

“Why does it always have to end like this?”: On Board the *Endeavour* in Australian Children’s Fiction

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Abstract:

Journals of the earliest British visitors to Australian shores facilitated the creation of the image of Australian Indigenous nations as savage, primitive and inferior in every aspect of their appearance and their way of life to both Europeans and indigenous peoples of other lands. In 1688, William Dampier described the inhabitants of “New Holland” as “the miserablest people in the world ... having no [sic] one graceful feature in their faces.” In 1770, James Cook found the natives’ canoes “the worst ... [he] ever saw” (*A New Voyage* ch. 16). The encounter took a hostile turn when beads and nails thrown at their feet failed to impress Aboriginal people and pave the way for a peaceful landing. Prejudiced descriptions and opinions justified European colonisation of Australia and dispossession of indigenous peoples. It took more than two centuries to revise those views. Literature was a powerful tool of colonisation and in turn was used by the colonised to oppose the coloniser. In this article, literature is examined as a tool for adopting fresh perspectives in education of new generations of young people in Australia about Cook’s discoveries on the *Endeavour* journey. The paper examines two children’s novels—*The Goat Who Sailed the World* by Jackie French (2006) and *Captain Cook’s Apprentice* by Anthony Hill (2008)—in order to demonstrate that these novels can be extremely important in educational, cultural and socio-political terms because they open the ground for a discussion of ideologies, social behaviour and cultural values in classroom, and thereby can contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation in Australia.

Keywords: children’s literature; first contact in Australia; reconciliation; revision

Introduction

It has been 250 years since Captain Cook anchored the HMB *Endeavour* in Botany Bay, and subsequently on Possession Island, claimed the eastern coast of Australia for the British Crown, thus precipitating the landing of the First Fleet and “unleash[ing] cataclysmic consequences upon Aboriginal people of the Australian continent” (Maynard). This paper first analyses how the journals of the first British visitors to Australia reinforced prejudiced and racialised images of Aboriginal peoples which were consequently used to justify colonisation and dispossession of the Indigenous peoples from their lands. After looking at the excerpts from the writings of William Dampier, James Cook and Joseph Banks and examining the explicit and implicit judgement expressed in them, the paper suggests that children’s literature can be a powerful tool to educate young generations by allowing them to engage with the past without perpetuating these deeply-embedded images. Jackie French’s *The Goat Who Sailed the World* (2006) and Anthony Hill’s *Captain Cook’s Apprentice* (2008) retell the story of Cook’s arrival on the east coast of Australia, but employ various narrative techniques and devices in order to subvert the explorers’ perceptions and interpretations. Events recorded in the explorers’ journals are in these novels told from the perspective of the youngest member of the *Endeavour*’s crew in Hill’s novel, a boy who is not even mentioned in Cook’s journal, while French tells the story alternating the perspective between that of the boy and a goat present on the board of Cook’s ship *Endeavour*. This change of perspective facilitates the reversal of

hierarchy of authority and importance vested in European navigators, explorers and scientists. It also serves to expose their moral character, and discredit their interpretation of events and the views of Indigenous peoples. Importantly, it reminds young readers that there are other perspectives than those recorded by official Western history. Anthony Hill's novel in particular fills in the silences of historical narrative by partially giving voice to Aboriginal people and interpreting the charged encounters from the perspective of their social and moral codes. As such the two novels allow for a reappraisal of "discoveries" of the *Endeavour* journey in the light of devastation that colonisation brought to Australian Indigenous population and traditional lands.

Australia in the Eyes of the first British Beholders

Remarkably, the first officially recorded encounter of British sailors with islands off the coast of Australia happened just 16 years after the first authenticated landing of Europeans on Australian soil which is attributed to Willem Janszoon, the commander of the Dutch vessel *Duyfken* ("Australian Discovery"). Unfortunately, the story of the earliest British contact with Australia is also the story of the first known Australian shipwreck. The *Trial*, belonging to the English East India Company and commanded by John Brooke, was wrecked off the coast of Western Australia in 1622 and lost 93 of its crew. Brooke, together with his son and nine other men, made it into a skiff and sailed to Java. A separate group of 36 survivors spent a week on the Montebello Islands before sailing a saved longboat to Java. In all likelihood, they were the first Europeans to have had a prolonged stay within sight of Australian mainland. Thomas Bright, in charge of the longboat, left a short description: "Not any inhabitants thereon. Wee travelled over all the land seeing nothing but Ilands, some small, some greatt, breaches and shoules every way as farr as wee could see. Very dangerous on the N.W. syde. To the S.S.W. of this Ile ther lyeth a great Iland neere nyne leagues off" (qtd. in Lee).

The first Englishman who landed on Australian mainland and told a detailed tale was William Dampier, a veritable pirate of the Caribbean, best-selling author, the first person to circumnavigate the world three times (Wilkinson 154), and according to the subtitle of Alexander George's book on Dampier, "Australia's first natural historian." In 1688, as one of the crew on the privateer the *Cygnets*, Dampier spent nearly two months on the northwest coast of Australia, in the vicinity of King Sound (Abbott 55-6). While the ship was beached to be cleaned of worms and barnacles, Dampier took extensive notes about the land, flora and fauna, and the inhabitants he saw there. The full account of the *Cygnets*' crew's sojourn in New Holland, as the land was known at the time, appeared in 1697 when Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* was published in London. "An immediate success" (Penzer), the book attracted the attention of even the British Admiralty and resulted in William Dampier's being commissioned by the Admiralty to undertake another journey to explore the east coast of New Holland and being given the rank of Captain and command of HMS *Roebuck* (Bach). Had the journey gone as planned and HMS *Roebuck* taken the route via Cape Horn and landed on the east coast of Australia, the world might have never heard of Captain Cook (Wilkinson 156). Instead, delays in preparations meant that a safer passage to New Holland was round the tip of Africa (Wilkinson 156-158), which brought HMS *Roebuck* and her crew to the west coast of New Holland again, this time making landfall at a place Dampier named Shark Bay in August 1699 (Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3). According to the account he gives in *A Voyage to New Holland*, Dampier spent the following month exploring the coast northward to what is now known as the Dampier Archipelago and Roebuck Bay. Failing to find fresh water, he finally turned northward towards Timor. By this time his ship was disintegrating and Dampier had to abandon his plan to sail south again in order to complete his mission of exploring the

east coast of New Holland (Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3). Europe would have to wait for another 70 years to feast their eyes on the descriptions of Botany Bay.

In the meantime, *A Voyage to New Holland* was published in 1703, containing Dampier's account of HMS *Roebuck's* expedition and exploration of the west coast of New Holland, and together with his *A New Voyage Round the World*, which ran to four editions within two years of its initial publication (Bach), they constitute the first descriptions of the west coast of New Holland and its people presented to the British public. Dampier's preface to the 1703 volume is revealing of his audience's expectations. Readers seem to have had two expectations: to satisfy their curiosity about far-flung corners of the world which had seldom or never been visited by Europeans and to be entertained (Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland*, "Preface"). Dampier's accounts and descriptions of soil, terrain, animals, plants and people reflect the dominant reason which was driving European voyages of discovery—the possibilities of either trade or exploitation of resources. The fact that there was no attempt or even intent on part of the British to establish a trading post or colony in the regions of New Holland explored by the *Roebuck* expedition was largely due to Dampier's unfavourable impressions of the nature of the country and the people.

Reading about New Holland and its inhabitants from Dampier's volumes feels like a rhetorical exercise in negatives. Nearly everything that is described is qualified by absence, lack, deficiency and inferiority, starting with the crew's failure to find a supply of fresh water. On both occasions Dampier found the land to be "a dry sandy soil" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16; *A Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3), "destitute of water" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16), "bearing only shrubs and bushes" (*A Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3), "no sort of animal nor any track of beast", "a few small land-birds", "few sea-fowls", "neither is the sea very plentifully stored with fish" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16). Dampier was the first to unfavourably compare Australian Aborigines to inhabitants of other lands and even question their humanity, making the infamous remark that:

The inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world. The Hodmadods of Monomatapa, though a nasty people, yet for wealth are gentlemen to these; who have no houses, and skin garments, sheep, poultry, and fruits of the earth, ostrich eggs, etc., as the Hodmadods have: and, setting aside their human shape, they differ but little from brutes. (*A New Voyage* ch. 16)

Prejudice, lack of appreciation, and, above all, taking measurements and making judgements against the European aesthetic and social yardstick continued on Dampier's next journey when he saw a painted Aboriginal man. Not only did Dampier presume the existence of social hierarchies comparable to those he was familiar with and therefore assumed that the painted man was "the chief of them, and a kind of prince or captain among them" but he reinforced his categorisation of Aborigines as being barely human: "his painting adding very much to his natural deformity; for they all of them have the most unpleasant looks and the worst features of any people that ever I saw, though I have seen great variety of savages" (*A Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3).

In addition to having "no graceful feature in their faces", "these poor creatures", as described by Dampier, had "no sort of clothes", "no houses", "neither boats or iron", "no instruments to catch great fish", "no boats, canoes, or bark-logs" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16). Possessing nothing that Europeans would consider to be indicators of civilisation, Aborigines were not seen as partners in exchange but rather as inferior species whose role in the world was to serve a more advanced race and humbly accept the crumbs from the master's table. Nowhere is this view

made more poignantly explicit that in Dampier's description of how the *Cygnets*' crew wanted to make the Aboriginal men carry water in barrels from the well to the ship:

But it being somewhat troublesome to carry to the canoes we thought to have made these men to have carried it for us, and therefore we gave them some old clothes; to one an old pair of breeches, to another a ragged shirt, to the third a jacket that was scarce worth owning; ... we brought these our new servants to the wells, and put a barrel on each of their shoulders for them to carry to the canoe. But all the signs we could make were to no purpose for they stood like statues without motion but grinned like so many monkeys staring one upon another: for these poor creatures seem not accustomed to carry burdens. (*A New Voyage* ch. 16)

The event might be interpreted as a failed attempt to impose forms of European social hierarchy and its ideology upon members of a vastly different social order on the one hand and Aboriginal refusal to be cast into an incomprehensible or unacceptable role, on the other. This might have been one of the first instances when "the cultural gap yawned alarmingly" in Australia (Clarke 18). Furthermore, prejudice, self-importance and a deeply entrenched sense of superiority left Dampier uncomprehending as to why European "toys" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16) or clothes failed to impress the people of what was known as New Holland or why they seemed not to "admire" (*A New Voyage* ch. 16) anything Europeans had. They preferred to stay away from the visitors and keep to themselves. In short, there was nothing in the Australian landscape that Dampier's English eye found appealing; the land lacked invigorating freshness and lush greenness. Desiccation, dryness and monotony prevailed instead. The inhabitants, with their open disregard for what were regarded by the British as valued possessions and signs of progress, were deemed as the lowest of the low. It should be pointed out that Dampier's view and interpretation of New Holland and its inhabitants was not so much an objective record of one man's observations as an expression of European imagination and racialized discourse of the time, and in particular the belief that "Englishmen were on the steepest ascent of human endeavour" (Pascoe 13).

It took 71 more years and possibly the greatest navigator of the eighteenth century to bring the British to the east coastline of New Holland. Ironically, exploration of this coast was the last on the list of orders which he received from the Admiralty ("Secret Instructions"), but it was the one which immortalised lieutenant James Cook as Captain Cook and paved the way for colonisation of Australia. He was promoted from master to lieutenant, given command of His Majesty's Bark the *Endeavour* and with two sets of instructions left Plymouth on 26 August 1768. Having observed from Tahiti the transit of Venus across the Sun, and thus carrying out the first set of instructions, he opened the secret instructions which directed him to search for the Great Southern Continent, whose existence was suspected by geographical philosophers of the time:

You are to proceed to the Southward in order to make discovery of the Continent abovementioned until' you arrive in the Latitude of 40°, unless you sooner fall in with it. But not having discover'd it or any Evident sign of it in that Run you are to proceed in search of it to the Westward between the Latitude beforementioned and the Latitude of 35° until' you discover it, or fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd by Tasman and now called New Zeland. ("Secret Instructions")

Following her Captain's orders, the *Endeavour* found herself within sight of southeast of Australian mainland, which was spotted by lieutenant Hicks (and duly named Point Hicks) at 6

am on 19 April 1770 (the nautical date given in Cook's log). However, it was not until 29 April that the winds allowed the ship to approach the coast safely and find a suitable harbour. At first, the inhabitants of Botany Bay (thus named because of a wealth of plant specimens the ship's botanist Joseph Banks collected there) seemed indifferent towards the newcomers. Indeed, they "seem'd not ill pleased with" the nails and beads thrown at them from boats, and Cook "thought that they beckon'd to [them] to come ashore" (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8). He was mistaken. Two Indigenous men were determined to oppose more than thirty men in the *Endeavour's* boats. The two Aborigines retreated only after four rounds of small shot were fired first above their heads and then at their legs.¹ Thus, demonstrating the superior power of their weapons over rocks, darts and spears, which were thrown at them, the British spilt the first Aboriginal blood on the east coast before stepping out of their boats. In the following week, while the *Endeavour's* crew caught large amounts of fish in the bay, collected giant oysters from the rocks, and botanists were marvelling at the eucalypt and other plants never seen before, the Aborigines would observe from the distance before disappearing into the bush. "All they seemed to want," Cook remarked in his journal, "was for us to be gone" (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8).

Based on Cook's journal, we know that the *Endeavour* made two short landfalls in search of water, at Bustard Bay and Thirsty Sound, before running aground on a coral reef, which resulted in the ship being beached for seven weeks at the mouth of the Endeavour River for repairs. This presented another opportunity for close encounters and possible cultural exchange between the British and the Australian Aborigines. The relationships were mostly amicable on all but one occasion, which demonstrated how easily conflicts arise when there is absence of understanding of cultural codes and social customs. The *Endeavour's* crew were not willing to share their catch of turtles with the Aborigines, and as they previously did in Botany Bay, the British resorted to their weapons and forcefully imposed their will and interpretation of the situation over that of the Aborigines.

When the *Endeavour* was under sail again, she eventually rounded Cape York Peninsula and landed on Possession Island on 22 August on which occasion Cook "hoisted English Colours, 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 Wales" (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8). In four months he had followed 2000 miles of the east coastline of Australia, observed the land and its people, and recorded his observations and opinions in his journals. His descriptions must have played a considerable role when a suitable destination for a penal colony was discussed in British Parliament. For Cook described a country which was not in the least "that barren and miserable country that Dampier and others have described the Western side to be" (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8). It must not be forgotten that neither Dampier's nor Cook's voyages of discovery were purely scientific or geographical exercises. They were driven by the competition with the Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese for the establishment of trading and colonial empires. Thus, Cook observed the east coast of New Holland contemplating possible ways of exploitation of the country and was the harbinger of good news for the British. Although Cook wrote "the Country itself, so far as we know, doth not produce any one thing that can become an Article in Trade," he concluded that:

¹ Here Cook differs from Dampier who thought that one warning was more than enough and the second time he thought "it was high time ... to shoot one of them, which [he] did" (*Voyage to New Holland* ch. 3).

In this Extensive Country it can never be doubted but what most sorts of Grain, Fruit, roots, etc., of every kind would flourish here were they once brought hither, planted and Cultivated by the hands of Industry; and here are Provender for more Cattle, at all seasons of the Year, than ever can be brought into the Country. (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8)

Equally important were his observations that the native inhabitants “seem to have no fixed habitation, but move about from place to place like wild beasts in search of Food,” that they have “not the least knowledge of Iron or any other Metal that we know of” (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8), which meant that their tools and weapons were inferior and less effective than the British, and therefore could not pose a serious threat in possible conflicts. Moreover, Cook noticed that the inhabitants did not seem “to be a warlike people” nor “very numerous” (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8). What the builders of the British Empire could infer from the diaries of James Cook and Joseph Banks, was that the east coast of New Holland which Cook claimed for the British by the name of New South Wales was an immense tract of land, “considerably larger than all Europe” (Banks), suitable for growing crops and bearing cattle, but not cultivated by its sparse, ill-armed and peaceable population. Both the land and its people seemed to be in “the pure state of nature” (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8). Indeed, while Dampier saw uncouthness and ugliness, Cook was more inclined to depict New Hollanders along the lines of the emerging notion of a Noble Savage:

From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the Superfluous, but with the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for Life. They covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff, etc.; they live in a Warm and fine Climate, and enjoy every wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Cloathing; and this they seem to be fully sensible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth, etc., left it carelessly 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, nor would they ever part with anything of their own for any one Article we could offer them. This, in my opinion, Argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessarys of Life, and that they have no Superfluities. (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8)

Cook seems to be oblivious that “this glowing written record which speaks of a paradise of equality” contrasts with “the arrogance of [his] actions in claiming possession of the continent without any alliance with, or consent from, the owners” (Maynard). Prejudiced opinions based on the descriptions of the first navigators and explorers justified the colonisation of Australia and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The observed absence of farming, housing, or anything which Europeans could interpret as signs of ownership of the land, and the non-existence of recognisable legal system or political order led to the infamous “terra nullius” doctrine which proclaimed Australia to be “nobody’s land” and therefore there for the taking. These first impressions, however, were subsequently shown to be erroneous have been proven wrong, and most recently by the Indigenous historian and writer Bruce Pascoe, who points out that, “by adjusting our perspective by only a few degrees we see a vastly different world from the same window” (12). After a detailed reading of the first explorers’ and settlers’ diaries, Pascoe concludes that “cultivation was a feature of Aboriginal land use” (24), and that

“Aboriginal farmers had ... cleared the best soils so that they could create pastures and croplands,” but regrettably “colonial settlers ignored the Aboriginal methods and contemporary Australians still suffer from the result” (26). Similarly, Pascoe quotes evidence of villages existing all across the continent which “were not just functional occupation centres but places of solace and comfort in often difficult terrain and climates” (73). Blinded by their “innate superiority” (Pascoe 13), the first British visitors were incapable of seeing could not see the sophistication of the Aboriginal culture they encountered, and it was their views and their interpretation of events that were promulgated in many decades to come.

Conversely, Aboriginal accounts of Captain Cook are at odds with Western narratives. Rather than casting him as a heroic figure that looms large in Western imagination, Aboriginal stories of dispossession identify the British navigator as “the key figure” who “brought the ‘law’ of invasion” (Rose 17-18); his “discovery” of Australia is not celebrated but mourned by Aboriginal peoples as can be seen in Elder Les Davison insistence in April 1995 that “his people ... threw wreaths into the sea and lowered the Aboriginal flag” (qtd. in McKenna). For them the sight of an *Endeavour* replica in Botany Bay would be “distressing” and “offensive” (qtd. in McKenna). The vastly differing viewpoints on Captain Cook and the interpretation of legacy of his *Endeavour* journey are reflected in the changes to how his landing in Botany Bay is commemorated. According to the official webpage of Australian Government, the 250th anniversary of Cook’s voyage to Australia is going to be marked by a “range of reflective exhibitions, activities and events” designed to provide multiple perspectives of all those involved in the “complex turning point in Australian history” (“250th anniversary”).² This is a part of a wider move toward revision, and reappraisal of those one-sided narratives which gave rise to colonial discourses.

The First Encounter Revisited in Australian Children’s Literature

Almost simultaneously two Australian children’s writers saw the potential of the *Endeavour*’s journey to be imaginatively recast as a tale for children with the capacity to challenge the authority of accounts given by the first British visitors to Australian shores. In 2006, Jackie French published her *The Goat Who Sailed the World*, which is told alternately from the perspectives of the goat who provided Captain Cook and his officers with milk in the course of the entire journey, and Isaac Manley, who at the age of twelve joined the *Endeavour*’s crew as a master’s servant and was the youngest on the ship.³ In 2008, Anthony Hill published his award-winning *Captain Cook’s Apprentice*, which is told from the perspective of Isaac Manley.⁴ Both writers turned to the *Endeavour*’s journals for historical details about the journey’s progress, and “for the view from the other side of the beach” (Hill, “The Idea of Isaac”). Hill was in contact with “Les Bursill, an Aboriginal man of the Dharawal people from the southern side of Botany Bay” and at Cooktown he met “Eric Deeral, an elder of the Guugu Yimithirr people, and was able to draw on his written statements of Cook’s only extended contacts with Aborigines” (Hill, “The Idea of Isaac”). By adopting points of view that children are likely to empathise with, the authors seek to engage young readers actively with the event

² For example, the National Museum of Australia will open an exhibition which “physically charts the journey of Cook and his crew along Australia’s coastline, delving into the past, present and future of 8 Indigenous communities along the way” and a project by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies will carry out a project “to return culturally significant Indigenous items from overseas institutions” (“250th Anniversary”).

³ Even though he is not mentioned in Cook’s journal, his presence on the ship is historically verified; he was a servant to Robert Molineaux, the Master. For further details, see Hill, “The Idea of Isaac”.

⁴ The book was awarded the 2009 NSW Premier’s Young People’s History Prize.

which constitutes one of the significant landmarks in Australian history and culture. Re-telling the story “for a new generation of readers” (“*Captain Cook’s Apprentice Q and A*”) who are growing up in the contemporary Australian sociocultural context of reappraisal of its colonial past and reconciliatory redefinition of intercultural relationships of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, French and Hill in their novels display an awareness of educational value of children’s literature. As Jackie French, a best-selling author of over 140 books and Australian Children’s Laureate 2014-2015, puts it: “Children’s literature is important to growing empathetic, intelligent, socially aware adults ... it teaches them ... that ... there can be different viewpoints” (“Profile”). Both *Goat* and *Apprentice* are third person narratives told by a narrator who is not a participant in described events. The narrator of *Goat* uses an animal and a boy as focalisers, which means that the story is presented from their points of view, while the narrator of *Apprentice* focalises the story through one central character, that of a boy. Point of view and focalisation are the most powerful strategies of authorial control over readers’ responses as they are likely to “align attitudinally and emotionally” (Stephens, “Narratology” 58) with focalisers. Furthermore, in Australian society, where “cultural production” is “affected by the historical phenomenon of colonisation” (Ashcroft 7), children’s literature can become “a site of decolonisation which revisions the hierarchies of value promoted by colonisation” (Bradford, “The Case” 271).

By choosing to adopt marginalised and silenced perspectives of the existing official accounts, French and Hill reverse the hierarchy of authority and importance vested in European explorers and scientists. In the tradition of foundational Judeo-Christian narrative based on Genesis, throughout much of European history, people liked to think that they have the right to rule over animals and to use them to satisfy human needs, and that is exactly why the goat is on Cook’s ship. However, this hierarchy is subverted as the Goat’s thoughts on this are disclosed and men appear to be mere retainers, her appreciation of them measured by the quality of grass they offer to her. Human concerns, feelings and actions are relevant insofar as they serve to satisfy the Goat’s needs. Otherwise, they are deemed insignificant or even foolish. This reversal of values is established right from the beginning, in the Prologue, where the Goat observes how green branches are thrown into the water as the ship approaches Tahiti. This gesture is meant to signify friendship but all the Goat has to say about it is: “What a waste of good food!” (French 3). The crew’s excitement at landing on this tropical island is counter-balanced by the Goat’s feeling of disgust at men’s behaviour, and when the time comes to leave Tahiti, Isaac’s feelings of exhilaration about the journey of exploration ahead are offset by the Goat’s indifference (103). Upon reaching Botany Bay, as Isaac’s friend Jonathan voices his dream of having a farm “in a place like this,” and thus foreshadows European appropriation of traditional Aboriginal lands, the Goat’s thoughts are on the grass which “was tougher than the grass of New Zealand, and not as sweet or succulent” but she is pleased that she has “something more solid to chew” (134-36).

The importance of her milk gives the Goat some privileges such as getting as much water as she wants while for everyone else the water is rationed. From Isaac’s perspective, “the Goat has the best life of anyone aboard” because not even an admiral gets “to just watch the scenery all day” (28). Isaac is amused by his thought that “you couldn’t milk an admiral” (28) and the hierarchy of relevance is disrupted again as an admiral is defined in terms of “lack” rather than superiority when compared to a goat. Isaac would become an admiral himself but that comes much later. On the *Endeavour* his rank is the lowest on the ship. Not even mentioned in Cook’s journal, in French’s novel, Isaac, whose duties include looking after the Goat, is unwittingly raised by Cook to the central position of trust and a confidante, the first one to learn about the Captain’s historic decision to sail west from New Zealand. More significantly, with Isaac as the

focaliser, French offers to young readers another view and interpretation of celebrated heroes of the European era of great discoveries. For example, the success of the Endeavour journey solidified Sir Joseph Banks's reputation as the leading scientist; he was presented to George III in August 1771, just a month after returning to Britain, and in November of the same year Oxford honoured him with the degree of civil law. Seven years later, he was elected president of the Royal Society. In 1779, it was Sir Joseph Banks who spoke before a House of Commons committee and gave evidence in support of the decision to choose Botany Bay as the site of a new penal settlement (Gilbert). He was one of the most influential figures of his time; his *Endeavour Journal* was immensely popular and the views, observations, comments and attitudes which he expressed there were taken by contemporary readers as highly authoritative (Gilbert). However, while following accurately the historical accounts of events but channelling a possible interpretation of them by foregrounding Isaac's emotional response to them, French's novel depicts Banks as a man whose great power and influence are not ennobled by compassion, common decency or feelings for others. When his two servants freeze to death in Tierra del Fuego as a result of Bank's decision to spend the night on land instead of returning to the safety and warmth of the ship, Isaac remarks that "Banks did not seem to feel guilty or even particularly sorry" but that the botanist was rather excited "as he described to Mr Molineaux the new alpine plants he'd collected up on the high plateau" (French 76). On several occasions in the novel, Banks's actions reveal him as self-centred, self-seeking and unsympathetic. Similarly, Cook's decisions and actions are reappraised from a perspective innocent of the imperative to assert control and dominance over peoples in other lands. After failing to frighten them into surrender, Maori men are shot at and killed in New Zealand by the men of the *Endeavour* at the captain's orders, which leads young Isaac to question moral values of society's most esteemed men: "Til now he had thought that Cook was perfect. ... But for the first time he realised that even heroes can be wrong" (108).

In addition to the earliest descriptions of the Australian Aborigines, which were infused by racial, social and cultural prejudice in the past and are undermined in French's book by questioning the character and weakening the moral standing of the men who made those observations, alternative points of view are presented to young readers. The Goat, dismissive of humans in general, does not make any cultural comparisons nor does she pass any aesthetical judgements as she observes "the local people ... fishing in their outrigger canoes" (167) or visiting the ship. Where Banks in his journal avails himself of Western cultural heritage and mythology to negatively portray Aboriginal women "who did not copy our mother Eve even in the fig leaf" (Banks), and explicitly invites comparisons to be made with Western norms of propriety, French has the Goat notice "necklaces and bracelets of shells or seeds, or bark headbands" (167). The details which French emphasises using the Goat as the focaliser are of the same nature and significance as those which the Aboriginal language and culture consultant at the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Dr Shayne T. Williams points out in Sydney Parkinson's sketches as being "meaningful because [they are] culturally educational" (Williams). At the same time, far from seeing the Aborigines as inferior, the boy is impressed and full of admiration for "the local people" who "could make their spears hit a target fifty yards away!" (French 171). Similarly, describing the first encounter in Botany Bay between Cook's men and the Aborigines, Hill has his hero, Isaac, "admire the cool bravery of these men in confronting three boatloads of strangers who must have appeared utterly alien, and who outnumbered them at least fifteen to one" (Hill 160). It is significant that Isaac's admiration for the Aborigines includes considerations about what they must have thought about the encounter, which reflects Hill's intention to make his young readers recognise that

contemporary written accounts available to us today only tell one side of the story.⁵ Cook's and Banks's accounts are written from the position of undisputed superiority over a less developed race that is ultimately bound to be defeated. Contrary to the official accounts where emphasis is put on the inadequacy of the Aborigines' weapons, on the one hand, and the benevolent supremacy of the British in their demonstrations of power, on the other, Hill's narrative puts the Aborigines and the newcomers on an equal footing with the remark that "the Gweagal also knew how to demonstrate their weapons without intending to kill" (Hill 159). Hill's narrative also exposes the hypocrisy of Cook's actions. He leaves "a few strings of beads" in the abandoned huts "to show he meant no harm" (Hill 160). However, he orders all spears and fishing harpoons to be taken from the camp. From Cook's point of view, it is "a sensible precaution" (Hill 160) and it is explained as such in his journal, too. The one-sidedness of this interpretation is pointed out by Hill's narrator, who wonders "but why the natives should interpret stealing their means of livelihood as a friendly act, Cook could not have explained" (Hill 160). The explorers' perspectives and interpretations of events are undermined in these two children's novels and stereotypical roles of official accounts are reversed so that Europeans are portrayed as thieves rather than the Aborigines who are on more than one occasion described by Cook and Banks as stealing things from the crew's tents and the ship.

Furthermore, Hill's omniscient narrator has intimate knowledge of all characters as well as the past, present and future events. As a result, Hill's fictional narrative fills in the silences of the historical narratives. Very importantly, rather than being reduced to nondescript nameless creatures, the Aboriginal peoples that the *Endeavour's* crew met at Botany Bay and the Endeavour River are given names and therefore endowed with identity. The children who read the book will learn that the two brave men in Botany Bay belonged to the Gweagal people, and that the people who gave the name to the kangaroo were called the Guugu Yimithirr. It is known that Cook and Banks compiled a list of Aboriginal words and their English translations, and thus they became the forerunners of anthropologists who created encyclopaedias of knowledge about native inhabitants around the world. For to know is to possess. However, unlike the lists of detached and decontextualized words which create only an illusion of understanding, Hill contextualises Aboriginal words and expressions and supplies explanations in English: "These warriors, armed with spears and throwing sticks—*woomeras*—came down ... and shouted at the strangers, "*Warra! Warra wai!*" Go away! Go far away!" (157-8); "Four men—*bama*—came down ... drawn by curiosity about these seeming white *Wangarr* spirits" (189-90); "What interested them most were the twelve captured turtles—*ngawia!*" (192).

Hill lets his Aboriginal characters speak whereby the incomprehensible savages of the early explorers' accounts become articulate agents with distinct identity, voices, customs and codes of behavior, who are determined to defend their land and resources. This is most poignantly portrayed in the turtle incident. Having completed the repairs on the ship, the crew is getting ready to leave the Endeavour River and a dozen turtles have been caught and put into a tub to

⁵ Reflecting on this moment, Shayne T. Williams says that "our Gweagal peoples would not have seen a phenomenon such as Cook and his party before. It is not possible to know with any degree of accuracy exactly what our Gweagal people thought of Cook. But it is possible to conclude that they would have sought spiritual understanding of it, undoubtedly through ceremony with other clans in the area" (Williams). She also explains the action of the two Gweagal men, saying that they "were assiduously carrying out their spiritual duty to Country by protecting Country from the presence of persons not authorised to be there. In our cultures it is not permissible to enter another culture's Country without due consent. Consent was always negotiated. Negotiation was not necessarily a matter of immediate dialogue, it often involved spiritual communication through ceremony" (Williams).

supply fresh meat on the onward journey. The Aborigines who visited the ship wanted to take one turtle but were prevented from doing so and ordered off the ship. Cook's and Banks's journals describe the Aboriginal men as resentful, disdainful and troublesome men who started throwing everything overboard when their efforts of getting the turtle were frustrated. They do not speak but stamp their feet and gesture (*Captain Cook's Journal* ch. 8; Banks). Hill's reimagining of the event includes the Aborigine's perspective and interpretation of the dispute over ownership of turtles:

'Them damned thieves be stealing our dinner!
We are happy for you to eat our turtle, but you have taken more than you need.
'We caught 'em ourselves!
By our law you should share them, and so we will take one.
'Oh no you don't!' (Hill 193)⁶

The use of punctuation, the agitation of exclamation marks in contrast with the calmness of full stops, and ungrammatical sentences of non-standard pronunciation in contrast with well-developed sentences and solid vocabulary, serves to convey the image of the British as inarticulate yelling brutes in contrast with the dignified Aborigines. The narrative then proceeds with the explanation of the cultural conflict for young readers: "Cook was as much bound by his native traditions as were the Guugu Yimithirr. He had no more idea of needing permission to fish the sea, than the Aborigines did of private property ownership" (Hill 193). In another example, "the conflict escalates as the Aborigines set fire to the British camp on land and it ends with the demonstration of power by the crew who fire a round of small shot and hit one Aborigine.⁷ 'Why does it always have to end like this?' wonders young Isaac, remembering the conflicts in New Zealand and at Botany Bay" (Hill 195). Aboriginal "words had no currency" (Hill 192). The voice of Indigenous peoples was silenced and written out of history in official accounts of the first encounter as described in the journals of explorers, navigators and scientists. Another (dis)empowering aspect of language is explored by the children's literature scholar Clare Bradford who argues that language and the treatment of space and place are "two broad areas of postcolonial textuality for children" and that "the two fields intersect because a key function of language in colonization is to redefine space through such means as cartography, the renaming of places that were already known and named by Indigenous peoples" (*Unsettling Narratives* 13). *Apprentice* makes young readers aware that those places in Australia named by Captain Cook already had Indigenous names, and children learn that Botany Bay was *Gamay*, for example, and the Endeavour River was *Wahalumbaal birri* (Hill 158; 189). Similarly, when Cook "took possession of the east coast of New Holland for King George" and wanted to think of a name "he did not of course consult the inhabitants about *their* name for this land (Hill 205-06).

⁶ In her book, Jackie French has Banks shout "thieving savages" (172), but his credibility has already been undermined by the unflattering picture of his egotistic character created in the novel. In addition, when fire is threatening the camp, "between Mr Banks's specimen and the Goat to save, Isaac chose the Goat" (174).

⁷ Two centuries later, the story is told and explained through Guugu Yimithirr law by Alberta Hornsby and her late uncle, Eric Deeral: "the old man, by drawing sweat from under his armpits and 'blowing the sweat on his hands into the air,' was performing a ritual known as 'ngalangundaama,' a call for 'protection and calm'" (McKenna). This gesture of reconciliation seemed to elude understanding on the part of the British.

The omniscience of the narrator allows for the benefit of hindsight and Hill uses the opportunity to introduce young readers to the grave consequences of Cook's voyages upon the inhabitants of lands he claimed for King George III: "Within decades of European settlement, the Gweagal had almost disappeared from the shores of Gamay. Drink and disease, and the power of the white man's weapons saw to their destruction" (Hill 165). With this knowledge contemporary young readers can reappraise the significance of eighteenth-century discoveries and be able to evaluate it from different perspectives. By the time the *Endeavour* is beached for repairs after striking the reef Isaac is fifteen years old and "puffing his pipe on deck" (Hill 184), which would at the time signify his transition from boyhood into manhood. Isaac matures through gaining knowledge and experience on the journey, and Hill makes it possible for young readers to grow up with Isaac through actively engaging with contemporary legacies of past events.

The Goat Who Sailed the World and Captain Cook's Apprentice in the Classroom

Teacher's guides issued by publishers, HarperCollins for *Goat* and Penguin Books for *Apprentice*, suggest a number of ways the novels can be taught in class and some of the proposed approaches address the topic of the first contact. Both sets of teaching notes recommend that the reasons for violence of the first contact should be explored, which also serves to introduce the topic of cultural differences. It is also suggested that students should discuss the impact of European settlement on Indigenous ways of life and their environment, which poses the question of how Europeans viewed the native inhabitants (Sarandis; Yates).

However, both texts remain limited in one crucial aspect. Given the fact that the main child focaliser is a white boy, it is questionable to what extent, if at all, these texts offer Indigenous children experiences of narrative subjectivity or whether girls, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, can share in the adventure. This limitation is due to the fact that the authors relied on historical accounts for the source of characters and events, and there were no girls or Indigenous children on board the *Endeavour* nor did Indigenous children participate in any encounters described in the journals. Nevertheless, the disadvantage of a confined point of view can be used to teach the important role which focalisation and point of view play in the creation of meaning. In that way, children will not be involved merely with retelling of the plot (e.g. "draw up a grid listing the places and reasons that the *Endeavour* went ashore throughout the novel" as suggested by Sarandis) or responding imaginatively within the givens of the plot (e.g. "write a job advertisement to recruit for one of the crew on the *Endeavour*" as suggested by Yates) but they will learn how elements of a literary text combine to produce desired effects.

Both *Goat*, recommended for ages 9-13 ("The Goat Who Sailed The World"), and *Apprentice*, recommended for ages 12 and over ("HMB Endeavour"), are historical novels for children, and their authors imaginatively engage with the past seeking to offer an explanation and interpretation of events which paved the way for the creation of the Australian nation, but which included wilful disregard and distinct lack of appreciation of an entire population. The authors' intention to remain true to historical accounts but not to repeat and reinforce the one-sided discourse of the first encounter between Indigenous population and European explorers has led them to employ a range of strategies which enable young readers to enjoy the adventure theme, on the one hand while making them aware of the colonial past on the other. Unlike children's authors of the first half of the twentieth century who resorted to strategies of "silence and concealment" (Bradford, *Reading Race* 15), French and Hill choose to bring to the forefront of their novels previously neglected points of view, fill in gaps and silences, and challenge the authority of historical texts. In doing so, these children's novels emerge as extremely important in educational, cultural and socio-political terms because they open the ground for a discussion of ideologies, social behaviour and cultural values in classroom. If "writing for children is

usually purposeful” and the purpose is to promote “contemporary morality and ethics ... and aspirations about the present and future” (Stephens, *Language and Ideology* 3), then in the contemporary Australian socio-political climate of cultural reconciliation, these novels foster a positive appreciation of cultural differences, racial equality and anti-colonial ideology.

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