Votre voyage vous mène quelque part, mais déjà tout le monde y a été avant vous. Il n'y a rien de nouveau, rien à découvrir, l'esprit de pionnier n'est qu'un rêve chimérique.

Ces pensées se firent jour en moi lors de notre descente de Gulaga (Mt Dromedary), pas loin de Bermagui, sur la côte de l'extrême sud de la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud. Pourtant, c'est l'esprit pionnier lui-même qui a animé la plupart des récits en anglais (langue colonisatrice par excellence) esquissant les paysages australiens que nous arpentons aujourd'hui. Comment ce fantôme peut-il ressurgir dans nos discours ? Il se glisse dans des figures rhétoriques épuisant la primauté, la linéarité, la nouveauté, et enfin, la re-familiarisation ...

On dit qu'à l'arrivée des Britanniques à bord de leurs navires, les Aborigènes ont cru apercevoir des fantômes 'blancs' incarnant leurs ancêtres de retour parmi eux. Auraient-ils pu passer pour des colons ou des pionniers ? Que nenni ! Ces blancs étaient des ancêtres connus depuis toujours, tout comme l'était le capitaine Cook, identifié au Dieu Lono à Hawaï, parce que son navire venait de la bonne direction et qu'il débarqua à la saison propice.

Les voyageurs blancs pensent de manière linéaire, à l'image des routes qu'ils comptent construire et parcourir un jour : les histoires qu'ils racontent sont chronologiques. Il existe cependant d'autres options parmi lesquelles être présent de façon multiple : se trouver dans l'environnement de quelqu'un, mais demeurer ailleurs. Peut-être que d'autres personnes se sont rendues là d'où vous venez également. Une fois chez eux, ils vous disent qu'ils sont déjà passés chez vous.

Et la nouveauté ? Ne sont-ils jamais nouveaux, ces lieux aborigènes tant vénérés, si singuliers, si chargés de sens et de puissance ? Les liens ancestraux transforment le déplacement d'un lieu à un autre en pélerinage. Tout le monde y est allé avant vous, voilà l'avantage. L'endroit est utilisé à force de frottage incessant, les peintures constamment retouchées avec de l'ocre fraîche, chaque saison ; les litanies poétiques célébrent le paysage, les pas de danse martèlent le sol poussiéreux et l'endurcissent, la chair des initiés est incisée, le sang s'écoule sur le sable.

Le pélerinage et le rituel ne sont pas des expériences modernistes de voyage. Ils sont certainement devenus des événements néo-traditionnels, grâce à la vague de tourisme sur les sites où jadis les rites et les guerres éclataient. De nos jours, on peut observer que les grands sacrifices rattachés aux événements historiques sont arrachés à la linéarité, étoffés et réactualisés par des événements culturels qui nécessitent l'intervention rituelle de la collectivité. Ainsi l'histoire devient culture. Les rituels sont toujours pratiqués à Gulaga. Il faut être invité pour y participer ; là, les hôtes découvrent que le concept de 'nouveauté' ne peut s'appliquer à la situation.

Et le capitaine Cook ! Son voyage a laissé des empreintes protéiformes dans le paysage culturel de l'Australie. Nous étions en route pour Gulaga pour effectuer des recherches sur le capitaine Cook. Notre problématique était la suivante : comment un événement singulier du passé — son débarquement en Australie — pouvait-il devenir intemporel et entièrement culturel ? Cet épisode, gravé dans l'imaginaire du peuple, semble se pérenniser dans leur vie quotidienne. Debbie Rose, anthropologue, nous a dirigé vers Gulaga. Comme Cook, elle a exploré les lieux avant nous, pour d'autres raisons, bien entendu. Le capitaine Cook incarnerait, pour ainsi dire, la figure emblématique du pionnier : en naviguant le long de la côte méridionale, en 1770, il contempla longue...

Illustration: Formation rocheuse symbolisant la Mère à Gulaga.

ment Gulaga dont la silhouette bosselée lui rappela un animal familier. Dans son journal, la montagne devint le Mont Dromadaire (Mt Dromedary). C'est ainsi que l'esprit pionnier se re-familiarise :

A six heures nous nous trouvâmes devant une grande montagne non loin de la côte. A cause de sa forme, j'eus l'idée de la nommer le Mont Dromadaire. En bas de cette montagne, la côte s'étire en pointe : je la baptisai ainsi le Sommet Dromadaire. Au-dessus se dresse un monticule pointu.

Il est possible que le peuple Yuin ait fait partie des acteurs de cette scène. Peut-être avait-il observé le passage de l'Endeavour du haut de la montagne lors d'une visite sur leurs sites sacrés. Et brusquement, les voilà perchés sur un chameau : la transformation magique commence.

Vers la fin des années 90, Debbie Rose est intervenue auprès des Yuin pour empêcher la déforestation de leur montagne sacrée. Elle a fait la connaissance de Yuin Kelly — portant le même nom que celui de la tribu — celle qui est notre guide sur la montagne aujourd'hui. Dans son nouveau livre, Reports from a Wild Country, Debbie parle de Mal Dibden — membre d'une vieille famille d'éleveurs du coin — devenu militant écologique :

Mal nous a conduits, Pete et moi, sur la montagne, et nous avons passé une journée à traîner derrière lui avec notre appareil photo et notre magnétophone. Tandis qu'il, sans sandales, se déplaçait, agile comme une gazelle, jetant au loin les sangsues collées à ses pieds, tout en nous indiquant des lieux et des arbres particuliers qu'il avait observés au fil du temps.

J'annonce à Yuin que «je connais Debbie Rose», qu'on est «bons copains» ; je tisse un lien dans la toile de la répétition. «Debbie Rose!» me dit-elle, «Elle est formidable, elle a sauvé cette montagne menacée par les bûcherons». Quant aux familles Dibden et Bates, Yuin se montre plus réserve à leur égard : elles ont fait travailler ses aieux, sans relâche, pendant des semaines, à défricher la terre d'en bas, à préparer le terrain pour les bêtes d'élevage, tout ça «en échange d'un bol de soupe et d'une promesse», promesse jamais tenue, probablement liée à un lopin de terre.

Je vérifie auprès de Yuin si Cook n'a vraiment pas débarqué ici, lui qui a nommé Gulaga, 'dromadaire'. «Non, il était de passage.» Et Gulaga, c'est une femme enceinte allongée sur le dos. «Mais il a fait mouche ailleurs. Là-haut, au Queensland, il donna le nom des 'Trois Frères', la dénomination que nous utilisons pour désigner ces montagnes.» En outre, lorsqu'Cook naviguait à bord de l'Endeavour, il ignorait l'existence du Rocher du Chameau situé sur la plage, là-bas. Elle le pointe du doigt, puis m'informe que c'était le chameau que Jésus avait abandonné sur les lieux, il y a 2000 ans, à la même époque où il avait marché sur le Lac Wallaga. Jésus était là, bien avant Cook.

Tout d'un coup, devant nous, sur la pente raide, se trouve une camionnette en travers de la route, les roues embourbées dans les ornières. On s'arrête, lorsque Bronwyn, une femme d'un certain âge, apparaît du dessous de la camionnette où elle entassait des pierres et des bouts de bois pour
caler les roues. Elle avait sans doute passé la nuit ici. On réussit à débloquer son véhicule en le poussant. La voie est libre mais Bronwyn souhaite poursuivre le chemin avec nous. La nuit entière passée dans une camionnette avec seulement une banane et un litre de lait n’a fait qu’attiser son envie de faire le tour de Gulaga.

L'atmosphère est propice à la conversation : Bronwyn avait acheté la camionnette de Harry Little, par l’intermédiaire d’une mécano nommée Phillie, figure notoire parmi les Abo-rigènes car elle retape leurs voitures : «Personne d’autre ne le fera pour eux, tu vois, elle ira même les chercher et les dépanner si leur voiture est foutue.»


Le cousin de Yuin, animateur de profession, a joué du didjeridoo dans le monde entier. Un jour, un physicien et un seismologue l’ont rencontré pour enregistrer sa musique. Ils conclurent que le son du didjeridoo reproduisait la symphonie cosmique des astres en rotation.

Cette fois-ci, nous n’avons pas pu danser sur la montagne pour faire vrombir les sphères du monde animées par le rythme lancinant du didjeridoo. La danse entraîne le rapprochement des sphères. C’est ce que Debbie Rose nous a dit à propos de son initiation nocturne à la danse indigène dans le Territoire du Nord :

Chaque représentation est différente. L’essentiel est que le spontané et le contingent peuvent toujours se former en schémas complexes, schémas pouvant rejoindre la puissance créatrice du monde.

C’est donc là que s’achève mon aventure à Gulaga. En tant que visiteur, votre présence est éphémère et votre image disparaît du paysage comme de la mémoire. La montagne est la scène, le miroir, où se reflètent les problèmes régionaux et mondiaux. On pourrait croire que la montagne attire ces choses comme un aimant, avec la puissance d’anéantir leur pouvoir temporel.

Peut-être Gulaga cherche-t-elle à nous dire qu’il existe plusieurs lignes temporelles. Cook s’est dirigé vers Gulaga, puis a viré au nord pour instaurer l’Empire britannique à Sydney. À force de se sentir maintes fois attiré par ces endroits magiques, on s’éloigne nécessairement de l’illusion d’être le premier à fouler ces lieux.

> Stephen Muecke

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Gulaga Story

Stephen Muecke

A ficto-critical essay, this narrative of a journey also presents an argument about time, modernity and indigenous versus colonial perceptions of place. The place in question is Gulaga, Mt. Dromedary, on the South Coast of New South Wales to which the author and his family went on a trip. This is the site on the Australian mainland first sighted and named by Captain Cook’s party in 1770. The article performs the idea of multiple travels and stories/histories; this particular site sees Cook’s account intersect with and contradict that of the local Aboriginal people, the Yuin. Neither is given more authority, nor are the Aborigines confined to ancient or timeless tradition. The fictocritical style tries to avoid the tendency to monologism of conventional scholarship and historical accounts. The author brings texts with him on his trip: Cook, the anthropologist Debbie Rose, and new characters met are woven into the script as they function to illustrate indigenous, romantic and spiritual positions. The eternal place of the mountain is set against the ephemera of empire(s) and the New World Order, setting up unresolved contradictions as other strange contingencies are included in the narrative.

You travel to a place and already the whole world has been there before you. There is nothing new, nothing to be discovered, no ‘pioneering spirit’. This is my thought-for-the-day as we are driving down from Gulaga (‘Mt Dromedary’), which lies out of Bermagui on the far South Coast of New South Wales. Yet the spirit of the pioneer is the one that has animated most of the stories told in English, the language of so much colonisation, about the Australian places we travel through. How does this ghost animate our language? It breathes figures of speech through it, figures which include primacy, linearity, novelty and, finally, refamiliarisation.

They say that when the British arrived in their boats, the blackfellas thought they saw pale ghosts. They must have been their ancestors coming back. Not first arrivals, pioneers, how could they be? These whitefellas were
the eternally present ancestors. Just as Cook, coming in to Hawai‘i in the right season and from the right direction, was transformed into Lono.

Travelling whitefellas tend to think in lines, like the roads they eventually build and drive along, like the chronological histories they tell. Yet there are alternatives: being multiply present, for instance, as if by landing up in someone else’s somewhere, you still remain somewhere else. Maybe other people have been where you come from too; you arrive in their place and they tell you they have seen your city or your country. A useful contrast might be gained if one speculates about blackfella modes of travel in their own country, what has inaccurately been designated as ‘nomadism’. Here no-one claims primacy, ‘we were here first’, unless it is something picked up from whitefella habits of locating events on a time-line. Yet what is blackfella time? The ‘everywhen’, says Stanner; ‘abiding events’, says Swain. Could it be that this great travelling civilisation, moving on foot over the whole of the Australian continent, could have nothing to do with the modernist discourses of travel which include not only linearity, but the further tropes and ideas of discovery, exploration, and commodification?

And what of novelty? The places of the Aboriginal world, so singular, so significant and powerful, so intensely loved, are they never new? The ancestral connections make travelling to those places more like pilgrimages. Everyone has already been here before you, that’s what makes the trip worthwhile, the wearing away of the spot with repeated rubbing, the touching up of the paintings with fresh ochre, once a season, the poetic words repeated in that same place, the dancing that pounds and hardens the earth, and finally, the initiates’ flesh cut in that place, and the blood dripping onto the sand.

Pilgrimage and ritual are not modernist travel experiences, but they may have become ‘neo-traditional’ ones with the rise, for instance, of tourism to war-time sites of battle, sites where the massive sacrifices of historical events are wrenched out of linearity and fleshed out and reanimated as cultural events via the ritual participation of the collectivity. History thus balloons out into the multidimensional event structure of culture. There are rituals at Gulaga today, but you have to be invited. And those who are invited to come understand enough not to see the events as novelty.
'On Account of its Figure'

Ah, but Captain Cook, there's a unique time and place in Australian history and culture. We came to Gulaga because of a research project on Captain Cook, investigating how a singular event in the past (his landing in Australia) has become pervasively cultural and timeless. He keeps coming back, he is everywhere, it seems, in our daily lives and popular imaginings. Deborah Bird Rose, the anthropologist, led us to Gulaga too; she and Cook had both been here before, but in different ways of course. Captain Cook, one could say, was a real pioneer, sailing past this south coast in 1770 and seeing the hump-backed Gulaga. For him it repeated something he was familiar with, sort of, so it became Mt Dromedary in his journal. This is the pioneering spirit refamiliarising:

At 6 oclock, we were abreast of a pretty high mountain laying near the shore which on account of its figure, I called Mount Dromedary (Lat$^e$ 36° 18' s, long$^e$ 209° 55' west). The shore underfoot of this mountain forms a point which I have called Cape Dromedary, over which is a peaked hillick.

The Yuin people might have watched his ship from the mountain as they visited their sacred sites up there. Suddenly, they were standing on a camel; now there's a magical transformation for you.

Debbie Rose had come by in the late 1990s to help the Yuin women save their beloved mountain from logging. She met Yuin Kelly—same name as the tribal name—who is our guide on this mountain trip today. Debbie wrote in her new book, Reports from a Wild Country, about Mal Dibden, a local from one of the old dairy farming families, turned into an environmental activist:

Mal took Pete and me up the mountain, and we spent a day straggling along behind him with camera and tape recorder, while he took off his thongs and leaped around as nimble as a goat, picking leaches off his feet, and pointing out to us particular places and trees that he had been visiting and observing for decades.

I'm saying to Yuin that I know Debbie Rose, that she is a good mate of mine, making the connection, a thread in a fabric of repetition. 'Debbie Rose!' she says, 'she's great, she saved this mountain from logging'. But Yuin is reserved about the Dibden and Bates families because they got her old people to clear all the low country around the mountain, working hard for weeks chopping down trees and clearing the land for the dairy cattle, 'on
Stephen Muecke

a pot of soup and a promise’, a promise never fulfilled, it might have had something to do with parcels of land.

So Cook never landed here, I’m checking with Yuin, when he called Gulaga a camel? ‘No, he sailed past. She is a pregnant woman, lying on her back. But he got something else right. Up the coast in Queensland he named the “three brothers”, and that corresponds exactly with what we blacks call it. Also, when Cook sailed by in the *Endeavour* he didn’t know about that “Camel Rock” down here on the beach’. She’s pointing in the direction, and, according to Yuin, Camel Rock was the camel that Jesus left behind when he came to the area 2000 years ago and walked on Lake Wallaga. Jesus had been through here long before Cook.

Driving up the mountain in Yuin’s 4 wheel drive, she had asked Pru to sit up front with her, so the boys and I were in the back, but I could hear the conversation, about red-necks on the council, about the ‘smart-card’ that the government was going to introduce to check Aboriginal people on work-for-the-dole schemes, so they would have no access to cash, about Bonsai (‘little Bush’) who was bringing the New World order that would be here in 2012 or something.

This is truly a global world, I am thinking. I can’t come to the South Coast on a holiday to get away from the newspapers, radio and television giving us the news about the Bonsai and his Deputy Dawg, John Howard. The anthropologist Gregory Bateson, says Debbie Rose (I was reading her chapter again in our hut at Mystery Bay the night before) had the view that pre-industrial people ‘had a much larger vision of their place within the biosphere’ compared with western industrialised and post-industrialised peoples. I don’t know if Yuin is pre-industrial or not, but she’s handling the 4WD pretty well. And certainly things of the world from far and wide are getting folded into her tour-guide talk.

Suddenly up ahead, on the track climbing steeply, a white van is stuck across the road, its wheels embedded in the ruts. We pull up and an elderly lady emerges from underneath where she had been trying to pack sticks and rocks under the wheels. She has been there all night apparently, but she’s cheerful and bright, and introduces herself as Bronwyn, as she brushes the dirt and twigs from her back. We get her out of the fix, with a bit of pushing and tyre-spinning, and we can go on. But she wants to come with us. All night in the cold van with only a banana and a litre of milk, but the tour of Gulaga has her fired up again.

Now the conversation really gets going. She had bought the van off ‘one of your mob, Yuin’, it was Harry Little’s van, (‘was that Jimmy’s brother?’),
via a mechanic called Phillie, a woman who is well known for fixing the local blackfellas' cars, 'no-one else will do it for them you see. She will even come out and get people out of a fix if their car is broken down.'

Bronwyn is from Victoria, but has been searching for a place to spend her last years and has settled on the Narooma area, the most perfect temperate climate in the world, 'Ah but this lantana is something terrible, isn't it', all around here on the mountain. And Yuin has to blame the bell-birds too, they are spreading the lantana seeds everywhere.

More excitement as there are further blockages of the road by fallen trees. Everyone has a theory, even the boys, on how to move the branches, even men start to get a bit more useful and I trim off branches with the saw blade on my Swiss army knife, and do a fair bit of pulling. I venture the observation that Gulaga herself might not want us to go to the top today, and this seems to strike the right sort of cosmic tone, as well as being ingratiatingly clever.

At the clearing at the top we learn that Yuin's totem, and that of her grandfather, is Umburra (wild duck), the name of the Cultural Centre on Wallaga lake, the duck being the shape of the small island in the middle of the Lake. Bermagui is shaped like a seagull's head, look, see down there? I'm waiting for an opportunity to say, 'Not this little black duck', but would Yuin be offended by the identification with Daffy?

The rainbow serpent's tail is the smaller mountain called Najanuga ('Little Dromedary'); some women from the Kimberley came through and recognised it. 'They have the head up there in the Kimberley, so the tail comes out all the way down here. All those old girls got excited when they came here and saw that tail', and Yuin loves it when her own people come through, talking language. After all, thirteen clans from South of Sydney to Canberra looked after this area. Women from around here had to marry out to men in Kempsey, that's a long way away. There is a stone on the north side for the Kempsey mob.

We head off to one side and she clicks her clap sticks six times, for six people, followed by a bit of trill, to warn Gulaga of our arrival. We come to a magnificent collection of granite tors. The first is covered with red lichen. She is the mother, next to her, lower down, is a breast, with fertility powers. You can see the mother's two eyes in lichen after you pass.

Then there is a three stage rock which gave Yuin occasion to discuss the three levels of life: the lowest or underground level is the evil one where you might have bad or violent thoughts, but that is all a part of life. The next one up, the middle one, is where we deal with all the earthly things,
then the top one is the spiritual one, pointed, nothing oppressing it, where all good things reside. 'If only life was like that all the time, eh?'

There is a stone of the mother giving birth, then a field of little baby stones in front of her, then a ‘cocoon’ where the babies grow bigger, then a shark, or seal (it transforms depending which way you look at it). There is also a penis-serpent stone, and finally a massive rock where the mother is giving birth again. 'Change is a really good thing, you know.'

Yuin’s cousin, an entertainer, has played the didge around the world, and a physicist and a seismologist came to see him and recorded the sound. The result, they said, was that it is the same sound the earth and the moon make while turning.

Yuin already heard about the ‘New World Order’ (happening in seven years time) when she was brought up by a Catholic family with fifteen kids in Eden. Now she is saying it will arrive with ‘Bonsai’, when money and time will conspire to reduce everything to their command, money is produced by machines, man-made, she says, so what use is it really?

Yuin’s mother had eight kids, she was the youngest. The others were all fostered out to Nowra and other places. One thing Yuin was grateful for was her mother hiding her when Welfare came around. ‘She put me in the food cupboard, behind the food, but there wasn’t much, flour and pickles and stuff, and there was this little crack between the door I could look out of. Other times she’d send me down the lake when the Welfare came, and when I got there there would be a few other kids there as well! We’d play around.’

‘Then from about ten until I was fifteen I lived in Eden with a big family, they were nice, they talked about love and we all had our chores to do, all that. I left school at fifteen and worked in the cannery taking the bloodline out of the tuna, hard work, eight or nine hours on my feet. But there were too many other people in the house working in that factory, you can imagine what the house smelled like. So when I didn’t want to work there anymore they said you can go back to your mother so that’s how I came back to the reserve at Wallaga, but I felt out of place there.’

She’s telling us this as we sit by the largest tor, the ‘cathedral’ that Gubbo Ted Thomas always brought people to and urged them to collect stones and make a stone cairn, a pyramid, with rocks they would pick up around the site, as one does when one climbs a mountain. Now that he has passed on, Yuin dismantled the pyramid and rearranged the stones in an egg shape, ‘changing the energy a bit’. She reckons she got into trouble for that.
Yuin used to have a job as a postie around our area in Newtown, yeah, up in Sydney, and stayed at a Koori hostel in Leichhardt. Pru remembers her delivering mail, her stocky frame lumbering up Forbes St and her sad bright eyes. She got to know the girls who lived next door, number 40. In those days it was a presbytery, owned by the Catholic church and occupied by a contemplative order of nuns. Now there are students and anarchists living there, all young women. Only the other day they put on a puppet show, a pirate play, with the girl from Seattle playing the accordion, and her friend on the saw violin.

The pirates had heard that someone wanted to sell the sea. ‘You can’t do that, it belongs to everyone!’ So they set out on a voyage of pursuit to kidnap this evil developer who turned out to be the notorious capitalist, Steve Forbes, the flat tax republican and would-be president. He was in Sydney, for the Forbes Global CEO conference at the Opera House. Only $5,000 a head. That’s why they had prepared their play, I guess it was to be street theatre too.

Anyway, the pirate girls enlisted the support of a giant squid and captured Forbes, amid many ‘har hars’ and singing, and made him walk the plank into the ‘abyss of the fiery volcano’, a forty-four gallon drum brazier set next to the small audience for this charming but ruthless piece of backyard theatre. Hey, then I remembered, Gulaga was a volcano once too.

Yuin had difficulties being a postie because she is left-handed and they wanted her to sort the letters with her right hand. World leaders are all right handed, she says, but left handed people use both hemispheres of the brain, ‘that means we must be smarter, eh? It is those right-handed people who want to run the world, people with half a brain!’

Now we didn’t get to have a dance on that mountain, and that’s really what we would have had to have done to get those global spheres turning with that grinding drone of the didge, and the worlds moving in and out of each other: your world and mine; the New World Order and the world of the little black duck.

Bronwyn wouldn’t have been up for a dance, with her bad knees, so she had to wait among the granites while we went on. We got back and talked about Captain Cook again. ‘Oh, I’ve been on the Endeavour, you know, the re-enactment voyage? Oh yes. I rang up and asked them if I could be part of the crew. They said, ‘well, you have to be prepared to climb up the rigging and all that.’ ‘Oh, I can do that you know I’ve been working for years saving the native animals. I climb up tall trees like that one there and bring down the little trapped Koalas, oh they can scratch like buggery too, you know.'
And so I had to ask, is there an age limit, me being in my retirement and everything? They said, "yes, you have to be eighteen!"

So the dance is the important thing for bringing those spheres together, dance and laughter. That's what Debbie Rose says about when she spent all night learning to dance up in the Territory:

... every performance is different. The point is that the spontaneous and contingent can still be formed into complex patterns, and those patterns can connect with the world-creative potential. The enduring and the ephemeral find their most powerful connections by meshing into each other's patterns.\(^7\)

What's the contingent? It is the accidents and the loose ends and everything that does not seem essential to life, including the hilarity of the jokes between the vigorous dancing sessions:

Joking speaks of the ephemeral: of the spontaneous, the partial, the incomplete, the contingent and that which is (or may be) outside the law. Performance engages Dreaming power as it is contained within the earth; the call is performed in patterns that already are given, are intensely rule-governed, and require proper execution. Music and joking call participants back and forth between the enduring (Earth, Law) and the ephemeral (spontaneous, transient). Each can be seen to be embedded in the dance of the other. The ephemeral draws close to, and withdraws from, enduring creation power which itself approaches and withdraws. This motion captures a mutual embeddedness of the ephemeral in the enduring and the enduring in the ephemeral. Where they meet and flip or interpenetrate, all is iridescent, there is an exultant awareness of life in action.\(^8\)

So that's where my travel story to Gulaga took me in the end. As a visitor you are an ephemeral presence, your image quickly fading from the landscape and from memory. But the mountain endures, as Yuin, the tour-guide, brings things to it. She brings us of course, but also local and global issues, contingencies: the council's policies, John Howard and George W. Bush, Jesus and Captain Cook. It is as if the mountain draws these things to it like a magnet, with the potential to neutralise their temporal power. Maybe it is Gulaga who helps us think that this new world order need not be so, because there is not just one time-line. Cook sailed towards Gulaga and then veered away to deliver the Empire to Sydney. And to the extent that we are drawn back, again and again, to those magical places, could it be we
Gulaga Story

are necessarily drawn away from the lure of Fortune 500 and the desire to possess the land, or even the sea?

Notes

2 Australian Research Council, Discovery project, with Katrina Schlunke.
3 Ray Parkin, H.M. Bark Endeavour: Her Place in Australian History, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997) from the Ship's Log, Cook, Saturday 21 April 1770, pp. 164-5. The log from Parkinson of the previous day has: 'AM: Saw a high land called the Dromedary from its resemblance to that animal bearing NNW.' p. 160. The 'peaked hillick' is probably 'Camel Rock'.
4 Bronwyn says she had lunch with Mal only yesterday.
7 Rose, 'Pattern, Connection, Desire'.
8 Rose, 'Pattern, Connection, Desire'.
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