

## ELEVEN

# How Do You Feel about Squeezing Oranges? Dialogues about Difference and Discomfort in Intercultural Ethnomusicological Research Collaboration in the Kimberley

SALLY TRELOYN AND RONA GOOGNINDA CHARLES

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### INTRODUCTION

Ethnomusicologists working with Aboriginal cultural heritage communities in Australia have long used collaboration-centred research methods such as participant-observation, audio and video recording, elicitation of texts, conversation and interviews. These methods of data collection usually give way to methods that are less centred on collaboration and more on representation, such as written ethnography and written discussion of musical transcription and analysis. While these methods can be experiential and relational tools,<sup>1</sup> insofar as there is a gap between the lived and felt, corporeal and emotional experience of field-work and music, and the signs, symbols and language-encoded methods at our disposal to describe them,<sup>2</sup> ethnomusicologists risk over-abstracting, distorting or eclipsing embodied musical processes.<sup>3</sup> To the extent that intercultural ethnomusicology in Australia operates on a colonialist stage, this model of collaboration followed by representation risks perpetuating a form of musical colonialism with which ethnomusicology worldwide is inextricably tied.<sup>4</sup> In saying this, researchers and communities are increasingly using the products and methods of representation in ethnomusicology to move beyond colonial repetition. While the research methods outlined here continue to play an important and primary role in contemporary intercultural ethnomusicological research in Australia, researchers in recent years are concerned to make the products of their research

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Linda Barwick, "Central Australian Women's Ritual Music", *Yearbook For Traditional Music* 22 (1990): 60–79; Catherine Ellis, "Response—Whose Truth?", in *The Essence of Singing and the Substance of Song*, ed. Linda Barwick, Allan Marett and Guy Tunstill (Sydney: University Of Sydney Press, 1995), 201–207; Allan Marett, *Songs, Dreamings, and Ghosts: The Wangga of North Australia* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Rice, *May It Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>3</sup> See Fiona Magowan, *Melodies Of Mourning: Music and Emotion in Northern Australia* (Oxford: James Currey, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> See Bruno Nettl, "Colonialism", *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/46822> (accessed 5 June 2014).



available to cultural heritage communities motivated by, amongst other factors, a concern for social equity and in response to community requests. Recordings, transcriptions, ethnographies and analyses are also discovered, identified, requested, repatriated and used by cultural heritage communities to research, learn or recover their own musical styles and songs.<sup>5</sup> As recent publications note, however, the transaction of research products and represented knowledge from performers to researcher back to performers opens a new field of complexities, ambiguities and anxieties for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants:<sup>6</sup> just like early forms of ethnomusicology, the introduction, return and repatriation of research materials operate in “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination”.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter consists of dialogue, analysis and reflections conducted between August 2013 and March 2014 by Rona Googninda Charles, a Ngarinyin/Nyigina Indigenous cultural heritage owner, and Sally Treloyn—a non-Indigenous ethnomusicologist, on the collaborative activities of a long-term ethnomusicological research project in the Kimberley.<sup>8</sup> We draw on the idea of a “contact zone”<sup>9</sup> as a “discomfort zone”,<sup>10</sup> looking upon the intellectual and social spaces of our collaboration as defined by both “difference”, where borders are maintained, and intersubjective identification and “hybridity”, where boundaries are crossed.<sup>11</sup> Our dialogue takes as a starting point a question put to Sally by Rona in 2011, at the beginning of the second phase of the research project and more than a decade after Sally first commenced ethnomusicological research with elders in Rona’s extended family. The question—“How do you feel about squeezing oranges?”, a metaphor Rona used to question the extraction of elders’ song knowledge in the research process—brought to the fore legitimate concerns about ethics and anxieties surrounding intercultural research between non-Indigenous researchers and elder Indigenous knowledge bearers. It also provided an impetus and frame-

<sup>5</sup> See for example Sally Treloyn, Rona Googninda Charles and Sherika Nulgit, “Repatriation of Song Materials to Support Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge about Language in the Kimberley Region of Northwest Australia”, in *Endangered Languages beyond Boundaries: Proceedings of the 17th Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference*, ed. Mary Jane Norris, Erik Anonby, Marie-Odile Junker, Nicholas Ostler and Donna Patrick (Bath: Foundation for Endangered Languages, 2013), 18–24.

<sup>6</sup> Sally Treloyn and Andrea Emberly, “Sustaining Traditions: Ethnomusicological Collections, Access and Sustainability in Australia”, *Musicology Australia* 35, no. 2 (2013): 159–77.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

<sup>8</sup> The introduction and conclusion to the chapter are written by Treloyn.

<sup>9</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 33.

<sup>10</sup> See Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, “Border Work in the Contact Zone: Thinking Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Collaboration Spatially”, *Journal Of Intercultural Studies* 24, no. 3 (2003): 253–66.

<sup>11</sup> Somerville and Perkins, “Border Work”, 257; Catherine Manathunga, “Research as an Intercultural ‘Contact Zone’”, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 30, no. 2 (2009): 166.

work for considering the “contact zone” operating in and as a result of our collaborations, and a foundation to continue a dialogue about the complexities, possibilities and recommendations for intercultural collaboration over time, across generations, cultures and agendas. In this chapter we first reflect on the shortcomings and tensions that underpin ethnomusicology, and assumptions that underpin intercultural research more generally. We then turn to the results of collaboration that have benefited individuals and a cultural heritage community. Following Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins,<sup>12</sup> we reframe the shortcomings of research as markers of a “discomfort zone” where acknowledgement of productive tensions enables transcultural production of knowledge,<sup>13</sup> noting recommendations for future and ongoing intercultural research.

First it is necessary to briefly outline the ethnomusicological activities and project that is the subject of our dialogue. The long-term research relationship that Sally has with Rona’s cultural heritage community encompasses two projects: one undertaken between 1999 and 2006 when Sally undertook graduate research on the public *junba* dance-song tradition performed by Ngarinyin residing in Derby and Aboriginal communities located along the Gibb River Road; the other commenced in 2009 and has focused on identifying strategies to sustain endangered *junba* practices and knowledges into the future. Stages of both projects were supported by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Research Grant scheme (2001, 2009), and the latter was supported by the Australian Research Council Linkage scheme in partnership with the Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre (in the Mowanjum Community close to the town of Derby) and the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre.

The aim of fieldwork undertaken between 1999 and 2002 was to investigate the repertoires of Scotty Nyalgodi Martin—the esteemed and pre-eminent composer and singer of *junba* songs in the Kimberley. A substantial body of Martin’s *junba* songs was recorded by Linda Barwick in 1999 at the historical dance-ground and meeting site Bijili, close to the Dodnun Community in Ngorungoru Ngarinyin clan country, at the request of the Ngarinyin Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) for the purposes of releasing a CD.<sup>14</sup> The study would also investigate other *junba* repertoires known to Ngarinyin elders. In a written invitation, the NAC outlined a reciprocal arrangement, in which over six months Sally would work as a volunteer to the organisation and, in return, would learn about *junba* for the purposes of writing a thesis about *junba*.<sup>15</sup> During this time she resided primarily in the town of Derby, recording and documenting *junba* events as directed by

<sup>12</sup> Somerville and Perkins, “Border Work”, 253–66.

<sup>13</sup> See Manathunga, “Research as an Intercultural ‘Contact Zone’”, 165–77.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Barwick and Scotty Martin, *Jadmi Junba by Nyalgodi Scotty Martin, Traditional Songman of the Dreamtime*, CD (Sydney: Rouseabout Records RRR135, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Sally Treloyn, “Songs That Pull: *Jadmi Junba* from the Kimberley Region of Northwest Australia” (PhD diss., The University of Sydney, 2006).

NAC, assisting with other administrative tasks, and spending the remainder of her time with a group of elder women, all of whom were singers and dancers. She gradually learnt about *junba* in the course of day-to-day interactions driving the women around town, on day and overnight fishing and hunting trips, and through more focused occasions of singing—either in her Toyota or sitting in the community or on Country. As the fieldwork extended to twelve months and then twenty-four months, she worked with a core group of elder singers to propose and then conduct research supported by AIATSIS to record and document collective memory of *junba* songs dating back to the early 1900s. Returning to Sydney in 2002, she undertook substantial transcription and analysis of this material and, integrating knowledge of *junba* gained through immersive fieldwork and focused documentation sessions, completed the thesis in 2006.

Between 2002 and 2006, and subsequent to the completion of her dissertation, Sally remained in contact with Scotty Martin and other elders, responding to requests for copies of analogue cassettes and then CDs. Upon receiving a request in 2008 from Martin to return to the Kimberley to help “keep *junba* strong” by increasing participation of young people in the traditions, over the phone and in subsequent face-to-face consultation with his community, Matthew Dembal Martin (Scotty’s son) and Sally commenced the Sustaining Junba Project, supported initially by AIATSIS and then the Australian Research Council. The project, while promising to contribute to issues of interest to scholars nationally and internationally, sought to have clear tangible benefit to the cultural heritage community based on a participatory action research design.

In the early days of the Junba Project, as it came to be known locally, Sally’s activities centred on the return of and discussion about the use and circulation of prior intercultural collaborative research products, including legacy recordings, transcriptions of song texts and song performances and her dissertation on *junba*. A number of uses of these products became evident: legacy recordings were and continue to be used to support the memory of songs and teaching and learning,<sup>16</sup> elders used the transcriptions of lyrics contained in the dissertation as a memory aid to recall songs, and Rona had used (prior to the commencement of the new project) musical transcriptions, completed and returned by Linda Barwick and Sally, and legacy recordings as tools to learn and teach the songs to her daughter.

The starting point for our dialogue on collaboration is a conversation that we had in late 2011, sitting in the shade of the large mango tree at the edge of the clear grassed open space, bordered by houses, at the centre of Yumurlun (Pandanus Park Community). We met there on this day to talk about the Junba Project and plan for future activities. Sally referred back to a story that Rona had shared about how she used transcriptions and recordings to learn *junba*. We sat,

<sup>16</sup> See Treloyn et al., “Repatriation of Song Materials”.

speaking about this and talking through the dissertation. In so doing, Rona asked the question, “How do you feel about squeezing oranges? Do you think that you leave the glass of juice with the community? Or, do you think it is empty?” Confused, but aware of the power of the metaphor to communicate the symbolic violence and colonialism of the documentation project, Sally responded, “How am I squeezing an orange? I am not taking knowledge away. Those old people sat down with me day after day for two years and had their own agendas for putting down the knowledge that they did.” Through this exchange, while our shared agendas were noted, our difference was clearly marked. We sat in a place of discomfort, both unsure of the ramifications of ethnomusicological intercultural, intergenerational collaboration. In the first part of this chapter we explore this discomfort zone.

### THE ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL PROJECT, COLONIALISM AND SQUEEZING ORANGES

In December 2013 we presented a paper on the methods and outcomes of the Junba Project and the impact of legacy recordings on the *junba* tradition at a conference at the University of Melbourne.<sup>17</sup> Following the paper, Linda Barwick responded to the presentation by highlighting the important contribution that the Junba Project and Rona’s engagement with the representation of research to national and international audiences makes to the field of research. In response, Rona reflected on the development of Sally’s research methods and collaborative activities, beginning in 1999–2002:

I remember Sally. ... I remember in the Community, she used to drive this old Toyota. It was red. She used to come into the Community and I used to wonder, “What [is] this lady doing here?” [She would] drive straight past, go over there, [and go] back out again. ... [S]he was doing a lot of recording with some of the older people, [a] lot of the seniors. And I used to do a lot of teaching. [I was] very passionate about it, *junba*, and [I was] teaching it. And, I thought to myself, “She gonna come in there, get all this stuff, take him [the recordings and research] back, and lock it up somewhere”, you know. That [was] what I was thinking.<sup>18</sup>

Here Rona summarises a concern felt by many cultural heritage stakeholders when witnessing and faced with the prospect of enabling research in their

<sup>17</sup> Sally Treloyn and Rona Googninda Charles, “Repatriation and Innovation: The Impact of Archival Recordings on Endangered Dance-Song Traditions and Ethnomusicological Research” (presentation at “Research, Records and Responsibility [RRR]: Ten Years of the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures” conference, University of Melbourne, 2 December 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Treloyn and Charles, “Repatriation and Innovation”. Note that in presenting the transcribed speech from conversations in this chapter we have edited wording to enhance readability for a broad audience.

communities, particularly in instances when the researcher—be they an ethnomusicologist, linguist, anthropologist, botanist or archeologist—seeks to record and document the knowledge of their elder family members; namely, that the researcher will take cultural property away, rendering it inaccessible to the cultural heritage community that want, need and have a right to control and manage that heritage. For Rona, song knowledge is something that can be taken and not returned.

Sally, however, while respecting the sensitivities and rights of the cultural heritage community, viewed the knowledge that was spoken to her by elders, and that she recorded and documented, as evanescent and inextinguishable. While she was aware that cross-cultural ethnomusicology and its tools of representation (recording, musical transcription and analysis) function within a shadow of acquisitiveness, exploitation and objectification, by virtue of their colonial roots and long histories of “taking” for the sake of preservation and cross-cultural representation, the songs and the song-based knowledge that she worked with elders to record and document was not and could not be removed from the Community. Moreover, from Sally’s perspective, the research was collaborative, and songs and knowledge were contributed to the project, to Sally by elders, via informed and relational decisions and actions. Sally, in preparing this chapter while in transit from Melbourne to the Kimberley, provided the following account of this work:

I spent my days and many nights with elder women, their daughters and their grandchildren. I learnt how to sing and responsibilities around songs in days and nights of travelling, fishing, hunting, and picnicking. In the later months I undertook documentation of repertoires recalled by elders dating back to the early 1900s. For me, the project was collaboratively planned and, while each member had distinct goals, we each shared the intent of creating a record for future generations. Song knowledge was documented but the context in which these performances took place was relational; a product of the time spent together, implicit and explicit negotiation of needs and desires, and, perhaps most importantly, repeated discussion and meetings over time. I felt that the senior people nurtured this relationality. Senior women called me “daughter” and stated that I was becoming “proper Ngarinyin” as I learnt language, songs and appropriate communication, protocols and social and interpersonal behaviours and accountabilities. When we received funding from AIATSIS to create a comprehensive record of *junba* I was cautious, not wishing to inconvenience or impose upon people, and elders by and large came to my house and directed my arrivals in and departures from the Communities. I systematically worked through and repeatedly revised text transcriptions of *junba* with the elders, becoming known to one old man as “junba garlil” (*junba* expert). I also served as an administrative and logistical facilitator of perfor-

mances and practices and thus came to be referred as a “boss” for *junba*, a term that sat uncomfortably with me at the time and that I questioned, but that I now understand in relation to relational responsibilities as well as the paternalistic nature of intercultural engagements in the Kimberley.<sup>19</sup>

In preparing this chapter, we have explored our respective experiences of these early years more closely. What came to light was a powerful story of Rona’s attempts to engage with elders to learn *junba* that sit in sharp contrast to those of Sally’s. Interested to learn more about *junba*, Rona expressed her enthusiasm to a senior elder. Rather than singing and sharing the songs as the elder had with Sally and other researchers, however, the elder responded, “You want to know about *junba*? Here, hold this for me”,<sup>20</sup> handing Rona a package of transcriptions. We continued:

Sally: So you’d see me driving around and [name omitted—elder singer] had said to you, “She’s putting all the *junba* on CDs.” What were you thinking then about what I did?

Rona: Well, when you ask those old people a question they don’t talk much, you know. They just tell you “We just recording, put ‘im ‘bout on music, on CD” and they won’t talk for a sentence or a whole paragraph. They will just give you one little quick answer and that’s it. They won’t talk more. I was thinking at the time [that I saw you here] that I wanted to be involved because I wanted to sing *junba*. I can sing *junba*. And I used to think, “How can I be sitting there singing with them?”, you know.

Sally: Did you wonder why they were talking to me?

Rona: In a way, but I used to [I wanted to] wait. We [are] talking about a cultural thing now, because I am not what you call a *manambarra* senior person you know. ... I used to say to myself, “I’ll wait until they ask me”—not [I wasn’t waiting for] you, I was waiting for them. Like I used to say to myself, “They’ll ask me to be part of them when they ready”, you know. I always thought to myself, “When they come and ask me mean[s] ... [that is when] they [are] ready to die. I used to always think that “They preparing themselves to die, when they want to give their knowledge.” ... I used to think [that] they might be making their way, preparing themselves to go, you know ... and [they] want to put all that knowledge [on paper and in recordings with you]. But I was also thinking, because ... [there were no] young people with them, they want to put it in the CD with you. Get all this written up.

<sup>19</sup> Sally Treloyn in reflection, 18 April 2014, Perth.

<sup>20</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

Sally: So what did you think, remember that day at Farm [Pandanus Park Community]?

Rona: What I meant by the orange juice, I [had] been thinking, "You [have] been squeezing all the knowledge out of them, and it mightn't come back to us" you know. I was thinking that way.

Sally: Yeah. So what kind of response did I give?

Rona: I must have been comparing your work with other people that came and ... done all of this [research, but] took it and never brought it back to us.

Sally: You had my thesis in your hands when you said it and you were saying how it had a lot of the elder's knowledge in it you know.

Rona: Some of those *junba* that you done with the elder, I already knew some of the stories. ... But it wasn't meant to be written down you know. To us we put it all in here [in our minds]. But, seeing you write it, well I never seen anything like that. Seeing you write it, I [had] been thinking, "Well what going to happen to this paper you know?"

Sally: I can understand now, how if that elder says to you, "Read this book written by this *gadiya* [non-Aboriginal person] I don't want to tell my stories anymore", I can understand what you mean, squeezing oranges.

Rona: Yes! I remember, I call him *abi* [brother], [he said] "I'll tell you blokes. I'll tell you the story." He was one of the main people responsible for teaching my sons. When they made a mistake he used [to correct them]—[but] he said [to them], "It's in the book, read it."<sup>21</sup>

Several important insights into the ramifications of Sally's early collaboration with elders can be drawn from this dialogue. In the first instance, Rona's experience of researchers coming, acquiring knowledge and taking it away, and concern that Sally may do the same, traces the contemporary practice of research-based salvage/documentation projects to historical acquisitive colonial research methodologies, marked by the hegemonic "discovery", collection and transport of items of cultural, private and communal property to museums interstate and overseas. Numerous scholars, including Catherine Manathunga, have spoken of the traces of imperial and colonial frontier violence in research:

Just as the colonial frontier involved violence, cultural and ethnic genocide and appropriation, so too research also involves moments of symbolic vio-

<sup>21</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

lence, exploitation and assimilation. Levels of severity vary in the negative under-side of research, ranging from outright racism, sexism and exploitation to the tension and discomfort of working across cultures.<sup>22</sup>

The colonial roots of ethnography-based disciplines are particularly charged in the Kimberley where histories of violence with the expansion of the pastoral industry and government policies underpin current-day intercultural governance and transactions in the region. Intercultural ethnomusicological research cannot escape these histories. For Rona and her family, the possibility that research may be conducted and then taken away touches on a particularly horrific history of research in the region, the early days of which were marked by a Swedish expedition in 1910 led by zoologist and ethnographer Eric Mjöberg. Mjöberg, who set out to advance Darwinian evolutionary theory, secretly removed and stole the remains of descendants of Rona's communities (both Ngarinyin and Nyigina) from burial platforms and interments and smuggled them by sea to Sweden.<sup>23</sup> This removal caused substantial distress for communities of the day as it has more recently as well,<sup>24</sup> as descendants, Lotte Mjöberg (Eric Mjöberg's great-niece) and the Swedish government have negotiated the repatriation of remains back to Country.<sup>25</sup>

In the second instance, in this dialogue Rona sets out a clear rationale as to exactly how it is that Sally's collaboration with her elders could result in the removal of their knowledge from the community. In her experience, elders share their knowledge with younger family members when they feel they are approaching death—"They preparing themselves to die, when they want to give their knowledge." By inserting Sally or other outsider researchers into this time-critical and relationally unique intergenerational knowledge transaction, such as in the gathering of data for inclusion in a thesis, the community runs the risk of losing that knowledge.

Our dialogue complicates several common assumptions about ethnomusicological practice in the field, namely that through participation-based field research, a researcher gains knowledge as a result of increasing intersubjective identification between the research and members of the cultural heritage community, and that the researcher can learn as a child in that community would. Clearly, relationships were formed with the elders as Sally and the elders and their grandchildren spent days together teaching and learning in the day-to-day business of social life and recording and documenting songs. As Sally reports,

<sup>22</sup> Manathunga, "Research as an Intercultural 'Contact Zone'", 171.

<sup>23</sup> Claes Hallgren, "Eric Mjöberg and the Rhetorics of Human Remains", in *The Long Way Home: The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*, ed. Paul Turnbull and Michael Pickering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 134–43; Eric Mjöberg, *Among Wild Animals and People in Australia (Bland Vilda Djur och Folk I Australien)*, trans. Margareta Luotsinen and Kim Akerman (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1915; repr. Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> John Gabrielsson, Warwick Thornton and David Milroy, *Dark Science*, DVD (Australia: Frank Haines Films, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Gabrielsson, Thornton and Milroy, *Dark Science*, DVD.

she was identified by the elders as “becoming proper Ngarinyin”, “daughter” and “*junba* boss”, relational terms of mutual identification through ongoing relationships and recognisable and consistent behaviour appropriate to those roles, encompassing both acceptance and renegotiation of expectations.

The collaborations were also productive. A vast collection of data was amassed that documented not just songs and historical and contextual data about *junba*, but also about aesthetics and personal responses to its power. However, in this collaboration, although unaware at the time, Sally also brought and was granted clear privilege over potential learners in the cultural heritage community such as Rona: Sally was mostly unburdened by social protocols guiding communication, was free to travel with no dependants or other full-time occupation, was unburdened by social and familial demands on resources, and was identified by certain elders as a desired conduit to communicate their knowledge, with research funding to both support herself, travel and resources, and to compensate elders. She had a clear advantage in attracting the engagement of elders. Her collaboration with elders may have been marked by increasingly rich intersubjective identifications but, without question, her “daughterness” and commitment to the social world of *junba* into the future was limited. She could not learn as a child would, because of course she was an adult. She had agency and external social, intellectual and financial resources that both granted her power to access and acquire knowledge in a manner that others in the community could not. Moreover, at the end of the day (literally and figuratively) she could and would take that knowledge away in a manner that a member of the elders’ families could not, returning to a house in Derby, or a swag on top of her Toyota in the Community, and then to Sydney in that same red Toyota, with recordings and documentation in hand.

Less tangibly, in stepping away from the field and attempting to write of her experience, she would also step aside from the intense identifications of the Self in relation to the ideas, feelings and bodies of others encountered in the field. This is partly a protective mechanism, as the researcher attempts to recover from what anthropologist Jennifer Biddle has described as a “professionally enshrined pathology” in anthropology and long-term participant observation fieldwork, in which there is “[a] trauma which almost by necessity arises from encountering difference as a postgraduate student”.<sup>26</sup> Writing is an ambivalent and corporeally and emotionally charged task, often marked by a paralysis: the researcher on the one hand feels a compulsion to write in order to reintegrate past identifications and therefore survive,<sup>27</sup> and, on the other, in writing, disavows and fails these identifications, sacrificing the subject as well as the Self to

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Loureide Biddle, “Bruises That Won’t Heal: Melancholic Identification and Other Ethnographic Hauntings”, *Mortality* 7, no. 1 (2002): 98.

<sup>27</sup> Biddle, “Bruises That Won’t Heal”, 97.

a new logic.<sup>28</sup> Words fail. This deepens the symbolic violence of colonial cross-cultural research, as Biddle explains:

Intersubjectivity is likely to be violated, even killed-off, by the very project that—perhaps more than any other—illustrates the deeply ambiguous, indeterminate and indebted nature of self-identity; an intersubjectivity almost guaranteed to be violated by the kinds of colonial and neo-colonial contexts within which the anthropological endeavour takes place.<sup>29</sup>

Collaboration in the field and then representation of knowledge gained through collaboration are marked by discomfort: identifications are challenged and reformed, and colonial relations are repeated. Returning to the elder's advice to Rona—"You want to know about *junba*? Here, hold this for me"—Sally (and perhaps the reader) is confronted by a sobering example of not only discomfort but the symbolic violence of colonial Western discourse in action, wherein "knowledge about Indigenous peoples ... [is] collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized".<sup>30</sup> Even the returns of research to communities delineate a "discomfort zone".

In this section we have outlined how the researcher might limit access to cultural knowledge within a community, and that the return of the products of research, already entangled in a colonial subsumption of the other, in the form of transcriptions and writing, potentially risks interrupting family-based knowledge transmission. We have also challenged rationales for data collection and an approach of resting solely on relationships and identifications in the field as a rationale for collection and representation. We have, to this point, focused on differences and discomforts that have the potential to freeze collaboration and engagement across the boundaries of our cultural, linguistic, historical and otherwise distinct identities. We have drawn this into the writing process itself and the experience of the researcher moving from relationships and roles in the field to the process of writing. In the following section of this chapter we reflect on the productivity of this collaborative discomfort zone.

### ORANGE JUICE AND PRODUCTIVE DISCOMFORT

In the years following Rona's question about the ethics of intercultural ethnomusicological research, we continued to collaborate on the Junba Project. Rona and other community-based researchers took on an increasingly active role in conducting and defining the methods and outcomes of data collection, analysis and representation. Somehow, working at the borders of our "discomfort zone",

<sup>28</sup> Biddle, "Bruises That Won't Heal", 104, 108.

<sup>29</sup> Biddle, "Bruises That Won't Heal", 103.

<sup>30</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 1, 2. See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 7.

acknowledging our differences and identifications, our collaboration has continued on to produce results. Manathunga explains:

Postcolonial theorists ... regard difference as a key site for creativity and growth. ... These forms of intercultural dialogue are highly productive because of the new kinds of cultural and intellectual identities that become possible. It is therefore likely that rigorous but respectful dialogue about cultural, disciplinary and other differences has the potential to create exciting new forms of knowledge construction.<sup>31</sup>

We will now reflect on our collaborative research in recent years to throw light on the process and product of continuing and renegotiating, rather than disavowing, our respective agendas.

Rona describes the productive space of our collaboration as “learning both ways”, reading the metaphor of squeezing oranges as not simply a metaphor of extraction, taking and using up, but also transmission across generations and cultures:

[A]fter all that time now [that we have been] working, and we [have been] talking about ... squeezing the orange juice—up until now we are talking about learning. I find that I can learn from that [thesis] as well because I can read: hearing, reading what you wrote. ... And I think it’ll be—all this stuff we [are] doing with the children, using the technology—we’ll find it easier to teach kids. ... We [are] both learning. You, we [are] educating. You wouldn’t have known about, you wouldn’t even have written the thesis. ... But you went and worked with the elders. You got a lot of their stuff and wrote it down, you know, but they are also teaching about their culture to you. And then you [are] returning it back to us, we’re younger ones, with all your technology and writing. Where we [are at] these days, we know how to read, we know how to use technology. So they [are] giving it back to us, and we [are] learning off that you know. We [are] learning both ways, we [are also] learning from them.<sup>32</sup>

In this sense, orange juice—or knowledge—can be squeezed not just from people but also, selectively, from the products of research returned to the community. Rona does not use products of research uncritically or in isolation. Rather, they are used as a tool to complement face-to-face, interpersonal learning with elder singers. Similarly, Sally, while she left the field and represented her knowledge of *junba* from a personal and physical distance, she too learnt from elders and returned with that knowledge. Most importantly, this learning informs the thesis (“You, we [are] educating. You wouldn’t have known about, you

<sup>31</sup> Manathunga, “Research as an Intercultural ‘Contact Zone’”, 168.

<sup>32</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

wouldn't even have written the thesis"), as well as Sally's ongoing commitment to the project ("they are also teaching about their culture to you. And then you [are] returning it back to us"). "Learning both ways" (all parties learning and teaching from multiple sources) involves a recognition of the distinct identities of the collaborators, as well as interaction, identification and sharing across these boundaries in spite of the necessary discomforts that are created when different people come together. Through "learning both ways" across our boundaries and difference, access to cultural knowledge is supported, rather than hindered. Moreover, the continued transmission of knowledge in the community, from teacher/learners such as Rona to children is facilitated. Rona explains, providing an example of overcoming the inaccessibility of research materials to use them to help teach and learn with her daughter:

Rona: The elder said, "You want to know about *junba*, here, hold this [book of transcriptions] for me", the elder told me. Not that, not that one you gave me.

Sally: No, that one with the notation, the music.

Rona: Yeah, and I got a file for it, I put it in the file, those plastic sheeting, and I had it for years. So, when you gave me that one [thesis] I was thinking "oh, yeah".

Sally: So what did you make of it when the elder gave you that?

Rona: I didn't really, well first of all I couldn't understand it but I knew the words and I was trying to sing. And I bought the CD. There was one song that my daughter could sing. It was a Jadmi that my daughter could sing. It was her favourite. That Brolga one.<sup>35</sup>

While crossing boundaries in collaboration can be productive, however, it is also important for researchers to respect the governance, private issues and political negotiations within the community:

Sally: What is it that makes a successful ... What is it that makes a good researcher? What's a good researcher?

Rona: The problem with ... [some outsiders is that they] get wrapped up in the blackfella politics. Mike [name changed] didn't get involved, just keep moving and working. And I sort of learned off Mike and you. ... [We] don't like to see researchers get bogged down in our customary way.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

<sup>34</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 21 March 2014, Melbourne.

Getting “bogged down” brings productivity from the collaboration to a standstill. Rona explains that this stems from outsiders becoming “wrapped up” and over-involved in the private matters of the community. This not uncommon tendency of outsiders to seek to emancipate or otherwise represent the interests and rights of the community as they perceive them reflects a subsuming disavowal of difference seen throughout Western society. Manathunga explains:

There are long traditions in Western pedagogy and science that regard cultural difference as problematic (McKinley, 2005). Difference is something to be suppressed where possible or “tolerated” when necessary (Manathunga, 2006). There is also a liberal tendency to minimalise or disavow difference. ... Homogenisation is a fundamental part of stereotyping and othering because it allows the colonisers’ subjectivity to be portrayed as the norm (Kenway & Bullen 2003).<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, researchers who respect the rights of communities to self-determination unimpeded by their own interests and identifications of outsiders, “keep ... moving and working”. Such an approach to intercultural collaboration, Rona explains, can be modeled on that of senior singers who emphasise the foundational ethos of sharing across cultures and generations that underpins *junba* practice, based in the Law of Wurnan.<sup>36</sup> Rona explains, referring to the practice of Matthew Dembal Martin, an emerging leader for *junba*:

Matt never got stuck in it, he just kept singing. What I find with him, [I have been] learning from him and researchers—well mainly him—because to him [it is a matter of] “I carry it, I sing it, and I have to still sing it until they learn.” Matt can sing all ... songs, he’d get growled at but that never used to stop him, because he was chosen.<sup>37</sup>

As a consequence, collaborative teaching, learning and researching can continue.

Finally, Rona stresses the importance of including younger generations in the research process:

I’d like to encourage researchers when you [are] going into communities, like Sally coming there [to the Kimberley], work with someone local. ... I had worked with Sally but we also have consent forms and I am able to go around in my community and other clans and I can speak to them. And it’s [also] good to have someone with you when you are doing work in the community.

<sup>35</sup> Manathunga, “Research as an Intercultural ‘Contact Zone’”, 168.

<sup>36</sup> Sally Treloyn and Matthew Dembal Martin, “Perspectives on Dancing, Singing and Well-being from the Kimberley Region of Northwest Australia”, *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement* 21, no. 1 (2014): <http://jashm.press.illinois.edu/21.1/treloyn.html> (accessed 3 September 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 21 March 2014, Melbourne.

We have one of the young ones just join the team and she does a lot of the lyrics writing, a lot of the *junba*. And she is learning to sing it.<sup>38</sup>

Researchers when they come in, if they doing that first year, you know ... [should] look for the next group, not for the little little one, but next group who have [responsibility to be] putting that knowledge on, you know, next. Work with that person, to [enable them to be a] part of that work you doing. ... I'm glad that I caught up with you [Sally] in a way. I was very, very interested.<sup>39</sup>

Some aspects of this process are illustrated in the following dialogue between Rona and a younger generation emerging leader, teacher and co-researcher on the Junba Project, and Sally. Here Rona and the learner explain the importance of including young people in the collection of knowledge from elders in relation to the possibility that elders may only release that information once. We reflect on the personal and social benefits of including younger family members in research transactions.

Sally: Does it help different generations come together when you have a joint project of getting words [song lyrics] down straight? What good things come out of that?

Rona: Fondness with the older and the younger one but also gaining knowledge you know.

Learner: Learning both ways.

Rona: When you see a young one like her, sitting with an old lady like that, her grandma. That blows people's mind. It's fascinating. I think it's beautiful, because she's passing it. ... [T]hat's what makes it very important. And I think [it] leaves her [with a] good spirit inside her. Because that energy flowing. I feel it like that way, that energy flowing out from her. Some old people might say, "I not ready yet—to go yet. I [have] got big mob in here [my mind], [and/but] I [am] not ready to release it." But that might be one way of it. ... They don't say it, but us we understand. "I got to throw all this knowledge away. Maybe something coming up."

Sally: So even though this might not be the traditional way of learning songs it still has all the traditional power, like feeling, strengthening the bond.

Rona: Talking about that energy flowing, like when Matt sings on Country.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Treloyn and Charles, "Repatriation and Innovation."

<sup>39</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 21 March 2014, Melbourne.

<sup>40</sup> Rona Charles and a learner speaking with Sally Treloyn, 3 August 2013, Mowanjum Community.

Later, Rona reflected on the impact that “learning both ways”, intergenerational intercultural research and presentation of results to conference audiences, has had on her engagement and participation in *junba* in the community:

He [This project is] bringing a lot to me: learning this thing now, working with you now, I [have] just seen so many changes. We [are] doing the *junba* ... , we live that ... us mob. I can collect ochre, I can make that *wurawun* [bough screen] for dancing. But to see them kids too also involved in the Art Centre, working on the computer (because nowadays our kids like computers) doing this *junba* thing, [and] me speaking around the people, you know, it’s getting good. I want to go! I want to do speaking all the time! ... I built so much confidence since working with you, it actually helped me a lot. ... Since working with you and doing presentations in front of people, that made me better around the table with my own people. I started to feel more strong and working more as a director to be able to present without getting frightened of the microphone. I used to think how Scotty used to hold the microphone you know, but seeing him talk he was a really good speaker. He sang for crowds, you know, but to him to hold the microphone to speak, I [used to] think “How could he do that?” These old people used to say [to me] “*Googninda dalij* [speak] now, speak this story for this *junba*!” But I wouldn’t speak. But you see, last year and this year I started to speak!<sup>41</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Sally: What does collaborating mean to you?

Rona: Sharing material–Wurnan.<sup>42</sup>

As discussed by Manathunga, after Julie Thompson Klein,<sup>43</sup> the production of knowledge in a postcolonial intercultural research contact zone is contingent on boundary crossing, wherein difference is treated as productive, rather than something to disavow, allowing cultural exchange and transculturation to enter the research process and product. In this sense, discomfort is a constitutive part of the research process. As Rona suggests in the above quote, a conceptual model for such collaboration is provided by Wurnan—a law of relational sharing in the Kimberley that underpins social collaborations such as marriage, intergroup negotiations, land care and management, the distribution of goods and dissemination of knowledge that provides a model for productive collaboration between

<sup>41</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

<sup>42</sup> Rona Charles speaking to Sally Treloyn, 4 December 2013, Melbourne.

<sup>43</sup> Manathunga, “Research as an Intercultural ‘Contact Zone’”, 166; Julie Thompson Klein, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

individuals, clans and Country. Anthony Redmond has discussed at length how Wurnan has been transformed in colonial Australia to accommodate “strange relatives” such as pastoralists and other outsiders.<sup>44</sup> Far more than a rigid system of reciprocal exchange Wurnan is a place-based, flexible, cultural and economic system dependent on relationships and collaboration between living people. As Anthony Redmond explains, “[s]tagnation results from a failure of participation by particular living people for one reason or another”.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, intercultural research collaboration requires both recognition of difference and active boundary-crossing participation.

In this chapter we have used a conversation between an Indigenous and non-Indigenous researcher, marked by the potentially paralysing and stagnating question “How do you feel about squeezing oranges?”, to throw light on the colonial underpinnings of intercultural ethnomusicological collaboration in Australia, and the importance of recognising both difference and identifications between collaborators for productive research. We have addressed difference in the positions, identities and identifications of a researcher within the cultural heritage community (Rona) and one from outside of it (Sally), touching on age and generation, power and social inequity, and the colonial foundations of intercultural research in Australia and beyond. A number of other important differences are at play in our “discomfort zone” that have fallen beyond the scope of the chapter, not least of which are gender and kinship.

It ought to be noted that, just as fieldwork can be an uncomfortable and even traumatic task,<sup>46</sup> so too can be reflecting on and then writing about these experiences. Writing about collaboration is intrinsically difficult, because it requires acknowledging difference, the inequalities and colonial assumptions that pervade Australian society and academia to this day, and our own personal identities and identifications. Writing is itself a “discomfort zone”.

The discomfort and trauma of the Self and body that researchers undergo in fieldwork is rarely noted in the literature.<sup>47</sup> The discomfort of writing is even less so. Researchers, even when discussing collaboration, instinctively look for and cite consensus, relationships and shared goals as core to the research project. There is a tendency to cite mutual relational identifications and homogenise, reduce and disavow difference, not necessarily to deliberately gloss over or deny

<sup>44</sup> Anthony Redmond, “Strange Relatives: Mutualities and Dependencies between Aborigines and Pastoralists in the Northern Kimberley”, *Oceania* 75, no. 3 (2005): 234–46; Anthony Redmond, “Tracking Wurnan: Transformations in the Trade and Exchange of Resources in the Northern Kimberley”, in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies Conference, National Museum of Australia, Canberra*, ed. Natasha Fijn, Ian Keen, Christopher Lloyd and Michael Pickering (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 57–72.

<sup>45</sup> Redmond, “Tracking Wurnan”, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Biddle, “Bruises That Won’t Heal”; Jennifer Loureide Biddle, “The Anthropologist’s Body or What It Means to Break Your Neck in the Field”, *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 4, no. 3 (1993): 184–97.

<sup>47</sup> Biddle, “Bruises That Won’t Heal”, 103.

the complex history and politics of collaboration, but as a strategy to manage the discomfort and even shame that this produces. Recognition of the tensions and discomforts of intercultural collaboration, however, is essential today. It is essential to responsibly support and sustain ongoing and new research and researchers in the field, for whom the necessary but unspoken discomforts of fieldwork and writing create a double bind. It is essential to acknowledge the functions of colonial power in intercultural partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians at work in ethnomusicological research and society at large. It is also essential for the sustainability of the discipline.