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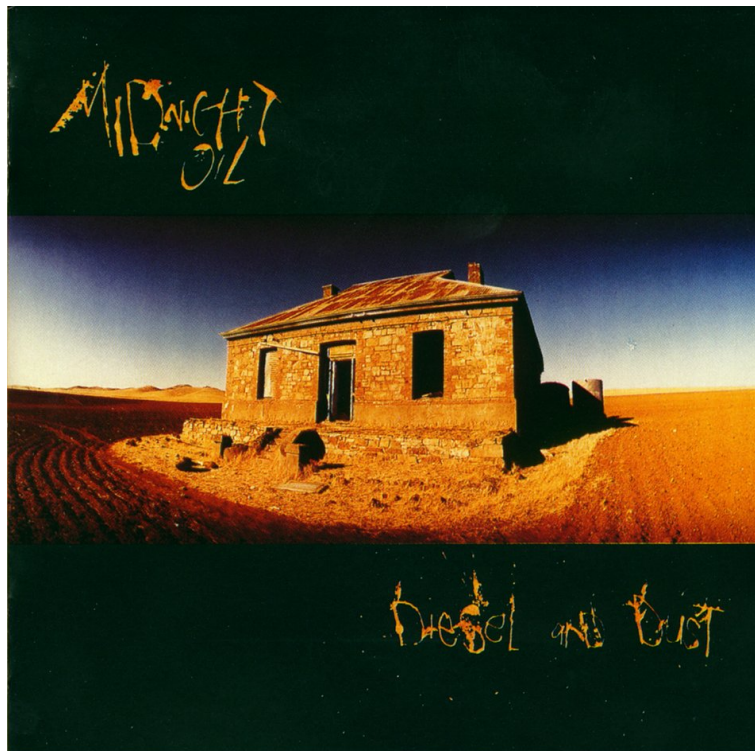
## Grassy Landscapes and the Australian Representational Imaginary: The Ongoing Tale of South Australia's 'Diesel and Dust' House

By Philip Bagust (University of South Australia)

### Introduction

This paper was inspired by a photograph that has become quite famous. Its fame is based on discourses at work in its production (the technical composition, the subject landscape, the 'post-compositional manipulation') and its transmission, reception and re-circulation (the Australian music industry, Australian environmental history and eco-politics, the history of Australian landscape representation, tourism, new social media technology). It attempts to make meaningful connections between these seemingly disparate elements through the 'glue' of this single image, taken in an obscure corner of South Australia in the 1980s, as a way of thinking about how images can inform an 'Australian landscape imaginary' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### The 'Diesel and Dust House' Photograph: Composition and Representation



**Figure 1:** *Diesel and Dust* by Midnight Oil. Photograph by Ken Duncan (<http://www.midnightoil.com/music/diesel-and-dust>)

Ken Duncan's photograph is of a farmhouse located just a few kilometres north of the old copper

mining town of Burra on the main Barrier Highway between Adelaide and Broken Hill. It famously appears, in 'letterboxed' format and filling approximately one third of the total frame area, between two black panels on the cover of well-known Australian rock band Midnight Oil's 1986 best-selling album *Diesel and Dust* (for a review of this band's place in the Australian popular music *oeuvre* see Sawford). The black panels contain only the band's name (top left corner) and the album's name (bottom right corner), both drawn in a font that looks a little like the desperate scrawl of a dying explorer. The text stands out against the black panels in the rich 'alpenglow' gold of a setting sun. In the middle of the central panel is the main compositional element of Duncan's photograph - an obviously abandoned 19<sup>th</sup> century symmetrical cottage - captured with a very wide angle lens. These elements give the cover an overall 'reading gravity' from top left to bottom right. The cottage is local sandstone built, has twin symmetrical chimneys and a gable roof in corrugated iron, now stained with rust. Although the building seems structurally sound, the front windows are gone (one is filled with a patch which reflects the light of the setting sun, the other is an empty 'black hole' of darkness, as is the doorway). The full-width veranda that is so typical of this vernacular style is also missing, although the plinth where it once stood and a series of entrance steps are both in place. Around the house are the chocolate coloured and barren symmetrical furrows of a newly ploughed field.

The way the low light plays on these furrows creates a dramatic difference in lighting with the left hand side of the panel being much darker than the right. On the right hand side of the house the (south) wall is dramatically marked out as negative space in pure blackness, sending a short cone of shadow over two old iron water tanks visible at the rear of the house. Balancing and yet contrasting this darkness on the left hand side of the frame is a seemingly distant range of strange, low, grassy, treeless rounded hills, swelling like gentle ocean breakers evincing subtle gradations of golden light and shadow. Except for some short dry grass immediately around the house, the frame is notable in lacking any visible vegetation, and verdant tones are entirely absent. Above this overwhelmingly golden composition is a clear blue sky, grading from a pale misty blue on the horizon, through to an almost 'space-like' blue black immediately above the house near the top of the frame. The overall impression is of compositional symmetry, intense fisheye distortion, and very high, almost surreal contrast and saturation.



**Figure 2:** *Janus-faced history. The ‘Diesel and Dust House’ taken from its ‘good side’ (Author)*



**Figure 3:** *Janus-faced history. The ‘Diesel and Dust House’ taken from its ‘bad’ side (Author)*

Much of the allegorical power of Duncan’s photograph comes from not just these compositional



techniques but from what I have called its ‘alpenglow’ setting. While this is a popularly used term, strictly speaking what we are seeing here is not alpenglow, which is only observed after sunset or before sunrise in snowy mountain environments. True alpenglow only occurs when the sun is below the horizon. Duncan’s photograph has rather been taken during the so-called ‘golden hour’ - that time when the sun is less than about 10 degrees above the horizon, and when the passage of light through an extended column of atmosphere (including any particulates in that column) preferentially scatters away light at the blue end of the spectrum, leaving only a dramatic, almost monochrome red (for further discussion see Lynch & Livingston). While this red can impart a soft and dreamlike quality, obvious associations with fire, destruction and aridity mean that an ‘apocalyptic’ tone can be imposed on any appropriately chosen and framed subject, especially if the ‘tonal drama’ induced by long deep shadows can be utilised to maximum effect.

The ‘golden hour’, if not always called that by name, is a standard element of any practical photographic manual’s toolkit, probably more so since the widespread adoption of digital photography and home post-image processing in the last decade (see Brown for a recent Australian perspective). As a commonly-used trope of professional and amateur image makers worldwide however, it is perhaps a rather under-theorised aesthetic-cultural phenomenon in the Australian landscape photography context. Thompson’s commentary on the critical reaction to some of Frank Hurley’s well-known early 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘picturesque sky’ land and city scapes is indicative and worth quoting:

[Hurley had a] longstanding practice of embellishing or manipulating an image to achieve a particular effect or to heighten its drama...the addition of a dramatic sky...[enhanced] the mood of a picture. This practice, used at least since the First World War, had aroused controversy and criticism amongst those who thought the veracity of the photographic record was compromised (5)

This is not the place to debate what kind of manipulation preserves a ‘true documentary record’. Suffice to say, whether entirely ‘natural’ or a product of later manipulation, the cover photograph of *Diesel and Dust* has served Midnight Oil’s politically didactic intentions well.

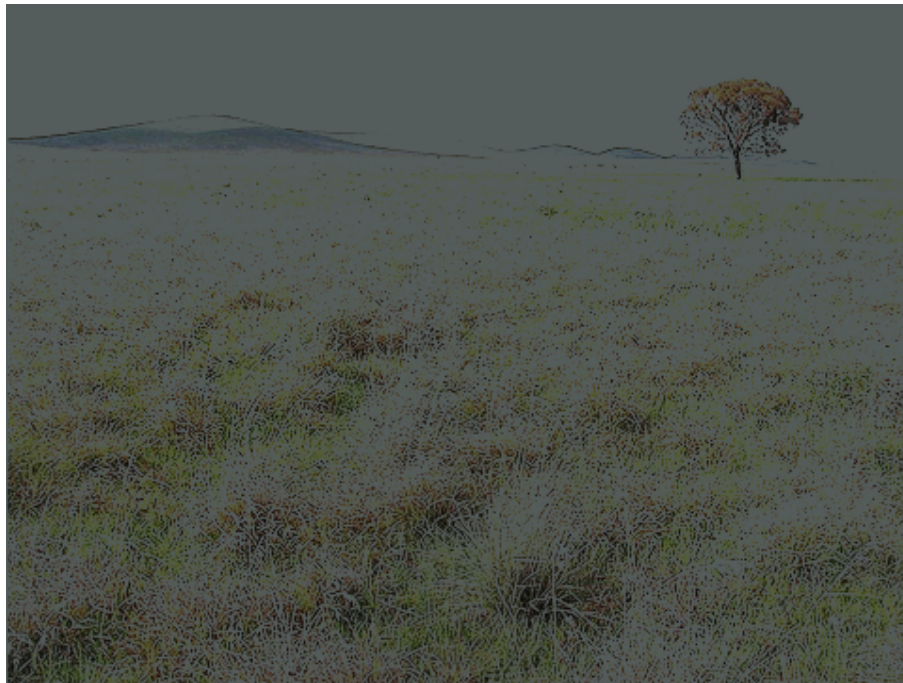
We have a photograph, and the techniques used to make it. Now we need to look at the landscape.

### **The Landscape: South Australia’s ‘Mid North’, Homesteads and Grasslands**

The so-called ‘mid-north’ of South Australia (those districts surrounding the town of Burra, 150km north of the state capital Adelaide) is dominated by a broad north-south series of parallel ridges, rising to almost 1000 metres in a few places, interspersed with long parallel valleys that themselves tend to be 400-600 metres above sea level. The climate has a dry, moderately ‘Mediterranean’ character, with cool moist frosty winters, rare snow at altitude, and hot dry summers with occasional heavy thunderstorms. The land loses altitude to the east, and rainfall drops until George Goyder’s famous 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘edge of arable land’ line is reached and cereal cropping ceases (Hayman).

For most part, this is a landscape of gentle moorland-like swells and hollows, interspersed with

reedy streams - a rhythmic, undramatic landscape unless one looks closely. Prior to European settlement, many of its ridges were covered by an open grassy woodland of Drooping She-oaks (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) and less commonly, dark barked 'box' eucalypts, while the frosty valley bottoms were home to extensive natural grasslands and sedgeland (Hyde a). Kangaroo and Wallaby grasses (*Themeda* and *Austrodanthonia* species), and tussocks of *Lomandra* or 'Iron Grass' (strap leaved plants related to lilies) predominated. Many small wildflowers filled the inter-tussock spaces (Kirkpatrick).



**Figure 4:** *A naturally grassy landscape. Mokota Conservation Park. Tussocks of Kangaroo Grass and the one native She-oak tree in the park. (Author)*

If this pre-European vegetation did not give itself easily to the colonial artist's easel or the early photographer's lens in the way the thumping eucalypts of the south-east mountain forests, or the glossy dripping closeness of the tropical and temperate rainforests did, we can also say that the rapidity of its early agriculturalisation has left us with little in the way of unassailed representation (Auhl and Marfleet usefully compile indicative artwork by early expeditions to the area). Today, much of the Mid-North has had such a long history of intensive farming (and of open-cut mining near Burra) that only in the more remote areas is it possible to imagine what the pre-European landscape *might* have looked like. It's still a largely treeless landscape, criss-crossed with grids of dirt roads, and dotted with abandoned buildings surrounded by small windbreaks of exotic conifers or Sugar Gums, bright 'cash crop' green in winter and golden-brown dry in summer. It's commonplace in South Australia today to blame the open landscape on

the depredations of smelters at the famous nearby Burra copper mine, but the truth is more complicated and much of the area seems to have always been relatively treeless (Hyde a xiv). The director Bruce Beresford, faced with finding cheap locations for his low budget but critically acclaimed film about the Boer War, *Breaker Morant* (1980), chose the Burra area because of this fiction - 'The surrounding landscape, cleared of trees for use in Burra's copper mines and smelters, bears a close resemblance to the South African veldt (or field)' (SA Tourism Commission). Nicol describes an area with 'a sense of empty flatness shimmering in a heartless summer sun: a sort of Clayton's outback' (195).

Although the pre-European grassy landscape figures increasingly in the thoughts of Australian ecologists, it has never managed to sell itself to the public in the same way more 'charismatic' ecosystems have. Kirkpatrick *et. al.* state the problem this way - 'grasslands have suffered from a lack of interest as well as annihilation...Most people would never see a native grassland, or at least not know that they had seen one' (11). Ellis, writing for the state government's own revegetation strategy notes similarly that 'Despite being afforded protection under the *SA Native Vegetation Act 1991*, remnant grasslands are...under considerable threat, due to the lack of recognition of them as indigenous ecosystems' (21). Williams and Cary investigated landowner perceptions of Australian grasslands and concluded that the 'low management and aesthetic preference for grassland shown by landholders...lends weight to concerns that the Australian community has little appreciation of native grassland ecosystems' (143). In a study of wind farm visual impacts in South Australia, Lothian found little community objection to turbine siting on country of 'lower perceived scenic quality' (16). Importantly, this 'low quality' country was described as having 'flat or gentle slopes, distant ridgelines or hills, fairly treeless or widely scattered vegetation or distant trees, cereals, grazing, no dams' (13), a description which matches our landscape well. In the absence of both the megafauna that gives African savannahs and American prairies much of their 'charisma', the charms of our grassy landscapes remain recondite.

We have a photograph and a landscape. We now need to look at the historical reception of Australian landscape photography.

### **The Aesthetics of Reception: Looking at the 'D & D House' Image through the Australian Landscape Representation Tradition**

What, if anything, might Ken Duncan's photograph (and its association with Midnight Oil's popular fame as environmental activists) bring to the corpus of Australian nature representational meanings? Giblett notes that 'the place and role of landscape photography in Australian life has not been well documented', a situation that 'compares unfavourably with the American one [where]' 'Some of its leading landscape photographers are national heroes' (a 335). While Tasmanians Peter Dombrovskis or Olegas Truchanas probably come closest to the status of an antipodean Ansel Adams, the anomalously verdant and vertical nature of Tasmania somewhat dulls any claims they might have to truly represent the spirit of a 'continental' Australian landscape.

Giblett reminds us that much of what passes for landscape photography (and for that matter landscape art of all kinds) has commonly included the rural scenes of farmhouse, outbuildings, domestic stock and rural workers - in other words elements of at least a partially settled and civilised landscape. It is only recently, he notes, that 'Landscape photography has...morphed into, or spawned, wilderness photography which is largely of a 'pristine', unpeopled landscape' (a 336). Giblett's typology of photographic 'modalities' might then begin with 'beautiful' landscapes, which evoke pastoral scenes of contentment and serenity. They are idealised, delicate, and on a diminutive scale. Painters depict scenes with muted skies and man in harmony with nature, 'A beautiful scene might include streams wending through verdant pastures beyond which [lie] mountains or rolling hills' (Burgess 41-42). Unlike most of Europe, the harsh Australian light, irregular climate extremes of drought and flood, and the unusual 'olive' colour palette of Australian vegetation make it an unlikely place for much conventionally 'beautiful' landscape. Giblett's (a 337-8) 'picturesque' on the other hand, has perhaps been a dominant mode of representation for Australian landscape photographers and artists. Wild, 'rough' elements might be present on the boundaries of these compositions, and the lighting might be equally dramatic. The picturesque seeks to invoke the 'pleasing or commanding prospect' in a scene that is both 'wild' (hillside vistas, rivers, waterfalls, fern tree gullies) yet constrained by framing devices like nearby logs and tamed cultural elements (ruins, houses, paths, roads, bridges) that remind and reassure the viewer that the landscape, while still beautiful, has been normalised, and rendered manageable by progress and civilisation. Neither sky, distant landscape or foreground framing devices are over-dominant. Newton (53-57) documents a concerted attempt on the part of late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographers to define, display and popularise an 'Australian picturesque' as a patriotic, nationalist project, a project to which, if captured in different light, our subject image might well belong.

The 'sublime' on the other hand, is not about 'pleasing' audiences, but 'involve[s] the formlessness of uplifting spectacles and produces feelings of awe and terror' (Giblett, b 43). Sublime landscapes exemplified by Ansel Adams in the Sierra Nevada are so huge they shrink the (invisible but nonetheless implicitly present observer) to a state of existential insignificance yet quasi-religious epiphany at the represented infinitude. Sublime landscapes are empty of humans (except as minute figures that emphasise this insignificance) and their works. Popular mid-19<sup>th</sup> century colonial painters such as Von Guerard, Chevalier and Buvelot often went out of their way to find cloud-wracked and snowy locations on the Great Dividing Range and in Tasmania that best expressed desirable sublimity in an Australian context (see, for instance, Sayers). It is clear from Newton (54-56) too, that the search for 'Yosemite Valley' scale landscapes was also part of the project for Australian photographers of the 1870s-1890s. However sublime landscapes were already marked with a 'gold standard' of American mountainous three-dimensional verticality (not often found in Australia), and an independently Australian sublime was slow to emerge, only really manifesting itself in Frank Hurley's Antarctic Territory photographs (Newton 96-101) of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A massively horizontal local 'desert sublime' is perhaps still fighting for popular recognition today.

Giblett is finally interested in a fourth modality - that of Freud's 'uncanny' - which illuminates what he sees as a 'counter aesthetic' of the repressed senses, one exemplified for him by the swamp (which is by definition a horizontal landscape), but which might be usefully applied to



some other landscape types as well. He goes on to discuss ‘natural’ but more aesthetically problematic American landscapes like the western deserts and ‘badlands’, and even the anthropogenic ‘wastelands’ of industry, mining, battlefields or nuclear testing sites. These are also landscapes, Giblett suggests, of the uncanny. Where Ansel ‘Adams’ work evoke[s] the sublimity of God’s and Nature’s nation...the new Topographics and Atomic Photographers [for instance] return to the stark beauty of Man’s bunkered, blasted and blighted lands’ (b 51). Precisely because the Australian landscape, with the particular exceptions outlined above, has been so difficult for its settler society to truly embrace, I think it is here we can get some traction on Duncan’s photograph and its reception.

How might the surrounding landscape, the ruined centrepiece, and the particular compositional choices work together in the context of a popular reading of an Australian ‘bush uncanny’? We can begin with a stereotypical Australian inland landscape setting, where:

No one is going to turn a corner and confront novelty. In the flat landscape there is no place for the undiscovered. It is a harsh country, hard on anyone passing through, a battlefield...this dry flatness goes on as far as they eye can see, and the closure of the horizon is forever deferred (Frost 54)

The monotonous and ‘funereal’ aspects of the Australian bush have long been tropes of Australian literature, song, and painting, if not perhaps, of our landscape photography. Ballantyne’s work of Australian ghost towns is diagnostic here. He reminds us that ghost towns ‘go against the grain of [triumphal settlement] histories, frustrating progressive settlement narratives. The history of the ghost town is...one which speaks of colonial hard work unravelling...Ghost towns speak of ‘lasts’ in the Australian landscape’ (33). The many ruined farmhouses and small abandoned 19<sup>th</sup> century settlements in the vicinity of the D&D house, if captured in the right ‘mood’, might then act as a kind of uncanny palimpsest imposed on an already aesthetically challenged grassland landscape.

If we remember our Freud (1993), his uncanny was the discomfort, distress, even horror, invoked by something that was familiar but ‘not quite right’, the horror being invoked precisely by that surficial familiarity. Freud himself notes that ‘the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar’ (124), while accompanying commentary from Haughton suggests that ‘With the death of the supernatural, it is our own and our culture’s disowned past that haunts us’ (42), ‘The uncanny...unlike [Edmund] Burke’s sublime, is a paradoxical mark of modernity’ (49). Complimentary are Ballantyne’s remarks about how:

The well preserved ghost town, seeming at first to be inhabited, and then revealing itself to be, in fact, deserted, can be even more unnerving’ (37), [and how] ‘ghost towns are always unsettling; looking upon them provides an imaginative link to a cache of colonial fears of the outback, and provokes feelings of insecurity about the strength of non-Aboriginal attachments to Australian land (38)

<b>The ‘golden hour’</b>
<i>‘The familiar’ – warmth, the campfire, awe, stage lighting</i>

<i>'The unfamiliar' – oncoming night, death, fire, aridity, apocalypse</i>
<b>Farmhouse</b>
<i>'The familiar' – settlement, domesticity, civilisation, rationality, progress, colonisation, growth, modernity, dispossession of indigenous peoples</i>
<i>'The unfamiliar' – ruin, failure of civilizational project, depopulation, decay, entropy, hauntings</i>
<b>Grassland</b>
<i>'The familiar' – lawn, meadow, crop, pasture, rational management, bountiful harvest, 'tamed' landscape, garden, status display</i>
<i>'The unfamiliar' – steppe, prairie, veldt, wasteland, exposure, erosion, weed-scape, barren-ness, aridity, monotony, a landscape of low hills worn down by time</i>

**Table 1:** *Would You Like Unheimlich With That? Some D&D House Associations* (Author)

Photography can encourage engagement with outback tropes in a way that never really endangers us, allowing the experience of uncanny chiaroscuro ‘ghostscapes’ with the safe playful fear that accompanies horror film reading. At midday with a blooming Canola crop in the field, the D&D scene is as picturesque as any tourist authority would want. At sunset after a blazing summer’s day and in the midst of a drought, it might seem more like dead Mars than living Earth, and potentially just as hostile for the permanent resident if not the fleeting visitor. It is the D&D house’s very closeness to an intact outback ‘settler society’ pastoral that is disquieting, a truly ruined farmhouse might populate the land with hoped for romantic ‘historical depth’ and be more ‘picturesque’. In the right mood we can feel the ‘failure’ that surely was implicit in Midnight Oil’s adoption of the image.

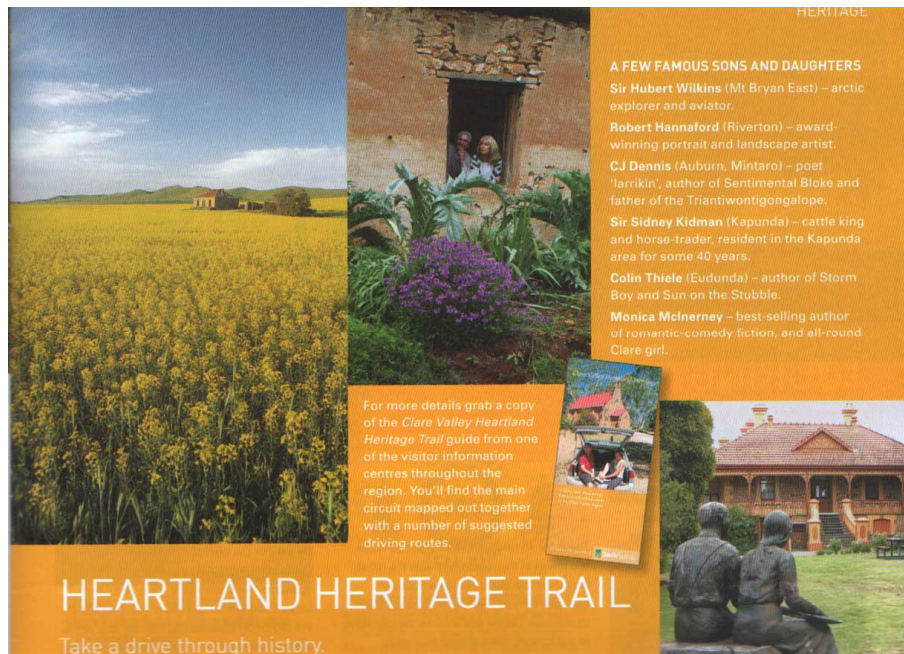
Duncan’s photograph as presented on Midnight Oil’s album cover is arguably an example of the deliberate mobilisation (in production) and amplification (in mediation and reception) of a contingent species of ‘the uncanny’. The ‘not quite rightness’ of Duncan’s scene is highly dependent on where (settler ruins, ‘barren’ grasslands), how (golden hour ‘amplification’ of mood) and especially when it became well known (as a statement of indigenous dispossession, settler failure, and ecological collapse by one of Australia’s most political rock bands).

None of this quite accounts however, for a renewed ‘fame’ and interest in both the photograph and its physical location. We now need to look at this image’s ‘second life’ as a remediated, ‘virtual’ object.

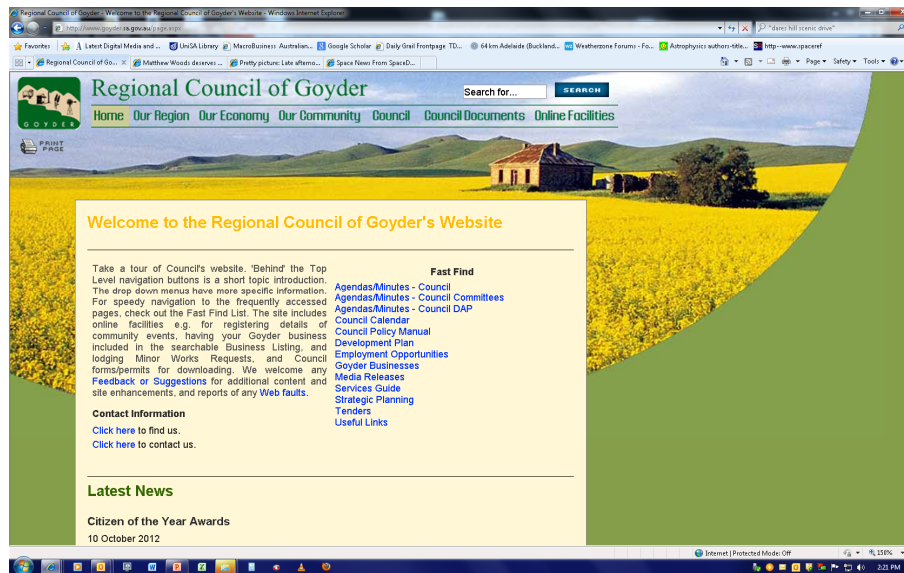
### **New Geographies of Fame: Advertising, Tourism, Social media and Augmented Reality**

In the years since the release of *Diesel and Dust*, our scene has been reinterpreted and reproduced

in many different (but normally less portentous) diurnal and seasonal moods. Local and state tourism authorities, airline commercials, and even corporate publications have increasingly co-opted the scene as a kind of visual trope for outback Australia and 'bush myth' values. These images, seasonally selected, all featuring the farmhouse, mature crops and low grassy hills, and all broadly matching Duncan's framing angles, seem often to mobilise an Australian picturesque rather than the uncanny.



**Figure 5:** Visual branding, local heritage/history and the Australian picturesque. Typical use of the 'Diesel and Dust House' (left frame) for tourism. Note high sun angle and the bright spring Canola clothing of a good season (Clare Valley Tourism, South Australia)



**Figure 6:** Visual branding, local heritage/history and the Australian picturesque. Typical use of the 'Diesel and Dust House' for the Goyder Regional Council website splash page. Also uses the high sun angle, spring canola clothing and green hills of spring (Regional Council of Goyder)



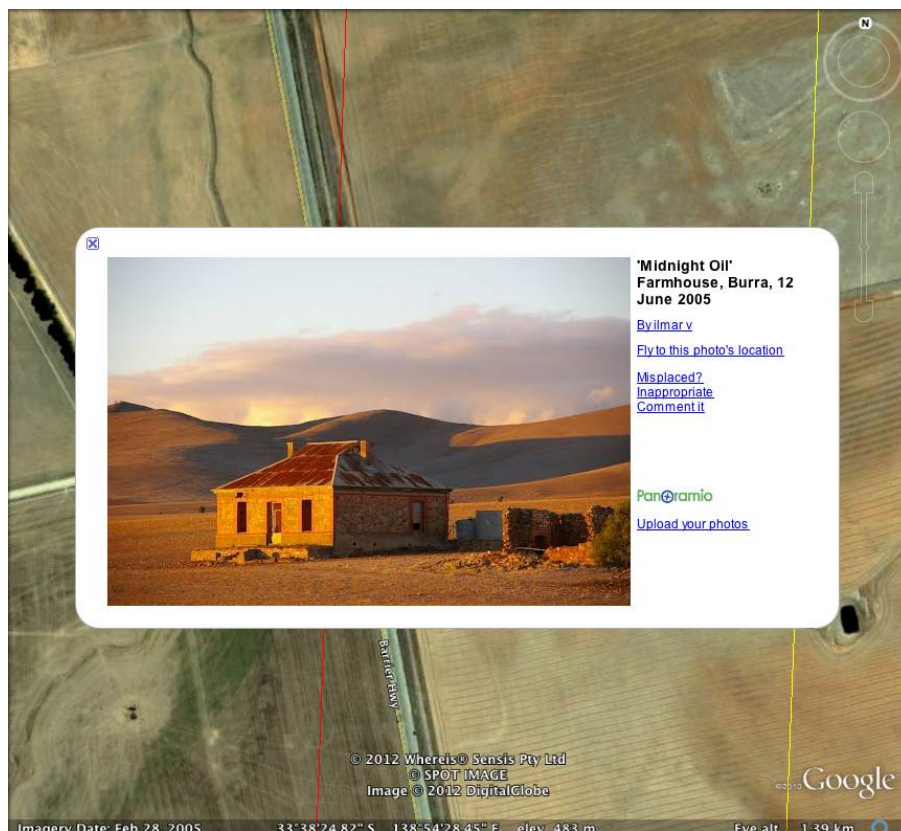
**Figure 7:** Visual branding of the 'sunlit plains extended' on the national and international scale. Use of the 'Diesel and Dust House' as part of a montage of 'Australia' in a television campaign by the national airline Qantas. 'Golden hour' light but late spring standing wheat (Qantas)

Recently however, the physical site - unexpectedly right next to a busy main highway - seems to have become more widely recognised and photographed by passers-by. Why? In the case of this landscape type and representational technology (grassland and photography), and the aesthetic/political/environmental questions the circulating texts pose, all the elements have been



greatly accelerated (compared to 1986) by the arrival of new media technologies.

In terms of representational technologies, smart ‘converged broadband devices’ with movie-capable digital cameras and microphones now move with us. GPS (Global Positioning System) technology allows us to locate ourselves spatially wherever we are, while with *Google Earth* we can select and ‘virtually’ interrogate where we want to go, when we want to go. New social networking platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Flickr!*, *Tumblr*, *YouTube*, *4Square* and *Panoramio*, and ‘apps’, allow us to micro-blog, tweet, upload photos, ‘geo-tag’ landscapes, upload movies and ‘perform’ our current selves for the instant entertainment and evaluation of social peers. Finally ‘Google Glasses’ (see, for instance, Israel) represents a near-future technology even more fully ‘mapped’ onto our native sensorium.



**Figure 8:** *The Diesel and Dust House. Geolocated and celebrity name-checked on Google Earth, with added ‘golden hour’ drama. (Google Earth/Panoramio, user ‘ilmar\_v’)*

Schwarzer wonders if this might lead to a future where:

users are treated to slideshows of others’ adventures and exploits...[where] One must go out into the world and record its aspects in order to concoct a compelling display of one’s self...Armed with

a handheld device, each person becomes an diarist, reporter, photographer and videographer, relaying information and personalising an online community's experience of place

*I geo-tag, therefore it is.* Augmented Reality, the coming to 'Google Glasses', of the real-time layering of customisable digital information over the 'real world view', forces us to ask an old question with renewed vigour - what is 'primary reality', the view via your native sensoria or the view via the accessory technology? Is it only 'really real' if your peer social network can experience your performance 'of it' and in turn affirm that experience? For Schwarzer, 'selectively augmented' (spectacular?) aspects of favoured places might come to dominate socially networked understanding even more than painting and photography have been able to. Ranked by users and data mined by marketers this would seem to herald a kind of user democracy of place, but it is also mapping techno-spectacle onto a biosphere where ecosystem services are externalised and abstracted and an aesthetics of celebrity normalised more than ever before.

How is this relevant? Because the 'Diesel and Dust House' is increasingly recognised, photographed, geotagged, shared and 'performed' by real and virtual visitors who make a connection between the album cover and the real physical location. The site is now undergoing a new kind of crowdsourced fame, one that is feeding back into mainstream media and possibly even local government tourism policy.

### **Conclusion: Scope for Ongoing Work**

The role of agricultural ruins and settler histories in rural Australia is of ongoing interest for governments and tourism authorities, especially in less obviously 'mediagenic' landscapes. As an example, the recent restoration of the nearby former ruin of polar explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins' birth-house by Australian entrepreneur and 'patriot' Dick Smith (see Badman) and the establishment of the nearby ruin-rich Dare's Hill Tourist circuit (Nicol 206-209) both reflect local and state government tourism policy. The recognition and appreciation of grasslands in Australia is an ongoing issue for ecologists as it is for artists. Mokota, the first native grassland conservation park in South Australia, is just a few kilometres from the D&D house, and reflects a keen new interest by the scientific and conservation communities in Australian native temperate grassland landscapes (see Turner).

The area has also recently become a nexus of multi-turbine wind farm development (see Clarke). Tower installation on ridge-tops has generally been uncontroversial in the area except when sites have an unusual number of trees (see Jones a). If we remember Lothian's findings this might suggest that grassland is still an aesthetically challenged landscape type in the popular Australian imagination - except when deployed as an aspect of a 'settler uncanny'. It is worth asking how this story might have developed had Duncan's scene been originally photographed using different editorial choices, published at a different time or industry context, had the building been more or less of a ruin, had it been set in a different landscape type (perhaps in a more mountainous location, or more sylvan one, or near a coastline), or had a wind farm been subsequently built on the ridgeline behind the house rather than on the ridge on the far side of the valley.



**Figure 9:** *Sir Hubert Wilkins' boyhood homestead - ruined and reconstructed. An 'anti-ruin'? A themepark? A 'folly'? Mount Bryan East (Author)*



**Figure 10:** *New 'trees' on the ridge-line to the west of the house. Hallett wind-farm (Author)*

Recently the Burra community, understanding the building's newly iconic status, launched a committee to fundraise for its stabilisation and preservation as a 'working ruin' (Novak 26). The house is now said to be 'cemented in Australian folk lore', a 'true blue Aussie rock icon', and to be on the site of 'the second best view in South Australia' (Jones b). This attention is unlikely to have occurred without an amplification of new-old media feedback loops formed in the gaps between representation, reception, landscape, place and performativity.

What effects these developing meanings will have on South Australian heritage 'ruin' tourism or the cultural prestige of grassland landscapes remains to be seen, but this is unlikely to be the only instance when one image has or will precipitate a chain of events that intersect - perhaps uncomfortably for some stakeholders - popular culture with policymaking. Some 27 years have passed since Ken Duncan and Midnight Oil made this unlikely landscape famous by joining a photograph to a musical/political vision. We should expect to be surprised by what the newly augmented and accelerated representational geographies of the next 27 years produce on this and other similar previously 'unloved' sites.

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