU passes into humans more easily than previously thought after battlefield use.” They also observe, “DU can disperse into the air and water,” and cite a UNEP study that states “The most important concern is the potential for future groundwater contamination by corroding penetrators (ammunition tips made out of DU)” (Hinden, Brugge and Panikker).

Given that perched lakes, parabolic sand dunes and creeks within the SBMTA contribute to Yeppoon’s water supply, the concern of local people is understandable. Perhaps fear that the water is contaminated by DU and other pollutants is one reason for the Livingstone Shire’s decision to build a 50 km pipeline to the Fitzroy River. It wouldn’t be the first time a military installation has poisoned a water supply. According to A.P.

In 2000, the U.S. military apologized after admitting a one-time release of 20 gallons (75.7 litres) of the hazardous chemical formaldehyde into a drain that leads to the Han River, a main source of drinking water for Seoul’s 12 million people. (AP)

Whitehall’s second conclusion is that “deformed babies should not be recruited for political ends. It is sufficient that normal ones be kissed for elections” (20). Perhaps he should be more worried about the health implications of politicians kissing babies in the first place. Furthermore, he is clearly using “deformed babies” for his own political ends and the implication that we should



ignore an epidemic of deformed babies in Iraq – or attribute it to “consanguinity” – is morally abhorrent (16). Whitehall continues: “Third, if there is any truth in the dangers of global warming, not to mention the dangers of remaining dependent on Middle East oil, it is time for reasoned consideration of nuclear energy. Allegations of deformations distort debate” (20). A rather tasteless pun is used to draw attention away from the fact that DU is not nuclear energy, it is nuclear waste. Even if there are some virtues to nuclear energy, it doesn’t mean that DU weapons are a proper use of it.

Whitehall’s fourth conclusion is as follows:

Fourth, we are at war with terrorists and we have troops in Iraq. The opinions of men and women in the streets of the Middle East are of importance. Is it in our interests to have them believe the West is deforming their babies and clouding their world with toxic gas? (20)

This rhetorical question begs a direct answer: yes. In an increasingly interconnected world, the interests of others are also our own. If the USA placed other interests before its own military and economic dominance, the world might now be safe from terrorism. According to Harry Kelso the US Department of Defence owns thirty billion acres of land around the world and the US military’s annual operating budget is \$450 billion, effectively making it the largest industrial corporation in the world (*Dirty War*). A small percentage of this wealth would make a huge difference to global poverty as high profile activists like Bono and Bob Geldof routinely point out. In an address to President Bush, Bono (asking for an increase in American foreign aid) said “America gives less than 1% now. We’re asking for an extra 1% to change the world, to transform millions of lives ... 1% is national security, enlightened self interest, and a better, safer world rolled into one” (Vox). Whitehall pushes the envelope of credulity by claiming, “radiophobia, the unrealistic fear of radiation is, itself, a weapon of mass destruction” (20). Here he invokes something essentially imaginary in order to draw attention away from something clearly destructive and real. He cites some very rubbery figures to shift the blame for the effects of the Chernobyl disaster onto the victims:

Though some thirty-one individuals died from the acute effects of the explosion in Chernobyl, over 1000 workers in the initial response are believed to have committed suicide for fear of the effects. Or because of the effects. Worse, up to 200,000 otherwise healthy pregnancies are believed to have been aborted in Europe because their parents suffered unwarranted fears. (20)

But Whitehall doesn’t know the fears were “unwarranted” or that the pregnancies were “otherwise healthy;” no sources are cited to support the claims. His next overstatement is “Radiophobia kills, and by promoting the idea that depleted uranium in Shoalwater Bay is a threat to the health of infants in surrounding towns, the ABC is promoting radiophobia” (20). Perhaps Whitehall should simply call ABC journalists “killers” instead of “environmentalists and peaceniks” (19) as he does elsewhere in the essay. Maybe radiophobia really means “fear of hearing something on the radio you don’t like”. Perhaps he’s hoping that people will stop listening to the ABC – he certainly wouldn’t be the first conservative critic or politician to want that. However, the local ABC can hardly be expected to ignore issues and events in the area. If the Department of Defence made an unequivocal statement about the use of DU in Shoalwater Bay the matter would be resolved. Until then the ABC and people in general are justified in pursuing the matter. People’s ability to remain silent in the interests of national security has limits. When Whitehall disparages the “peaceniks on the ABC,” (19) he reveals a mindset that should have disappeared with the cold war. Discrediting the anti-DU lobby with insulting epithets does not hurt the peace movement, detract from the evils of war or help the war on terror.

For a spokesperson like Whitehall to seize the opportunity to defend DU weaponry on scientific grounds ironically shows how desperate the so-called “coalition of the willing” is for legitimacy.

Whitehall's final conclusion is the most outrageous of all:

To allow the claim to be made that the deformations of a dead infant near Rockhampton could represent Australia's first DU baby is an unscientific and cruel intrusion into its and other parents' minds which could result in the unnecessary termination of pregnancies. (20)

The likelihood of anyone in the Capricorn region aborting a baby for fear of DU is remote to say the least – more badlands myth making. And even if they did, the ultimate responsibility would lie with armament manufacturers and the Department of Defence, not peace activists and the local ABC.

## Conclusion

Whether weapons containing depleted uranium have been used in Shoalwater Bay may never be known, but the "smoking gun" in this case will continue to smoulder for 4.5 billion years. In the meantime, the Department of Defence should at least confirm or deny the claims, as residents shouldn't be kept ignorant about the use of nuclear waste in their area. But the people of the Capricorn region aren't holding their collective breath. When you live in the badlands you get used to being treated badly – it goes with the territory. Yet, if the region's land were truly bad, governments and big business would not own so much of it. In a Baudrillardian sense, the scandal of the badland as a "historical crime scene" (Gibson 1) obscures or dissimulates the existence of a greater scandal: the way the land continues to be used and abused. But in a social and political climate where to speak out against the government and military might constitute an act of sedition, most people are likely to remain silent about the use of DU weapons and the construction of joint training facilities for the war against terror. It looks increasingly like governments and military can do anything they want all over the world *and* in our own backyards. Perhaps the most bizarre, if not frightening aspect of this issue is that it all revolves around simulation and what Jean Baudrillard calls the "hyperreal". [11] In effect, the SBMTA is a hyperreal military Disneyland, a miniature theatre of war simultaneously crystallizing and dissimulating the militarisation of the world and Australian culture. The fact that war games are played out (from now on without an EIS) in such close proximity to the World Heritage areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is a clear sign that the ADF has reneged on its responsibility to ensure that environmental and defence priorities within the area are given equal weight.

There is no hegemony without contestation, however, and in a democracy no decision is ever final. The JCTC is presented as a *fait accompli* and Talisman Sabre 2007 (the proposed military manoeuvres) will probably go ahead as planned, but a groundswell of awareness and resistance is emerging in the Capricorn area as reflected in the local media. A *Capricorn Coast Mirror* article entitled "Military Under Fire" begins the following way: "Low flying helicopters with armed men visible inside, military devices washed up on shore, it all sounds like scenes from some movie. However, this is no movie – it is happening in our own backyard." The pop culture tenor of the article is significant; it means that anti-war sentiments are gaining currency. Politicians and the media are like weather vanes, they go which way the wind blows and if enough people don't want the World Heritage standard SBMTA developed or degraded further, they can prevail. The future is not predestined despite what (the increasingly influential) religious fundamentalists would have us believe.

Just as culture is a work in progress, so too is nature. As Ross Gibson describes it: the Capricorn hinterland behaves like a live thing, naturally present and always evolving – a creature animated by its own powers" (177). If culture is dynamic and nature is dynamic, it stands to reason that sites where culture and nature intersect in dramatic ways will be doubly dynamic. Shoalwater Bay on the Capricorn Coast of Central Queensland is one such place and it may only be a matter of time before the forces of nature return like the repressed and wreak havoc on our increasingly militaristic culture's best-laid plans. The challenge for people who live in the Capricorn region is

to use their local knowledge to contest the prevailing perception of their living space and engage with policymaking and the practices that derive from it. The size of the region, the nature of the landscape, its relative isolation and lack of population represent a temptation to exploitation and abuse that government, military and big business apparently can't resist. In a submission to the 1994 Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry, Shoalwater Bay, Jon McCabe observed:

There is a perception, I think, in Brisbane and Canberra, that Central Queensland is, in the words of one of our ex-politicians, "the Ruhr valley of Australia." It is the place where we extract resources and ship them out of Gladstone. And I think there is the perception that the residents of this region accept that and do not seek for the quality of life issues that other people seek. (Commonwealth of Australia 230)

Much has changed in the Capricorn region since these comments were made. Local residents are not as complacent as they once might have been and dominant institutions can no longer rely on their silent consent. The making of badlands continues apace. Ross Gibson asks us to seek "something good we can do in response to the bad in our lands" (3). One response begins by asking is the badness in the land or does it reside elsewhere? If we analyse the discourses and practices of the various agencies and institutions governing the badland, it may enable us to formulate effective tactics of resistance to their strategies of domination.

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## Endnotes

[1]



The local region: hinterland of the Capricorn Coast of Central Queensland, Australia. (Image courtesy of Google Earth)

[2]





Front page of the *Morning Bulletin* 26 March 2003

[3]



Notice of Proposed grant of exploration permits the *Morning Bulletin* 8 Feb. 2006

[4]



A letter to the *Capricorn Coast Mirror* summarizing environmental concerns with the Department of Primary Industry's Hedlow Basin wetland forestry development.



Draining the Hedlow Basin Wetlands

[5]



The Morning Bulletin 29 June 2006

[6] I mention these other environmental issues as examples to support the basic thesis that the identification of the Capricorn region as a badland has a real affect on land use. Space does not permit consideration of these problems here, but in a sense they are all related (for example, the herbicide in question possesses the militaristic name "Task Force" implying a war against nature. As Donna Harraway puts it: "global technology appears to denature everything, to make everything a malleable matter of strategic decisions and mobile production and reproduction processes." (qtd. in Coupe 188)

[7]



Shoalwater Bay (Film still from *Blowin' in the Wind* courtesy of B Sharp productions)

[8]

Raymond and Townsend Island: a World Heritage



bombing range. "Offshore Islands are not surveyed as part of the NWI (National Wilderness Inventory), but Townsend Island is likely to be of moderate wilderness value" ("Commonwealth of Australia" 119). To see a larger view of this image click on the following link.

[www.geocities.com/peaceconvergence/postcard.inc](http://www.geocities.com/peaceconvergence/postcard.inc)

[9] A cursory search of the Internet will reveal hundreds of web sites dedicated to exposing the reality of DU. The link below will take you to a site with very graphic and disturbing images.

<http://www.mindfully.org/Nucs/2003/DU-Baby2003.htm>

[10] *Dirty War* describes Yeppoon in similar terms as "sleepy sea change kind of town."

[11] 9/11 and the "war on terror" have been exhaustively analysed by Baudrillard and other critics in terms of simulation, spectacle and the mass media: a selection of articles is listed here:

[www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard/ baudrillard-the-spirit-of-terrorism.inc](http://www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard/ baudrillard-the-spirit-of-terrorism.inc); and

[www.ubishops.ca/ baudrillardstudies/ vol2\\_1/ kellnerpf.htm](http://www.ubishops.ca/ baudrillardstudies/ vol2_1/ kellnerpf.htm)

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Environmental Protection Agency. "Shoalwater and Corio Bays" 18 Aug. 2006  
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