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‘Race’, intimacy and go-betweenes in French–West Papuan encounters

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From the early modern age of discovery to the nineteenth-century era of science, relations between European maritime explorers and Indigenous peoples grew easier and the gaze explorers cast over the bodies and behaviours of their ‘native’ hosts became far more focused; yet paradoxically, scholars observe, explorers’ records of cross-cultural encounters increasingly obscured the agency and influence of local individuals. Particularly in the case of French explorers, who had an almost constant presence in Oceania from 1817 to 1840, this development has been largely accounted for by the nature of modern ethnographic knowledge production. By the nineteenth century, in order to facilitate and lend authority to their claims about human diversity, many French voyager-naturalists were distancing their reports from the ‘messiness of locally tortuous wheeling and dealing’ and particularly from the potential for ‘failure, infection and leakage’ caused by local go-betweenes.¹ Certainly, they were also seeking more explicitly in their reports to advance existing theories in the nascent field of anthropology and, to that end, referring more to previous studies than to their own observations in the field:

1 See Schaffer et al. 2009: xxi–xxx.

the effects of accumulating knowledge were more pronounced and profound at this time than ever before. Yet, while the demands of scientific method, on paper, may have increased the distance between voyager-naturalist and ethnographic subject, during the encounter itself, as close observation necessitated some intimacy, they also placed a heightened significance on the cultivation of cross-cultural ‘friendships’. Evidence of the voyagers’ efforts to this end is found mainly in the expedition narratives – the *voyages historiques* – and, more sparsely, in manuscript journals and notebooks. These records demonstrate that it could certainly be a messy, even ‘tortuous’, venture and one, moreover, which shaped the formal ethnographies so silent about it.² At each encounter, voyager-naturalists entered dynamic zones of cross-cultural exchange, where the local interests competed with their own and where often they were not the first Europeans to land. Like them, though influenced by generations of their own knowledge and experience and driven by their own interests, the ‘observed’, too, sought both friendships and a sense of distance. While the visitor, for his own part, reached out to his host then later retreated, moving from the beach to his desk, from field observer to sedentary naturalist, the Oceanic go-between in turns drew in and withdrew from the visitor, endeavouring to limit the interaction to a particular space, to draw political, social and material benefits from it while preventing ‘leakage and infection’ in their community. It is this process, which in nineteenth-century French–Oceanic encounters is seen to have been so pronounced, so heavily, if inconsistently, papered over in expeditionary writings, and was in fact so shaped by accrued knowledge, that forms the main theme of this chapter.

One of the questions considered here is just how far nineteenth-century voyagers did neglect the role of local intermediaries in their records, in comparison to their predecessors on fifteenth- to eighteenth-century expeditions. The historiography of cross-cultural history has been even more silent on the relations between French explorers and Oceanic Islanders in the nineteenth century than have the voyage records themselves. Most of the key interrogations of European–Indigenous contact, and of the role of intermediaries in particular, have been set in the context of New World conquest. From various disciplinary angles and focusing on particular geographic regions, colonising

2 See Bronwen Douglas’s discussions of countersigns. Douglas 2009a, 2009b.

nations and colonial periods, Stephen Greenblatt, Tzvetan Todorov, Mary Louise Pratt, Patricia Seed and Alida Metcalf unpack the cross-cultural encounter and lay out its many elements: the performances, exchanges, and negotiations; the tensions and bonds; the (mis) understandings and representations.³ It is such scholarship that has established the figure La Malinche as the quintessential model for the local go-between. La Malinche, or Malintzin, was a Nahua woman who acted as translator and political intermediary for Hernan Cortez during the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. More clearly than most, La Malinche demonstrates the ways in which cultural boundaries were drawn, redrawn, manipulated and crossed by individuals – individuals who, in the historical narrative, had long remained indistinguishable amongst a supposedly powerless crowd. In the very rich body of eighteenth-century contact history, most particularly the British studies, Tupaia and Bennelong have followed in La Malinche's footsteps: Tupaia for some months contributing to the success of James Cook's *Endeavour* journey; and Bennelong, over a much longer period, moving in and out of British and Aboriginal worlds.⁴ Studies of these individuals reveal the complexity of that space where the worlds of the visitor and the local overlap, as new knowledge, practices and views emerge, and consequential imperial relations develop. In different contexts this space has been articulated as the 'contact zone' or 'middle ground'.⁵ Many New World and later contact studies recognise that go-betweens in this space emerged not only amongst the local people but also amongst the visitors. For example, Greenblatt and Metcalf argue that it is important to acknowledge that voyagers themselves acted effectively as envoys for the government, intellectual bodies and the public at home. In their ceremonial performances and their exchanges of objects and knowledge, they worked hard to translate French, Spanish, Dutch or British interests into a language that 'natives' might understand. They also mediated in the reverse direction, representing to the authorities and the public at home the lives, capacities and bodies of those same natives.⁶ It is the voyagers' own mediation, in fact, that scholars have most easily and fruitfully been able to study and they reveal that it has always tended to obscure local agency. As Todorov explains, for example, Columbus sees his

3 Greenblatt 1991; Seed 1995; Todorov 1999; Metcalf 2005; Pratt 2008.

4 See, for instance, Fullagar 2008: 211–237; Turnbull 1998: 126–31; 2009: 390–402.

5 White 1991; Pratt 2008.

6 Greenblatt 1991: 119–151; Metcalf 2005: 10–11, *passim*.

'Indian' acquaintances only as 'living objects', part of the landscape and without a right to their own will.⁷ Similarly, Cortez shows more interest in the objects produced by the Aztec people than in the people themselves. He did not acknowledge them as 'human individualities', remarks Todorov.⁸ From the 1760s through to the turn of the nineteenth century, captains Cook, Alessandro Malaspina and Nicolas Baudin and their men produced more objective and thorough accounts of Indigenous peoples, but theirs was not a golden era. Their reports are muddied, too, by colonial preoccupations, ideas of the 'noble savage', and desire to preserve their own safety and sense of superiority. On the whole, the presence and significance of local go-betweens are only inadvertently revealed in these records. Both this pattern of denial or blindness concerning local agency among European voyagers and the rich and varied methodology scholars have developed to elucidate the history of contact intermediaries – both Indigenous and European – need to be kept in mind when we turn our attention to the nineteenth century.

On the question of the relationship between 'race', intimacy and go-betweens during the final years of French–Oceanic exploration, the West Papuan encounters of 1819–1827 provide valuable insight. The expeditions of captains Louis Freycinet, Louis-Isidore Duperrey and Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont D'Urville visited Waigeo Island in the Raja Empat Archipelago and Dorey Bay on the Bird's Head Peninsula of New Guinea. They represented a new era in the history of France and French maritime exploration. Since the last French expedition had sailed for Oceania, slavery in the French colonies, abolished during the Revolution, had been introduced, the Napoleonic Empire had risen and fallen, and the Bourbon monarchy had been restored. Politically, the Restoration period itself was uneasy. A resurgent class of elites were calling for 'legitimacy' while, in the midst of a society thoroughly transformed by democratic revolution, a new bourgeois generation revived the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire and expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the Bourbon regime.⁹ Culturally, this was a time when 'sentiment' was relegated to the female, private, sphere, while Frenchmen conducted themselves according to the deeply imbedded, if only recently democratised,

7 Todorov 1999: 41, 49, 34–50.

8 Todorov 1999: 129.

9 McPhee 2004: 113–119.

rules of honour.¹⁰ The division of natural history into professionalised disciplines, further divided by sedentary and fieldwork roles, had been affected, and a shift from the 'natural history' to a 'science' of Man was well in progress. Reflecting these changes, the Restoration expeditions were markedly leaner and more disciplined machines than their predecessors: they carried only naval staff, pursued specific scientific questions, and kept to shorter and more circumscribed itineraries. In West Papua, they were each to gather data that would facilitate classification of 'les papuas'. Comparative anatomist Georges Cuvier had inquired with some sense of urgency: 'Are the Papuans [in fact] Negroes who may formerly have strayed across the Indian Ocean? We possess neither figures nor descriptions precise enough to allow us to answer this question.'¹¹

Indeed, prior to the encounters of the Restoration era, Europeans in general and the peoples of New Guinea and the nearby islands had had only rare and, typically, very limited contact. That said, the inhabitants of Dorey Bay experienced an encounter of some weeks with Thomas Forrest, of the East India Company, and his crew in 1774, and even a short-lived British settlement led by John Hayes, a lieutenant in the Bombay Marine, in 1794–1795.¹² Forrest had also made a brief visit to Waigeo, and he was followed there by a French expedition led by Bruni d'Entrecasteaux in 1794. D'Entrecasteaux's botanist, Jacques-Julien de Labillardière, wrote favourably of the local peoples' hospitality and character and remarked, too, on the combination of Indonesian and Papuan cultures, the evidence of conflict between these inhabitants and the Dutch colonists further east, and the sophistication of local commerce.¹³ Located on the trade route between mainland New Guinea and the archipelagos of Indonesia, the Waigeo Islanders were involved in vigorous networks of exchange in produce, objects and slaves while also entangled in a subservient and tense relationship with the Sultan of Tidore.¹⁴ They would have had an interest in incorporating the Frenchmen into their trade networks

10 Nye 1998: 31–46, 127–147; Reddy 1997: 1–17, *passim*; Reddy 2001: 211–256.

11 Cuvier 1817: 99. See also Ballard 2008: 158–159.

12 Forrest 1780: 79–82, 93–114.

13 Labillardière 1800: 298–303.

14 Moore 2003: 86.

– indeed, leading that process was bound to enhance the status of local intermediaries – but particularly at Waigeo Island they also had reason to beware of potential exploitation.¹⁵

As a case study in cross-cultural history, this set of French–Papuan encounters has received little attention. Bronwen Douglas does argue, however, that the official ethnographic reports that resulted are especially illustrative of the emergent ‘science of race’ and of the influence of Indigenous ‘countersigns’ on voyagers’ ethnographic reports.¹⁶ Factors beyond the actual encounters undoubtedly played a strong part in this development: the drive for theoretical advances in Paris, the generational differences between captain Freycinet and his two successors,¹⁷ and the voyager-naturalists’ increasing focus on the knowledge that accumulated on paper rather than in the field. The voyagers’ itineraries may have been influential as well for, as Chris Ballard suggests, trajectories from east to west, or vice versa, could influence what would later be recognised as Polynesian/Melanesian comparisons.¹⁸ Freycinet approached Waigeo from the west, after visiting Western Australia and Timor, whereas Duperrey and Dumont d’Urville both sailed from the east, having visited Tahiti and New Zealand. These are all factors that bore particularly on the French explorers in their capacity as, to borrow from Metcalf, ‘representational intermediaries’.¹⁹ Yet, the actions and experiences of individuals in the particular spaces and moments of the encounters themselves are certain to have had a fundamental influence as well.

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The Freycinet expedition weighed anchor and set up camp at Rawak Island off the north coast of Waigeo in 1818. It stayed only two weeks, but the conscientious Freycinet and his surgeon-naturalists, Jean René

15 See Rutherford 2009: 13, 16–18; Moore 2003: 69.

16 Douglas 2008: 116–124; 2009b.

17 Freycinet was born in 1779 and joined the navy as part of the new Republican officer corps during the height of the French Revolution, early 1794. Freycinet served as first-lieutenant on the Australian voyage of Nicolas Baudin (1800–1804) and completed the publication of the official account of that voyage. Duperrey was born in 1786 and joined the navy in 1802, during the Consulate era, while Dumont d’Urville, born 1790, joined the navy of the Napoleonic Empire in 1807. It was during the Restoration era that Duperrey and Dumont d’Urville sailed to Oceania for the first time. See Roquette 1843: 501–502; Vapereau 1870: 592; Collectif 1836: 701–702; Cormack 1995; Starbuck 2013: 46–47, 53–54.

18 Ballard 2008: 160.

19 Metcalf 2005: 10.

Constant Quoy and Joseph Paul Gaimard, wrote extensively about the local people.²⁰ The captain produced a history of the encounter brightly illustrated with anecdotes about moments of contact while Quoy and Gaimard focused on a largely physical analysis of the Papuans' human nature. Of all the West Papuan records from this set of encounters, Freycinet's voyage narrative gives by far the most detail about local intermediaries and their interaction with the Frenchmen. However, it was the surgeon-naturalists' reports that informed the later observations by Duperrey, Dumont d'Urville and their men.

Early in the Freycinet expedition's stay at Waigeo, local chiefs set the boundaries of the encounter, and they continued to manage these boundaries throughout the following two weeks. The local delineation of spaces – spaces for commerce with visitors, spaces for private everyday life, and spaces of danger – shaped French–Papuan relations during each of the expedition's sojourns in this region, but it is clearest in the accounts of the Freycinet expedition. It is probably not coincidental, for instance, that the most flattering, empathetic and detailed ethnographies were produced by the only one of the expeditions which anchored at an uninhabited island. Unlike the others, the Freycinet expedition did not directly intrude upon a community at Rawak but remained on the very fringe of their world.²¹ Instead, it was left to the local chiefs to choose to set out in their canoes to make contact with the strangers. Srouane, from nearby Boni Island, was the first of two chiefs to approach the French ship. Having rowed out to the *Uranie* with some companions, early on the expedition's first morning at Rawak, he offered the captain fresh fruit and fish. Srouane wanted cotton cloth, not trinkets, in exchange for this produce but Freycinet, not prepared to sacrifice his precious supply of cloth, instead gave him a 'gift'. The chief then called him his 'friend', Freycinet explained, and thereafter became his most regular dinner companion. Srouane dined often at the captain's table and, from the day the Frenchmen's oven failed them, also shared his own meals with Freycinet and the officers.²² This interaction took place almost entirely at Rawak Island, and the fact that that was what Srouane wanted became abundantly clear when officers Duperrey and Quoy approached Boni Island to explore his village. According to Quoy's

20 Freycinet 1829: 20–30; Quoy and Gaimard 1826: 27–38.

21 See Shellam 2009.

22 Freycinet 1829: 20–21.

account, reproduced in Freycinet's narrative, the chief met them on the water and deliberately delayed their progress so that by the time they had arrived the local women and children were safely hidden a short distance away in the forest. Only then did he allow them access to the village, himself as their guide.²³ The accounts by Freycinet and his officers clearly depict Srouane standing between his people and themselves during this sojourn. Moreover, they allude to the influence of his actions on the relationship: officer Louis Raillard, for example, noted that the 'naturally fearful' locals became much more relaxed after the 'rajah' of Boni Island had 'hazarded' to step aboard the *Uranie*.²⁴ It is clear that this encounter was limited, largely as a result of the efforts of this individual, to a space deemed relatively safe and neutral, to the exchange of particular products and knowledge available within that space, as well as to Srouane himself and the other Papuan men.

The second chief who approached Freycinet, according to the voyage narrative, was Moro, chief of one of the Ayu Islands. He travelled some distance from the island group north of Waigeo in order to establish a relationship with the French expedition, which would suggest that he was motivated rather more by the possibility of material, political and cultural benefits than by a sense that he needed to protect his community. Indeed, what stands out about Moro as an intermediary, by comparison to Srouane, is less how he managed this encounter than how he exploited it. Freycinet's narrative shows how Moro positioned himself as a 'transactional' go-between. It was Moro, 'who came to our observatory', 'asked a thousand questions' and, asserted the captain, seemed the most 'intelligent and witty' person met during this encounter. Although the local chiefs generally could speak Malay, Freycinet highlights that Moro spoke it 'fluently'; presumably, then, he was able to communicate more effectively with the French than other locals.²⁵ However, in his efforts to benefit from the encounter he also drew heavily upon flattery and humour. This approach undoubtedly did much to gain Moro a detailed inclusion in the voyage narrative and also encouraged Freycinet's praise for the Papuan people. As Gillian Beer and Vanessa Smith highlight, European voyagers appreciated being subjects of curiosity and tended to take offence when they were

23 Freycinet 1829: 25–27.

24 Journal de Raillard, ANF 5JJ68.

25 Freycinet 1829: 22.

not.²⁶ Such conduct could also significantly influence the course of the relationship itself and the degree of benefit drawn from it by the 'curious' individuals. For example, indicating to the voyagers that he would not be comfortable boarding their vessel until dressed like themselves, and with a good dose of theatricality along the way, Moro gradually acquired a complete French outfit. Later, by pretending to inhale a handful of pepper, an act that played on the tendency for amusement at native 'ignorance' which he surely observed during his interactions with the French, he deliberately provoked the captain's and officers' laughter at the dinner table. Freycinet's appreciation for this entertainment led to gift exchange and soon Moro had acquired the role of 'police officer' and 'commercial agent': he took on selling French knives to local people at a profit both to himself and to Freycinet. The captain noted Moro's 'industriousness' with a laugh.²⁷

Neither Moro nor Srouane rate a mention in the scientific paper produced by Freycinet's surgeon-naturalists, 'Observations on the physical constitution of the *Papous*'. Actually composed by Quoy, though attributed also to Gaimard,²⁸ this paper was based on analysis by the naturalists themselves and phrenologist Franz Josef Gall of skulls taken from Rawak Island. Accordingly, it was produced within what Dorinda Outram describes as the sedentary naturalist's 'inner space';²⁹ that is, where the author, distanced from the intensity and activity of the field,³⁰ was free to examine the material before him 'at his leisure', to 'choose and define his own problems', 'bring together relevant facts from anywhere', and, ultimately, illuminate the material 'with every ray of light possible in a given state of knowledge'.³¹ Quoy's compartmentalisation between this inner space and the 'outer space' of the ethnographic field, however, was not absolute. His memories of contact – of physical appearances, conversation, the Boni Island episode described in Freycinet's narrative – seeped

26 Beer 1996: 40–41; Smith 2010: 40–41.

27 Freycinet 1829: 22–23.

28 Douglas 2009a: 182.

29 Outram 1996: 259–265.

30 See Chris Ballard's discussion of the 'excess of experience' and nineteenth-century field workers' efforts to omit it from their published accounts. Ballard 2008: 159.

31 Cuvier quoted in Outram 1996: 260–261.

into this paper, showing that, as he wrote, he had wandered back and forth between the observational and theoretical roles of the naturalist-intermediary.³²

In both Quoy's paper and Freycinet's narrative, the Papuans are sometimes described in essentialist terms and at other times with optimism and even admiration. Quoy attributes to them a 'carnivorous instinct' and a 'disposition for theft', for instance, but concludes that with some 'education' they could achieve a 'distinguished rank among the numerous varieties of the human species'.³³ He and Freycinet both also describe these people as 'naturally fearful', even 'distrustful'. Quoy suggests that this trait is 'a sort of instinct in half-savage men', but also relates it to the Papuans' experience of the Moluccan slave trade. Freycinet adds too that they are 'intelligent' and 'kind'.³⁴ Finally, while several French accounts note the Papuans' interest in trade, they do so only in passing and without animosity. The locals had provided Freycinet and his men with plenty of fresh meat, fish, fruit and vegetables and the Frenchmen recorded no complaints about the commerce. As shall be shown, the subsequent expeditions' reports would take up and expand only upon the developing racialist threads and derogatory claims in these records, not the warmth of Freycinet's narrative or the touches of optimism and humanity in Quoy's scientific paper. Srouane and Moro are not mentioned again, at least they are not identified; indeed, there would be little more mention of go-betweens at all. One has to wonder whether relatively active and 'friendly' Papuans during Freycinet's sojourn influenced the more humane, less racialist accounts, or whether a more open attitude encouraged greater recognition of local agency.

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The Duperrey expedition visited Waigeo for 12 days in 1823 and the following year spent a month at Dorey Bay. Duperrey's narrative of this stage of the voyage was not published;³⁵ however, according to the officers' journal entries as well as the ethnographies by his

32 Quoy and Gaimard 1826: 31, 36–38.

33 Quoy and Gaimard 1826: 38.

34 Quoy and Gaimard 1826: 37; Freycinet 1829: 52.

35 Only the first volume of the *Voyage Historique* was published: Duperrey 1826.

surgeon-naturalists, René-Primivère Lesson and Prosper Garnot,³⁶ the visiting and local intermediaries' behaviours during these encounters differed noticeably from those exhibited during Freycinet's stay in the region.

At Waigeo the expedition was received with still greater caution than Freycinet's had been. The locals waited a longer period, watching from a distance on the water, before making direct contact. Perhaps they were anxious because the *Coquille* was anchored at Waigeo Island itself. Sub-lieutenant Jules de Blosseville recorded that it was not until he and some of his men followed a group of Papuans ashore and presented them with 'some small presents' that relations were eventually established.³⁷ At Dorey Bay, by contrast, perhaps because it was further from the Moluccan slave traders and the Dutch colonists, the *Coquille* was approached without delay by a number of canoes and a large prau. Blosseville noted that he and his men had felt uneasy at first, but that the 'friendly dispositions' of the people, manifested in part by an eagerness to enter the French space of the ship, soon put them at ease.³⁸ Both episodes are recorded as encounters between two groups rather than as meetings initiated by local chiefs or other individuals. However, Blosseville does mention that during the first days at Waigeo a 'rajah' established a 'union' with his captain, and that a local chief at Dorey Bay came aboard to communicate or trade specifically with Duperrey.³⁹

At Dorey Bay, local guides allowed the voyagers a little more access to their environment than they had been allowed at Waigeo. For example, they were allowed to explore local villages, though women and children first retreated into the surrounding forest. This time, however, the guides went unnamed in the records and their agency is barely reflected in the reports Lesson and Garnot published in the *Zoologie* volume of the *Voyage autour du monde*. The naturalists admitted they were still unable to provide precise detail about the

36 Lesson and Garnot authored different sections of the 1826 *Voyage autour du monde*, *Zoologie* volume. Lesson composed 'Considérations Générales Sur Les Îles Du Grand-Océan, Et Sur Les Variétés de l'Espèce Humaine Qui Les Habitent' and Garnot wrote 'Notes Sur Quelques Peuples du Mer Du Sud'. It must be noted too that Garnot was not with the expedition when it visited Dorey Bay (he had disembarked at the British colony at Port Jackson, New South Wales).

37 Journal de Blosseville, ANF SM 5JJ82.

38 Journal de Blosseville, ANF SM 5JJ82.

39 Journal de Blosseville, ANF SM 5JJ82.

peoples' lifestyle, and whereas Quoy and Gaimard's zoological report related specifically to 'the Papuan', this one covers the peoples of Oceania overall. On occasion, it refers broadly to the peoples of Waigeo and Dorey Bay, in reference to customs and industry, but it merges them with other inhabitants of New Guinea and nearby islands when it comes to the subject of character. Lesson wrote, 'the moral character of these peoples has attained a profound barbarity, this sombre and continual distrust, which renders them traitorous, perfidious and murderous'.⁴⁰

In their journals, the other officers used milder terms – as Douglas states, Lesson and Garnot had written 'self-consciously' within the discourse of developing 'racial science'⁴¹ – but they also strongly emphasise the supposedly distrustful and fearful nature of the Papuans. They also reflect a preoccupation with the material exchanges. While it had been with little further comment that Freycinet's officers noted the arrival of canoes at their ship and the products those canoes carried, the men travelling with Duperrey described with disgust the Papuans' zeal for trade, their daily presence alongside the *Coquille*, and their demands and high prices. In addition, although the officers occasionally and briefly noted visits by local chiefs, they did not explain how or if those individuals directed the marketplace around them.⁴²

No doubt, chiefs at Waigeo still exercised some control over their peoples' exchanges with the French, and we might assume that at Dorey Bay local individuals also supervised the village and inland excursions, yet their presence in the records is barely perceptible. We might surmise that Papuan intermediaries would have been more visible in the captain's narrative. It is notable, though, that while that had indeed been the case with Freycinet's narrative it was not to apply later to Dumont d'Urville's. If we are to believe the officers' claims at Waigeo, then, it might be that with this visit the Papuans felt sufficiently familiar with the French to trade with a view more to their material advantage than to learning about and befriending the newcomers.

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40 Lesson 1826: 100.

41 Douglas 2008b: 118.

42 See the journals of Blossville, Jacquinet, Deblois, Lottin and Berard, ANF SM 5JJ82.

The people of Dorey Bay received their next group of French visitors three years later. The Dumont d'Urville expedition arrived towards the end of its voyage and stayed for 11 days. As Duperrey's men had described their arrival, Dumont d'Urville's voyage narrative presents the *Astrolabe* being met by a crowd, rather than by a single canoe and a local chief. And it suggests a sense of unease on the part of the captain, who was unable to recognise amid the throng any 'old friends'.⁴³ Contemporary documents, however, suggest that the people of Dorey Bay provided more assistance in the Frenchmen's natural history researches than they had during the *Coquille's* visit. In his journal, for example, Quoy (now on his second Oceanic voyage) explained that the local men no longer abandoned their homes, as they had done previously, first hiding their women from the Frenchmen's view. This time, Quoy states, he and his fellow voyagers were able to observe the Papuans living in their villages and, more specifically, the local children, who were 'of interest in all countries'.⁴⁴

That said, even here in his journal, Quoy does not go on to provide any illustrative accounts of these village encounters let alone to reveal the individual character, actions or appearance of the locals who guided him or of the children he was finally able to meet. As Douglas explains, Quoy's 'racial' representations of the Oceanic peoples he encountered typically oscillated depending on the nature of his experience in the field and the genre and discourse at hand.⁴⁵ Certainly, the language he uses in the journal is generally descriptive rather than 'scientific'. Quoy discusses certain physical differences between different peoples observed in the region of Dorey Bay but draws no comparisons between Papuans altogether and the inhabitants of other areas of Oceania. Furthermore, there is a touch of cultural relativism and, in such descriptors as 'sagacity' and 'finesse', some positive recognition of agency in his reference to local trading practices.⁴⁶ And yet, even when his 'guides' protect him during a frightening disturbance, no individuals are drawn from the crowd. It would appear that Quoy formed no relationship close enough, observed no individual conduct or character sufficiently important to the encounter, to warrant inclusion in the record. It is in his published report of the Papuan

43 Dumont d'Urville 1832: 578.

44 Quoy 1827, reproduced in Dumont d'Urville 1832: 743–744, 747.

45 Douglas 2009a.

46 Quoy and Gaimard 1830: 744.

'race' that Quoy eventually singles out one individual to illustrate a point: although these people were generally unattractive, he wrote, 'one could find an agreeable physiognomy among the young', for example, one of his guides, 'Manebou'.⁴⁷ Still, however, Quoy did not continue on to discuss or illustrate the young man's contribution to the encounter.

Indeed, although according to Quoy's journal entry the inhabitants of Dorey Bay showed greater trust during the *Astrolabe's* sojourn and by all reports demonstrated an assertive approach to trade, their character was consistently described as 'simple and gentle', 'fearful' and 'distrustful'.⁴⁸ Dumont d'Urville himself referred to an 'innate' fearfulness, and asserted further that these peoples' 'poverty, dirtiness and profound ignorance prevents them from making effective friendly advances'.⁴⁹ This claim sits uneasily alongside his description of the *Astrolabe's* enthusiastic welcome at Dorey Bay: 'a large number of canoes surrounded the corvette and the savages began immediately to communicate freely with us', he had remarked; 'several among them remembered the ship clearly and they interacted with us as with people they knew well'.⁵⁰ Dumont d'Urville also complains with particular bitterness about the trade practices of Dorey Bay's inhabitants, still without reference to any particular individuals. Whereas the Papuans had previously been 'enchanted' at receiving payment in tin-plate bracelets, writes Dumont d'Urville, this time they wanted 'only' Spanish piastres; and, to make matters worse, he claimed they gave him an insufficient supply of fresh food in return.⁵¹ Dumont d'Urville would write very similarly, in a later chapter, of the people at Vanikoro, and, in analysing those comments, Douglas argues that a complex combination of preconceptions, prejudices (arising particularly from his knowledge about the fate of the *La Pérouse* expedition) and developing racial theories came together over the course of and following the conclusion of the voyage to significantly harden his attitude.⁵² No doubt, his memory of events and his motivations altered over time. His representation of the traders of Dorey Bay

47 Quoy and Gaimard 1830: 31.

48 Quoy 1827, reproduced in Dumont d'Urville 1832: 744; Quoy and Gaimard 1830: 48; Dumont d'Urville 1832: 578.

49 Dumont d'Urville 1832: 578–579.

50 Dumont d'Urville 1832: 578.

51 Dumont d'Urville 1832: 579–581.

52 Douglas 2009a: 197–200.

would also have been influenced by the pressures to advance, and to a degree also confirm, ethnographic knowledge in a coherent narrative. In fact, by comparison, Quoy refers in his journal to the same trading preferences and skills but without any evident degree of rancour.⁵³ However, what the journal and the official narrative have in common, in their treatment of this subject is their generality: neither provides an anecdote or even fleeting reference to an individual trading partner to illustrate their points. Similarly, neither record indicates if there was a system in place by which the commerce was managed: where did the trading take place, did someone, either French or Papuan, play the role of 'commercial agent', as Moro had done at Waigeo? Since the *Uranie* had sailed in Oceania, the imperatives of classification had grown considerably stronger. The 'finesse' that Quoy could mention in his journal posed greater problems for official ethnographic reports.⁵⁴ In general, shrewd trading, such as that observed at Waigeo and Dorey Bay, had long tended to disturb the simple civilised/savage distinction with which European voyagers were typically most comfortable and which smoothed over evidence of accommodation and resistance. It appeared to indicate a rather more ambiguous state. As Emma Spary observes, European travellers tended either to be blind to or to deem dismissible certain types of Indigenous agency.⁵⁵ However, as the nineteenth century gathered pace, dismissals of laughter turned predominantly to denials expressed in silence.

In all, the people of Dorey Bay were evidently more familiar with Dumont d'Urville's expedition than they had been with Duperrey's. Guides had loosened boundaries and significantly facilitated the naturalists' research. From their own point of view, they had also advanced the commercial relationship. All the same, in the records – the unpublished as well as the published – local intermediaries again appeared only very fleetingly and then with scarce recognition of their agency or demonstration of their individuality.

Certainly, the Frenchmen were leaving intermediaries out of the picture in their published accounts as they worked on sharpening their claims about 'race'. Yet developments in the 'science of Man' alone are unlikely to have produced such a pronounced change

53 Quoy 1827, reproduced in Dumont d'Urville 1832: 744, 746.

54 Quoy 1827, reproduced in Dumont d'Urville 1832: 744.

55 Spary 2009: 381.

within just eight years. The near disappearance of local individuals and the hardening attitude of many of the voyager-naturalists in the expeditionary record also result largely from the evolution of the voyager–Islander relationship. Although, in comparison to their predecessors, the Restoration era voyagers sought more consciously to distance themselves from their subjects in their writing, they also sought greater intimacy during the contact itself.

Duperrey, Dumont d’Urville and their men assumed that as the Papuans became more familiar with them, they would also become more generous with the products they required, such as fresh fruit and meat, and more open about their daily lives, their customs and relationships. However, at Waigeo, the Papuans’ welcome was not warmer for the Duperrey expedition than it had been for Freycinet and his men, and although the people of Dorey Bay did show more openness it clearly was not enough. For the people of Waigeo and Dorey Bay, repeated visits from French ships apparently indicated an extension of the local commercial network, more than an opportunity to admire, wonder at and host newcomers. With each encounter, the Papuans treated the French first and foremost as trade partners. They annoyed the Frenchmen as they became more assertive in their negotiations, offended them when they showed insufficient interest in their ways, and, ostensibly, confirmed earlier impressions of fearfulness when they kept themselves at some distance. Indeed, although a middle ground developed as familiarity increased, it was a discordant one, and both inconvenient and distasteful to the French. The balance of power felt different to the voyagers, when the flattery ceased and the acquirement of fresh supplies grew difficult, and the natives paradoxically seemed only more savage. Evidently, inclusion in the written record as an individual, with the capacity to influence events, was an award voyagers granted to locals largely in appreciation of both their assistance and their amusement.

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