Introduction:
A Cake of Portable Soup

It may, I think, be justly observed that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travelers.

Dr Johnson, The Idler, No. 97, 23 February 1760

No sign of life on the shore this morning. From the bridge the glass picks out nothing. No wordless mime of figures crouched on their haunches; no Indians, more unaccountably still, pursue their way

... in all appearance entirely unmoved by the neighbourhood of so remarkable an object as a ship must necessarily be to people who have never seen one.¹

But otherwise the physical conditions have scarcely altered. The shape of bay Cook surveyed, the tides, depths and weathers persist. To be sure: where cockatoos exploded out of the tree-tops, glittering across the bay, reflections of white hulls bob sedately at anchor. A cloud of historical consciousness must affect our vision, attributing to doubtful contours a permanent significance. A more sensuous trace of aircraft and oil refineries stains the prospect but, with a selective eye, the outlines of what Cook saw, the rim of shore on which Banks's natives remained absorbed in their own preoccupations, these material facts remain discernible. Botany Bay: if we believe the name, the place is still recognizable. Or is it?

Before the name: what was the place like before it was named? How did Cook see it? Barring catatonic seizure, his landing there was assured: but where to land, where to look, how to proceed? Where was the place as yet? Ahead, it was dense, cloudy; the report of small waves behind. The sound of voices calling to each other out of sight, displaying the invisible
space, making it answer. Birds with human voices. The legend of giants. What we see is what the firstcomers did not see: a place, not a historical space. A place, a historical fact, detached from its travellers; static, at anchor, as if it was always there, bland, visible. Standing at this well-known point, the spatial event is replaced by a historical stage. Only the actors are absent. Even as we look towards the horizon or turn away down fixed routes, our gaze sees through the space of history, as if it was never there. In its place, nostalgia for the past, cloudy time, the repetition of facts. The fact that where we stand and how we go is history: this we do not see.

According to our historians, it was always so. Australia was always simply a stage where history occurred, history a theatrical performance. It is not the historian who stages events, weaving them together to form a plot, but History itself. History is the playwright, coordinating facts into a coherent sequence: the historian narrating what happened is merely a copyist or amanuensis. He is a spectator like anybody else and, whatever he may think of the performance, he does not question the stage conventions. The First Fleet reached Botany Bay early in 1788. Shortly after, Governor Phillip founded the first settlement (the future Sydney) at Port Jackson, a ‘capacious’ harbour immediately to the north of Botany Bay. This is how Australia’s leading historian describes the scene.

On 27 and 28 January the male convicts and the rest of the marines landed. Some cleared ground for the different encampments; some pitched tents; some landed the stores; a party of convicts erected the portable house brought from England for the Governor on the east side of the cove. So, as Collins puts it, the spot which had so lately been the abode of silence and tranquillity was now changed to that of noise, clamour and confusion, though after a time order gradually prevailed everywhere.\(^2\)

Clark’s description does not simply reproduce the events: it narrates them, clarifies and orders them. As history’s secretary, Clark colludes in history’s own wish to see chaos yield to order. Firstly, his syntax creates the sense of diverse activities converging towards the single goal of settlement. Indeed, the choice of events itself contributes to the illusion of growing purpose: for what is narrated are precisely those activities indispensable to foundation. It is their susceptibility to a cause-and-effect explanation which renders the landing, the clearing and the pitching of tents historical events, events that lead to other events.

In a theatre of its own design, history’s drama unfolds; the historian is an impartial onlooker, simply repeating what happened. In Clark’s account this illusion of the historian as répétiteur is reinforced by other, literary means. His second sentence, for instance, recalls the passage in Virgil’s Aeneid, where Aeneas witnesses the founding of Carthage: ‘Eagerly the Tyrians press on, some to build walls, to rear the citadel, and roll up stones by hand; some to choose the site for a dwelling and enclose it with a furrow . . .’ In this sense the founding of a settlement at Sydney Cove is itself a historical repetition, a further enactment of a universal theme. Finally, of course, Clark draws attention to his own secondary role by letting the contemporary comment of Collins stand as a gloss on his own description: the historian does not order the facts, he conforms to them.

Such history is a fabric woven of self-reinforcing illusions. But, above all, one illusion sustains it. This is the illusion of the theatre and, more exactly, the unquestioned convention of the all-seeing spectator. The primary logic which holds together Clark’s description is its visibility. Nature’s painted curtains are drawn aside to reveal heroic man at his epic labour on the stage of history. The processes of clearing, pitching tents, erecting dwellings, are wholly ancillary to the main action. Their chief value is to set the scene. They are visible pointers to the swelling theme of foundation. What Clark gives us, in fact, is a series of stage directions, conventional and unexamined. For this is the irony: described in this way, from the imaginary spectator’s point of view, these processes fundamental to the act of settlement are stripped of their historical meaning. Referring to the same events which Clark describes, another First Fleet chronicler, Tench, writing at the time, says: ‘. . . the scene to an indifferent spectator, at leisure to contemplate it, would have been highly picturesque and amusing’.\(^3\) But this is the point:
there was no spectator, no gallery, no surveyor-like comprehension; it was precisely this that soldiers and convicts were about—and to picture their activities theatrically, according to the conventions of a unified viewpoint is, by a curious rhetorical trick, to efface the historical nature of the events described at the very moment their importance is apparently, and piously, asserted.

This kind of history, which reduces space to a stage, that pays attention to events unfolding in time alone, might be called imperial history. The governor erects a tent here rather than there; the soldier blazes a trail in that direction rather than this: but, rather than focus on the intentional world of historical individuals, the world of active, spatial choices, empirical history of this kind has as its focus facts which, in a sense, come after the event. The primary object is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate. This is why this history is associated with imperialism—for who are more liable to charges of unlawful usurpation and constitutional illegitimacy than the founders of colonies? Hence, imperial history’s defensive appeal to the logic of cause and effect: by its nature, such a logic demonstrates the emergence of order from chaos.

Hence, too, its preference for fixed and detachable facts, for actual houses, visible clearings and boats at anchor. For these, unlike the intentions which brought them there, unlike the material uncertainties of lived time and space, are durable objects which can be treated as typical, as further evidence of a universal historical process. Orphaned from their unique spatial and temporal context, such objects, such historical facts, can be fitted-out with new paternities. Legitimized by an imperial discourse, they can even form future alliances of their own. (It is precisely this family-tree myth of history which assures the historian his privileged status.)

Clark has been criticized for his tendency to moralize Australian history. His sense of a national destiny tragically unfulfilled has been found unfashionably biblical. But such criticisms make the error of lashing the person rather than the vice. For Clark’s preoccupations are not personal foibles: they do not represent a peculiarly Australian preoccupation with questions of purpose and identity, but are inherent in the kind of history he practises so well. The fact is that, as an account of foundation and settlement, not to mention the related processes of discovery and exploration, empirical history, with its emphasis on the factual and static, is wholly inadequate. This is one reason why Australia’s beginnings are felt to be so fragile, why it is felt that something more than Cook and the First Fleet is needed if Australians are to acquire a proper sense of their true and special destiny. For the result of cause-and-effect narrative history is to give the impression that events unfold according to a logic of their own. They refer neither to the place, nor to the people. Imperial history’s mythic lineage of heroes is the consequence of its theatrical assumption that, in reality, historical individuals are actors, fulfilling a higher destiny.

Nor is the nostalgia for beginnings that this kind of history generates satisfied by pushing back the date of first discovery. It is well known from Dutch charts that by the mid-seventeenth century Dutch navigators had mapped the western half of Australia’s coast, from Nuyts Archipelago in the south to Cape York in the north. Recently, considerable media interest has been aroused by the convincing-enough claim that, a century earlier, a Portuguese sailor, Mendonça, had mapped Australia’s eastern coastline, from Cape York to Warrnambool on Victoria’s southern coast. Five keys found (and since lost) near Geelong, a mahogany ship (found and since lost) near Port Fairy are thought to be relics of that voyage. And somehow the fate of these fragments emblems the strange lack of importance which attaches to their history. For, treated only as a question of priority, what does Mendonça’s voyage tell us about our history? It serves simply to fill in a gap in Australia’s imaginary chronology. Australia itself, the geographical object he and the Dutch helped to bring into being, is taken for granted. And so, by a characteristic paradox, Mendonça is relegated to the rank of a hero coasting a continent which was already there; as if the coast chose him, and not he the coast.

‘In Sagres, in Coimbra, and elsewhere’, writes McIntyre, there are mosaic wall-maps, showing the outline of all the continents of the world, with proud ribbons radiating from
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Lisbon along the track of the Great Discoverers. The discoverers who reached the shores of Australia are justly entitled to be joined in that distinguished company . . . 4

There is something almost pathetic about this conclusion: as if, in the end, the only significance of Mendonca's voyage is as a heroic episode in an imperial pageant. Similarly, one is curious to know what our Sunday-historians will have learnt when they eventually find the lost caravel or the missing keys. But the pathos of these relics is a product of the historical method which constitutes them as facts, as evidence of a lost chronology. It is a method which does not, for instance, ask itself what 'discovery' means, which does not see the paradox inherent in writing a book about the 'secret discovery' of Australia. As if acts of discovery only differed accidentally from other voyages, and were not expressions of an imperial design; as if, for instance, a country which has not been named and brought into cultural circulation can, in any sense, be said to have been discovered.

There is no end to this filling in of the chronology, this cult of firstcomers: shards on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria bear witness to the regular visits of trepang fishermen from the north. And what of the Aborigines themselves, whose infiltration into the sub-continent is annually, as it were, pushed back a further thousand years? This dispersion of a too singularly British genealogy should not be mistaken for a desire to 're-think' Australia's beginnings. It represents nothing more than a transfer of power, a new nationalism as insular as the British connection it seeks to replace. The new chronology remains a form of legitimation. It continues to confuse routes with roots. When archaeologists 'push back' the date of first aboriginal settlement, who gains? To be sure, our legal preoccupation with issues of priority ensures each new date some political leverage. More profoundly, though, the increase of knowledge increases our control. For it is we Europeans who associate antiquity with 'a rich cultural heritage'. In discovering the Aboriginal past, we demonstrate our piety towards the household gods of our own history: the very variosity of Australia's cultural origins suggests an epic potential. The very elusiveness of any convincing cause-and-effect pattern becomes, paradoxically, evidence of a special destiny.

Viewed theatrically, there is nothing in Australia's prehistory which does not set the scene for Clark's description. There is no fact or artefact, however confusing, which does not, once located in the framework of European chronology, contribute to the emergence of historical order and narrative clarity. The historical eye may be seeking out more exotic objects, but its viewpoint remains fixed. History continues to unfold upon a stage: indeed, this is exactly what chronology is, a stage which nullifies time's cultural peculiarities. Chronology is the temporal counterpart of a Euclidean space: both are operationally efficient because they deny the historical nature of the realms they manipulate.

One of Australia's more popular, and avowedly nationalist, historians opens his account of the European settlement of what later became the state of Victoria in this way:

As the sun rose on a winter's day in 1834, and the pale light successively shone on that wild coast stretching all the way from Bateman's Bay to the outskirts of Albany, only the sparsest signs of activity could be seen. Here and there the smoke drifted from a fire. On a few stretches of sand a rowing boat might be seen, resting well above the reach of the high tides. An alert eye might have discerned, in a few places, the green of a vegetable patch and the fresh unpainted wood of a hut and a new grave or two with a name and a date carved on a spar or the lid of a wooden cask. Along that three thousand miles of coast, Aborigines were probably stirring in the early morning from their sleeping places beside their tiny fires. Maybe a hundred Europeans could be counted . . . 5

And so on. Leaving aside the ancestor worship of smoke and spars and the paradigmatic yielding of pallor to verdure, the real mythologizing which occurs here is in the invention of a point of view, a panoramic eye before whose gaze the historical facts unfold again exactly as before. Only now - as never before - they are visible. If Clark's point of view is theatrical, Blainey's is sublime. Only it is the sublimity of a working model, a model which renders time clockwork and miniaturizes space. It is a
world where events occur ‘quietly’, where change is always gradual and where, most significantly of all, nothing could have happened except in the way it did. It is, in short, diorama history – history where the past has been settled even more effectively than the country.

The satellite eye, and the commentary with it explaining how the model works, reveal a further distortion of this kind of history. The eye which sees is not the organic counterpart of Locke’s blank mind: its gaze is not random, open-minded, equally attentive to all directions, all phenomena. On the contrary, it looks down a telescope. This is how epitaphs loom up – they were, after all, carved to be read. They were, from the beginning, historical sources. Smoke also was a signal. But this is why, too, the Aborigines fail to show up. The modesty of Blainey’s remark that the ‘Aboriginals were probably stirring . . . ’ is false modesty. For we do not need his stratospheric seer to establish their presence: some of those ‘hundred Europeans’ have left us ‘eye-witness’ reports. Still, by an unintended irony, Blainey’s ‘probably’ reminds us that it was not only Banks’s natives who went about their business apparently without seeing who was there: the gaze of most historians has been comparably partial.

Blainey’s panoramic figure of speech, like Clark’s theatrical description, does not refer to a physical invisibility. Rather, it outlines the selective blindnesses of a cultural discourse: imperial history. The Aborigines, for instance, were not physically invisible, but they were culturally so, for they eluded the cause-and-effect logic that made the workings of history plain to see. They did not share history’s celestial viewpoint. Unlike ships at sea, their movements were unpredictable. Yet the former inhabitants of Australia were not unique in this respect: the diorama model of historical progress has equally obscured a fundamental dimension of the colonizers’ history.

In the seventy years or so after the First Fleet’s arrival, the Australian coastline was mapped – even discovered, since it was not until Flinders circumnavigated Australia in 1801–2 that it was established as a discrete and single land mass; the Australian interior was explored, its map-made emptiness written over, criss-crossed with explorer’s tracks, gradually inhabited with a network of names; the Australian coastal strip, especially between the Great Divide and the sea, was progressively furrowed and blazed with boundaries, its estuaries and riverine flats pegged out for towns. The discoverers, explorers and settlers – and they were often one and the same person – were making spatial history. They were choosing directions, applying names, imagining goals, inhabiting the country.

And yet no history of these processes exists. We are well supplied with historical geographies, but these share the diorama mentality: they take it for granted that the newcomers travelled and settled a land which was already there. Geomorphologically, this was perhaps so – although even the science of landforms evolved as a result of crossing the country – but historically that country remained to be described. The diorama model shows us the river on the hill’s far side; it shows us hills. But it was precisely such features which spatial history had to constitute. At the centre of the colonists’ minds were not picturesque places, but what preceded them, horizons, possible tracks, bounding spaces.

The ironic result of not recognizing this is that those activities of exploring and settling, which nationalism elevates to an iconic status, become strictly superfluous. If the country was already there, laid out waiting to be found, why, anyone might have done it – and at any time. Landing might have occurred anywhere; any place might have been cleared; any site might have been chosen for the governor’s house: and, from the point of view of history, the effect would have been the same. By the same token, when we reverently trace the explorers’ tracks, we can claim to be explorers no less than they, and writing up our own experiences pretend it is history. A new genre is born, the explorer biography, where our own thoughts and feelings take an epic turn. Treating the historical space as ‘natural’, passive, objectively ‘there’, has the effect of draining what is most characteristic of Australian history of its historical content. The uniquely spatial experience is replaced by a ritual of repetitions. Putative journeys are effaced by a cult of places. And another genre emerges: the local history.

The Road to Botany Bay, then, is written against these mythic imaginings. It is a prehistory of places, a history of roads, footprints, trails of dust and foaming wakes. Within its domain
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fall the flight of birds, the direction of smoke, the lie of the land. Against the historians, it recognizes that our life as it discloses itself spatially is dynamic, material but invisible. It constantly transcends actual objects to imagine others beyond the horizon. It cannot be delimited by reference to immediate actions, let alone treated as an autonomous fact independent of intention. It recognizes that the spatiality of historical experience evaporates before the imperial gaze, like the lump of charcoal falling away from the undamaged diamond in the original ending of His Natural Life. The result may be legitimacy, but at the expense of a world of experience.

The Road to Botany Bay is concerned with the haze which preceded clear outlines, but this is no reason why it should imitate its subject. So, lest there be any misunderstanding (particularly perhaps amongst readers who have not thought of space as anything but an empty interval, a natural given), let it be stressed again: this book’s subject is not a physical object, but a cultural one. It is not the geographer’s space, although that comes into it. What is evoked here are the spatial forms and fantasies through which a culture declares its presence. It is spatiality as a form of non-linear writing; as a form of history. That cultural space has such a history is evident from the historical documents themselves. For the literature of spatial history – the letters home, the explorers’ journals, the unfinished maps – are written traces which, but for their spatial occasion, would not have come into being. They are not like novels: their narratives do not conform to the rules of cause-and-effect empirical history. Rather, they are analogous to unfinished maps and should be read accordingly as records of travelling.

Indeed, to read them as self-evident sources for theatrical or nationalist plots – in the way that Clark treats Collins, say – or to regard their contents as little more than the raw material of heroic biography is to exclude precisely what distinguishes them: their active engagement with the road and the horizon. For the historical significance of the explorers’ journals and the settlers’ diaries does not reside in any stylistic illusion of picturesque completeness – a fact which Dr Johnson noted and lamented. Quite the contrary, it is their open-endedness, their lack of finish, even their search for words, which is characteristic; for it is here, where forms and conventions break down, that we can discern the process of transforming space into place, the intentional world of the texts, wherein lies their unrepeatability and their enduring, if hitherto ignored, historical significance.

Such spatial history – history that discovers and explores the lacuna left by imperial history – begins and ends in language. It is this which makes it history rather than, say, geography. If it does imitate the world of the traveller it is in a different sense. For, like the traveller whose gaze is oriented and limited, it makes no claim to authoritative completeness. It is, must be, like a journey, exploratory. It suggests certain directions in historical texts, leaves others for others to explore. Certain figures of speech draw it on; to others, no doubt, it is deaf. Certain historical characters loom large; others remain beyond its horizon. But like a journey it opens up the possibility of going back, of turning a private passage into a road, a road reaching more places than the first traveller imagined. ‘A page of my Journal’, Boswell once remarked, ‘is like a cake of portable soup. A little may be diffused into a considerable portion’. And his modern editor draws attention to an advertisement in the London Chronicle recommending such soup or ‘solid broth’, to gentlemen ‘on journeys and at sea’. What follows is, I hope, useful to those modern travellers who emulate eighteenth-century gentlemen by writing and reading. And, as such, it suggests, perhaps, a ground-plan for exploring (even discovering) historical frontiers elsewhere – in the Old Country quite as much as the New World.

But where to begin? Late in 1616, Dirck Hartog of Amsterdam and his ship, the Eendracht, were blown on to the north-west coast of Australia. The skipper commemorated his involuntary landing on a pewter plate, which he affixed to a post. The island where Hartog landed was named after him; the adjoining mainland was called the Land of Eendracht. In 1697, another Dutchman, Vlamingh, also blown off-course, found Hartog’s memorial. He had Hartog’s inscription copied on to a new pewter plate and appended a record of his own visit. In 1699, the English seaman William Dampier also visited this coast. He let
the island retain its Dutch connection, but renamed the country to the east Shark Bay. Then, in 1801, one Captain Emmanuel Hamelin discovered a pewter plate 'of about six inches in diameter on which was roughly engraved two Dutch inscriptions . . . ', and named the place Cape Inscription.

The Road to Botany Bay is not about chronological priority: it is about historical beginnings. In this sense, the name Cape Inscription is emblematic of its approach. For such a name, as the earlier additions testify, belongs firmly to the history of travelling. Rewritten and repeated, it serves as a point of departure. But Cape Inscription, the name, is also the result of erasure: it also symbolizes the imperial project of permanent possession through dispossession. In short, the name oscillates between two extreme interpretations. It suggests a kind of history which is neither static nor mindlessly mobile, but which incorporates both possibilities. It points to a kind of history where travelling is a process of continually beginning, continually ending, where discovery and settlement belong to the same exploratory process. The 'facts' of this spatial history are not houses and clearings, but phenomena as they appear to the traveller, as his intentional gaze conjures them up. They are the directions and distances in which houses and clearings may be found or founded.

But Cape Inscription is also a striking figure of speech, an oxymoron yoking writing and landscape in a surprising, even grotesque, way. A geographical feature is made no bigger than a page of writing. A calligraphic flourish is able, it seems, to plume out like an ocean current one hundred miles long. This metaphorical way of speaking is a pointer to the way spatial history must interpret its sources. It also indicates, concisely and poetically, the cultural place where spatial history begins: not in a particular year, nor in a particular place, but in the act of naming. For by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history. And, by the same token, the namer inscribes his passage permanently on the world, making a metaphorical word-place which others may one day inhabit and by which, in the meantime, he asserts his own place in history.

It is not, then, at Botany Bay, or anywhere else, that this history begins, but in the name. Dr Johnson was right when he remarked, 'There is something in names one cannot help feeling.' But he meant much more than he intended.
An Outline of Names

... hanging Clouds and a thick horizon are certainly no known Signs of a Continent ... 

James Cook to John Walker, Letter, 1771

Casting a jaundiced eye over burgeoning preparations for Australia's bi-centenary, a weekend columnist of the Melbourne newspaper *The Age* reported not so long ago a plan to replace all Cook's Australian place names with others more congenial to ordinary Australians. It is a measure of Cook's ambiguous role in Australian history that one was not at all sure whether or not the writer was serious. In the nearly two hundred years since Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet and first governor of the colony of New South Wales, found Cook's description of Botany Bay so inaccurate he had to transfer the settlement to Sydney Cove, historical writers have eulogized and vilified Cook with almost equal enthusiasm. He has been called the founder of Australia; at the same time, he has been accused of culpable indifference - his descriptions of the Australian coast are said to be less than fulsome and, much worse, he never came back. On top of this, whether rejecting or embracing his memory, all writers on Cook have had to deal with the awkward eighteen-year interval between the passage of the *Endeavour* and the arrival of the First Fleet: why, if Cook's excellent chart of the east coast of New Holland (as Australia was then called) laid the foundations for a new colony, was the British government so slow to take up the challenge? After all, Cook had been dead ten years when Phillip sailed.

In the context of some Australian historians' largely imperial assumptions, Cook's mixed historical fortunes are understandable. For what has been at stake in such debates is not Cook's credentials as a navigator, but his status as a founder. Indeed,
one recently published book goes so far as to see in Cook a hostile father-figure, which, for the good of the nation, must be rejected once and for all. Absurd as this Oedipal projection may sound, and though it confuses Cook the man with Cook the myth, in its own way it perpetuates the assumption that the chief task, so far as Australia's beginnings are concerned, is to establish Cook as a historical character, a personality separate from his travels. In flat contradiction to Cook's own propensity for coating, Australian historians have in the past sought to haul him on land, and to anchor him statuquely as an authority they can look up to.

The plausibility of that bi-centennial report did not only take advantage of Cook's enigmatic role in Australian history. More specifically, of course, it was a reminder of how little value our culture attaches to names, whoever may have given them. During the four months Cook spent in Australian waters, he named well over one hundred 'bays', 'capes', 'isles', and the like (see plate 2). In giving these names, Cook expended a good deal of ingenuity. There were names that were straightforwardly descriptive, like 'Point Upright' or 'Cape Manyfold'; but there were also names that were more fancifully evocative, like 'Pigeon House' and 'Glass House', applied to mountains. Other names, like 'Magnetical Island' and 'Eagle Island', referred to distinctive qualities or incidents associated with a place; yet others, like 'Thirsty Sound', 'Point Danger' and 'Cape Tribulation', alluded to the history of the voyage itself. Then there were the personal names: Cook commemorated some of his crew members, but perhaps a third of the hundred and fifty names he scattered along Australia's east coast celebrate nautical, political or aristocratic figures of the day.

Having studied Cook's manuscript journal, the great Cook scholar and biographer John Cawte Beaglehole had no doubt that Cook took the greatest care in bestowing names:

There are numerous blanks left for geographical names, later filled in with a different ink and written very large and carefully. Some of these names are juggled and reassigned a good deal, particularly on the N. E. Australia coast, where the Lords of the Admiralty flitted from cape to cape, and in and out of bays, according to decisions which it is impossible to account for now — though one sees that Cook was the reverse of casual in placing these names on the map: he was not a mere sprinkler of royal duked. Despite this, it is fair to say that little attention has been paid to Cook's names, the general assumption being that, in contrast with Cook's journal itself and his excellent maps, the names have no particular relevance to the places, at any rate no or little objective relevance. At best they are anecdotal; at worst, adulatory. Any significance the names do have is biographical or circumstantial, hardly historical, even less scientific.

Thomas De Quincey probably articulates the insecurity associated with Cook's names where he writes in his essay 'On Style',

Why are the local names, whenever they have resulted from the general good sense of a country, faithful to the local truth, grave, and unaffected? Simply because they are not inventions of any active faculty, but mere passive depositions from a real impression on the mind.

By contrast, De Quincey claims,

Where there is an ambitious principle set in motion for name-inventing, there is sure to terminate in something monstrous and fanciful.

As instances of the 'monstrous and fanciful', De Quincey cites sailors' names like 'Big Wig Island', 'The Bishop and his Clerks', 'Point Farewell', 'Cape Turn-again'. Pioneers' names are similarly culpable: names like 'Big Bone Lick' and 'Dismal Swamp' may be descriptive:

Primary aspects of nature compose the scenery of their thoughts, and these are reflected by their names . . . There is a truth expressed, but again too casual and special. Certainly, Cook's names do not avoid De Quincey's criticism. By turns, his inventions are monstrous, fanciful, casual and special. If the criteria for good names are long residence and a local truth in which the mind is passively saturated, it is clear that Cook's names — and indeed almost all
Australian names – are doomed to the charge of wilful affectation. And yet Cook’s choice of names was not casual: simply because it was active, it was not arbitrary. The fact that the names did not well up spontaneously from some sort of folk consciousness is undeniable, but it does not mean they have no historical import. Cook’s knowledge of the Australian coast was a product of his mobility and his active engagement with its waters, reefs and horizons; at the very least, his casual and special names represent the conditions under which he aimed to make history. They underline the active nature of the explorer’s space and time.

If we find names like ‘Repulse Bay’ or ‘Cape Flattery’ fanciful, it may reflect nothing more than a habit of minimizing the historical conditions that determine historical knowledge. It may be that, instead of seeing the process of exploration itself as history, we are too preoccupied with what Samuel Johnson called ‘the fruits of travel’. Certainly, in most histories of exploration, Cook’s voyages are treated as historical facts to be located chronologically in the history of Pacific exploration. Beyond placing Cook’s achievement in the context of the state of navigational technology, there is little attempt to interpret what Cook’s names themselves refer to – the specificity of his historical experience. And this is quite understandable, for it is the specificity of historical experience that is the enemy of positivist history: it is the active charge of historical time and space that undermines the cause-and-effect patterning of lives, events and facts into something significant. What would a history of Cook’s names be? Their resistance to any kind of cause-and-effect classification becomes, then, proof of their historical insignificance.

Any attempt to classify Cook’s names according to a static cultural taxonomy, whether etymological, semantic or biographical, certainly reinforces this impression of insignificance. An etymological account has some value in ascertaining eighteenth-century meanings of words like ‘hillock’, but is evidently absurd in relation to proper names. Any attempt at a semantic classification soon runs into difficulties of reference: when Cook names a feature ‘Ram Head’, because it is ‘very much like the Ram head going into Plymouth Sound’, is the name descriptive or not? And, if it is descriptive, does it refer to a feature, a point of view, Cook’s personal experience or what? Similarly, a biographical classification offers no singular, unequivocal key to the meanings of the names. You could almost think of the features Cook named after famous people in Ptolemaic terms, with Cook as the earth and successive spheres circling as far as the primum mobile of the royal house. Inside names like Northumberland Islands and Cumberland Isles, which both commemorate younger brothers of George III (in whose reign the Endeavour sailed), move places like Cape Grafton, Rockingham Bay and Shelburne Bay, all alluding to politicians influential at the time of the Endeavour’s sailing.

Closer to the biographical centre may be found commemorated Lords of the Admiralty, responsible for all marine endeavour, but responsible in particular for the Endeavour. These find their place in Cape Palmerston, Cape Sandwich, Edgcumbe Bay and elsewhere. Closer still are those luminaries with whom Cook himself was professionally acquainted, the naval commanders who served in the Seven Years War and, in particular, the officers who were his superiors on the Newfoundland Station. Here we find Cape Hawke, Cape Howe and so on. And a yet more intimate ring of names alludes directly to Cook’s own career. Whether it is coincidence or not, Three Brothers, Eagle Island, Cape Grenville and Northumberland Isles punningly recall the vessels in which Cook had made his way as a seaman. With the Three Brothers Cook completed his apprenticeship and signed on for the first time as a seaman, in April 1750, ‘perhaps with a little pride in his heart’, remarks Cook’s biographer, Beaglehole. He gained his Master’s Certificate while serving in the Eagle, and had already applied that ship’s name to an island in the Bay of Islands, Newfoundland. It was as master of the Northumberland, between 1759 and 1762, that Cook carried out his Draughts and Observations of part of the St Lawrence, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, thus laying the basis of his reputation as a surveyor. ‘Mr Cook the Surveyor’ completed that survey while aboard the Grenville in 1765. His next command had been the Endeavour.4

Finally, there is an innermost circle of names arising, apparently, out of the immediate experiences of the voyage
itself. These include descriptive names ranging from the blantly literal to the highly metaphorical, but having in common their focus on the permanent qualities of a geographical object – names like ‘Red Point’, ‘Cape Dromedary’, ‘Pigeon House’ and ‘Sandy Cape’. These are complemented by names that, rather than evoke the physical appearance of objects, commemorate circumstantial events associated with them – names like ‘Smoaky Cape’, ‘Magnetic Island’, ‘Islands of Direction’. And we can add to these occasional names those drawn from crew members – ‘Point Hicks’, ‘because Lieutenant Hicks was the first who discovered this land’.

Analysed like this, in terms of a static historical hierarchy, the relevance of these names to the coastline where they appear seems minimal. It is no wonder they appear to represent an ‘ambitious principle’ – and one rooted firmly in self-interest. The coastline appears as an occasion for self-glorification or, at any rate, as an opportunity to memorialize all the historical and personal facts that converged and found their historic climax in the *Endeavour* voyage. Cook may have been assuring his own career prospects in his flattering choice of names, but they hardly betray a founding vision of Australia’s future. Why not, then, change the names?

But, even as one imposes this biographical interpretation on Cook’s names, one sees that its coherence is illusory. For one thing, it is to forget that Cook’s Australian names were but the final episode in a progress of naming that began off the South American coast eighteen months earlier. It is to suppose *a priori* a special relationship with the future Australia. For another, to attribute to Cook a summational impulse in his choice of names is evidently illogical. It is to unify them within a backward-looking, possibly imperial perspective. It is to ignore the historical circumstances in which the names were given – the fact that, like the places commemorated, they unfolded in time, and in space. Above all, perhaps, this impulse to classify Cook’s names as if they amount to an enigmatic memorandum advocating colonization seems to assume that words apply uniquely to objects. It denies the possibility of equivocation, forgetfulness, even a sense of humour. It assumes Cook named his coast like a botanist naming plants.

In fact, despite Cook’s historical reputation for unemotional coldness, his names are anything but dispassionately logical: they are not components of a cultural jigsaw or a sort of eighteenth-century dream to be deciphered according to an imperial codebook. Cook may have served in a ship called *Three Brothers*, but the fact is that, on 12 May 1770, he saw three hills which he named ‘Three Brothers’ as they ‘bore some resemblance to each other’. Likewise, there was, after all, an eagle seen at Eagle Island. The simple truth is that punging names like ‘Eagle Island’ are an instance of what, in a different context, Freud called overdetermination. They were names that bore more than one hidden allusion. In the context of the immediately preceding names, we might suppose that ‘Green Island’, for example, honoured the *Endeavour*’s astronomer, Charles Green. After all, geographical features just to the south were both named after contemporaries of Cook – the Frankland Isles commemorating a naval commander who had distinguished himself in the West Indies during the Seven Years War and Cape Grafton recalling the Prime Minister at the time of the *Endeavour*’s sailing. However, Cook’s description of the island in question as ‘low green woody’? seems to settle the matter: the name is obviously descriptive. Or is it? It might as easily be an allusion to Green Island, Newfoundland, dear to Cook as the site of his first important survey, work that led indirectly to the *Endeavour* commission.

The significance of this overdetermination of meaning does not lie in the direction of Cook’s psychology, but in the revelation of the fact that Cook moved in a world of language. He proceeded within a cultural network of names, allusions, puns and coincidences, which, far from constraining him, gave him, like his Pacific Ocean, conceptual space in which to move. His was not the definitive univocal language of the dictionary. Unlike dictionary definitions, Cook’s place names remained to be defined: they certainly claimed no finality or universal validity. On the contrary, they were deployed contextually, strategically. What they referred to was not a life elsewhere. It was not the imaginary leisure of an honoured retirement that they aimed to secure. They alluded to the journey itself, as it unfolded horizontally, revealing itself as a succession of events.
The idea of Cook spontaneously generating an imperial mythology is a biographical myth. It ignores the fact that exploration, no less than, say, botany was an intellectual discipline with its own distinctive scientific method, its own rules of description and classification. And, unlike the various branches of eighteenth-century natural history, whose classificatory system derived from Linnaeus and wholly ignored the circumstance of discovery, exploration was a spatial discourse. It was attentive to the where and how of objects, and its strategic deployment of names was integral to its transformation of the natural world into an object of knowledge.

Cook's names were neither meaningless nor arbitrary: they did have a genealogy, but it was a genealogy of particulars, a horizontal disposition to mark things where they occurred locally, rather than to organize them hierarchically or thematically. Cook's names were not proto-scientific or proto-imperial. Cook no more yearned for the exotically unique – always, potentially, the basis for a new taxonomy – than he disdained the continuously ordinary. The names Cook used in Australia he or others had used elsewhere; and he used some of them again. Names flattering the mighty (like Sandwich) he used on numerous occasions; others more sparingly. He took the Islands of Direction not only from observation, but also from Narborough, whose group he had passed as he neared Tierra del Fuego. In applying the name again, Cook implied no theory, no geomorphological speculation. Quite the opposite: he took advantage of the fact that proper names did not generalize or classify, but denoted particulars alone: however many places he named after Sandwich, the places themselves remained individual, uncompromised, unrelated. Their uniqueness lay not only in their spatial differentiation, guaranteed them by the map: it resided also in their textuality, in their belonging, each of them, uniquely to a journal, in which each had its own place.

Cook's attitude towards names is summed up in his first addition to Pacific knowledge, an island, which he called 'New Island', 'because it is not laid down in any chart'. The unassuming circumspection of this is almost droll, but it embodies Cook's purpose precisely. For Cook, knowing and naming were identical, but there was no question of a direct relation between signifier and signified, any more than an imitative relationship existed between the uncompleted map and the world. To know the world in detail meant preserving its particulars. In this sense, the term 'New' is a name. It precisely delimits the conditions under which it came to be known; it resolutely refuses to say anything about the island. The name is, in fact, a pun on the fallacy of description. It is a subtle critique of those who might think a name with a history ('Old Island', perhaps) is somehow more appropriate. It is a name that refuses to admit the place was there before it was named, a name that celebrates the travelling mode of knowledge.

Consider in this context the foundational case in point: the name 'Botany Bay', which Cook gave to his first landing on the coast of New Holland and in which he recorded the delight of his two botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Charles Solander, in finding a country so rich in floral novelties. If we are to replace empirical history's cause-and-effect preoccupation with founding fathers, and show Australia's true historical beginnings, in the traditions of exploration and discovery, our first task is to refloat Cook's static names and locate them once more in the light of travel. It is to dismantle names as definitive statements of arrival and let them function again as points of departure, as rhetorical lighthouses for getting on. We need, once again, to think of them, like the weather, the winds and clouds, which form so important a part of the ship's log, as metaphors of the journey. In this light, Botany Bay is, in more than one sense, a good place to begin.

The name has attracted speculation ever since John Hawkesworth published his edition of the Endeavour Journal, three years after the voyage in 1773. The fact that an anonymous version of the voyage, hurried into print before the official account, preserved an earlier name for the place, 'Stingray Harbour', soon led critics, well disposed and otherwise, to ask why the name was changed. And the question has been raised again at intervals since. Was Cook generously paying tribute to his scientists? Or was he merely kowtowing to Banks, one of the richest and most influential men in England? Was he
perhaps translating the older name for that coast, 'Coste des Herbaiges', thereby conspiring in Britain's imperial ambitions?

Three historical writers in particular have addressed themselves to these questions: the nineteenth-century self-made historian, archivist and student of Aborigines James Bonwick; Frederick Watson, responsible among other things for carrying on Bonwick's pioneering work in compiling the *Historical Records of Australia*; and, of course, the magisterial Beaglehole. And, for all their differences, what is interesting is that all three writers assume that the explanation for Botany Bay's involved history lies in either the psychological or the political spheres. None of them seems to think the occurrence of the name in a journal of exploration in the least pertinent to its interpretation. Essentially, Bonwick and Watson both subscribe to a conspiracy theory. Beaglehole describes Watson's 1933 pamphlet 'Lieutenant James Cook and his Voyages in H.M. Bark Endeavour', as 'a rather silly, though fortunately small, book' – and much the same may be said of Bonwick's earlier effort, 'Captain Cook in New South Wales', published in 1901. Both writers assume an anonymous scribe in London was responsible for the change from 'Stingray Harbour' to 'Botany Bay'. Bonwick, for instance, guesses that the most likely interpolator was Hawkesworth, for

Dr Hawkesworth meant to prepare as interesting a narrative as he could, and tried to please home parties as flatteringly as circumstances permitted. Thus, men of science would be gratified by the selection of the place as Botany Bay... 10

Watson took a darker view of proceedings. He suspected 'Botany Bay' and 'New South Wales' 'were given after the return to England' and furthermore that the copies of Cook's autograph journal were for the major part 'compiled and written in England under official instructions and censorship'. 11 Watson agrees with Bonwick that the motive for altering Cook's 'Stingray Harbour' (or 'Bay', depending on the copy of Cook's journal consulted) to 'Botany Bay' was crudely imperialist. By appropriating the name 'Coste des Herbaiges' in the 1542 Roze chart Whitehall wanted to leave the world in no doubt as to which coast it now claimed.

Beaglehole's more recent explanation of the name change is quite different and, in empirical terms, probably definitive. He is sure Cook alone was responsible for the changes, and the confusion was a product of his being in transit, nothing more. Beaglehole explains that Cook was writing up his *Endeavour Journal* before and after he reached Batavia. As he wrote it up, so his clerk, Richard Orton, successively transcribed corrected passages to furnish copies to be forwarded to London. This meant that not only might inconsistencies occur as a result of Cook correcting earlier passages as he went along; they might very well be compounded by the copyist. Firstly, Cook himself might be guilty of carelessness, failing, for instance, to change every reference to 'Stingray Bay' to 'Botany Bay'. Secondly, whether or not Orton picked up an afterthought of Cook's depended on whether he had already transcribed that part of the journal. The variant forms of Botany Bay that occur in the journal (and these include 'Botanists Harbour' and 'Botanists Bay' as well as 'Stingray Harbour' and 'Bay') are, says Beaglehole, not evidence of tampering. In fact, they reveal a process of conscious revision in which we can discern 'Cook's mind'. 'We have some indication', writes Beaglehole,

that the change of name was no early decision; for 'Sting-ray Harbour', left in the entry for 7 May, occurs altered to 'Botanist' and then 'Botany' in the entries for 14, 23 and 30 May, and as late as 6 June unaltered, as 'Sting-ray Harbour', in a passage of three lines which were all deleted. In the general description of New South Wales, given under 23 August 1770, the variant 'Botanist' has disappeared; on f. 122a 'Sting Ray Harbour', and on f. 123c 'Sting Ray Bay', become 'Botany Bay'. 12

Beaglehole's empirical rigour may make the conspiracy theories of Bonwick and Watson look foolish. But the fact remains that, for all three, the real question at issue is not the name itself, but the supposed biographical and political motives its changes represent. Underlying their wish to set the facts straight, all three authors suppose that the real subject under discussion is Cook's personality, his personal responsibility for the name, his personal integrity. If the text is problematic, it is
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only because the motives of the author (whoever he or they may be) are complex. In this sense, all three betray their common purpose, which is not to investigate the meaning of the name, but to establish an authentic genealogy for it. Their approach ignores entirely the fact that the name occurs in a journal of travelling and, just as the geographical feature it brings into scientific circulation has its own unique place on the map, so the name occupies a unique place in the text.

For all three writers, a place name like Botany Bay does not exist as a particularity, with a particular meaning in the context of the journal. Its significance is assumed to be hidden, perhaps deliberately suppressed. The corollary of this assumption is obvious: the historian must set himself up as an interpreter, revealing what is superficially arbitrary as a fragment of a repressed imperial discourse. Bonwick published his ideas in the year of Federation and his An Octogenarian’s Reminiscences, published in the same year, reveals him as an ardent nationalist, a historian for whom the object of historical research was to promote a national consciousness and a sense of historical destiny. Looking down on Sydney Harbour ‘as a historian’, Bonwick wrote in his Reminiscences, ‘I missed the dark-skinned fisher, but I beheld the arts of Civilization in full triumph. The white man had triumphed because he was progressive, and caught the note of advancing thought.’ In this vision of emergent nationhood – one admirably captured by E. Phillips Fox (plate 1) – a Cook unsullied by colonial taint was clearly much to be desired. Watson, too, was an out-and-out nationalist. ‘The materials of this volume’, Watson wrote in the preface to The Beginnings of Government in Australia (1913), ‘collect for the use of the present and countless unborn generations the primordial documentary factors in the development and growth of the nation to which they belong.’ And an article published as recently as 1982 notes ‘Watson’s pride as an Australian and his sense of the uniqueness of the Australian experience’.

Beaglehole’s understanding of Cook and his writings is, of course, considerably more sophisticated and sensitive. His biography seeks to replace Cook in his appropriate historical context – not the context of imperial politics but of eighteenth-century scientific empiricism. Summing up Cook’s character, Beaglehole writes:

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He was not semi-mystical, striving as some rarefied explorers have done after the meaning of existence or some absolute human affirmation; he was not searching for or fleeing from himself. He had, so far as one can see, no religion. His was not the poetic mind, or the profoundly scientific mind. He was the genius of the matter of fact.

Having persevered through nearly seven hundred pages of meticulous historical narrative, the reader may feel this represents a somewhat slender discovery. But, far from being an admission of biographical defeat, this litany of negatives vindicates Beaglehole’s exhaustive detail. It underlines how the historian’s task is to master the facts, to map in as much detail as possible the salient features, rather than to speculate about what lies beyond. In this sense, Beaglehole’s approach imitates the empirical scepticism he finds so admirably characteristic of Cook. But Beaglehole’s admiration is also a form of self-legitimation: for, of course, under the guise of writing Cook’s life, Beaglehole is also furnishing a justification for his own historical method. His dispassionate empiricism finds its authority in Cook’s own practice. Seen like this, Beaglehole’s project also represents a form of historical imperialism. In treating Cook’s biography as a network of dates, places and facts, Beaglehole assumes a natural consonance between the man and his age: he effaces the man’s individuality at the very point that he asserts it. In this way, Cook becomes but another heroic variation on history’s universal theme.

How, then, should we understand Cook’s most famous name? The extraordinary effect of attempting to interpret a place name according to some kind of preconceived historical etymology is to empty the name itself of all meaning. The result of attempting to translate the name into psychological, biographical or empirically historical terms is to neutralize the name, to suggest that, so far as the ‘place’ goes, it is replaceable. The corollary of interpreting place names as disguised historical facts is that, more than ever, the name itself becomes an arbitrary imposition on the place, a linguistic gesture without a local topographical or traditional justification. And we may notice here another assumption implicit in this approach: the place itself, the ‘bay’,
is taken for granted. Its existence as an already definite place is assumed, with the result that the name appears simply as an addition, a historical event that comes after the physical fact — and which is, accordingly, of relatively minor significance. The effect is to suppress the occasion of discovery, to treat the act of naming as if it represented nothing more than a postcard home, a personal memento of a journey completed. In the same spirit, a commission to commemorate Cook’s landing at Botany Bay (plate 1) can stipulate that the painting be executed in England.

Suppose, though, we do not take a name like 'Botany Bay' out of context, but read it in the context of the journal where it occurs. Rather than attempt to explain it away, suppose we pay attention to its place in the text — a text, after all, with a definite narrative direction. Then, instead of appearing arbitrary, the name emerges as an accurate expression of the experience of travelling. It becomes a characteristic figure of speech to evoke the nature of exploration, with its zigzag course of erasures, revisions, provisional harbours and invisible reefs.

Cook’s Endeavour Journal was the product of revision — on this at least Bonwick, Watson and Beaglehole all agree. In Batavia, for the first time, Cook could see the outline of his voyage. His voyage of discovery was over: but the memoranda of it remained to be ‘written up’, possibly for publication. Part of this process was, as Beaglehole has shown, a matter of elevating the general tone of the narrative by borrowing some passages of philosophical speculation from Banks’s journal; partly it was a question of clarifying details. But what was the function of this revision? It was not to anticipate Hawkesworth: the object was not to give his narrative a discernible beginning and end, but rather to articulate it as a journey — this was what it meant to tell the ‘undisguised truth and without gloss’, as Cook put it.

In this light, the meaning of Botany Bay emerges — and it begins, like the approach to New Holland, in New Zealand. Reading through the New Zealand section of the journal, it must have been clear to Cook that Endeavour Bay, the name he had originally given to his first landfall in New Zealand, hardly captured the place’s significance in the voyage. In retrospect, the bay had not proved a haven to the little ship. ‘It is a wild riding for a ship,’ Robert Molyneux had written. It had seen a bloody encounter with the natives. In Cook’s own words, the place ‘afforded us no one thing that we wanted’. In Batavia, therefore, Cook renamed it, more appropriately, ‘Poverty Bay’. This change of name had not changed the place, but it had changed its place in the voyage. For, despite the unpropitious beginning, Cook’s survey of New Zealand’s two major islands had turned out to be, at least in retrospect, the major success of his Endeavour voyage. What had begun in poverty had ended in plenty: and it was no accident that Cook eventually named the bay corresponding to Poverty Bay on the north side of Cape East the Bay of Plenty (see plate 2).

After the Pacific’s long, smooth horizons, the crew, if not Cook himself, had looked forward to surveying the substantial land mass of New Zealand from the time it first loomed on the horizon. Was it, as Banks conjectured, ‘certainly the Continent we are in search of’ — the great southern land Cook had been instructed to look for? No doubt it was the surfacing of the question that led Cook to identify himself so firmly with his first landfall. In retrospect, though, his expectations had been surpassed. The successful circumnavigation of both islands — and indeed the discovery that there were two islands — had a significance that extended beyond the survival of the little community on board: the survey of New Zealand was a vindication of the whole Endeavour enterprise. In this context, it was appropriate to celebrate the authorities who had backed the voyage and made it possible. Thus Cook marked the culmination of the New Zealand survey by naming his point of final departure Admiralty Bay and, to underline its place in his career, its two capes were named after the signatories of his Instructions, the Secretaries of the Admiralty, Sir Philip Stephens and George Jackson. A survey that had begun at Poverty Bay now ended at Admiralty Bay: the grammatical similarity between the names marked them as belonging to the same journey; their semantic distance, on the other hand, told the story of changed fortunes crowned by success.

In the wake of these changes, the eventual appearance of the name 'Botany Bay' is understandable. Editing the text, reading back, turning the discontinuous repetitions into a continuity of experience, in the interests of investing the often puzzling
overlaps, backtracks and zigzags of the voyage with a narrative direction, which would also preserve the sense of sailing on, the feel of things appearing successively to the trained eye, the fact that New Holland succeeded New Zealand became a connection worth emphasizing. It lent, for instance, Cook’s decision to return via Batavia an air of reason. It transformed a region of uncertainty into a bridge passage. It made sense to link his first New Holland landing with his last New Zealand landfall. And, having been impressed by Banks’s enthusiasm for the place, having decided to commemorate his botanists there, it was logical to copy the arrangement he had just used in New Zealand – or, at least, to have the two configurations conform. Out of respect for their differing ranks in society (according to Beaglehole) or, perhaps more importantly, because of their close collaboration during the voyage, Cook accorded Solander a point, Banks a cape. Cook first thought of ‘Botanists Bay’, but afterwards changed ‘Botanists’ to ‘Botany’: not, presumably, because he was suddenly struck by the platonic grandeur of flower hunting, but by analogy with ‘Admiralty’. The analogy was not justified empirically, but it did work rhetorically. It faithfully preserved the traveller’s sense of facts, not as discrete objects, but as horizons increasingly inscribed with spatial meanings, defined not in terms of objective qualities, but as directional pointers articulating and punctuating the explorer’s destiny.

This account of how the name ‘Botany Bay’ emerged has, it seems to me, a number of advantages. Even in conventional biographical terms, it accords better with the image of Cook as the ‘genius of the matter of fact’. Beaglehole’s rationalization of the process of revision implies an introspective individual finely sensitive to nuances of sound and sense. To speak in terms of ‘variants’ is to imply that Cook had the ambition and talent of a poet, that he revised teleologically, towards the perfect expression he had in mind from the beginning. It suggests a middle-class sensibility and leisure quite at odds with the portrait Beaglehole elsewhere paints in his biography. In addition, of course, the recognition that Cook actively engaged in his own biography, and was not by any means a dispassionate observer of events, puts paid to the notion that the character of the man has to be sought elsewhere. In the open-ended form of the journal, the making of history and the writing of history went together.

Seeing ‘Botany Bay’ the name as a characteristic device of travelling texts enables us to free the name of its posthumous mythology, to see it as a link forging the discontinuous entries of the ship’s log into a continuous narrative. The world it refers to is the world of the text, not the mind of the author, nor even the collective ambition of the British government. Freed of these superstitious encumbrances, the name becomes one of a series of nominal strategies for articulating the dynamic of journeying; it discovers its logic in the twin processes of reading and travelling. In this strategic context, the fact that, on a later voyage, Cook named an island near New Caledonia ‘Botany Isle’ ceases to be surprising. In this instance, as before at Botany Bay, there was an anecdotal botanical circumstance justifying the choice of name; but the object was not to fix the place uniquely, to distinguish it uniquely – that was the task of the map – only to preserve, with Boswellian immediacy, the particularities of the journey.

To suppose that a name like ‘Botany Bay’ is, in some sense, arbitrary, that it lacks local authority, is to indulge in a form of linguistic animism – as if the soul of the object was, or could be, contained in a word. Its implication of a deep-rooted empathy between language and land represents a mythical nostalgia for a tradition, a tradition that, by supplying history with, as it were, a prehistory, serves only to eclipse the historical significance of the very event that might furnish the beginnings of a tradition. ‘Botany Bay’, the name, is no doubt replaceable – in the sense that ‘Stingray Harbour’ would serve equally well; but, and this applies to Cook’s naming practice generally, no other name could improve on it. No other name could speak with greater authority about the place. For it was the shadowy outline of a place that Cook’s name brought into being. The only argument for altering the name would have to be horizontal, in terms of the dynamic of the journey, not posthumously associative. And, even if renaming were to occur (as it has done in innumerable Australian instances), the replacement would still refer only to the particularity of a new journey, a new spatial horizon or orientation.
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This kind of reading, which interprets, rather than explains, which relocates the text in the context of its writing, can be applied more generally: taken as a whole, Cook's place names express the navigator's active engagement with the space of his journey. They are figures of speech characteristic of the explorer's discourse. This much is clear, but what exactly is the explorer's discourse? How, for instance, does exploration differ from that other great eighteenth-century naming discipline, botany? In answering this question, the conjunction of Cook and Banks on the Endeavour voyage is a particularly fortuitous one. Historically speaking, the distinction between botany's concern to reduce the variety of the world to a uniform and universally valid taxonomy and exploration's pursuit of a mode of knowing that was dynamic, concerned with the world as it appeared, went back, on the one hand, to the Enlightenment project of universal knowledge and, on the other, to the trenchant criticism of its empirical assumptions mounted by David Hume. But nowhere is this methodological distinction brought out more clearly than in the contrast between the scientific practices of Banks and Cook.

Beaglehole shows that the more elaborate passages in the Endeavour Journal, where Cook attempts some form of reflective generalization regarding, say, the state of the Aborigines as noble savages or where he attempts a heightened descriptive prose (as in the account of the Endeavour's holing) were, for better or worse, borrowed from Banks's journal, which Cook had an opportunity of consulting in Batavia—the same opportunity that gave him the idea of naming Botany Bay. But, significant as the borrowings may be in biographical terms, even more instructive is their dissonance within Cook's own text; and this dissonance did not mark a merely temperamental or social distinction, but also a difference in the kinds of knowledge the two men pursued. For where Banks was preoccupied with the typical, Cook was concerned with the singular; where Banks tended to generalize, Cook tended to specify. And this, indeed, was the difference between botany and geography as they were practised in the eighteenth century.

On the Endeavour voyage, Solander and Banks made use of the system of classification developed and popularized by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. The Linnaean system was artificial in the sense that it derived from no detailed examination of plant morphology, which might reveal 'natural affinities between distinct species. It was based instead on a superficial comparison of a limited number of characteristics. Once these characteristics had been defined for a type specimen, it simply became a question of seeing to what extent any new plant corresponded to it. If the new plant differed considerably, then it might itself become the type specimen of a new family. Whether these type specimens were actually typical of certain groupings in nature was not the issue. As the Linnaeus scholar William Stearn points out, the natural character of a genus had a single species as its basis, and he notes that

Having once drafted a generic description, maybe at a time when only one species of the genus was known to him, he [Linnaeus] often left it unchanged from edition to edition of the Genera Plantarum, despite the addition to the genus of other species diverging in flower or fruit from the original species.  

Stearn quotes a letter, written by Linnaeus's son in 1778, in which Carl describes Linnaeus's 'secret of determining genera' as 'nothing more than his practice of recognizing plants by ex cern facie [general aspect].'

By 'Method' alone, as Oliver Goldsmith explained in his widely read History of the Earth, can we hope to dissipate the glare, if I may so express it, which arises from a multiplicity of objects at once presenting themselves to the view.

And the great advantage of the Linnaean system over the other methods of classification was its simplicity: it made the getting of botanical knowledge beguilingly simple. The sole aim of it, as one of Linnaeus's disciples explained, is to help any one to learn the name and history of an unknown plant in the most easy and certain manner, by first determining its Class and Order in this system; after which its Genus is to be made out . . . and finally its Species . . .

The great drawback of the system was that as a result
botany, as the nineteenth-century German botanist Julius von Sachs pointed out, ceased to be a science ... in place of the morphological examination of the parts of plants there was an endless accumulating of technical terms devoid of depth of scientific meaning.\textsuperscript{35}

Sachs was admittedly an evolutionist, who had therefore no time for the doctrine of the constancy of species on which Linnaean taxonomy rested. Even so, his outspoken dismissal of 'the dull occupation of plant collectors, who called themselves systematists', is just:

It is true indeed that these adherents of Linnaeus did some service to botany by searching the floras of Europe and of other quarters of the globe, but they left it to others to turn to scientific account the material which they had collected.\textsuperscript{36}

The pleasure of the plant collector, then, was a pleasure in naming uniquely and systematically. It was the pleasure of arrangement within a universal taxonomy, a taxonomy characterized by tree-like ramifications -- in short, a pleasure analogous to that felt by the imperial historian, who assimilates occasions and anomalies to the logic of universal reason. Equipped with the artificial system of Linnaeus, novelty ceased to present a problem. Utterly strange forms became type specimens. Less curious plants might be assigned to existing genera. The taxonomy depended on no close examination. Accordingly, the botanist could concentrate on superficial differences between plants, rather than subtler likenesses: 'My business was to kill variety and not too many individuals of any one species,'\textsuperscript{27} as Banks put it, referring to a bird-shooting expedition at Botany Bay. By the same token, once specimens of all that came immediately to hand had been collected, the botany of the place held no further interest. As Banks wrote, 'The Plants were now intirely compleated and nothing new to be found, so that sailing is all we wish for if the wind would but allow us.'\textsuperscript{28} (And not long before, Banks had been sulking because Cook sailed too much and stopped too little!)

A significant corollary of Banks's Linnaean bias for the history of early perceptions of Australian landscape is that, although he had an eye for superficial differences, Banks was likely to be insensitive to the appeal of likeness, of relatively undifferentiated continuity. Thus, at a distance from the New Holland mainland, he found, 'For the whole length of coast which we saild along there was a samenes to be observd in the face of the countrey very uncommon.'\textsuperscript{29} Only at close quarters on land could Banks embark on that process of differentiation which, for him, constituted the pleasure of travel. The hint of contradiction in his remark that 'Of Plants in general the countrey afforded a far larger variety than its barren appearance seemed to promise,'\textsuperscript{30} faithfully reflects the bias, even the impatience, implicit in his Linnaean strategy of possession.

Equally significant is the poverty of Banks's epistemology once he attempts to speculate beyond the immediate object. One of the temptations of the Linnaean system is to pass from species to classes, from particular differences to abstract uniformities. Banks's view, for instance, that, from the poor appearance of parts of the New Holland coast, the interior of the country must be equally barren -- and hence entirely devoid of inhabitants\textsuperscript{31} -- is an exemplary instance of the indifference of the botanizing mind to the claims of locality and the limits of observation. Banks justifies his remarks, not by his own observation, but by quoting an authority on primitive people -- to the effect that they are universally dependent on the sea for their subsistence. But such an authority serves merely to appropriate the Aborigines to a universal condition, to make them a further species in an already established family. Rather than encourage closer examination, it circumvents it. It denies the possible otherness that would render the unknown worth knowing. It renders the potentially interesting fact null and void.

Perhaps the most far-reaching implication of Banks's general outlook and the Enlightenment philosophy of knowledge that it represented was that the spatiality of experience could be ignored. Banks's interest in taxonomy quite excludes as part of his knowledge the circumstances of discovery. Knowledge, for Banks, is precisely what survives unimpaired the translation from soil to plate and Latin description. There is, in Banks's
philosophy, no sense of limitation, no sense of what might have been missed, no sense of the particular as special. By a curious irony, even though he sets out to botanize on the supposition his botanical knowledge is incomplete, his knowledge is always complete: each object, found, translated into a scientific fact and detached from its historical and geographical surroundings, becomes a complete world in itself. It loses all power to signify beyond itself, to suggest lines of development or the subtler influences of climate, ground and aspect. In short, its ecology, its existence in a given, living space is lost in the moment of scientific discovery. And, we may add, what applies to Banks’s botanizing is also true of empirical history — a discipline that, after all, is grounded in the same Enlightenment assumptions as botany: it is precisely the particularity of historical experience, the material hereness and nowness which cannot be repeated, that such history crowds out in favour of a transcendent classification in terms of multiplying causes and effects.

In all these respects, Cook differed from his botanists. Where Banks sought to build up, Cook aimed to pare away. His attitude is perfectly summed up, when he reports:

In this Chart I have laided down no land nor figur’d out any shore but what I saw my self, and thus far the Chart may be depended upon.32

Cook prizes his lightness of touch; he finds blank spaces, gaps in his outline, as informative as the line itself. It may yield little of value to the traveller at home, eager for useful facts, but, as a document of travelling, to be used by those who follow Cook, the gaps are as significant as the discoveries. This anti-empirical focus on particularities, so characteristic of Cook’s practice in mapping, is also evident in his attitude towards the ‘natives’. Unlike Banks, he shows no interest in filling in the unavoidable blank spaces in his knowledge. Of the Australian Aborigines, he is content to say,

Being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them ... they have very little need of Clothing and this they seem fully sensible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth &c to, left it carlessly upon the Sea beach and in the woods as a thing they had no manner of use for. In short they seem’d to set no Value upon anything we gave them.33

Beaglehole dismisses this passage, with, as he sees it, Cook’s uncharacteristic lapse into the mythology of the noble savage, as so much ‘nonsense’, although he admits that, since Cook repeated the description in a letter after returning to England, ‘one must presume he was rather taken with it’.34 But must Cook’s sentiments be allied with those of Banks or even Jean-Jacques Rousseau? What fascinates Cook about the Australian Aborigines is, in contrast with the Tahitians, say, who swarmed over the ship after nails, their complete detachment, their lightness of touch in dealing with the world around them. In this sense, a parallel existed between their unassuming behaviour and Cook’s own refusal to trade in hypotheses, to dress up (and thereby conceal) the naked truth.

The chief discovery of the Endeavour was its discovery of nothing or, rather, of the non-existence of a great southern continent: from an empirical point of view, this can only be construed as a failure. But, from the traveller’s point of view, Cook’s journal gains or loses nothing by its discoveries: what matters is the quality of the travelling it reveals. In contrast with the botanist, Cook’s geography, his writing of lands, was inseparable from the conditions of the inquiry itself. The same calculations that enabled him to steer a course also enabled him to leave the coastlines he sighted where they were. This was the essence of the maps he made, that they did not mirror the appearance of natural objects, but preserved the trace of encountering them. Despite its tabula rasa appearance, the map was, from the beginning, designed to record particular information. As the spaces of its grid were written over, there was revealed a palimpsest of the explorer’s experience, a criss-cross of routes gradually thickening and congealing into fixed seas and lands. In this context, the rubric ‘New South Wales’, disc. 1770’ (see plate 3) named not so much a country as, by the direction of its writing, the course of a journey. By contrast, the illustrated plant and its Latin description belonged to a metaphysical system of classification from the moment of
discovery. The nature of the discovering process was concealed. But, whereas the blank surround of the botanical plate was dead, the blank spaces of the map were active, locating future histories. For Cook, though, his knowledge was indistinguishable from the conditions of knowing. The fruits of his travel were directions to the traveller.

What could be further from Banks's eagerness to haul off and leave New Holland behind him than Cook's elaborate explanation of his zigzag route inside the Great Barrier Reef? As Cook wrote,

I have engaged more among the Islands and Shoals upon this Coast than perhaps in prudence I ought to have done with a single Ship and every other thing considered, but if I had not I should not have been able to give any better account of the one half of it than if I had never seen it, at best I should not have been able to say whether it was Main land or Islands and as to its produce, that we should have been totally ignorant of as being inseparable with the other; and in this case it would have been far more satisfaction to me never to have discover'd it.\(^{35}\)

No such scruples inhibited Banks: whether the flora of Botany Bay was typical or special, whether it was insular or coastal, was unimportant to him. For Banks, it was the aggregate of objects that counted, not their true relations. And, unlike Cook, Banks had no time for undiscoverable countries. The very syntax of Cook's explanation is symptomatic of his geographical practice: if Banks advances from superficial acquaintance to grand generalization, then Cook, from the certainty of a continuous coastline, entertains the possibility of having remained, after all, at sea.

Evidently, then, there was more to the dispute that led Banks to give up plans for sailing with Cook a second time than a personal difference. The disagreement was also methodological. True, the additional upper deck and extra cabin on the poop, which Banks demanded for himself and his scientific entourage, rendered the *Endeavour* unworthy, but, in ordering their removal, Cook was also asserting the secondary nature of the kind of knowledge they represented. Primary knowledge lay in the course of the exploration itself, not in the elaboration of possible discoveries. To ensure his ship handled well was not to exhibit the boorishness of a professional sailor, but to protect the integrity of exploring as a mode of knowing. It was to suggest travelling itself was knowledge and not merely the fruits of travel.

This difference between Banks's interest in botanical novelties and Cook's devotion to navigation can also be expressed in terms of the difference between exploration and discovery. For, while discovery rests on the assumption of a world of facts waiting to be found, collected and classified, a world in which the neutral observer is not implicated, exploration lays stress on the observer's active engagement with his environment: it recognizes phenomena as offspring of his intention to explore. Despite the tendency of most historians to regard the terms as virtually interchangeable, the pleasures of discovery and exploration rest on utterly opposed theoretical assumptions. The delight Banks took in discovery was summational, a matter of adding up discrete experiences. For Cook, it was quite different. To be an explorer was to inhabit a world of potential objects with which one carried on an imaginary dialogue. And, in so far as they had already been imagined, there was a sense in which the explorer's most valuable service lay in progressively clearing them away, in allowing the uncluttered space of the journey to emerge in its own right and speak. In this context, Banks's pleasure in finding Botany Bay surprisingly rich in flowers is as predictable as Cook's relative indifference to the fact.

In his letter to the Admiralty, dated 23 October 1770, summarizing the *Endeavour*'s progress, Cook wrote:

Altho' the discoveries made in this Voyage are not great, yet I flatter my self they are such as may merit the attention of their Lordships, and altho' I have fail'd in discovering the so much talk'd of Southern Continent (which perhaps do not exist) and which I my self had much at heart, yet I am confident that no part of the failure of such discovery Can be laid to my Charge.\(^{36}\)

Clearly, Cook is conscious here of the Admiralty's desire of tangible fruits of travel: he had, after all, been sent out, among other things, specifically to test the hypothesis of a great
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'southern continent' (not, of course, to be confused with the already partially known land mass of New Holland later Australia). But equally impressive is Cook's assertion of the quality of his travelling, his confidence that the value of his journey is not in direct proportion to the discoveries made. And the belief that attentive exploring was a form of knowledge quite as valuable as actual discoveries is made explicit in Cook's post-Endeavour letter to John Walker:

I . . . have made no very great Discoveries yet I have explor'd more of the Great South Sea than all that have gone before me so much that little remains now to be done to have a thorough knowledge of that part of the Globe.\textsuperscript{37}

It is perfectly possible to explore without discovering anything. In fact, it is precisely an exploring state of mind that renders discoveries significant, not accidental, not spuriously factual but authentically intellectual. It is this sense of intellectual discovery which explains Cook's 'possession' of the east coast of Australia. In his journal Cook reports:

I . . . steer'd to the westward until I fell in with the East Coast of New Holland . . . I coasted the Shore of this Country to the North . . . \textsuperscript{18}

And, at the end of that coasting, he explained:

Having satisfied my self of the great Probability of a Passage, thro' which I intend going with the Ship, and therefore may land no more upon this Eastern Coast of New Holland, and on the Western side I can make no new discovery the honour of which belongs to the Dutch Navigators, but the Eastern Coast, from the Latitude of 38° South down to this place I am confident was never seen or visited by any European before us, and Notwithstanding I had taken possession of several places upon this coast, I now once more hoisted English Coulers and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third, took possession of the whole Eastern Coast, from the above Latitude down to this place, by the name of New South Wales, together with all the Bays, Harbours, Rivers, and Islands situate upon the said coast . . . \textsuperscript{19}

What justified Cook in taking possession of the east coast was not his discovery of it: as his description of falling in with the coast indicates, he knew in advance (even if the sources of his knowledge are disputed) that such a coast existed. Cook's justification lay in the quality of his exploring, in the particular discoveries his meticulous navigation had yielded. As he said, regarding his discovery of the Great Barrier Reef, he may have 'engaged more among the Islands and Shoals upon this Coast than perhaps in prudence I ought to have done', but, had he not done so, 'I should not have been able to say whether it was Mainland or Islands . . . and in this case it would have been far more satisfaction to me never to have discover'd it.'

Cook's possession of the coast – and nothing more or less – reflects his confidence that the quality of his journey (evident in his charts and journals) has been the means of adding substantially to geographical knowledge. But it is not so much that New Holland has been possessed; rather it has appeared in the direction of Cook's sailing, it has fallen under his intentional gaze. It is this outlook which explains Cook's decision to claim the east coast for the crown by finally planting the British flag on an island. Imperial historians have always been puzzled by this: what could Cook possibly mean by not formally taking possession of the mainland, by laying claim only to an insignificant island? From the point of view of the imperialists, anxious to establish a direct link between Cook and 'Australia', this spatial dislocation between the place of possession and the place possessed appears like an act of wilful perversity or neglect. True, by 1787 Possession Island had aggregated to itself a group (see plate 3), but it remained resolutely moored off the mainland's northern tip. In fact, though, Cook's diffidence simply bears witness to the symbolic nature of his knowledge. For what Cook, his charts and journal knew was quite precisely a direction travelled. As Cook was an explorer of horizons, and not a discoverer of countries, his realm of competence was confined to a coastal swath bounded by the visible horizon: in the zigzag map created by his passage, Possession Island, far from appearing peripheral, stood as a symbolic centre, a jewel crowning his outline of names.

In this light Cook's place names suddenly grow eloquent. In adopting them, Cook's object was, as far as possible, to leave the 'places' as he found them, just as his maps did. To name them was
to invent them, to bring them into cultural circulation. But the metaphorical function of his names—and this was embodied in their resistance to empirical paraphrase—was to leave the place uncharacterized. It was as if Cook’s aim was not to fill the world up with objects but, rather, to erase its surface as far as possible of mythic excrescences. It was as if he wanted to bare the surface of the Pacific of imaginary objects in order to reveal the intentional space of his own experience, the sense in which it had produced his travelling. We see that Cook’s name, Botany Bay, was given not without a sense of its irony. In yoking a scientific discourse that claimed universal validity to a place so particular, Cook registered a very proper sense of scepticism. As we shall see, the name’s grandeur subsequently attracted a good deal of sarcastic wit, but there is no reason to suppose that Cook himself was wholly unaware of the name’s pretentiousness. Rather, his name neatly recognized, and perhaps satirized, the difference between Banks’s science, founded on changeless, universal axioms, and his own nomadic discourse, which, by contrast, engaged phenomena as they presented themselves to his problem-solving consciousness.

We can now make fuller sense of an interesting little correction that Cook made to Orton’s fair copy of his journal. Referring to a New Zealand place name, Orton had inadvertently written, ‘Banks names Sandy Bay.’ Reading through Orton’s copy, Cook came to this statement and wrote over Banks’s name ‘me’.⁴⁰ The temptation is to read this as evidence of personal animosity. After all, the name is hardly a distinguished one. But the truth lies elsewhere, in Banks’s and Cook’s differing attitude towards names. If Cook reserved to himself alone the privilege of naming places, it was not merely because he stood on his dignity as lieutenant-captain; it was because he knew where places were. And, in this sense, no name of his was casual, the mere product of circumstance. But the names that Banks gave, precisely because they were casually descriptive, superficially characteristic, tended to trail the place behind the name’s own destiny, attaching it to a point of view.

Returning to Beaglehole’s conviction that ‘Cook was the reverse of casual in placing these names on the map’, we can now see that quite as significant as Cook’s juggling of names are the ‘blanks’ themselves. These nameless gaps in the text symbolized Cook’s concern to preserve, as he went along, his discoveries; to retain them provisionally within the open-ended domain of exploration, rather than commit himself to a premature, and artificially authoritative, definition. Unlike Banks, pressing his plants before hurrying on to the next discovery, Cook preserved his discoveries by not characterizing them on first acquaintance, by leaving them as they were where they first appeared in the text.

A profounder distinction between botany and exploration now emerges. For the difference between the two was not simply a matter of methodology: it embodied, more fundamentally, a disagreement about the nature of language and its relationship to the world. For Banks, names enjoyed a simple, Linnaean relationship with the object they denoted. They gave the illusion of knowing under the guise of naming. Cook’s names obey a different, more oblique logic, the logic of metaphor. His names do not intend to preserve the delusion of objectivity, for his standpoint is neither neutral nor static. Instead, they draw geographical objects into the space of his passage. The paradox is that Cook’s more wilful practice, his greater subjectivity, succeeds where Banks’s unreflective objectivity does not in preserving what is named. A case in point is Banks’s first attempt at Australian nomenclature. Banks writes, from on board ship, ‘We could discern many cabbage trees but nothing else which we could call by any name.’⁴¹ This seems straightforward enough, until we realize that, when Banks names certain trees on the shore ‘cabbage trees’, he is not identifying the trees, he is not naming them: he is only asserting their resemblance to a tree with which he is familiar. Under the guise of a scientific label Banks employs a simile based on what Erasmus Darwin later called ‘intuitive analogy’; and, since he employs it in the absence of a proper name, we could say he employs the commonplace rhetorical trope of catachresis.

Banks’s notion of a genuinely descriptive language spontaneously available to the empirical mind goes back to John Locke, who envisages scientific language as a language free of metaphorical distortion:
If we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative applications of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement, and so indeed are perfect cheats.  

Banks's 'descriptive' language, his lexicon-like invention and application of terms which are to be regarded as unequivocal and definitive, exemplifies Locke's position. But the language of things as they are is an illusion: as Banks's 'cabbage trees' illustrates, even the most factual name embraces the new figuratively. The illusion is compounded by the fact that, as Locke's own prose demonstrates, even the most dispassionate argument cannot dispense with figures of speech. Even to adopt the stance of a neutral observer is to adopt a point of view. The fact is that, however 'scientific' it may purport to be, the language of empiricism remains metaphorical. Even as Banks applied a name he resorted to figurative language; even as he denounced figurative language, Locke took advantage of it. Indeed, Locke's imagery of sinuous paths is peculiarly interesting for, whether intentionally or not, it draws attention to a fact of the greatest significance for spatial history; which is that rhetoric, the whole range of figurative terms by which we denominate the world, attempting to translate it into plausible conceptions, is itself fundamentally spatial in nature. Metaphor, for instance, is quite literally a spatial figure of speech: in a static sense, it stands in for or in place of something else – in this way, it makes what was invisible or only dimly perceptible emerge clearly before our eyes; in a mobile sense, metaphor carries meaning over, brings distant things near or even runs alongside normal usage on a parallel track.  

Figures of speech, place names among them, correspond symbolically to the scope of exploration itself: they are a means of making sinuous paths comprehensible, a means of recording the journey as it impresses itself on the consciousness. There may be nothing objective about this, but then, as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has observed, 'There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which we could look upon metaphor, and all the other figures for that matter, as if they were a game played before one's eyes.'  

Similarly, there is no non-directional, unimplicated point of view from which the traveller can describe the facts of the journey. Cook's metaphorical mode of naming is not a peculiar whim of the namer: it represents an authentic mode of knowing, a travelling epistemology that recognizes that the translation of experience into texts is necessarily a process of symbolizing, a process of bringing invisible things into focus in the horizontal lines of the written page. So, where the metaphorical nature of Banks's discourse is suppressed, Cook feels under no such constraint. Names like 'Pigeon House Mountain' or 'Mount Dromedary' spectacularly depend on the namer's point of view. They assert no literal likeness but are offspring of the paradoxical miniaturization of the magnified image in the telescope; framed and isolated, such features are brought close, made homely, domestic. They are grand enough to hang on a wall; small enough to fit into a pocket. But Cook's seafarers' metaphors do not in any way diminish the otherness they make so readily accessible. For implicit in his metaphors is the figure of irony, a mode of description that passionately distances the observer from what he sees. If Banks's generalizations tend to belittle the coast, then the particularity of Cook's inventions suggests nothing so much as humility, a willingness to be dwarfed as well as to command.  

To accuse Cook of insensitively reducing a foreign coast to certain local, biographical preoccupations of his own is wholly to miss the point that his names preserve and even enhance the otherness of the outline. The very violence of their metaphorical displacements preserves the irony of the explorer's position and the contingent nature of his knowledge. The unnaturalness of attaching ministers to mountains, secretaries to capes, the playful tautology of calling islands 'Islands of Direction', the unlikelyhood of Botany Bay, as if the flora in question were marine: by all these figurative means Cook preserves the difference between the order of nature and the order of culture. If, as the Marxist historian Theodor Adorno argues, it is the loss of irony that characterizes the discourse of totalitarian regimes – 'Irony's medium, the difference between ideology and reality,
has disappeared" — then we can after all see in what sense Cook was a foundational figure. We do not have to invent an imperialist conspiracy, as Bonwick and Watson sought to do; nor, as Beaglehole has done, do we have to imagine a 'genius of the matter of fact'. It is enough to detach Cook from the company of the sedentary, speculative map-users and to replace him in the realm of the travelling map-makers.

Cook's place names were tools of travelling rather than fruits of travel. Rather than represent premature attempts to constitute Australia as a number of distinct physical parts, adding up to a metaphysical whole, their proliferation imitated the exploring process. Their concentration in north Queensland waters, for example, was not an objective mirror to the quantity of geographical objects found in that particular area, but a testimony to the extent of the exploring that went on there. Rather than iron out the coast, reducing its otherness to a placeless classification, Cook's names served to preserve the space of exploring, to spread the coast out. What they named were the individual moments that went together to form what James Boswell, referring to the contents of his own journal, called a series of uniformity. Their function was to preserve the means by which they came to be known, the occasion of places, the sense in which places are means, not of settling, but of travelling on.

Cook offered future travellers an accurate chart, an outline of names, but the essence of these texts was that they did not sum up a journey, but preserved the trace of passage. They were open-ended; their very accuracy invited further exploration, pre-empted premature possession. They — and this is what distinguishes Cook's achievement from that of his putative predecessors in the area — created a cultural space in which places might eventually be found. In this sense the superficial purchase of Cook's names is not a weakness but a strength. Where Banks's brief forays into the interior irremediably centred the future comprehension of the Australian flora on the narrowest of bases, Cook's un-cumulative, un-centred maps and travelling journal retained the possibility of multiple futures, endless journeys, arrivals and departures. It was hardly Cook's fault if, even before 1788, the gaps in his outline had been closed up (see plate 3) and map-makers serving the imperial cause were already representing New Holland as a bounded object, closed to future journeys. He was hardly to blame if the calligraphers were already capitalizing on Botany Bay, both literally and figuratively.

If Cook's voyage threatened to steady that line of foam, to have it coagulate into a possessable, a translatable territory, the integrity of his travelling nevertheless kept open (indeed, opened up) the possibility of other ways of possession. The world view embodied in his naming practice stood at odds with the aims of imperialism. Oriented towards the solution of problems, attentive to the changing hues of water and horizon, Cook's travelling embodied an attitude essential to the colonization of Australia. It was not Banks's imperial gaze, passive and static, that later explorers and settlers borrowed when they made their way in Australia, but the open-ended, imaginative vision of Cook. It was Cook's example they followed in writing up their journals and in drawing their maps. It is in this respect that Cook was a foundational figure: although he found a country, Cook did not aim to found a colony. Among contemporary historians he may not have the central place he once occupied. But what is needed is replacement, not displacement, a recognition that, by establishing a tradition of travelling, Cook inaugurated Australia's spatial history.