

## **Heading South: An Embodied Literary History of the Cape to Cape Track and the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region of South-west Australia**

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**Abstract:** Based on the author's end-to-end walk of the Cape to Cape Track (C2C), this article presents a literary history of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste region traversed by the trail. The C2C is a continuous, 135-kilometre coastal pedestrian path from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin south of Perth in the south-west corner of Western Australia. A relatively short route by long-distance trekking standards, the C2C reverberates with literary narratives, incidents and encounters. In 1831, explorers John Dewar and Andrew Smith walked northbound from Augusta to the Swan River, approximately following the modern-day orientation of the track. Known for tempestuous weather, Cape Leeuwin—the southern terminus of the C2C, near Augusta, where the Indian and Southern Oceans converge—was the model for “Lewin’s Land” referenced in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) and later alluded to in D.H. Lawrence and Mollie Skinner’s *The Boy in the Bush* (1924). Drawing from theories of emplacement (de Certeau; Edensor; Gros; Ingold; Ingold and Vergunst; Merleau-Ponty; Michael; Solnit), this article describes walking as a medium for understanding the imbrications between bodies, landscapes, journeys, histories and stories.

**Keywords:** Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region; Western Australia; Cape to Cape Track; bushwalking; literary history

On the second morning, as also on every succeeding morning, we started before sun-rise, continuing our march sometimes by moonlight. This day we passed over better land, the country rather hilly, consisting of a good brown loam. This district had been lately burnt. (Dewar and Smith 110)

Officially opened in 2001, the Cape to Cape Track (C2C) is a continuous, 135-kilometre (84-mile) coastal bushwalking path from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin south of the city of Perth in Western Australia (Scott and Forma 1). A relatively diminutive route by long-distance trekking standards—in comparison, for instance, to the neighbouring 1000-kilometre Bibbulmun Track from Perth to Albany (Baker 1–10) and the venerable Appalachian Trail of the Eastern United States (Miller 1–15)—the C2C nonetheless reverberates with diverse cultural meanings and literary narratives. From Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) to Stedman’s *The Light Between Oceans* (2012) and its subsequent cinematic adaptation, the calciferous Leeuwin-Naturaliste landscape traversed by the track has featured in a diverse range of works, spanning eighteenth-century European satire, nineteenth-century explorers’ journals and contemporary Australian poetry, fiction and film. While writers such as Swift and Rudyard Kipling were distanced physically from the Leeuwin-Naturaliste, others such as Dewar and Smith resided in or travelled through the region for extended periods or, in the case of Georgiana Molloy, most of their lives. During the nineteenth century, conspicuous landmarks glimpsed from afar inspired authors journeying by steamer between the west coast of Australia and ports in Java and beyond. Prior to and during the colonial era, the

popularisation of explorer-naturalist accounts and the circulation of maps of New Holland captivated writers and audiences, signifying the prominent position of the region and its topographical features in the global imagining of the antipodes (see, for example, S. Ryan).

The literary history of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste region marshalled in this article comprises extracts from the journals of explorers, settlers and sojourners as well as from the contemporary works of novelists, essayists and poets. Emphasising the embodied, sensory dimensions of Western Australian places, the article focuses principally on narratives of walking—and, to a lesser extent, of sailing and motoring—within, between and to Leeuwin-Naturaliste locales. Bipedal movement, moreover, provides a structure mirroring my own southward progression during an end-to-end walk of the C2C in 2015 over the course of five days in the company of a fellow trekker. The geographically-delineated sections of the article follow the overall north-to-south trend of the route from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin with the Indian Ocean steadfastly within earshot to the west, that is, to the right of my hiking partner and me as we slogged up dunes and glided through coastal eucalypt forests. The literary history, thus, integrates first-hand observations of the path with reflections on works that feature centrally—or allude peripherally to—the Leeuwin-Naturaliste region, the C2C, and the human and nonhuman communities through (or near) which it passes. My analysis of literary texts reflects a conceptualisation of environmental knowledge as derived corporeally through walking:

Knowledge and footprints are not then opposed as mental to material. The relation between them is rather tantamount to one between bodily movement and its impression. If knowledge and footprints appear equivalent, it is because knowing is doing, doing is carrying out tasks, and carrying out tasks is remembering the way they are done. (Ingold and Vergunst 7)

In addition to theories of corporeal emplacement, I further contextualise the discussion through previous literary studies of hiking trails in the United States, England and Australia (e.g. Hardyment, Lewis, Marshall and Morrison) as well as a body of philosophical, historical and cultural research into walking as a modern counterforce to the exponential technologization of human movement (e.g. Gros and Solnit).

### **Initial Declivities: Cape Naturaliste to Mount Duckworth**

*It's 2 pm. We stash the car securely behind a gate within view of the Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse, scrawl a message in the register at the visitors' centre, exchange pleasantries with passers-by and hoist packs overburdened with provisions and gear. As the coastline panorama sharpens and the boom of roiling surf becomes more distinct, we revel in the maiden strides of the long jaunt. Finding rhythm within this landscape, especially after a four-hour drive from Perth, we descend through salt-pruned heathlands of prickly honeybush (*Hakea lissocarpa*), golden-red bitter pea (*Daviesia angulata*), granite bottlebrush (*Calothamnus graniticus*), balga (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) and different species of the perfumed myrtle family.*

*Glancing back at the northern terminus of the Cape to Cape, the wind-rippled bush appears to consume the lighthouse panopticon and the wispy figures of tourists who climbed to the lantern room deck for a good view and trophy photographs. The first few kilometres of the track are impeccably paved. We reach a welcome kiosk bejewelled with the trail icon: an image of a bushwalker with a rucksack, brimmed hat and trekking pole against a blank yellow figuration of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste region. The distant limestone formations of the*

*littoral zone uncannily resemble marsupials, facing east and surrounded by still pools of auburn seaweed. Where the paved walkway comes to an abrupt end at a tangle of tracks, we drop down a sandy access road, lured by the sea. Intuiting that this was the wrong choice, we retrace these missteps with a short uphill slog and resume late-afternoon progress on the C2C to the Mount Duckworth campsite.*

Two-hundred-and-fourteen years prior to our forgivable lapse of judgement, on 30 May 1801, the French navigator Nicolas Baudin sighted Cape Naturaliste during an expedition to New Holland aboard the corvette *Le Géographe*. Accompanied by a contingent of natural scientists and illustrators, Baudin was tasked by Napoléon Bonaparte with documenting the last uncharted stretches of the Australian coastline. Following his annoyance with Sub-Lieutenant Antoine Furcy Picquet for failing to return to the vessel by nightfall after a brief reconnaissance by longboat, Baudin christened the landmark “Cap des Mécontents” (or “Cape of Discontent”). The cartographer Louis de Freycinet, nevertheless, would enshrine the name “Cape Naturaliste” on his charts in commemoration of *Le Naturaliste*, the second corvette of the voyage (Fornasiero, Monteath and West-Sooby 300). As his party progressed north from Cape Leeuwin, Baudin chronicled, in a largely dismissive tenor, his impressions of the heathlands through which the C2C now wends. On 29 May, for instance, he noted that “all the land that we have explored has looked arid to us. As far as the coast nearest us is concerned, the most noticeable hills were, in the main, covered with a type of heath which gave us little height” (Baudin 162).

The environment appeared void of the familiar lush-green signifiers of aesthetic value in the northern hemisphere: “Sometimes we made out a few plateaux with trees of a rather lovely green, all of which only served to make looking at the parts which lacked them more disagreeable” (Baudin 162). Unable to locate anchorage anywhere before the safety of Geographe Bay where the coastline recurves south-east from the turbulent cape, the French navigator remained incredulous that the distant territory could “offer anything of interest to Natural History” (162).

No land birds visited *Le Géographe*. The only sea birds encountered were common cape petrels (*Daption capense*), leaving the captain further unmoved by the apparently parched terrain and impoverished ocean (Baudin 162). After coming upon “a large bay, the South point of which was formed by the cape we had just rounded [Cape Naturaliste]” (163), however, the crew seized the opportunity to step foot on New Holland for the first time and, in doing so, ground-truthed preconceptions formulated at sea, particularly concerning the aridity and productions of the landscape (Fornasiero, Monteath and West-Sooby 44). To this end, Baudin selected Freycinet, the mineralogist Louis Depuch and the gardener Anselme Riedlé to go ashore. Freycinet reported that:

...the land, in spite of a large amount of growth, seems too sandy to be fertile ... the most common tree is a type of eucalyptus which grows only moderately high. One also finds quantities of a shrub which grows in clumps. The shape and scent of its leaves are like those of the laurel, but Citizen Riedlé told me that it was a type of *Phillyrea*. (qtd. in Baudin 165)

In all likelihood, the laurel-like species in question is Dampier’s rose (*Diplolaena dampiera*), a member of the aromatic Rutaceae—or boronia—family. Bearing musky leaves and flowers, the heathland dweller reaches approximately two metres in height (Grose 182). Also known as native rose and southern diplolaena, it is widespread throughout the coastal limestone

habitats of Leeuwin-Naturaliste (Scott 58). Bearing in mind the dark, glossy and ovate leaves of the native rose, I believe Riedlé was justified in reckoning it as a *Phillyrea*, an evergreen shrub native to the Mediterranean Basin. The gardener's surmise, nevertheless, inflected an engrained European perspective on plants that would steer the course of botany in Australia, causing bewilderment and debate among taxonomists from the colonial era to the present day (J. Ryan 87–109).

As members of Baudin's expedition disembarked and set off on foot in the vicinity of Cape Naturaliste, they began to gather sensory information about the landscape that, of course, was impossible to access from their vessels. During a one-hour amble before returning to his boat, Freycinet noticed "some large black birds" and "a flock of sea-gulls," as well as evidence of "quadrupeds" and "an animal with cloven hooves" (qtd. in Baudin 165). It was the vegetation, however, that facilitated immediate physical encounter with the terrain east of the cape. Freycinet continued his report to Baudin with an account of the balga: "Another tree furnished me with a type of gum, a sample of which I am giving you. Its leaves are rather similar to those of the vetiver and form a bunch which sprouts on top of a fairly thick coal-coloured trunk" (qtd. in Baudin 165). In comparison to the scented shrub Riedlé branded a *Phillyrea*, the identity of the resinous tree with sprouting leaves and a coal-like trunk is entirely more definitive. Balga (or grass tree) is one of three members of the distinctive Xanthorrhoeaceae family growing within the C2C corridor. Whereas the two other species (*X. gracilis* and *X. brunonis*) are more compact, balga is a conspicuously large shrub with a trunk composed of dead leaf bases cemented together with natural resin and characteristically sooted by fire (Scott 18–19). Grasping for language to describe the radically unfamiliar plants of the coastal habitat, Freycinet likened the balga leaves to vetiver (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*), a perennial bunchgrass native to India. In a comparable effort to rationalise New Holland flora, Depuch, the mineralogist, aligned the balga to the screw pine (*Pandanus utilis*) of Mauritius and also recorded, by means of visual and olfactory feedback, "a very agreeable reddish-yellow resin. It gives off a nasty smell when burning" (qtd. in Baudin 168).

### **Southerly Aspects: Mount Duckworth to Gracetown**

*By 7 am, more gung ho bushwalkers have already decamped south. We unfurl ourselves from geodesic tents and spread stoves, bottles and fluorescent paraphernalia on a weathered picnic table. The downy sand of the campground, protected from buffeting winds in a grove of sculpted melaleuca, made for sound sleeping. Rest assured, we fared better than Picquet, forced to "beat about all night" (166) between a rough sea and unsheltering shore, as he awaited the captain's inevitable reproach. Baudin's speculations were at least partially correct. The Leeuwin-Naturaliste spine followed by the C2C is quintessentially arid. After downpours, the few freshwater springs that punctuate the route recede swiftly. Walkers should carry water like camels or draw from unreliable polypropylene rain tanks at a scattering of unevenly spaced sites, such as Mount Duckworth. Our source is an oddly placed apparatus that I approach with trepidation. The roof of the privy serves as the catchment surface replenishing the adjacent cistern. If only to allay squeamishness over the proximity of the long drop, I filter my ration with a carbon-based hand pump then boil it. Mineral tang tinges tea. Leaving the coven of trees, we witness the ocean's variations on the theme of blue. Steps intermingle with the outlines of snakes in light umber tread. The tempo of joints articulating and quadriceps elongating strikes me as antediluvian, as connected deeply to the land. Near the crimson sands of Quininup, a solitary male kangaroo snoozes in a patch of fragrant bush. When I pause too long, fumbling with my camera, he stands and postures tensely. Trundling up the dune beside him, one boot strains to overtake the other. Descending*

*again, beached kelp crunches underfoot as I traipse along the ocean's brink in a daydream broken unexpectedly by surfers at Yallingup.*

Troubling the modern legal conception of New Holland as *terra nullius*—as empty terrain, nobody's land or “a land belonging to no one” (Attwood 9)—Baudin noted signs of human presence as he sailed north along the treacherous Leeuwin-Naturaliste coast. As historian Bain Attwood clarifies, the doctrine of *terra nullius* became a “powerful sign or signifier in popular discourse” (8) following the landmark *Mabo* decision in 1992 but only entered the public domain in 1978 when a Wiradjuri activist, Paul Coe, in a High Court case, claimed that the British had “wrongfully treated the continent now known as Australia as *terra nullius*” (qtd. in Attwood 8). Attwood further argues that, contrary to the opinion of Captain James Cook, Joseph Banks and other chroniclers aboard the *Endeavour*, Aboriginal people “were neither nomads wandering aimlessly over the land nor a people without laws but rather a sovereign people who regarded themselves as the owners of the land” (10). Thus, the myth of *terra nullius* came to represent, in strongly emotive terms, “the racism that led a colonial society to denigrate and disregard the land rights of Aboriginal people previously” (Attwood 18). Writing in the early nineteenth century, the mariner observed “proof to the contrary” in the form of “fires in various parts of night” (Baudin 162). To be certain, the balga specimens later narrated by Freycinet and Depuch would have played an essential role in the fires observed by Baudin. Forty years after the French expedition, lawyer and diarist George Fletcher Moore would note that the balga's “resinous trunk forms a cheerful blazing fire” (3). As “owners of the land,” the Nyoongar—the Aboriginal residents of the south-west corner of Western Australia from Geraldton to Esperance—needed to maintain an embodied connection to its landforms, animals and plants.

The Nyoongar have the term *piring* for balga gum and applied the substance as a binding agent for fastening quartz or glass fragments to the end of spears (Moore 94). Nyoongar people harvested the flammable resin as a firestarter and also made use of the flower shaft of the species to spark blazes by friction (City of Joondalup 34). One of the fourteen cultural groups of the Nyoongar nation, the Wardandi inhabit a coast-hugging rhomboid of land demarcated by the towns of Bunbury to the north, Augusta to the south and Nannup to the east, and including the C2C environs. After several days of only seeing traces of human activity, on 4 June 1801, Baudin's party encountered a grey-bearded Wardandi elder carrying three spears and a firebrand. Driven by the desire to procure information about natural history, propelled by the colonial French agenda but lacking even a rudimentary comprehension of the local dialect, however, Baudin was ill-equipped to access the complex environmental understandings of the Wardandi whose traditional lands he assayed. In the twenty-first century, Wardandi custodians are retelling narratives in the public domain, helping to ensure the continuity of biocultural knowledge. Compiled from library archives and presented in English and Wardandi, for instance, *Dordenap Boodja Wongki* by Karl Brand, Maree Klesch and Denise Smith-Ali includes the stories “*Boranga Boongoorang: The Great Shake*” and “*Milkibaa Morakoot Boyang: Old Man Rock*,” relating the exploits of ancestral beings and detailing the genesis of supernatural phenomena.

Also unaware of the depth of the indigenous biocultural landscape they traversed, largely because they could not converse with the Wardandi, John Dewar and Andrew Smith in 1831 ventured northbound from Augusta to Port Leschenault (just north of Bunbury), roughly following the modern-day placement of the Cape to Cape Track and keeping within five kilometres of the coast for the duration of the journey. Without a compass but loaded with guns, ammunition, bread, beef, sugar, water and tea, the zealous men commenced before

dawn and often continued by moonlight, covering an impressive thirty kilometres on some days. Between Leeuwin and Hamelin Bay, they came across the bestrewn wreckage of the *Cumberland*, which collided with a reef the year before. Like Baudin, the party apprehended signs of Wardandi presence, including the nearly uninterrupted burnt appearance of the environment from cape to cape as well as “one whale with the flesh still on, but the blubber cut off” (Dewar and Smith 110). By the sixth day, the duo reached Cape Naturaliste where a Wardandi man led them to a brackish spring in a swamp. In places, the limestone landscape was “undulating with fine valleys, well covered with a silky grass, not the kangaroo grass [probably *Themeda triandra*, ubiquitous throughout Australia]; and with plenty of capital springs” (111). However, by the end of summer—they left on 15 March—fresh water was only available sporadically. Invoking the now-antiquated common name for *Xanthorrhoea*, the explorers noted the below-ground formation of the trunks of slender grass trees and distinguished the plant from its more prominent sibling: “The *black boys*, growing in the country we had hitherto passed over, were the underground ones, the rushes of which are not brittle [italics added]” (111). They feasted on the grape-like fruits of coast bonefruit (*Threlkeldia diffusa*), a prostrate herb that sometimes hangs over rocks and dangles above the sea: “We eat [sic] great quantities of this berry, and found it very pleasant; it was agreeably acid” (112). Their bushtucker diet, additionally, consisted of sturgeon, “great quantities of periwinkles, of a large size, which we boiled, and found excellent eating” (113) and Hottentot fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*), an invasive succulent plant that apparently had already made inroads into Western Australia as a stowaway on ships. To be certain, Dewar and Smith’s account underscores the importance of ideas of embodiment and emplacement to understanding historical accounts of the C2C. Rather than distanced commentators, reading the landscape as a visual or aesthetic spectacle, the explorers were physically immersed in the environment they observed. In this sense, as Merleau-Ponty elaborates in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the world becomes “the prolongation of my [their] body [bodies]” (57).

### **Onward Declension: Gracetown to Dune Before Contos Beach**

*Not all C2C camping is backcountry. Some of Australia’s wealthiest towns and resorts grace the way, offering respite following hours up ridges, down dunes, in sun, headlong into wind. I awake at the Gracetown Caravan Park. As my companion and I crossed the boat ramp the evening before, the tendrils of civilisation sank in: the stability of sidewalks, water gushing from taps, goulash at a tourist cafe. At dawn, the caravan park proprietor drives us back to where we left off, give or take a few kilometres. Energised by this headstart, we shortly pass Ellensbrook House, built by the pastoralist Alfred Bussell in 1857 on a black loam clearing near a sweet brook he named after his wife, Ellen. Driftwood, timber, lime, dung and hair were used to construct the homestead. Unhinging our shoulders, we speak with an onlooker, who wants to “knock” the C2C off his bucket list one day. Leaving the historic site and trying to avoid the public gaze, we reach the oasis of Meekadarrabee Falls—“the moon’s birthing place”—where an interpretative board tells of the two lovers, Nobel and Mitanne, who found refuge here. After the warriors of an angry elder speared Nobel, Mitanne was punished and later died from overwork, but was reunited in the afterlife with her paramour: “Waiting in the peppermint trees was the spirit of Nobel. Together they made their way to the cave behind the waterfall at Meekadarrabee to live happily together forever more. It is said that if you listen carefully you can hear their happy voices and laughter.” The lovers still whisper as I traverse the wide mouth of the Margaret River and negotiate rough Cape Mentelle.*

On much larger scales, others too have attempted to formulate literary and cultural histories of walking tracks by, indeed, walking the tracks themselves. The best-known example is Ian Marshall’s book *Story Line* (1998). Examining the literature of the Appalachian Trail,

Marshall (*Story Line* 3) characterises his methodology as “literary geography”—or “literary geohistory”—foregrounding the fusion of literature, history and geology that supplies the organising principle of his study. Marshall also leverages the term “narrative scholarship” to foreshadow his use of the first-person voice to situate himself in the place(s) of the Appalachian Trail and within the American environmental writing tradition (*Story Line* 8). For Marshall, subjectivity is essential both to the literary lineage he studies and to the mode of address he adopts in discussing American works linked to places along—or proximate to—the route. Unlike my C2C excursion (but similar to the Dewar and Smith party in 1831), Marshall plodded the Appalachian Trail from south to north, the commonest direction taken by long-distance trampers departing Georgia in early spring and arriving in Maine months later during the autumn. Through classic works including William Bartram’s *Travels* (1791), Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851), Henry David Thoreau’s *The Maine Woods* (1864) and the poetry of Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg, Marshall argues that—in transgressing social, political and geographical boundaries—the Appalachian Trail represents a literary heritage of places touched by the mountain ridge and its cultures, perambulatory and otherwise. As Marshall suggests, moreover, walking tracks, such as the AT and C2C, show us that “place” is not always an ovoid or rectangular splotch with more or less distinct features on a map. It can take the form of an elongated thread—a woodsy tunnel or sandy inscription—connecting locales dispersed across a vast terrain. Not a static phenomenon, as Tim Edensor puts it, place is “always in a process of becoming” (3) and is “depicted, performed and sensed through its ensemble of normative and counter rhythms” (4). What is more, the becoming of place *becomes* the being and becoming of humans. Tim Ingold explains that “it is from their emplacement in the world that people draw not just their perceptual orientation but the very substance of their being” (144).

The walking and reading of tracks—through embodied emplacement in them—provides a means of understanding interlinked cultural and natural heritage. For de Certeau, walking is a “space of enunciation” (98) in which the inflections of past and present, of human and nonhuman, of mind and body, intermingle. Given the floristic, rather than geological, focus up to now, my approach could be called “literary botany”—or “literary *phyto*history” to underscore the interweaving of plants, history, heritage and literature. In this spirit, the botanical sauntering of Georgiana Molloy comes prominently to mind. One of Australia’s first female plant collectors, she settled initially with her husband Captain John Molloy not far from the C2C near the Blackwood River in Augusta but, in 1839, the family relocated one-hundred kilometres to the Vasse Valley closer to the present-day northern terminus (Barry 1–25). Georgiana’s life shifted drastically when naturalist James Mangles wrote from England to request that she collect seeds of the native plants of the region. Developing a *hortus siccus*—a herbarium of dried specimens—in the remoteness of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste, Molloy extolled the experience of the bush as “one of the most delightful states of existence, free from every household care, my husband and children, all I possess on Earth, about me” (qtd. in White 179). Georgiana’s diary entries verge on the ecstatic and devotional, acutely so after she identified new species or populations: “I discovered a plant I have been almost panting for, a very small neat white blossom, on a furze looking bush ... As the shades of night were commencing, we reluctantly turned homewards when other agremens [amenities or assets] met my eye—what but a grove of *Nuytsia Floribunda*!” (qtd. in White 184).

Georgiana’s green passion—crystallised in her idea of *panting* for plants!—would be lyricized by contemporary writer Alan Alexander in the poem “*Nuytsia Floribunda*,” narrating the tribulations of her efforts to procure of the seeds of the hemiparasitic Western

Australian Christmas tree under the distant encouragement of Mangles: “Warm thoughts of the wilderness. Am I perhaps / A woman loved. All night in this lonely world, / In my scorched kitchen, the gems of my becoming sing” (Alexander 15, lines 22–24). While bipedal travel obviously provided the medium to fulfil her botanical ambitions, Georgiana was limited invariably to circular perambulations close enough to home to enable her to return by dark.

### **Magnetic Deviations: Dune Near Contos Beach to Quarry Bay**

*Unlike the sea-struck Baudin, we locate anchorage behind a dune somewhere before Contos Beach. Although not an approved camping spot, the floor is plush enough and the view of the dying sun unrivalled. Exhausted from beach-walking and parched from southwesterlies, I feel overcome by the temptation to fall asleep in an instant after pitching the tent when two pied oystercatchers snap me from stupor. The wading birds with bright red eyes and legs flit in a brackish river outlet severed from the sea by a sand bank. Schools of doomed minnows inhabit the contracting puddles of water and steal away in unison as I hover above, camera in hand. Walking in stunningly beautiful and wildly remote areas—without a shard of societal infrastructure in sight, except for our own agremens—often provokes conversations (if with another) or reflections (if alone) on “the mundane:” work, romance, some caustic comeback I could have said but, instead, suppressed. And that ongoing verbal assessment of gear—a four-letter word uttered to self, other or elements. Sociologist Mike Michael characterises trekking gear—and, more specifically, walking boots—as “mundane technology” in distinction to “epochal technology” exemplified, for instance, by cameras (representation) and cars (transportation). Michael regards walking boots as adjuncts to the human body that mediate the natural world to the trekker through complex material and semiotic exchanges (114–15). In their potential to cause pain and suffering, however, boots (and the other “invisible” technologies of walking, such as backpacks) intervene materially in the relationship between the trekker and the landscape while facilitating environmental damage caused by plant pathogens and soil degradation (115).*

*The next morning, a solitary Baudin’s cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*)—the namesake of the cantankerous Frenchman—announces his presence. Testing the air, a rotund lizard poses at a split in a granite outcrop beside pink myrtle flowers. Reaching Boranup Forest, our pace quickens beneath mammoth trees on the leeward edge of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste spine. A blood-red burl at the base of one rotten karri inscribes the fact that this locale observes ecological rules markedly different to the wind-swept beaches and limestone crevices of the other side. At Cosy Corner Blowholes, however, I become disoriented at an intersection of several tracks, then deviate completely from the C2C after reading the map incorrectly. Having lost my trekking companion—who was ahead of me when I last saw him—I blow past the turnoff to Deep Dene, where we agreed to camp for the night, and resume the beach slog that is a defining feature of the C2C. Regrettably, I never saw the blowholes. Indeed, for Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, “losing the way is like falling asleep: amounting to a temporary loss of consciousness” (18). It’s going to be a rough night lying supine, wondering if my partner thinks I’ve dropped off an ocean ledge or fallen into a limestone cave. I resolve to see him sometime the next day, with luck. As night drapes down, I walk alone, gradually progressing south towards turbulent Cape Leeuwin where the Indian and Southern oceans meet.*

Although an ordinary transaction between body and environment for most of us, walking is far from a homogeneous pastime. The historian Joseph Amato supports this assertion, for instance, in calling attention to the spectrum of descriptors that discern between hues of



bipedalism: “Passing people are said to slink, slither, stalk, shuffle, slog, trudge, hike, stroll, strut, swagger, promenade, gallivant, jaunt, mosey, wander, peregrinate, amble or saunter” (6). Additionally, *marching* is a genre of walking in which “the body is propelled on a predetermined course ... unresponsive to any kind of interaction with the environment that opens up along the way” (Ingold and Vergunst 13). Bearing the polyvalence of walking in mind, Ingold and Vergunst, moreover, characterise walking as “a profoundly social activity ... in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others” (1). For them, “walking is not just what a body *does*; it is what a body *is*. And if the body is foundational to culture, then walking—or thinking in movement—is foundational to being a body” (Ingold and Vergunst 2–3, original emphasis). While I would claim that I neither gallivanted nor moseyed on the Cape to Cape Track, especially past the intersection to sheltered Deep Dene, I certainly did my fair share of slogging, trudging, sauntering, skidding and, at times, marching, in accordance with the terrain’s demands. Even so, the intensive end-to-end hike—or trek or tramp—undertaken during a period of six days (C2C) or six months (Appalachian Trail) distinguishes the mode from casual practices of walking integrated more seamlessly into everyday life: to the office, in the garden, with the kids, to school and back, up stairs, on a treadmill, through the train station. What is more, *wilderness walking* (for want of a better term) allows insights into, and unmediated experiences of, the lives of nonhumans who require relative seclusion to flourish and who cannot cope as well as other species in the impacted—some would say *denatured*—margins between city and country. Like other books in its genre, Frédéric Gros’ *Philosophy of Walking* picks up on these themes according to the premise that, as a response to capitalist modernity’s obsession with speed and the appropriation of movement by technology (cars, trains, planes, etc.), walking is at once liberating, life-affirming and subversive. Whatever its manifestation, as Gros suggests, the practice of walking intrinsically resists the commodification of space and minimises the destructive implications of petroleum economies (143).

The truth, however, is that we need to stop walking at some point, just as Dewar, Smith, Freycinet and Molloy did—and just as my C2C party of two will do (within a day or so, I hope). For Gros, the inborn joy of perambulation lies in the contrasts between motion (exertion) and inertia (recuperation). In movement’s cessation, the fruits of walking flow forth and become harvestable. From the philosopher’s perspective, these latent physical and spiritual rewards are evident when, after a day spent walking, the trekker simply relaxes: “The body free from hunger and thirst, without aches, the body at rest, the simple feeling of being alive is enough to produce the highest sort of joy, of pure intensity and absolute modesty: the joy of living, of feeling oneself *here*, tasting one’s own presence in harmony with the world’s” (Gros 143, original emphasis).

In *Wanderlust*, originally published in 2000, Rebecca Solnit propounds a comparable thesis, explaining that the history of walking is “an unwritten, secret history whose fragments can be found in a thousand unemphatic passages in books, as well as in songs, streets and almost everyone’s adventures” (3). Following her idea, the significance of explorers’ journals in my effort to formulate a literary purview of the C2C has a basis. For Solnit, above and beyond the cultural history of walking, there is the corporeal history “of bipedal evolution and human anatomy” (3). It is hard to say if the New Zealand-born poet William Hart-Smith, who resided in Perth in the 1960s and 70s, had related ideas in mind when he wrote about his walks in search of mollusc shells. Attracted to Western Australia’s pristine coast, Hart-Smith would have found his conchological interests fulfilled in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste. His poem “Shell-Collecting,” for instance, depicts the speaker sifting through a rock pool for shells,

only to disturb an octopus “who stared at me a moment with I swear / surprise” and then “extended / the tip of a tentacle / and pulled back over his head / his multicoloured shellpiece / pathwork quilt” (Hart-Smith, lines 9–14) .

### **Oceanic Convergences: Quarry Bay to Cape Leeuwin**

*I have run out of food and my water supply is low. This is the last day of the C2C. Cape Leeuwin will be redemptive, especially the café. But, for now, there is much tread ahead of us—many more footprints to impress upon the landscape. In this respect, Ingold and Vergunst understand footprints as “impressions rather than inscriptions” insofar as they register “changing pressure distributions at the interface between the body and the ground” and, thus, are “linked the tactility” (8, original emphasis). I perform morning rituals and deconstruct the tent, set up mid-track on the protected side of a dune illumined by the lighthouse through the night. The impression of my reclining body remains in the sand. I look back, checking for stray items. Tucked away at his authorised campsite, my hiking companion might never know the particular medley of wind-swoosh, bellow and coruscation that penetrated my semi-consciousness until dawn. There is a modern, miniature lighthouse behind a barbed wire fence before a mild ascent to the Augusta Cliffs. Uninterrupted views of Australia’s south-westerly tip unfold as the lighthouse enlarges. When another kiosk appears, I realise this is the home straight. I recall Ingold’s remark that “every trail, however erratic and circuitous, is a kind of life-line, a trajectory of growth” (144).*

*With this in mind, I notice rushes populating the sandy patches between granite loafs. An old waterwheel is beset by algae and encrusted in calcium deposits. The contrivance once pumped from a nearby swamp to supply the lighthouse keeper’s cottage. My arrival at the southern terminus is marked by sightseers who jostle past a garish sculpture of a cow peering through a periscope. I compose myself and make a beeline for the café. Built in 1895, the lighthouse was dedicated by Sir John Forrest, the first Premier of Western Australia. The Anglo-European history of this turbulent point of oceanic convergence, however, goes back much further. In 1627, Dutch cartographer Hessel Gerritsz noted the landmark on his Chart of the Land of Eendracht, inscribing data from the logbook of the Dutch vessel, the Leeuwin, which sailed here five years prior. Historical digressions aside, when my companion arrives three hours later, he discovers me sated fully with the fruits of not-walking.*

Of all the locales along the track, Cape Leeuwin has played the most prominent part in the imagining of the Australian landmass, especially by distant audiences. Reaching the cape on 6 December 1801, the British navigator Matthew Flinders named it as such, “being the south-western, and most projecting part of Leeuwin’s Land,” and described the area as “a sloping piece of land of about six hundred feet in elevation” with a rocky appearance and “a slight covering of trees and shrubs” (49). Like Baudin and other explorers before him, Flinders asserted erroneously that “the general aspect of the country was that of great sterility; not was there, as yet, any appearance of its being inhabited” (50). Having passed cape in his circumnavigation of the continent, Flinders could not have been aware then of the fifty-thousand-year-old Wardandi Nyoongar culture and the extraordinary species richness of the region. Throughout the nineteenth century, Cape Leeuwin and other features of the C2C corridor frequented the treatises of European geographers. Conrad Malte-Brun, for instance, assayed the accounts of Flinders and François Péron, the zoologist onboard Baudin’s expedition, in assembling his ambitious *Universal Geography, or a Description of All the Parts of the World*. Malte-Brun took note of the etymology of the name conferred by Flinders: “That part of New Holland which projects more in a south-west direction, has the

name of Lewin's Land, from the Dutch word for 'the lioness', which was the name of the first vessel that touched at it" (370). Although recognising the aesthetic attributes of the vegetation, he deduced mistakenly that palatable water was unavailable: "The ground, though covered with beautiful trees, particularly the *Melaleuca*, the *Xanthorrhéa* [sic], and a fine close sod, seemed to be impregnated only with brackish water" (Malte-Brun 370). Although a moot point, the geographer's account would have been enhanced significantly by the later reports of trekkers such as Dewar and Smith.

By the time of Malte-Brun and Flinders in the early nineteenth century, Cape Leeuwin had already been popularised through various cartographic depictions and literary renderings. Most notably, the cape provided the model for Lewins Land in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, published originally in 1726. Swift was conversant with the work of William Dampier, who explored the west coast of New Holland in 1699, and he also read the accounts of other navigators and mapmakers of his era (Elliott 9–10). A sketch accompanying the text depicts Houyhnhnms Land due south of Lewins Land with Edels Land to the north and Nuyts Land to the north-east (Swift 214). The satire's last part, "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms," narrates the protagonist Lemuel Gulliver's perceptions of the mythological island's vegetation: "The Land was divided by long Rows of Trees, not regularly planted, but naturally growing; there was great Plenty of Grass, and several Fields of Oats" (Swift 217). It is possible that Swift's placement of Houyhnhnms Land close to Cape Leeuwin reflects his synthesis of a range of disparate sources, including Dampier's narrative of Shark Bay and other areas of the north-west of Western Australia as well as Dirk Hartog's voyage of 1616, public lore surrounding the voyage of the Dutch galleon *Leeuwin* in 1622, the logbook of which was lost, and Gerritsz's grand map published in 1627. Dampier produced the first European record of Australian flora and the earliest botanical drawings of the antipodes, but his expedition diverted to New Guinea well before the Leeuwin-Naturaliste. Swift, nevertheless, would have been compelled by Dampier's responses to New Holland flora, especially the arboreal diversity: "Some of these trees were sweet-smelling, and reddish within the bark, like sassafras, but redder. Most of the trees and shrubs had at this time either blossoms or berries on them" (Dampier 122). The mariner's *A Voyage to New Holland* is prefaced by a map bearing a tantalisingly faint outline of the cape projecting into the sea.

In the late-nineteenth and early- to mid-twentieth centuries, references to Cape Leeuwin as a metonymy for Australian nationhood punctuate the narratives of poets and novelists. In 1891, Rudyard Kipling rounded Cape Leeuwin as the *Valetta* veered northwards to Ceylon (Kennedy and Pinney 54). The sluggish progress of the ship gave Kipling pause to versify the creation of the Commonwealth in "The Young Queen," branded "Kipling's federal poem" (7). Indeed, the British poet alluded fleetingly to the cape in the line "where the clean surge takes the Leeuwin" (Kipling 7, line 10). In this respect, it is important also to mention D.H. Lawrence and M.L. Skinner's jointly-authored enigmatic novel *The Boy in the Bush* (first published in 1924) with its intertextual relationship to *Gulliver's Travels* and, therein, to Lewins Land—both real and imagined. The cape, moreover, served as a stock rhetorical device for poets of the Jindyworobak Movement of the 1930s and '40s. In his epic book-length poem *The Great South Land* (1951), for instance, Rex Ingamells dramatises "grey rollers leisurely sweeping from the Pole / into the sombre Bight and dashing sprays, / in flurry of whiteness over Leeuwin" (155) and elicits the precolonial history of the region in lines such as "the *Leeuwin* found a lone, low-lying Coast / covered with dunes of sand" (164). Ian Mudie, similarly, cast "the Leeuwin's cliffs" in stark contrast to "the roar of Sydney-side" in his poem "Australia's Day, 1942" in an paean intended to uplift the nation during an era of hardship and war (Mudie, line 3). Consider, as a further example disclosing the overlays

between the cape and literary identity, *The Leeuwin*, an early Western Australian journal founded in 1910 by Willem Siebenhaar (friend of D.H. Lawrence) and co-edited by the poet Alfred Chandler.

### **Future Acclivities: A Track's-Eye View of Literature and Culture**

*We arrange a lift to Augusta, the nearest town to Cape Leeuwin. Hobbling around the streets—raw feet and sore muscles symptomatic of “agonised walking” (Michael 117)—I nonetheless feel inspired by this far-flung corner of the country. The Leeuwin-Naturaliste region remains vital to the literary rendering of Australia. David Malouf’s semi-autobiographical novel Johnno (1975), for example, treats sketching the coastline of Australia as an act of both dutiful learning and iconoclastic reinvention, “leaving the spurred heel of Cape Leeuwin so far out in the Indian Ocean that it would wreck every liner afloat, or so close in to the Bight that far-off Western Australia looks as if it’s been stricken with polio” (72–73). Thomas Keneally in The Daughter of Mars (2012) invokes “the sharp lines of Cape Leeuwin in a clear morning rinsed by a furious west wind” (272). In both instances, Cape Leeuwin provides geo-literary anchorage for the articulation of Australianhood. As with the Jindyworobak poets, personal memory interleaves with national identification, including the underlying colonial history propelled by Baudin, Flinders and others. Unlike Keneally and Malouf, however, M.L. Stedman set her novel The Light Between Oceans (2012) fully where “the Indian Ocean washed into the Great Southern Ocean and together they stretched like an edgeless carpet below the cliffs” (3). The central characters, Tom and Isabel Sherbourne, take up residence at an isolated lighthouse where the wind-prone landscape comes to mirror the moral implications surrounding a baby found in a lifeboat. The movie adaptation of the novel was shot in New Zealand, partly to capture the historical seclusion of the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse.*

Notwithstanding their connections to the Leeuwin-Naturaliste, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century works mentioned above invariably lack the immersive engagement with place palpable, for instance, in the journals of nineteenth-century wayfarers. Rather than particularised in their botanical, zoological or geological aspects, C2C localities become generalised in service to human stories. In closing, I suggest that walking supplies a counterforce to the temptation—the conscious or unconscious inclination—to background the natural world in narratives. As a practice of somatic awareness, walking is capable of bringing to prominence the articulations between journey, story, history, body, environment and knowledge. In this respect, Mike Michael asserts that “human knowledge is grounded in the indissolubly corporeal and cultural relation to nature—it is a practical, embodied knowledge that is also inscribed in the landscape and vice versa” (112).

Walking—and all of its synonyms—moreover remind us that, despite the pervasive technologization of movement in the modern era, human being-in-the-world and meaning-making are linked inextricably to the life-worlds of nonhuman others, and to soil, sand, rock, water, sun and sky. Walking is a performative act that comprises “observing, monitoring, remembering, listening, touching, crouching and climbing. And it is through these performances, *along the way*, that ... knowledge is forged” (Ingold and Vergunst 5, original emphasis). The trekking of routes, such as the Cape to Cape, provides an embodied principle for approaching the production of literary histories, such as the one presented in this article. As “tactile, feet-first, engagement with the world” (Ingold and Vergunst 3), walking thus involves creative and critical engagement reflecting our historical interdependence with places, landscapes, environments, habitats and ecosystems.

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