GEELONG GALLERY

William Buckley : Rediscovered

Front

Juan Davila Australia born 1946

Buckley's return 1999

watercolour, brush & ink, gouache, coloured wax crayon pencil, chalk, synthetic polymer paint and red wool

180.0 x 115.0 cm

Purchased, 1999
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Copyright: the artist,
courtesy of Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art

Acknowledgements

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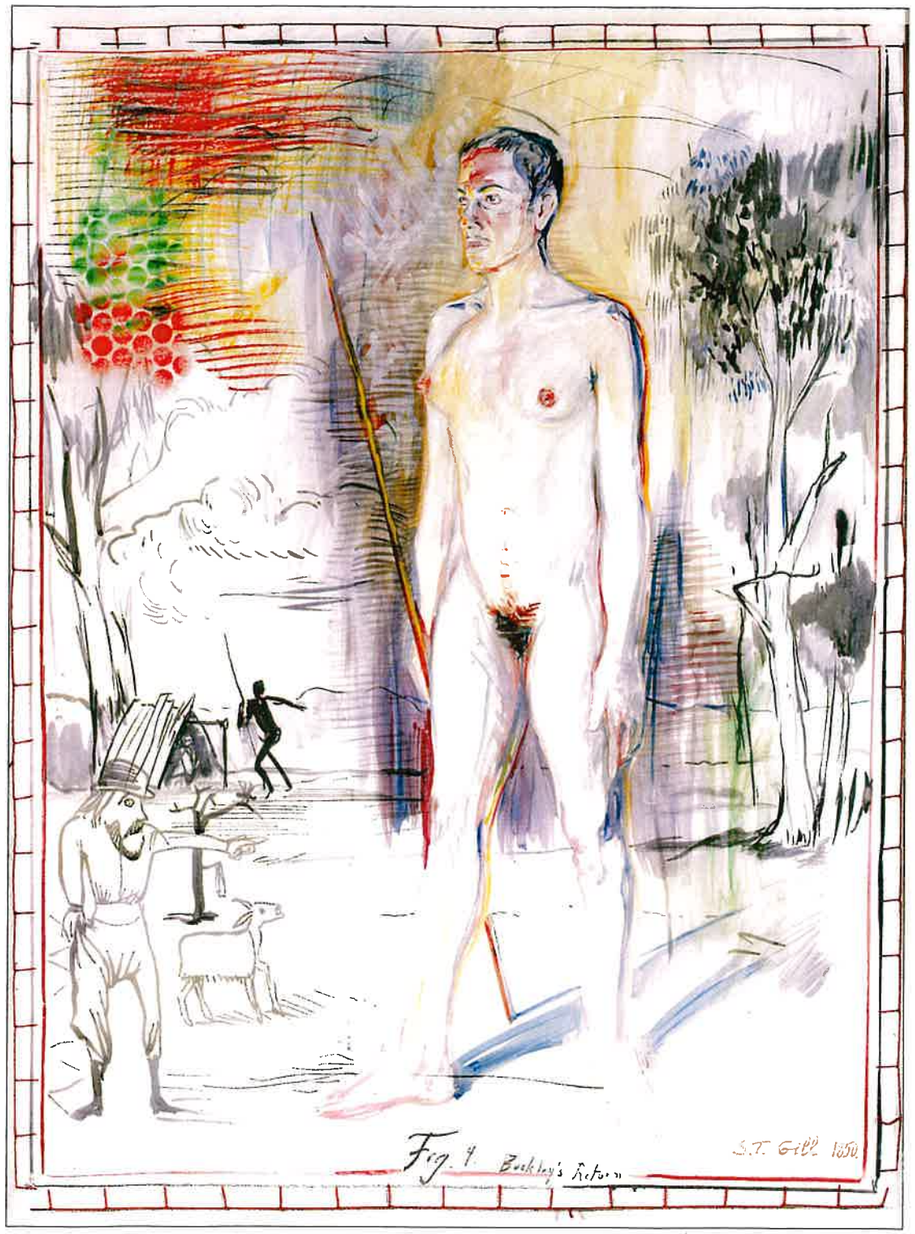
Indemnification for the exhibition is provided by the Victorian Government through the Cultural Exhibitions and Fine Arts Indemnification Scheme.

GEELONG GALLERY



William Buckley : Rediscovered

Geelong Gallery 12 May – 8 July 2001

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery 20 July – 26 August 2001

Foreword

William Buckley: Rediscovered is the most ambitious exhibition mounted by the Geelong Gallery in the current year. Ambitious, that is, in terms of the range and rarity of works secured as loans to the exhibition, and in terms of the conjunctions established between them. Consistent in spirit with many of the special exhibitions mounted in Australian public galleries during this Centenary of Federation year, *William Buckley: Rediscovered* reviews a subject of particular relevance to the history of the Gallery's immediate region. This is true also, as it happens, for our partner in this project, the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. By the same token, offering as it does a fresh perspective on the events and circumstances of the life of William Buckley, the legendary convict-escapee — the so-called Wild White Man of colonial history — we recognise a subject of demonstrably more than local interest.

To be sure, William Buckley is one of the first and most remarkable identities in the recorded history of Geelong and its region, and his story is ripe for review in the context of this Gallery's special exhibition program. This is especially so in view of the extent to which visual artists, past and present, including several prominent local painters, have given expression to certain of the most dramatic or poignant episodes in Buckley's life. Nonetheless, we can scarcely ignore the clear and compelling interest that the story holds for a wider audience, and specifically for a contemporary audience attuned to public discussion of the issue of reconciliation.

William Buckley: Rediscovered will tour to the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery after showing at Geelong Gallery. Obviously, both galleries are devoted to the visual arts, and it follows that, in essence, this exhibition is a pictorial account of its subject. The majority of exhibits are paintings, watercolours, photographs, prints and drawings. The exhibition also features rare historical and archival items — including charts, letters, books, and a small group of aboriginal artifacts — all of which amplify the experience of the pictorial representation of the events with which these items are connected. These important loans have been drawn chiefly from major galleries, libraries and historical societies in Victoria, New South Wales, the ACT and Tasmania, in addition to the collections of the Koorie Heritage Trust and National Trust of Australia (Victoria). To all lenders, institutional and private, we express our grateful thanks for their generosity and co-operation. A number of works are on loan from the artists themselves and I convey to them our sincere appreciation for their interest in the project. In particular, I acknowledge the kind co-operation of Juan Davila, Jan Senbergs, and Philip Davey.

Our thanks are due also to those individuals with whom we have been dealing at the organisations mentioned above. Thanks are due to my colleagues on the Gallery's staff and to the Director and staff at Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, all of whom have made a valuable contribution to the research, preparation and realisation of this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. While this is not the place for a definitive list of individual contributions, I must acknowledge the signal involvement of two distinguished historians, Barry Hill and Dr. David Turnbull, both of whom have contributed scholarly and thoroughly engaging essays to the catalogue. We thank both individuals as well for the keen interest they have shown in the development of the exhibition itself. Several former members of the Gallery's staff have been intricately involved with this project at different stages in its preparation. In this respect, I should record thanks to the Gallery's former Curator and sometime Acting Director, Ann Carew, as well as to Monique Nolan and Sally Hill. Of the Gallery's current staff, special mention should be made of the valuable work undertaken on this project by the Registrar, Veronica Filmer; the Marketing and Development Officer, Sue Ernst; and by Brian Hubber who has been indispensable in his energetic management of the final stages of preparation of both the exhibition and the catalogue.

I must also record our sincere gratitude for timely assistance with funding received for the project from Visions of Australia, the Commonwealth Government's national touring exhibitions grant program; and from the RETI Fund of Museum Australia (Victoria) that is, in turn, supported by the Community Support Fund through Arts Victoria. And, not least, I am delighted to acknowledge the support of our local and eponymous sponsor, Buckley's Entertainment Centre.

It is tempting to observe that in this exhibition, *William Buckley: Rediscovered,* we are witness to disparate depictions of episodes from the life of William Buckley — of a singular episode in the colonial history of our country — that would seem to suggest that history painting can be indeed a compelling, if fragmentary, feature of Australian art, especially when the subject of the narrative in question has the intrinsic interest of the story told here.

Geoffrey Edwards, Director

Buckley, Our Imagination, Hope

Barry Hill

1 The bones of his story

The first settlement in Port Phillip Bay was at Sullivans Bay, now Sorrento, in October 1803 when Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins unloaded 303 convicts from the Calcutta. They had gone again by 30 January 1804, sailing south to what would become Hobart Town. In that time 27 convicts escaped, most of them eventually limping back into camp, preferring it to starvation or the phobia of 'cannibals'.

Buckley, aged 23, absconded on Christmas Eve 1803, along with at least four others: William Marmon, William McAllenan, James Taylor and William Vosper.
They headed north without a map, in the vague direction of Sydney — 'China Travelling' as escaping was sometimes called. They had a gun, an iron kettle and plenty of stolen provisions. Marmon was the first to turn back. By the time the others reached the northern end of the bay and crossed the Yarra they had thrown away the kettle. McAllenan staggered back into camp mid-January, handing in the stolen gun. He said Buckley and the others had headed on to the mountains west of Port Phillip, which seems to have been true.[1]

Buckley and the others walked around the western side of the bay, climbed the You Yangs, came down to Corio Bay and pressed on to the northern end of Swan Bay. From there they had the extraordinary experience of observing the camp from which they had escaped some weeks before. Their nerve failed. Preferring captivity to the wilderness, they lit a fire, hoping to attract the attention of Collins's camp. A boat set off from the other side: they watched it come towards them halfway across the bay and then turn back.

At that point Taylor and Vosper decided to walk back. Buckley made the momentous decision to remain free. Left alone, and experiencing, as he recounted, 'the most severe mental suffering for several hours', he then pursued his 'solitary journey'.[2]
He travelling west, hugging the coast where there were shellfish and succulents. In one account he went as far as Cape Otway and then turned back, increasingly exhausted, until he was back on the shores of Port Phillip Bay at Indented Head, where he was taken in by natives, the tribe that was to be his for the rest of his time in the area.[3]
A year might have passed — Buckley is often vague about time. In another account, he came back as far as Barwon Heads, finally collapsing near the swamp where he was discovered by two native women. Overjoyed, they called their men, who helped him back to camp. They started a big cooking fire which Buckley feared was preparation for eating him. But it was a celebration at finding him with the spear of their late kinsman, Murrangurk, whose grave Buckley had passed some days before. Since Buckley's pale skin made him a spirit returned from the dead, he was declared to be Murrangurk. So, after falling down semi-conscious, he rose to a new life, happily received into the country of the Wathaurong.[4]

At this point of fully journeying into the 'wilderness' (when wilderness is untamed country as well as untamed natives) – the legend of William Buckley begins. At this point he becomes the Wild White Man, Australia's own Robinson Crusoe, as John Morgan, an impecunious Hobart journalist called him in 1852, when Buckley agreed to sit down with him and tell his true story. At the time Buckley was 72 years of age and poor: he had been pensioned off in Hobart Town, and had as much reason to help Morgan tell a ripping yarn as Morgan had reason to cash in on the vogue for Defoe-styled myths. Morgan made it clear in his preface that he was elaborating on what Buckley had told him, if only because Buckley 'could neither read nor write'. Elaboration it was, considering that Buckley had, seventeen years earlier, told another man he trusted that his wandering life had had 'no interesting events'.[5]

That said, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley* is still probably the most convincing account of how he survived, physically. His new relatives taught him to hunt and to fish. They spared him their frequent and bloody clan battles, which were mainly over women. On two different occasions over those years they presented him with a young wife — solace that he accepted, he says, though his time with the first girl was short. They were sufficiently attached to him to be upset when he wandered away from their camp, yet accommodating of his need to be alone for weeks or months at a time. They gave him the shelter of their society and the freedom to wander in their country.
They did not expect him to be versed in all their ceremonies (since he was, to all intents and purposes, a spirit), so he was spared the responsibilities of secret sacred knowledge.

The upshot was that since he obviously had the common sense to fit into native proceedings and often to make himself useful as well — his six foot six inch frame must have added to his dimension as spirit — for the next 32 years he survived, and perhaps even flourished as a black man, a native of the region who spoke the language of the tribe. Indeed, he became perfect in it, according to one of his reports, and in so doing forgot his own. He entered aboriginal culture at a more practical level than any other white man in early Australian history. The frontier that Buckley knew was the frontier where the white man did the assimilating. This makes him, potentially, the most important of our pioneers.

O.R. Campbell, *The finding of Buckley*, 1869
Cat no 7

It makes sense to believe Morgan's account of Buckley's topography. He wandered between Port Phillip Heads and the Otways, and sometimes as far inland as the You Yangs. But his main country seems to have been along the Barwon and around Breamlea, where he set traps for fish and eels. The precise cave and the hollow trees that have been the narrow concern of some historians[6] are neither here nor there when one remembers that he had joined a nomadic people: but there is no reason to doubt, considering the attractions of the site, that he was fond of the area around Buckley Falls, where food was plentiful and the caves were more congenial than the one facing the ocean winds at Point Lonsdale.

Morgan's account is, however, a strange one in a crucial respect: on aboriginal religion, Morgan cites Buckley's opinion that the aborigines had none.[7] More specifically, that they had no belief in a Supreme Being, which was central to the Judaeo-Christian concept of religion at that time. Anything short of that was categorised as heathen superstition and thus dismissible.
This attitude would persist for the best part of the century, until such time as ethnographers began to think more tolerantly of cultural difference. So, it is more than likely that the Morgan/Buckley view simply mirrored contemporary frames of reference. And yet it is still strange that Buckley was so emphatic with Morgan. In all his time with the Wathaurong — inhabiting their language, and therefore being intimate with their myths and songs — he must have realised the depth of native spirituality, the resonance of their links with the habitat, the local flora and fauna as well as sites of special significance. The Morgan account is illuminated by Aboriginal place names that Buckley provided: how could Buckley know them without knowing something of their meaning and significance? Why did none of this seep into the Morgan account?
In another, earlier report on the native religion, Buckley said he knew the place of the imaginary being who was 'the author of all the songs', and of another being who 'had charge of the Pole or Pillar by which the sky is propped'.[8] These two claims — one pointing to a myth about the origins of language, the other indicating the stories that told of the links between the earth and the creation beings that were the sky creatures — go to the heart of what, today, we would call the Dreaming. On this evidence alone, Buckley knew more about the aboriginal religion than he was prepared to tell Morgan, or Morgan was interested in writing down. Either that, or Buckley was, in his inability to relate one abstract thing to another, especially obtuse. This possibility certainly fits the picture given of him by white settlers like John Pascoe Fawkner who called him 'a lump of clay'. But this diminishment of Buckley flies in the face of more interesting facts.

Buckley walked back into white society on Sunday, 6 July 1835 at Indented Head, when he decided to make himself known to the three white men and five natives from New South Wales, who occupied John Batman's staging camp for the rapacious Port Phillip Association. Batman had come from Tasmania, where he had made himself popular with Governor Arthur during his savage solution to the native problem. Not wanting to replicate the Tasmanian experience, he had already drawn up treaties, hoping to clinch the native land peacefully; and this he had done by July, with his notorious deal of blankets and beads for the spiritual inheritance of the Kulin people, along with tracts of land around Geelong, even though no clans from that area were present in the fraudulent signing ceremony.[9]

Andrew Todd, the Irish convict who was Batman's scribe, captured the moment of Buckley's return, when the bearded giant in possum skins — barely recognisable as a white man — carrying spear and waddy, if the early paintings are to be believed, walked into their camp.

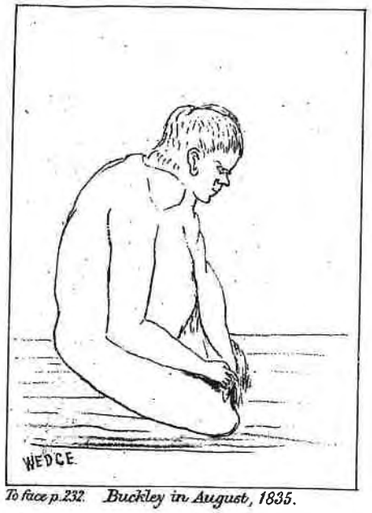
> Clad the same as the Native, he seemed highly pleased to see us. We brought him a piece of bread, which he eat (sic) very heartily, and told us immediately what it was.. He also informed us that he has been above 20 years in the Country, during which time he had been with the Natives ... He then told us that his name was Wm Buckley — having there (sic) following marks on his arm: [10]

It was a poignant moment. The man had forgotten his own language, which came rushing back only when the word 'bread' was spoken — this was how he told it to Morgan. But still his tongue did not fully loosen; it would be some days before he was fluent again in his native English. He sat quietly in the white man's camp, a strange figure of dejection, if the sketch of him by Batman's surveyor, John Helder Wedge, is anything to go by. His future was now very uncertain.

Buckley said he was a soldier who had been shipwrecked off Port Phillip Heads. Two days later, when he felt safer, he told them a slightly more accurate story. He was a convict who had been transported for 'selling Stolen Property' and that 'Him and three others had bolted from the ship', the name of which he could not remember, when it was in Western Port Bay. But that was no truer than the story he told Wedge, which was that he 'was transported for mutiny, he with six others having turned to shoot the Duke of Kent at Gibraltar'.[11] Buckley's romancing abilities were already impressive. (The connection he did have with that mutiny was that six men involved in it had been shipped on the Calcutta, and one of them was named James Taylor, though not the Taylor he had escaped with).[12]

In fact, Buckley had been tried and convicted in 1802 at the Sussex Summer Assizes (along with his fellow runaway William Marmon) for burglary. They had broken into the shop of a Mr Cave of Warnham and stolen two pieces of Irish cloth. Their death sentences were commuted to transportation for life.

William Buckley's Tattoo
From Andrew [William] Todd, 'Diary', [1835]
By courtesy of the La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria



To face p.232. Buckley in August, 1835.

Buckley was born in Macclesfield, Cheshire, the son of a farmer at Langton. By trade a bricklayer, he had learnt to read by the age of 15 — though Morgan and others have emphasised his illiteracy — and served as a soldier, at first in the Cheshire Militia and then in the 4th or King's Own Regiment of Foot in Holland. He served reasonably well, was wounded in the right hand, but still had his strength and skills as a bricklayer to be a useful man in a new land.[13]

He was desperate, it emerged, to receive a pardon for his crimes, having served such a time now in the colony. That remained to be seen: Wedge penned a letter for Buckley that went off with Batman to Governor Arthur. In the meantime Buckley settled for several months into the camp at Indented Head, as content as his Wathaurong friends to be there.

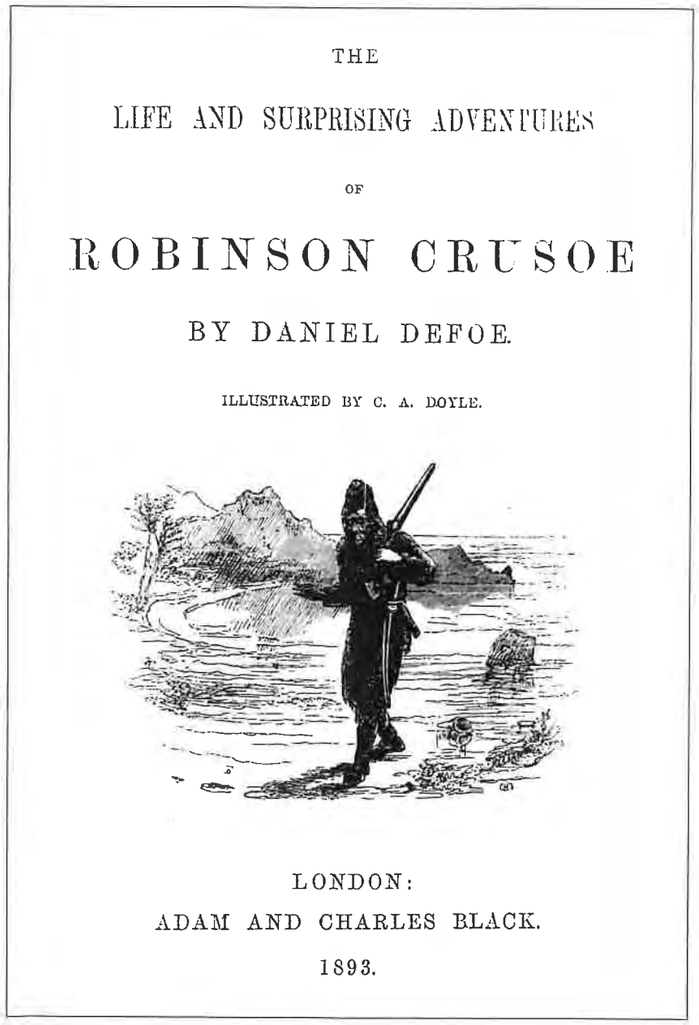
John Helder Wedge, ***William Buckley***, August 1835
From James Bonwick, ***Port Phillip settlement***, London, 1883
Cat no 6

Buckley on Indented Heads.

From the start the local natives had been singing and dancing with the New South Wales men in Batman's party. They went 'Cangaroo hunting' during the day, and sang and danced at night. They loved the white man's bread and potatoes, and before long 90 men, women, and children had gathered at the camp. They were most appreciative when Batman, on his return from Tasmania with more provisions, as well as Buckley's pardon, put them on a daily donation of boiled wheat and potatoes. This did not stop them, however, keeping a sharp eye out for more scissors and tomahawks, and becoming restless at the thought of their new-found food running out. Buckley calmed them down, on one occasion persuading them to return to their hunting grounds until more supplies arrived.[14]

The natives sat with Wedge and he wrote down their names, thus making the first white attempt in Victoria to record one of the difficult and beautiful Aboriginal languages. He listed the names of 76 individuals. Across one page he drew a line and wrote: '*The above families belong to this Ground, where we are on*' — an extraordinary phrasing for the period because it suggested that the white man had glimpsed the depth of aboriginal belonging to place.[15] Wedge learnt that Buckley knew no 'principal chief' of the kind that Batman claimed to have made a treaty with, and decided that (as he wrote to a friend)' this is a secret that must, I suppose, be kept to ourselves or it may effect the deed of conveyance'.[16] Wedge, through Buckley, made an agreement with the Wathaurong that in return for use of their land, provisions of food and other items would continue to be made — an agreement that was never kept.

When Batman began to make plans for final departure, the natives were restless again. A 'boy' warned them that plans of murder were afoot (as Buckley had done earlier). Todd then made a diary entry that erases the humanity of all previous references to singing and friendliness, and gives the lie to the respectable view among even distinguished local historians that at this time 'the Port Phillip Association's pacific racial policy largely prevailed'.[17] 'We told them', Todd let out in his record, 'that if they attempted to do any thing of the kind we should shoot every man, *woman and child* of them'. With this incipient threat of genocide Batman's party sailed away. Buckley, now invaluable as go-between, went up to the Yarra with Batman, where he was put to work as a translator: for £50 a year and rations he became one of the first public servants in 'Victoria'.


THE

LIFE AND SURPRISING ADVENTURES

OF

ROBINSON CRUSOE

BY DANIEL DEFOE.

ILLUSTRATED BY C. A. DOYLE.

LONDON:

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK.

1893.

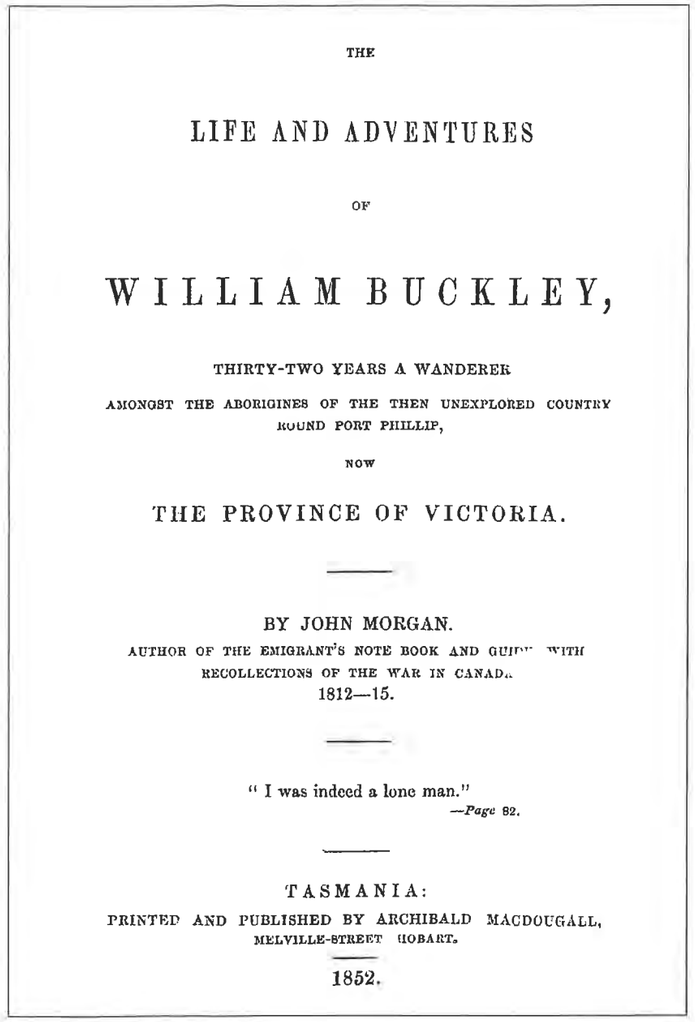
Daniel Defoe, *The life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, 1893

2 Buckley as Robinson Crusoe

What kind of story, then, is William Buckley's? How does it arouse — or not arouse — our imaginations? Already, of course, it has a classic myth structure, where the hero courageously embarks from his place of origin, ventures into a wilderness, faces trials of various kinds, and, in the end, comes homes to a place that is as changed as himself. Departure. Journey. Return. That is the story as myth.

In the thumbnail sketch above, I have picked my way through some facts in order to prick the imagination with regard to Buckley's ordeals: his escape; his dwelling with the tribe; his return to a new and invidious life as go-between. How we answer that question 'What kind of story is Buckley's?' depends on which section of the great circle we want to shine the light on. That, and on the time and place (Buckley's as well as ours) of the recounting, and, I suggest, on how we see our relationships with indigenous people. All narrative turns on the lathe of history, and the history in question is still in motion — hence the resonance of the Buckley story today.

In general the legend of Buckley has focussed on that 32 years in the wilderness, his Robinson Crusoe aspect. Its origins are in the founding myth of modern and romantic individualism written by Daniel Defoe in 1719.[18] Defoe's novel was loosely based on the actual experiences of the shipwrecked sailor Alexander Selkirk, and thus Crusoe claims in the preface that the story 'though allegorical, is also historical' — a slippery formulation that invites more poetic licence than fact.[19] But actual or not, there is some mileage in the comparison of Buckley to Crusoe. If, on winter nights of lashing rain, we put ourselves out there, alone and exposed to the elements, we might think of Crusoe dragging himself ashore from his shipwreck and equally of Buckley huddled in one of his caves. How did they do it? Could we do it? We must imagine ourselves in a radical solitude, surviving without another of our kind to talk with, putting the nature of our individuality to the test in the most extreme way, and taking heart, perhaps, from the idea of managing our solitude well, of even learning to thrive in our private innerness rather than crack. But there the comparison ends, really, because all the important things Crusoe was or was meant to be, Buckley was not. And what Buckley might well have been — a cognisant, consanguine member of the Wathaurong tribe — Crusoe could never have been. We must bury Crusoe to discover Buckley.


THE

LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

WILLIAM BUCKLEY,

THIRTY-TWO YEARS A WANDERER

AMONGST THE ABORIGINES OF THE THEN UNEXPLORED COUNTRY ROUND PORT PHILLIP,

NOW

THE PROVINCE OF VICTORIA.

BY JOHN MORGAN.

AUTHOR OF THE EMIGRANT'S NOTE BOOK AND GUIDE WITH RECOLLECTIONS OF THE WAR IN CANADA 1812—15.

" I was indeed a lone man."

—*Page* 82.

TASMANIA:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY ARCHIBALD MACDOUGALL, MELVILLE-STREET HOBART.

1852.

John Morgan, *The life and adventures of William Buckley*, 1852
Cat no 30

Crusoe survived for reasons that made his wilderness a very tame affair. From the beginning he had at his happy disposal all those items from the nearby shipwreck — the chest, the tools, the firearms, right down to the watch, the ledger, and the pen and ink. He had the material provisions for setting to work and keeping a record of his work, which he did. He built himself a house; he made a chair, a shovel, a grindstone. He dug a garden, and later, after growing his own food, he built an oven and then pots to cook and serve it. His toil, the dignity of his skilled labour, made him a perfect example of the Puritan work ethic. Crusoe's time was well spent: it was time measured and marked off, as God meant it to be.

Then too he had his Bible, which he fished out of a chest with tobacco and rum. He began reading after a bad dream, which reminded him of his 'rebelliousness' towards his father and his neglect of duty to Providence. The Bible commanded, 'Call on me in this day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me'.[20] Work was good for the soul as well as his industrious body, the inner nourishment that solitude required. Defoe's point is that his hero will demonstrate something metaphysically fundamental to life, that 'life in general is, or ought to be, but one universal act of solitude'. Crusoe, like Defoe, believes that solitude 'is not afflicting, while a man has the voice of his soul to speak to God, and to himself'.[21]

So be it, one might think. Crusoe is alone for ever: happily self-redeemed by solitary work and Christian conscience. But the Crusoe myth is incomplete without the arrival of the Other. The other is a native black man, Friday, whose single footprint at first terrifies Crusoe as a Satanic sign, but whose presence, when they finally meet face to face, is another detail that confirms the model of self-fulfilling solitude. Friday becomes the ideal companion for a Crusoe: he is so because he is happy to be Crusoe's servant, and he requires instruction, which Crusoe is more than happy to give. Crusoe teaches Friday English, though not in a way conducive to a full human relationship. 'They kept a functional silence, broken only by an occasional 'No, Friday', or an abject 'Yes, master', adds to the charms of the idyll. Man's social nature seems to be satisfied by the righteous bestowal, or grateful receipt, of benevolent but not undemanding patronage'.[22]

What does the Australian Crusoe look like now? He is the most limited of Crusoes imaginable. He is anything but an industrious survivor of the wilderness: his work bears no comparison with Crusoe's civilising labour — nor does it mark out time in any way that can be dutifully measured. Buckley's wandering — by Morgan's account — is a wandering in time as well as space, precisely because he does not set about the self-improving task of making anything for himself. Fish traps and the odd construction of a brush hut are the best that Buckley can put against Crusoe (though he may have actually helped build larger, stronger huts than usual).

All the more reason — the imaginer of Buckley might say here — to admire his management of solitude, since a man so adrift in time and space must surely have a harder task keeping his mind, not to mention his soul, in order. But the Buckley that Morgan presents is apparently unaware of the standards Crusoe has set. He wanders far and wide — often in isolation, in the times he had left the tribe — with next to nothing to say for or about himself. Admittedly he makes his appeal to Providence, echoing Crusoe, but there is no innerness to speak of. Morgan's Buckley is a man alone on a promontory, a man crying out in the wind — such a presence inhabits his narrative as a haunting, elementary figure, but that is all. This Buckley is a psychologically impoverished Crusoe.

Then there is the one absolute difference from Crusoe: Buckley had company. Buckley — even Morgan's Buckley, straining to be Crusoe — is not a tale of solitude or radically isolated individualism, but rather a story of community on a day to day basis and of sociality writ large. There would have been no moment in Buckley's thirty-two years when this was not the case. He was, he claims, often living alone, but even then he would have been in the sights of the Wathaurong, not only because they had a regard for him but because in their active notion of country there was no space, literally or metaphysically, for an individual to be 'alone'. Buckley would have known that he could not trespass on certain areas. Wherever he went, he knew, and they knew, that the meanings of the country kept him company: he may not have known all the meanings but the social fact was that everywhere — on the flats and along the coast, by the sea and the lakes and the rivers — was animated by spiritual expressions of Wathaurong sociality.

W. Blamire Young, *Buckley acting as interpreter at Indented Head*, 1901

This absolute difference entails another one: that there was no room in the Buckley story for instructing. Leaving aside the slight inconvenience of having no Bible to hand, here was a situation where an unarmed Buckley was rather outnumbered and unlikely to find 'Fridays' as servants. Admittedly, contemporary reports show some natives keen to please Buckley — Todd went so far as to remark 'he is a complete terror to the natives'[23] — but that is a world away from the early eighteenth century when an English novelist could contruct a dream of imperial mastery. The simple fact — which Morgan's chosen genre could not incorporate — was that Buckley's Englishness had to engage with the Wathaurong on an even footing, and that the human outcome of that, its rich possibilities of understanding and cultural enlightenment both ways, was left by Morgan as a mystery.

It is at this point where we might make sense of Morgan's blanket statement that Buckley thought the aborigines had no religion. The conventions of the time — as well as the Robinson Crusoe myth — made Morgan steer clear of any suggestion that not one but two religions were at issue. Buckley was to be seriously reproached by white settlers for not teaching natives the Christian religion, for not doing his duty as a civilised man. If, in fact, his 'Fridays' were very strong and self-respecting about their beliefs, he would not have been able to; and, if he had sympathetically travelled with their songs and stories, he might not have wished to. Not to have 'wished' to civilize them would have meant he had gone beyond the pale, become a savage.

There is a more dubious aspect to Morgan's account: his stress on Buckley's absolute isolation from other white men for his entire 32 years along the coast. To read Morgan is to enter a myth in which Buckley is a figure of pure isolation, an exile whose fated destiny it was to thrive in Nature rather than Culture (the aspect that compelled Rousseau to make so much of Crusoe, forever planting the fable in the heart of Romanticism). But in Buckley's earlier accounts to Wedge and George Langhorne he was not without some contact. In one account he met a fellow escapee and lived a while with the man and his aboriginal girl, until the man's ill-treatment of her drove Buckley away (and the man was subsequently killed by the natives).[24] He knew that sealers were camped over on Western Port Bay but decided not to approach them. In a Hobart obituary it is reported that he met white men who brought their shipwrecked boat ashore, before sailing off again.[25] And — the decisive detail — when in 1835 Buckley finally made his decision to return to white society, camping a few miles away at the heads was a party of sealers who made their presence known by gunfire. This fact emerges from Todd's camp notes.[26] So, despite Morgan's emphasis on Buckley as a victim of total isolation, Buckley himself had decided over many years to avoid the company of his kin. He was not so much marooned, like Crusoe, as a wilful escapee, and a freer man than we thought.

Buckley effectively chose to be and remain a native, an idea which involves us in an ethnographic leap of the imagination — a leap resisted by Defoe and Morgan. Through thick and thin we are individuals defined by a different fabric of community. Try as we might to enter the essentials of aboriginal society, it is not possible: linguistically, ethically, physically, metaphysically. It is all too different for the European Self to fully belong to. But Buckley travelled far enough towards aboriginal culture to experience that difference, and there, in the firelight of the strangers, he made his home. We are referring here only to the body of Buckley's experience, about which he could not speak any more than a man like Morgan could affirm it. Such reflective and self-reflective discourse had to await the age of anthropology, which is not to say that it did not — as an unspeakable experience — exist. Yet it is Buckley's field of experience which pulses as an imaginative prospect, trying to reach, to touch, the unique qualities of aboriginal being.

That is what the middle part of Buckley's journey offers us — a continent of otherness to inhabit, anything but an island.

3 Buckley as hero

Now what is happening to our imagination? If we liberate Buckley from Morgan's 'Crusoe', Buckley stands up as a potential songman of Aboriginal culture. So we have to leave Buckley there, free standing, so to speak, among his clanspeople. And then we have to follow him into the final stage of his story: his return to white society and his problematic new life. Mythically, this is the narrative point of maximum arousal. It holds within it the central question as to whether the hero's journey, or quest, has been worthwhile. Or to speak crudely: has he come back from his deep with the goods, and will those goods be visible to those who take him back in? Here, in our heart of hearts, we know how the Buckley story sits. The Return is the human fulcrum of the story, the universal narrative junction, both in myth and colonial history. In the here and now of Australia (not to mention downtown Geelong) its telling has long created a difficulty, for two reasons. It implicates a narrator in the evidence for the slaughter on the frontier. It obliges us to question some of the more respectable contemporary accounts of Buckley as a passive victim of circumstances, a dullard of the first rank. There is a story to be told where Buckley leaps off the page in his own right, a greater adventurer than any Robinson Crusoe.

The clearest picture of Buckley as lumpen is from the Derwent Company's squatter George Russell, who spotted the giant among the natives when he arrived at the Yarra settlement in 1836.

> His looks altogether were not in his favour. He had a shaggy head of black hair, a low forehead, shaggy overhanging eyebrows, which nearly concealed his small eyes, a short snub nose and his face very much marked by small pox, and was just such a man as one would suppose fit to commit burglary or a murder. Before being transported he had served his apprenticeship as a bricklayer and had been in the Army. He was a very ignorant, uneducated man. The Government expected that he might be useful in reconciling the native population to the settlers, but he was indolent, and never did much in that way.[27]

This is such a solid picture that it is hard to refute on its own terms: it closes down the imagination, as it is designed to. But then, out of the corner of the eye, Russell acknowledged other details about Buckley. When first sighted, he was 'keeping up a conversation' and 'talking at a pitch' with natives across the river. Later, when Buckley was helping build the chimney of Batman's house: 'He seemed very pleased with his work and asked me if I did not think it was pretty good for a man who had lived thirty years with the blacks'. Didn't Russell miss something? Buckley was teasing him — his banter played with the notion of what it was to be wild or tame, and a skilled worker back in civilisation. He was sporting with Russell as a member of the colonising audience.

The counter picture — and the more telling one — comes from Captain Foster Fyans, Geelong's first Magistrate, Protector of Aborigines and Commissioner of Lands. The incident occurred in October 1837. By then the depth of Buckley's feelings had become clear. There is no reason to doubt Morgan on this. Buckley knew that Batman's treaties for the land were fraudulent — a 'hoax', as Morgan reports, 'to possess the inheritance of the uncivilized natives of the forest'. He knew that the natives had 'no chiefs claiming or possessing any superior right over the soil',[28] just as he knew that the treaty ceremony was a farce since it was conducted among men who did not speak each other's language (the New South Wales men in contact with the Kulin people).

Ludwig Becker, *William Buckley*, 1852
From John Morgan, *The life and adventures of William Buckley*, Hobart, 1852
Cat no 30

The other man who knew this was Batman's rival, John Pascoe Fawkner, who wasted no time telling the authorities. Fawkner bitterly envied Batman's 'monopolising' of Buckley, who owed Batman his pardon. Fawkner in turn sought to befriend his own natives, such as the Yarra man, Derrimarte. In Fawkner's terms he and Derrimarte one day 'changed names' — an expression that seemed to indicate some kind of 'brotherly ritual'. It was Derrimarte who sounded the alarm about a plan among the natives to murder the whites, bringing Buckley into close contact with the fearful Fawkner. Fawkner later wrote, 'Buckley declared that if he had his will he would spear Derrimarte for his giving the information'. It does not make sense that Buckley the peacemaker supported such an attack, but the very idea fed Fawkner's view that Buckley was 'more than half a savage'.[29]

Already this to and fro of perceptions is rather complex: it requires some dramatic imagination to sense their various aspects. Everyone in the small settlement was playing a part for themselves and in the eyes of others. Once Buckley stepped onto the stage of the colonial settlement, he was an historical agent in his own right. As he told Morgan, 'the policy I adopted was to *seem* to fall in with the views of the savages…'. He was referring to the tactful restraining of his friends from killing Batman's men for food. At the same time, he was referring to the 'seeming' he would do on the other side, in order to 'keep alive the good understanding' which existed between the natives and the whites.[30]

For a time Buckley was even a producer of performances. In August 1835 he assembled 300 Aborigines from at least three tribes as the welcome party to 'King John' — Batman returning from Tasmania. As it happened, Fawkner arrived before Batman and was amazed at the extent to which whites were outnumbered by the lively blacks. In March 1836 Buckley managed the reception party for Governor Bourke. Buckley's drollery is evident from Morgan's report: 'As good a parade as possible was made to receive him, myself having the charge of about one hundred natives ranked up in a line, soldier fashion, and saluting him by putting their hands to their foreheads as I directed'.[31]

At the same time, on the domestic level, Buckley was seeming to fit in with the settler's 'civilizing' project. He went along to the first prayer meeting held by Fawkner in his new hut, and later heard the first sermon, preached by the Reverend Orton in April the following year: it was Buckley's guidance which moved Orton's thinking towards the mission station at Buntingdale. Orton thought Buckley 'a man of thought and shrewdness'.[32]

Then there was the illuminating, heartfelt trek to the Geelong district with Joseph Gellibrand, the barrister and Port Phillip Association member who had come from Hobart Town to claim his land. On that journey in February 1836 Gellibrand wrote that he witnessed one of the most pleasing and affecting sights.

> There were three men, five women and about twelve children. Buckley dismounted and they were all clinging around him with tears of joy and delight running down their cheeks. It was truly an affecting sight and proved the affection which these people entertained for Buckley …Amongst the number was a little old man and an old woman one of his wives. Buckley told me this was his old friend with whom he had lived and associated for thirty years.[33]

Buckley had to greet his long lost friends and then part with them without betraying the hardheadedness of men like Gellibrand, who could express kind intentions towards the natives while stealing their livelihood. On that journey it became clear that the agreement made by Wedge had been broken: no provisions had been given to the natives, even as the sheep were overrunning their land. Gellibrand gave Buckley a blanket to give the old man, reaffirming that the provisions would be delivered. They travelled on, Buckley having 'seemed' to his former kin, while keeping up appearances as the white man's guide. When they were in another part of his old country, he said that some of the land was his and that he would like to give it to one of the party, William Robertson, for his stamina and carrying the gear of the exhausted Gellibrand. (Robertson returned the favour when he subsidised the publication of Morgan's account of Buckley's life in 1852.) We glimpse a Buckley who knew the double part he was playing, and also sensed something of the authority he might have.

This is the point. Within six months of his work as go-between, the historical reality was clear to Buckley, and he stepped forward with a proposal. It was that the colonisers make him 'superintendent over the native tribes for the purpose of protecting them from aggression and also of acting as an interpreter in imparting to them not only the habits of civilisation but also of communicating Religious Knowledge'. The phrasing is Gellibrand's,[34] treating Buckley with serious respect. I think we can put aside Buckley's interest in mission work. He said he did not want land or sheep, but rather some authority in the matter of frontier work, proposing that he become, in effect, a Protector. Gellibrand explained to Buckley 'the desire of the Association in every respect to meet his views'.

Nothing came of this idea, but Buckley's initiatives continued. In February 1836 he called 150 Aborigines from the Maribyrnong river to meet with Gellibrand about a particularly serious grievance. A shepherd had captured a young, married aboriginal woman, tied her up for the night in his hut, and raped her. When the girl was returned to the tribe, her husband beat her, and now the tribe wanted the shepherd beaten. Through Buckley, Gellibrand reassured them that the man would be removed from the district and punished (which he was), and he commiserated with the poor woman about her situation — 'I … tied round her neck a red silk handkerchief, which delighted her exceedingly'.[35] A few weeks later members of the Bunurong tribe on the Mornington Peninsula carried a thirteen-year-old girl thirty miles to Buckley: she was one of four who had been shot in a dawn raid on her family's camp. Buckley told Henry Batman about it, but John's drunken brother refused to investigate. The natives arrived because 'Buckley decided to *confront* the settlers with the evidence' (my italics).[36] In this confrontation he had the worried backing of Wedge, who feared that unless the Aborigines were protected there would be warfare.

Warfare there was on the Werribee river that July 1836. A squatter Franks and his shepherd Flinders were clubbed to death in their huts, having adopted a policy of occupying Aboriginal land without even a gesture of gift-giving. Two revenge parties rode out accompanied by the New South Wales natives and some of those from Batman's camp. Buckley was conspicuously absent. Wedge feared 'a deluge of blood' and wondered whether natives who speared sheep should be shipped off to Flinders Island. Gellibrand had no doubt that 'many will be shot' but thought it would put a stop to 'this killing for bread'. The vigilantes rode down a group of eighty natives and fired away, 'annihilating them', in the triumphant words of Tasmania's *Cornwall Chronicle*. Then the hush-up began. The Port Phillip Association's man, James Simpson, turned a blind eye to the extent of the punishment inflicted (on the natives). When he later stated his reasons to Governor Arthur, the Governor heard him out and did not approve — ending, as Simpson put it, 'that part of the play'.[37] The official estimate was that ten Aborigines were killed.

The 'play' was now entirely real. Not much imagination is required — if we choose to use it — to appreciate Buckley's sense of predicament. It was only a few weeks after the Werribee massacre when Captain Foster Fyans called for his help. In addition, the colony was still mystified and agitated by the sudden disappearance of Gellibrand and George Hesse on their journey from Point Henry to Melbourne. Buckley had helped with the search party, but his contact with the natives was sabotaged: he went back to Melbourne in disgust, aware, it seems, that without him the search parties would fall into some kind of revenge, as they did.[38] It was in this troubled atmosphere, where the role of go-between was conspicuously fraught, that Fyans wanted Buckley to come with him to Geelong to help set up his first administration in the area.

Buckley kept Fyans waiting some days. I imagine the last thing he could stomach was to walk through the country of the massacre. He told Fyans that he needed no blanket and would not carry the damper and pork. 'I can feed myself', he told Fyans, 'you can do what you like'. And so they set off, Buckley having asserted himself with his native ways. Fyans was travelling with his 'cortege of constables and twelve convicts' and Buckley helped carry some gear at first. But after a night's sleep at the Werribee river he did not want to get up, and further on was sulking and refusing to eat. When he did, he declined the pork and hacked into a tree with his tomahawk in search of grubs. Fyans waited while 'the monster of a man' ate.

'Well', Fyans said, 'Buckley, are you ready?'

'For what?'

'For Geelong'

'No, no', Buckley replied, 'it is too far for me to pull away there'.

'Why, Buckley, you must come on with me'.[39]

But Buckley would not. Fyans and his party moved on to the Barwon river where he met up with David Fisher, one of George Russell's managers for the Derwent Company. Fisher was hospitable, but the other Derwent manager, Frederick Taylor, who was to become notorious as a killer of natives, could not wait to tell Fyans where 'neither a black nor a white man' was to intrude on to the borders of the company's land grab. The claim stretched as far as the eye could see, from the Barwon to Indented Head, and the ban, of course, was intended to completely dispossess the Wathaurong.

Buckley eventually came in off the road to join Fyans; and he was there for the muster of local natives — '275 of all classes' — near the Moorabool river. Fyans wanted to distribute blankets, clothing and provisions — but not tomahawks — which had been supplied by Governor Bourke. When there were not enough blankets to go round there was some 'tumult' among the natives. So, as Fyans recorded, 'I ordered my two constables to load, and my ten convicts to fall in close to my hut'. Fyans and a constable patrolled with arms until the natives retired, 'Buckley telling them to do so'. At the same time though, Fyans was not thanking Buckley for anything, least of all the possibility of having to shoot people because they wanted more blankets. Fyans said he did not have 'the slightest trust in Buckley'.[40]

By the end of the year Buckley had resigned — quietly so, as La Trobe did not tell Gipps until three years later, and then with the kindly remark that 'he could not be useful to the extent that might have been hoped'.[41] By then La Trobe and Gipps, in their correspondence with each other, were frankly using the term 'atrocity'. Buckley went to Hobart, looking to a life remote from what was becoming, in the words of one historian, a 'field of murder'.[42]

Finally, what can we say about Buckley's role on the frontier? Around Geelong, where he did most of his work, it seems there were no massacres. George Russell recollected that the local natives 'were quieter in their habits and more easily reconciled to the white populaton than the tribes who inhabited the country more in the interior'. Perhaps this was due to the influence of Buckley. Barak of the Woiworung was a young boy when Buckley wanted his clan to meet Batman, and he seems to have remembered their meeting rather sharply.

> I never forgot Batman's words. He said he was a good man. Batman said you must not kill the white man, nor steal his things. White man is good and will give you meat and sugar, but if you kill a white man he will shoot you like this, and Batman fired a gun. We all shivered with fright. Women watching in the scrub screamed and ran away. Batman said, 'Don't be frightened' and then gave us meat and rations and we all went back to the camp.[43]

Buckley was there to pacify. He was both friend of the natives and a herald of their doom — foreshadowing the battle they had lost before they could even fight. By faithfully translating Batman, Buckley could not help but betray the long-term interests of those who had been his kin. No wonder he resigned rather speechlessly, without fanfare, hopelessly bowing off to go south, giving up the ghost of reconciliation.

Is there anything more to be said about that defiant moment with Fyans? I have read it as Buckley asserting his identity almost as a black man, which is itself a rebellion in terms of colonial society. It was upstart behaviour, to say the least, the kind of unruly colonial conduct that was to cause such heartburn among those who lamented the confusions in the Masters and Servants Act. It was, at least latently, dissenting behaviour, and Captain Foster Fyans, formerly of the King's Own Regiment and Commandant of the troops on the penal settlement of Norfolk Island, rankled at it. In another situation, less isolated than the old Geelong Road, with more constables than convicts in his charge, Buckley would have been clamped in irons.

Can we find any rebelliousness in Buckley's past? E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* tells us that Macclesfield in Buckley's native Cheshire was one of the seedbeds of resistance to established Church and State.[44] Buckley may have been carrying the social memory of resistance. Closer to his Australian life, the men of the *Calcutta* were a fiery mix of offenders. They included the mutineers at Gibraltar and the radical, very literate Irishman, George Lee. At Sullivans Bay, Lee, like Buckley, was one of the few who had the privilege of living in his own hut outside of Collins's camp. That privilege was abolished when Lee wrote scurrilous verse about the officers. Brought to account he retorted, 'I would rather take to the bush and perish sooner than submit to the torture to please the tyrant, the ignorant brute placed over him as a slave driver' — almost Jacobin words. Lee's disappearance was reported at the same time as Buckley's: in the same week Collins had taken serious measures to prevent an insurrection. It requires no great strength of the imagination, surely, to think that the giant twenty-three-year-old might have taken heart from those whose vitality fed on defiance.[45]

To speak out about any of that, if he had had it in him, would have been as impossible for Buckley as to sing the praises of the natives. Far easier to go along with the safest story of all: Robinson Crusoe, the romantic myth of the solitary individual who would look neither critically at his own society nor sympathetically at anyone who did not belong to it.

Buckley died in Hobart Town on 30 January 1856, aged 76. A few days before, he had fallen under the wheels of a horse and cart while turning a corner. The Tasmanian obituaries did not imply any simple mindedness or lack of awareness, but referred rather to the 'celebrated William Buckley'.[46] From the time of his arrival he had worked as the gatekeeper at the Female Factory, the woman's prison, having come full circle, it might be said, in his mythic expressions of captivity. When he retired in 1850 he received a pension — which the press called a pittance — of £12 per annum, and to which the Victorian Government added the princely sum of £40. In 1840 he married a widow, Julia Eagers, a woman so much shorter than himself that in order to walk while holding hands they had to link them by a kerchief.

4 A New Prologue

Defoe created his Crusoe at a time when for Englishmen no other 'civilization' existed. Morgan created his after a colonial society had nearly wiped out the indigenous culture. Today, we know this in our bones — especially if we live in the aboriginal country that Buckley negotiated. We know it even when we do not want to speak about it. Only in very recent years have a few historians attempted to write fully about it; and as they have, the figure of Buckley has come walking into our camp again.

That camp, I assume, is one that at least dreams of the possibility of shared singing and dancing — the best metaphor I know of cultural tolerance and understanding. As such, Buckley properly imagined, would be leader of the dance. In the light of the tragedy that has occurred it would have to begin mournfully, and that part of it would end when the descendants of the lost clans saw fit; and after that, perhaps, the dancing would be genuinely communal, a measure of the extent to which those shaped by a European imagination could manage to do what Buckley had done — endure a nakedness before clothing himself in another culture, all the better to survive, be enriched by difference, and gain something that quietly enlarges the soul in the telling.

1 M. Tipping, *Convicts Unbound: The Story of the Calcutta Convicts and their Settlement in Australia*, South Yarra, 1988, pp.92-96.

2 John Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, Melbourne, 1967, p.88.

3 J.H. Wedge, 'Narrative of William Buckley', in J. Morgan, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, Canberra, 1979, p.166.

4 Morgan, 1967, pp.20-3.

5 Wedge, 1979, p.166.

6 C.M. Tudehope, 'William Buckley', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, May 1962, p.219-25.

7 Morgan, 1967, pp.44-5.

8 G. Langhorne, 'Reminiscences of William Buckley', *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*, Canberra, 1979, p.191.

9 The most detailed account of Batman's tactics is in A.H. Campbell, *John Batman and the Aborigines*, Malmsbury, Vic., 1987, esp. pp.99-106.

10 A. Todd, *Andrew alias William Todd (John Batman's recorder) and his Indented Head journal 1835*, P.L. Brown, ed., Geelong, 1989, p.31.

11 Todd, 1989, pp.31 and 35.

12 Tipping, 1988, p.315.

13 Tipping, 1988, p.260.

14 Todd, 1989, pp.35-57.

15 Todd, 1989, pp.59-60.

16 Campbell, 1987, p.101.

17 Todd, 1989, p.55. The comment is made by P.L. Brown, Todd's editor. It is important to stress that Brown was focussed on the official intentions of Batman's parties, not the savage reflexes of convicts such as Todd. An analysis of murder on the frontier often comes down to a distinction between the formalities of British Law, as it was urged upon Governors in New Holland by the Colonial Office, and the conduct of what the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines called 'the dregs of our countrymen'. Those 'dregs' were often nudged in the direction of murder by their bosses in Port Phillip, as suggested by the depositions regarding the 1836 murder of Curacione on the Barwon and the revenge massacre on the Werribee river (*Historical Records of Victoria*, M. Cannon, ed., Melbourne, 1982, vol.2A, pp.55-60 and 43-50).

18 D. Defoe, *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1893.

19 I. Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*, Cambridge, 1996, p.149.

20 Defoe, 1893, p.109.

21 Watt, 1996, p.150.

22 Watt, 1996, p.168.

23 Todd, 1989, p.32.

24 Langhorne, 1979, pp.185-6.

25 *Hobart Town Daily Courier*, 31 January 1856.

26 Todd, 1989, p.29.

27 G.Russell, *The Narrative of George Russell*, P.L. Brown, ed., London, 1935, p.79.

28 Morgan, 1967, pp.87-88.

29 On Fawkner see works by C.P. Billot, especially J.P. Fawkner, *Melbourne's Missing Chronicle: Being the Journal of Preparations for Departure to and Proceedings at Port Philip by John Pascoe Fawkner*, C.P. Billot, ed., Melbourne, 1982, pp.11, 21, 32 and 60, and *The Life and Times of John Pascoe Fawkner*, Melbourne, 1985, pp.112 and 119.

30 Morgan, 1967, pp.88-90.

31 Morgan, 1967, p.30.

32 Campbell, 1987, p.165, and *Historical Records of Victoria*, 1982, vol.2A, p.81.

33 J.T. Gellibrand,' Memorandum of a trip to Port Phillip. January-February 1836', in *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, T.F. Bride, ed., Melbourne, 1983, p.20.

34 Gellibrand, 1983, p.16.

35 Gellibrand, 1983, p.29, and Campbell, 1987, p.149.

36 Campbell, 1987, p.161.

37 Campbell, 1987, pp.170-2, and *Historical Records of Victoria*, 1982, vol.2A, pp.43-50.

38 Morgan, 1967, pp.102-3.

39 F.Fyans, *Memoirs Recorded at Geelong, Victoria Australia by Captain Foster Fyans (1790-1870)*, P.L. Brown, ed., Geelong, 1986, pp.207-8.

40 P.L. Brown in Fyans, 1986, pp.209-10.

41 Morgan, 1967, p.107.

42 J. Critchett, *A 'distant field of murder': Western District frontiers 1834-1848*, Melbourne, 1990.Critchett's phrase — 'distant field of murder' — refers to districts some distance from Melbourne and Geelong, where most of the shootings occurred between 1835-1845. Estimates of death by shooting vary from 350 to at least 500, out of a Western District aboriginal population estimated at 6,000 to 8,000 people. See Critchett, 1990, pp.68-85, M. Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?*, Melbourne, 1990, p.50, and P.L. Brown in Russell, 1935, p.151.

43 Campbell, 1987, pp.141-2.

44 Rev. ed., Harmondsworth, 1980, pp.461-2, 42n.

45 Tipping, 1988, pp.90-96.

46 *Hobart Town Daily Courier*, 31 January 1856.

Cultural Encounters, Go-betweens, and the Tense Topography of the Intercultural Zone

David Turnbull

'Buckley's chance' is a typically Australian saying — laconic, pesimistic, but with a hint that perhaps the long shot might come through, that the underdog might prevail. But why does the phrase have such vernacular resonance?[1] Possibly because it reflects the inimical nature of the bush and Aboriginal life in the popular imagination, and also because William Buckley is most often portrayed as a passive agent, subject to forces of nature and dispossession completely beyond his control.

What Barry Hill's essay makes abundantly clear is that Buckley was not passive. Official accounts of colonial processes have often tended to characterise indigenous people either as having no active agency, just part of the flora and fauna, or as hostile savages, a threat to civilisation which has to be eliminated. The narrative of dispossession as one of discovery and exploration excludes the indigenous people from any active part in or knowledge of the encounter. Buckley and the natives are held to be 'wanderers', living lives of no consequence or purpose and hence with no history or significant events, as opposed to the explorers with their plans and charts, pursuing the historically shaped ends of civilisation.[2]

In reality, most acts of discovery and exploration, especially the successful ones, were aided and assisted by indigenous guides and interlocutors who were not just beasts of burden and cooks catering to the needs of the intruders.[3] They were expedition leaders, scouts and diplomats; their knowledge of the land, of the people and of the resources was central to every act of 'discovery', especially in Australia where expeditions unaccompanied by Aborigines were often failures, like the notorious Burke and Wills disaster. Why do we not say 'You've got Burke's'?

Australia was not so much 'discovered' by Europeans as it was revealed and displayed by its inhabitants to incompetent and ignorant intruders. Aborigines were vital go-betweens for most white expeditioners, deploying their local knowledge to provide sustenance and to attempt the negotiation of peaceful interactions with the inhabitants. Because the role of go-between is so crucially dependent on local knowledge, such roles were almost invariably undertaken by indigenes. Buckley was the rare exception of the stranger who stayed long enough to become enculturated.[4] Relatively few other non-indigenous arrivals ever spent sufficient time with the inhabitants to learn their language and their mores.

The history of the 'exploration' of the Pacific and Australasia is replete with examples of go-betweens who worked across the problematic boundaries between indigenous and white communities and who not infrequently were taken back to Europe for display and presentation to royalty, Omai and Bennelong being pre-eminent examples.[5] Some like Truganini, William Barak, and David Burrumurra the 'first aboriginal anthropologist'[6] are well known, but many were anonymous and almost entirely unacknowledged. For example, the five 'Sydney blacks' that John Batman brought to Port Phillip in 1835 were so reliable that he left them as part of the holding party on the Bellarine Peninsula to maintain good relations with the Wathaurong.[7]

William Barak drawing a corroboree at Coranderk, c.1895
By courtesy of the La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

The historian Henry Reynolds has gone a long way towards restoring the balance in our understanding of the active role Aborigines played in both resisting and assisting white colonisation.[8] However, encounters between cultures have always been occasions for 'intensely difficult epistemological and moral denials'.[9] The difficulties lie not just in the denial of the role of the indigenes in showing the land to the intruders and the concomitant translation of local knowledge into the dominant knowledge of the coloniser, nor in the denial of the resistance of the indigenes to invasion; compounding difficulties occur in the representation of the encounter by subsequent historians, be they post-colonial indigenous authors writing against the colonial account or reflexively inclined inheritors of the dominant culture like myself.

The narration of cultural encounters and the interpellation of actors in those stories is profoundly problematic. Complex acts of translation and betrayal, oppression and resistance occur on both sides of the encounter and in its narration. I want to suggest that the key figure in cultural encounters and in their representations is the go-between. The figure of the go-between is always two-sided, always both enabler and betrayer, but the duality and the centrality of their role is typically suppressed, if not erased, in the colonial historians' account. In this duality and denial the nature of the go-between is like that of the contemporary historian, who as a teller of narratives, a crosser of boundaries, is also something of jester or trickster.[10]

The trickster appears in a vast range of cultures from the *mimi* and *quinkan* figures in Australian Aboriginal Arnhemland and Cape York mythology, to the coyote in Native American stories.[11] The trickster is the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries. The function of the trickster myth, according to Kerényi, 'is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted.'[12]

The profound epistemological tensions of the trickster go-between are beautifully expressed in an image of the *Fool's Cap Map* from the late sixteenth century. Its author and origin are unknown but the title is roughly translatable as 'Tis folly to be wise'. There are several variants of this image but they all bear the Delphic injunction 'Know thyself'. What it symbolises for me is that all universal truths, all trustworthy knowledge is at the same time partial and untrustworthy because it conceals an imposed social ordering. The jester is employed by the monarch to mimic and parody authority and officialdom whilst also representing the foolishness of the lower orders' claims to knowledge. However, all knowledge traditions are like the jester's motley uniform, an assemblage of heterogeneous, local components, and we need the trickster myth to remind ourselves of that, or else we are likely to take our knowledge for truth and become victims of our own folly.

This duality of order/disorder, permitted /unpermitted is also concealed in the Janus-faced character of the translator, the analyst, the critic, anyone who moves between traditions and cultures, between self and other, or between accounts. There is a tension hidden in the ways in which all knowledge claims are built; in order for there to be truth there is always 'untruth' or 'unknowing', that is a concealment of the prior assumptions and social constructions that provide the conditions for the possibility of truth. Such concealments are often unconscious and inadvertent, and hence we find it hard to give voice to them. As Wittgenstein pointed out 'the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity'.[13] Other problematically concealed aspects of truth-telling are embedded in the ideology and power of those whose truths are accepted as authoritative.

In trying to tell both sides of the story of cultural encounters, I, like other historians, cannot avoid telling the story in the language and meaning-frame of my own culture. Writing the history of the intercultural, I suggest, needs the establishment of a third space in which both sides of the encounter can allow their differing ontologies to contest, interact, hybridise.[14] This inevitably involves translation, and all acts of translation are acts of cross cultural mapping, of creating space in which powerful connections can be made. However, at the same time translation often involves both voluntary and involuntary acts of méconnaissance, misunderstanding and symbolic violence.[15] Bringing the role of the go-between to the fore in attempting the problematic exploration of the topography of the intercultural zone enables us to see the invisible and hear the unspoken.[16]

Fool's Cap Map, c.1590
By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Douce Portfolio 142 no 92

The archetypal figure in whom this duality is most profoundly captured is the woman who symbolises the defining encounter between the Old World and the New, the encounter in which the modern era began and in which western science defined itself in contradistinction from the other. That figure is Dona Marina or Malinche. She acted as translator for the Spanish invader Hernando Cortés and took a central part in the conquest of Mexico.[17] Neither Cortés nor the Mexican ruler Montezuma could be sure of her trustworthiness yet they had no option but to take her translations, her representations, her knowledge claims on trust. Malinche is now seen as the mother of modern Mexico since she gave birth to Cortés's child, the first mestizo, but at the same time the term *Malinchista* symbolises 'betrayal of indigenous values, of servile submission to European culture and power'.[18] This defining encounter for Western scientific knowledge in terms of a 'new', previously unimagined world is thus reflected in this two-sided character of the go-between and translator.

In the history of the fatal impact of Europe on Australia and the Pacific there was no more important go-between than Tupaia, a Polynesian high priest and navigator from Tahiti.[19] In 1769 James Cook invited Tupaia to join him and Joseph Banks aboard the *Endeavour* on the voyage during which they systematically explored the Pacific, for the first time putting on Western maps the position of many Polynesian islands, New Zealand, and the east coast of Australia. In so doing Cook completed in broad outline the panoptic, imperial, vision of science, mapping the entire world. Through his gathering of linguistic and cultural evidence, Cook was the first to recognise that the people on the islands of the Pacific, despite being scattered over a wide area, were of one nation.[20] Thus he threw up an intriguing question to which he never developed a firm answer: 'How shall we account for this nation spreading itself so far over this Vast ocean?'[21]

Cook vacillated between believing that the Pacific islands were discovered deliberately or that they were discovered accidentally by Islanders blown off course. Despite his profound interest in how the Pacific islands came to be inhabited, Cook never asked any of his informants how they navigated. What is especially interesting is that he did not ask Tupaia, or at least he makes no reference to asking him in any of his writings.

The question of why Cook did not ask Tupaia how he navigated is even more acute when we recall that not only did he ask Tupaia to draw a chart of the islands in the Pacific, a map which is one of the most interesting documents representing an encounter between the different knowledge traditions, but he was also very conscious of the value of Tupaia's knowledge and assistance.

> [W]e found him to be a very intelligent person and to know more of the Geography of the Islands situated in these seas, their produce and the religion, laws and customs of the inhabitants than anyone we had met with and was the likeliest person to answer our purpose.[22]

Of Tupaia himself we know very little, but he was born around 1725,[23] a near contemporary of Cook who was born in 1728, both men being in their forties when they met. Tupaia was a high priest of the cult of Oro serving the ruling caste and also a member of the Tahitian family most skilled in navigation.[24] He was in effect the expedition leader throughout the voyage from Tahiti around New Zealand and up the Australian coast.[25] However, Tupaia was also facetious and a teller of tales — a trickster.[26] That Tupaia also had an agenda of his own seems apparent in his dealings with the Maori. Banks frequently noted Tupaia claiming that the Maori were liars. For example, 'Tupia says they are a parcel of liars because they report their ancestors sailing to an island a month away where there were hogs but they didn't bring any back. You must be a parcel of liars then, said he, and your story a great lye for your ancestors would never have been such fools as to come back without them'.[27] For Banks this is 'a specimen of Indian reasoning'.

For Anne Salmond in her work on encounters between Europeans and Maori this is an example of Tupaia's Polynesian chauvinism.[28] For me it is the kind of strategic balancing act that a go-between has to sustain. To remain an authoritative and superior source of knowledge to both sides of the encounter, his/her informants must, on occasion, be deemed inferior and less trustworthy, while on other occasions their claims must be made to seem impeccable as the go-between moves uneasily across the borders of the intercultural zone.

Despite the artists on board and their multiple drawings of natives there is no portrait of Tupaia, though there is one of his boy Taiatea. So why the silence, why the erasure? Why did Cook not question him about navigation? It is, I think, plausible to suggest that his role as go-between was hard to acknowledge, requiring him to be allowed a cross-classificatory hybridity which is more easily denied than recognised. Cook, being a consummate navigational calculator, may well have assumed that Tupaia's navigational skill was uninteresting because he imagined it to be non-computational, simply a matter of following the stars and local signs, the skills of a wanderer not a navigator.

Some of the irony of Tupaia's position is revealed in an image that was thought to have been drawn by a member of Captain Cook's crew of a fellow sailor exchanging a handkerchief for a crayfish with a Maori in Uawa, New Zealand in 1769. Rather deflatingly, Anne Salmond argues that the handkerchief is probably white bark cloth from Tahiti, but the lobster is undoubtedly cooked so it does look very like the exchange of civilities.[29] In symbolic terms the lobster is wisdom /knowledge and the handkerchief refined civility, but the real irony lies in the recent revelation that the drawing is actually a caricature of Banks drawn by Tupaia.[30] Tupaia is re-established as an historical character, an autoethnographer[31] parodying the explorer's encounter with the natives.

Ten months after leaving New Zealand and travelling up the Australian coast, Cook declared on 22 August 1770 that 'the Eastern Coast from Latitude of 38 degrees South down to this place I am confident was never seen or visited by any European before us'. On this Eurocentric basis he felt entitled to perform that most remarkable of acts in the theatre of colonisation: 'I now once more hoisted the English Colours and in the name of King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast'. Remarkable because, as Greenblatt points out, dispossessions are often entirely performative: 'European contact with the New World natives is continually mediated by representations: indeed contact itself, at least where it does not consist entirely of acts of wounding and killing is very often contact between representatives bearing representations.'[32] In this case there were no Aboriginal representatives, just a colour-raising ceremony witnessed, presumably, by Tupaia, who was thus a major player in the British imperial annexation of most of Polynesia, New Zealand and Australia.

Tupaia the Polynesian from Raitea in the Society Islands, *A Maori exchanging a crayfish for tapa cloth with Joseph Banks at Uawa New Zealand* 1769
Department of Manuscripts, Add. MS 15508. By permission of the British Library

Another important player in the history of the Aboriginal cultural encounter with European imperialism is King Bungaree, whose path neatly intercepts with that of William Buckley. Unlike Tupaia, who has largely been ignored, Bungaree has come to epitomise the role of the go-between. His activities in the early days of Sydney, acting as a self-appointed Aboriginal ambassador greeting all the visiting dignitaries and explorers as their ships arrived, has been much discussed[33] and his portrait has become an icon of the encounter.[34]

One particular incident exemplifies the complex transgressions and betrayals of Bungaree's role as trickster/go-between. In 1826, with the arrival of the *Warsprite*, Bungaree was ceremonially piped aboard and presented to the Commodore of the fleet who introduced himself by saying 'My name is Brisbane'. Bungaree flatly denied that he was Brisbane whom he knew as the previous Governor, Thomas Brisbane. He took a telescope from a sailor and proceeded to imitate the Governor, a reputed astronomer, by pointing it at the heavens and exclaiming 'Ah'. 'No sir', resumed Bungaree, addressing the Commodore, 'you not Brisbane. But you very good man, I dessay. Never mind I forgive you. I now feel very thirsty'.[35] In this transgressive mimicry 'realising the hopelessness of his position and the loss of his heritage, Bungaree determined to play it for laughs. He mocked the white men by mocking himself'.[36]

According to Bernard Smith this incident may be apocryphal.[37] If so, the interpellation of Bungaree may now be serving contemporary ends in the representation of the encounter. However, it is revealing that there is relatively little emphasis on Bungaree's most important role, as expedition leader on Matthew Flinders' voyage to Moreton Bay on the *Norfolk* in 1799, in his circumnavigation of Australia on the *Investigator* in 1802, and with Phillip Parker King and Frederick Bedwell on their coastal survey on the *Mermaid* in 1817.[38]

Bungaree's bravery and the complex duality of his role is shown in incidents like the one reported by Flinders after landing on Fraser Island and encountering an Aboriginal group. Bungaree, not speaking the local language, 'stripped off his clothes and laid aside his spear, as inducements for them to wait for him; but finding they did not understand his language, the poor fellow in his simplicity addressed them in broken English, hoping to succeed better'.[39]

Interestingly Bungaree was an 'agent of change' in two directions. He 'was the first Aborigine ever seen by Europeans throwing a returning boomerang in the area around Sydney and it is likely he introduced the weapon to Port Jackson' as well as 'the woomerah or spear thrower to coastal Aborigines in the north of Australia who did not know it'.[40]

Augustus Earle, *Bungaree,* c 1826
By permission of National Library of Australia

It was John Murray on the *Lady Nelson* who first found Port Phillip Bay, but only ten weeks later in April 1802 Flinders and Bungaree entered the bay and anchored near the future site of the penal settlement, established at Sullivans Bay by Lieutenant-Colonel Collins in October 1803. From there in December of the following year William Buckley ran off and crossed the boundary between nature and culture to become a 'native'.

It is one of the curious ironic reversals so typical of modern life that the ceremony in which I took part several years ago to become an Australian is called 'naturalisation', but it was that transgressive boundary crossing that made it possible for Buckley to become a go-between. Ultimately it was also to prove the cause of his incapacity to mediate the cultural encounter.

The difficulties he experienced and the tensions created around his interpellation into the colonisers' account are best revealed by the surveyor Wedge who befriended him and got him pardoned but effectively could not really see him as anything other than 'naturalised'. Wedge reports encountering Nullaboin with whom Buckley lived but unconsciously notes he 'had never seen a white man before' clearly not thinking of Buckley as like himself.[41] Indeed, he subsequently describes Buckley as 'entirely identified as one of themselves'.

> During the whole course of his residence and midst all his wanderings there were no interesting events, save the fact for his having passed thirty-three years of his life amongst savages, and of his having retrograded from the habits of civilised life and lapsed into those of the savage; for in fact he was one amongst them, and except in cannibalism, he adopted their mode of life in everything. Indeed, isolated as he was, and without the necessities of life to which he had been accustomed, or the means of procuring them, it was scarcely possible for him to do otherwise.[42]

As Hill points out, Buckley himself was acutely aware of this, and in his ironic aside to Russell about his chimney-building for Batman reveals his own recognition of the duality of the go-between role. Even as I write, Buckley is being interpellated in yet another ironic reversal. Trevor Edwards, chief executive of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative, being interviewed about Buckley's role and the possible return of his bones from Hobart to the Bellarine Peninsula, said, 'when we talk about reconciliation this man started it off many years ago .... I think this has the potential to put Geelong on the map'.[43] Negotiating the topography of the intercultural zone is a tricky business.

1 For discussions of the phrases 'Buckley's chance' and 'Buckley's and none', see: S.J. Baker, *The Australian Language*, 2nd ed., Sydney, 1966, p.269; *Australian Words and their Origins*, Melbourne, 1989, p.83; G.A. Wilkes, *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, 4th ed., 1996, p.60; *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 3rd ed., 1997, p.283; and Susan Butler, 'Australian word', *Age*, 10 July 1999, Saturday extra p.9. 'Buckley's and none' is a play both on the experiences of William Buckley and on the well-known Melbourne store of Buckley and Nunn.

2 As reflected in the title of Morgan's account of Buckley's travels and in Wedge's comment that 'during the whole course of his residence and midst all his wanderings there were no interesting events, save the fact for his having passed thirty-three years of his life amongst savages' — see J.H. Wedge, 'Extracts from the field book of J.H. Wedge (August 1835)', in *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley: Thirty-two Years a Wanderer Amongst the Aborigines of the Unexplored Country Round Port Phillip*, J. Morgan, ed., Canberra, 1979, pp.163-82, esp. p. 167.

3 H. Gatty, *Nature is Your Guide*, London, 1958, p.43.

4 James Morrill was another but later example, for which see J. Morrill,' Sketch of a residence among the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland for seventeen years', in J. Morgan, ed., 1979, pp.195-237.

5 M. Alexander, *Omai: 'Noble Savage'*, London, 1977; I. Brodsky, *Bennelong Profile: Dreamtime Reveries of a Native of Sydney Cove*, Sydney, 1973.

6 V.R. Ellis, *Trucanini: Queen or Traitor?*, Canberra, 1981; A. Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Melbourne, 1994; I. McIntosh, *The Whale and the Cross: Conversations with David Burrumarra MBE*, Darwin, 1994.

7 P. Brown, ed., *Andrew, Alias William, Todd (John Batman's recorder) and his Indented Head Journal 1835*, Geelong, 1989, p.11.

8 H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Ringwood, 1982, and *With The White People*, Ringwood, 1990.

9 U. Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800*, Cambridge, 1989.

10 D. Turnbull, 'Mapping encounters and (en)countering maps: a critical examination of cartographic resistance', in *Research in Science and Technology Studies: Knowledge Systems. Knowledge and Society*, S. Gorenstein, ed., Stanford, Conn., 1998, pp.15-44, and *Masons, Tricksters and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge*, Amsterdam, 2000.

11 R. Berndt and C. Berndt, *The World of the First Australians: Aboriginal Traditional Life Past and Present*, Canberra, 1992, p.407; W. Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, Berkeley, 1993.

12 K. Kerényi, 'The Trickster in relation to Greek mythology', in *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, P. Radin, ed., New York, 1972, p.185.

13 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1958.

14 H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, New York, 1994.

15 I. McLean and G. Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Roseville, 1996; W. Veit, 'Misunderstanding as condition of intercultural understanding', in *Cultural Dialogue and Misreading*, M. Lee and M. Hua, eds., Sydney, 1997, pp.163-73.

16 P. O'Neill, 'Putting the English in drag: Bungaree's theatre of mimicry as a response to colonialism', in *Aratjara: Aboriginal Culture and Literature in Australia*, D. Riemenschneider and G. Davis, eds., Amsterdam, 1997, pp.69-86.

17 A. Lanyon, *Malinche's Conquest*, St Leonards, N.S.W., 1999.

18 T. Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, New York, 1984, p.101; S. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Chicago, 1991, p.143.

19 This section draws on D. Turnbull, 'Cook and Tupaia, a tale of cartographic méconnaissance?', in *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century*, M. Lincoln, ed., London, 1998, pp.117-32.

20 B. Finney, *Voyage of Rediscovery: A Cultural Odyssey Through Polynesia*, Berkeley, 1994, p.7.

21 J.C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, Part One, Cambridge, 1967, p.cxviii.

22 J.C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*, London, 1955, p.117.

23 D. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, Honolulu, 1974, vol.3 p.1202.

24 J.C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: 1768-1771*, Sydney, 1962, p.312.

25 W.J.L. Wharton, ed., *Captain Cook's Journal During His First Voyage Round the World 1768-71*, London, 1893, p.363: Wharton points out Cook's omission of any record of value of Tupaia's services — 'there is no doubt his presence on board when the ship was in New Zealand was the greatest advantage, affording a means of communicating with the natives, which prevented the usual gross misunderstandings which arise as to the object of the visit of an exploring ship. Without him, even with Cook's humane intention and good management, friendly relations would have been much more difficult to establish'.

26 G. Lewthwaite, 'The Puzzle of Tupaia's map', *New Zealand Geographer*, 26, 1970, pp.1-19.

27 Banks in Beaglehole, 1962, pp.446-7; see also pp.460 and 462-3.

28 A. Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772*, Auckland, 1991, p.238.

29 Salmond, 1991, figure following p.208.

30 H. Carter, 'Note on the drawings by an unknown artist from the voyage of HMS Endeavour', in *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century*, M. Lincoln, ed., London, 1998, p.133.

31 M.L. Pratt, 'Transculturation and autoethnography: Peru 1615/1980', in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, F. Barker, P. Hulme and M. Iversen, eds., Manchester, 1996, pp.24-46.

32 Greenblatt, 1991, p.119.

33 K.V. Smith, *King Bungaree: A Sydney Aborigine meets the great South Pacific Explorers, 1799-1830*, Kenthurst N.S.W., 1992; O'Neill, 1997; J.J. Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*, St Lucia, Qld., 1989.

34 Smith, 1992. For modern interpretations, see the self-portraits of Stephen Bush, *No Title* 1989, in the exhibition Colonial Post Colonial at the Museum of Modern Art at Heidi, 1996; of Juan Davila in G.Brett and C. Villalobos, *Juan Davila: Juanita Laguna*, London, 1995; and of Clinton Nain, *Dream Run* 1997 in S. Kleinart and M. Neale, *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, South Melbourne, 2000, p.551. Geoffrey Dutton even likens Bungaree as a tourist attraction to the Sydney Opera House, for which see G. Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art*, Melbourne, 1974, p.29. Tim Bonyhady claims, 'In certain respects Earle's portrait of Bungaree appears as a counterpart to his portrait of Sir Thomas Brisbane, since it shows Bungaree dressed and acting as if he were governor'; see T. Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image: Australian Painting 1800-1880*, Sydney, 1987, pp.18-19. See also J. Kerr, 'Past present: the local art of Colonial quotation', in *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, N. Thomas and D. Losche, eds., Cambridge, 1997, pp.231-50.

35 Healy, 1989, p.9.

36 Dutton, 1974, p.31.

37 Smith, 1992, p.157 — a possibility that is overlooked by many commentators e.g. Dutton, Healy, O'Neill.

38 Smith, 1992 being the main exception.

39 Smith, 1992, p.53.

40 Smith, 1992, pp.67-68.

41 Wedge, in Morgan, 1979, p.164.

42 Wedge, in Morgan, 1979, p.167.

43 D. Adams, 'Retracing the trail of an early father of reconciliation', *Age*, 1 November 2000, p.15.

William Buckley : Rediscovered
A Curator's Perspective

Brian Hubber

1

William Buckley: Rediscovered has been under development now for more than two years, but what were the original impulses which motivated the Geelong Gallery to develop the show? Ann Carew, former Acting Director at the Gallery, recollected that there was in fact a variety of factors, all working in harmony. The starting point was the permanent collection itself.
The Geelong Gallery is fortunate in having two significant works that feature Buckley, the first being Oswald Rose Campbell's *The finding of Buckley* (1869), and the second Blamire Young's cinematic *Buckley acting as interpreter at Indented Head* (1901). The latter, in fact, was the focus of a meeting with people from the local Aboriginal community, held late in 1998, and it was then when Ann saw that Aboriginal people have their own perception of Buckley. Members of the group spoke of Buckley in quite a different way to prevailing (white) historical interpretations: they treated him more or less as one of their own.

At about this same time Ann Carew attended a session of the 1998 Melbourne International Council of Museums (ICOM) Conference and was affected and inspired by The Hon. Fred Chaney's keynote address, in which he showed a copy of the deed drawn up by John Batman in 1835 and signed by a number of Aborigines of the Jaga Jaga tribe.

> There is one artefact that conveys to me the essential moral difficulty that exists in asserting that Australia is a consensual multicultural society and I would feel more comfortable about museum displays if it were always part of them. It is the deed entered into by John Batman with representatives of the Jaga-Jaga Tribe. This solitary attempt to obtain land by treating with its Aboriginal occupiers has high symbolic value for two reasons. First, it stands alone as a formal consensual accommodation of settlers (however notional), and second, it was so speedily repudiated.[1]

It was Batman's belief that the Aborigines owned their land and had the right to sell or lease it. In the event, the transaction was a massive fraud: Batman was offering about £200 worth of goods for more than 600,000 acres of prime grazing land in the Port Phillip and Corio bay areas. It might be argued that the deed was set aside by an even more massive fraud: Governor Bourke, quickly asserting the law of *terra nullius*, claimed that the Crown owned the land and only the Crown could sell it — which it did from 1837 onwards.

Chaney's keynote address encouraged Ann to reflect upon the issues of white settlement in Victoria and in particular on William Buckley's role in that settlement. She realised that the Geelong Gallery was in a unique position to tell Buckley's story in an incisive and dramatic way. It was almost a bonus that Buckley's was such a local story, and that it could build on so many local references — Buckley's Cave at Queenscliff, Buckley's Falls at Fyansford, Buckley's Well at Breamlea.

And then, of course, there was the very contemporary issue of Reconciliation. Could *William Buckley: Rediscovered* contribute to the debate in any meaningful way? On 26 August 1999, the House of Representatives passed the Prime Minister's 'Motion of Reconciliation'. While the Motion fell short of making a formal apology for past wrongs to the Aboriginal people, many believed that it represented some progress. Lowitja O'Donoghue, former ATSIC Chair, stated 'I am on my own journey of healing and I believe the Prime Minister has embarked on a similar one'.[2] *William Buckley: Rediscovered* goes some way to fulfilling paragraph (d) of the 'Motion of Reconciliation', in that it recognises the importance of understanding the shared history of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, and the need to acknowledge openly the wrongs and injustices of the past.

William Buckley himself has both a white and a black history, and one of the purposes of the present show is to examine both those histories.

The final happy coincidence that made *William Buckley: Rediscovered* possible was the implementation of the Regional Exhibition Touring initiative (RETI) Grant Fund in 1999. RETI funding allowed the appointment early in 1999 of Monique Nolan as curator of *William Buckley: Rediscovered*. Monique was able to develop a project brief for the show, which in turn became the basis for the successful application to the Visions of Australia fund.

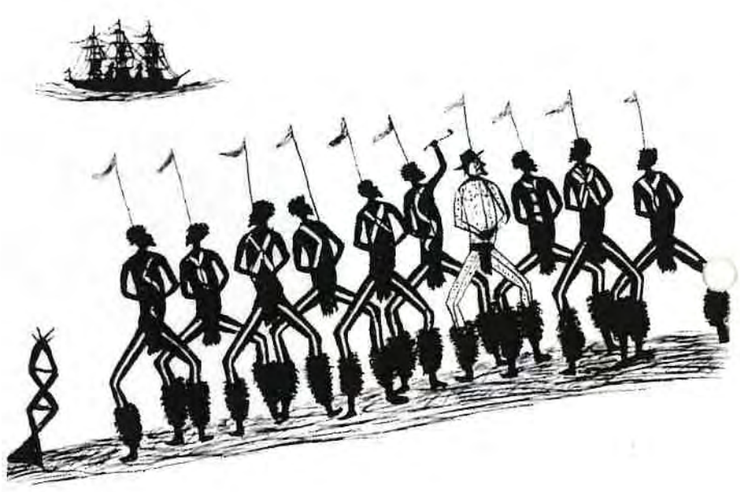
Monique worked on the project until September 2000 when she returned to study. In that 18-month period she went about sourcing the artefacts, books, and works of art for the show. This was a huge task, involving considerable amounts of primary research in library and gallery catalogues and on the World Wide Web. In many ways, the fundamental richness of *William Buckley: Rediscovered* is due to Monique's exhaustive search.

Of course, sourcing materials also involved considerable contextual research into the Buckley story and its various re-interpretations. However, I think it is fair to say that the interpretive shape of the exhibition — its narrative and themes — was one of the contributions of Sally Hill, who succeeded Monique as curator and who carried the project forward. As well as the interpretive shape, Sally put the show in good logistical order, by preparing the indemnification, transportation and loan documentation and arrangements. Sally worked on the show for about six months before family circumstances required that she relocate to Sydney. I know Sally was disappointed not to see *William Buckley: Rediscovered* through to its conclusion, but she has made an essential contribution to the realisation of the show.

2

In what sense then is William Buckley *rediscovered* in this show? The first rediscovery was in August 1835 when he returned to white society, and he continued to be rediscovered throughout the nineteenth century — upon publication of his own account in 1852; by his mythologisation in a succession of historical paintings by Woodhouse (1861), Campbell (1869), van der Houten (1878), Blamire Young (1901); by the numerous popular accounts of his story by James Bonwick (1856), Marcus Clarke (1871), W.T. Pyke (1889) and J.B. O'Hara (1895).

But what of William Buckley's own story? Can we now rediscover this? Buckley, himself, tells us that when young he learnt how to read at an evening school; however, late in life, it is seems certain that he could not write. At his daughter's wedding in 1853, he and his wife Julia both signed the marriage register with their marks. If illiterate, how could Buckley tell his remarkable story? Answer: through a 'ghost' writer. And for a person described as being almost pathologically taciturn, Buckley told his story to a remarkable number of people, though clearly not to everybody. He would pick and choose, according to whether his own purpose would be served.



Tommy McRae, *Buckley ran away from ship*, c 1870
Cat no 29

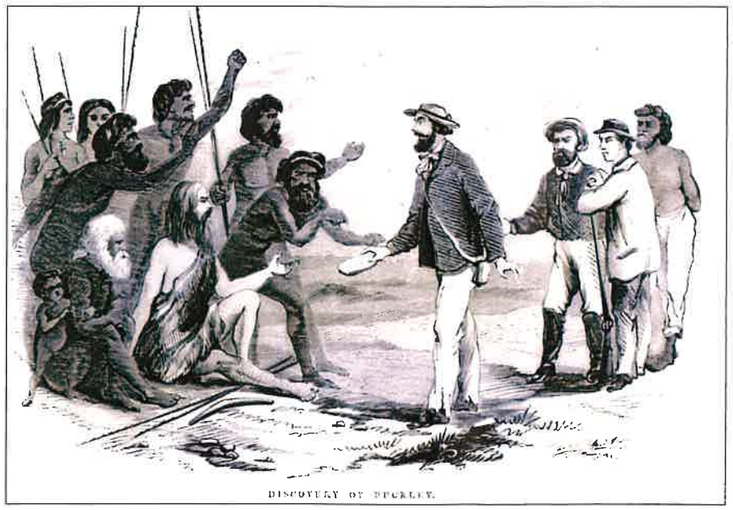
The first to hear Buckley's story was John Batman's holding party at Indented Heads. As Barry Hill shows in his catalogue essay, Buckley told only an approximate version of the truth at this time. The next 'ghost' was Batman's surveyor, John Helder Wedge, who befriended Buckley and drafted the petition to Governor Arthur, 'praying' for a pardon for Buckley. John Batman himself heard the story at this time but failed to put it into writing. In the next several months, Buckley also talked to a succession of missionaries in George Langhorne, William Thomas, the Rev. Joseph Orton, and the Rev. William Waterfield, presumably in the belief that they might ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines.

In each of these accounts Buckley consistently claims to have given himself up to the white settlers. *The Hobart Town colonial times* (23 July 1835) announced:

> A most extraordinary discovery has taken place at Port Phillip. Some of Mr. Batman's men were ... much frightened at the approach of a white man of immense size, covered with an enormous opossum skin rug, and his hair and beard spread out as large as a bushel measure.[3]

This dramatic image of the wild man coming out of the bush has come down to us through the works of Frederick Woodhouse, Oswald Rose Campbell, H.L. van der Houten, and the numerous illustrations in books and newspapers. However, there is an alternative version. James Bonwick has George Evans, a very early settler, claiming that Buckley was first seen by one of Batman's men who was given to rambling by himself. He was sitting on a kangaroo skin rug, which he had made himself and which he later presented to Mrs Batman, whose daughter made a pair of slippers for the giant.[4] This is the version depicted by Samuel Calvert for Bonwick's *The Wild white man and the blacks of Victoria* (Melbourne, 1863). However, Calvert takes many liberties: the Aborigines are depicted in an aggressive mood, and Buckley is a peace-bringing 'John the Baptist'-figure, preparing the way for the lord(s) of the kingdom (Sayers 1996/97).

In this alternative version Buckley did not give himself up; he was discovered. He did not want to leave his tribe; circumstances forced his hand. Within weeks of giving himself up, he was sketched by John Helder Wedge. He is a forlorn, dejected figure; his magnificent hair and whiskers have been hacked and shorn. Even at this stage, Buckley may be regretting showing himself.



Samuel Calvert, Discovery of Buckley, 1863
From James Bonwick, *The wild white man and the blacks of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1863
Cat no 6

3

The very slipperiness of William Buckley's story allows multiple perspectives, multiple interpretations. Late in the twentieth century, Buckley was rediscovered again. The first catalyst appears to have been Craig Robertson's novel, *Buckley's hope* (1980), which inspired both the writer Barry Hill and artist Philip Davey. Hill has been intrigued with Buckley for two decades now, examining the cultural, mythical and poetic resonances of the story in a number of ways, including his long poem, *Ghosting William Buckley*. In a similar way Davey has conducted a visual exploration of the narrative in a series entitled 'William Buckley wild white man', first exhibited at Gallery 101, Melbourne in 1995.

A second catalyst, independent of Robertson's novel, can be traced to Andrew Sayers' work on Tommy McRae.[5] Sayers' 1994 exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia and the accompanying publication, entitled *Aboriginal artists of the nineteenth century*, brought the previously little known Tommy McRae to national attention. McRae was a *kwatkwat* man from the upper Murray region, who worked as an artist in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. William Buckley was a sub-theme of McRae's work, indicating that perhaps there was an Aboriginal oral memory of Buckley, a memory which has never found its way into the written histories of white society. McRae's 'Buckley', however, has found its way into the work of contemporary artists, Jan Senbergs in *Otway night* (1995) and *Buckley's cave* (1996) and Juan Davila in *Juanito Laguna* (1994).

Juanito Laguna was a 1994 installation that included a frieze around the bottom of the walls.[6] The frieze, a portion of which was reproduced on the Tolarno Gallery invitation, depicts a series of bordello scenes combined with Tommy McRae sketches, and indeed it is here we find the epitome of the go-between, William Buckley. Davila again took up the myth in *Buckley's return*, first exhibited in *Recent drawings* at Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art in 1999.[7]

Tommy McRae visually reworked an oral memory of William Buckley. Blamire Young incorporated the 1852 Ludwig Becker portrait into his own work. Jan Senbergs re-imagines McRae. Juan Davila reworks McRae as well as what might be called the Woodhouse-Campbell tradition. William Buckley is not only part of our visual and literary heritage, his story goes beyond history, beyond art. His story can be used to make new meanings for contemporary Australian society.

C.T.H. Costantini,
William Buckley 6 feet 6 3/4 inches in height — who lived for 30 years amongst the natives of Port Philip, 1837
Cat no 11

4

The above few brief remarks have attempted to do two things. Firstly, outline the aims and motivations of *William Buckley: Rediscovered*. Secondly, describe a few instances of the power of the story and the variety of its forms. I hope that the visitor can discover many more William Buckleys.

1 International Council of Museums Conference, Melbourne, 1998, www.mov.vic.gov.au/icom/spkr7.html, 2 April 2001

2 'PM expresses "regret"', *Ethnic voice*, December 1999, p.12

3 James Bonwick, *Port Phillip settlement*, Melbourne, 1883, p.229).

4 Bonwick, 1883, p.231.

5 Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal artists of the nineteenth century*, Melbourne, 1994.

6 Chisenhale Gallery, London, 1994; Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney, 1995; and Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne, 1995.

7 Davila's conception of the 'go-between' is referred to by David Turnbull in his catalogue essay. See also: Wayne Baerwaldt, 'Juan Davila', *Art + Text*, 48, p.73, and Michael Archer, 'Juan Davila', *Artforum*, February 1995: 101.

Catalogue

SUE ANDERSON
born Geelong 1962

1. *Escaping Sorrento 1803* 1999
pastel on paper
Geelong Gallery
Sybil Craig Bequest Fund 2000

2. *William Buckley hears some strange sounds* 1999
pastel on paper
Private collection

GEORGE ROSSI ASHTON
born England 1857; arrived Melbourne 1879; returned London 1893

3. *Batman treating with the blacks* n.d.
ink on paper
On loan to The University of Melbourne from Arts Victoria from the Arthur and Caroline Howard Bequest

JOHN BATMAN
born Sydney 1801 died Melbourne 1839

4. *Batman deed — Geelong* 1835
manuscript on vellum
La Trobe Australian Manuscript Collection, State Library of Victoria

JAMES BONWICK
born 1817 died 1906

5. *The wild white man and the blacks of Victoria* 1863
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria

6. *Port Phillip Settlement* 1883
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria

OSWALD ROSE CAMPBELL
born Jersey, Channel Islands 1820; arrived Australia ca1850; died 1887

7. *The finding of Buckley* 1869
watercolour
Geelong Gallery
Gift of Robert Short 1937

ROD CARMICHAEL
born Edinburgh 1931; arrived Australia 1974

8. *Buckley's Luck* 1979
oil on canvas
Private collection

NICHOLAS CHEVALIER (artist)
born Russia 1828; arrived Victoria 1855; died England 1902
Frederick Grosse (engraver)
born 1838 died 1894

9. *William Buckley, the wild white man* 1857
wood engraving on paper
National Library of Australia
After the lithographic frontispiece to John Morgan, *The life and adventures of William Buckley*, 1852

JOHN HEAVISIDE CLARK
England born 1819; arrived 1844; died 1910

10. *Smoking out the O'Possum* ca1813
hand coloured aquatint
La Trobe Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria
From: *Foreign Field Sports* (London, 1813)

C.T.H. COSTANTINI
France born 1803; arrived Sydney 1824

11. *William Buckley, 6 feet 6 3/4 inches in height — who lived for 30 years amongst the natives of Port Philip 1837*
lithographic print on paper
Dixson Library,
State Library of New South Wales
Originally published as a supplement to the *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston, Tas.), September 1837

PHILIP DAVEY
born England 1949; arrived Australia 1958

12. *At the Water Hole* 1995
gouache on paper
Courtesy Australian Galleries, Melbourne

13. *First night alone* 1995
oil on linen
101 Collins Street Pty Ltd, Courtesy Australian Galleries, Melbourne

14. *Transportation* 1995
oil on linen
Courtesy Australian Galleries, Melbourne

JUAN DAVILA
born Chile 1946; arrived Australia 1974

15. *Buckley's return* 1999
watercolour, brush and ink, gouache, coloured wax crayon, pencil, chalk, synthetic polymer paint, and red wool
National Gallery of Victoria
Purchased 1999

ROBERT DRUMMOND
born Brisbane 1955

16. *Buckley sleeping* 1991
pastel on paper
Private collection

LACHLAN FISHER
born Camperdown 1956

17. *The Estuary* 1993
oil on canvas
Private collection

G.A. GILBERT (attributed to)
born Great Britain 1832; arrived Australia 1841; died before 1889

18. *Swan Bay* ca1843-1850
pencil, white gouache, blue wash on grey/green paper
National Gallery of Victoria
Felton Bequest 1960

EUGÈNE von GUÉRARD
born Austria 1811; arrived Victoria 1852; died England 1901

19. *View of Geelong, the Corio Bay and Indented Heads from the southern declivity of Station Peak* ca1850
pen and ink and wash
National Gallery of Victoria
Purchased 1948

LEAH KING-SMITH
born 1957

20. *Untitled 10/15* 1991
Cibachrome photocomposition
Purchased with the assistance of The Victorian Regional Galleries Art Foundation Trust Fund.
Collection: Horsham Regional Art Gallery

KELLY KOUMALATSOS

21. *Decorated possum skins, joined to form a cloak* ca1995
possum skins and paint
Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. collection

GEOFF LOWE
born Melbourne 1952

22. *Buckley's chance* 1984
synthetic polymer on linen
Collection of A Constructed World

GEORGE GORDON McCRAE
Scotland born 1833; died Hawthorn 1927

23. *Proclamation! Desertion of William Buckley* n.d.
pen and ink sketch on paper
La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria

TOMMY McRAE
born ca1836 died 1901

24. *Buckley meeting with a group of Aborigines* ca1890
pen and ink on paper
Mr Brian Cox, Bungendore, New South Wales

25. *Buckley meeting with a group of Aborigines* ca1890
pen and ink on paper
Mr Brian Cox, Bungendore, New South Wales

26. *Hunting birds* ca1890
pen and ink on paper
Mr Brian Cox, Bungendore, New South Wales

27. *Buckley with a group of Aborigines* ca 1870
pen and ink on paper
Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. collection

28. *Buckley with a group of Aborigines* ca 1870
pen and ink on paper
Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. collection

29. *Buckley ran away from ship* ca1870
pen and ink on paper
Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. collection

JOHN MORGAN
born 1792 or 1793 died 1866

30. *The life and adventures of William Buckley: thirty-two years a wanderer amongst the Aborigines of the then unexplored country around Port Phillip now the province of Victoria* 1852
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection,
State Library of Victoria
The frontispiece is a lithograph portrait thought to be by Ludwig Becker, born Germany 1808; arrived Tasmania 1851; died 1861

W.T. PYKE
born 1859 died 1933

31. *Savage life in Australia: the story of William Buckley the run-away convict, who lived thirty-two years among the blacks of Australia* 1889
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection,
State Library of Victoria

32. *Savage life in Australia: the story of William Buckley the run-away convict, who lived thirty-two years among the blacks of Australia* 1904
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection,
State Library of Victoria

JAN SENBERGS
born Latvia 1939; arrived Australia 1950

33. *Buckley's Cave* 1996
synthetic polymer on canvas
Sharon Grey and Jeff Hall

34. *Otway night* 1994
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
The Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased with assistance from Ruth Komon 1994

FRANCIS GUILLEMARD SIMPKINSON de WESSELOW
England born 1819; arrived 1844; died 1910

35. *Geelong — Australia Felix* 1847
pencil, watercolour and chinese white highlights on buff paper
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
Royal Society of Tasmania Collection; gift of the artist, 1900

36. *Corio Bay from the Barrabool Hills — Australia Felix* 1847
pencil, watercolour and chinese white highlights on buff paper
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
Royal Society of Tasmania Collection; gift of the artist, 1900

37. *Geelong from the Barrabool Hills, Geelong — Australia Felix* 1847
pencil, watercolour and chinese white highlights on buff paper
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
Royal Society of Tasmania Collection; gift of the artist, 1900

38. *On the Barwon, Corio — Australia Felix* 1847
pencil, watercolour and chinese white highlights on buff paper
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.
Royal Society of Tasmania Collection; gift of the artist, 1900

ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND
born 1852 died 1902

39. *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present* 1888
printed book
La Trobe Rare Books Collection,
State Library of Victoria

J.H. (James Hingston) TUCKEY
born 1776 died 1816

40. *Port Phillip on Bass's Strait. Surveyed by J.H. Tuckey 1st lieutenant of H.M.S. Calcutta October 1804* 1804
facsimile of engraved map
La Trobe Map Collection,
State Library of Victoria

JOHN HELDER WEDGE
born 1793 died 1832

41. *Map of Port Phillip* ca1836
lithographed map mounted on linen
La Trobe Map Collection,
State Library of Victoria

42. *Petition from J.H. Wedge to His Excellency Colonel George Arthur, Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemens Land, praying for a free pardon for William Buckley* [1835]
manuscript, ink on paper, paper watermarked '1832'
National Trust of Australia (Victoria) — Rodney Davidson Collection

43. *Minute by Lieutenant Governor George Arthur that His Majesty (William IV) confirmed and approved the pardon granted to William Buckley and that intimation be made to Mr Batman of His Majesty's sanction to issue the pardon to Buckley*
1 September 1836
manuscript, ink on paper
National Trust of Australia (Victoria) — Rodney Davidson Collection

WILLIAM WESTALL
born England 1781; visited Australia 1801-05; died England 1850

44. *Port Phillip* 1802
pencil drawing
National Library of Australia

THOMAS WHITCOMBE
born England 1763 died 1824

45. *HMS Calcutta of 52 guns* 1805
oil on canvas lined on composition board
National Library of Australia

HERBERT J. WOODHOUSE
born England 1854; arrived Australia 1857; died late 1920s

46. *The settlers first meeting with Buckley* c.1875
hand-coloured drawing
Mitchell Library,
State Library of New South Wales
Study of F.W. Woodhouse's *The settlers' first meeting with Buckley* 1861

W. BLAMIRE YOUNG
born England 1862; arrived Australia 1885; died 1935

47. *Buckley acting as interpreter at Indented Head* 1901
watercolour and gouache
Geelong Gallery
Gift of G.M. Hitchcock 1903

UNKNOWN

48. *View of Macclesfield* early 1800s
photograph of original engraving
Macclesfield Museums Trust

49. *View of Macclesfield and church* c.1790
photograph of original engraving
Macclesfield Museums Trust

50. *Macclesfield from Buxton road* c.1814
photograph of original engraving
Macclesfield Museums Trust

51. *Club* n.d.
casuarina species
Courtesy of Museum Victoria, acquired 1888

52. *Awl* n.d.
bone
Courtesy of Museum Victoria, acquired 1940

53. *Basket* n.d.
coiled plant fibres
Courtesy of Museum Victoria, acquired 1940

54. *Bone implement* n.d.
bone
Courtesy of Museum Victoria

55. *Throwing stick — boomerang* n.d.
wood, plain
Courtesy of Museum Victoria, acquired 1888

56. *Leg irons* ca1803
iron
Nepean Historical Society
Used at the British penal settlement at Sullivans Bay, near Sorrento

57. *William Buckley* ca1890-1910
oil on canvas
La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria

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