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Aboriginal Australians and Boundary
Crossings

Introduction

We would like to begin by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people, traditional owners of the lands on which we stand, and pay our respects to their elders, past and present. We also thank Joy Damousi, Trevor Burnard and Donna Merwick for inviting us to present this year's Greg Denning Lecture on our research for the ARC project, 'Exploring the Middle Ground', which examines cross-cultural encounters within the context of maritime and land exploration in Australia.

In devising this project we drew on the American historian Richard White's idea of the *middle ground*, conceived as a site in which different peoples come together—often only fleetingly—and 'adjust their differences through what

amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings'.¹ Our aim in this project is to consider whether or not this concept had any purchase in the Australian context, despite claims to the contrary, such as Henry Reynolds' assertion in the 2006 edition of the *Other Side of the Frontier* that 'there was no middle ground in Australia'.² While his assessment may have characterised the broad history of settler encroachment on indigenous lands, we felt that the history of exploration differed significantly, and was marked by conditions that opened up the possibility of a middle ground, if only temporarily.

Crucially, exploring parties *moved through* rather than *moved into* Aboriginal people's country. Moreover, exploration enterprises were typically, although certainly not always, characterised by curiosity about, as well as some reliance upon, Aboriginal people. By considering the individual histories of various exploring expeditions that landed on Australian beaches, or journeyed through Australian landscapes, and their encounters with various Aboriginal peoples we can see that the elements Richard White defined as necessary to the construction of the middle ground were certainly present in the Australian context: these elements were 'a confrontation between imperial or state regimes and non-state forms of social organisation, a rough balance of

¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1991]), xxvi.

² Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 7, cited in White, *The Middle Ground*, xiv.

power, a mutual need or desire for what the other possesses, and an inability of one side to commandeer enough force to compel the other to do what it desired'.³

Such elements were especially apparent in the dynamics between explorers and the various Aboriginal individuals who served as intermediaries, guiding the explorers through country and mediating between the European explorers and the Aboriginal traditional owners whose lands they passed through. Such guides have often been assessed by the value of their contribution to the exploration endeavour, or whether or not they were colonial collaborators, traitors to their own kind. More recently scholars have teased out the complexities of the Aboriginal guides' experiences, contexts, and motivations, elucidating the agency of these in-between figures who carved out new identities for themselves in the face of colonial-Aboriginal encounters.

Our aim is to explore the histories of different Aboriginal guides – Gogy, Boongaree, Miago, and Jackey - who worked with separate colonial surveying expeditions exploring the Blue Mountains in NSW, the Kimberley coast in WA, and Cape York in Queensland. Through these separate case studies we will highlight the diverse histories, methods, ambitions, and legacies of Aboriginal intermediaries, and their role in mediating the Australian middle ground. The histories of these guides are necessarily constructed from the colonial archive, but our approach is to read these texts against the grain, remaining sensitive to the various colonial

³ White, *The Middle Ground*, xii.

discourses which effaced the guides' contributions to the expeditions, and even at times their presence, in the explorer accounts, and reduced them to mere archetypes.

Gogy in the Blue Mountains – *Shino Konishi*

I will begin by discussing Gogy who acted as a guide on Francis Barrallier's attempt to cross the Blue Mountains in 1802. He was a Dharawal man, whose territory spanned southwards from Botany Bay to the Shoalhaven River, and inland to Camden. When he met Barrallier he was probably still a young man, with only one wife and a young son.⁴ Yet before that time he had already encountered British colonists, and is believed to have established an enduring friendship with the first European he met, ex-convict and local explorer John Warby.⁵ Warby was the first Briton to reside in the local area, and had been assigned the task of guarding the wild cattle which had inspired the European name for Dharawal lands, the Cowpastures.⁶ Even earlier still, Gogy was reported to have transgressed Aboriginal law, and rather than facing his tribal punishment for this unexplained offence, he fled his own lands into that of the neighbouring Gandangara people, who lived in the Blue Mountains to the north-west of Dharawal country. There Gogy was sheltered by Goondel, and

⁴ By 1810 he would have two wives and more than one child. Carol Liston, 'The Dharawal and Gandangara in Colonial Campbelltown, New South Wales, 1788-1830', *Aboriginal History* 12(1), 1988, 58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

claimed that the two had become great friends until Gogy befriended one of Goondel's enemies. Together the two men captured a Gandangara woman, alleged to be Goondel's sister, who was killed before the two men were said to have cooked and eaten some of her flesh.⁷ Gogy again fled, this time fearing Goondel's wrath and retribution, and headed east, towards the British outpost at Prospect Hill.

It was here in October 1802 that Gogy met the young French surveyor, Francis Luis Barrallier. At the time, Barrallier had undertaken a brief reconnaissance trip to the base of the foothills of the Blue Mountains in order to scout potential depot sites in preparation for his imminent expedition to find a route through the Blue Mountains. Since the colonists first arrived, the Blue Mountains had served as an impenetrable western boundary of the expanding Port Jackson settlement, a boundary that had already defeated numerous British attempts to ascertain what lay beyond. Barrallier, a young Frenchman whose Royalist family had escaped 'the wrath of the early French Revolutionaries' and fled to Britain in 1793, had sailed to Port Jackson with the ambition of becoming the colony's Deputy Surveyor General.⁸ Upon arriving in the colony he enlisted with the NSW Corps, and in 1802 became Governor Phillip Gidley King's aide de camp, and was given

⁷ Ibid., 57, and Valerie Lhuedé, 'Francis Barrallier, explorer, surveyor, engineer, artillery officer, aide-de-camp, architect and ship designer: Three Years in New South Wales (1800–1803)', *Explorations: A Journal of French-Australian Connections* 35, 2003, 13.

⁸ Lhuedé, 'Francis Barrallier', 6–7.

the diplomatic mission to visit ‘the King of the Mountains’.⁹ In his actual assignment of endeavouring to cross the Blue Mountains, Barrallier was confident that he could succeed where others had failed by establishing a network of depots, which would allow his expedition to remain in communication with the colony, and receive provisions as necessary.¹⁰ Upon encountering Gogy on this initial reconnaissance trip, Barrallier perceived that the ‘native’ had ‘taken a fancy’ to him, and assumed that Gogy would be ‘useful to [him] when [he] advanced further inland’.¹¹ However, given Gogy’s turbulent history with both the Dharawal and the Gundangara, it is likely that Gogy in turn saw an advantage in ‘attaching’ himself to the French surveyor. After having agreed that Gogy would serve as a guide on the eventual expedition, they arranged to rendezvous at Prospect Hill the following month.

The history of this failed expedition is well charted by historians, and Barrallier’s frequently disparaging assessments of Gogy as ‘useless’ have been echoed by some historians who perceived both his disturbingly violent treatment of his wife, who accompanied the expedition, and

⁹ King, Letter to Joseph Banks, May 1803, cited in Andy Macqueen, *Blue Mountains to Bridgetown: The Life and Journeys of Barrallier, 1773–1853* (Springwood, NSW: Andy Macqueen, 1993), 68. See also Lhuedé, ‘Francis Barrallier’, 8 and 11.

¹⁰ Francis Barrallier, *Journal of the Expedition into the Interior of New South Wales 1802, by Order of His Excellency Governor Philip Gidley King, by Francis Barrallier, Ensign, New South Wales Corps* (Melbourne: Marsh Walsh Publishing, 1975), 1.

¹¹ Barrallier, *Journal*, 1n.

his seemingly mercurial behaviour as 'obnoxious' and troublesome.¹² Others have suggested that the Gundangara's hostility towards Gogy 'undermined' Barrallier's expedition.¹³ Yet such interpretations take Barrallier's account at face value. Instead, it could be argued that in his journal, Barrallier, like many other European explorers, effaced the important contribution his Aboriginal guide made as not only a mediator and translator with other Aboriginal people encountered in the expedition, but also as the provider of the detailed local knowledge that enriches Barrallier's text.

On the 6th of November, the first day of the expedition proper, Barrallier noted that the ford where they crossed the Nepean River was 'called Binhény by the natives', and that a swamp they arrived at later that day was known as 'Baraggel'. The next day they passed two more swamps called 'Manhangle' and 'Carabeely'.¹⁴ The French surveyor also reported that he had learned that these swamps teemed with 'enormous eels, fishes, and various species of shells' which were 'sometimes used by the natives as food', in addition to the 'opossums and squirrels, which are abundant in this country, and ... upon kangaroo rat and kangaroo'.¹⁵ Barrallier also described in detail how the Aboriginal people of the Blue Mountains hunted kangaroos by large groups forming a circle one or two

¹² Macqueen, *Blue Mountains to Bridgetown*, 94; and Lhuedé, 'Francis Barrallier', 13.

¹³ Martin Thomas, *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 87.

¹⁴ Barrallier, *Journal*, 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2n.

miles across, and slowly moving inwards, corralling the animals with fire and noise so they could be easily speared.¹⁶ This detailed local and cultural knowledge must have been explained to Barrallier by Gogy, as the only other Aboriginal people in the party at this stage of the expedition were Gogy's wife, whom Barrallier infrequently mentions, and his young son Gogy. The level of detail suggests that despite Barrallier's later complaints about his guide, the two must have spent considerable time conversing about the immediate environs, possible routes to take over the mountains, Aboriginal food sources and hunting practices. However, my interest in Gogy is not limited to uncovering or evaluating his contribution to the colonial enterprise of exploration. I am also intrigued by the apparent parallels between Gogy's behaviour which has confounded historians just as much as it confounded Barrallier in 1802, and the behaviour of his better known Port Jackson contemporary, Bennelong, a Wangal man from the southern side of Sydney harbour.

In December 1789, under the orders of the first governor, Arthur Phillip, the British had kidnapped Bennelong in the hope that a captive would both provide intelligence about the population and martial strength of the Eora people and serve as an intermediary in conciliating their affections. Despite his incarceration at the colonists' hands, Bennelong eventually forged a close relationship with Governor Arthur Phillip: Bennelong called the governor 'Be-anna' or father, and in turn

¹⁶ Ibid., 2–3n.

was called ‘doorroow’ or son.¹⁷ Inga Clendinnen has highlighted the way in which Bennelong’s actions were highly performative and strategic, suggesting that from very early on he sought an ‘alliance with the strangers’ as a means of elevating his own status within the local Eora polity.¹⁸ These parallels between Gogy and Bennelong, which I will tease out in this paper, suggest that Gogy’s actions were likewise performative and strategic.

However, unlike Phillip, who eventually became partially aware of Bennelong’s strategic endeavours throughout the course of their friendship (spanning a number of years and including Bennelong’s journey back to Britain with the governor at the end of his commission in 1792),¹⁹ Barrallier knew Gogy for less than two months, so remained oblivious to the motives behind Gogy’s confusing actions. Further, Gogy’s personal history reveals the ways in which the European

¹⁷ P.G. King, ‘Lieutenant King’s Journal’, in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787–1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, ed. John Bach (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968 [1793]), 269; David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, ed. B. Fletcher, 2 vols (Sydney: A.H. & A.W. Reed in association with the Royal Historical Society, 1975), vol. 1, 452; and Watkin Tench, *1788: Comprising ‘A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay’ and ‘A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson’*, ed. Tim Flannery (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1996 [1789 & 1793]), 119.

¹⁸ Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), 102–9.

¹⁹ Shino Konishi, ‘The Father Governor: the British Administration of Aboriginal People at Port Jackson, 1788–1792’, in *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain*, ed. Matthew McCormack (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54–61, and Kate Fullagar, ‘Bennelong in Britain’, *Aboriginal History* 33, 2009, 31–52.

presence provided Aboriginal individuals with opportunities to purposefully remake themselves through their acquired affiliations with explorers. I hope to try and understand Gogy's motivations for trying to 'attach' himself to Barrallier, and elucidate the way in which he attempted to elicit Barrallier's dependence on him, and him alone, by trying to maintain a political and spatial buffer between Barrallier and other Aboriginal people.

There were many professional or career guides who accompanied explorers in their expeditions to distant lands, inhabited by unknown Aboriginal clans and language groups.²⁰ Gogy's contemporary, Boongaree, from Broken Bay who moved to Port Jackson for instance, circumnavigated Australia with Matthew Flinders on the *HMS Investigator* from 1801 to 1803 encountering various Aboriginal strangers speaking foreign tongues.²¹ However, Gogy was different for he was enlisted locally, and rather than encountering unknown Aboriginal peoples, he shared a personal history with the Gandangara people of the Blue Mountains. In this respect Gogy had much in common with fellow Aboriginal

²⁰ See Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

²¹ For example, at Sandy Cape in what is now Queensland, Bungaree attempted to speak to the local Aboriginal people in his own language, and upon realising they did not understand, then attempted to communicate in 'broken English'. Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis: Undertaken for the Purpose of Completing the Discovery of that Vast Country, and Prosecuted in the Years 1801, 1802, and 1803*, 2 vols and atlas (Pall Mall: G. and W. Nicol, 1814), vol. 2, 205; and Shino Konishi and Maria Nugent, 'Newcomers, c. 1600–1800', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, eds Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, 2 vols (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), vol. 1, 65.

intermediary Bennelong. Both men sought to occupy the middle ground between natives and newcomers by mediating and controlling the wants of each side – knowledge of the local environments as well as peaceful interactions on behalf of the early colonists, and for the Aborigines, information about the colonists, food, and material goods (such as metal axes which all of the Gandangara men happened to wear even though few had previously come face to face with Europeans, as well as the red cloth that the Eora people particularly desired).²²

As we have seen, Gogy quickly attached himself to Barrallier, and he arguably found this to be a privileged position that he alone wanted to occupy and so jealously guarded. This became apparent when two Gandangara, or ‘mountaineer’ men as Barrallier called them, Bungin and Wooglemai, joined the expedition. The former, who had never seen a white man before, quickly impressed Barrallier by showing gratitude to the Frenchman’s generous trade of a new axe for Bungin’s old one, as well as his ability to discern the identity of individuals by their footprints. Bungin also built a hut for the Frenchman, which, Barrallier learned, was a local custom extended to ‘strangers they wish to receive as friends’, since ordinarily ‘the natives do not allow any stranger to inhabit the territories they have appropriated to themselves’.²³ Consequently, Barrallier was determined to try and ‘attach’ himself to Bungin, believing he would be ‘very useful in the

²² See the different significances of red for Eora people in Grace Karskens, ‘Red Coat, Blue Jacket, Black Skin: Aboriginal Men and Clothing in Early New South Wales’, *Aboriginal History* 35, 2011, 1–36, esp. 12.

²³ Barrallier, *Journal*, 4–5.

country ... he was in', and so attempted to curry favour by ensuring food was given to him.²⁴ As these exchanges and conversations would have been negotiated by Gogy, the expedition's translator, it is most likely that he was conscious of his imminent displacement as the expedition's primary guide.

It seems that in response Gogy attempted to insinuate himself back into Barrallier's favour. His first opportunity soon arose when the expedition encountered some new people, Bulgin and his wives and children. They had just been hunting and had in their possession two feet of an animal they called 'colo'.²⁵ Knowing that Barrallier was interested in collecting natural history specimens, Gogy obtained these in exchange for two spears and a tomahawk, presumably his own since the only trade items Barrallier mentioned bringing on the expedition were metal axes. Barrallier was delighted with these specimens, no doubt koala feet which he mistook for that of a monkey, and, in his own attempt to ingratiate himself, had them sent to Governor King 'in a bottle of spirits'. That same night Gogy 'built for Barrallier a *very* large hut', perhaps as a reminder that before Bungin's arrival, he had a stronger friendship with the explorer.²⁶ These gifts and symbols of friendship are reminiscent of Bennelong's ostentatious present of a piece of whale meat which he instructed some sailors to take back to Governor Phillip as

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ Ibid., 8–9.

²⁶ Ibid., 9 (my emphasis).

well as his willingness to exchange names with the governor, an act which the British interpreted as a universal sign of friendship amongst savage peoples, shared by both Australian Aborigines and South Sea Islanders.²⁷

Towards the end of the expedition, Gogy seemed especially determined to show Barrallier that his allegiance was to the French surveyor and not the Gandangara ‘natives’. As Barrallier repeatedly double-backed to the depot after each failed excursion to find a route over the mountains, he frequently found that his huts had been burnt down or destroyed by the local Aboriginal people. In response to this, and arguably as a sign of his loyalty to Barrallier, ‘Gogy set the country over which [they] were passing on fire to avenge [themselves] on the natives who had burnt [their] huts’.²⁸

Yet Gogy’s attempts to forge an alliance with Barrallier seemed to fall on deaf ears, as Barrallier instead attributed these actions to his guide’s obsequiousness. In his account, Barrallier subsequently reduced Gogy to the role of mere servant rather than primary guide or intermediary, a European textual practice that Kathrin Fritsch has identified in her accounts of African exploration.²⁹ Instead of recognising Gogy’s role as expedition *guide*, Barrallier claimed instead to have been ‘followed by the native’, and

²⁷ See Shino Konishi, *The Aboriginal Male in the Enlightenment World* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 124–5.

²⁸ Barrallier, *Journal*, 45.

²⁹ Kathrin Fritsch, “‘You Have Everything Confused and Mixed Up...!’: Georg Schweinfurth, Knowledge and Cartography of Africa in the 19th Century”, *History in Africa* 36, 2009, 87–101. Barrallier for example refers to Gogy as a ‘native in my service’. Barrallier, *Journal*, 8.

instead of perceiving hut building as a sign of friendship as he initially had, towards the end of the expedition each night Barrallier harshly ordered Gogy to ‘cut a hut’ for him as they prepared the camp.³⁰ This dismissive treatment evidently offended Gogy, as did Barrallier’s failure to respond appropriately to Gogy’s hospitality: for instance, he ‘regarded it an insult’ when Barrallier refused to accept the parrot eggs that Gogy had laboriously procured for him.³¹

Gogy’s motive for fostering a close alliance with Barrallier, not to mention the four redcoats who accompanied the expedition, became apparent during one of their excursions from the depot into the mountains. On 12 November Bungin discovered a group of Gandangara men including Gogy’s enemy Goondel sitting around a fire. He approached them in a reassuring manner, ‘telling them not to be frightened’ and that the white men ‘were travelling without any intention of doing them any harm’.³² Gogy followed, but instead of placating the Gandangara men he ‘held [Barrallier’s] gun in his hand to show them he could make use of the [British] arms’.³³ This threatening demonstration of his superior weapon and allies was perhaps Gogy’s main motivation for agreeing to guide Barrallier into the territory of the enemy he had previously fled. Bennelong had also frequently and fruitlessly pressed his British friends to attack his enemies:

³⁰ Barrallier, *Journal*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11n.

³² *Ibid.*, 15–16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

according to Phillip 'from the first day he was able to make himself understood he was desirous to have all of the [neighbouring] tribe of the Cameragal killed'.³⁴ However, Gogy's aggressive performance did not elicit the reaction he intended: the men refused to speak to Gogy, and instead threw 'terrible glances at him' and deliberately excluded him from a share in their meal, a gesture that Gogy considered 'as the greatest insult'.³⁵

As a result, Gogy appeared to have changed tactic, and thereafter attempted to prevent Barrallier from having further contact with Goondel and his men. He begged Barrallier not to camp near them, claiming that they would kill Gogy in his sleep despite the presence of armed sentries. Later in the expedition, whenever they happened upon Goondel or his men Gogy would 'insist that they must not disturb him' and encourage the expedition to move on. Towards the end of the journey, on 14 December, when they were in Gundungara country, Gogy exclaimed that they were about to enter the territory of a new tribe who 'were anthropophagi' and that 'they ought not to try and mix with them'.³⁶ Bennelong and other Port Jackson Aboriginal people

³⁴ Arthur Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', in John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792, by Captain John Hunter, Commander H.M.S. Sirius, with further Accounts by Governor Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant P.G. King, and Lieutenant H.L. Ball*, ed. John Bach (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968 [1793]), 323, cited in Konishi, *Aboriginal Male*, 125.

³⁵ Barrallier, *Journal*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47. Gogy made the same claims against the Gandangara as late as 1814. *Sydney Gazette*, 18 June 1814, cited in Liston, 'The Dharawal and Gandangara', 51.

had similarly launched exaggerated accusations against neighbouring Aboriginal people in order to dissuade the British from approaching them.³⁷ When Barrallier laughed at Gogy's apparently tall tale, he grew angry and retorted 'Well master, you will see that I am not a liar'.³⁸ Yet, the next day, instead of discovering the apocryphal tribe of cannibals as they ventured further into the mountains, they again happened upon Goondel.

Gogy's most notorious and perplexing performance was a violent assault on his wife. One month earlier, on 14 November, while they waited at the depot for their supplies, Gogy unexpectedly flew into a rage when his wife ate some 'morsels' of food given to Gogy's son, and suddenly 'took his club and struck his wife's head such a blow that she fell to the ground unconsciously'. Ignoring the others' attempts to pacify him, Gogy paced around, all the while 'abusing his wife', and then rushed back, stabbing her in the thigh with his fishing spear several times, and then grabbed a musket and threatened to shoot her. After a short interlude in which Bungin attempted to calm him down, Gogy again 'walk[ed] up and down in a great fury', and this time the others cowered from approaching him. Finally, Gogy went to Barrallier and 'said he was almost certain one of [Barrallier's] people had

³⁷ For instance Bennelong had told Phillip that the Botany Bay people 'always kill the white men', which eventually led 'Governor Phillip ... to suspect, though very unwillingly, that there was a great deal of art and cunning in Bennelong', and the Port Jackson Aboriginal people reported to the British that the Botany Bay man 'Gòme-boak was a cannibal'. Phillip, 'Phillip's Journal', 327 and Collins, *Account*, vol. 1, 342.

³⁸ Barrallier, *Journal*, 47n.

seduced his wife'. The Frenchman replied that this 'was impossible' and it was only his 'state of anger which made him believe things that did not exist'. However, this did not placate Gogy and he again struck his wife, who then revealed that the seducer was 'Withington, one of [the] soldiers' and assured him that 'she had never responded to his advances'. Barrallier did not put much faith in this confession, instead commenting that that in general 'cruelty and laziness are two prominent characteristics of the natives'.³⁹

Scholars have deplored Gogy's violent attack on his wife, and like Barrallier, construed it as an example of how male violence against women has been 'a feature for Aboriginal culture since long before the First Fleet'.⁴⁰ However, even though this was a shockingly brutal incident, and not the only occasion in which Gogy was reported to have physically abused women, this assault cannot be solely explained by the ostensibly violent nature of Aboriginal gender relations.⁴¹ Again, Gogy's performance is reminiscent of Bennelong's protracted and violent attack on the young woman Boorong in front of the British officers and Governor Phillip, in

³⁹ Ibid., 22–3.

⁴⁰ Tony Thomas, 'The Long History of Aboriginal Violence – Part II', *Quadrant*, 7 May 2013. See also Lhuedé, 'Francis Barrallier', 13. However, in response to similar charges made by Manning Clark, McQueen points out that Bungin, Gogy's competitor for Barrallier's esteem, tenderly dressed Gogy's wife's wounds, and in the following days Gogy 'looked sorry for having ill-treated, his wife', and was 'very affectionate towards her'. McQueen, *Blue Mountains to Bridgetown*, 96.

⁴¹ For a more detailed discussion of colonial tropes about Aboriginal gendered violence see Shino Konishi, "'Wanton with plenty": Questioning Ethno-historical Constructions of Sexual Savagery in Aboriginal Societies, 1788–1803', *Australian Historical Studies* 39(3), 2008, 356–72.

retaliation of a crime committed against him by her father.⁴² Both attacks appeared to have been flagrant and defiant aggressive acts performed in front of the colonists, whom in both instances claimed to pity the women but failed to intervene. Both Bennelong and Gogy demonstrated their power over their women, perhaps to show the newcomers that they still exerted some authority within their own domestic polity in spite of the colonial authority of the governor and expedition leader. Perhaps Gogy's charge that one of white men had wronged him by seducing his wife was also an attempt to elicit some kind of compensation from Barrallier.

In this section of the lecture, I have attempted to read Gogy's motivations for 'attaching' himself to Barrallier, in order to understand how some Aboriginal individuals saw the presence of the newcomers as an opportunity to remake themselves, and to attempt to elevate their status and power within the local Aboriginal society. After failing to find a route through the mountains, Barrallier returned to Sydney, and after falling out of favour with Governor King swiftly left the colony. Gogy continued to transgress Aboriginal law, and was even ritually punished by Bennelong, Nanbaree and another man in 1805, receiving two spear wounds.⁴³ Yet, he also continued to try and strategically attach himself to various colonists. Such endeavours served him well in 1816 during Governor Macquarie's punitive raids against the Gandangara,

⁴² See Konishi, *Aboriginal Male*, 60.

⁴³ *Sydney Gazette*, 17 March 1805, cited in Peter Turbet, *The First Frontier: The Occupation of the Sydney Region, 1788 to 1816* (Kenthurst, NSW: Rosenberg Publishing, 2011), 147.

for his old friend John Warby and Charles Throsby protected Gogy from the soldiers who mistook Gogy for a 'hostile native'.⁴⁴ This allowed Gogy to flee to Botany Bay, shortly after which, he disappeared from the historical record.

Boongaree and Miago on the north-west coast – *Tiffany Shellam*

Boongaree was a Garigal man, born around 1775 in Broken Bay, to the north of Port Jackson. He has become one of Australia's most iconic go-betweens with a reputation for moving seamlessly between his own world and that of the newcomers, and his role as 'welcomer of ships' to Port Jackson has been the topic of much discussion.⁴⁵ However, despite the work of Bronwen Douglas and David Turnbull, there is little emphasis by historians on Boongaree's important role – as intermediary on the maritime expeditions of Matthew Flinders and Phillip Parker King.⁴⁶

From December 1817-July 1818 Boongaree joined the hydrographic expedition, captained by Phillip Parker King, Governor King's son. The expedition's botanist, Allan

⁴⁴ Liston, 'The Dharawal and Gandangara', 52.

⁴⁵ David Turnbull, 'Boundary-Crossings, Cultural Encounters and Knowledge Spaces in Early Australia', in *The Brokered World: Go-betweens and Global Intelligence 1770–1820*, eds Simon Scaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj and James Delbourgo (Sagmore Beach: Science History Publications USA, 2009); Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: A Sydney Aborigine meets the great South Pacific explorers: 1799-1830*, (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1992).

⁴⁶ Bronwen Douglas, 'The Lure of Texts and the Discipline of Praxis: Cross-Cultural History in a Post-Empirical World', *Humanities Research* 14(1), 2007; Turnbull, 'Boundary-Crossings'.

Cunningham referred to Boongaree frequently in his Journal as 'our friend', 'our witty friend' or 'our Native chief'.⁴⁷ Prefacing Boongaree's name with 'Ours' placed him in possession of the expedition; it also served to set up a dichotomy between Boongaree and other Aboriginal people they encountered.

In February 1818 at Dampier's Archipelago the crew kidnapped a Jaburara man who was paddling on his canoe. He was seized by his hair and brought on board the *Mermaid*.⁴⁸ King wrote that this man was 'unwilling' to go on board the ship until: 'Boongaree showed himself to him when he obtained a little more confidence and he allowed himself to be conducted over [the side] and [into this vessel]'.⁴⁹ A conversation between this man and Boongaree was attempted: 'he occasionally made signs towards the land, and talk'd'.⁵⁰

This kidnapped man was unsettled on board, but, King remarked, he 'looked round discontented [appeared anxious] and with a sort of inquiry when Boongaree was away from him and on his return he appeared pleased'.⁵¹ Cunningham wrote that this man 'took much notice of Boongaree, who had

⁴⁷ Cunningham, Journal, 25 January 1818, King George's Sound and 25 February 1818, Enderby Island; State Library of Victoria, Reel no.6034, SZ7.

⁴⁸ King, Journal and log of H.M. Cutter Mermaid, 26 February 1818; Mitchell Library, MAV / FM4 / 2094-2095.

⁴⁹ King, Journal, 26 February 1818.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, Journal, 26 February 1818.

⁵¹ King, Journal, 26 February 1818.

reluctantly at our persuasion, strip'd and exhibited a scarified body'.⁵² The Jaburara captive had scars too, on his breast and stomach. Cunningham referred to Boongaree's nudity in the presence of this captive as a 'counterpart of the strangers', linking their naked 'native' bodies.⁵³

Boongaree remained a key protagonist when the crew went ashore to meet with the 30 Jaburara people who had collected on the beach later that day. The man who had been kidnapped earlier soon noticed Boongaree and pointed him out to his countrymen, who, according to Cunningham, 'addressed themselves to him, wishing him more particularly to land with them'.⁵⁴ King recorded: 'they were all much struck with Boongaree's appearance and appeared to be very anxious to talk with him but for Boongaree who upon all occasions forgets his native tongue addressed them in Broken English – it is of little consequence for he does not understand one word uttered by them and therefore he would have been misunderstood in English as in his Port Jackson language.'⁵⁵ But the effect of Boongaree's presence is clear. King explained: 'When Boongaree opened his mouth to speak they were all quite silent awaiting for his answers to the question which every one was putting to him'.⁵⁶

As the crew departed Dampier's Archipelago a few days later, King wrote that 'Boongaree was made very much of' by the

⁵² Cunningham, *Journal*, 26 February 1818.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ King, *Journal*, 26 February 1818.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Jaburara who ‘appeared quite delighted to find his shoulders scarified like their own he always spoke to them in Broken English - He however, is of great use to us...on the appearance of a Black man being with us [has] given them a confidence [which would] be difficult otherwise to instill’.⁵⁷

These brief episodes reveal Boongaree’s presence was crucial in these encounters. He was sought out by Aboriginal strangers who are described as being less anxious in his presence, and King and Cunningham were aware of Boongaree’s usefulness in encouraging a mutual confidence between Aboriginal strangers. I will come back to Boongaree shortly.

Miago is the second go-between I will discuss in this project. Miago was from the upper Swan to the north of Perth, and by 1833 was well known to colonial settlers. Like Boongaree, he was a mediator between the various Aboriginal groups around Swan River and described by colonial observers as a ‘messenger of peace’ and an ‘ambassador’.⁵⁸ As well as having mediating skills, he was considered a useful tracker and guide. John Septimus Roe, the mid-shipman on the Australian Hydrographic Survey, had travelled with Miago overland to King George’s Sound from Swan River, and he advised the successive maritime surveyor of the north-west coast, John Lort Stokes, to take Miago with him on board the *Beagle* in 1837, captained by John Clements Wickham.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 21–27 February 1818.

⁵⁸ *Perth Gazette*, 3 January 1835; CSR 37/178, 230 State Records Office of Western Australia (SRO WA from here); *Perth Gazette*, 29 March 1835.

Unlike the east coast intermediary, Boongaree, who had, perhaps, little prior knowledge of Aborigines of the north west before travelling there, Miago had stories and deep knowledge of the northern Aboriginal groups of the west coast. Like many Nyungar people in this period, Miago feared his northern neighbours, the Waylo men, who were considered to be physically large and violent by the southerners. This, I suggest, contributed to Miago's belief that even far-distant north-westerners were men to be feared. As Stokes recorded in his published expedition narrative: Miago 'evidently holds these north men in great dread ... They are, according to his account, "Bad men – eat men – Perth men tell me so: Perth men say, Miago, you go on shore very little, plenty Quibra men [men of the ship] go, you go'.⁵⁹ Unlike Gogy, whose allegation that the neighbouring people were cannibals appeared to be a ruse to dissuade Barrallier from continuing along that route and meeting Goondel, Miago's anxiety about the 'north men' seemed real. Perhaps, then, Miago used the explorers as his go-between when meeting with these northern men, a technique he was encouraged to deploy by his countrymen in Perth.⁶⁰

At Beagle Bay, Stokes recorded an encounter with a group of Nyul Nyul people and their reaction to Miago: 'Their speech

⁵⁹ John Lort Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia: with an account of the coasts and rivers explored and surveyed during the voyage of H.M.S. Beagle in the years 1837-38-39-40-41-42-43, by command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, also, a narrative of Captain Owen Stanley's visits to the islands in the Arafura Sea*. London, T. and W. Boone, vol.1, (Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1969 [1846]): chapter 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

was shrill and quick, perfectly unintelligible to our friend Miago, who seemed greatly in fear of them: they seemed astonished to find one apparently of their “own clime, complexion, and degree” in company with the white strangers, who must have seemed to them a distant race of beings; nor was their wonder at all abated when Miago threw open his shirt, and showed them his breast curiously scarred after their fashion...as a convincing evidence that he, though now the associate of a white man, belonged to the same country as themselves’.⁶¹

Go-betweens, rarely neutral, influenced the power dynamics at play in the relations between the Aboriginal and European worlds. ‘There is a further dimension of power’ compared to the dichotomous native-stranger encounter. As Alida Metcalf has written: ‘go-betweens may exploit their positions for their own benefit’ because he or she is ‘indifferent to the outcome’.⁶² Stokes reported that Miago expressed a desire to kidnap an Aboriginal woman from the north-west to take back to Swan River. Stokes believed that she would be tangible evidence to his kin of his far traveling. Having some *thing* or some *story* to show or tell their countrymen gave a status to Aboriginal travellers, and was not just a European enlightenment phenomenon.⁶³ It also reveals that Miago had the expedition’s

⁶¹ Ibid., chapter 5.

⁶² Alida Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500–1600*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005), 3.

⁶³ Tiffany Shellam, “Manyat’s Sole Delight”: Travelling Knowledge in Western Australia’s South-West’, in *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present*, eds Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and

aftermath in mind – he was thinking about his return home and, perhaps, the reception he might receive.

Miago was frequently described as being homesick and unsettled at sea. Stokes records on their return journey that Miago was increasingly impatient for Swan River and would stand by the gangway singing mournful songs. Being away from family may have been difficult for some intermediaries. On Miago's safe return, another song was composed about his adventures at sea.⁶⁴ The lyrics told of the ship's unsteady movement on the water: 'Unsteadily shifts the wind-o, unsteadily shifts the wind-o, The sails-o handle, the sails-o handle-ho.' George Grey, who was picked up by the *Beagle* on the north coast recorded later in his journal the song that Miago's mother sang constantly during his absence at sea, which included the lyrics: 'whither is that lone ship wandering'. Grey wrote that these songs remained in Nyungar repertoire as a continuing chronicle of these notable events; recorded to be recited, recited to be remembered.⁶⁵ Boongaree found his own songs useful while mediating with Aboriginal people at Skirmish Point with Matthew Flinders in 1791; the local people sang and Boongaree reciprocated with a Garigal song of his own.⁶⁶

Angela Woollacott (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke England, 2010), 121–32.

⁶⁴ George Grey, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia*, Vol II, (Middlesex, UK: The Echo Library, 2006), 409–10

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ 'Their singing was 'musical and pleasing', but, 'The song of Bong-ree, which he gave them at the conclusion of theirs, sounded barbarous and

In thinking about the experience of these Aboriginal men and their border crossings it is obvious that their bodies and their talk were crucial vehicles or sites of connection during meetings with Aboriginal strangers, in their mobility between ship and shore. According to King, Boongaree's skill as 'native aid' was inseparable from his body. His physique, his clothes – or absence of them were key aspects of his presence and effect in these encounters. His nudity was frequently commented upon in the journals of the crews' who drew connections between the removal of clothes and the success of encounters. Indeed, months earlier at Twofold Bay, King was frustrated that Boongaree had refused to remove his elaborate English dress when meeting Aborigines there. The failed communication at this site, King thought, was due to Boongaree's clothes, given to him especially for the expedition. He was, according to King, 'looking quite fierce with a new blue jacket and trousers, a red frock and cap'.⁶⁷

King recognised the language of the body in human encounters. He recognised too, that Boongaree's body, his skin colour, physical features and decoration would speak a language that his white, clothed body couldn't. Yet, he still yearned for the security of language, commenting each time in disappointment when Boongaree used Broken English to speak with "Strangers". Likewise, at Beagle Bay Miago,

grating to the ear and 'annoyed his auditors', Matthew Flinders in David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement in January 1788, to August 1801*, second edition, (London, T Cadwell and W Davies, 1804), 512

⁶⁷ King, Journal, 26 December 1817.

according to Stokes: ‘very sagaciously addressed [these Aborigines] in English; shaking hands and saying, “How do you do?” and then began to imitate their various actions, and mimic their language...’⁶⁸ Boongaree and Miago’s use of broken-English is revealing: as David Turnbull suggests, ‘the improvised resort of a go-between trying to create an auditory common ground, but relying on the language he had acquired during an earlier boundary crossing’.⁶⁹

While explorers emphasised the strangeness between their intermediaries and Aboriginal locals, they were also attempting to render these people more familiar to each other: encouraging Boongaree to forget his Broken English, remove his clothes – to be an authentic Aborigine – and not the ‘civilised native’ he had become. In telling Boongaree to strip, was King asking him to distance himself from the crew and the European space of the ship? Did this act confuse the imperial teachings of modesty, the sense of shame and civility associated with clothing and nudity?

Grace Karskens recently pointed out the strategic use of clothes by Aborigines, overturning earlier historiographies which narrated Aborigines wearing clothes as a sign of degradation and cultural disintegration.⁷⁰ And in these encounters we see something else: Boongaree, content in his European clothes was encouraged - sometimes coerced - to remove them, while some of the Aborigines he encountered,

⁶⁸ Stokes, *Discoveries*, chapter 5.

⁶⁹ Turnbull, ‘Boundary-Crossings’, 22.

⁷⁰ Grace Karskens, ‘Red Coat, Blue Jacket, Black Skin’.

such as the captive at Dampier's Archipelago were dressed, their presentation altered then applauded, when they came on board the ship. European clothing was practical and meaningful for Boongaree and being forced to remove them may have chagrined him. In settlements, as Karskens has observed, 'it was frequently remarked upon by settlers that Aborigines removed their European clothes when they went back to their own camps'. Indeed, when Boongaree visited Frenchman Rene Lesson in 1822 on his way to corroborees and contests 'he', according to Lesson, 'appeared a transformed man. The coat and plumed hat were gone, his powerful body was dusted with red ochre and painted with red and white clay, his canoe filled with spears and clubs'.⁷¹

The suspended space of the expedition, on board a ship, far away from the go-betweens' country was viewed as an experiment by some explorers. Crew members commented on the rapidity with which Boongaree and Miago went back to their uncivilised ways at the end of their expeditions, suggesting the experiments' failure. Boongaree did not re-join King's expedition as he had cultural obligations to fulfil, yet the crew represent this as a step *backwards*. As the mid-shipman, John Septimus Roe stated: 'he had secreted himself in the Woods'.⁷² While Miago's much anticipated return to Swan River is constructed by the crew as a crisis of identity: 'On arriving home he dressed with care, borrowed an old

⁷¹ Ibid., 26.

⁷² Roe to William, 6 June 1821, item 160 in Series 05: John Septimus Roe letters, the Australian survey completed: the voyage of the Bathurst 2 June 1821–1 June 1823, Mitchell Library, MLMSS7964/ vol.5 (Safe 1/368).

uniform of Captain Wickham's, an old sword and feathered cap. ... When he disembarked the next morning and met with some of his people, he spoke to them in English and they responded impassively'.⁷³ Soon, Stokes records, he re-joined his kin and went back to his 'uncivilised ways', and when asked to re-join the expedition he decided to remain at home with his wife.⁷⁴ Later, George Grey commented on this tension for Miago, comparing the 'apparently perfectly civilised' native he had first met on board the *Beagle* who 'waited at the gun room mess, was temperate (never tasting spirits), attentive, cheerful, and remarkably clean' with the 'savage, almost naked [man] painted all over...(who) had been [involved] in several murders'.⁷⁵

Historians have helped to continue this expedition-as-experiment narrative. Marsden Hordern describes Stokes' failed attempt to *wean* Miago from his Aboriginal life, writing: 'Torn between the attractions of the new life and the forces of the old, [Miago] struggled for several days, trying to reconcile the two. In the end, discarding his clothes and with them his recently acquired white man's habits, he re-joined the tribe.'⁷⁶ Miago's experience of voyaging to the north west coast could also be understood as reinforcing his Nyungar world. Meeting

⁷³ Marsden Hordern, *Mariners Be Warned: John Lort Stokes and HMS Beagle in Australia, 1837-1843*, (Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1989), 88.

⁷⁴ Stokes *Discoveries*, chapter 8.

⁷⁵ Grey quoted in Hordern, *Mariners Be Warned*, 88.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

the dreaded north men gave further weight to his ongoing stories about them.

It was not simply black naked bodies that were important in the exchanges with strangers, but the inscriptions that they revealed. Both Boongaree and Miago were initiated men, having gone through the process of ritual scarification. These deliberately made cuts and keloid cicatrices engrave social and cultural meaning and brand bodies as inextricably part of the 'social collective'.⁷⁷ At the encounter at Dampier's Archipelago, the scarred body of Boongaree had deeper significance; the Jaburara people were in the process of initiating a young man when the expedition arrived: 'the whole of them' wrote the botanist, Allan Cunningham, 'were scarified on the back and shoulders and one poor lad, on whom the operation had been recently made, still [flinched] under its pain ...'⁷⁸

Boongaree had been inscribed by both his Aboriginal and colonial worlds. He was the first Aborigine to be given a king plate. Historians have read these metal gorgets, hung around the necks of designated wearers, as a form of colonial branding or labelling. Such inscriptions identified people like Boongaree as useful, worthy individuals, and, also could be read by other settler-colonials as a badge of protection against frontier violence. As Ray Evans has written: 'Bearing the "imprint of the master's control" and testifying to the wearers'

⁷⁷ Anna Haebich, 'Marked Bodies: A Corporeal History of Colonial Australia', *Borderlands*, 7(2), 2008, 3.

⁷⁸ Cunningham, *Journal*, 26 February 1818.

deracination, they eradicated one identity and imposed another'.⁷⁹ However, I am wary of the term 'deracination', and suggest instead that Boongaree not only wore his king plate like his English dress – with pride – he used the status it brought to benefit him in the rapidly shifting colonial world in Sydney.

Greg Denning reminded us that people, not cultures, met on the beaches in encounters between natives and strangers. We could add: clothes, not cultures, were left on the beach. These boundary crossings were far messier than we can ever imagine.

Jackey in Cape York and Sydney – *Maria Nugent*

On 23 December 1848, Jackey (or Jacky, and also known as Jackey Jackey), who was employed as 'expert native guide' on the expedition led by E.B. Kennedy through north Queensland, emerged from the scrub and onto the beach at the tip of Cape York. Having travelled solo through difficult country for a fortnight after Kennedy's death, Jackey had finally reached his destination. Anchored close to the shore was the *Ariel*, the supply ship that had been waiting for two months to rendezvous with the exploring party. Of the thirteen men of the overland expedition who had set out six

⁷⁹ Quoted in Penny Van Toorn, 'Slave Brands or Cicatrices? Writing on Aboriginal Skin in Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland', *Biography*, 31(2), 2008, 233.

months earlier from Rockingham Bay (near present-day Cardwell), Jackey alone had kept the appointment with it.⁸⁰

The story of the ill-fated Kennedy expedition in north Queensland is well known in the annals of Australian exploration and Jackey is among the most famous and celebrated Aboriginal guides. His contributions to the expedition were acknowledged at the time, and they have been remembered and memorialised since.⁸¹ Marcia Langton recalls that Jackey was one of the few Aboriginal people to be mentioned in her Australian school education in the 1950s and 1960s. He was noteworthy for the 'loyalty' he displayed to Kennedy, and characterized in history lessons as 'exceptional' among the 'almost universal' representation of Aborigines as 'animal-like, cunning and treacherous'.⁸² Within contemporary, postcolonial scholarship, Jackey has been recuperated for other purposes. Paul Carter, for instance, drew on recorded descriptions of Jackey's efforts to locate Kennedy's dead body to delineate differences between tracking and guiding, suggesting that guiding (unlike tracking) relies on 'looking back' in order 'to keep in the mind the backward view, the view towards which he would be going

⁸⁰ For details of Kennedy's expeditions, see: Edgar Beale, *Kennedy, The Barcoo and Beyond, 1847* (Hobart: Blubberhead Press, 1983).

⁸¹ Catherine Bishop and Richard White, "Three cheers for Tommy Windich, The West Australian Explorer": Explorer memory and Aboriginal celebrity', in , *Indigenous Intermediaries and Exploration Archives: New Interpretations and Approaches*, eds S. Konishi, M. Nugent, T. Shellam and A. Cadzow (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015, forthcoming).

⁸² Marcia Langton, 'Prologue', in *First Australians: An Illustrated History*, eds R. Perkins and M. Langton (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2008), xxiv.

in the event of returning'.⁸³ Others, such as Penny van Toorn, have paid attention to Jackey's words, drawing on his recorded testimony about his exploration experience to understand the processes and politics by which Aboriginal oral accounts were made text.⁸⁴ In various ways, then, Jackey is of relevance to our project to write cross-cultural histories of Australian exploration and to provide new interpretations of Aboriginal people as intermediaries. Here, though, my focus extends beyond his experiences of the expedition itself to consider instead the ways in which he navigated and negotiated the terrain of the colonial institutions he came into contact with in the immediate aftermath of the journey, as evidence about Kennedy's fate was accrued and the narrative of the expedition was consolidated.⁸⁵ These same processes were critical to the making of Jackey's reputation as celebrated Aboriginal guide.

As already noted, one element of our broader project is to consider the applicability and usefulness or otherwise of the concept of the 'middle ground', an idea we have borrowed from the North American historian Richard White, for reconceiving histories of Australian exploration. Reflecting twenty years after the original publication of his book *The Middle Ground*,

⁸³ Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language* (London: Faber, 1992), 48.

⁸⁴ Penny van Toorn, 'Wild Speech, Tame Speech, Real Speech? Written Renditions of Aboriginal Australian Speech, 1788–1850', *Southerly* 67(1-2), 2007, 166–78.

⁸⁵ A longer version of this paper is forthcoming. See: Maria Nugent, 'Jacky Jacky's Exploration Narrative: The Aboriginal Guide as Author and the Politics of Knowledge in Colonial Australia', in *Indigenous Intermediaries and Exploration Archives* (forthcoming 2015).

White says he was especially influenced by Greg Dening's 'wonderful' *Islands and Beaches*. He was taken particularly with the doubled meaning of the 'beach', which Dening used both to describe the actual location where cross-cultural contact in the Pacific occurred *and* as a metaphor to express something of the nature of contact between people across cultures.⁸⁶ White's 'middle ground' and Dening's 'beach', both redolent of the geographical regions and environments they each studied, express the common idea of cross-cultural contact zones as 'in-between' or 'liminal' zones. They are spaces where people meet across their differences and where something new emerges. These spaces, both White and Dening insist, do not come into existence by mutual understanding. They are rather the result of creative misunderstandings, cross-wired communications and contingent interactions.

Within the in-between spaces created by journeys of exploration as well as within the broader colonial society in which they occurred, the Aboriginal – or 'native' – guide was an in-between figure. He (rarely she) was someone who possessed neither the certain status of 'native' nor the 'newcomer'. Aboriginal guides are 'in-between' characters who, in the context of exploration expeditions, act as 'go-betweens'. This makes them a doubled and ambivalent character. They are, as David Turnbull suggests, enablers as well as betrayers. But this duality, he goes on to argue, is

⁸⁶ Richard White, 'Preface to the Twentieth Anniversary Edition', in *The Middle Ground*, xx.

suppressed by and within the narration of colonial history. In its place is the assertion of a series of binaries that serve to portray the 'native' guide as either/or: either celebrated or condemned, contributor or collaborator, accommodating or resisting.⁸⁷ Jackey has suffered this historiographical fate. On the one hand, he bears the weight of an exaggerated reputation as the exemplary loyal companion to the explorer, Kennedy. On the other, his name has been made synonymous with the category of 'race traitors', those Aboriginal people who are later judged as lackeys to colonisers.⁸⁸ Neither characterization does him justice, and nor does such a polarizing perspective take into account the ways in which Jackey himself negotiated the quite circumscribed subject positions available to him as an Aboriginal man in mid-nineteenth century, colonial New South Wales. Paying attention to the production of his own exploration narrative, a process that began as soon as he went aboard the awaiting *Ariel*, and its incorporation into the larger archive about Kennedy's expedition, allows, I want to suggest, some insights into the processes by which Jackey's credentials as faithful 'servant' and faithful 'witness' were constructed as well as the ways in which he was able to present and fashion himself, in whatever limited ways, his own identity and reputation. In doing this, the activity of the colonial exploration becomes connected to a series of other colonial

⁸⁷ Turnbull, 'Boundary-Crossings'.

⁸⁸ Shane Maloney, 'Jackey Jackey and the Yadhaykenu', *Monthly* 33, 2008, 74.

sites of knowledge production, including the courtroom and the press.

Although Jackey belongs to the small cohort of named and acknowledged Aboriginal guides in Australian exploration, he is distinguished among that group for the fact that he had an opportunity to provide a quite lengthy piece of testimony about his exploration experiences. His is an anomalous archive, because rarely was it that an Aboriginal guide had an opportunity to have their accounts of exploration recorded. Jackey's testimony was produced through exceptional circumstances. It is often the case that Aboriginal guides only enter the records at moments of crisis. They warrant a mention in explorer journals when something goes wrong and they save the day; or, alternatively, when they cause disruption by absconding and in their absence they come into view. For Jackey, the crisis that made him visible in the written records was Kennedy's death and his own survival. As the only living witness to the demise of a celebrated explorer and expedition leader, he immediately became a privileged source of knowledge about the fate of the party. His is not only an anomalous archive of exploration; it is an accidental one too.

It is now commonplace in the contemporary scholarship on imperial and colonial exploration to note that Aboriginal guides contributed significantly to the epistemology of exploration, even if their contributions became, as Dane Kennedy puts it, 'secret knowledge' – secreted within the narrative mode that 'held that the explorer's unmediated

encounter with the places and peoples under investigation was the sole legitimating source of knowledge about their nature'.⁸⁹ Jackey's uncommon testimony, by contrast, was destined to be public knowledge, because it was produced as evidence about an event of considerable public interest and because that event would be subject to a public inquiry. Violent deaths generated depositions – a transcribed record of information given orally, often in response to a standard set of questions, which could be used in a coronial inquest or in criminal matters. It was as deposition that Jackey's narrative was initially and urgently taken down when he reached the *Ariel*. As fate would have it, on board the *Ariel* was a medical doctor and coroner, Dr Adoniah Vallack, who was expecting to join the expedition. He was, moreover, a man known to Jackey. Both hailed from the Hunter region west of Sydney.⁹⁰ Here, then, was another exceptional circumstance contributing to the creation of Jackey's exploration narrative.

But an Aboriginal man's testimony had uncertain status in a colonial knowledge economy in the 1840s in New South Wales. At the time Jackey made his deposition, questions about Aboriginal people as competent witnesses in law courts were still being debated. A push for Aboriginal evidence acts, provoked in part by the Myall Creek massacre in 1838, and pursued by the Colonial Office in London, had not yet been

⁸⁹ Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁹⁰ Jack Sullivan, *A Fortunate Liaison: Dr Adoniah Vallack and Jackey Jackey*, (Paterson, NSW: Paterson Historical Society, 2003).

realised.⁹¹ Within this context, it was one thing to record Jackey's account. It was another matter entirely to have it admitted as reliable evidence and to have it accepted as faithful testimony. The faithfulness of his character and the faithfulness of his witness statement would increasingly come to be mutually constituted.

This process was initiated during the two months it took the *Ariel* to make the return voyage to Sydney. The *Ariel* not only became a supply-turned-rescue ship, but after Jackey's arrival it was also transformed into a quasi-colonial office. On board it, Jackey's testimony about what had happened was prepared and in the process his reputation as faithful and loyal guide and companion to Kennedy began to be made. A slow voyage provided time for much talk, conversation and storytelling, as Greg Dening's *Mr Bligh's Bad Language* makes abundantly clear.⁹² During the *Ariel*'s return voyage to Sydney, Jackey had opportunities to talk about matters that ranged beyond the subject of Kennedy's demise, which he had already detailed under questioning for his deposition. And so, by the time the *Ariel* reached Sydney in early March 1849, to Jackey's original deposition was attached a long addendum, composed of seemingly unrelated snippets not immediately relevant to the ostensible facts of the matter. It includes, for

⁹¹ Russell Smandych, 'Contemplating the Testimony of 'Others': James Stephen, the Colonial Office, and the Fate of Australian Aboriginal Evidence Acts, circa 1839–1849', *Australian Journal of Legal History* 11, 2004.

⁹² Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

instance, the details that Jackey 'would have with him latterly a pencil and paper to describe rudely any mountains he might see when on a tree &c'; 'that Kennedy had promised him 5s a day if he looked out for opossums, which he did'; 'that Mr Kennedy promised to take him to England on his return'; and that 'Kennedy appears to have made a companion of him the latter part of the journey'.⁹³ These were all comments that spoke more directly to Jackey's own personal past, present and future.

Yet this rich document would become little more than a supplementary text, easily dispensed with as the authorised and publicly accepted version of Kennedy's death was produced, a process in which the colonial press and the colonial courts would play a major part. As Anna Johnston's recent work illustrates well, the press and the courts were among the most influential institutions in mid-nineteenth century colonial New South Wales for making claims about colonial culture, authority and morality as well as producing ideas and knowledge about Aboriginal people.⁹⁴ Within these contexts, Jackey's addendum, replete with incidental details about his own exploring practices, the conditions of his employment, his relations with Kennedy (and other expedition members), and his anticipation of future events, failed to become incorporated into the official record, the subject of which was *always* Kennedy's death. It was his

⁹³ 'The Fate of Kennedy's Expedition', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1849, 2.

⁹⁴ Anna Johnston, *The Paper War: Morality, Print Culture, and Power in Colonial New South Wales* (Perth: UWA Publishing, 2011).

deposition that would stand, but he would gradually be distanced from that text as well. Whenever a version of his account appeared in print, it was presented or prefaced by someone else.⁹⁵ When it was tendered as evidence in court in Sydney, for instance, Jackey, as an Aboriginal man and a non-Christian, could not be sworn to give evidence of his own experience or to speak to his own statement. It was left to Dr Vallack, to whom he had dictated his account, to testify on his behalf.⁹⁶ Not surprising then that in a review of the evidence, the NSW Attorney-General commented that: ‘the melancholy case furnishes an additional proof of the necessity that exists for altering the law of evidence so as to allow the Aboriginal natives to be competent witnesses in the court of justice of the colony’.⁹⁷ And when the expedition’s official narrative was published later that same year, its author was not Jackey who had completed the journey, but rather the naturalist William Carron, who had not. To fill the gap in Carron’s

⁹⁵ See for instance ‘The Late Mr Kennedy’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1849, which led with the naturalist William Carron’s sworn statement at the inquiry, and explaining to readers that: ‘We give a minute account of the evidence taken of this melancholy but interesting event, but have arranged it in order different to that in which it was taken, to give it intelligibility and consistence to the facts it narrates’. From this time on, Jackey’s account would appear after Carron’s and others.

⁹⁶ ‘The Late Mr Kennedy’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1849, 3.

⁹⁷ NSW Attorney-General, Memo, 22 March 1849, Papers collected by Sir William Dixson relating to Edmund Kennedy’s expedition to Cape York, 13 September 1848–7 March 1849, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML CY 4279.

narrative, Jackey's deposition (but not his addendum) was included as an appendix.⁹⁸

While Jackey's accounts have been drawn on by historians and others for details about Kennedy's death and the fate of the expedition, less considered are the colonial conditions -- especially the colonial politics surrounding Aboriginal people's testimony and evidence -- under which they were produced, through which they circulated, and by which they were authorised as faithful and true knowledge. Understanding these contexts and conditions is crucial to interpreting the possibilities available to Jackey and to Aboriginal guides more broadly. What we can see by tracing the production of his particular exploration archive are the ways in which he traversed and negotiated colonial knowledge economies just as much as he tracked and navigated unfamiliar geographies and terrains.

A politics of knowledge always attends exploration: exploration is nothing without the knowledge it produced. This is underlined when we recall that Kennedy's (apparently) dying words to Jackey were to tell him to take his papers, maps and books to the governor.⁹⁹ It was underscored again when the New South Wales government commissioned a recovery voyage designed to retrieve the papers that Jackey had left behind, secreted in tree trunks or

⁹⁸ William Carron, *Narrative of an Expedition Undertaken Under the Direction of the Late Surveyor E. B. Kennedy for the Exploration of the Country Lying Between Rockingham Bay and Cape York* (Sydney: Kemp and Fairfax, 1849).

⁹⁹ 'The Fate of Kennedy's Expedition', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1849, 2.

buried in the ground as he made his way to Cape York after Kennedy's death. Retrieving the papers had much the same priority for the government as recovering Kennedy's corpse. Fragments of the first were found; the second was not.

A different order of politics attended the knowledge that Jackey acquired through his participation in Kennedy's expedition. That knowledge might well have become completely 'secreted' or 'erased' if not for Kennedy's death and Jackey's solitary survival. To even be produced, however, his exploration accounts were subject to processes of truth production beyond those that apply within the realms of cartography and science. Jackey's experience and the accounts he gave of it were refracted through a network of other colonial sites of knowledge production: a coronial inquest, the colonial press, a government-commissioned recovery expedition, and publication of an authorised exploration narrative. By taking these interconnected sites into account, by paying attention to the complicated processes through which truth and faithfulness was established within them, and by considering the place of the 'faithful' Aboriginal 'guide' and 'witness' in mid-nineteenth century colonial culture and imagination, provides greater scope for interrogating not only Jackey's biography, but also the cultural meanings of the figure of the Aboriginal guide.

Jackey's anomalous archive might be thought as the exception that proves the rule. If it took such exceptional circumstances for his exploration narrative to be produced, then it is little wonder that the testimony of Aboriginal

guides is so rare -- and so faint -- within exploration literature and historiography. The politics of the production of Jackey's narrative returns us to the very real problem of the *non-production* of Aboriginal guides' accounts, narratives and testimonies – of the archival aporias faced when writing histories of the middle grounds occupied by explorers and Indigenous guides and produced through their interactions and negotiations with each other.

Conclusion

In his book *The Death of William Gooch*, Greg Denning wrote of his hopes for the history he had written of this intriguing but elusive man: 'There are lives caught like dried flowers between the pages of a book. I would not like this life of William Gooch to be like that—exemplary, still'. Rather, Denning wished for something more for his subject, continuing: 'I owe William Gooch—because of the pleasure he has given me in discovering him—the realism of a crafted story, an ethnography of his life. I owe him presence in the ways of life he actually experienced'. But catching himself succumbing to this conceit of history, in his characteristically reflective and confessional way, Denning continued: 'The realism I crave for him is crafted too—by my ironies, by my show of doubt as well as certainty, by display of exhaustive research, by all the tropes that persuade you that he, not I, is present'.¹⁰⁰ Gogy, Boongaree, Miago, Jackey and many others

¹⁰⁰ Greg Denning, *The Death of William Gooch: A History's Anthropology* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 13.

who ‘guided’ explorers are owed ‘an ethnography of their life’. A question at the heart of our project is how best to craft their stories: of how to tell humane, historical stories of Aboriginal people who occupied the middle grounds of colonial exploration and to write them in ways alert to the politics and complexities of their own history-making, not to mention our own. Needless to say, as we grapple with this challenge, we recognise our debt to Greg Denning and continually turn to his writings to guide us.

In our combined project on cross-cultural histories of Australian maritime and overland exploration across the nineteenth century, the ‘middle ground’ is conceived, as we trust our abbreviated case studies presented above show, as both a suitable description of a historical space and an evocative metaphor to express something of the nature of relations between Aboriginal guides and explorers as well as between Aboriginal guides and Aboriginal people encountered in the course of exploration journeys. We want to suggest as well that the metaphor of the middle ground might usefully describe an approach to and a mode of writing history that looks to zones, transitions, translations and ruptures, to points of articulation between various kinds of knowledge, perspectives and experiences, to different ways of relating and being, to the fluid, contingent and unsettled nature of things, and to the expedient misunderstandings and creative responses that produce new knowledge, histories and identities. As Greg Denning once commented: ‘To write a grammar by which the past is transformed through histories,

one need not do something new, only hold the middle ground between poles of every kind'.¹⁰¹ This is, we believe, good advice for all historians, and not least those interested in writing histories of relations and interactions between Aboriginal people and others in the constantly shifting grounds of Australian colonial exploration.

¹⁰¹ Greg Dening, *Performances* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 38.