

Eatdirtzian Geosophy: approaching ethical reading practices.

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Doctorate of Philosophy (English)

by Emma Maree Joel

BArts/BTeaching (Secondary), BArts (Hons)

Student Number c3006752

School of Humanities and Social Science

Faculty of Education and Arts

University of Newcastle

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

Eatdirtzian Geosophy proposes a theoretical position for critical and intersubjective reading practices. Embedded at its core is a reconciling ethic in which critics occupy an a-colonial reading position in their practices, achieving this position through combining a meta-critical reading practice with a focus on geographic knowledges in their readings of texts. The concept of geosophy acknowledges that a multitude of subjective geographic knowledges exist. Eatdirtzian Geosophy suggests thinking about the appearance of these knowledges discursively.

The thesis provides a literature review of geography and arrives at the concept of geosophy as a starting point for thinking discursively about geographic knowledges. This discursive understanding highlights three core dimensions in the construction of geographic knowledges, scale, time, and space, which become the basis for conducting a geosophical analysis of text. Further, this mode of analysis highlights the significance of language and instances of language usage in the communication of geographic knowledges. The theoretical position proposed by Eatdirtzian Geosophy is further developed throughout the thesis with discussions of a reconciling ethic and an a-colonial reading position. The a-colonial reading position and the three core concepts are applied in a critical discussion of a number of Australian literary texts and literary practices throughout the thesis, including the narratives of Anita Heiss, Tom Cho and the film, *Lucky Miles*. Further, a reading of Bill Neidjie's *Story about Feeling* demonstrates the practice of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy theory as a whole, highlighting the ways in which a geosophical discourse could inform critical reading practices.

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To Dr Brooke Collins-Gearing, Dr Caroline Webb, and Dr Wendy Miller, my supervisors, my witches three – thank you, thank you, thank you!

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Thank you for taking me on as a PhD student. Thank you for being my real-life, tangible role models and my uni-family. As three of the best educators I have ever known, I will forever be grateful for the seeds you planted in my garden. It is to the three of you that I dedicate this thesis, because it would never have been possible if it was not for you.

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To the storytellers, thank you for sharing your stories with us. Thank you for providing me and my students with stories that inspire reading and discussing; stories with so much to think about and write about; and, stories that motivate readers to expand the ways in which they engage with ideas.

And last but absolutely not least, I would like to thank my family and close friends. I want to thank you foremost for your patience and your acceptance that I needed space and to be selfish to finish this thesis, even at the times when you didn't exactly understand what it is that I spent my time doing. More specifically, thank you for reminding me that sometimes eating ice cream cake, watching Sharknado or Adventure Time, practicing my krumping, coming over for dinner and special dessert night, waiting at Hurricanes for delicious ribs, seeing Salt N Pepa, or hanging on the veranda with pots of tea are more important than school work. Thanks for the cups of tea that magically appeared, thanks for the dinners that I didn't have to cook, and thanks for letting me be your roomie because I made life choices that privileged being a word nerd over sustainable finances.

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List of illustrations and copyright information

The Polar Bears floating on an iceberg cartoon featured on page 56.

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The map images featured on pages 1, 28, 62, 100, 132, 188, 232, 287, 288 and 299.

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Images of characters (Guard, Geosophy and the Meta-critic) featuring on pages 15, 22, 26, and 61. These images also feature in the maps on pages 28, 62, 100, 132, 188, 232, 287, 288, and 299.

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A note on reading this thesis

The work in this thesis plays with a traditional academic thesis structure and style. As such, this thesis has two components: the chapters which reflect a traditional thesis proper and a narrative that runs concurrently throughout the document. The main narrative component frames the thesis; it begins and ends the thesis through the inclusion of a prologue and epilogue, and it also features between the chapters ensuring that the narrative's ideas and its characters' adventures are revisited. The narrative uses images and maps to symbolically trace the emergence of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy through academic terrain, offering an alternative way of telling this theoretical story and an attempt of subverting academic strictures. Additionally, it should be noted that work within the thesis proper chapters draw significantly on narrative as a continuation of this intention and style.

My rationale for using narrative in these ways is two-fold. Firstly, it is embraced as a teaching and learning technique and secondly, it is used as a stylistic choice that reinforces the theoretical ideals explored within these pages. My true passion in life is education. The use of narrative is one of the most effective mediums we have to teach and to learn (*Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools*; Yunkaporta "Aboriginal Pedagogies"; Yunkaporta and Kirby). I employ different narrative devices throughout this thesis in order to consolidate my own learning in this research area and as a means to effectively communicate and teach my readers about the ideas, theory, and concepts explored within this thesis. My use of quotes at the beginning of chapters and sections; my use of maps; my use of the main narrative component which traces the adventures of Geosophy and the Meta-critic; my blending of narrative structures and thesis structures; and my use of story through my critical dialogues have all been employed in an attempt to aide comprehension, learning, and critical thinking about my research area. As most teachers know, everyone learns differently. So perhaps some of these devices will appeal to your individual styles of thinking and learning by helping to visualise, relate to and understand. And perhaps, some of these devices will not. As an educator my main goal here is to have a number of different modes of engaging

with the material available, so that everyone can find an access point to explanations and thoughts that are explored here.

In terms of style, one of my favourite writers and biggest influences is Thomas King. His novels play with traditional western narrative structure offering ideas about the palimpsestic and interwoven nature of stories, and the connection or relationship we all have to spaces and times (King *Medicine River*; King *One Good Story*; King *Green Grass*). Engaging with his narratives has been a major step in leading me to my questions and considerations about geosophy and critical reading practices. In addition to his creative pieces, King's work in the area of literary criticism has been a direct influence on my own writing style and narrative structures. King embraces narrative as an avenue for discussing and elucidating the critical (King *The Truth About Stories*). This style of writing is a feature I attempt to embrace in my own critical musings throughout the thesis proper chapters, drawing on narratives and telling relatable stories that offer a sense of the familiar and comfort as it is interspersed within the densely theoretical and abstract.

And to you, my reader, please allow me to finish on a point of clarification about what Eatdirtzian Geosophy actually is as you are probably hearing of Eatdirtzian Geosophy for the first time. Before you rush over to Google to catch up on what you've been missing out on, let me advise you to save your time. You will find information about the concept of geosophy elsewhere, but the ideas concerning what an Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) is are exclusively in the pages of this thesis.

This thesis explains and develops an EDG theory and practice further through theoretical explanation and narrative exploration. However, to help you relax and concentrate as you delve into the nerdy adventure that lies within the pages ahead allow me to clarify EDG before you begin. I am proposing Eatdirtzian Geosophy is a theoretical position that can inform reading practices. Yes the name is taken from the expression "eat dirt", and pronounced "Eat – dirt – zee -an". And that's exactly what it requires you to do – eat dirt. Think about the act of eating dirt, as it

symbolises an actual relationship with the earth: how do you connect with the earth? How does the earth enter your being? How does your connection to earth shape the way you know, think, see, and feel? As a theoretical position EDG proposes individual reconnection to our environments; thinking about our connections on various scales – e.g. locally or globally, politically, culturally or physically; and, exploring various intersections of those various individual reconnections. So, as you read remember to “eat dirt” by reconnecting and intersecting.