Chapter IV
Advertising and Uluru

"Advertising has become a form of internal cultural colonialism that mercilessly hunts out and appropriates those meaningful elements of our cultural lives that have value" (Goldman, 1992: 8).

As the last chapter has shown, advertising is largely engaged in framing meanings into a currency of signs. This chapter analyses, through a series of case studies, how Uluru has been commodified, imaged and appropriated in the service of advertising. The majority of these advertising images come from the 1980s, the decade of rapid expansion of both tourism and advertising into the centre of Australia (see Appendix 2 and 5) The advertising of the 1980s was marked by what Goldman refers to as *frame reflexivity* whereby "ads now feed on the culture of advertising in the never–ending search for differentiated signifieds that can be used as currency" (Goldman, 1992: 166). Advertising turned on itself using parody, puns and pastiche to project images that are both straightforward and ambiguous. The ideological process of framing Uluru/Ayers Rock was foregrounded and in turn mythologised (a reflexive meta–discourse working) as a second–order signifier. Most of the advertisements below simultaneously de–mythologise and re–mythologise commodity fetishism. Within the discourse of advertising Ayers Rock is Australia's largest commodity fetish. Viewers are now encouraged to actively participate in the decoding process along predetermined semiotic chases. While many of the examples below display the space of interpretation in a self conscious, reflexive play of sign values, the hegemony of the frame remains intact. Any appeal to opening up a discourse of signification is foreclosed by the politics of framing. As the last chapter demonstrated, frames work by steering inquiry away from the structural hegemony of economic, political and social interests which prevail in culture. Instead, mythologies of the referent are substituted for politics of the product. As Goldman neatly phrased it, advertising during the 1980s "turned the real into the ideal" (Goldman, 1992: 200). It is the commercial mapping of idealised images of Uluru/Ayers Rock by the advertising industry that is of concern in this chapter.

The analyses of advertisements often draws on related images from popular culture and elsewhere to place in context and explain how specific advertisements gained currency and incurred criticism from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities across Australia. Any analysis of how images of Uluru/Ayers Rock have been constructed in advertising must consider the ideological process of naturalisation. The term 'naturalisation' concerns the cultural transformation of natural objects. Judith Williamson argues that if a culture is to refer to itself, "it can only do so by the representation of its transformation of nature - it has meaning in terms of what it has *changed*" (Williamson, 1978: 103).

Cultural processing or transformation of natural objects into cultural signs can be termed *cooking*, as Levi-Strauss described it in *The Raw and The Cooked*. In the same way as the raw wheat is ground into flour then cooked into bread, so too are images of nature cooked in culture to be used as part of a symbolic order in advertisements. Once nature has been culturally processed, it is given a meaning which is then attached to the product. Nature is in effect turned into the *natural*. The raw, natural object becomes a symbol not

of Nature but ironically of the culture that has processed it and dubbed it natural. Nature is used in both a symbolic and an imaginary system of creating meaning. The object in nature (the rock) is given meaning by being appropriated into a cultural system of created differences.

We live in a society that likes to process or *cook* most things it consumes. Nature is the primary referent or food-stuff of culture. A culture therefore has meaning in terms of what it has changed in nature. The ideology of culture feeds on networks of images *of* nature which are empty of any real content. In an advertisement, the referent (natural object) is presented *with* the product - they are merged into one image. The product takes on simultaneously the properties of the referent (natural object) and of not-the-object.

Yet this apparent paradox is presented as a natural process and is therefore deemed unquestionable. Judith Williamson makes the point that in ads the natural has the connotation of a *transparency* that "always gives the illusion of getting right there to the bare bones of something; it also implies *proof* simply by *showing*: 'there it is, it must be so.' Everything is revealed, and nothing explained" (Williamson, 1978: 117). Nature is seen therefore as a mirror for the cultural to be reflected in. The currency of the natural increases the further a society moves away from nature through technological development. So the natural is a meaning given by culture to nature, and what constitutes the natural is constantly being rewritten by each generation, depending on what it sees as desirable and appropriate.

Society and advertising in particular, both technologically and ideologically, work on nature to create symbols of *the natural* which are then wed with manufactured products so that meaning can be exchanged between the two. The product comes to symbolise nature and we are always trying not only to buy the product but also to capture it's naturalness.

In summary then, advertisements seek out referent systems of the natural then empty these sites before refilling them with product meanings and values that the reader is urged to buy into.

4.1 "A Taste of Australia": Analysis of the McDonalds Television Campaign.

We've got the best of everything
yeah, Australia's standing tall
our own special taste of Australia
a taste that's got it all

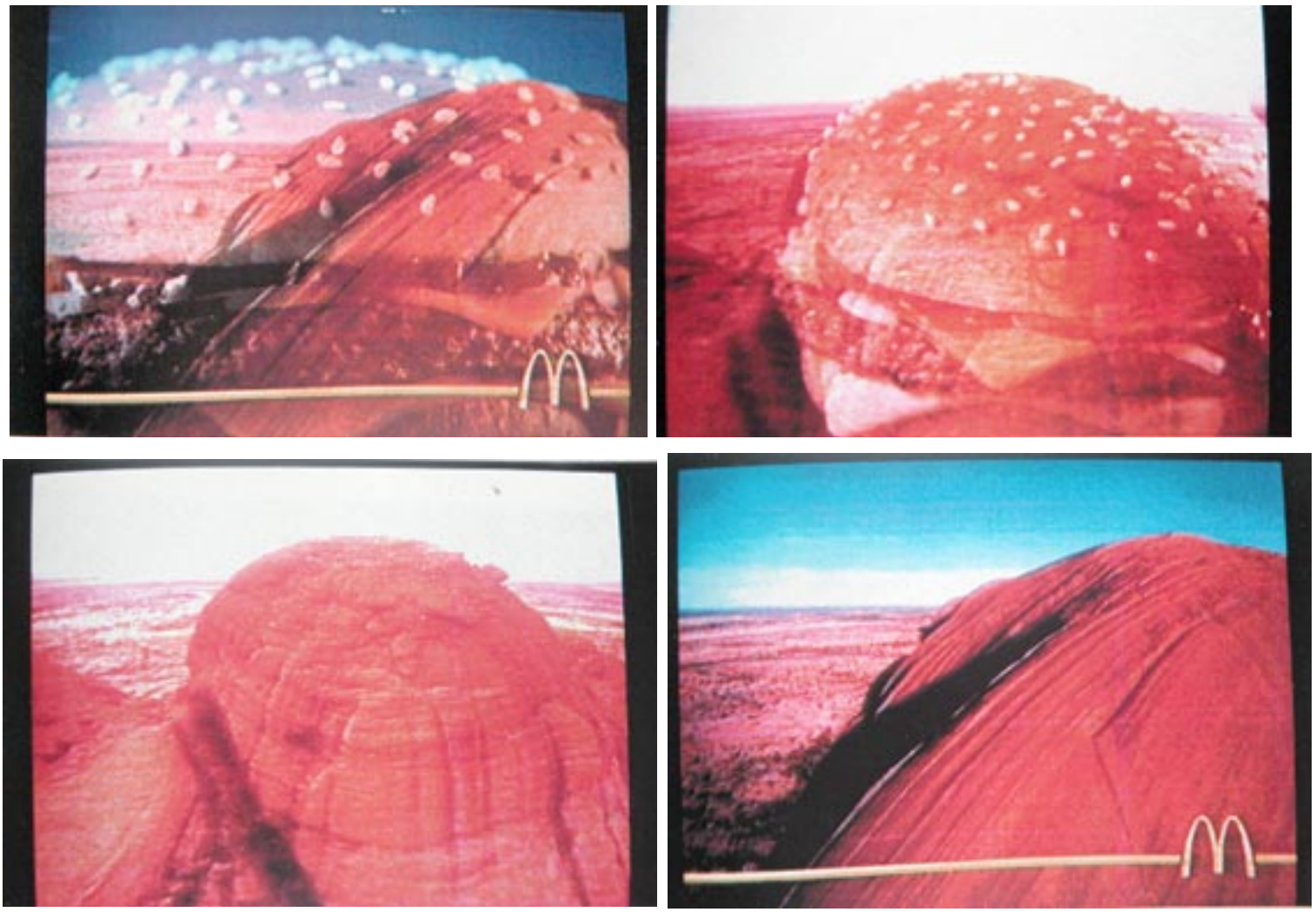
Pure Aussie beef
Tasmanian potatoes make
our fries the best
its a good time for the great taste at McDonalds

We've got the best of everything
a taste that's really ours
everything you see means quality

and McDonalds know just how
yeah, the taste of Australia is here today
and McDonalds good times are coming your way
a taste of Australia is here today at McDonalds.

(Lyrics to *A Taste of Australia*- McDonalds television advertisement produced by DDB Needham, 1984: see video appendix)

McDonalds is a leading player in the world's fast-food economy and a major producer in the Australian market. On advertising alone, McDonalds annually spends over $1 billion world-wide and over $22 million in Australia. During the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic games, for example, the American hamburger giant strategically slotted its messages into the Australian television coverage. The McDonalds advertisement sought to 'Aussie–fry' its public image within the Australian market by linking its product to selected images of Uluru and other famous national landmarks.



4.1- 4.4 1984. - Television commercial.
Client: McDonalds. Agency: DDB Needham.

While this television commercial, (**Figs. 4.1-4.4**) produced by DDB Needham, won an advertising award for excellence at the time, it also angered local Anangu (Aborigines living at Uluru), arguably more than any other advertisement has done, before or since. This campaign, titled *A Taste of Australia*, was seen by Anangu as a violation of their sacred laws regarding Uluru. Simply stated, the advertisement semiotically reduced Uluru to the status of a giant hamburger. The analysis below sets out how this television advertisement strategically appropriated images of Uluru and Kata Tjuta to sell fast food, and in the process, harmed the cultural image of this sacred site.

A Taste of Australia was constructed by melting together images of the Australian outback and American corporate capitalism to produce a form of hamburger internationalism. These images were not simply cut into the flow of familiar tourist scenes; rather, a series of famous landmarks were cooked-up and resold as a product line of outback metaphors. Through a similarity of form, cultural and political differences between hamburger and landform were filmically and rhetorically dissolved into each other. Kata Tjuta dissolves into a Big Mac, the Twelve Apostles into a packet of fries and Uluru into a McDonalds restaurant.

The visual metaphors build up a typology of McIcons through a process of substitution: of name, object, form, content, and location. These various metaphors work to naturalise the McDonalds hamburger's place in the Australian dietary landscape. To naturalise something means to rob it of its history, and fill that gap by importing new meanings and values which key into the local culture and law in a seamless and smooth movement. This process of naturalising the colonising product through the appropriation of national icons wraps burgers, fries and shakes in true blue myths of the pioneer outback spirit. The "taste of Australia" is marketed and naturalised through McDonalds stores. Big Macs are elevated to the level of national symbols which in turn familiarises their taste (McTaste), making them more palatable to the Australian market. The selection of iconic images together with an orchestral soundtrack and anthem-like lyrics acts to mythologise the place and role of McDonalds in the Australian market. McDonalds were following a successful advertising strategy exercised by earlier American companies eager to exploit the Australian market. In the 1930s, for instance, the American company Wrigley's sought to overcome consumer resistance to the perceived "dirty American habit" of chewing gum, by sponsoring the famous Australian radio program *Dad and Dave*, seen at the time to connote all that was Australian in character. John Potts notes that Wrigley's effected, through the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, a "taste transfer" between the "archetypal bush family" in *Dad and Dave* and American chewing gum (Potts, 1984: 8).

The lyrics of the McDonalds advertisement state that their special taste ("a taste that's really ours") also embodies the "special taste of Australia." McDonalds has become the new source of original recipes for Australian nationalism. So what are the steps in this process of burgerising the nation? According to the journalist Dierdre Macken, who enrolled in a hamburger arts course and became privy to the management secrets of the "McBosses," the first step is to become a McDonalds person. This metamorphosis dictates that you "lose your old identity, forget your surname, your background, and your old ideas. McDonalds has no room for competing identities" (Macken, 1988: 32). Once you've forgotten what and who you once were, then you are taught a new language (a learnt lexicon of McWords), a uniform with badges, new methods of behaviour. This new notion of the self extends to a new facial expression, the McSmile. This frozen smile has since been stylised into the Ecstasy logo, the dance-club and street-drug equivalent of the Big M logo - both are coloured yellow and typographically rounded in shape. As Peter Richie, the managing director

of the Australian wing of McDonalds says, “manipulation is more effective than coercion.” This doctrine can be applied to images as well as staff behaviour, architectural designs, real estate ventures and unions (Macken: 34). Whenever poorly paid teenage staff at a McDonalds grow rebellious or stop performing at peak levels, they are pulled in for a ‘rap session’ which involves “the combination bull session, psychodrama and interrogation.” They are then given a copy of the official “McBible” titled *Behind the Arches* , written by Ray Krock, the founding father of the *quarter-pounder* philosophy course. Ray’s political philosophy includes the prohibition of all unions, the absence of anti-discrimination policies and a barring of local cultural practices in the restaurant environment. When asked if he thought the company was turning people into robots, Peter Richie answered that, “we’re accused of creating robots, but doing things by numbers, like in the army, is one of the best ways to operate” (Macken: 34). If people are treated as numbers then hamburgers can be read as so much ammunition to be fired at a target market while their advertisements serve to direct and motivate symbolic raids through a semiotic process of motivating specific signs into a montage or narrative of military–like strategic planning and proportions. In the TV advertisement (see video compilation), the use of helicopter point of view tracking shots, sing–a–long music and general mobilising images of growing, harvesting and manufacturing thousands of burgers in war effort proportions, reinforces the *task force* invasion mood.

One of the political functions of such militaristic images in the service of advertising is to empty symbols of their meaning and substitute new and often opposite meanings in their place. If we analyse the McDonalds sleight of meaning performance a little further, it can be seen that the Anangu significance of Uluru has been kept out of the narrative, and what is retained is the formal properties (the shell/form) of the symbol. In short, Uluru is valued as an object in so much as it resembles the moulded appearance of a hamburger.

Within this economy of hamburger appearances, Uluru is valued not as a unique sacred site within Anangu law, but rather as a popular icon with rhetorical take-away potential. Uluru, a national symbol, is here metonymically located as a unified and condensed ‘essence of Australia’. The Rock stands for the whole of Australia’s natural outback beauty. Linked to this notion of an ‘essence’ is the pun on “a taste” which involves both geographical and gastronomical meanings. “A taste of Australia” includes the “taste of McDonalds” which is reinforced by the visual analogy involving Ayers Rock and a Big Mac hamburger. “*A* taste of Australia” also becomes essentialised later in the advertisement “*the* taste of Australia”. By a neat process of inversion, Australia now tastes *of* McDonalds.

Throughout the advertisement, the Australian landscape is rapidly McFried into separate easily digestible and marketable products. This desire to render concrete “the taste of Australia” can, for example, be found represented in the form of a “kangaroo sirloin, the taste of Australia” which appears on the menu in the Sheraton Hotel at Yulara resort (Pilger, 1989: 165). The visual analogy continues in the television advertisement, with a cut-shot from Uluru to a McDonalds restaurant. Rock becomes restaurant (with allusions to a polystyrene Big Mac container) at sunset.

The keywords “we’ve” and “our” in the opening lyrics form the signifying pivot around which the process of naturalising McDonalds revolves. The words refer collectively to both McDonalds and Australia. Taste and property are here brought together by metaphorically connecting the possession of territory to a desire for “a taste that’s got it all” only at McDonalds. As we fly over Uluru and Kata Tjuta and witness their

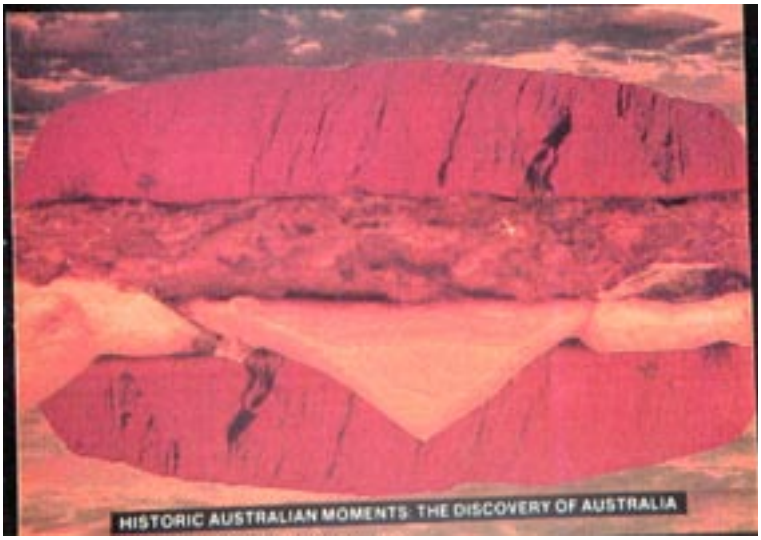
transmutation into take away food products, the lyrics tell us that "Australia's standing tall" as a hamburger or a packet of fries.

The outback is still the advertising heart of our nationalist mythology. McDonalds identified the outback as such and compose a menu of national symbols in the 'take away' service of American owned interests. "Everything you see" in this advertisement "means quality" of product cooked to an ideological (secret) recipe, culturally and technologically condensed then purified, when "McDonalds knows just how." As Judith Williamson has deduced from the structuralist anthropologist Levi-Strauss, "the product, having 'cooked' nature, can then offer a safe passage 'back' to it. It can re-present nature to us in a form where it may be consumed" (Williamson, 1978: 120). In this sense Uluru is represented as canned nature; that is, a cultural re-presentation of nature.

Metaphorically reconstituted as a Big Burger Thing, Uluru is held up as the gold standard of Big Macs across the nation. All hamburgers can now be traced back to the Rock, towards some mysterious, secret truth of hamburger origins. Uluru plays a role, within this fantastic narrative reading, of the Dreamtime Hamburger now solidified (metamorphosed) into a rock. The camera moon–scans above desert sand-dunes then cuts to a shot of flying above a tray of real hamburgers laid out in a military style grid formation. In *McSpeak*, the top of a hamburger bun is called a *hill*. In a mythical sense, McDonalds has reshaped Uluru as a hamburger hill complete with sesame seeds (gibber pebbles) on top.

This *burgerisation* of Uluru in the final few shots of the advertisement superimposes the McDonalds golden arches logo over an old stone arch bridge. The whole scene is bathed in a golden light which, while denoting the golden brown colour of take away food, also has a strong Christian fundamentalist (born again) connotation. Australian taste-buds are now flavoured by the myth of a universal "taste of Australia." The Twelve Apostles landmark is also born again as a packet of fries anchored to the golden arches myth. In the final shots Uluru is also stamped with the Big M logo. Ordained as the largest of all McProducts, Uluru is converted (filmically dissolved) into an eternal quarter-pounder; topped with sesame seeds and dripping "pure Aussie" juices.

Now in the popular imagination, Ayers (Mc)Rock forever offers itself to visitors, as the sign of the hamburger to end all hamburgers signs. The popular postcard (**Fig 4.5**) produced in 1987 by David Arthur

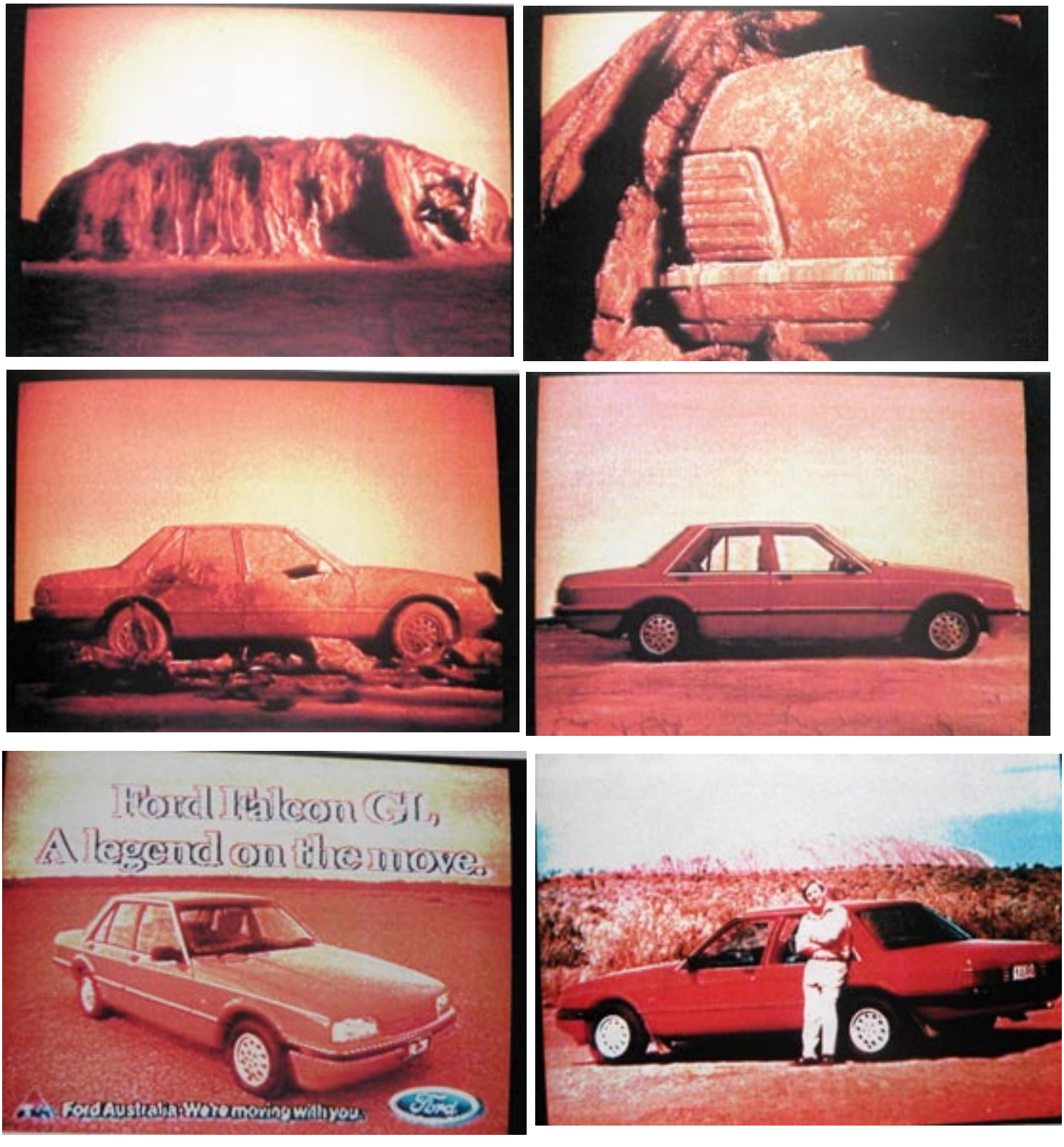


4.5 1987 - Postcard produced by David Arthur Simons.

4.6 1984 - Postcard from the Wonderful Australia series. Published by Galah Greetings.

Simons, titled *Historic Australian Moments: The Discovery of Australia*, shows Uluru as an enormous hamburger waiting in the desert for explorer/tourists to discover it. The colonial dream (image) of the inland precedes the moment of its own discovery. In this indigestible comic parody by Simons, the promised inland gives the explorer/tourists what they wanted on a scale they couldn't consume.

Whereas the McDonalds advertisement dissolved (cooks) one set of commodity values into the image of Uluru, the next example involves the Rock rhetorically giving birth to a new Ford Falcon car.



4.7 - 4.10 1986. - Television commercial. Client: Ford Australia.
Agency: USP Needham.

4.2 A Legend Built to Last: Analysis of the Ford Falcon TV Commercial.

The association between cars and Uluru goes back to the 1930s with the exploits of Michael Terry and *Walkabout* magazine. Since then Uluru has become a regular petrol stop for tourists and advertising agencies alike. The heyday of driving culture in Australia is nostalgically evoked by the collage postcard (**Fig. 4.6**) dating from 1984, showing three 1950s teeny boppers touring at Uluru. As the preferred fun place to drive out to, or back from, the Rock is associated with losing yourself in the act of outback driving. As Baudrillard suggests, "long-distance driving is a spectacular form of amnesia. Everything to discover, everything to erase." (Baudrillard, 1987b: 48) The Ford Motor Corporation exploited the high profile of Uluru still large in the public eye after the 1985 handback controversy. The strategic amnesia performed by Ford in appropriating Uluru concerns the erasure of any Anangu presence or link to the sacred site. Ford had much to gain in the way of long distance marketing strategies and little to lose by way of short-term brand recognition.

From August 1986 through to early 1987, commercial television stations around Australia screened an advertisement which showed Uluru giving birth to a new Ford Falcon car. As with the McDonalds ad before it, the Ford advertisement provoked an angry response from Aborigines around the country who saw this advertisement as insulting to the cultural values of Uluru. In marketing terms, though, this advertisement was seen by the agency responsible (USP Needham Sydney) as "highly successful." The agency did not seek permission to use Uluru in the advertisement, (according to ANPWS files) because, as the creative director of USP (now DDB) Needham, Chris Bailey, stated: "The agency didn't see the rock in the ad as representing Ayers Rock." Given that the two sunset profiles and striated surface markings are the same, there is, however, a striking resemblance between the Ford Rock and Ayers Rock. Another important factor involved in USP Needham not having to request permission to use Uluru as an image in their advertisement, was that they didn't have to go to the Park to film the advertisement; the filming was all done in the studio with models.

There are no regulations that cover the exploitation of Ayers Rock as an image. Regulations are only concerned with on site filming of the Rock within Park boundaries. (See chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of this issue). This question aside, what was the significance Ayers Rock, as a sign, would have in the Ford advertisement? What value could it have to the Ford image in the market? When asked this question, Chris Bailey stated that the Rock "symbolised strength and Australia." What were the Ford values being promoted through the use of the Rock? The main values targeted at consumers were, according to the ad copy, "the family, reliability and the Australian quality of the product." So what then "does it take to make an Australian legend," as the voice over in the advertisement announces in the opening sequences of the TV commercial? And how does this "legend" relate to certain values being promoted through the image of Ayers Rock? To examine the visual and verbal elements within the advertisement, sequence by sequence, is to attempt to answer these questions more accurately.

The advertisement opens with a conventionalised profile shot of Ayers Rock (**Fig. 4.6**). Dawn is breaking from behind the rock. The transition from dark to light can be read as an enlightenment from ignorance to knowledge. Something is to be revealed, history is about to be written. An orange light (the

morning sun) rising behind this rock and illuminates the familiar form of Ayers Rock. As the shadow of darkness peels back from the rock, a stern authoritative male voice asks, "What does it take to make an Australian legend?" There is a hidden pun here on the word legend, which is revealed subsequently as signifying both slogan and myth/story. The use of the pun allows a certain ambiguity of significance to come into play between product (car) and referent (Ayers Rock). This semiotic slippage of meaning is reinforced by the equivalent red colour of both the Rock and the car. In terms of advertising rhetoric, the myth of Ayers Rock and its connotations are substituted in the production of the Ford legend. The Rock is reliable, it's always there, it remains rock-steady ("reliability that goes on and on") and it is a natural part of the Australian landscape. This mythical process masks the actual industrial production processes involved in churning out thousands of American owned Ford cars made in Australia from imported parts on an assembly-line. We are therefore encouraged to see Ford cars as objects naturally *born* of the land rather than as economically and politically driven cultural products. The factory is replaced by the Rock as the metaphoric Ford birthing centre.

In **Figs. 4.7-4.11**, the previously solid Rock is revealed to be a chrysalis holding an automotive butterfly that breaks free to drive the outback highways on its way to the cities. Uluru is now a vessel. Just as all crypts are meant to hold secrets, Uluru is constructed to hold a Ford secret: the secret of driving excellence on Australian roads. The car rhetorically denotes some desert animal awoken from hibernation by a rain storm, to leave the moistened earth and breed. The anthropomorphised Ford car, having been awakened by the right marketing climate, stirs into life to populate the open roads of Australia like some metallic reptile. This automotive break-out parodies and draws currency from a host of techno–birthing films including *Alien, The Hulk* and *Cocoon*. This advertisement has its roots though, in earlier textual references to metamorphic births that involve animating the inanimate such as *Frankenstein* (1931), *Metropolis* (1926) and *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb* (1955).

In European mythology, the anthropomorphism of objects and creatures, all have one thing in common, they all involve a transference and increase of power. The dead come alive, the weak give birth to strong or the good turn evil. In the case of the born–again Ford family car, a metamorphosis takes place whereby the inert rock turns into a shell. The car (legend) is magically pressure–cooked over time from dumb matter like a diamond. The vulcanisation process produces the hardest matter, the toughest car. The larval rock core constitutes the end of matter; with its critical mass always threatening to melt down. In this advertising fiction Ayers Rock marks the end of matter; that point where science fails to fully explain the immensity and mystery of the material and cultural site.

Following the myth of the birthing rock John Bechervaise *holds up* the Rock as "one of the barriers of the world, a veritable end of space. I remember finding myself repeating old childlike words...what lies on the other side of the end of space? How finite is the hard, high rock!" (Bechervaise, 1967: 134). Bechervaise vainly searched for the transcendental answer in the material stone object that marked the edge of his understanding when it came to Anangu culture or even scientific explanations.

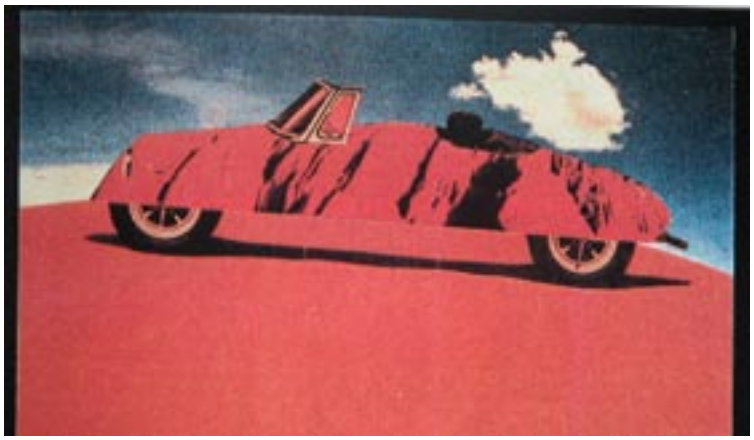
Uluru is emptied of meaning; it cracks up, under the internal pressures of the new; it strives to be set free (exchange value dominating use value) before being refilled and fixed as the Ford Rock, the Australian legend "built to last." Stone, a signifier of nature, is the ancient material of while metal, chrome and glass are the modern materials of technological culture. Stone absorbs while metal and glass reflects. Stone is dull,

rough and unprocessed while car metal is shiny, smooth and highly manufactured. The Kitten Car Polish campaign (**Fig. 4.12**) was produced in the same year as the Ford campaign and in turn drew on the rock–hard durability of the rock's glass–like Arkose surface to sell its tough polish developed for hash Australian conditions. The car is parked in front of Ayers Rock connoting isolation from culture. The culturally cooked polish protects the car's body from the ravages of the raw outback. The Kitten ad differs fundamentally from the Ford ad since it is not the Ayers Rock image that gives meaning to the car product: it is the polish itself that provides an image for defying nature. Kitten polish resists the forces of time, sun and the weather just like Ayers Rock has done. The presence of Ayers Rock is a sort of consumer's guarantee that the polish really does work. Judith Williamson notes that:

> The more 'civilised' and controlled our lives become, precisely because of such products – mechanical, accurate, labour–saving – the greater the need to compensate, by reintroducing danger and excitement in the surrogate form of advertising 'adventure stories' (Williamson, 1978: 130).

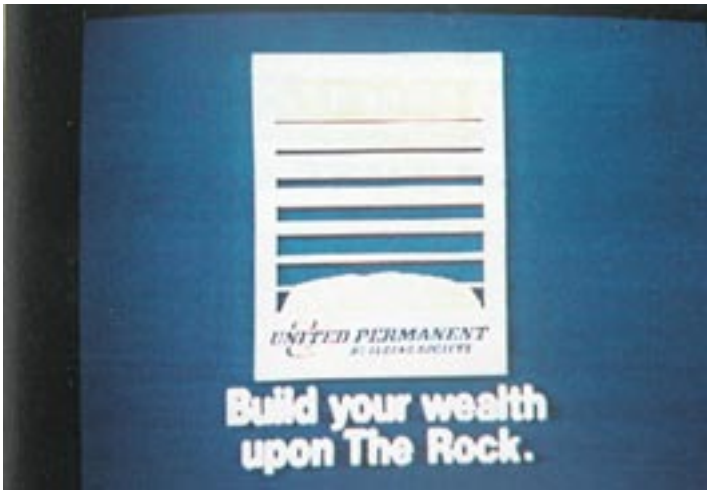
The Ford adventure story involves driving a car in the city that was born of the land. This car myth is faithful to the Sleeping Beauty and Rip van Winkle fables. The kiss of the consumer raises the car from its terrestrial slumber. Held in a form of suspended auto-animation (cultural cryotology) "while others have come and gone", the Ford car (legend) has been waiting for the right moment, as it were, to magically burst onto the market, in the tradition of Excalibur, the stone-bound sword. Instead of Sir Lancelot we are given the nuclear family with mum at the wheel, driving the legend from the outback towards the city. It is as though all Ford cars are hatched from Uluru (the outback factory warehouse) to migrate to the coastal urban centres like a miraculous breed of aliens with a mind of their own and a mission to never stop moving. "Right across this big country" Ford Australia, the friendly alien, is "moving with you." The metaphoric brand name of Falcon, a bird/car of prey, has been an ongoing symbol of Ford cars in Australia for years.

Cars have until recently been metaphorically linked to animals: Jaguar, Hawk, Colt; and much of the advertising of these cars has been geared to naturalising cars in terms of animal characteristics: myths of speed, freedom of movement, power and aggression. Ford Falcon connotes both speed ("on the move") and freedom of movement ("right across this big country in comfort") which are the two dominant myths of touring by car on Australia's open roads. Touring signifies leisure; the middle class pastime of travelling to various scenic spots such as Ayers Rock with the luxury of having time on your hands. Ayers Rock here also signifies both a centrifugal point of departure and a centripetal destination centre.

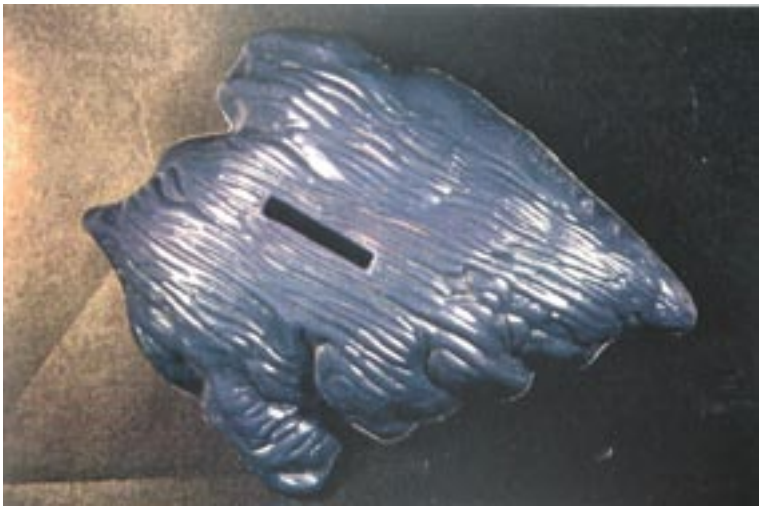


4.13 1987. - Postcard from the Historic Australian Moments series. Published by David Arthur Simons.

The final image of the Falcon (**Fig. 4.10**) is that of the show-room display shot which portrays the car in isolation. In a completed metamorphosis we see not Ayers Rock on the outback horizon but the empty new car waiting for you, the consumer, to take possession of the legend and drive/fly it away. In the year following the Ford campaign there appeared a postcard in the *Historic Australian Moments* series published by Sydney–based graphic artist David Arthur Simons. **(Fig. 4.13)** While there is no direct link between Ford and Simons, these two texts both make use of the Rock to motivate the concept of travel. Simons inverts the Ford convention of driving out to the Rock. Uluru does the driving with its stasis overturned as in the popular TV children's cartoon *The Flintstones*. The Simons image can be read as illustrating an anxiety of losing a fixed central marker of Australia's nationalism to foreign automotive corporations or simply as the desire to commodify a national icon in terms of its automotive worth within car culture. Simons' postcard is ironically playing on the idea of a truly Australian car capable of handling the harsh outback conditions.



4.15 - 4.18 1981. - Television commercial. Client: United Permanent Building Society. Agency: McCann Erickson. Produced by Ross Wood Film Productions.



4.18 1970. - Plastic money box promotion for the Ayers Rock Hotel.(a similiar box was sold by United Permanent Building Society during the early 1980s).

4.3 The Money-Box: United Permanent Building Society.

The first television campaign to feature Uluru as an advertising prop was for The United Permanent Building Society. Produced through the agency McCann Erickson in 1981, it was filmed by Ross Wood Film Productions and approved by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. This advertisement symbolically linked Uluru to the world of finance.

Uluru also featured in a series of advertisements for United Permanent, and was adopted as the Building Society's logo and slogan, which called upon customers to "Build your wealth upon the Rock." In order for the image of Uluru to be appropriated as the United Permanent Rock, the history of this famous Australian landmark was reconstructed in terms of its financial connotations. To do this the advertisement drew upon the myths of Ayers Rock as a solid, permanent, solitary and massive touchstone within the Australian cultural psyche. As Sanders states, "Ayers Rock is security, stability and centrality," and these three connotations of the Rock are also the well worn advertising principles of selling the banking industry to the market (Sanders, 1988: 141).

This "new symbol for United Permanent" then becomes, rhetorically, Ayers Rock the permanent moneybox, as evidenced by the thousands of plastic moneyboxes in circulation at the time **(Fig. 4.18)**. With the Australian economy in a slump during the early 1980s, the banks needed to stress rock-solid saving policies rather than asset liquidity, as was the case later in the decade. A motel at Ayers Rock also produced plastic moneyboxes around the same time, perhaps cashing in on the currency of the United Permanent campaign. Changing Ayers Rock into a moneybox symbol in the minds of consumers required a semiotic melt-down to take place at the level of myth. Represented as a united and permanent piece of real estate, Ayers Rock is metonymically reduced to the status of a miniature moneybox. Having semiotically connected Ayers Rock with a plastic moneybox, we cannot remove the connotation of the Rock from the realm of investment capital. In America, the huge Prudential insurance company has long used the (solid as the) rock of Gibraltar on its logo for the same reasons as United Permanent appropriated Ayers Rock.

In the United Permanent television advertisement, the image of Ayers Rock is preceded by some opening shots of central Australia circa "1,500 million years ago." A sea of molten lava crashes against rocky outcrops. From a hot soup of liquid rock and toxic gases, "a symbol is born." As the sun rises to cast its golden glow across the outback, we are told that this strange rounded landform is a symbol for a Building Society. At no time during the advertisement is it mentioned that this rock is Ayers Rock or Uluru. The absence of the proper noun allows the history of Uluru and/or the history of colonisation, symbolised by Gosse and Henry Ayers, to be sublimated into and displaced by the United Permanent Rock.

If this advertisement is broken down into its constituent elements we can better understand how this rock is constructed as a symbol for capital investment. Within the transformation from molten lava to solidified monolith, a number of stages of petrification take place. In each stage of this allegorical birth of a symbol a banking metaphor is set in motion. Liquid assets converted to cold hard cash; the rock cave commonly known as *the wave* lends it's form to an investment wave; the solid rock pun is an asset counted towards a "rock-solid financial reputation." This rhetorical cooling process freezes metaphor into symbol and the strong currency of these outback symbols provide the semiotic finances to back the united and permanent investment organisation.

The singular and massive weight of the Rock appeals to investors searching for some Fort Knox amongst Building Societies. This stand-alone-against-all-odds connotation attributed to Ayers Rock can be found mentioned as far back as 1945 when the naturalist and writer Finlayson declared that:

> Everything about it is huge; but it is not this alone which makes it so impressive, nor even this added to its utter unexpectedness, its isolation, and its brilliant red uniform coloration. Underlying and reinforcing all these impressions is a sense of the oneness of the Rock - its purely monolithic character. It is without seam or cleavage; a great pebble, as truly integral as the smallest that one might pluck from a river-bed (Finlayson, 1945: 33).

Ayers Rock appeared initially in the United Permanent Building Society advertisement as an apparition on the flat horizon, without reference to time or scale. Signifying a certain nervousness surrounding investment security, Uluru remained in the distance as the camera rushed towards it, signifying the indeterminacy (a great pebble) of a deposit growing or eroding. Ayers Rock was an elusive goal, a pot of gold that initially seemed always just out of reach as represented by the rapid time-lapse photography. In the delirious rushing towards the rock (through time), the reader/potential investor is semiotically transported into the centre (banking pre–history) of indifference: where market fluctuations matter little and the only permanent truth is the solidity of rock. Once at the rock the remythologisation of United Permanent begins to take shape.

The financial advertisement is concerned to establish a history for the United Permanent Building Society that is as united and permanent as the Rock itself in order to reassure investors that it will be a safe and secure place to deposit money. Overtly, this is done by graphically superimposing "$600,000,000" over an image of Ayers Rock while the voice-over states that the building society has "$600,000,000 in gross assets". Figuratively, this can be read as meaning that, on the one hand, the building society has gross assets as big as the Rock (a mountain of money), and on the other hand, that the rock is itself worth "$600,000,000". By investing your money in United Permanent, you are investing in a national symbol, the advertisement seems to imply. These gross assets, upon which your money builds, are "secure in mortgages

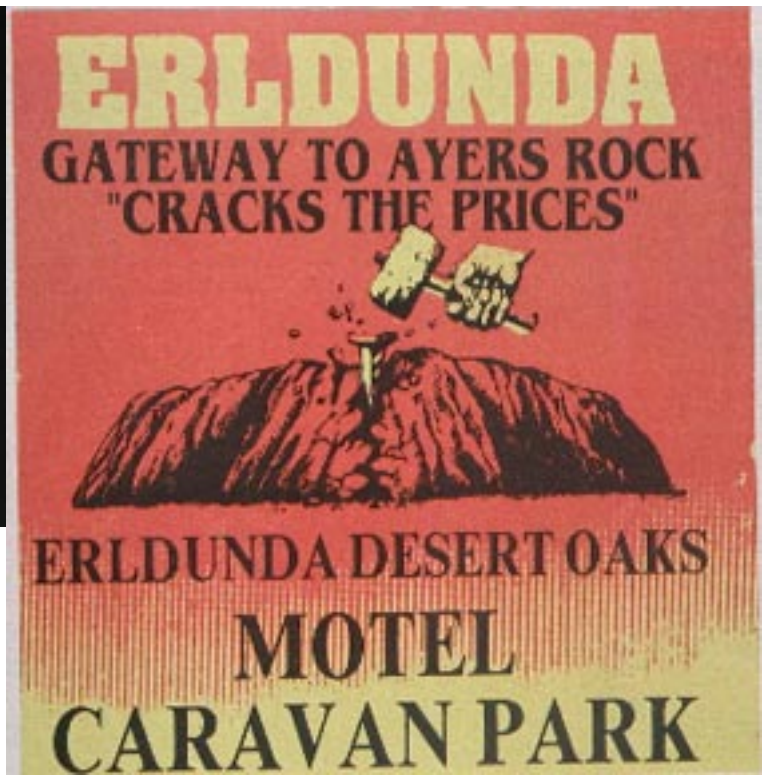
and government subscribed securities" that can form the solid ground (Australian soil) base that supports the Rock of your interest bearing deposits.

The last stage of the symbolic process involves fixing the Rock as a naturalistic or iconic image. The flattened profile of Ayers Rock is then graphically reduced to a stylised logo. The Ayers Rock logo is sectioned by horizontal bars that can be read as denoting the various layers of profit that can be "built upon the Rock": the sedimentation of capital deposits over time.

In 1981 at a time when Building Societies were seeking to establish themselves in the financial market and small investors were searching for higher interest rates, advertisers turned to the desert in search of prophets that could supply creative answers to the riddle of economic uncertainty just prior to the recession of 1982. Ayers Rock proved to be a highly successful choice for United Permanent Building Society in terms of brand awareness. The high profile association with Ayers Rock could not however, prevent the Building Society finally going out of business in the stock market crash of 1987. Even so, the dramatic impact the advertising campaign had on the public meant that other agencies would make the trek out to the Rock in an attempt to recapture the success of the United Permanent vision.

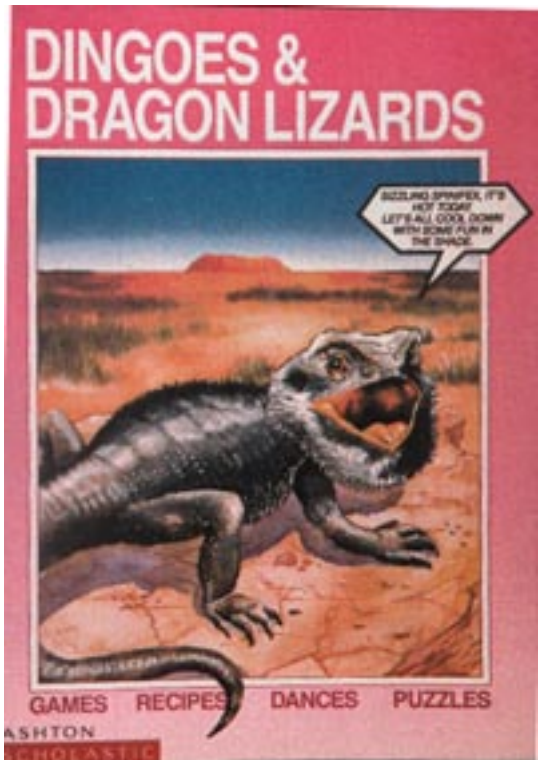
Images of anthropomorphic Ayers Rocks seemed to becoming a fashion in 1981 when the advertisement for Soothers Cough Drops joined United Permanent on the hoardings and TV screens. Figuratively, these two advertisements were the Gosse and Giles of marketing, rediscovering Ayers Rock for the new nationalism of the 1980s led by Hertz Walpole and Mojo with support from Clemengers and McCann Erickson amongst others. Images of transformation in advertising reflected and reinforced other images of change in Australian economic and cultural fields including the *Life*. *Be in it* campaign; Azaria Chamberlain case; internationalisation of global markets; move from Liberal to Labor government and the first stirring's of the republican movement.

4.19(a) 1987 - Print logo Client: Hytest Square Mouth Shovel, Trojan Australia



4.19(b) 1991 - Promotion logo for Erldunda Desert Oaks Motel Caravan Park, Northern Territory.

4.20-4.21 1981. - Television commercial. Client: Soothers Cough Drops, Allens-Lifesavers. Agency: Clemengers.



4.22 1988. - Front cover graphic. Dingoes & Dragon Lizards by Brian Mackness. Published by Ashton Scholoastic Pty Ltd.

4.23 1986. - Frillyneck Lizard Hologram Jewellery Box produced by New Dimension Holographics.

4.4 Sucking Rocks: Soothers Cough Drops.

The Allens–Lifesavers legend of the gigantic outback lolly **(Fig. 4.20)** is a repackaging of Anangu creation myths (see Mountford: 1950, and Harney: 1968). Reading this surreal confection of myths, Ayers Rock signifies the larval stage in a metamorphosis towards a packet of Soothers Cough Drops. By drawing upon the myth of the divine birth, Soothers Cough Drops are raised to the level of an immaculate conception in the desert, ordained from the heavens and given life by the lightning bolt that touches the Rock during a storm. Such a vision plays on the Seven Visions in the Book of Revelation:

> There came flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, an earth–quake, and a violent hailstorm. After that there appeared a great sign in heaven: a woman robed with the sun, beneath her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was about to bear a child, and in the anguish of her labour she cried out to be delivered (Rev. 11: 19).

The Soothers revelation substitutes a packet of cough drops for the heaven–sent child. The semiotic exchange between first order (rock/Tablet/drop) and second order myth (sacredness/secret medicinal property) connotations finds that Soothers Cough Drops have metaphorically been charged with the spirit (medicinal powers/magic potions) of the red heart. The moral lesson from this desert parable is that a dry sore Australian throat needs a uniquely formulated outback medicine to clear those blocked urban passages.

The Soothers creation myth unfolds like an Aboriginal Tjukurpa story. The frill necked lizard (a popular tourist souvenir image **Fig. 4.22–4.23**), cockatoos, flowers and the elements all lend a hand in this narrative performance.

Cockatoos fly above, screeching out a warning of some foreign agent's appearance. A bearded-dragon lizard while seeking to escape the drought, bears a large mouth to utter in a hissing voice a raspy sound which we identify with as a "dry sore throat." As the drought intensifies the cracking of the earth (throat), we see the word SOOTHERS appear on the side of Ayers Rock. The rock/packet is represented as a dried-out useless object gripped by the harsh outback elements. By analogy, as the drought is broken by the onset of the wet season, so too is the dry sore throat soothed through the action of cough drops (of medicated waters). The lightning strike brings with it the life-giving rains, and the word/spell/incantation of the magic logo, a vision of a new product. Filling the dormant rock/packet with energy, a bolt of lightning strikes the rock/packet (as in the film *Frankenstein)*, giving it a glowing animate appearance (medical aura), charged with the role of an alchemic agent in the fight against sore throats.

The appeal to thunder and lightning, as signifiers of divine intervention or supernatural powers working at Uluru, was also employed to illustrate a 1970 poem titled *Night After Bushfire (From "Woman to Man")* by Judith Wright in *Australia Today* (**Fig. 4.22**). In Wright's poem Uluru signifies change, death and fear for "Man" after a bushfire that can also be read as a metaphor for the colonial invasion that swept the land:

> There is no more silence on the plains of the moon
> and time is no more alien there, than here.
> Sun thrust his warm hand down at the high noon,
> but all that stirred was the faint dust of fear.
>
> Charred death upon the rock leans his charred bone
> and stares at death from sockets black with flame.
> Man, if he come to brave that glance alone,
> must leave behind his human home and name.
>
> Carry like a threatened thing your soul away,
> and do not look too long to left or right,
> for he whose soul wears the strict chains of day
> will lose it in this landscape of charcoal and moonlight.

Wright's poem makes no direct reference to lightning and perhaps the editors of *Australia Today* felt that an image of Uluru in an electrical storm dramatically supported the text. The image of Uluru being struck by lightning is a pastiche of the Biblical reference to Mt Sinai. Storms on Mt Sinai symbolised Moses bringing the people to meet God at the foot of the mountain. God then called Moses to the top of the mountain: At dawn on the third day there were peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense cloud on the mountain, and a loud trumpet–blast; all the people in the camp trembled (Exodus 20: 18).

Perhaps some of the power of Ayers Rock for the Australian Christian–based culture also stems from the warning God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai: If you make an altar of stones for me, you must not build it of hewn stones, for if you use a tool on them, you profane them (Exodus 20: 22).

In the Soothers campaign version of Exodus, the glowing Rock mountain turned molten fire, rhetorically playing on anthropomorphic references to God/Dreamtime spirits speaking in voices of thunder. Ayers Rock is transformed into a tiny, individually wrapped Tablet that cures sore throats, signified by the signs of health: flowers and bird–song. The hyperbolic encapsulation of the large spirit-filled Rock into the small scientific lozenge is made possible by a sleight of signifieds. The signifier (rounded form) remains constant; while the signifieds (rock/lolly) are switched or, in film terminology, lap dissolved. The Soothers campaign set a precedent in TV advertising representation of Uluru by metaphorically rendering it a hollow or soft centred object. A number of subsequent campaigns analysed in the following section together constitute a genre referred to in this thesis as the hollow rock myth.

4.24 /25/27 1981. - Television commercial. Client: Soothers Cough Drops, Allens-Lifesavers. Agency: Clemengers.

4.26 1970. - Photograph used to illustrate a poem by Judith Wright. Published in Australia Today.

4.28 1987. - Print advertisement.
Client: Kenlow (Ined Welding Plastics).
Agency: Cogent.

4.29 1987. - Chocolate-box cover for Pacific Gold (Macadamia Plantations of Australia).

4.5 The Hollow Rock.

Non-Aboriginal mythologies of Ayers Rock have expressed, through anthropological studies, popular literature and tourist brochures, a fascination with Anangu beliefs concerning Uluru and its various Tjukurpa stories. Advertising has also appropriated these Anangu stories for specific commercial ends. Judith Williamson noted that at the level of connotation "a product is placed within a hollowed-out knowledge, and draws its significance from that" (Williamson, 1978: 102). In terms of signification and the logic of commodification, the commodity form of Ayers Rock is hollowed–out or abstracted, appropriated as an appearance and reformed into the commodity–sign of a giant Lotto ball (**Fig. 4.30**) or a chocolate covered nut (**Fig. 4.29**). The commodity–sign is a composite of a signifying unit (photograph, sound, word or object) and signified meaning (the mental image) suggested by the signifier. The relationship between signifier and signified is not fixed and emerges out of social practice. As Ayers Rock is metamorphosed into a commodity–sign it "splits into quality and quantity, matter and form, use value and exchange value" (Lefebvre, 1971: 95). Since advertisements are more concerned with form (the *look*) of Ayers Rock than with its cultural significance, the value of Ayers Rock to advertising lies in its measure of *equivalence*. The term equivalence is here used in its Marxist sense: that is, the use value of Ayers Rock is subordinated to its exchange value. Therefore, the value of Ayers Rock depends on how much its characteristics are comparable to those of a product. Walter Benjamin linked equivalence to his notion of *aura* surrounding works of art. Following Benjamin's logic Ayers Rock loses its aura or uniqueness given by its singularity in time and space which is the hallmark of its authenticity. When reproduced in endless advertisements the uniqueness of Ayers Rock becomes a matter of indifference in so far as every image is equally exchangeable:

> To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose "sense of the universal equality of things" has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction (Benjamin, 1969: 223).

The aura of Ayers Rock is culturally transformed within a symbolic system of exchanges that can then be transferred to a product. Therefore Ayers Rock "has meaning in terms of its relationship with what has transformed it, but is not valued in itself. Thus the 'raw' natural object becomes in this context a symbol, not of nature, but, ironically and in alienation from its original place, of that culture that has worked it over" (Williamson: 104).

In all advertising scenarios relying on a hollowed Rock form, the empty shell of meaning is rapidly filled and transformed with a variety of products that convey the fantasies and fears of those agencies who carved out its interior. Advertising mythologies have played on the idea of Ayers Rock working like a magician's hat from which appeared a range of products illustrated above (cars, hamburgers, chocolates, cough drops).

The shape of the economy has been metaphorically moulded into the form of a rusty nineteenth century Ayers Rock factory. At the heart of the country lies an ancient factory metonymically signifying the outdated manufacturing base Australia possessed against the adverse market forces of 1988 (**Fig. 4.32**) In the midst of economic hardship the only bright spot was the healthy state of the tourist economy that recommended that we could "go to the red centre without going into the red." The line graph of debts incurred by those tourists who had made the trip, also followed the template of the Rock's profile (**Fig. 4.33**). A profile that forms an cardiographic horizon line for the nation's economic health that constitutes a blip on the international futures market graph.

4.30 1989. - Print promotion for Lotto Holiday Competition for Travel Agents.

4.31 1985 - Label for UTH Milk (Dairy Farmers-Kraft) Packed by Allan Roberts.

Ayers Rock also lies at the horizons of epispastic thinking and at the beginning of temporal epiphany's for Kenlow, the welded plastics company. In the business of lining dams across the outback, Kenlow used a visual pun to raise the Rock to the status of an enormous ready-made plastic mould. This ancient Rock-mould (fixed as an inverted and petrified rock) rhetorically manufactures dam-liners ideally suited to the harsh outback conditions. (**Fig. 4.28**) Isolated from any historical context, these commercial signs of Ayers Rock 'float' free of any political baggage to inform and supply the values of commercial products: be it the latest model car, medicinal cough drop or soft drink. In its paradigmatic dimension, Ayers Rock is rendered inert, frozen in a pure state of some Rock 'essence'. The meaning of Ayers Rock is then syntagmatically compressed into, for example, the UHT milk narrative (**Fig. 4.31**) or alternatively blown up into an enormous dam–liner fantasy. As a sign of nature, the Rock is pressed into the domestic service of commodification to mark out the ever expanding boundary of the naturalised (symbolic) suburban environment.

4.32 1988. - Front cover of Australian Business (August 4). Illustrated by Scott McDougall.

4.33 1990. - Print advertisement for Access Australia, Southern Cross Travel and Tourism Management. UK Traveller's Guide, 14thEdition, p.105. Australian Tourist Commission.

4.34 1989. - Print advertisement for Victa Motor Mowers. (in U.K. only).

4.35 1988. - Print advertisement. Client: Boutique Lacoste. Agency: Mattingly.

4.6 Rock, House and Garden

The appearance of water still was wanting [and is all that is needed] to turn a wilderness into a garden (Giles, 1889: 159).

This section analyses a number of advertisements and popular images that appropriate Uluru in terms of suburban or domestic mythologies. As the outback fills up with various commercial and private enterprises that extend the urbanisation process ever outward from the cities, the more the suburbs turn to face the desert for reassuring images of identity. The more crowded and alienating the suburbs become, the more advertising turns to fantasies of being a Marlboro–style cowboy: he is a mythical figure who roams with the nomadic drovers and Aborigines, finding honesty between mates while camping out in fresh air under the stars at night. A recent billboard advertisement (1993) for Marlboro cigarettes shows a lone Toyota land cruiser wagon parked in front of Kata Tjuta (The Olgas). The car has replaced the horse as the signifier of nomadic independence.

Advertising and tourist industries have frequently inscribed Uluru using domestic analogies. This practice of rendering unusual outback phenomena more familiar has a literary precedent in the previously mentioned journals of Ernest Giles who seeded his journal with the romantic poetry of Byron to add a dramatic emphasis to his conscious and subconscious images of the outback. At one campsite for example, Giles paraphrases Byron's 1813 poem *Childe Harold*'s *Pilgrimage* after dreaming of an outback tamed by romantic images of

> ... fabulously lovely glades, with groves and grottos green, watered by never-failing streams of crystal, dotted with clusters of magnificent palm-trees, and having groves, charming groves, of the fairest of pines, of groves "whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm" (Giles, 1889:167).

4.36 1988.- Painting by Sally Swain. “Mrs Dali Hangs Out the Washing” in Great Housewives of Art. Published by Grafton Books, Sydney.

4.37 1975. - Stock photograph from Australian Tourist Commission slide library.

4.38 1990 - Print advertisement for Selkirk Brick.

In **Fig. 4.38**, the Selkirk Country Clay Bricks advertisement tells us to “stimulate your imagination ... your landscaping dreams come true with the extensive selection of colours and textures.” By placing these paving stones in front of Uluru, the suburban dream of owning a little bit of the outback finds a concrete expression. The urban backyard extends to the foot of Ayers Rock (the mother of all paving stones), that functions as the fictional origin (quarry) of all bricks. These bricks bring home the exotic Outback to your backyard so that you can “go walkabout” without leaving your urban lot. You can feel “at home in any Australian backyard” with Selkirk’s metonymic *Ayers Bricks* (your very own bit of Ayers Rock).

As frontier pavers with a proven track record, Selkirk reassure us via their advertising copy that “if we can handle their outback, we can handle yours.” The wildness of the outback is here something to be conquered and laid out in a neat concentric pattern that controls the experience of leisure (“at home”) while allowing the fantasy of a nomadic lifestyle free-range within the cultural framework of any suburban backyard.

The chaos of native weeds and bush scrub is also reduced in **Fig. 4.34** to the neatness of European notions of horticulture that speaks of greening the desert with a grassy sameness that ironically overgrows the fears associated with the outback as an empty wasteland. The recent (1992) *Zest* garden fertiliser campaign showed a burst of flowers growing in a parched desert with Uluru in the background. The slogan "Zest For Life" played on the raw empty waste transformed by the scientifically designed product. There is also a Biblical connotation to the Old Testament Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "let the wilderness and the parched land be glad, let the desert rejoice and burst into flower" (Isaiah 35: 1). Planting flowers blessed with Zest in the desert extends the private Selkirk courtyard to the foot of Uluru. This is the restoration of the Garden of Eden image in the New Jerusalem outback. The advertising fiction of urbanising the empty centre demands that we also "turn grass into lawn" with a new Victa Motor Mower. Victa lawn-mowers are sold to the English market, in this advertisement, as rugged frontier machines that turn unruly nature into urban culture.

This desire to find the suburban dream in the outback can be found as early as 1934 with Errol Coote, who sought to domesticate Uluru, by giving it the appearance of an enormous garden object such as a gnome, rockery or hibachi. At its base he found "cool green lawns that would have graced any suburban home stretched from the base of the Rock for several hundred yards" (Coote, 1934: 209). Having mown the lawn, the next role for Uluru as a backyard metaphor is that of clothes line.

In **Fig. 4.35**, the French clothing company Lacoste hangs its T-shirts out to dry on a bush telegraph line. The Uluru pole holds up and anchors Lacoste's product by way of a visual pun (line/alligators next 500 km) to both the Australia landscape and clothing market. An alligator *metalepsis* is performed in the highway road sign whereby the driver/reader is warned to beware (on the look-out for) of boutique T-shirts for the next 500 kilometres. In 1988 a T–towel was produced by Lodwick Campbell titled Older then the Hills that showed a familiar backyard scene of a woman hanging out the washing on a Hills Hoist clothes line in front of the big hill of Uluru. The surreal image of the outback planted with clothes lines was picked up at the same time by Sally Swain **(Fig. 4.36)**, who parodies Salvador Dali's famous surrealist allegory *The Persistence of Memory* (1931). Mrs Dali in Swain's painting hangs out the soft watches to dry with Uluru in the distance. Swain's feminist parody of Dali also conforms to the myth of Uluru lying at the edge of empty space in which time is at an end. In Dali's painting, the barren landscape, without horizon, drifts into infinity in a land lit by a never setting sun. Dali's metaphysical dream is Swain's domestic nightmare. In a land where time goes limp, Mrs Dali's arm and body has metamorphosed into a dead branch turned robot. The extended arm in Swain's painting is reminiscent of Australian artist Russell Drysdale, famous for his 1940's paintings of outback life including *The Drover's Wife* depicting a lone woman standing defiantly against an unforgiving desert environment. Drysdale's dried-out static figures grew to look like the twisted junk and gnarled dead trees that keep them company in his unforgiving sparse outback landscapes. Swain's dreamscape parodies the old European wasteland myth while Drysdale marks the empty centre as a place where the dream of the suburban backyard can never be fully realised.

Another genre of suburbanised images of Ayers Rock moves from the claustrophobic backyard to the inside security of the domestic home. The alienating country is mediated by the window frame. These images are usually concerned with a woman performing some service role while Uluru looms outside. An Australian Tourist Commission stock slide of 1975 (**Fig. 4.37**) for example, shows the domestic comforts of campervan cooking parked next to Ayers Rock. The photo demonstrates that at a time when roads were not the best, the comforts of home could still be had at the Rock.

4.39 1984. - Postcard from the Wonderful Australia Series produced by Galah Greetings.

4.40 1984. - Postcard from the Wonderful Australia Series produced by Galah Greetings.

4.41 1989. - Print advertisement. Client: Caroma Bathrooms. Agency: McCann-Erickson.

4.42 1981. - Television advertisement. Client: United Permanent Building Society. Agency: McCann- Ericksen

4.43 1981. - Television advertisement. Client: United Permanent Building Society.
Agency: McCann- Ericksen

4.44 1984 - Postcard from the Wonderful Australia Series produced by Galah Greetings.

4.45 1987 - Postcard. “Celebrity Roo” produced by Card Sharp. Artist: Gordon Young.

4.46 1988 - Windup musical “beautiful Australian furry animals” which play Waltzing Matilda. From the Bicentennial Merchandising Catalogue, p.25. A.B.A.

4.47 1986 - Graphic advertisement for Kangarucci in Ad Art p66. Artist: Annette Harcus.

4.48 1988.- Print advertisement. Client. Qantas. Jetabout Holidays. in Australia Travellers Guide UK Edition. ATC.

4.49 1987 - Postcard from the Historic Australian Moments:Picnic at Ayers Rock. Published by David Arthur Simons.

4.50 1987. - Postcard titled "One Moretime" Artist: John Windus. Published by Comedy Cards.

By 1984 the roads out to Uluru were sealed, and a certain nostalgia for the dirt track was installed by Galah Greeting Cards, who produced the comic collage *Wonderful Australia* postcard series. Here a photo from the 1950s, shows a woman in a cocktail dress carrying a tray of refreshments towards the viewer (**Fig. 4.38**). Uluru, in this context, is served up as a giant *hors d'oeuvre* for incoming tourists.

The incongruous image of a cocktail scene at Ayers Rock is echoed in later advertisements for the Yulara Corporation (**Fig. 5.20a**-**5.20c**) and also in the magazine *The Yulara Experience* (**Fig. 5.19**). Champagne breakfasts at the base of Uluru are now a regular feature of some tour packages out of Yulara. However, culinary metaphors attached to Ayers Rock are not only confined to advertising strategies. In 1976 Eric Mack, a journalist, saw the Rock as a "Gargantuan scone thrusting some 350 meters from the undulating emptiness of red sand "desert" (Mack, 1976: 7). John Forbes' image of Ayers Rock as a "huge lump of hash" turns the home cooking metaphor into an illicit pastime: a junkie's fantasy in the Mirage Bar of the Cafe Oasis.

By contrast, Galah Greetings Cards (**Fig. 4.40**) opts for a beach fantasy with a pin-up *beach bunny* striking a pose outside the Australian suburban kitchen window. Bringing the mountain to the 1950s suburban kitchen or the kitchen to the Rock commemorates the first decade of post war tourist travel and also the rise of plastic products and the kitchen appliance. From the kitchen window we move to the bathroom window. In **Fig. 4.41** Caroma draw on Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) instead of Uluru, to link their bathroom pastel colour schemes to the exotic landscape at the level of the imaginary. The ad caption "Imagine what Caroma could do for your bathroom" appeals to the rather scatological fantasy of sitting on the toilet and gazing out upon the famous brown-red domes. In all these window-genre examples, the

referent, Uluru, has been appropriated to serve a double movement: both as real object (a great place to go) and as a metaphor (food or excreta).

In the genre of outback naive painting Ayers Rock becomes the mythical home of anthropomorphic kangaroos, koalas and wombats portrayed as furry garden gnomes, cartoon characters or cuddly toys. The woman posing with a joey in **Fig. 4.44** and the *Celebrity Roo* portrait postcard (**Fig. 4.45**) draw on Uluru as a fantastic place where animals seek the company of tourists and in the process take on the characteristics of tourists themselves. These animals are seen posing for photographs in front of Uluru or camping out as in **Fig 4.47**. Here the *Kangarucci Koala* pastiches the characters in the bush stories of *Blinky Bill, The Magic Pudding* and *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*. In so doing, *Kangarucci* naturalises an up–market range of clothes as authentic *dinkum Aussie* gear.

During the Bicentennial, Qantas Jetabout Holidays, to name one company, cashed in on the popularity of koalas in Japan and the USA by offering prospective tourists images of personified animals behaving as tourists or in the service of tourism. In **Fig 4.48** Australia is served up on a silver plate held by the Qantas Koala mascot cum waiter. The faster Australia's native animals disappear from the land the more they are revered and raised as symbols of nationalism in the marketplace. The recently extinct Tasmanian Tiger (1930s) for example is now a widely used icon for Tasmania and products such as Cascade Beer.

The Bicentennial Merchandising Catalogue in 1988 offered a range of furry wind-up musical toy animals that play *Waltzing Matilda*. (**Fig. 4.46**) Koalas and Wombats are not found at Uluru, yet the use of the rock serves to authenticate these toys as naturalised additions to the imaginary (fairytale) landscape of Bicentennial Australia. And in turn, Uluru is incorporated (anchored) into a world of wind–up toys and national icons as a discrete object to be marketed along with these stuffed products.

Koalas portrayed as Australian versions of the Yogi Bear character can be seen in the Kangarucci parody of the early Billy Tea advertisements showing a stockman sitting with a kangaroo beside a camp fire comforted by products that in turn draw meanings (connotations) from the *Waltzing Matilda* myth: of the jolly swagman, gumtrees and roughing it in the bush.

The use of anthropomorphic Koala bears signifies that *Kangarucci* products are not only dinkum Aussie but also innocently so; that is, *Kangarucci* is a natural addition to the marketplace referent system. Imaginary furry animals, sporting sponsored T-shirts and giving testimonial appearances on the benefits of various products in front of Uluru to a waiting public, add to the image of Australia as one huge Dissent styled theme park.

4.7 The Abject and Sublime Rock

For the majority of non-Aborigines visiting Uluru, the images evoked to describe the experience of being there, be it walking around at the base or on climbing to the top of the Rock, can be broadly organised for the purposes of analysis into myths of the *abject* and *sublime*. French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva suggests that the abject is that object which is "radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1982: 2). The abject lies outside and beyond the 'master order' and as such

is considered loathsome, improper and unclean. For Kristeva, the abject is also "the lining of the sublime" which is "always with and through perception and words, a *something added* that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both *here*, as dejects, and *there,* as others and sparkling" (Kristeva: 12).

For the Romantics such as Byron, Shelley, Turner and Friedrich, the sublime in its material or subject manifestations occurred when "we are reminded of our absolute transcendence of external nature and what relates to it" (Kroeber and Walling, 1978: 213). The subjective sublime in the apocalyptic visions of Turner sees the dissolution of material forms in light. Watching the sun set upon the Rock for example, the sublime is that which "carries me away, and sweeps me beyond the things that I see, hear, or think. The sublime object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory" (Kristeva: 12).

Both the abject and the sublime gain strength by pushing and fraying the fabric of language, customs and the senses. One can not exist without recourse to the other, yet each is always held at a distance by the forces of desire and repulsion of the other. Jean–Francois Lyotard, following Burke and Kant, states that the sublime emerges when the beautiful form has disappeared leaving a feeling of something monstrous. The "retreat of regulation and rules is the cause of the sublime" (Lyotard, 1986: 11). The litany of popular imagery bearing the signs of ecstasy and horror suffered in the outback remind us that the true home of the sublime and the abject in the eighteenth century was the unmapped Alps of Europe and the wilderness deserts of the Orient.

The economic distribution of tourist icons in the outback is comically deregulated in the photo–collages of John Windus (**Fig. 4.50**). The travel agent's dream of bringing the natural wonders of the world into one park is turned into a surrealistic tourist nightmare by Windus. The Windus postcard titled *One More time* juxtaposes Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa,* the paramount symbol of the sublime in western art, with two monsters of the deep rearing out of a black lagoon. The Mona Lisa is carefully pasted between the cleavage of The Olgas domes to solicit connotations of an outback earth mother figure.

Whether monstrous or divinely beautiful, Uluru attracts metaphors that speak of extremes; of size, shape, colour, geology or cultural significance. Frank Clune, for instance, spoke of Uluru casting spells upon visitors:

> Oolera (sic) still has power to throw its magic spell on the beholder, and no man could feel egotistical as he stands in its mighty shadow (Clune, 1944: 25).

Clune's notion of Uluru working spells was recirculated by the *Territory Digest* in 1983 when the journalist David Marchbanks marvelled at the "mystique of the great outback and felt the spell of the Rock" (Marchbanks, 1983: 3). In western mythology, spells can be used for good or evil ends. In a secular adaptation of the term, a spell simply refers to a sense of wonder or amazement. In this sense, the abject evil spell can be overtaken by the sublime vision. Vincent Serventy in 1967 used the 1889 Ernest Giles quote to re-enforce the myth that "Mount Olga is the more wonderful and grotesque; Mount Ayers the more ancient and sublime" (Serventy, 1967: 80). Serventy then recalled Coleridge via Giles to further describe Mt Olga: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure-dome decree" (Serventy: 82). The travel writer, Eric Mack, was encountered a sublime vision when he visited Uluru a decade later:

> As you approach it shoulders into the sky, a citadel holding the plains in tribute. It is huge. It

> stands alone and isolated, its immensity dramatised by the absence of fawning foothill courtiers; and for anyone who comes to it across those dry plains it holds a powerful, irresistible awe. It seems changeless, inviolate, eternal. It is bare, and all that it is seems apparent, yet still it stirs the sense of mystery that is at the root of man's perception. It is like a huge altar, hunched up from the earth by the forces of creation. It is insensible and mute, yet in sight of it men hear the voiceless breath of wonder. It is the embodiment of foreverness. It is the kin of stars and planets (Mack, 1976: 12).

For the young Australian camel trekker Robyn Davidson, "the indecipherable power of the rock had my heart racing. I had not expected anything quite so weirdly, primevally beautiful" (Davidson, 1979: 138). Here the sublime vision is couched in an appeal to geological and historical origins - involving a search for the first Rock (of Ages) and perhaps even a personal searching for a rock-solid base to build one's future life.

Returning to Giles, the first visitor to apply the terms sublime and grotesque to Uluru/Kata Tjuta, there is also something of the fantastic about his vision. A dialectic is set-up between Giles' image of Mt. Olga and that of Ayers Rock, when he saw that Mt. Olga was "the more wonderful and grotesque and Mount Ayers the more ancient and sublime" (Giles, 1889: 62). Giles was only the first in a long line of visitors to see the anthropomorphic potential of Ayers Rock and Mt Olga and this potential stems largely from the rounded crouching forms of the singular Ayers Rock or grouped Olgas. This is one reason why Uluru and Kata Tjuta are more popular than the flat mesa form of Attila (Mt Connor) within non-Aboriginal culture. The animal simulacra found in the profile of these landmarks give tourists, writers and advertisers an added reason to identify their products and services with these animistic signifiers.

Douglas Kemsley, who drove out to Uluru in 1951 for *Wild Life* magazine, saw that "the giant pink-red monolith lay in the desert like a stranded prehistoric monster" (Kemsley, 1951: 143). For Walter Gill, Uluru took on the appearance of a more benign animal:

> I imagined I was seeing the curved back of a huge recumbent animal; actually, I thought, of a wombat (Gill, 1968: 67).

A few days later, after some reflection, Gill had changed his mind. Uluru didn't belong to Australia at all, it was imported from Egypt as "a crouching colossus in stone...a monument out of Egypt; a monstrous sphinx extruded in error on the Australian scene" (Gill: 70). Eric Mack likened Mt Olga to an "eerie mass of domes separated by deep fissures, forming a grotesque outline like some sky-scraping mosque in a mythical kingdom" (Mack, 1976: 10).

The desire to see Uluru imported from Egypt, India or Tibet, stems from the English colonial familiarity with these cultures compared to the relatively unknown Anangu culture. Well before the tourist boom in the outback, Webb alluded to the colonisation of Uluru while still holding on to the monster reference:

> There is about the rock an atmosphere of eerie splendour. One feels that it is a monster, asleep on the lonely plain and that it is resentful of the intrusion of the white people, though it might accept the aborigines who regarded it as an object of worship (Webb, 1957: 9).

Today, Uluru cannot be seen outside of the context of what Baudrillard called apocalyptic visions

(Baudrillard, 1987b: 48). The demands for sacrifices, of cutting ones teeth on the land, is a plea for a paucity of meaning – to render those apparently opaque Aboriginal signs and sacred laws of the land more transparent to post–colonial minds. The opacity of Uluru's meanings for non–Anangu also symbolises the threatened state of disappearance awaiting all other natural objects in the centre.

Camping at the base of Uluru was a troubling experience that could only be explained in terms of the abject for one visitor:

> Next morning, we opened the flap of our tent, and a mile away loomed the largest rock in the world. It is an unbelievably menacing conglomerate, pitted with small caves and huge perforations. The aboriginals believe that the rock is the home of the Good Serpent, who knows all, and sees all, and each cave and marking has a mythical significance to the tribe. To our eyes it resembled a slumbering monster, which, if disturbed, would clumsily rise and destroy the countryside (Knack, 1960: 9).

Perhaps the most publicised example of the sublime Rock turning into a living hell for non–Aborigines was the Harold Lasseter rescue attempt in 1931. While carrying out an aerial search for the gold prospector Errol Coote crash–landed at Uluru. Stranded beside the Rock, Coote grew weaker each day from hunger, thirst and the ever increasing prospect of being left for dead himself:

> I thought I was done for. Mentally, I cursed Lasseter, cursed the gold, cursed Taylor – and most of all, I cursed the Rock. As the sun set each evening it took the form of the giant red coal that I had admired my first evening there. Now, it seemed to mock and torment me. I likened it to a Hob of Hell (Coote, 1934: 211).

For Coote, an experienced outback traveller, Uluru became "like a red ghost" coming out of the haze in the distance (Coote: 199). This ghostliness connotes a resistance to the real world of explainable facts. According to the anthropologist Charles Mountford, this resistance extends to the failings of language to adequately describe the phenomenon. Uluru resisted any attempts by Mountford's vocabulary to explain its powerful presence. Uluru gave off an "imposing beauty...impossible to convey by the written word any sense of its grandeur and majesty...it was an eerie place" (Mountford, 1950: 86).

When the sublime meets the abject a sense of eeriness is produced. The inability of language to express the power of Uluru was countered by Mountford through use of the terms "imposing" and "eerie". David Goldberg suggests in the *Anatomy of Racism,* that the power of the abject serves to subvert that which threatens the dominant image since

> the fear of the Other's power is overcome in the power of abjection and horror. The perceived threat of the racial Other to undermine order is displaced and countered by appealing to an absolute, reassuring, mystic law incorporated in the body, family, nation, race, and tradition (Goldberg, 1990: xix).

Connotations of the abject linked to Uluru received added currency when baby Azaria Chamberlain disappeared in the camping ground next to the Rock on 17th August 1980. The resulting murder trial and controversy surrounding the case revolved around the question of whether or not a dingo had taken the baby from the family tent. The country was split over this question - did a dingo or the parents kill the infant?

A large media contingent tended to lean towards the parents as the guilty party, as did the judge and jury in the first trial. Others in various women's movements and the Seventh Day Adventist church (of which the parents Lindy and Michael were members), were convinced that the dingo did it. A small industry in T-shirts, buttons, post cards and jokes circulated in the popular press and tourist shops across the country. In the collaged postcard by David Arthur Simons (**Fig. 4.49**) titled *Picnic at Ayers Rock*, a dingo is shown swallowing a baby in front of Uluru. Here the dingo is represented as a monster, reminiscent of the mythical Cyclops in Homer's Odyssey.

Most of the dingo jokes circulating at the time anthropomorphised the dingo. For example, "what's the height of impertinence? ... A dingo trying to cash a child endowment cheque" or "what's a pram at Ayers Rock? ... Meals on wheels." Newspaper and radio headlines announced that "The dingo's been acquitted" after the jury passed its guilty verdict in Darwin during February 1982. Most of the country initially applauded the verdict. Then gradually the Crown's case began to fall apart resulting in Lindy and Michael Chamberlain's acquittal and subsequently a huge compensation payout to them both.

The many ventured reasons why the Chamberlain case gripped the popular imagination across Australia can be linked to the abject connotations attached to the significance of Uluru. Journalists, including James Oram, drew on a range of myths springing from children's fairy tales, Anangu Tjukurpa stories of Kulpunya the malevolent dingo spirit bent on revenge, bizarre religious cults (one rumour said that the name Azaria meant sacrifice in the wild), infanticide Taboos and desert tales of disappearances. Speculation surrounding the case played heavily on childhood fears for suitable metaphors and similes to explain the enigma of a baby being carried off by a dingo without witnesses.

Images of the young infant alone in a tent feed horror-stories of being left alone in the dark as a child only to be carried off by Bogey Men or The Big Bad Wolf. Fairy tales featuring wolf-dogs range from the crazy werewolf to the "beast in drag who sprang from the bed to gobble up Little Red Riding Hood" (Oram, 1983: 140). The abject connection between dingo and baby was extended to the Pitjantjatjara name Yulara said to mean howling dingo (Peel, 1979: 50). Dianne Johnson argued that "what essentially underlies the Azaria Chamberlain case was the making of Lindy the witch" (Johnson, 1984: 90). Ayers Rock was the "setting of the mystery," and, as such, was "regarded [in the media] as being inherently mystical, projecting a foreboding of danger and death" (Johnson: 93). Projections of death and foreboding onto Ayers Rock by the media during the Azaria case were built upon a solid foundation of tomb analogies by such authors as Groom, Ollif and Serventy. For Groom, Ayers Rock was the "immense coloured tomb of a dead age into which I had no right to look" (Groom, 1950: 158). Ollif compared the Rock to the tomb of Lenin (Ollif, 1983: 63) while Serventy felt that while "Coventry Cathedral may inspire the feeling of religious awe. In Ayers Rock at sunrise and sunset one can feel more shapely the kinship between man and his environment, the feeling that earth and sky, plant and animal, are all one" (Serventy, 1967: 83). The abject and sublime Rock are two side of the same image: each extreme sensorial image finding the other in the same vision. The cathedral Ayers Rock is given currency by being juxtaposed to the pagan Uluru. Yet both Christian and Tjukurpa rock myths involve some notion of a spiritual inside to the material object. The difference is that the animate rock is a direct expression of the spirit being world while the Cathedral is a house of the Lord.

The desire to hollow out the rock and fill it with new meanings found expression in advertising images more readily than in other media. Modern advertising aims to reproduce the Rock as a commodity

form by colonising the domain of desire surrounding myths of the desert, Aboriginal culture or historical fantasies of exploration. So persistent are the appearances of hyper–real images of Ayers Rock/Mt Olga that together they constitute a genre that can be best called *Rock utopias*. Although no one believes any more that these stories reflect any physical reality, these pleasure domes of the desert seem to reveal more about the corporate imagination than anything of Uluru or Kata Tjuta.

4.8 Rock Utopias

Advertisements can be seen as imaginary havens (*wishlands* where the promise of pleasure is within easy reach), that function as fantasies to raise brand awareness. These wish-images promote products as utopic solutions which in turn gain their value by referring to what is missing in the present social order. As consciously constructed instruments of economic objectives, advertisements promise to fill the gap of not only a material lack (the absence of goods), but also a desire for the transcendental that carries with it the mythical fruits of immortality. The small *desiring machines*, to use a phrase borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, we call advertisements, work to synthesise potentially conflicting forces through the construction of imaginary worlds which resolve these opposing forces and anxieties to the ultimate advantage of economic interests.

In 1516 Sir Thomas More published *Utopia*, a fictional account of an island which lay some(no)where off the coast of Western Australia or *terra incognita* (the Great South Land) as it was called in More's day. The Greek term Utopia literally means no (*ou*) place (*topos)* describes an imaginary island which enjoys a perfect social, legal and political system. The word *ou* is also a pun on *sweet*, that is, the sweet place. For More, the primary method of investigation is via the imagination and he speaks of visions, dreams and hopes realised.

The utopian model is always linked to a physical environment, to some particular *place*. Of primary interest to More for example, is the interaction on an island of the various social institutions (culture) with the environment (nature). When we leave the ship and set foot on the island of Utopia, we leave the empirical world of *what is*, and enter the realm of *what can or ought to be*. Utopias are holistic; that is, they create in image or practice, a complete society.

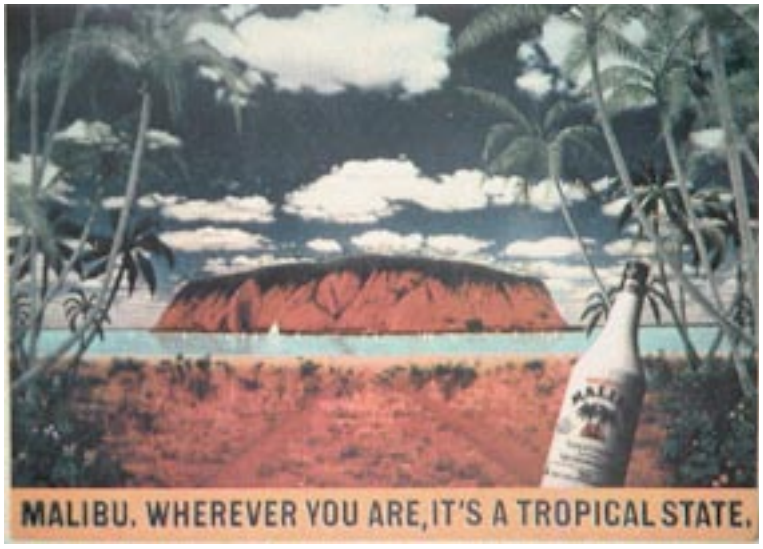
A utopic model attempts to reveal the crucial forces operating in a society which strive to realise certain values above others. Utopias are functional models. They don't simply express certain ideas and values; they *embody* these principles in actual institutions, organisations and actions.

Utopias are idealistic. Utopians believe that humans have the power to shape their own destiny. So, they don't merely imagine a better society, their objective is to realise such a community. Utopias transcend the structure of the existing social order. A utopia is not a programme of reform or adjustment; it is a model of a new social system. Critically utopian speculation doesn't take place in a historical vacuum. For example, More's lived during the Elizabethan period and was engaged as an ambassador and Catholic leader at the beginning of British imperialism. This was a time of religious and social upheaval. The feudal order was being broken down by the forces of individualism and capitalism which threw much of the English population into poverty.

Utopia, as a blue-print of More's ideal society, can be read as a metaphor for the rise of colonial expansionism projected onto a future place where liberal conditions, as he saw them, would become the norm. Yet a Utopia can also be seen as being self referential. That is, it has the power to transform itself into history: it has an effect on reality. Utopia is for itself its own reality. The myth of a heaven on earth lies at the heart of utopian fantasies. Myth operates as an unconscious cultural process while utopia is the always failed conscious expression of an idealised world.

Utopic models and advertisements both harbour an element of determinism and are explicit and organised in presentation. So, behind the apparent ease of order and the natural appearance of things, lies a didactic moral directive. The utopic advertisement in practice also draws on other *referent systems* (including advertisements, art and media images) for its rhetorical strategies. Theoretically, all advertisements are no-places that only gain meaning in the conceptual space of reading. These promotional utopias elide the means of production while projecting fantastic meeting places for the imaginary and the symbolic.

Consumers are encouraged through reading advertisements to think of themselves as utopians inhabiting a magical world of products where they can reap the benefits of those products without the struggle of labour and without the threat of social ridicule.



4.51 1990 - Billboard/poster. Clent: Malibu (Swift & Moore). Agency: Clemengers.

4. 9 Analysis of the Malibu campaign.

One of the high profile examples of constructing Ayers Rock as a promotional utopia, was the Malibu campaign launched in 1990 and produced by the ad agency Clemengers. Manufactured by Swift & Moore, Malibu is an alcoholic drink made from a combination of coconut and light Jamaican rum. It was first launched by the advertising agency Clemenger onto the Australian market in 1984 in Sydney and Brisbane. It has since grown into a national campaign employing a range of media, and sales have steadily increased. In marketing and advertising terms, the Malibu campaign has been highly successful.

This analysis focuses on the most recent campaign strategy (across radio and billboards) which has the slogan "Wherever you are, its a Tropical State" and features a number of different images under this banner.

The Tropical State campaign ran three comic radio advertisements. The first ad does a "rap" version with a black rapper from New York voice over stating "Malibu. Wherever yo' at, yo' in a tropical state!". The second version was a "heavy metal" song with the ending lines sung by the Beach Boys of "do ya wanna go straight to Hawaii, Hawaii, Hawaii, Hawaii." The third song was a "country" number based on the duelling banjos classic and had as its chorus a Caribbean band singing of the:

sun beatin' down on de clear blue sea
We all havin' party under big palm tree
We don' do no workin', all we do is play
Everybody happy mon, we sing all day.

The target market for these ads was primarily the under 20 year old who lives in the suburbs. The 'creative strategy promise' offered to these teenage drinkers was the declaration: "when I drink Malibu, I forget my worries and enjoy myself". All these songs as backing tracks and chorus lines seek to naturalise Malibu as a simulated drink of Jamaica according to the ideology of Clemenger and Swift & Moore.

What is significant is not so much that the drink actually comes from Jamaica; rather that we read Malibu as having currency as a fashionable myth (story) of Malibu as an naturalised Aussiefied tropical drink. A drink that allows the play between different connotations of tropicalness to flow easily and smoothly: that Malibu is a meaning-full product. So it doesn't matter wherever you are physically and emotionally, Malibu has the power, rhetorically if not chemically to send you into a state of tropicalness (with connotations of *going troppo* on rum in the third world) on your own imaginary utopian island.

Analysis of the billboard campaign.

In the billboard advertisement (**Fig 4.51**) Ayers Rock is depicted as an island rising out of an inland sea. Coconut palms sprout from the top of the rock while in the near-foreground large palms form a grotto framing and directing the viewer's gaze towards the Rock lying on the horizon. Sailing boats play on water which has flooded the desert. A number of events informed this image of the rock as a tropical Utopia among them, the fears brought on by the greenhouse effect, which would cause the deserts to turn into tropical environments.

At the time of this advertisement, the inland of Australia was largely under water having suffered heavy rains which were widely reported in the media. There were images of Ayers Rock cut off by rising waters or of people shoring up homes with sand bags and cars washed off highways. These news images of hardship and destruction were encoded and mythologised in line with biblical tales of abject deluges, of deserts turned into paradisiacal gardens overnight, of the revenge of nature over culture by bringing to the surface the underground sea that normally lies dormant beneath the burning sands. The Biblical references to Zionistic utopias in the Book of Isaiah have been in part followed by contemporary Israel in the construction of Kibbutzim settlements in the deserts of Palestine. The Malibu advertisement rhetorically transforms the Biblical flood image into a benign recreational lake. The normally unforgiving desert has been tamed and turned into a palm tree lined oasis. Contrived as a mythical Mount Zion, Ayers Rock emerges as a Malibu island paradise.

The Greek *paradeisos* refers to a royal park which the Babylonians translated into the Garden of Eden: a place to the east where there rises a mountain under which lies the Holy Grail, the site that continues to provoke the desire for a return to an earthly paradise which will solve the problems of the present age. Each generation reconstructs the fantasy of the Garden of Eden to justify its particular line of cultural development by holding up some sacred site as the proof of some point of origin. The Malibu advertisement locates Ayers Rock as the original island where all Malibu drinkers either report from (drunk) or seek to travel towards, across an inland sea of desire.

If we analyse the Malibu advertisement in terms of how Ayers Rock as a natural object is used as a cultural sign, the bottle of Malibu takes on the connotations of *tropicalness, islandness* and *castawayness*. As readers, we are called upon to semiotically decode these various meanings (puns, metaphors, symbols etc) which come to mind when confronted by the advertisement. The act of speaking and identifying with particular codes of meaning, engages us in a transference of our desires and repressions onto the product, now no longer a dumb object but a fetish (of exchange) above and beyond its use value. In order to reach the island of pleasure in drinking Malibu, the sea of exchanges (of fear for comfort or ignorance for knowledge) must be sailed and crossed.

In utopic narratives, the path to pleasure (enlightenment) usually involves a journey of some hardship: by sea, over mountains, through jungles, across time and space. These journeys, such as Alice's journey through the underworld to the Mad Hatter's tea party, involve a projection of the subject into a future state of bliss. In advertising utopias, though, this journey takes place in the space of the text itself; through the television, radio or print media. The product functions as a passport and therefore as proof of a capitalist utopia's true existence and with it the promise of customer satisfaction. The graphic Malibu logo on the label of the bottle, showing palm trees on a desert island, metonymically speaks of or stands for the greater islands of Ayers Rock and beyond it, of Australia and Jamaica. Ayers Rock is here cooked-up as Australia's Jamaican island ("a little bit of Jamaica in a bottle") state.

Reading the Malibu signs in greater detail it is possible to sketch out a strategy of sign production that connects the different elements of the advertisement into a commodity map.

The bottle and logo together form the rhetorical pivot around which the rest of ad turns. The message in a bottle found washed up on the beach or bobbing in the water carries with it the promise of an answer

to the Crusoe castaway. If we look at utopias from a Freudian perspective, we can see that the desire for a utopic island may be seen as either repressive or as an attempt to overcome some psychic crisis. Utopians must necessarily withdraw from this complex and often confusing world onto a far simpler imaginary island where their fantasies can be played out. Their return journey from utopia is often characterised by a devotion to a fixed idea which becomes obsessive. The idea seeks out an object and transforms it into a fetish that is worshipped, defended and feared. This fetishisation of the object is in advertising terminology called brand loyalty. This resistance to leave the world of the fetish: to be loyal to a brand of product, is appealed to by offering the product as a totem (a natural object that is used to differentiate between human groups) through which the consumer can gain reassurance from (and identify with) unconscious desires, fears and hopes. Advertisements are, in this sense, commercial *dream works*. Malibu drinkers are differentiated from other drinkers by their symbolic relationship to the Malibu product image.

The palm trees in foreground and on top of the rock play a sensual function similar to that of the forest in Gosse's drawing. The connotative history of desert islands can be traced back to the Babylonian myth of paradise. A mountain rose up from the dark waters and on top was a walled garden in the middle of which was an ox horn tree. Symbolically, this tree was made into the wooden cross used later to crucify Christ. Palm trees connote a tropical Eden where the origin of romantic hedonistic pleasure reside: of sex and food (usually fruit) freely available "there for the picking right off the tree". Hollywood films such as *South Pacific* and *Blue Lagoon* made during the 1950s play on eighteenth century European myths of a utopian Tahitian society. These films in turn, draw on the illustrations and writings on the voyages by Louis de Bougainville (*Voyage Round the World*), Joseph Banks and James Cook (*The Journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery,* edited by J. C. Beaglehole) and at the end of the nineteenth century, with the Tahitian paintings of Paul Gauguin. Earlier still, William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was set on a utopic desert island between Tunis and Naples and was partly based on the account of a shipwreck off Bermuda by William Strachey in 1610. These layers of myth feed on each other (not without a sense of irony) and the advertisement transfers these connotations from the palm trees, island and sailing to the product.

Myths of rock island paradises concerning stones and rocks can be found throughout history and across cultures. For example: tales from the Roman and Hellenic periods tell of *primitive* peoples who lived beyond the edge of the civilised world in a paradise safe from the discontentments of city life. By the sixteenth century and through to the eighteenth century, these myths grew into the widely held and pervasive belief in the noble savage which was used to give credence to, and cover–up, the brutal yet profitable slave trade from Africa and elsewhere to Europe and the Americas. The Gnostics of the first century AD thought that the Garden of Eden was really an allegory for the nourishing afterbirth which gave life to the womb of paradise. In the wilderness an underground river was said to flow from Eden to Paradise (being one and the same) and this river was seen as the umbilical cord between the navel and mother earth. If Ayers Rock denotes a naturalised Garden of Eden fed by an underground spring (Mutitjulu/Maggies Spring), then Yulara (the tourist resort nearby) promotes itself as a leisure–seekers Paradise nourished by an underground river of tourist profits.

Lake or mirage? This is a common image puzzle for explorers dying of thirst or alcoholics who "need a drink real bad." Here is a Malibu inland sea where everyone can "drink the ocean" – the utopic myth is realised at last as a billboard advertisement. Sailing at Ayers Rock is also an incongruous situation. The presence of sailing boats turns the body of water from a raw dangerous flood into a cooked culturally friendly lake.

Noel Sanders (Sanders, 1985: 30) suggests that the oldest utopias including Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Harrington's *Oceana* (1656) are watery. Malibu's Ayers Rock–island is a variation on the castaway's desert island where isolation dictates that society has to be imagined or dreamt:

> The hallucinations of the castaway are metonymic ('A sail, a sail!'). In the inverse, the person lost in the desert sees what the castaway abhors: here the parched throat cries ('Water, Water!'), and what the eyes see is the mirage of a watery oasis (Sanders, 1985: 30).

The Malibu billboard is dream image of the inland sea fantasy realised as a sponsored utopia. The dead heart is imagined as a living heart pumping the life blood of commerce into the centre: making the desert bloom. The resulting utopic Malibu vision is of a sublime drinking hole turned asylum. For every paradise is a kind of prison–island where all the inhabitants must have fun. Everything is perfect, beautiful and boring. The dayglow blue lake is fantastic; the fluffy–white clouds dream–like, floating across the sky under solarised lighting – a vision filtered through coconut and rum. The slogan: "MALIBU, WHEREVER YOU ARE, IT'S A TROPICAL STATE" is a pun which is a joke on utopic myths of inland Australia as an economic playground for idle rich lotus eaters.

The sans-serif typeface on a yellow background denotes a roadsign with connotations of officialdom and orderliness- this ambiguity of signification (between hedonism and regulation) helps arrest the reader's attention. A pun on the word "state" helps link drinking and driving: note the dirt tracks leading off towards the horizon and the Rock. The Malibu fantasy cuts off the need to drive any further - you simply float across the symbolic sea to the imaginary island.

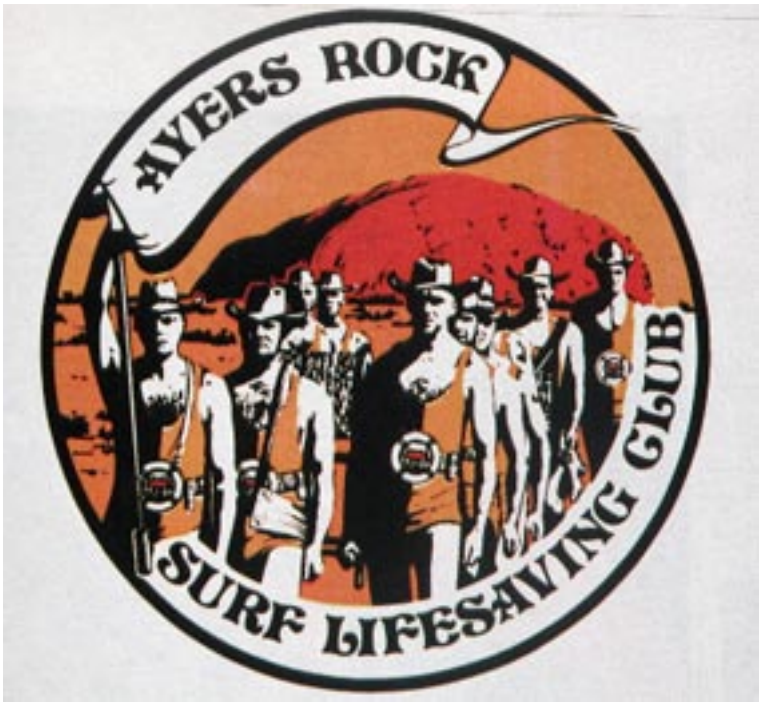
The grotto effect of placing trees inside the frame edge also helps direct the gaze towards the Rock, that is, towards the mythical pleasures that can only be gained if you 'buy' into the Malibu 'club'. The postcard (**Fig 4.52**) produced by Jimmy Jones Souvenirs, titled Ayers Rock Bread, also frames the Rock in a border/grotto of grain and seed bearing plants. The Utopia portrayed here is an Anangu lifestyle in opposition to the processed bread production methods of Western culture. That is, the people were self sufficient and could live in harmony with their environment without need of western technology.

4.52(a) (b) 1988. - Postcard produced by Jimmy Jones Souvenirs.

It is also possible to read this advertisement as a building site development sign showing a projected image of what the finished building will look like. Usually prospective buyers invest on the basis of these idealistic images long before the actual building is constructed. Rhetorically, Ayers Rock is here depicted (idealised) as a piece of real estate, a site on offer for you to invest in - the price being only a bottle of Malibu.

4.53 1988 - Postcard. Artist: Dawn Reade. Published by Barker Souvenirs.

4.54 1985. - Postcard “Ayers Rocked”.
Artist: Lindsay Buckland. Published by OZPIX Australia.



4.55 1983 - Souvenir sticker produced by Barker Souvenirs.

4.56 1984. - Postcard form the Wonderful Australia Series. Published by Galah Greetings.

4.10 The Coastal Rock

Much of the fascination of Uluru for non-Aborigines lies in the fact that millions of years ago the desert lay under the sea. The many references in advertisements, like the Malibu example discussed above, to Uluru being an island in a desert of sand is testament to this fascination with the disappearance of Australia's inland sea. Jean Baudrillard states that "the secret of this country perhaps lies in having been an undersea relief, and in maintaining this oceanic surreality in the open air" (Baudrillard, 1987b: 47). The strong desire by Europeans to reinvest the outback with aquatic signs finds expression in advertising and tourist images through the use of analogy and metaphor.

Laurie Sheard felt the experience of walking around the rock was like "following the cliffs of a coastline with many little bays and promontories" (Sheard, 1964: 55). The postcard (**Fig. 4.53**) illustrates, by way of a joke reference to the King Canute myth (at Alice Springs the tide won't come back), this fascination with sitting on the bottom of a sea without water. There is also a desire to see the outback as a "petrified Red Sea" (Hamlyn–Harris, 1962: 14) frozen by time; a country held in suspended animation. The reference to the Red Sea invokes the myth of Moses parting the waters so that he could lead his people out of Egypt. The later day deciples shown in the postcard mentioned above sit in deck chairs waiting for the waters to return to the parched sea bed. One of the tourists exclaims: "doesn't the tide stay out a long time!" The importance of water to the life of central Australia is often lost on today's tourists who never have to go without a bath at Yulara. For Hamlyn-Harris in the early 1960s, the water gathered in red pools after rain was considered "the life–blood and immortality of this indomitable heart of Australia – this unpredictable, changeable and absolutely fascinating land of no perspective" (Hamlyn-Harris, 1962: 13).

Bill Harney and Merve Andrews tapped the first artesian bore at Uluru in 1957, and Harney wrote an account of this difficult task for Walkabout magazine in the same year (Harney, 1957). Harney makes a reference to Moses finding water in the desert ("Moses smote the rock with his wand and the waters gushed forth") and jokingly compares Merve Andrews "probing with a crowbar" to Moses. The constant desire in these Biblical references is to reinvent the outback as a new Jerusalem, where these bush prophets can lead coastal settlers through the scrub to the promised land.

In the Australian outback, Uluru stands as a oasis/barrier to the ravages of drought and death by thirst. Gosse noted that Uluru had the first decent water after leaving Alice Springs (Gosse, 1874: 10). Water, or the lack of it, was a constant image in an outback explorer's mind. The merciless sun governed all activities real and imaginary. In the desert, says Baudrillard, "Sun is god and Jesus is a zombie" (Baudrillard, 1987a: 136). Thirst is the curse of all who travel and live in the desert, for, as Bechervaise stated, thirst

> ... reduces men to silence. Every exhalation may be reckoned in terms of precious humidity – exchanged for dehydrating desert air (Bechervaise, 1967: 118).

The fear of a permanent drought in the desert is a constant one. In **Fig. 4.54** Uluru is reduced to a dry river-bed stone. This nightmare vision of a barren desert is clearly expressed by Eric Mack who describes the daily reminder of this scenario at Uluru. At midday

> each sand-grain clings only to itself, separated from its fellows in thirst, shushing and hissing dryly in the wind, scratching at the silence (Mack, 1976: 7).

The power of the desert form and the immanent fascination of dryness and sterility of the brutal expanse, is, for Baudrillard, the . This is a metaphysical fascination whereby

> colours, pastel blue, mauve, lilac, come from a slow, geological, timeless combustion. The mineral quality of the underground surfaces in the crystalline flora. All the natural elements here have passed through their baptism of fire. The desert is no longer landscape, it is pure form which results from the abstraction of all others. Its definition is absolute, its frontier initiatory, its stops sudden and its imperious necessity, of an ineluctable necessity - but empty of meaning, arbitrary, inhuman, that one crosses without deciphering. irrevocable transparency. The desert cities as well stop short, they have no environment. And they take after the mirage, which can fade away at any instant.

Against this “inhuman transparency” (Baudrillard, 1987a: 137) of the desert that erases all traces and all psychology in bodies, Europeans have carried with them from the coast the rituals of beach culture. In a small way these post–colonialists have realised the failed promise of Australia’s inland sea by setting up sailing and surf lifesaving clubs (**Fig. 4.55**) or by manufacturing images of Uluru as an island off the coast as in **Fig. 4.56**. The Coca Cola (**Fig. 4.58**) and Yulara television advertisements have both included shots of women leaping out of a swimming pool in front of Uluru, giving the impression that the Rock lies next to a beach or lake. For Carter, the search for an inland sea was motivated in part by a desire to arrive at a new coast at the centre of the continent: the centre as sea surrounded by a coastal ring forming a lacuna or hiatus that provokes comparisons with Thomas More’s crescent shaped ideal island of Utopia with an inland harbour.

4.57 1986. - Print advertisement. Client: Tab Coca-Cola. Agency: Lintas.

Modern day tourists staying at the utopic resort Yulara, often wear bathing suits to the amusement of some like Vincent Serventy who remarked that, "the ancient spirits of the Rock must have stared in amazement at a scene reminiscent of Bondi Beach" (Serventy, 1967: 82). The power to intimate the sea in the desert creates an imaginary meeting place where the nature of the sea (water, flood, voyage, castaways) can be used to transcend the trials of being in a desert and unify and naturalise the narrative of exploration. The metaphorical function of the sea-land image; that is, to express the direction of desire, to characterise the ambiguity inherent in an activity where wanting to find always exceeds the sum of objects found. Likeness and indifference are both felt contemplating the sea as landlike and vice versa. This land/sea mobius-like inversion is touched on by Carter who believed that this sensation is "rooted phenomenologically in our most primitive sensations of earth and water and of their common heritage in the wind-filled sky" (Carter, 1987: 92). Within this paradigm of rock/water, Uluru is the solid expression of the adamantine sea, as impenetrable as the lustre of a red diamond - a giant crystal of solidified water forming the littoral edge of the outback.

The most controversial advertisement to link Uluru with images of water and littoral culture was the 1986 Tab campaign. This advertisement was the first to launch Ayers Rock as Australia's geological erogenous zone. The *Australian Woman's Weekly* published a double page advertisement for Tab cola in its October issue. This advertisement outraged Aborigines, who felt that the image of a woman in a seductive pose placed next to Uluru was not in the best cultural interests of the Park or community.

The following analysis examines how the Tab advertisement sold its product to the soft drink market through an association with Uluru. And how the advertisement operates rhetorically to highlight Tab as image–enhancing soft drink which has the power to turn "you" into a "beautiful body", and the role Ayers Rock plays in this Tab mythology. The Tab advertisement's message revolves around anxieties connected to bodies; which includes the woman's body represented in the advertisement and, by appellation and through identification, the consumer's body.

4.58 1986. - Television advertisement. Client: Coca-Cola. Agency: McCann-Erickson.

The first dichotomy involves the wet versus the dry and the second dichotomy is the hot versus the cold. In both cases Tab mediates and resolves the rather surreal conflict of a woman in a swimming costume with wet hair lying in front of Ayers Rock in the middle of the desert. This once fantastic image of swimming in the Outback is now made possible by Yulara resort with its swimming pools which bring the coast to the desert. It is fashionable ("cool") to be seen in exclusive ("hot") places with a cold can of Tab which tastes 'cool' and while you appear hot in sexual terms Ayers Rock radiates heat and redness while the Tab can is red yet cold.

What are the signs and directives or the significant codes that direct and call upon us, as readers and consumers, to play the Tab game? On an abstract level, that is, these signifiers have no inherent meaning, this double page spread is a collection of colours, marks and shapes which are theoretically meaningless. It is by convention that we recognise this page as an advertisement for a soft drink. Each of the signs in the advertisement has a meaning, a value and a currency depending on the cultural knowledge and social position of the reader. Together, these various signs build up a picture called *Tab at Ayers Rock*. This advertisement will mean different things to different people depending for example, on where they stand socially in terms of race, class and gender. However there are specific myths involved in the fiction of this advertisement which are symbolically recognisable to most people who might read *The Australian Woman's Weekly*. All the signs are carefully placed in a hierarchy or order of importance by the copywriter and art director in the ad agency so that according to our cultural conventions of reading printed pages from top to bottom, left to right and from centre to margins, a total picture or story is built up. These aesthetic codes work to give Tab a specific personality that stands out from the host of other soft drink brands.

The appropriation of Ayers Rock as a pivotal sign in the Tab advertisement is an attempt by the ad agency/client to launch this product with a joke involving Tab as a *hip* soft drink seen "in all the right places". How is this dubious joke of a visual and verbal pun motivated? A woman is seen posed across the bottom half of the advertisement in a particular fashion: reclining in the tradition of paintings such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538), Goya's *The Naked Maja* (1800), Manet's *Olympia* (1863), Modigliani's *Reclining Nude* (1917). More recently, thousands of soft-porn photo-pastiches of the above nudes can be found in both men's and women's magazines, posters and family snaps. All these images denote, to greater or lesser extent, a sexual display and receptiveness to the voyeuristic gaze; from a patriarchal (usually male) viewpoint. The sign "woman" in this particular advertisement is as a *syntagm* made up of a collection of smaller signs including blue swimming costume, tanned skin, wet hair, gold stud in her ear and plain makeup. These particular signs are carefully selected to connote specific values of Tabness. The model is a young, Anglo Saxon and middle class woman who is looking directly at you, the customer. Her facial expression is also in the tradition of classical western painting, reminiscent of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* smile. Together, these signs make up this outback Olympia relaxing beside some imagined pool.

At the connotative level a certain feeling of middle class leisure is suggested which draws upon the myth of the great *Aussie* outdoors lifestyle, of beach culture and sun worshipping. Just above, and supported by the woman's hip, lies the rounded red form of Ayers Rock.

Ayers Rock, symbolic of Australia's red centre; is now also the centre of our erotic outback fantasies. The Rock denotes in this fantasy context, a huge hot, dry and solitary object which in its uniqueness is mythically spoken of as both a magical and exotic object: and, by juxtaposition, a signifier of sensual

outback pleasures, which are left open to the imagination of the viewer.

The placement of Ayers Rock directly above the woman's rounded hip draws our attention to the text that hovers above Ayers Rock so that a vertical line can be drawn from the woman's rounded leg and hip (her sex) up through the Rock to the Tab text which plays upon the pun "in all the right places." The text is composed in a way that allows it to be read from either top to bottom; *Tab/You see it/in all the right places* (hips and body) or bottom to top; *In all the right places/you see it/Tab*(at the popular tourist destination of Ayers Rock). This text acts as an *anchor*, to borrow Barthes' term, to direct and partially close off the range of meanings in the visual images. The text links the woman to the Rock and the Tab can to the reader. *You see it* - that is, you see the relationship (equation) Rock/woman/Tab. This triangle of signs become metaphorically interconnected with the woman finding herself between a rock and a hard can of Tab in the middle of the desert. On the right hand side of the advertisement is a vertical bar that acts as a legend (as in a map) to the rest of the advertisement. This *legend* tells the reader more about the rules of the Tab game: how to be a Tab person. The legend is made up of a set of instructions for the use and value of Tab set out in the form of a poem on the right hand side of the advertisement with the signature image of the product plus slogan at the bottom. The logo image operates both as an index and reward (this is what you get if you buy into this fiction/if you play the game) to the total advertisement.

The role of the referent Ayers Rock in this Tab strategy, is to highlight some connotations and suppress others. The Rock naturalises Tab's place in "your" lifestyle; as another red, flab-free, firm, decay resistant (Tabes), exotic and magic object (Taboo) which will transform "your" body into the (T)otal (A)ustralian (B)ody. The Tab drink will, after you have drunk the potion, become a part of your image - always in your hand "in all the right places."

Reading the text down the side of the advertisement, we find out more about the rules of the Tab game. *From the Rock to the Snowy's*...is where Tab can be found and consumed. And *when you try on last year's swimsuit*...which you do either actually or in your imagination. This is the Tab-test (keeping Tabs on your body image) spurred on by the size ten blues, of being too fat to love. This is the problem you now know you have even if you didn't a minute ago; it exists because it now has a name - Tabitis. So to resolve this image problem, which implies the battle between the depressed fat you and the desired thin you, the Tab fat-busters are sent in.

After setting up the problem in the two previous captions, the last stanza of the Tab commandments give us the crucial answers we have been thirsting for: why and how do you drink the stuff? *Tab tastes good*... is reassuring no doubt. As good as what though? As good as being at the Rock or as good as the model looks? No, Tab is as good *as you look* which is a double bind at best and a paradox at worst. This mere use of the word, now a cliche appropriated by Tab, both serves to appeal to the myth of beauty as a skin-deep phenomena (of how you look) and establishes a vicious circle of desire (thirst) and pleasure (quenched) which, along with envy and glamour, form the structural supports of the Tab-beauty programme.

The Tab identification is staged in a *mirror phase*, to use Lacan's term whereby the ego ideal provided by the advertising image is deferred until the product image is united with the consumer's own image through consumption. In other words, the social symbolic "I" is united with the imaginary "me" into a Tab self image. The production of a beautiful body through the consumption of Tab cola is given motivation

by the catch 22 clause of only looking as good as you sexually taste to others. If your beautiful then Tab tastes even sweeter. If Tab tastes horrible it means you are "ugly" so you have to drink a whole lot more until Tab tastes great.

At the bottom of the right hand side of the page there is an index image; the reference product logo which signifies the alchemically transformed "you" after the Tab operation has been successfully completed. Your body is now a Tab-body and Tab is synonymous with yourself. In rhetorical terminology, this operation is a cola hyperbola: the soft drink metaphorically produces your body-*Body by Tab*. Tab itself has body and so, figuratively, Tab is a liquid essence of the body beautiful packaged in a can.

Aesthetically, the codes into which the various component signs are structured, direct our reading around the advertisement via a series of triangular moves. The sign elements at the ends of these aesthetic triangles relate according to the classical dichotomy: that of similarity versus difference. Repetition of these signs can be analysed as a double relation of identity: identity of form and identity of content.

Similarities and differences of form (red and rounded Ayers Rock and drink cans) and of content (soft drink and body) serve to naturalise the signifieds (beauty, slimness, leisure, outback lifestyle) in the advertisement. In this advertisement Ayers Rock is rhetorically displayed as another Tab container.

The controlled use of colours acts to focus attention and naturalise the difference between signs within the advertisement. For example, the redness of the rock motivates the redness of the Tab cans; the blueness of the swimming costume is borrowed from the sky; red-brown earth serves as a colour chart for the woman's tanned skin. The repetition of triangular layout pattens unify the ad-message: bent straws point to the mouth, to the rock and to the text; the bent arms and leg echo the triangular layout of the text above the rock, which in turn echoes the pivotal letter "a" in Tab while the letter "a" on the can is a visual metaphor for the straw. Triangles have both a vertical and horizontal axis, and it is along these axes that we join up syntagmatically the different signs which we then read together as the total message (which appears to be naturally derived).

Reviewing the figures of similarity in the advertisement, we can conclude that they serve to transmit a signified which can be analysed as consisting of two correlative propositions. Firstly, the unity of the brand name Tab is not an actual, but a *de jure* unity. Secondly, the unanimity of the consumers' preference for the brand. Here, too, the unanimity is not a fact, but an ideal, a goal to be attained. Tab presents itself euphemistically as a monotheistic universal decree: that is, there is only one God (Tab) and everyone should praise (drink) Him. Today, the Tab drink is no longer on the market yet the association of Ayers Rock as "a place to be seen in," remains in the popular imagination.

The economic salvation of the outback, today, is tourism. And the major tourist attraction of the outback is Uluru. The next chapter examines the role of tourism in shaping images of Uluru, with particular reference to tourist advertising.