

KATRINA SCHLUNKE

*Burning Cook*

I had already thought of breaking up Captain Cook.

Of taking the giant Captain Cook that sits outside Cairns, the giant leftover of the Captain Cook Motel and trucking him back down the east coast, one bit after another broken off and buried until what remained would arrive in Canberra and be sunk in Lake Burley Griffith. One hand left up to remind folk of the deep bloody depths, the ideas and actions, that “Australia” depended on.

And then I saw the armed and masked and mounted cops guarding the statue of Captain Cook in Hyde Park Sydney,

(June 2020, Blak Lives Matter)

It should have been some clever piece of performance art, it could have been some smack in the face installation (a Fiona Foley, a Jonathon Jones or perhaps a Michelle Maynard designing with fluoro and uniforms) but no, it was real

That when push came to shove at a 1.5m COVID distance, when the black dead in Australia were being spoken for and in that speaking the stained white sheets were seen again and again,

when that push came—“Australia,” the Australian government, the state security forces rushed to defend

a statue.

An icy bronze statue.

A statue that sits on Moruya Granite. Granite from Yuin country and the Bugelli-Manji clan and underneath that, foundations set into Gadigal land.

As Archie tells us:

“Be careful when you walk through this land

Because a child was born here

And a child was born there”

Be careful where you stand Mr Policeman Australia

You are always standing on life.

Touching that life is a gift we sometimes get

But we Johnny-come-lately Australians are never going to get it from atop a statue

So I am burning Cook.

Trying to burn away that bit of myself that forgets

Trying to transform that mixed up shit

That emptiness, that nothing, that you only see when you see, how heavily you defend it

This fractured father figure, this frozen phallus, this national need, the personal greed to claim his seed.

This letting go might look like Cook but it’s me.

Southerly 79.3: The Way We Live Now

One of too many Cooks  
Too many confusions  
I am letting the cemented Cook go  
I don't need him any longer  
Let him go  
Let him rest with his people  
Let him be  
I don't want him,  
We don't need him  
I really don't  
We really don't  
Need him