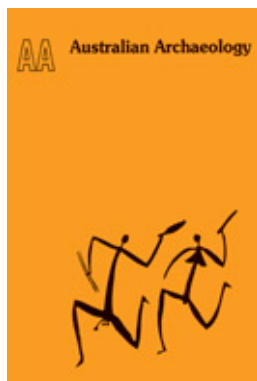


Australian Archaeology



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SEA BEACH AND CAVE, DURRAS

Sunday 22nd April 1770...saw the smook of fire in several places...(We) were so near the Shore as to distinguish several people upon the Sea beach. They appear'd to be of a very dark or black colour but whether this was the real colour of their skins or the C(1)otes they might have on I know not...

- Captain James Cook, Journal of
The Voyage of the Endeavour

A cave is a beginning - and the sea.
It is the cave that gives this sandstone cliff,
This beach, their meaning; though tonight the fire
Burns on the sand outside.

This morning in the cave, crouching, they touched
And turned to where its blackened mouth-edge framed
The sky, the flashing sea and the white surf
Tumbling upon the sand.

Then, as they rode those long waves in, their boards
Pointed towards the cave - it was a mark
As natural as the channel and the reef
That runs out from the shore.

A good place for a camp: stripped to her shorts
The girl slept face-down in the sun, then woke
To watch the boy, black in his wet-suit, take
The four-pronged spear and dive.

At sunset, in the deep shade of the cliff,
They cooked the fish the boy had killed. And now,
Caught in another wave, they turn and take
Each other on the sand.

The fish-bones smoulder in the cooling fire.
The spear shines in the moonlight. In the cave
Behind the sleeping lovers the earth floor
Minutely shifts and settles,

Drifts over the other bones, the other spears -
The fish-hooks carved from shell, the flakes of stone,
The bones of bird and animal and fish,
The blood, the long-dead fires.

R.F. Brissenden

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