CONCEPTS OF VIEWPOINT AND ERASURE: BOTANY BAY

I S PROVEST

Master of Arts (Honours)
Visual Arts

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY
Nepean

September, 1996
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a higher degree to this or any other institution.

Ian S Provest
1996
When Captain James Cook sailed into Botany Bay in Australia for the first time in 1770, his botanist Joseph Banks described the behaviour of the Aboriginals to be 'totaly unmovd' and 'totaly engag'd'.

During this same few days Cook named the place Stingray Bay. Within eight days the name was changed by Cook to Botany Bay. Banks' phrases generate oscillating perceptions and Cook's name change poses questions. The perceptions documented in Banks' journal, refer to an invisibility of the explorers and their ship Endeavour, in the bay. But in a way it also refers to an invisibility of the Aboriginals themselves. The name 'Stingray' and its change to 'Botany' raises political questions about the necessity for the change. The change also sheds light on a viewpoint at odds with its subject.

The events that occurred during the eight days Cook was anchored in Botany Bay will be discussed firstly in the framework of an analysis of the implications of the terms 'totaly unmovd' and 'totaly engag'd' entered in Banks' journal, and secondly in a discussion about the various historical notions concerning the name change.

Did these cloudy histories and viewpoints render the indigenous culture invisible? Can these inscriptions made by Cook and Banks and the subsequent mythologies surrounding them, including those about the actual place, be a metaphor for 'further understanding'?
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 Unmovd</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 Work</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 Stingray</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 Conclusion</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION
Who or what was invisible when Captain James Cook first arrived in Botany Bay, Australia on 28th April, 1770? Was it Cook, the crew and the ship Endeavour? Was it the natives? Or something else still deeper below the surface?

On this day Joseph Banks, Cook's botanist, made the following entry in his journal:

These people seemd to be totaly engag'd in what they were about: the ship passed within a quarter of a mile of them and yet they scarce lifted their eyes from their employment; I was almost inclined to think that attentive to their business and deafnd by the noise of the surf they neither saw nor heard her go past them. At 1 we came to an anchor abreast of a small village consisting of about 6 or 8 houses. Soon after this an old woman followed by three children came out of the wood; she carried several pieces of stick and the children also had their little burthens; when she came to the houses 3 more younger children came out of one of them to meet her. She often looked at the ship but expressed neither surprise nor concern. Soon after she lighted a fire and the four Canoes came in from fishing; the people landed, hauled up their boats and began to dress their dinner to all appearance totaly unmovd at us, tho we were within a little more than 1/2 a mile of them. Of all these people we had seen so distinctly through our glasses we had not been able to observe the least signs of Cloathing: myself to the best of my judgment plainly discerned that the woman did not copy our mother Eve even to the fig leaf.¹

They were to stay in the bay for eight days, leaving on Sunday, 6th May, 1770. Colonisation began eighteen years later when the First Fleet sailed into Botany Bay. The bay was then rejected by Captain Arthur Phillip as being an unsuitable harbour.

This discussion is about issues surrounding the notion inscribed in history by Banks when he referred to the natives in Botany Bay as being 'totaly engag'd' and 'totaly unmovd at us'. It also centres around the naming of the bay itself. Cook's first name for the bay was Stingray Bay. Given the fact that much has been discussed and theorised regarding Australia being declared 'Terra Nullius', (empty land), what can be gained from an investigation of these events during the original encounter in the bay. Both viewpoints end up being a simulacrum, a shadowy outline; but a shadowy outline in need of further definition. Underlying these cloudy viewpoints is the dilemma that neither viewpoint fits the paradigm of the other.

---

2Shaw, A. 1987. *Australians A Historical Dictionary.* (Terra Nullius). The land of none is the term used in international law to describe a region which is either uninhabited or in which the inhabitants are thought to have neither developed an organised system of government, nor improved nor cultivated the land. In the later case it has been argued that the indigenous inhabitants have no claim to the territory and it might be seized by a European or other 'civilised nation'. Eighteenth Century Australia was regarded as Terra Nullius. In Cook’s words it was in the pure state of nature: 'the industry of man has nothing to do with any part of it', and:


When the British invaded, they declared Australia 'Terra Nullius', empty land....

In 1837 a House of Commons Select Committee completed hearings about the conditions of native peoples in the British Colonies. Only one person was found to have been denied absolutely the right of prior ownership of their land: the Australian Aborigines. The Select Committee’s report demonstrated that terra nullius, empty land, was an absurdity, a legal fiction.
The name 'Botany Bay' became concrete when inscribed on the map itself and would go on to generate its own mythologies. The journal entries and the name Stingray are left to oscillate between cloudy viewpoints, when in fact they require analysis, as they refer more to initial, immediate and experiential responses. Banks' initial response was to describe the Aboriginals as 'unmoved'. Cook's initial response was to call the bay 'Stingray'. These were first responses and therefore hold value for analysis. They are not camouflaged with the complex and clouded histories that were associated with the actual colonisation of Australia.

The discussion is about erasure, the erasure of the Aboriginals and the erasure of the name. It's also an analysis about the place Botany Bay and how its history can act as a metaphor for a consideration on difference. For this reason I will argue the Bay and an analysis of its present modified landscape along with an examination of the genesis of its name provides a valuable resource in coming to terms with change.

The aim in centreing this work around the first communications in Botany Bay is not an effort to absolve any responsibility for the genocide that later occurred to the Aboriginal culture. Also, it's not a romantic or nostalgic yearning for a re-running of a different history. Its aim is to explore these issues of viewpoint, difference and erasure from a personal position in an effort to gain more understanding. Does Australian culture have an invisible lesion as a result of its relationship to the Aboriginal culture?
One might conclude that from the Aboriginals' point of view the oscillating interpretations of "totaly unmovd", and "totaly engag'd" refer to an invisibility of the explorers in the bay. This interpretation rotates and then refers to an invisibility that was to partake in the decimation of the Aboriginal culture.
CHAPTER 1: UNMOVED
The recurring word Banks uses - 'tally' (totally engag'd, totally unmoved), in explaining the Aboriginals' behaviour generates and accelerates the idea of a possible invisibility - they were not just unmoved but 'tally' so, inferring that they carried on as if nothing had changed and that the ship was invisible to them. Another factor of the idea of invisibility is that Banks' observation was based on his use of a 'glass' - a telescope to observe the landscape and people¹. This magnification generates an image on the glass loaded with the idea of a more reliable truth. Optically it merges the background (the landscape) with the subject². The sense of distance between the two is condensed. As the trees and landscape are unmoved, so are the people, they merge. In observing the Aboriginals through a telescope the image Banks observes and the behaviour of the Aboriginals he thus describes is one of inaccurate perspective. On one level the actual optical perspective inherent in the image actually flattens and condenses any sense of distance between the observed (the Aboriginals) and the landscape behind them. His description is influenced by the modified image illuminated on the glass of the telescope. On another level the telescope with its resultant circular framed image transmits the image in a time scale dependent on the period of time the observer actually looks through the glass. This is not a real-time perspective and is dependent on one hand on the observer's diligence and on the other on the cultural baggage carried by the observer that affect interpretations. This baggage was mainly Banks' framework of scientific empiricism. The distant

¹Banks quoted in Introduction: .... 'of all these people we had seen so distinctly through our glasses (telescope) we had not been able to observe the least signs of clothing.'
²With telescopic/telephoto lens² a visual condensation of space occurs in the image. The subject focussed upon and the background appear closer than they actually are.
image magnified and its associated power had no connections or links to a possibility of an understanding of Aboriginal culture. The observations reported by Banks emanated from his position in the Newtonian-based system of Western science and its framework of classification, difference, and mathematics.

To contrast life going on as normal with what we imagine would be the alien strangeness of a ship in the bay, poses questions.

The reactions of the Aboriginals did not fit in with previous encounters in the Pacific. This report was of a passiveness and not a territorially aggressive stance. Their behaviour seemed to be unpredictable. Paul Carter in his book The Road to Botany Bay comments on this fact:

The Aboriginals, for instance, were not physically invisible, but they were culturally so, for they eluded the cause and effect logic that make the workings of history plain to see. They did not share history's celestial viewpoint. Unlike ships at sea, their movements were unpredictable.

Do Banks' comments actually refer to the idea that the Aboriginals didn't mind them being there? Were they seen as visitors who lived on the sea? In this case they would sail out as they sailed in; without effect.

---

In describing the Aboriginals in *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes states:

... they had no notion of private property, but they were intensely territorial.\(^5\)

In fact this tribe at Botany Bay were intensely territorial, as they did not understand Aboriginal languages fifty miles from this area.\(^6\)

The aspect of scientific rigour, required of Banks in the documentation of plants tends to lend weight to his observations. This rigour, in relation to his description, is connected to the fact that it is the scientist's job to analyse life as it is, unaffected. This is much like observing birds or animals from a camouflaged hide. Banks 'unmovd', renders the people with the plants.

An aspect of Aboriginal mythology and culture is discussed in the book *Explorers of the Southern Sky, A History of Australian Astronomy*. The authors explain a fundamental difference in the two cultures as they meet:

---


\(^6\)ibid, p.10. Robert Hughes describes this fact here, in describing the Iora Tribe. The Tarawal Tribes' territory began on the south shore of Botany Bay and this is the location we are discussing. Hughes is comparing these tribes to inland tribes who traded along 1,000 mile routes. Compared to these inland tribes, the Iora and Tarawal were provincial.

Like the Newtonian-based system of Western science, it (Aboriginal culture) represented an attempt to construct a view of the Universe as an ordered and unified system, but in most ways it was fundamentally different. It was relational rather than mathematically-based, and it was concerned with similarity rather than with difference, with synthesis rather than analysis, with symbiosis rather than separation.8

The authors go on to discuss Western science's difficulty in analysing a culture at odds with it:

Their beliefs show us (the Aboriginals) as no other existing culture can, how natural phenomena were assimilated and understood without recourse to the objective measurement of time, distance or quantity. In the process, Aboriginal astronomy also lends support for the view of many anthropologists that the findings of Western science are not culture-free knowledge, which is universally and necessarily true, but rather the product of particular assumptions inherent in a technological culture.9

Joseph Banks fitted this paradigm. His reports regarding the Aboriginals were not scientifically rigorous, while the Endeavour voyage was fundamentally concerned with discovery. The flowering of Western science in the eighteenth century, during the period known as the Enlightenment, was based on the notion that Nature was orderly, measurable and comprehensible, an assumption which we have inherited as being so self-evident as to be almost beyond question. Nothing epitomised these values so clearly as the British and French voyages of discovery to the South Pacific, of which the most famous were those of Captain James Cook.

---

8 ibid, p.7.
9 ibid, p.8.
Perhaps from the Aboriginal point of view there were similarities. They were observing the same species - humans; their ship was made from the same material as their canoes - wood. Was it the space in the landscape, the sea between the two, that allowed the Aboriginals to be 'unmoved', to fish and prepare their food? Within this space was the notion of time, the time it would take to move across the water; this knowledge was a powerful intuition within them. Their main food source was from the sea and they fished from canoes. Robert Hughes points out they had a history connected to the sea. In explaining how the first Australians came from Asia using eyeball navigation and island hopping, he writes:

But the moment when the first man stepped ashore from his frail chip of a canoe on the north eastern coast of Pleistocene Australia should rightly be seen as one of the hinges of human history, it was the first time Homo sapiens had ever colonised by sea.10

This activity is estimated to have occurred more than 40,00011 years prior to the time we are discussing.

Were the Aboriginals ambivalent at this time, being without cultural notions of what possible motives this ship in the bay might symbolise?

---

11 In September, 1996 (when this paper was submitted), an extremely significant archeological find was made in the Northern Territory. It is yet to be fully verified, but would change the figure of 40,000 to 176,000 years. (Sydney Morning Herald, 21 September, 1996.) p.1.
In the text of Banks' journal the observer (Banks) is implied to be less visible than the observed, therefore representing the privileged viewpoint of the empirical analyst or hunter. The observer's implied invisibility in the text gives weight to an interpretation of the Aboriginals' invisibility. The unspecific and cloudy nature of the terms 'totaly unmovd' and 'totaly engag'd' provided the platform on which the Aboriginals were rendered invisible. They are portrayed in a sparse state. Their hunting, gathering and survival skills are overpowered by the notion of the observer's invisibility.

No description or analysis is made that relates to or engenders further enquiry into the Aboriginal culture. In Banks' text they are simply 'totaly unmovd'.

Aboriginal astronomy however can provide clues, as it has direct links with their mythology and legends, which in turn support and sustain their culture. A discussion of astronomy and the notions of 'viewpoint', and 'observation' by the Aboriginal culture shed another possible light on Banks' description. That light is the notion of human beings as equal partners with the world around them. The Aboriginals were dependent entirely on the natural world and survival was the dominating influence. Their mythology supported this. The authors of *Explorers of the Southern Sky* describe:

The legends served this purpose - integrating a potentially alien Universe into the moral and social order of the tribe by "humanising" species and natural objects and ascribing to them behaviour patterns and motivations that accorded with those of the tribal unit.
.... it engendered confidence ... about the place of human beings in the Universe, not as superior creatures but as equal partners .... it created respect for the inanimate as well as the animate, since all things partake of the same spiritual identity as human beings

Space and time was not measured by the Aboriginals. Was this aspect of their culture relevant to their behaviour, being reported by Banks as 'unmovd'? Banks' viewpoint was heavily loaded with these same structures of measurement of space and time, in fact these factors were the very purpose of their journey. Astronomy and the Aboriginals' perceptions and interpretation of the stars provides further understanding of their viewpoint:

In the first place, traditional Aboriginal culture paid no attention to two of the most basic concepts of Western science, numeracy and temporality. The Aboriginals made no measurements of space or time .... Fundamentally they observed the stars not out of scientific curiosity, or out of an interest in the stars for their own sake, but for essentially pragmatic reasons. Either they attempted to discover predictive correlations between the position of the stars and other natural events important to the survival of the tribe - the availability of particular foods or the onset of particular weather conditions - or they derived a system of moral guidance and education in tribal lore, a function equally necessary to preserve the tribe's identity

---

13 ibid, p.9.
The Aboriginals had a mythical framework that supported the idea of no separation between themselves and everything else in the environment. They considered themselves to be an integral part of Nature.

The meaning of the stars and everything else in the environment, was neither self-evident nor independent of the observer; rather it depended on the degree of initiation into tribal law that elucidated the links between tribal customs and natural phenomena. Without this knowledge the individual was disoriented and powerless in an alien Universe\textsuperscript{14}.

What role did this aspect of unity with other phenomena and landscape have in explaining the notion Banks had of them going about their activities 'unmovd' by the Endeavour's presence? They were only explained as 'unmovd' as long as the crew remained on the sea. It is not possible to discuss the subtleties and meanings of Aboriginal mythology and how it affected their behaviour at this time, however it is possible to make clear the differences of 'object' and 'observer' for each culture.

The Endeavour expedition and its position as observer within the framework of Newtonian science is explained by the authors of *Explorers of the Southern Sky*.

Within the framework of Newtonian science, the observer is regarded as independent of, and distinct from, the object observed and this object, in turn, is uninfluenced by the observer. Hence, the relationship between physical objects can be validly expressed in mathematical terms that remain true irrespective of the observer.\textsuperscript{15}

And in describing the Aboriginales:

\ldots \text{they did not conceive of themselves as observers separated from an objectified nature, but rather as an integral part of that Nature} \textsuperscript{16}.

The words Banks uses, 'totally engag'd' and 'totaly unmovd', can also imply possibilities concerning the 'observed'. The first is that the Aboriginales were not territorial, as discussed earlier. Their described behaviour could be interpreted as ambivalent to any notion of it being their land and territory. The second is that their behaviour was intentional, that they actually meant to be observed and that this behaviour of hunting, gathering and eating was a territorial signifier for the explorers. The Aboriginales had keen eyesight and the ship certainly was visible to them. The invisibility described in the text marks its implied reverse. By describing the Aboriginales as a passive part of the landscape itself, Banks' text under-estimates the sophistication before him. It is invisible, but it is there.

This convergence of the Aboriginal people as part of the landscape, but barely in it continued after the First Fleet arrived in 1788, and provided the platform for genocide.

\textsuperscript{15}ibid, p.19.  
\textsuperscript{16}ibid, p.19.

With the Aboriginals in it, the (Australian) story .... is a story of theft, dispossession and warfare, of massacre and resistance. It is a story every bit as rapacious as that of the United States, Spanish America, and colonial Africa and Asia. It is, above all, a political story.\(^{17}\)

Pilger goes on to say,

a faintly heroic tale of white man against nature, of 'national achievement' devoid of blacks, women and other complicating factors\(^{18}\).

Also it was to reflect in the way that Australian landscape was portrayed visually and thus mythologise Australian identity:

This in turn continued the myth of an empty land. Ian Burn discussed this in a lecture to students in 1993:

The social construction of the Landscape also excluded values which might reflect how aboriginal people used and understood the Land. The European conventions of landscape painting were alien to, and could not accommodate, the symbolic and ontological complexity of Aboriginal relations to the land, for example: the idea of the landscape as a constellation of separate and specific sacred sites. The expression 'white belonging' included a possessing of the land (even in a spiritual sense), which conversely entailed a dispossessing or displacement of the Aboriginal attachment to the land.\(^{19}\)


\(^{18}\)Ibid, p.31.

Later in the same day that Banks made his observations in Botany Bay, Cook and a party set foot on the shore. The telescope was the device that partook in a rendering that was to imply invisibility a little earlier. The gun was the device that wielded the power and effected a passage on to the land. Banks writes:

... hoping that as they regarded the ships coming in to the bay so little they would as little regard our landing. We were however mistaken, for as soon as we approached the rocks two of the men came down upon them, each armed with a lance of about 10 feet long and a short stick which he seemed to handle as if it was a machine to throw the lance. They call'd to us very loud in a harsh sounding language of which neither of us or Tupia understood a word, shaking their lances and menacing, in all appearance resolv'd to dispute our landing to the utmost tho they were but two we 30 or 40 at least. In this manner we parley'd with them for about a quater of an hour, they waving us to be gone, we again signing that we wanted water and that we meant them no harm. They remain'd resolute and a Musquet was fired over them, the Effect of which was that the Youngest of the two drop'd a bundle of lances on the rock at the instant in which he heard the report; he however snatch'd them up again and both renew'd their threats and opposition. A Musquet loaded with small shot was now fird at the Eldest of the two who was about 40 yards from the boat; it struck him on the legs but he minded it so very little so another was immediately fird at him; on this he ran up to the house about 100 yards distant and soon returned with a shield. In the meantime we had landed on the rock. He immediately threw a lance at us and the young man another which fell among the thickest of us but hurt nobody. 2 more musquets with small shot were then fird at them on which the Eldest threw one more lance and then ran away as did the other.20

So the telescope and the text in their way rendered an invisibility as the gun did even more effectively. As the telescope condenses space, the gun does too. When the trigger is pulled the effect is felt at seemingly the same moment. The Aboriginals were culturally invisible and then physically so.

Earlier in the day when the aboriginals were reported as 'unmovd' they had not had experience of the gun and its power. Was this why they were able to be reported as unmovd at this point in history? What is evident from Banks' journal entries regarding the landing is a steadfast and brave stand-off by the out-numbered Aboriginals.

There are elements that connect the two devices - the gun and the telescope. One element is the space, the condensed space, between user and subject. This space and distance in the case of the telescope as I have discussed creates a visual merging, and a flattening of image. No zone in which to experience the aura of the other is possible. The space condensed renders a surface truth, a facade.

In the case of the gun, it explodes and is audibly shocking. Its bullet is invisible and space remains visibly constant (unmagnified). To consider the notion of the invisibility of the bullet to a culture who had no knowledge of the gun can shed light on 'difference' itself and of their unknown perceptions.
Botany Bay's initial history and its subsequent rendering in the text was thus used as a ground for the decimation of the Aboriginal culture. The three activities, looking, writing and shooting render emptiness. So the act of a magnified viewing, a viewing that merged the landscape and the people, and the shots of the gun with a written account loaded with imperial ambition render the Aboriginals 'unmoved', and not any more there than the trees.

The telescope's image, with its condensed perspective and the fact that the Aboriginals did not know they were being observed intimately allowed Banks to inscribe them in the terms 'totally unmoved'. Australia later was able to be described as an empty land.

John Pilger describes the first use of the gun by an Englishman on Australia's west coast.

William Dampier, the first English navigator and explorer to 'discover' Australia shot dead an Aborigine as he came ashore.  

The gun was also used (with smallshot) in Botany Bay to inflict pain and render the Aboriginals 'gone'.

In describing the Aboriginals (after convict colonisation) John Pilger states:

... they were curious, not hostile; they led the strangers to water and waited patiently for them to leave.

---

22 Ibid, p.31
This notion of 'curious and not hostile' in some ways connects with the scientific definition of the Stingray. The species of Stingray that was found in Botany Bay is described as

.... normally inquisitive rather than aggressive\textsuperscript{23}.

Stingray Bay was Cook's first name for the bay.

CHAPTER TWO: WORK
"Bound From My Fathers Boat, Botany Bay"/"Stingereeo"
Detail from installation in the exhibition "Sydney
Photographed", Curated by Linda Michael.
The installations titled 'Bound From My Fathers Boat, Botany Bay' and 'Stingeree' evolved from a process, using photography to record explorations of sites, around Sydney. Middle Head, (north of the harbour) and Botany Bay, (south of the harbour) were the main sites. My aim was to examine ideas surrounding a 'sense of place'. During this process I came across the following statement written in chalk on a relic gun emplacement at Middle Head:

Fly without wings, the Heart is the
Hub of all Sacred Places
Go there and Roam

This phrase became a basis for the series 'Roam', which considered relationships of cultures, the landscape, self and change, embodied in a sense of place and the memory of place. A collection of colour slides taken by my father provided a source for these explorations. These photographs, taken in the 1950's included portraits of myself in various local landscapes. From these initial photographic site documentations I went on to produce works in which photographic images on transparencies were placed between glass and used to project images onto sandstone, the light source for which was the sun. These constructions and projections were then photographed on large-format film, and large scale colour prints made. During this period I also developed ideas and a sculptural site work with

---

1 Anonymous, 1990. (I was later to meet by chance Frances Zirkler who had written the quote in chalk. She told me it derived from Indian spiritual mythology but she had added the 'Fly without Wings' herself.)

2 4 inch x 5 inch film was used in a view camera creating high resolution images.
transparencies suspended over water. The idea in both of these was to let nature set some of the terms of the working process. The sun again acted as the light source creating reflections of the illuminated image on the water surface. The resultant image affected by wind, water, light and importantly the observers' viewpoint. As the viewer moved in the landscape surrounding these works the image changed in intensity and perspective. I also produced in this series a sandstone, glass and photo-media based sculpture titled 'Omphalos'. This work was based around the 'Roam' quote I mentioned earlier. The title 'Roam' refers to a process of moving in the landscape (an endeavour to examine an unsystematic process of observation and production). Its random and spontaneous connotations refer to a geographic and cultural enquiry. The use of photography is an integral part of this process.

The seed for the 'installation 'Bound' was a colour photograph, a Kodachrome slide, taken of me standing in front of the Captain Cook monument at Kurnell, Botany Bay. This picture was taken by my father in the 1950's. I returned to this monument and began to research the area. Botany Bay is geographically wide and many areas of the shoreline are 'out of bounds' to the land-based observer. The dock areas at Port Botany are marked 'Restricted Area' and a circular area around Phillip Bay is marked 'Prohibited Quarantine Area'. These demarcations appear both on the map and on signage in the bay. These restrictions are for

---

3Omphalos. Conical stone at Delphi supposed to be the central point on earth; centre, hub.
4Kodachrome. The Kodak process for producing images in a slide (reversal) form.
marine craft and there is no access by land. The third airport runway was under construction at the time, a political 'hot potato', with its ramifications of further ecological damage and noise. Much of the shoreline has some form of development or industry. 'Being there' was part of an examination of the histories and mythologies that surround the name, the bay itself, and events during Cook's eight day stay there in 1770. I used my father's small aluminium boat from which I photographed most of the shoreline of Botany Bay.

The viewpoint I chose was close to the landmass, but importantly, it was apart from it. A viewpoint parallel with the shoreline was maintained and each image contains the elements water, land and sky. Paul Carter comments on these elements:

... and on the sea-land metaphor -- its power to figure forth the nature of the explorers experience lay, in fact, in its very lack of originality. From Homer onwards, the metaphorical intercourse of land and sea has been conventional. But the likeness in difference felt in contemplating the sea as land-like, the land as sea-like, goes deeper than this. It is rooted phenomenologically in our most primitive sensations of earth and water and of their common heritage in the wind-filled sky. If at times the sea promises an ease of passage impossible on land, at other times it seems disastrously flat, depressed, pointless.

The sub-text to the title 'Roam', and 'Bound From My Fathers Boat, Botany Bay' is a meditation on paternity; on different kinds of paternity. My father's Kodachrome slide (portrait) of me at Botany Bay was a seed, as I mentioned earlier. I grew up in Sydney and

---

it is my present home. The area I was born in, Hornsby is north of the harbour. I had not been on Botany Bay prior to 'Bound's and virtually had no geographical experience of it.

Whilst photographing a section of shoreline that was natural bushland I had an experience that connects to the paternal subtext. This experience was triggered by the sight of a hut constructed out of timber logs on the shore. Why did this brief experience of seeing this hut resonate so strongly? Was it a shelter, a construction made from the 'botany' of Botany Bay? Was it a notion that perhaps Aboriginals still lived here? I was not able to explore this structure at close quarters. Gaston Bachelard offers some clues to my reaction:

These virtues of shelter are so simple, so deeply rooted in our unconscious that they may be recaptured through mere mention, rather than minute description. Here the nuance bespeaks the colour. A poet's word, because it strikes true, moves the very depths of our being.7

In describing a passage from Henri Bachelin's book, Le serviteur6, Bachelard says:

The hut appears to be the taproot of the function of inhabiting. It is the simplest of human plants the one that needs no ramifications in order to exist. Indeed, it is so simple that it no longer belongs to our memories - which at times are too full of imagery - but to legend; it is a centre of legend.9

---

6Work began on 'Bound' in 1993.
6The Poetics of Space. New York. p.30.)
6l'espace, 1958.
The point Bachelard makes referring to the hut as 'the simplest of human plants' perhaps cohorts with the idea of a 'hut tree' being part of the botany of the bay.

Bachelard in discussing the hut finally says:

And although geographers may bring back photographs of hut villages from their travels in distant lands, our legendary past transcends everything that has been seen, even everything that we have experienced personally. The image leads us on towards extreme solitude. The hermit is alone before God. .... the hut can receive none of the riches "of this world". It possesses the felicity of intense poverty; indeed, it is one of the glories of poverty; as destitution increases it gives us access to absolute refuge.10

I did not bring back photographs of hut villages from my survey of Botany Bay. What I did endeavour to do was to look, document and seek clues to more meaning regarding the cultural collision that took place there. To contemplate the landscape juxtaposed with the mythology and history of the place.

In the physical work itself - I produced two scrolls each one metre wide by thirty metres long, containing 116 photographs of the shoreline. An aim was to have these photographs in a unified form, and to dictate somewhat a sequence and multiple viewing.

10ibid, p.32.
The original site for the installation of this work ('Bound') was the foyer of a public building; the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney. The idea of creating an installation in a public area, and in this case in a position where many people have to pass each day was an element in the development of 'Bound'. The work can be experienced while the viewer walks.

The work 'Bound' evolved into an installation titled 'Stingeree'. This work used a cyanotype photographic process. It is a summary of the Botany Bay Survey and Research. It concerns the need to acknowledge the invisibility of viewpoint. Carter describes this fact:

> What we see is what the first comers 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 facts that where we stand and how we go in history: this we do not see.

---

11 Stingeree. The name Stingeree refers to a small, very young stingray. One of these was used in a photogram cyanotype image, and was part of the installation.
12 Cyanotype Print. Invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842, the cyanotype was low-cost permanent print made by exposing a negative against paper prepared by soaking it in a solution of ammonium-citrate of iron and potassium ferricyanide, drying it in the dark and exposing by contact printing in daylight. After washing in water, a print on paper revealed an image of insoluble Prussian blue on a light ground. The selection of this method of image making was due to the process and effect required to produce an immediate image - not to deal with a synthesis of intermediate steps and processes.
The cyanotype prints in this installation are on lightweight paper, and are unframed. No element in the work is enlarged or reduced. The entire set of negatives of the Botany Bay survey in 'Bound' are exposed same-size, creating proofs. A stingray, the same species as caught in Botany Bay in 1770 is also exposed in a photogram\textsuperscript{14} process creating its shape in silhouette.

\textsuperscript{14}Photogram. A photographic print made without a camera. The image is produced by placing objects upon light sensitive paper which registers their shapes during exposure. The selection of this method was due to the process and effect required to produce an immediate image - not to deal with a synthesis of intermediate steps and processes.
'Bound/Stingeree'
Installation in the exhibition 'Sydney Photographed', curated by Linda Michael.
Detail 'Bound/Stingeree'.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
CHAPTER 3: STINGRAY
Detail, (work-process), 'Bound/Stingaree'. 1994-96.
A large degree of speculation, hearsay, and confusion surrounds the naming of the bay. The official record of the journey, *The Endeavour Journal* was published in London in 1773 by John Hawkesworth⁴, but in 1771 an anonymous account was published which included the use of the name Stingray Harbour. Carter discusses conspiracy theories, censorship issues and anonymous scribes which surface in the responsibility for the change in name. However most debates have been centred around the change, and not the names themselves.

The name 'Stingray' today is quite invisible, its initial erasure and the subsequent debates surrounding it have been dominated by the mythology that developed around the name 'Botany Bay'. This mythology will be discussed later in this chapter.

In discussing responsibility for the name change Paul Carter writes:

> 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 the coast, 'Coste des Herbaiges', thereby conspiring in Britain's imperial ambitions?²

Carter goes on to discuss the historical writer James Bonwick's speculations on John Hawkesworth's role:

---

¹The official record of the journey was published 3 years after. Hawkesworth, J, *An Account of the Voyages undertaken by the Order of His Majesty for making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, London, 1773, 3 volumes.
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.³

Carter then goes on to discuss historian Frederick Watson's⁴ view:

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. Watson agrees with Boswick that the motive for altering Cook's 'Stingray Harbour' (or 'Bay' depending on the copy of Cooks journal consulted) to 'Botany Bay' was crudely imperialist. By appropriating the name 'Coste des Herbaïges' in the 1542 Rotz chart Whitehall wanted to leave the world in no doubt as to which coast it claimed.⁵

In Carter's view the more recent historian Beaglehole's explanation is probably definitive. This view is that Cook alone was responsible for the changes. Beaglehole argues that the revisions Cook and his clerk Richard Orton made:

.... reveal a process of conscious revision in which we can discern 'Cooks mind'. We have some indication, writes Beaglehole ....⁶

---

³Ibid, p.10
⁴Watson, Frederick was responsible for carrying on Bonwick's work in compiling the Historical Records of Australia.
⁵Carter, P., 1967. The Road to Botany Bay, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.10
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', became 'Botany Bay'.

Carter explains that Beaglehole's understanding of Cook is 'considerably more sophisticated and sensitive' than other historians' views:

.... not the context of imperial politics but of eighteenth century scientific empiricism.\(^8\)

Beaglehole's view of Cook was of a "genius of the matter" of fact:

He was not semi-mystical, striving as some previous 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 a poetic mind, or the profoundly scientific mind. He was the genius of the matter of fact.\(^9\)

Commenting on Beaglehole's exhaustive detail and the role of the historian, Carter writes:

\(^7\)Carter, P, 1987 The Road to Botany Bay, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.11
\(^8\)ibid, p.12
\(^9\)ibid, p.13
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 lives beyond .... in treating Cooks 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 he asserts it. In this way Cook becomes but another heroic variation on history's universal theme.\textsuperscript{10}

Carter argues that actual analysis of the name diminishes any traditional or topographic justifications, and thus the place - the bay - is taken for granted. An historical event after a physical fact, of minor significance, and therefore suppressing the occasion of discovery.

Carter proposes we take the name in the context of the journal where it occurs.

Then instead of appearing arbitrary, the name emerges as an accurate expression of the experience of travelling.\textsuperscript{11}

Carter argues the name was nothing to do with a notion of Cook honouring botany itself:

In Botany Bay Cook accorded Solander a point, and Banks a cape. Cook first thought of 'Botanists Bay', but afterwards changed 'Botanists' to 'Botany': not, presumably, because he was struck by the platonic grandeur of flower hunting, but by analogy with 'Admiralty'.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, p.13
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p.14
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p.16
Carter explains that this view of how Botany Bay emerged fits well within the image of Cook as the 'genius of the matter of fact'.

Carter argues that to see the name Botany Bay as a characteristic device of travelling, enables us to free the name of its posthumous mythology.

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 ... it discovers its logic in the twin processes of reading and travelling.\(^\text{13}\)

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.\(^\text{14}\)

'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 .... 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, the replacement would still refer only to the particularity of a new journey, a new spatial horizon or orientation.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\)ibid, p.17
\(^{14}\)ibid, p.17
\(^{15}\)ibid, p.17
The Aborigina|\ls had been rendered 'unmovd'; thus implying them to be a part of landscape and botany. They had not been classified and collected like the plants. They were not the physical and scientific evidence attached in the botany books. Cook's journey was to do with exploration and mapping. The act of place naming went hand in hand with this process.

Patrick O'Brian in his book Joseph Banks A Life describes some events in Botany Bay on 5th May, 1770, which provide clues to the naming.

Banks and the men who cut grass for the hardy livestock still surviving on board brought back rich harvest; so did the fishermen, for on the same day Gore beat his previous record of a 239 lb stingray with another of 336 lb, both of them without their guts. Indeed so many and such excellent stingrays were speared in the shallow water as they followed the making tide that the place was very nearly called Sting-Rays Harbour.16

The day he left the bay Cook wrote in his journal, referring to his two botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Charles Solander's rich and varied botanical collecting in the bay:

Sunday 6th (May). In the evening the yawl return'd from fishing having caught two Sting rays weighing near 600 lbs. The quantity of New Plants and ca Mr Banks and Dr Solander collected in this place occasioned my giving it the name of Botany Bay.17

17Ibid, p.129. This is from the surviving pages of the surgeon Monkhouse's journal in The Journals of Captain James Cook (ed. J C Beaglehole), Vol 1, The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1777.
At this point it is clear the name 'Stingray' has been erased, it was not inscribed on the map and as we have discussed, various accounts have been given for its erasure. On sailing out of Botany Bay on 6th May, 1770, Banks goes on to say in his journal:

Went to sea this morn with a fair breeze of wind. The land we saild past during the whole forenoon appeard broken and likely for harbours; in the afternoon again woody and very pleasant. We dind today upon the sting-ray and his tripe: the fish itself was not quite so good as a scate nor was it much inferior, the tripe every body thought excellent. We had with it a dish of the leaves of tetregonia cornuta boiled, which eat as well as spinach or very near it.\(^{18}\)

The stingrays that were caught in the bay (Dasyatis brevicaudata) were very large; huge in fact. An estimated length of over 3-1/2 metres and a width of 2 metres. This species of ray is found on Australia's southern shores, New Zealand and South Africa\(^{19}\).

The inquisitive nature and grand scale of the ray can perhaps provide connections not only to the naming, but to the landscape and indigenous culture of Australia. Was the stingray 'unmovd' as well, and thus an easy catch? The species is explained in 'Sharks and Rays of Australia':

---


\(^{19}\)Last, P, and Stephens, J, 1994, *Sharks and Rays of Australia*, CSIRO, Fisheries and Research Development Corporation, Australia. p.387. This size of the stingray caught in Botany Bay is estimated based on the weight of the stingray Banks noted in his journal (336 lbs without guts).
This ray, which will frequently raise its tail above its back in a scorpion-like fashion when approached, is normally inquisitive rather than aggressive. The stinging spine is large and sharp and is capable of inflicting a severe or potentially fatal wound.\textsuperscript{20}

Various elements partake in creating a mythology surrounding the name and place Botany Bay. The name change and the rejection of the bay as an unsuitable harbour by Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788, were the seeds of this mythology. Phillip writes:

\begin{quote}
It is not possible to lie landlocked with a ship in any part of it; you will always be exposed to the large sea which tumbles in here with an easterly wind.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The word botany, inferring a rich natural environment, is polarised by the unsuitable, unpleasant conditions and post 1770 history.

The erasure of the name and the rejection of the bay were further modified by an association with criminality. This mythology centred on Australia's colonisation as a penal settlement in 1788.

Professor Joan Kerr in her 1992 Art Association of Australia, Franz Philipp Lecture 'Somersaults in the Antipodes', remarks of Botany Bay:

\textsuperscript{20}ibid, p.21.
but the term ‘Botany Bay’ (the place of prisoners, not plants) rapidly signified the criminality of the whole continent in the northern hemisphere and continues to do so. More than 200 years after the first white settlers disembarked at Port Jackson (Governor Phillip having briefly viewed Captain Cook’s Botany Bay site and rejected it), London tabloids still call us ‘Botany Bay convicts’ when our prime minister\textsuperscript{22} touches their queen.\textsuperscript{23}

In eighteenth century Europe and Britain, Botany Bay meant Gaol and a criminal class and still resonates as the focal place of colonisation in Australia.

The alliteration of the two words the ‘Botany’ and ‘Bay’ had also lent itself to ballads and satire. In 1790 in Britain a ballad entitled \textit{Botany Bay: A New Song}\textsuperscript{24} called for more of Britain’s petty criminals to be sent to Botany Bay:

\begin{quote}
.... There's gay powder'd coxcombs
and proud dressy fops,
Who with very small fortunes
set up in great shops,
They'll run into debt with
design ne'er to pay,
They should all be transported
to Botany Bay ....\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22}Ex Prime Minister Paul Keating touched the Queen Elizabeth II, by placing his hand across her back while escorting her during an Australian visit.


\textsuperscript{24}"Botany Bay: A New Song" is in Ballads Collection, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

\textsuperscript{25}Hughes, R. 1987 \textit{The Fatal Shore}, London, Collins Harvill, p.75.
The lightness of another ballad 'Bound for Botany Bay' generated a sing-along notion of the journey. A journey with uncertain consequences.

John Pilger in his book *A Secret Country* describes his childhood memories at Botany Bay in 1951. In referring to the Aboriginals:

> The silhouettes related to no one. They were meant to have 'died off'. Certainly few adults spoke of them as if they existed and anyway, they were not counted, unlike the nations sheep. But they were not invisible.\(^{26}\)

He goes on to state:

> Dump it at La Perouse was an expression .... La Perouse was one of the few Sydney beaches not given an Aboriginal name. Nearby there were Bondi, Tamarama, Coogee and Maroubra. But Count Jean-Francois Gallup de la Perouse was remembered here, on the headland of Botany Bay. In one of history's co-incidences, he had appeared with two ships in Botany Bay on January 26, 1788, just after the arrival of Britain's 'First Fleet' under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip.\(^{27}\)

When the British invaded, they, declared Australia 'Terra Nullius', empty land, and for the purpose of historiography, those who inhabited this 'empty land' did not exist. And not only was such a denial of reality and logic exclusive to the Georgian mind; subsequent generations accepted the nuance that in this empty land the original people were 'dying off'.\(^{28}\)

---

\(^{27}\)ibid p.24  
\(^{28}\)ibid p.25
My argument that Banks' description in 1770 of the Aboriginals as 'unmovd' made them partial or invisible is described and discussed in other terms by John Pilger:

One explanation for the notion of 'empty land' was that the people living in it did not count because they were not really human. They were part of the fauna. The Encyclopaedia Britannica appeared in no doubt about this: Man in Australia is an animal of prey. More ferocious than the Lynx, the leopard, or the hyena, he devours his own species.²⁹

Pilger explains that the link between events in the uncharted past and today remains elusive. He goes on to explain that black cries of anger and anguish were out of place:

in works that celebrated national achievement or catalogued peaceful progress in a quiet continent, while deft scholarly feet avoided the embarrassment of bloodied billabongs.³⁰

The elusiveness of the links to today that Pilger refers to can be further defined by an examination of the first days in Botany Bay where the politics involving invasion began, as quoted in chapter one:

With the Aboriginals written out, the Australian story seems apolitical, a faintly heroic tale of white man against Nature, of 'national achievement' devoid of blacks, women and other complicating factors.³¹

²⁹ibid, p.25.
³⁰ibid, p.30.
³¹ibid, p.31.
The heroic tale of white man against nature, is of white man against black. The Aboriginals were 'nature' from the time they entered the text as 'unmovd'.

The name Botany Bay in the late twentieth century also carries strong connotations of a history of physical and cultural blights. Shelley Kay who grew up on the north shore of Botany Bay writes:

Botany was never pronounced "bot-lan-nee", evocative of natural things, no summoning up images of a genteel profession dedicated to the scientific study of plant life, nor the variety of plant life it was originally named for. Botany Bay was always known as "bott-nee-beigh": it reminded one of aeroplanes, dirty roads, cemeteries, crematoriums, burned out cars, smoke stacks, oil refineries, factories, housing commission estates, lunatic asylums, gaols, scruffy kids, poor migrants and whingeing poms. .... everything Sydney society couldn't cope with went to the North Shore near La Perouse: Aboriginal people, migrants, the poor, the criminal, the sick and mentally ill.32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bond, A.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>A sense of place: exhibition catalogue.</td>
<td>Sydney: University of Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn, I.</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>A landscape is not something you look at but something you look through.</td>
<td>Australian Journal of Art, XII, 31-36.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Gryse, J. &amp; Sant, A. (eds)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Our common ground. A celebration of art, place and environment. Tasmania: Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and Board of Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisler, W.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>The furthest shore. Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook. Victoria, Australia: Cambridge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


CONCLUSION
The faint name 'Stingray' is left lying innocently in the journal. The map itself is the media for moving on and creating history, it set the seed for Botany's blights. The bay itself is wide, open and shallow. The dumping ground for Britain became the dumping ground for the colony. The history of the name with its erasure and the bay's social and industrial development can now perhaps act as a metaphor for a meditation on difference. A metaphor that sheds light on the vast difference in viewpoint of the two cultures that met in the bay. Cook's initial engagement with the sea/landscape refers to the name Stingray. The stingray was eaten by the explorers and thus provided an element to do with their survival. The 'unmovd' Aboriginals had engaged and survived in the landscape for many thousands of years. There's a silence and a blandness at Botany Bay. The sky is the element that is the strongest. Perhaps the bay is a metaphor for the culture and continent itself and the need to acknowledge and move on.

Who or what was invisible when Captain James Cook arrived in Botany Bay?

The notions of invisibility may be explained in terms of an initial implied invisibility of the explorers which then rotates to the notion of an invisibility of the Aboriginals. This rotation and oscillation, 'itself' provides the simulacrum, the shadowy outline. It is concerned with the problem of disengagement. A viewpoint not only separated by sea, but by ignorance.
The oscillating interpretations of 'totaly unmovd' also refers to the generation of the myth presently relevant to perceptions of Aboriginal culture - invisibility.

There is a definite poetic beauty about the words 'unmolv'd' and 'engag'd', but Banks was no 'fly on the wall'. From the moment they had sailed into the bay perceptions were cloudy.

It was a point of white arrival and departure in 1770 and 1788. Today with the airport runway protruding into the bay, its still about arriving and leaving. Now from the modern viewpoint of the sky, the shape of the bay itself is very much like a huge stingray.