

Objects As Polyagents:  
Tracing The Histories Of The Gweagal Spears

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I declare that this dissertation is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the  
works of others the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly  
acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

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## Introduction

This paper explores the capacity for objects entangled in complex - and often painful - histories to become constituted of multiple agencies (Gell 1998) through their interaction with various actants in complex and ever-expanding networks of association (Latour 1993; 2005). It does so by analysing how such objects become symbols for multiple histories, presences, and political agendas throughout their social lives (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). The paper also examines how these objects influence and construct the pathways of their social lives through their polyagency. ‘Polyagency’ reflects a theory of object agency that I have developed through engaging literature on materiality and agency (Gell 1998), consumption and object movement (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986), and networks of relationality (Latour 2005). It considers the multiple gathered identities that objects come to embody through the sum of their interactions with various human actors during the objects’ social lives - agencies which then become efficacious in later interactions with people. The productivity of this theory is demonstrated by applying it to the analysis of a complicated repatriation case. This application illustrates the impact that innovations in theory and repatriation cases can have on the perceived role of museums regarding object return, decolonisation and reconciliation efforts through relationship-building with source communities.

The paper focuses on a set of four wooden spears taken from the Gweagal people by Captain James Cook and the crew of the *Endeavour* in 1770. This interaction occurred during the first known landing of British powers on the shores of the continent now known as Australia, on Kamay Beach in Gweagal Country, and the first encounter between Indigenous Australians and the British Empire. This aspect of the spears’ history, rooted as it is in violence and invasion, is critical to explicating the potency of the objects’ agencies and the tense discussions and narratives that surround them.

Tracing these objects’ social lives (Appadurai 1986) follows their journey from the hands of the Gweagal people at Kamay Beach to the Edwardian cabinets of the Maudsley Hall Gallery in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (hereafter MAA), at the University of Cambridge. Here they form part of the Cook-Sandwich Collection owned by Trinity College, Cambridge. For the purposes of this paper, a crucial aspect of this journey is the

repatriation claim submitted to the MAA in late 2016 by David Shoebridge M.L.C. and Rodney Kelly for the return of the spears to Gweagal Country, Trinity College's subsequent rejection of the claim, and the activism campaign that followed.

Outlining the history and presences of these objects points to the complexity of the network of associations they have built. Through these networks, the objects exert their capacity to gather politics, power, and meaning through their many identities. Involved in this are the various power structures and struggles that underlie the objects' movements and the narratives that they produce or are manipulated to produce. These struggles occur within and between the La Perouse Land Council, the Gweagal Family Group, Rodney Kelly, the Australian Government, various museums in the UK and Australia (though predominantly the MAA), the University of Cambridge, Trinity College, and the University's Department of Social Anthropology.

Considering the capacity for polyagents in museums to embody and emanate such a multitude of affective and meaningful associations indicates the importance of relational approaches in museology which focus on collaboration between museums and source communities. These methods enable greater access to - and more nuanced interpretation of - objects in museums (Herle 2008). Such approaches enable the presence and magnification of diverse voices that become embroiled in the histories and presences of polyagentive objects. Central to this is an institutional awareness of the power imbalances that may underpin interactions between source communities, museums, and other stakeholders. Such objects can, through their complex and generative efficacy, come to direct museum methods in new and unexpected ways (Thomas 2010), making space for subaltern voices and histories that are not built or bolstered by Western practices of history-making.

## Theory and Fieldwork

In any piece of ethnographic and anthropological work, the politics and power of writing and representing 'cultures' and peoples must be attended to. The 'writing culture debate' of the 1980s and early 1990s prompted a severe critique of the discipline's 'othering' approach towards subject-representation. This produced a near-critical destabilization of the field. Critiques of 'ethnographic realism', ethnography-as-genre, the poetics and politics of writing ethnography - the inherent self-fashioning therein -, and institutional limits on interpretive freedom demanded new paradigms and 'experimental forms of representation' which dislodged old anthropological canon (Geertz 1988; Cushman and Marcus 1982; Clifford and Marcus 1986). The intradisciplinary self-criticism that this produced was criticised as having 'paralysed the production of first-hand anthropological knowledge' through inciting within ethnographers a severe fear of their inherent prejudices (Kohl 2011:5). This came alongside extra-disciplinary critiques; lodged against anthropology by representatives of indigenous peoples and academics of post-colonial and subaltern studies (Kohl 2011:5), which described anthropologists as 'part of a colonising horde because they take away from us the power to define who and what we are, and how we should behave politically and culturally' (Trask 1991:162).

Current debates in anthropology involve similar issues regarding the politics of knowledge and interpretation, and the impossibility of a neutral point of view when '[t]he study of any culture, as of any phenomenon, is ineluctably framed by the value-system and cultural imperatives of the scholar, irrespective of any claim to objectivity' (Hallaq 2018:229). In academia this has prompted calls for pedagogical decolonisation which criticise anthropology's disproportionate engagement with Euro-American academics and institutions (Sanchez 2018), in which practitioners and publications become 'imprinted by unequal hierarchies of knowledges and power' (Mogstad and Tse 2018:54). The above issues have framed my approach to fieldwork, ethnography, and written analysis. The questions and issues raised by Tuhiwai Smith (2012:10), Williams (2007) and Stewart (with Williams 1992), and Rigney (2001) have aided in navigating this, and in maintaining an awareness of my positionality's effect on my research. This is a privileged position involving academic study in a university and department which was foundational in the history of anthropology. Without this position, I would not have been able to access the individuals and events that

form the subject of this paper. As such, the work presented here is tied to the complex and conflicting histories of those early anthropologists and colonial-era collectors. These genealogies of knowledge are intricately linked to histories of injustice, empire, and slavery. The subject of the research presented here has also demanded direct interaction with, and interrogation of, these entangled histories.

I first learned of the Gweagal spears case in early 2018 through discussions at Yabun Festival; an Invasion Day event in Sydney which counters Australia Day celebrations. Further early investigation was informed by a mixture of Australian and British media reports and blogs (Daley 2016; McDonald 2016; Brown 2017; Steel 2017; Hewitt 2017; Kelly 2018). My primary research, which has been ongoing throughout the academic year 2018-19, became directed by the powerful and intricate polyagency of the Gweagal spears through their processual unveiling of the multiple interrelated, intersecting and implicated histories, agencies, and experiences that constitute the network of actants coalescing around these objects. The sprawling nature of this actor-network (Latour 2005) produced sprawling fieldwork, which engaged with multiple nested institutions and organizations, each of which possess and exert power over one another, and over me as a researcher/student within that network. Thus any boundaries separating ‘the field’, ‘the classroom’, and ‘the analysis’ became blurred.

My fieldwork involved attending various protests, talks, conferences, and meetings in London and Cambridge throughout the 2018-19 academic year. The events principally revolved around the Gweagal spears and a shield held at the British Museum (hereafter BM) that was believed, until February 2018, to be directly associated with the spears through shared origin and acquisition (see Thomas 2018a and Nugent and Sculthorpe 2018). I also attended various other lectures, workshops and conferences relating to the Gweagal artefacts’ cases, or more general issues of repatriation, restitution, representation, and decolonisation in museums. These are listed in Appendix A. Fieldwork was also performed in the Maudsley Hall Gallery through voluntary work in the MAA from October 2018 - July 2019. This primary research produced data via participant-observation, formal and informal discussions, and semi-structured interviews with museum visitors and staff, activists, protestors, students, academics, and researchers.

Additional fieldwork was undertaken online in Facebook communities that became implicated in the network surrounding the spears, their symbolic associations, and Kelly's activities. This involved observing various online groups and pages that promoted the campaign and protest activities surrounding all of the Gweagal artefacts. These communities also appear in Appendix A. Further secondary data analysis involved a wide literature review. This included: (1) scholarly work on issues of object-provenance, repatriation, and restitution, (2) consulting archival records from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries relating to Cook's first Oceanic voyage, Cooman, the MAA, and Trinity College, (3) publications, reports, and policies relating directly to the claim submitted to the MAA, and (4) media reports from student, local, and national outlets on the claim and related activities.

Constraints of time and space inevitably limited this research. Without such constraints, further qualitative data could have been gathered from relevant parties in the UK and Australia. Crucially, this would have involved the diverse voices and perspectives within the Gweagal Families Group and the La Perouse Land Council. Currently, these perspectives are largely represented through primary and secondary data on the views held by Kelly and Williams; an elder of the Dharawal, Gweagal, and La Perouse communities.

My theoretical approach directs me toward the analysis of objects' social lives as they move through commodity phases and different regimes of value (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986), and their function as 'actants' within networks of relations (Latour 2005), such that I question the manner of 'factual' story-telling engaged by institutions that house particular objects. Doing so reveals such facts to be manipulated interpretations of object-agencies; and that their collective acceptance is directly correlated to the establishment's reputation (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1996). The establishment's repute privileges these bodies with the power to inscribe, erase and reinscribe histories and identities. These discourses systematically form the object of which they speak (Foucault 1969), and as such form aspects of polyagents' identities. This, coupled with the legitimizing power of established institutions, forms an epistemic reality (Foucault 1981); a technique for controlling these objects and their histories.

Approaching such histories whilst Appadurai's methodological approach, of tracing objects social lives as commodities (1986), in a theoretical capacity reveals how polyagents are built over time through interactions and (re)associations with various intertwined networks of



actors. Through these relations, the meaning of a thing or actant is gathered as a ‘bundle of relations’ (Latour 2005). These relations extend through the art nexus, across space and time, allowing the object (‘index’) to link its observer (‘recipient’) to the maker (‘artist’) and the ‘prototype’ it represents, either visually or non-visually (Gell 1998:13,26; Chua and Elliott 2013:5-6). These lattices, and the human-object interactions they support, enable the embodiment of myriad histories in transacted and interactive objects. Thus building their polyagency.

Through their complex indexicality, the spears become both ‘protention[s]’ (Gell 1998) of multiple futures, and ‘retention[s]’ (Gell 1998) of a history that has been erased, interpreted, documented orally and textually, and re-told many times over from different perspectives. These perspectives reflect the diversity of actants within the objects’ network (Latour 2005). Attending to the efficacy of object-agencies in interactions with their actor-networks/art nexus considers their ability to direct their movement and the actions of those around them (Latour 2005; Gell 1998; Thomas 2010). For polyagentive objects the potential pathways of this movement are multiple, structured by the identities and affiliations of the particular actants engaging with the object. In the context of the museum, interactions occur in ‘displays... stores and workrooms where they mediate past and present intentions, where they provoke revelations, where they precipitate ambience’ (Thomas 2013:204). This paper points to pathways that lead beyond these spaces.

The limitations of any one of these theoretical perspectives are managed through engaging them in conversation with one another, as heuristic devices to produce a theory of object agency that includes the effects of multiple actants, complex networks, and intricate social lives, upon the growth and efficacy of multiple agencies embodied within one object, or set of objects. Any enduring dichotomies unintentionally reproduced in Appadurai’s method (as Ferguson suggests there to be 1988:501-502) are disturbed through partly engaging the flattening view of Actor-Network-Theory, or ANT (Latour 1993; 2005). This allows for a focus on the object’s agentive development (Gell 1998) whilst tracing its efficacy across pathways carved by theft, gifting, donation, deposit, and loaning.

Infusing Appadurai and Kopytoff’s perspectives on the social lives and cultural biographies of objects, the politics of value and process of (re)commoditization (1986) also manages Canda’s critique of ANT; that challenging the perspectives of those being studied may not

be a ‘recognisably anthropological project’ (2018:221). It does so through revealing the multiple perspectives that are embroiled in the lives of objects in motion, and the counter-currents of affect between object and human that co-construct the agencies of those objects. These interactions enable polyagents such as the Gweagal spears to ‘form a macro-object, or temporal object, which evolves over time’ (Gell 1998:233) through an expanding actor-network (Latour 2005). Therefore, it is precisely ANT’s capacity to challenge the perspectives of those being studied that allows for the critical analysis in this paper. To reveal the political and powerful; and the ways in which object context, history, and/or agency is manipulated to the benefit or detriment of other actants entangled in the network (Latour 2005)/ nexus (Gell 1998).

Placing ANT in conversation with Gell’s theory of object-agency and the art nexus in the study of polyagentive objects allows for an analysis which distributes action equally across humans and non-humans (Latour 2005). It further enables an interpretation of the ‘inferred intentionality’ of objects; by looking *‘through’* objects to the embedded human agency we infer they contain’ (Miller 2005:13, italics added) to reveal ‘a congealed residue of performance and agency in object-form’ (Gell 1998:68). Beyond this, engaging Gell also provides an appreciation of the index-object as ‘a generative agent in itself’ (Chua and Elliott 2013:8); ‘the visible knot which ties together an invisible skein of relations, fanning out in social space and social time’ (Gell 1998:62). This particular marriage of theories, in attending to both inferred human agency and object primary-agency, helps to overcome Laidlaw’s critique that ANT is blind to the tendency for people to ascribe responsibility to one another, rather than to objects (2014). Polyagents embody both of these perspectives on object-agency; wherein agency in the first instance is the result of human-object interaction, but then becomes embodied in and emanates from that object. Through the layering of multiple interactions, the object’s agency also becomes multiple - and sometimes contradictory.

Additionally, the two concepts of the art nexus and the actor-network complement each other in their plastic capacity to reflect complex and changing relationalities. Particularly their porous terminology, where ‘actant’, ‘index’, ‘recipient’, ‘artist’, and ‘prototype’ are relationally constituted and ‘can potentially be filled by anything or anyone’ (Chua and Elliott 2013:6). This porosity, as Candea notes, is ‘not a bug but a feature of ANT’ (2018:210) - and the art nexus (Gell 1998). They are *living* theories, which reflect ever-changing living networks; as such they may transform themselves with adaptive and

imperfect reproduction (Law 1999:10) which reflects the unstable and unpredictable nature of social relations.

The events discussed and analysed in this paper have not occurred in a vacuum. The broader context involves current debates within anthropology, museology, and indigenous studies. Particularly discussions regarding access to and ownership of cultural objects held in Western museums, and the politics of representation, repatriation, restitution, and reconciliation. For Indigenous Peoples in contemporary Australia, such discussions are intensified by socio-political issues of unequal access to education, medical care, police brutality, displacement and historical erasure. The spears, the claim, the rejection, and the protests all become symbols for the above contextual issues. Campaigns and groups like Change The Date<sup>1</sup>, Uluru Statement From The Heart<sup>2</sup>, Decolonise Anthropology, Decolonise History of Art, and BP or Not BP<sup>3</sup>, all of which have engaged with the claim at some point, embody and foreground these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> A campaign to change the date of Australia Day, see: <http://changethedate.org/>

<sup>2</sup> A campaign calling for First Nations representation in the Australian Constitution, see: <https://www.1voiceuluru.org/>

<sup>3</sup> A group campaigning for cultural and heritage institutions to cut ties with the fossil fuel industry, see: <https://bp-or-not-bp.org/>

## The Social Lives of the Gweagal Spears

The social lives of the Gweagal spears have enabled the gathering of multiple agencies through their actions in complex associative networks, crafting them as ‘lenses through which to view much larger questions of cross-cultural and colonial history’ (Thomas 2010:10). Their current dominant identity is formed through their inclusion in the Cook-Sandwich Collection, currently on deposit at the MAA and owned by Trinity College. The four spears, as seen in Figure 1, include a four-pointed fishing *garrara* (D.1914.1), two three-pointed *garrara* (D.1914.2 and D.1914.3), and a hunting spear (D.1914.4).



Figure 1: The Gweagal spears (MAA Collections' Images).

In April-May of 1770, the spears were taken from the Gweagal people (a group within the Dharawal community) following a violent interaction that resulted in two Gweagal men being shot at and injured. The objects were subsequently removed from Traditional Dharawal Country by Captain James Cook and the crew of the *Endeavor* following their invasive landing on the Kurnell Peninsula. It has been stated that ‘Aboriginal dispossession started there, in that very place’ (Williams, quoted in Coates *et al.* 2015:50); the crew were not given permission to enter Gweagal Country, nor were they ‘Welcomed to Country’ through the appropriate ceremony; they were in breach of Dharawal Law (Keenan 2018; Kelly 2019b).

Additionally, their invasive acts contradicted Cook's private orders from the Admiralty to 'with the Consent of the Natives...take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain... [whilst] cultivat[ing] a Friendship and Alliance with them...and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard' (Brett *et al.* 1768). These instructions were complemented by the Earl of Morton's advice to show Indigenous peoples kindness, and 'that shedding the blood of these people is a crime of the highest nature' (Douglas 1768). The acquisition of these objects and their indoctrination into the network of the British Empire was thus, in the first instance, unlawful and immoral in British and Indigenous Australian contexts.

This landing was one of many during Cook's first voyage to the Oceanic region between 1768-1771, the stated purpose of which was observing the transit of Venus, and proving the existence of 'Terra Australis Incognita'; the 'Great Southern Continent' (Brett *et al.* 1768). Cook gifted the bounties of this first Oceanic exploit to his patron, the Earl of Sandwich. Sandwich then donated the 100-object collection - along with an inventory - to his alma mater, Trinity College, in October of 1771 (MAA 1916). These objects now form Trinity College's Cook-Sandwich Collection. This collection was moved to the MAA in two transfers; in 1914 (which included the Gweagal spears) and 1924. The collection is still held there on deposit. The accompanying inventory remains in Trinity College's Wren Library.

At least one of the four spears has been on exhibition in the MAA since 1990 (Appendix 3, MAA Management Committee 2017:15), with two then being included in the 'Gifts and Discoveries' exhibition which ran from 25/05/2012-16/02/2013. This exhibition claimed to display 'fertile' and 'remarkable objects' described as 'finds, and the things [the collectors] received as gifts or in trade' (MAA 2012). The spears were also loaned to the Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik, Bonn, for the 'James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific' project; also shown in Vienna and Bern between 2009-2011 (Appendix 3, MAA Management Committee 2017:15), and to the NMA during 2015-2016 for the 'Encounters' exhibition.

Three of the spears are currently displayed in the MAA's Maudsley Hall Gallery, in the 'Voyages' and 'Australia' cabinets - D.1914.2 is not currently on display. The former houses D.1914.1 and D.1914.4, see Figures 2 and 3, engaging them in the story of Captain Cook's South Pacific explorations. The spears' label states that:

When Captain Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*, arrived at Botany Bay in April 1770, men belonging to the local group, the Gweagal, threw spears and resisted their landing. After the men were shot at they retreated, and the British gathered up spears, including these. Cook later tried to trade, but acknowledged that 'all they seem'd to want was for us to be gone'.

(Voyages cabinet label text, MAA)



Figure 2: The Voyages cabinet in the Maudsley Hall Gallery (Author's Image).



Figure 3: D.1914.1 and D.1914.4 in the Voyages cabinet (Author's Image).

The Australia cabinet holds D.1914.3, suspended alongside a barbed spear from North Australia (donated by H.M. Brunel), see Figure 4. D.1914.3's label describes the spear's materiality, use, and acquisition, stating that '[t]his object was collected during the first encounter between Aboriginal people and the British, when Captain James Cook landed at Botany Bay in April 1770' (MAA). Here no mention is made of the nature of that 'encounter' or the legality of the 'collect[ion]'.



Figure 4: D.1914 in the Australia cabinet (Author's Image).

One curator noted that the 'museum collection is full of scars, and those scars should be shown' (Elliott 2019a). The spears' labels arguably efface these scars in their brevity; surmising the story as it has been documented in Western historical archives that provide no space for Indigenous perspectives on the event. The Indigenous oral history 'of musket fire, bloodshed, and theft' (Kelly 2019a) has been passed down intergenerationally:

Two Gweagal men were assiduously carrying out their spiritual duty to Country by protecting Country from the presence of persons not authorised to be there. In our cultures it is not permissible to enter another culture's Country without due consent. Consent was always negotiated. Negotiation was not



necessarily a matter of immediate dialogue, it often involved spiritual communication through ceremony.

(Williams 2018)

Inclusion of this perspective would not only provide greater nuance to the story of the Gweagal spears, but the entire history of invasion and colonisation of Australia. This first act of violence and disrespect of Indigenous protocol set the tone for settler-colonialism in Australia (Perkins and Langton 2010), which has included the systematic erasure of, and silence around, the history of pre-colonisation Australia (Pascoe 2018), and the nature of display and ownership of Indigenous Australian artefacts and human remains in Western museums (Fforde 2002; Hubert and Fforde 2002; Turnbull and Pickering 2010; Fforde *et al.* 2013; Fforde 2014; Turnbull 2016). The continued insistence of particular exhibitions that colonially-affiliated objects are 'not all looted' - some being the product of gift, exchange, and barter (Brunt *et al.* 2018) - or framing looted artefacts as 'finds' (MAA 2012) or 'obtained through an act of disarmament' (Appendix 3, MAA Management Committee 2017:14) does not do justice to the dynamics of power articulating the historical setting of the collection. Nor is it sufficient in demonstrating the persistence of those dynamics in British institutions housing the products of those interactions, and the contemporary settler-state of Australia.

Similarly, nuance and context can be added by including Gweagal and Dharawal knowledge in the exhibition and label-texts. For example, the perception that 'everything, has a spirit, even innate objects like stones and mountains' (Williams, quoted in Power 2015); 'because of our spirituality those artefacts are a part of us...My ancestors' spirits are trapped in those spears... the only way they can be at rest is if everything starts coming back to the people where they belong' (Kelly, 2018). The importance of the spears spans the blurred realms of politics, kinship, and cosmology. Their agencies affect people in highly personal, social, and political manners; enlivened by ancestral spirit and shared history. If ethnographic museums are to represent the peoples and histories that they claim to faithfully, then it is necessary to do so in a manner that respects the beliefs and cosmological positions of those people. As such, the Gweagal view that these objects house ancestral spirits

should be taken as seriously in matters of display, conservation, and access as other beliefs that the museum attends to<sup>4</sup>.

A point that has been reiterated by the curatorial team at the MAA throughout my fieldwork is that objects are not static, and the museum is not a terminus (Elliott 2019b; Herle 2019). The active and affective lives of museum objects enable the expansion of their actor-networks and art nexus, and thus the expansion of their meaning and agencies. Such developments are enhanced through objects' associations with histories and persons deemed particularly valuable by implicated institutions. In the case of the Gweagal spears, their historical uniqueness as: (1) signs for Cook's first landing in Australia, (2) possibly the first Indigenous Australian objects to be collected by Europeans (Thomas 2003), and (3) symbols for Indigenous dispossession (Williams, quoted in Power 2015; Yu, quoted in Provost 2015; Kelly 2018), has crafted them a broad network of relations, through which they gather meaning and avenues for the development of their social lives.

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<sup>4</sup> Exemplified in He Tautoko's display in the MAA's Pacific Currents exhibition, wherein concessions have been made to keep the *taonga* warm through audio and visual connection to people and place (Herle 2008a:164).

## Ownership and Repatriation

The issue of ownership and repatriation of objects of historical and cultural significance to Indigenous communities is not new to the museum world. However, such debates have recently experienced a resurgence with the rising calls for the decolonisation of anthropology and of Western museums, and inclusion of postcolonial, subaltern, and critical voices. Particular questions of ownership, historical narrative, and discourse production (Foucault 1969) within museums have led to calls for a ‘*New New Museology*’<sup>5</sup> which prioritises relationships and collaboration with source/descendant communities. Thus issues of repatriation need to be broadened to include questions of who has access to - and who interprets - the objects and histories held by museums.

Each claim of repatriation (or restitution) must be dealt with individually, reflecting the uniqueness of each situation. A significant amount of literature and policy surrounds the issue of ownership and repatriation of human remains (see for example Payne 2004; DCMS 2005; Lohman and Goodnow 2006; Teague 2007; Alberti *et al.* 2009; Jenkins 2011). Across the globe, exhibiting and holding the remains of Indigenous Peoples materialised and made a spectacle of the dehumanisation and dispossession that colonial rule inflicted upon Indigenous populations (Fforde 2002, 2004). More recent discussions explore the effect of exhibiting cultural artefacts on such materialisations, and include questions of object-ownership, restitution, and repatriation. Questions and processes of repatriation and reconciliation become intertwined with the relinquishing of established power relations and the return of control, authority, ownership of history, and the narrative of representation (Peers 2004; Fforde *et al.* 2013). Returning the material symbols of that history is part of this process and enables therapeutic healing for descendant communities (Turnbull and Pickering 2010), and actively builds relationships between those communities and the museums that house(d) their cultural objects or ancestral remains (Herle 2008).

Such activity is partly framed by policy – although its enforcement is variable. UNESCO’s 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions states the importance of providing Indigenous peoples access to their ‘traditional cultural expressions’ (UNESCO 2005:3) and recognising the position ‘of traditional knowledge as a

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<sup>5</sup> A term used by an audience member during discussions at the Colonial Theft and British Museums conference held at Queen Mary University.

source of intangible and material wealth’ which requires ‘protection and promotion’ (UNESCO 2005:2). The United Kingdom ratified the Convention in 2007, and Australia accessioned it in 2009. The United Nations’ 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which the United Kingdom and Australia are also bound<sup>6</sup>, directly addresses the issue of stolen objects. Article 11 states the necessity for Indigenous peoples to have the right to practice, maintain, and protect physical manifestations of their culture and history in the form of artefacts and technologies, and have those artefacts restituted if they were ‘taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs’ (UN 2007:12). Similarly, Articles 12 and 31 foreground Indigenous peoples’ right to access, use, control, and repatriate their ceremonial objects (*ibid.*:12), and objects that manifest ‘traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions’ (*ibid.*:22).

These policies do not mention the unique circumstances of colonial-era or colonial-affiliated artefacts. A particularly pertinent report in this regard was published during my fieldwork; the Sarr-Savoy Report (2018). This was resultant of President Macron’s statement in November of 2017 demanding the ‘temporary or permanent restitution [by French museums] of African heritage to Africa’ (Macron quoted in Codrea-Rado 2017). The report established that returns of objects which met criteria for ‘restitutability’ would begin in 2018 (Sarr and Savoy 2018). The report has been criticised for having several major legal and logistical issues (outlined in Herman 2019a; 2019b). However, its publication and media attention has put pressure on other European countries to engage in similar work, and has brought the issues of colonial-era artefacts, repatriation and restitution into more public discussions - albeit without any of the promised outcomes as of yet (Herman 2019b). These pressures are being felt by British institutions such as the BM (Bakare 2019), and have become intertwined with the protest narratives surrounding the Gweagal spears (Kelly 2019b). Whilst some institutions face legislative restrictions on the deaccessioning of items from national collections (see the British Museum Act 1963<sup>7</sup>), there are no such barriers for non-national collections such as those in university museums like the MAA, or Cambridge College collections such as Trinity’s.

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<sup>6</sup> As of 2007 and 2009 respectively (AHRC 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Which prohibits the return of any object held in the museum’s collections, regardless of the moral obligations felt by trustees (Keenan 2018:287).

Such freedom has allowed the MAA to be at the forefront of policies and practices regarding access to, and return of, objects and human remains. The first instance of this was the tacit restitution (via ‘permanent loan’) of Kibuuka relics in 1961, following a request by former Cambridge student - and then Ugandan Minister for Education - Abubakar Mayanja (Bennet 2018:217; Elliott, Herle and Joy 2019). Since then there have been four repatriation/return claims submitted to the MAA; by a Maori group for human remains (successful), by the Nordic Museum in Sweden for an 18th-century Sámi drum (resulting in a ten-year loan; see Mulk 2009; MAA 2010), by Shoebridge and Kelly for the Gweagal spears (rejected), and by Torres-Strait Islanders for six objects that incorporate human remains<sup>8</sup> (ongoing; Elliott, Herle and Joy 2019).

While these cases are relatively few - perhaps pointing to a need for greater outreach work regarding the contents of the museum’s stores - the MAA has made a point of being proactive about engaging in field-based projects for visual returns to various communities around the world. A few examples include Geismar’s work on making Layard’s photographic collection accessible to Male-kulan people (2005; 2009) and the ongoing relationship-building activities and access arrangements with Pacific Islander and Torres-Strait Islander communities (see Herle 2008a; 2008b; Williams 2019). This year has also seen ongoing work within the MAA to redraft their repatriation policy, the form of which has not changed significantly for at least 15 years (Thomas 2019). Such efforts foreground the museum’s potential as a forum and space of productive and collaborative relationships. It also points to the wider context of artefact return, which involves access, reconciliation, and co-presence. Each of these elements demands attention in the relational museum (Herle 2008).

It is pertinent to briefly compare the Gweagal and Sámi cases. The artefacts in each case are legally owned by Trinity College. The request for the Sámi drum’s return was made by a recognised heritage institution for a 5-year loan, later extended to 10 years, during which time the object would be cared for and exhibited to agreed standards stipulated by the terms of the loan (Mulk 2009). In contrast, the Gweagal claim was made by an unaccredited Indigenous person without institutional backing or security. The Sámi drum was personally delivered to Sweden by the Trinity Librarian (Mulk 2009:205); the Gweagal spears have not left the MAA

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<sup>8</sup> Held by the University's Duckworth Laboratory for Human Evolutionary Studies. The claim is being strongly supported by curators at the MAA (Herle 2019).

since the claim's rejection. Herein the power of the legibility, accreditation, and promise of return that a heritage institution can provide in such claims is made clear.

Prior to the submission of the repatriation claim for the Gweagal spears, they too had travelled to other heritage institutions, and in doing so built an increasingly complex polyagency; an ever-growing sum of efficacious identities. As a result of this polyagency, particularly the aspects which affiliate them with pre-invasion Australia, Cook and colonisation, the spears were included in a joint exhibition between the BM and the NMA<sup>9</sup> on the history of Indigenous Australia. The exhibition aimed to express that history through the stories produced by Indigenous Australian objects in British Museums. It was shown in both London and Canberra under the titles 'Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilization' and 'Encounters: Revealing Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Objects from the British Museum' respectively.

The BM exhibition ran from 23/04/2015-02/08/2015, and the NMA exhibition from 27/11/2015-28/03/2016. Both focused on making the collections accessible to Indigenous communities across Australia and included a significant amount of consultation with those communities. This included the involvement of Williams, whose consultation helped to 'represent what happened at the time of the landing...that this country wasn't terra nullius' and to show that '[w]e have a shared history, a shared present, and we have a shared future' (Williams, quoted in Power 2015). It was on the final day of this latter exhibition that the verbal claim, for the return of the shield and spears from the BM and MAA, was made by Rodney Kelly on behalf of the Gweagal people. This ignited the ongoing campaign for the return of the Gweagal artefacts; spanning three museums in the United Kingdom and Sweden. Claimed objects include spears held at the MAA and the Swedish Ethnographic Museum, and a shield held at the BM (McDonald 2017; 2019), all of which Kelly claims to be of Gweagal origin; appropriated during Cook's first landing. The statement read as follows:

It is a matter of fact the shield held in the collection of the British Museum and currently on display at the National Museum of Australia ... was in fact stolen from our ancestor, the warrior Cooman of the tribe Gweagal upon first

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<sup>9</sup> Financially supported by the oil and gas company BP.

encounter with James Cook and the crew of the Endeavour in 1770 at Kamay Bay which is the original name for land now known as Botany Bay...It is our will and the will of the clan that all Gweagal artefacts are kept on Gweagal Country and do not leave the shores of Australia under any circumstances whatsoever without express permission from the elders of the Gweagal Tribe. All artefacts currently held by the British Museum and National Museum of Australia are to be returned within 90 days of this letter.

(Kelly, quoted in Daley 2016)

Kelly reported that this verbal claim was met with applause from museum staff - that it was a moment of extreme emotion for him as a Gweagal man and descendant of the warrior Cooman; whom he believes to be the original owner of the shield and spears (McDonald 2016; Kelly 2018, 2019). The claim explicitly calls for the return of artefacts held by the BM and the NMA, which included the spears on loan from the MAA. As such, the claims submitted to the MAA and the BM are intertwined through their shared network of actants and histories. Their mutual constitution in the discourse created by Kelly and the narratives woven by historians and curators have enmeshed them in one another's social lives irreversibly. One particularly interesting intersection of this is that the two academics consulted regarding the legitimacy of Kelly and the claim for the spears, Williams and Nugent, were also two key members of a two-day provenance workshop at the British Museum which determined that the shield held at the BM was not of Gweagal or Dharawal relation (Nugent 2018 and Sculthorpe; Thomas 2018a). These academics have also been invited to Cambridge twice in the last three years; once to see the spears and once to present their views at a conference entitled 'Objects' Other Histories: Australian-British Encounters'.

The claim and supporting evidence for the repatriation of the Gweagal spears, submitted by Shoebridge on behalf of Kelly on the 1st of November 2016, requested<sup>10</sup>:

'[T]he repatriation of spears held in your Cook Collection to the Gweagal people of Sydney, Australia. The request is made on behalf of Mr Rodney Kelly, a direct descendant of the warrior Cooman, from whom these spears were taken. Mr Kelly makes this request on behalf of the Gweagal people.'

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<sup>10</sup> The full letter is included in Appendix 2 of MAA Management Committee 2017.

(Shoebridge 2016:13)

The submission then outlines the basis for Kelly's claim by indicating his genealogical link to the warrior Cooman. Evidence for this claim is provided in the form of a family tree prepared for Kelly's mother by NTSCORP<sup>11</sup> and a registrar of births, deaths, and marriages (see Annexures A and B of Shoebridge 2016) which tie Ms. Kelly to Elisabeth Cooman; daughter of Nelly Doongh and Cooman. Shoebridge and Kelly believe that this 'Cooman' is descended of the warrior Cooman, whom the submission reports is the original owner of both the spears held at the MAA and the shield held at the BM. Smith, an Australian historian, also reported that this Cooman was present at the 1770 landing, drawing on an oral history that Richard Longfield had documented in a letter to W. Houston in 1905 (2008). This is also the history that the submission cites as evidence for Cooman's presence on the beach in 1770. Smith's essay was published in the catalogue for the exhibition '*Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*'; which is where Kelly first discovered that Cooman was his ancestor (Harmer 2016).

In response to this claim of genealogy and presence, the Sub-Committee requested advice from an historian at Australian National University regarding the legitimacy of the referenced oral history. This resulted in Nugent's refutation of such a history, stating that the letter makes 'no reference to the name of the spearman, or any mention that the spearman was the grandfather of the narrator's husband' (Nugent 2017:19).

Kelly's claim to direct ownership is constructed by positioning himself as a descendant of Cooman and locating Cooman's presence on Kamay beach during the pivotal 1770 landing. In attempting to legitimize Kelly's identity as a Gweagal man descended of Cooman, and thus bolster his claim, the claimant has attempted to translate his relation to the object in terms understandable to a Western institution by referring to Western historical records and publications. Doing so made him vulnerable to that Western-historical tendency to reinterpret and reinscribe histories (Trouillot 1997); a phenomenon also observed in the related case of the shield held at the British Museum (see Thomas 2018a). Regarding such self-formation, Williams also noted that individuals without 'Traditional connection' to Country or objects

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<sup>11</sup> Native Title Service Provider for Aboriginal Traditional Owners in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.



had taken to ‘political grandstanding’ and ‘fabricating history’ to create such connections following exposure to the Gweagal artefacts in the Encounters exhibition at the NMA (2019). Whilst this comment points to the quagmire of complex and tense issues of legitimacy and identity in the politics of Indigeneity, it also demonstrates that these artefacts, in their symbolic and agentive potency, attract politics and history-making in actants throughout their network.

Focusing on ownership through direct lineage ignores the polyagency of these objects, which gathers and legitimises multiple histories and meanings. Each of these actants, through co-creating interpreted histories and meanings, becomes a part-owner of that history; ownership which is shared with the object-actors themselves. This capacity for indexical ‘stickiness’ (Nugent and Sculthorpe 2019) is used socially, politically, and in processes of identity construction for communities and individuals; most crucially for Indigenous Australians whose identities and histories have been systematically and continuously erased, effaced, and altered since that first landing. As such, it is the complex shared ownership of the Gweagal spears by Indigenous Australians that is the sticking point of this claim. Indeed, Shoebridge and Kelly state that the claim was made ‘on behalf of the Gweagal people’ (Shoebridge 2016:13), not an individual. However, it is precisely this claim to Gweagal representation that is challenged in the final report of the Sub-Committee, as discussed later.

The claim also references Dharawal Law, which dictates that objects of Gweagal origin must remain on Gweagal Country in order to maintain historical, cultural, and philosophical continuity for the community (Shoebridge 2016:5). Here the submission draws on the words of Michael Ingrey - Gadhungal man and member of the Dharawal Nation - to illustrate the importance of repatriating the spears for all Indigenous Australians as the objects ‘represent Aboriginal resistance to the destruction of culture and community following invasion and colonisation’ (Coates *et al.* 2015:49-51). Through the skein of the art nexus, these objects are functioning as ‘retentions’ of a devastated community, the ‘prototype’ (Gell 1998) for which was that community’s Traditional Knowledge; a knowledge now embodied in the materiality of those objects, and thus a rich resource for community development and re-learning today (Williams 2019).

The submission notes the potential for the return of these objects to empower Indigenous communities to ‘tell the story of first contact on their own terms and in their own words, with

their own artefacts' as a part of the 'reconciliation process' (Shoebridge 2016:6). This illustrates the educational potential of object-return. Similarly indicated is the capacity for reconciliation to fill the (aforementioned) gap in museum labels with an Indigenous voice, activating the spears as agents of decolonisation.

The particular terminology of Shoebridge and Kelly's claim - for the *repatriation* of these objects - is not insignificant or inefficacious. Repatriation, in the context of museum objects, refers to the return of things to their countries or communities of origin - with the Collections Trust specifying that such objects can be 'returned to a nation or state at the request of a government'. Therefore, repatriation claims are embroiled in questions of governmental power and the identity of the nation-state. Indeed, to strengthen the assertion that the Gweagal people - and Kelly in particular - 'remain the rightful and lawful owners of the shield and spears' (Shoebridge 2016:7), the claim makes reference to common law, as well as national and international motions and policies that support the repatriation of cultural artefacts (UNESCO 2005; United Nations 2007) and this claim specifically (NSW State Parliament 2016; Australian Federal Parliament 2016 - see Annexures E and F in Shoebridge 2016). This is a citizen-reversal of Scott's notion of 'statecraft'; whereby a legible society is socially engineered by the authoritarian state - driven by the high-modernist ideology to make 'rational designs of social order' (Scott 1998:2). Kelly - upon recognising the capacity for Western systems of law and governance to legitimize populations - engages these frameworks in an attempt to make an Indigenous issue legible in Australia and Britain.

## **Rejection and Protest**

While the Cook-Sandwich Collection is considered to be the property of Trinity College, the MAA is curatorially responsible for the objects on deposit that constitute the collection. Shoebridge and Kelly's submission, received on 01/11/2016, was addressed to Professor Nicholas Thomas in his capacity as director of the MAA. As a result, Thomas contacted the MAA's Management Committee who in turn consulted Trinity College; a day later establishing a 'Sub-Committee to consider the request for repatriation in accordance with the MAA's published procedure for requests for repatriation, and to advise the Committee and, if requested, Trinity College' (MAA Management Committee 2017:3).

The Sub-Committee on Repatriation of Artefacts was comprised of seven individuals, all directly affiliated with the University of Cambridge through the Museum Consortium, academic departments (including Social Anthropology, Archaeology, and Law), Trinity College, and the University's External Communications and Legal Services departments. The names and titles of these individuals are included in Figure 5 below. The committee also sought advice from 'recognised representatives of the Gweagal people' concerning Kelly's relation to the spears; leading to the consideration of Williams and Nugent's perspectives. The Sub-Committee's meetings were held on 16/01/2017 and 19/04/2017. It is notable that Professor Joel Robbins did not attend either of the two meetings, Professor Cyprian Broodbank was not in attendance at the first meeting, and that Ms. Sarah Collins missed the second. The degree to which this impacted the decision-making process is not clear, although it did swing the balance of voices away from the Departments of Archaeology and Anthropology; towards those of the University and Trinity College. The meetings were also attended by Thomas; director and curator of the MAA, Professor of Historical Anthropology, and Fellow of Trinity College.

### Sub-Committee's Membership

Professor Cyprian Broodbank (John Disney Professor of Archaeology and Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge)

Dr Nicolas Bell (Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge)

Professor David Feldman (Rouse Ball Professor of English Law, University of Cambridge, and Chair of the Management Committee of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology), Chair of the Sub-Committee

Mr Tim Knox (Director and Marlay Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge)

Professor Joel Robbins (Sigrid Rausing Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge)

Mr David Parsons (Deputy Head of Legal Services, University of Cambridge)

Ms Sarah Collins (Communications Officer, External Communications, University of Cambridge)

In attendance:

Mrs Felicity Eves-Rey, Secretary of the Sub-Committee

Professor Nicholas Thomas (Professor of Historical Anthropology, and Director and Curator, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge)

Figure 5: Members of the Sub-Committee (MAA Management Committee 2017:11).

Whilst Thomas was not a member of the Sub-Committee, he has almost certainly played an active role in the decision, not least due to his contribution to 'The Curator's Evaluation'. This analysed the claim in accordance with the MAA's published Guidelines for Consideration of Requests for Return of Cultural Property (hereafter Guidelines, see MAA 2014), and included some background as to the MAA's purpose, its approach to repatriation, the Cook-Sandwich Collection, and the historical and current situation of the spears. The presence of one of the world's foremost Cook scholars will have impacted the narratives that were foregrounded. Regardless of intentionality, the report does state that the spears' 'significance is above all historical' (MAA Management Committee 2017:15). It is also worth noting that, while the collegiate affiliations of Sub-Committee members are recorded in Figure 5, Thomas' fellowship at Trinity College is not. This obscuration of potentially affective power relations muddies the already complicated nexus of associations surrounding these polyagentive objects.

The final report was agreed by email communication after the second Sub-Committee meeting. The report advised that Trinity College should not accede to the request in the submission, and was sent to the Museum Management Committee and the Trinity College Librarian. Shoebridge and Kelly were also informed of the outcome - although Kelly has stated that he was 'only cc'd in the email' (Kelly 2018).

Although the full report of this claim and its rejection is publically available, including all evidence from the claimants, MAA and the Sub-Committee, the process is not fully transparent; internal politics and outdated policy blur the affiliations, biases, and desires of each actant. The rejection was steered by the aforementioned Guidelines. This document's 15 years of relative sameness (Thomas 2019) results in anachronistic priorities regarding the effect of object return on the collection, an object's historical significance, and the availability of the object for study and documentation (see MAA 2014). In light of this, a new repatriation policy has been considered in draft-form by the Museum Committee and focus-groups of staff and students in order to address some of these areas of 'weakness' (Thomas 2019). Were such weaknesses addressed prior to the claim's submission the University's public statement on the matter may have read quite differently.

The University's statement on the outcome of the claim was released 07/06/2017, see Appendix B. This outlined its aim to:

'[C]ontinue developing strong cultural links and exchanges with indigenous Australians, particularly members of the Gweagal people and to take steps to continue to increase the accessibility of the spears to everyone for whom the artefacts are culturally, historical and educationally significant'

(University of Cambridge 2017)

It noted that this was best achieved by retaining the four spears in the Cook-Sandwich Collection. The surmised reasons for this were also included in the statement, see Figure 6.

- 1: The request contains no clear proposal for housing and conserving the spears if they were to be returned
- 2: There is no commitment by an Australian institution to care for the spears
- 3: Removing parts of the Cook-Sandwich collection, which is of great historical, scientific and educational importance nationally and internationally, would cause considerable harm by depriving the collection of its integrity
- 4: It is very important that any request for a change to the current situation of the spears should be made only after full consultation with accredited representatives of the Gweagal people, and on terms which command their support.

Figure 6: Official statement from the University regarding the outcome of the repatriation claim (University of Cambridge 2017).

Analysing the four key points for rejection reveals power dynamics that are integral to the nexus of interactions that occur around and through these objects. Such interactions developed in response to the potent polyagency of these objects, which are symbols of a history whose narrative is constantly undergoing political manipulation. The first and second points of the statement (Figure 6) are of the same thrust: that the care of the objects as *artefacts* is paramount. Such a distinctly Western-scientific position on how an object can and should be cared for disregards Indigenous perspectives on care. It also takes for granted the notion of the museum as a terminus. This position, taken also by Kopytoff (1986), curtails objects' social lives the moment they are accessioned into the heritage space and ascribed the identity of 'artefact'. As such, the 'stickiness' (Nugent and Sculthorpe 2018) of these objects, which gathers stories to amass polyagency, becomes a barrier to its forward movement. It has become caught in the web of the Western museum.

The Gweagal spears have gathered the care, affection, and agencies of many actors, including museum personnel who feel a significant duty of care as the objects' custodians; a responsibility to ensure their material wellbeing (Elliott 2019b). 'Proper care' in this instance involves conserving the object's materiality, documenting its provenance, matrix, and use, and making it accessible. These methods have enabled the spears to be conserved in good condition for over 249, and therefore have been applauded by the community of origin (Kelly 2018, 2019; Williams 2017, 2019). However, a focus on materiality does not attend to other forms of care; emotional, spiritual, and the objects' capacity to care for their community through education, and the conveyance of Traditional Knowledge. These are forms of care which require access.

The MAA's efforts to make these objects accessible to Indigenous people is notable, with visits by Williams, Kelly, and Sculthorpe during and after the consideration of the claim. However, the degree to which this can be extended to the wider community is limited by issues of resources, logistics and distance. As such, Kelly and Williams both posit that the objects' return to Country is of central importance. Kelly's position foregrounds the immediate return of the Gweagal artefacts to Country (with preference given to keeping places close to Kamay). Williams, however, has noted that the immediate return of the spears could cause significant social divides within the community (Williams 2017, 2019). Kelly has consistently referred to an 'ideal scenario' of building a cultural center to house returned

objects at the site of invasion, and assuage such divides by pairing shared learning of Traditional Knowledge with the provision of employment opportunities for local youths. Williams has a similar goal; to eventually house *garrara* produced by directly learning from the objects in the MAA (2019).

However, as the report notes, the claim had no clear plans to house the spears, and there was no commitment from any funding bodies to create one. It was assumed that in the interim between the spears' return and the building of a cultural center, Kelly and his family would become interim guardians of the objects. If this were the case then, as pointed out by Herle, the objects would be undergoing restitution<sup>12</sup>, not repatriation (2019). This confusion may well be due to the inaccessibility of jargon used in the policies of Western institutions; in this case, the use of a term which lacks legal definition yet is referenced in legal contexts (Herman 2019a). The term's ambiguity is not immediately obvious to individual(s) making repatriation claims, and as such the onus is upon the institution to outline the differences and definitions of specialist terminology at the outset in order to enable better communication and more favorable outcomes for all parties.

If it were the intention that Kelly becomes the spears' custodian, such individualisation in ownership of the shared history and legacy associated with the spears could, as Williams noted (2017), create significant divisions within and between the Gweagal Family Group, the La Perouse Land Council, and its associates. However, community views on ownership or guardianship are not cohesive, illustrated in a heated debate within a Gweagal Family Group meeting documented by Blackmore (2017a). This meeting provided no consensus on the best keeping place for the objects, and references were made to their potential to create rifts within the group around ownership and access. Equally, members of the community feared that the spears would move from 'one colonial institution to another and one vault to another...the story will continue but the objects won't be connected' (Gweagal man in Blackmore 2017b).

It has been noted that if objects are returned to Country under the care of individuals rather than heritage organizations, access for the wider community would be significantly reduced (Williams 2019). Additionally, the objects would be exposed to further political manipulation; such a transfer 'turns people into narcissists - it becomes about them, not the

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<sup>12</sup> The return of an object to its 'proper' owner, indicating individual ownership.

objects' (Williams 2019). Similar barriers regarding internal divisions and logistical challenges are faced in potential return of the objects to an Australian institution (Thomas 2019). This encapsulates the capacity for polyagents, particularly those whose long and complex social lives have gathered especially potent agencies, to alter and affect other actants.

Point three of the University of Cambridge's statement (Figure 6) foregrounds the 'great historical, scientific and educational importance nationally and internationally' of the Cook-Sandwich Collection. It states that it would be harmful to the integrity of this collection to remove the spears from their current context. Encapsulated here is a fundamental imbalance regarding what and whom Trinity College has decided to privilege in their consideration of this claim. The hierarchy of language here is telling. History, specifically a Western view of Cook's legacy and the colonisation of Australia, is foregrounded. The 'scientific' importance of the spears is not elaborated upon in the report; thus its magnification in this summary is dubious. This is the same reason given by Western institutions in the past for retaining human remains; and is currently slowing the claim for the repatriation of Torres-Strait Islander human remains at Cambridge University's Duckworth Laboratory (Herle 2019). Finally, focusing on the objects' educational significance in its current context reveals a bias towards the education of Western audiences in Western institutions over that of descendant communities. This focus highlights a point made by Thomas during a panel discussing 'repatriation in the arts', regarding the capacity for museums to use the legacies of empire for education, rather than as a tool to devalue collections through their affiliation with colonialism (Thomas 2018b). In this instance education is a one-sided affair, occurring within Western institutions for the benefit of predominantly Western audiences, students, and researchers. The foregrounding of history and education in the statement could, therefore, be a footprint of Thomas's presence in the Sub-Committee's meetings, and thus the influence he may have had. Finally, the mention of the collection's national (British) importance over international is telling. As stated earlier, the educational significance of these objects for the Gweagal people was a sticking point of the claim. Kelly hoped to illuminate, through these objects, that interactions between Britain and Australia were violent from the first instance;

History shows...that our man was wounded, we had all of our spears,  
all of our things we relied on to live off, we had all them taken off us.  
People just don't know that back home in Australia. I thought that if I



got the shield back, if I got the spears back, we could teach people about true history... They could have a better understanding of who we are, where we come from.

(Kelly 2019a)

The social lives of these objects and the network of actants that they have built, and continue to build, around them were framed by the structure of the expanding British Empire, and their affiliation with Captain Cook. Circulating in such frameworks ‘enliven[s]’ objects with potent histories (Appadurai 1986:4), which are intensified when placed in the context of a British museum. The network of the British Empire, and the interactions of power therein, are inescapably entangled with the agency, affect, and narratives exuded and held by these objects. This particular history can romanticise colonisation through the often-valorised legacy of Cook and his exploits. This legacy is reinforced by monuments<sup>13</sup>, political discourse<sup>14</sup>, and through education (*cf* Rigney 2001). Such rewriting of historical realities and injustices enhances the systematic forgetting and erasure of Indigenous Peoples’ experience of invasion and colonisation (Perkins and Langton 2010). This debate, including the public image of Cook, is increasingly in the public domain. Such discussions are embodied in the political protests surrounding the Change The Date campaign and the Uluru Statement From The Heart. The Sub-Committee’s focus on the significance and apparent immutability of the spears’ eclipsing affiliation with Cook and Empire reflects a bounded conception of the nature of the collection and the museum. These definitions, in their social construction, are porous.

The fourth and final published reason for rejecting the claim makes reference to the lack of consultation by the claimant with the ‘accredited representatives of the Gweagal people’. This statement points to the fact that Kelly has refused to interact with or consult the ‘accredited representatives’ - the La Perouse Land Council - before or after the claim’s submission. This lack of discussion reflects internal politics and social divisions within the Gweagal Family Group and wider La Perouse Land Council. Indeed, Kelly has reported his lack of faith in the Land Council several times, stating that ‘these Land Councils, they rule

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<sup>13</sup> Such as the monument to Captain Cook in Sydney’s Hyde Park, which states that he ‘discovered this territory [in] 1770’.

<sup>14</sup> Encapsulated by the commitment of the current Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, to commemorating and celebrating the 250th anniversary of Cook’s first landing in Kurnell, the reported costs of which top \$50mn (Jones 2019).

us... the government set up these Land Councils, these government bodies. They represent the community even if they don't represent the community' (Kelly 2018 Interview). Kelly destabilizes the Land Council's legitimacy in a direct parallel of the Sub-Committee's destabilization of his legitimacy. The Sub-Committee paints Kelly as unrepresentative because he is not backed by an 'accredited' (government recognised) organization, whereas Kelly believes that Land Councils are not representative of the people precisely because of their governmental affiliation. Also demonstrated by this statement are the dichotomous interpretations of the value of state legibility (Scott 1998); for the activist, state legibility is damaging and suspect, for the institution it is reassuring.

This preference for a legible voice is reflected through action; following the rejection of the claim in 2017, the Sub-Committee invited Williams to view the spears at the MAA, in a visit allegedly funded by Trinity College. This visit enabled Williams to experience a visceral connection to these polyagentive objects. Their story had been passed to him from his mother, and their materiality emplotted into his childhood, having learned the technique of *garrara* manufacture from his uncle (Williams 2019). Thus the objects act as a physical manifestation for the capacity of Traditional Knowledge transmission to connect individuals through space and time, and reinforce their shared heritage. Facilitating such learning and interaction across Indigenous communities with claims to this heritage can strengthen the lattice of relations between peoples of the past and the present. This is the kind of link-building and accessibility that the University's statement referred to (2017). However, it is notable that Kelly's request to visit the University and discuss the case with the Sub-Committee was resolutely rejected by the Chair; a decision supported by the Sub-Committee (MAA Management Committee 2017:24,25). His visits were funded through an online donations page<sup>15</sup> (Kelly 2018 and 2019). These disparities outline the way in which Trinity College may use its financial and institutional resources to privilege particular narratives over others, and perhaps manipulate those narratives to their own political ends. Kelly's attempts to craft himself as a more 'legible' individual - through the reference of national and international policy and Western-historical publications - went unrewarded.

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<sup>15</sup> This page is still active and gathering funds for another trip to the UK:  
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/repatriationnow>

Particular actors emphasise the differences in opinion between these two Gweagal representatives for reasons which seem politically divisive. There are certainly local political tensions within the Gweagal and Dharawal communities; reflected in the lack of communication between Williams and Kelly. However, the MAA and Trinity College are not equipped to understand or adjudicate these divides. Polarization of these two individuals ignores their many shared views, which center the importance of the spears for Indigenous youth education, their spiritual significance, and the necessity of their ultimate return to Country. It also overlooks the intersection of their stories, which were illustrated by, and enacted within, the Encounters exhibition at the NMA. It was Williams' early efforts in the making of that exhibition which enabled Kelly to come into contact with the spears for the first time, enabled the first verbal claim, and set in motion all of the actions that followed.

The submission of the repatriation claim to the MAA, and its' rejection, sparked a series of activist and protest activities in the UK, Australia, and online. The first instance of this in Cambridge was on 16/06/2017, when Kelly and a handful of fellow activists staged a protest outside the MAA (Brown 2017; Steel 2017). This protest was filmed by Kelly and is available online<sup>16</sup>. During a subsequent trip to Cambridge in November 2017, Kelly gave talks about his campaign at Pembroke College, Senate House, in the Maudsley Hall Gallery of the MAA, and during a meeting in the MAA chaired by Herle. This second visit was part of a larger trip that involved museums and artefacts in London and Sweden (Hewitt 2017).

Throughout the academic year 2018-19, Kelly has visited the UK twice in regard to his ongoing campaign for the repatriation of the Gweagal spears at the MAA and the shield in the BM. The first of these, in November, included three events in Cambridge; a seminar held in Pembroke College hosted by two local activist groups (Un-versity/Antisystemic and Anti-Capitalist Cambridge), a protest and march held outside the MAA, and a final talk given in the CUSU Lounge booked by Anti-Capitalist Cambridge. Kelly also took part in the Stolen Goods Tour at the BM, organised by the activist group BP Or Not BP by giving a talk regarding the shield and his faith in its Gweagal origin. Engagement with Kelly by MAA curators at this stage set a precedent for their continued action to enable Kelly to tell his own story in the museum's forum, to directly access the spears (as pictured in Figure 7), and to

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<sup>16</sup> See <https://antisystemic.org/gweagal/videos/>

discuss his campaign with them directly. Such actions lay the foundation for future collaborative efforts to enhance the relational capacity of the museum.



Figure 7: Rodney Kelly with the Gweagal spears during a visit to the MAA in 2018 (MAA 2018).

In April-May of 2019 Kelly visited Cambridge for the second time this academic year and gave three talks. The first was at St John's College, organised by the student group Decolonise History of Art and Architecture. The second was in the Maudsley Hall Gallery, which was followed by a march to, and protest outside of, Trinity College. The third, which also included a screening of Blackmore's film 'Objects of Resistance'<sup>17</sup>, was held in the Department of Social Anthropology, in affiliation with the Decolonise Anthropology group. A further protest took place outside Trinity College which was less widely publicised. Following these events, Kelly attended and spoke at a conference on Colonial Theft and British Museums at Queen Mary University, London. He also participated in the second Stolen Goods Tour at the BM, again hosted by BP Or Not BP. Finally, he spoke at a

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<sup>17</sup> This film documented the claim's submission and rejection.

screening of *Te Kuhane o te Tupuna: El Espiritu de los Ancestros* at MOKU Pacific HQ, London. Kelly continues to make plans for further visits to Cambridge to continue his campaign work.

In his various activist activities online and offline, Kelly frequently foregrounds the potential for the spears to incite greater connection to Country, culture, and identity through educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, thus strengthening his campaign's affiliation with the Article 31 of the UNDRIP (2007:22):

What these artefacts can do is bring back culture... knowing where you come from, and seeing something from there, before Europeans come to our shores - it's very powerful. A very powerful thing that could happen We could learn our culture again. We could learn how to make these spears again...I'd like to teach the young troubled youth about their culture. They could start learning language again. Those spears have a name; they have stories behind them. So we can reteach that to our youth again

(Kelly 2018)

The method of identity articulation in the textual and verbal discourses of the submission and protest speeches become influenced by the intended audience and desired outcomes. In the case of the written submission, Kelly's Indigeneity is articulated in such a manner as to create discernable divisions between 'insiders and outsiders' (Clifford 2013:61) of the Gweagal community and Cooman lineage, in order to craft a heritable ownership over the spears. Whereas in the above quotation, taken from a speech given by Kelly at a protest event in Cambridge, Kelly's Indigeneity is articulated through inclusive and communal language when discussing historical and contemporary contexts. Through similar linguistic devices, he also invites non-Indigenous protest attendees into the narrative through emotive and compelling story-telling. His repetition of 'we' enplots listeners into his story; engaging the singular and plural pronoun 'you' to both craft listeners as included 'insiders' in the activist dialogue. It also crafts an individual connection to Kelly's plight through positioning the listener to imagine themselves into the Indigenous position of 'knowing where you come from, and seeing something from there...it's very powerful'. The efficacy of such speech constructs a space for a 'mutuality of being' between Kelly and his listeners wherein they can, temporarily, believe that they are participating intrinsically in one another's' existence

(Sahlins 2011:2)<sup>18</sup>. In these discussions, Kelly is able to create apparently individualised bonds of kinship with listeners in a network of supporters that continue to expand; ‘that’s why I come here, to get the Cambridge public to stand up and give these artefacts back...I didn’t come here for the museums... I come here for the people of Cambridge’. This construction of a dichotomy between the people and the museum plays upon the framework of the activism network of which he has become a part; that of ‘the people’ versus ‘the establishment’; thus providing an implicit sense of kinship between actants – one which is made ‘real’ through the action of protest.

Events are often attended by small core groups - outdoor protest numbers ranging from 5-10 people, and indoor talks being attended by up to 35 (though often less). These generally small groups enhance the effectiveness of Kelly’s personal approach, often resulting in strong emotional responses, with attendees suggesting possible contributions they could make to the campaign. The call-to-action style of discussion is no doubt influenced by the network through which the events are organized.

The audience is widened through engaging a digital network. This involved livestreams, updates, and photos, enabling ‘[t]he participation of broader publics in socioeconomic justice and antiracist movements in the “real time” of social media’ (Wright 2018:9), creating a stage from which Kelly could continue to promote the campaign year-round. This included engaging online news publications which were shared widely through online networks of students, Indigenous rights communities, and intersecting resistance networks (Klee 2016; Pearl 2017; Declarations 2017; Ma 2019a; Ma 2019b; Thomma-Stemmet 2019). Digitizing protests also generated a fundraising system through which Kelly could appeal to supporters directly. As such, the role of social media and the digital world were integral to both the logistical possibility of Kelly’s visits to Cambridge and to building resistance networks across disparate and diverse social and geographic contexts (Juris 2012).

In each of these protest activities, Kelly constructs his identity as a representative of the Gweagal people, rather than an individual claimant. Indeed, he now distances his ‘individual self’ from the claim in favor of this articulated identity in order to surmount his institutionally

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<sup>18</sup> The duration and intensity of these constructed bonds of kinship within the protest groups would be a particularly interesting line of further study, as the degree to which attendees continued participating in protest events was highly variable.

illegible Indigeneity; ‘it’s like it’s always been about me with the museum - I put the claim in but... I really think... they need to stop putting me up there in the reasons why they won’t give them back’ (Kelly 2018 Interview). This representative identity is one which is reinforced through media coverage and by the networks of protest that Kelly has become enmeshed in. Positioning a constructed representative identity in such a structure, regardless of the degree to which it may be ‘fabricated’ (Williams 2019) or lacking evidence (Nugent 2017), harnesses the legitimizing power of sensationalist media and domineering rhetoric of protest. As the Gweagal spears are central to this identity-formation, they too are affected by the fact-construction of media and protest, thus enveloping new identities into their polyagency.

Manufacturing discourse in this way subverts the institutional discourse of the University, Trinity College, and the MAA; as well as the episteme which structures it (Foucault 1969). Thus, Kelly creates a counter-discourse which rejects the structure of knowledge and legitimacy of those institutions, in the same manner that his own identity, legitimacy, and knowledge was rejected. This counter-discourse, through its public legitimization, may also gain epistemic authority – and consequently the power to alter object-histories (Foucault 1981).

The networks of support and protest, and the discourse-production they engage in (Foucault 1961), which developed in the wake of the rejection of this repatriation claim became knotted together through the actions and relationships of their constituent actants. This reflects the manner in which resistance narratives of minority and social justice groups have historically become entangled (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). In this case, networks have spanned groups promoting decolonisation, divestment, anti-capitalism, untold histories in British institutions and Australian politics. These links have been created and solidified through the shared space and embodiment of protest, the use of shared online and offline networks for protest promotion, and in the discourse of protest itself; which interlinked issues of racism, climate change, capitalism, murder, Indigenous incarceration rates, and unequal access to education and medical care.

## **Conclusion: Polyagents in the Relational Museum**

The Gweagal spears' very nature as polyagents rejects any implied cessation in their meaning-gathering social lives. As such, this conclusion discusses the future pathways these objects may take; particularly those which enhance the relational potential of the museum. The substantial efficacy of these polyagents redirects museum methods towards previously unrecognised actants caught up their skein of associations, and thus demands representation of histories and presences not often attended to in Euro-American historical narratives. Such a redirection can enliven the protentive (Gell 1998) capacity for these objects to act upon their futures. They do so through enabling lasting relationships to be built with their source community. Attending to gathered objects in this manner demands 'a more relational understanding of the dynamic links between people and things...[wherein] entities (both objects and people) emerge from (and thus acquire substance, meaning, and value through) the relations in which they are enmeshed' (Herle 2008:159). This model has been successful in relationship-building between the MAA and Pacific Islander communities; whereby considerations of access, use, and interpretation has 'reconnected communities with treasured historic objects, reinvigorating their potency and reinforcing the presence of the ancestral past in the present' (*ibid.*:160). Similar work can be done to build relationships with Indigenous Australian communities and enable the museum to act as a forum through engaging the Cook-Sandwich Collection, and Gweagal spears particularly.

Such action in public and private museum spaces maintains the ongoing process of decolonisation by reflecting the diversity in voice of the peoples their collections represent. In the case of the Gweagal spears, this could involve a dedicated temporary exhibition focusing on the social lives of these objects, and the many stories that they can tell. Additionally, the negative space that the temporary or permanent return of these objects would leave could be highly affective, and no doubt lead to greater engagement with the labels and legacies left behind. Exhibition work that builds on the politicization of objects in these ways can help to increase outreach, education, and awareness of particular issues faced by Indigenous communities. Doing so foregrounds the museum as a space of community; as a forum for multiple voices. Indeed, as noted by Viso; '[i]f museums want to continue to have a place, they must stop seeing activists as antagonists. They must position themselves as learning



communities, not impenetrable centers of self-validating authority' (2018). These foci of access and collaborative learning underpin the project of the relational museum.

Attending to polyagentive objects involves respecting their function as symbols for histories and identities other than those which provenance work legitimizes. These include histories that are oral, passed down intergenerationally, as well as histories, meanings, and ancestral embodiments which may be found to be unsupported by (re)provenancing work. Such indexed meanings and stories, when told and re-told within and between origin communities, descendant communities, heritage institutions and their diverse audiences, are both powerful and affective. They speak to legacies of historical and contemporary interaction, injustice, and a refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Indigenous identities, presence, and claims to place. This is not to imply that claims of ownership over and/or repatriation of particular objects based upon evidence that is not supported by rigorous community outreach work, research, and provenancing should be accepted without question. Rather, to consider what social, political, and historical injustices such a claim might be indicative of.

In considering this angle, the relational museum is able to build substantive networks of support, education, and knowledge-sharing among multiple communities and networks. Doing so may also aid in dispelling the perceived dichotomy between activist narratives and museum institutions, and help to craft a 'cultural interface' (Nakata 2007); a space for communication, productive of a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of each party's perspectives. This kind of place-making generates a 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997) which verbalises the nexus of entangled histories, identities, voices, and perspectives. This more accurately reflects the complex interconnected nature of the globalised world, and begins to demystify the perceived - or exaggerated - differences between these entanglements. Including voices like Kelly's in the museum forum helps to dissolve constructed Western notions of ownership and the terminality of artefact identity. It also attends to power dynamics both within and outside of the museum through acknowledging the distributed and discursive nature of that power (Foucault 1975).

Issues of representation, repatriation, reconciliation, and collaboration are replete with power relations on all sides. Further work is required to determine the extent to which the power of each actant comes to manipulate and be distributed across the complex skein of

associations that intersect these issues. What is certain is that dynamics of politics and power are central; this case has partially unveiled the extent to which these articulations come to influence the MAA (and other museums), the University of Cambridge, Trinity College, the La Perouse Land Council, the Gweagal community, and the individuals that are embroiled in the actions/identities of those groups. Protests within the MAA and the University highlight these power dynamics, and create demand for discussion, further research, and relationship-building - in this case, it led to the University's public commitment to engage in such activities (University of Cambridge 2017).

The University can act upon this, and uphold international policy (UNESCO 2005; UN 2007), through relationally-focused collaborative projects that improve access to and awareness of collections with entangled histories. A suggest project relating to this case is a joint project between the Indigenous communities of Dharawal Country and Trinity College, which opens the collection to individuals wishing to use re-learn the craft of spear-making (Williams 2019). This provides descendant community members with access to Traditional Knowledge - materially preserved for nearly two and a half centuries - which is ingrained in the objects (Williams 2019). The products of such an enterprise may be exhibited in a cultural center on Dharawal and Gweagal Country, and could ignite further programs of community-building and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Enabling access to the untapped knowledge held by these objects allows communities 'to build cultural knowledge to be passed on to the next generation of young people... then the artefacts can become part of our lives again' (Williams 2019). Such reconciliatory acts of inclusion, access, and education help to heal social divides within and between nations, histories, and communities - the roots of which are often found to be entangled with histories of settler-colonialism through modern frameworks of governance, law, resource allocation, and education.

Improving access and relationship-building efforts in the manners outlined above can activate the potency of these polyagents in a manner which moves away from politics and power dynamics; towards community-building educational projects. Such enlivenment of objects enables them to continue to alter the trajectory of their social lives, dissolving the imposed boundaries of 'artefact', 'collection', and 'museum'. Viewing objects in museums as polyagents thus helps to illuminate the nuances of their histories, presences, and futures. Incorporating such a notion into museum methods and policies - particularly those that surround contested objects subject to claims for return - can help to situate and direct

approaches to ownership, access, and interpretation that build productive and enduring relationships between museums, their various stakeholders, and descendant communities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Summary of fieldwork activities

Continuous from October 2018 to June 2019

- Voluntary work at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in the Maudsley Hall Gallery as an exhibition explainer, various events across the University as an object handler, and in the store/work rooms as a collections assistant.

October 2018

- 31/10/2018: Return the Gweagal Spears Seminar (Pembroke College) - University (@antisystemic) and Anti-Capitalist Cambridge.

November 2018

- 04/11/2018: Return the Relics of Genocide (MAA) - Anti-Capitalist Cambridge.
- 30/11/2018: Activate the Gweagal Spear! (CUSU Lounge) - Anti-Capitalist Cambridge.
- 30/11/2018: Recorded interview with Rodney Kelly 1.

December 2018

- 07/12/2018-10/12/2018: European Society for Oceanists 2018 Conference.

January 2019

- 18/01/2019: Race, Empire and Education: Knowledge, representation, recognition in turbulent times (Faculty of Education) - REE Reading Group - session led by Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney and Olivia Slater.

February 2019

- 03/02/2019: Untold Histories Museum Tours (MAA) - Untold Histories Museum Tours – created and led by Archaeology PhD students Ananya Mishra, Danika Parikh and Akshyeta Suryanarayan.

March 2019

- 14/03/2019: Dr Anita Herle's Floor Talk for museum students.

April 2019

- 25/04/2019: Cambridge Return the Gweagal Spears: A Talk by Rodney Kelly (St Johns College) – organised by Decolonise History of Art and Architecture.
- 27/04/2019: Musical Protest Outside Trinity College – organised verbally by Rodney Kelly.
- 27/04/2019: Recorded interview with Rodney Kelly 2.
- 28/04/2019: Repatriate the Gweagal Spears by 2020 (MAA floor talk and march to Trinity College) - hosted by Rodney Kelly.

- 28/04/2019: Recorded interview with Rodney Kelly 3.
- 29/04/2019: Objects of Resistance: Gweagal Perspectives with Rodney Kelly (Department of Social Anthropology) - by Decolonise Anthropology - Cambridge.
- 29/04/2019: Recorded interview with Rodney Kelly 4.

#### May 2019

- 01/05/2019: Colonial Theft and British Museums: The Gweagal Artefacts (Queen Mary University) - hosted by Rosi Carr (academic) and Rodney Kelly, with papers presented by Sarah Keenan, Rosalind Carr, and Rodney Kelly.
- 04/05/2019: The British Museum Stolen Goods Tour: Colonialism, Carbon & Cook (British Museum) - BP or Not BP.
- 05/05/2019: Screening: Te Kuhane o te Tupuna: El Espiritu de los Ancestros (MOKU Pacific HQ, London) - MOKU Pacific HQ - Rodney Kelly spoke before screening.
- 09/05/2019: Decolonisation and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) – organised by Decolonise Anthropology - Cambridge, talk by Dr Mark Elliott.
- 17/05/2019: The Gweagal Spears: Q&A with Professor Nicholas Thomas (Department of Social Anthropology) - talk given by Professor Nicholas Thomas.
- 24/05/2019: Objects' Other Histories: Australian-British Encounters (Faculty of English) - CRASSH - presentations from Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, Professor Maria Nugent and Professor Penny Edmonds - Dr Shayne Williams was unable to make it.

#### June 2019

- 13/06/2019: Recorded interview with Nicholas Thomas.
- 19/06/2019: Recorded interview with Mark Elliott.
- 25/06/2019: Repatriation Draft Policy Meeting (Downing Site) – convened and hosted by Dr Anita Herle, Dr Mark Elliott and Dr Jody Joy.

#### July 2019

- 03/07/2019: Museums, Restitution and Colonial-era Artefacts: Law, Ethics and France's Sarr Savoy Report (V&A, London) – presentation given by Alexander Herman.

#### August 2019

- 16/08/2019: Interview with Shayne Williams.

## Appendix B: The University of Cambridge's official statement



### **Statement on response to submission made by David Shoebridge on behalf of Rodney Kelly Released: Wednesday 7 June 2017**

The University recognises the great significance of the spears, not only to the Gweagal people, but to all Australian citizens, and indeed anyone who is interested in Australian culture and history. It considers it very important to continue developing strong cultural links and exchanges with indigenous Australians, particularly members of the Gweagal people and to take steps to continue to increase the accessibility of the spears to everyone for whom the artefacts are culturally, historical and educationally significant.

The University has concluded that at present these aims can best be achieved by retaining the spears in the Cook-Sandwich Collection in Cambridge because:

- 1: The request contains no clear proposal for housing and conserving the spears if they were to be returned
- 2: There is no commitment by an Australian institution to care for the spears
- 3: Removing parts of the Cook-Sandwich collection, which is of great historical, scientific and educational importance nationally and internationally, would cause considerable harm by depriving the collection of its integrity
- 4: It is very important that any request for a change to the current situation of the spears should be made only after full consultation with accredited representatives of the Gweagal people, and on terms which command their support.