Writing Tasmania's "Different Soul" Danielle Wood School of English, Journalism and European Languages University of Tasmania Australia HYPERLINK "mailto:Danielle.Wood@utas.edu.au" Danielle.Wood@utas.edu.au

Abstract: The narrator of Christopher Koch's 1958 novel The Boys in the Island claims for Tasmania "a different soul", distinct from that of the Australian mainland to the north, in the same breath in which he claims for the island "a different weather". Observations of the distinctiveness of island geography and weather – and of the quality of the light – are recurrent in narratives set not only in Tasmania, but also on those islands to which Tasmania itself acts as a 'mainland'. This paper surveys a range of texts, including Koch's The Boys in the Island, Joanna Murray-Smith's Truce, and my own The Alphabet of Light and Dark, in which a Tasmanian island functions both as a setting for the protagonist's idealised childhood and as a metaphor for the protagonist's "true self". It explores the representation of islands in these texts, examining how a specific tradition of writing about Tasmania intersects with a broader tradition of writing about islands. Keywords: Australia, distinctiveness, islands, mainland, Tasmania © 2008 - Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada Island Studies Journal, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2008, pp. 153-162