

This chapter examines the terrain of Pacific literature published in English by its indigenous peoples. With a few outliers, like Cook Islander Florence Johnny Frisbie's *Miss Ulysses of Pukapuka* (1948), this is a "land" barely four decades old, with its genesis occurring in the late 1960s. The broad aesthetic foundation of this terrain is deeply embedded in oral traditions, a field still in development in terms of adequately critiquing literature simultaneously engaged in the rich orature of its cultures. This chapter, however, confines itself to examining major critical, thematic, and aesthetic developments in Pacific literature and argues that writings once read reductively as sociological or anthropological texts to support essentialist assumptions about cultures from the outside, can and should be read holistically in their geographical, historical, social, and political contexts if they are to be fully and critically engaged with. It is not my intention to produce an annotated bibliography, but selective texts indicative of developments in the field will be examined.

"Pacific" Criticism

The geographic outlay of the region commonly known as the Pacific, or Oceania (using Hau'ofa's [Waddell, Naidu, and Hau'ofa 1993] development of Wendt's [1976b] notion of Oceania), is examined in detail throughout this book. But in terms of popular conceptions surrounding what constitutes the Pacific in the study of its literatures, it is informative to examine the seminal critical texts produced in particular periods of its development and how they have shaped ideas and definitions about the region.

In 1980, Subramani's landmark critical text *South Pacific literature: From myth to fabrication* focused critical attention on the eleven English-speaking Commonwealth countries served by the University of the South Pacific (the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa, and Vanuatu), one of two of the first universities established in the Pacific (the other being Papua New Guinea). He demarcates the region according to its colonial centers: Papua New Guinea; New Caledonia and French Polynesia; the "American Pacific" with Guam, the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Northern Marianas, American Samoa, Hawai'i; Rapanui, colony of Chile and the only Spanish-speaking Polynesians; Australia (Aborigine) and New Zealand (Maori); and the South Pacific. Due to the comparatively high production of indigenous literature in

the South Pacific, it gained prominence over other areas in the field and was the first to produce a critical text from inside the region. Despite the regional specificity of the title, an unintended effect of Subramani's critical companion was to further make the term "Pacific literature" synonymous with "Anglophone South Pacific literature," leading, albeit inadvertently, to further marginalization of literature from other geographical regions in varying degrees.

Of course, all these regions have their own unique historical and geographical complexities that made access to the study and dissemination of their literatures problematic for the majority of Pacific peoples in Anglophone centers of learning (the context of this chapter). Pacific Francophone literature has only recently been translated for general distribution among Anglophone readers. In 2004, New Caledonia's leading Kanak writer, Dewe Gorode, had a collection of short stories, *The Kanak apple season*, translated into English. This was followed by a translation of her poetry collection, *Sharing as custom provides*, in 2005. In 2005 the exquisitely produced *Vārua tupu: New writing from French Polynesia* was published in *Manoa: A Pacific Journal* by the University of Hawai'i Press. The first of its kind, it brings indigenous francophone literature from Tahiti and French Polynesia to the English-speaking world in an eclectic mix of fiction, poetry, memoir, art, and photography. Tahitian women writers have also sought wider readership with Tahiti's first Mā'ohi novel, Chantal Spitz's *L'île de rêves écrasés* (1991), recently translated into the novel *Island of shattered dreams* in 2007. Alongside the award-winning trilogy of now Australian-based Célestine Hitiura Vaite—*Breadfruit* (2000, 2006), *Frangipani* (2004), *Tiare* (2006)—these two have inscribed Tahitian women writers on the literary map. Vaite's fiction enjoys global distribution, a testament not only to some savvy marketing but to its ability to culturally cross over into a mainstream, Anglophone readership. Meanwhile critical texts like Robert Nicole's *The word, the pen, and the pistol: Literature and power in Tahiti* (2001) offer an examination into the relationship between history, power, knowledge, and literature in the colonial and postcolonial contexts of Tahiti. Such texts foster a critical discourse around indigenous worldviews and frameworks useful in informing the reading of such texts.

As is true elsewhere, the development of writing centered around the establishment of higher institutions of learning. Notably, the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and the University of the South Pacific in Suva (and to a lesser degree, its eleven

extension centers throughout the South Pacific) were the hubs of literary production and dissemination from the late 1960s. At UPNG, Ulli Beier was instrumental in establishing and editing several influential literary journals including *Kovave* (1969–1974), later replaced by *Papua New Guinea writing*, the *Papua Pocket Series*, and the anthology *Voices of Independence* (1980). The journals *Gigibori*, *Ondobondo*, and *Bikmaus* also helped to foster writing, as did a national writing competition in 1981, from which a selection of entries in the 1981 national annual literature competition edited by Kathy Kituai and John Kolia was published in 1982. For more about these early years of literary and artistic development, see Beier's *Decolonising the mind: The impact of the university on culture and identity in Papua New Guinea, 1971–1974* (2005).

Literary activity in the region during the 1960s and 1970s paralleled its political activity. Alan Natachee, considered Papua's first poet laureate, was the first to publish poetry throughout the 1960s, Vincent Eri's *Crocodile* (1970) was PNG's first novel, and Albert Maori Kiki's *Ten thousand years in a lifetime* (1968) was the first published autobiography. Writing competitions maintained the impetus, and three collections of student poetry were published between 1973 and 1976. Nora Vagi Brash and John Kolia in particular wrote numerous plays for stage and radio between 1971 and 1981. The late 1980s saw several anthologies capturing the wealth of production, Papiya Chakravarti's *Papua New Guinea literature in English: A bibliography, 1974–1985* in 1986, and Ganga Powell's *Through Melanesian eyes: An anthology of Papua New Guinean writing* in 1987. Established fiction writer Russel Soaba's *Maiba* (1985) and writer and literary critic Regis Stella have also been important in the literary scene (see, for example, *Melanesian Passages* (2004) by Stella and Lynda Aniburi Maeniani). Later the field widened enough to enable specialized anthologies like Adeola James' *PNG women writers: An anthology* in 1996. The steady production of writing continues to depend predominantly upon the patronage of universities and government departments. Steven Winduo, who has two collections of poetry in English and Tok Pisin, *Lomo'ha I am, in spirit's voice I call* (1991) and *Hembemba: Rivers of the forest* (2000), is an important figure in the literary scene. He is the founding editor of *Savanna flames: A Papua New Guinea journal of literature, language, and culture* (still in circulation today and the main vehicle for creative publication) and is currently director of the Melanesian and Pacific Studies (MAPS) Centre at UPNG (with its own publishing program) and chair of the National Literature Board. Arguing that the millennium has brought another literary renaissance, Winduo has been instrumental in ensuring that the board, alongside the National Cultural Commission, plays a major role fostering a resurgence of interest. In 2007 a national writing competition was held in which more than three hundred entries were submitted. It was also the first year the University of Papua New Guinea held its own writers' workshop in Port Moresby attended by more than eighty aspiring and established writers (Nalu).

By comparison, Goetzfrid's annotated bibliography on literature in the Pacific Islands until 1994 (1995) omits the French and Spanish colonies (while including Australia and New Zealand) and has few entries for literature produced by the indigenous peoples of American Samoa, Micronesia, and Hawai'i. An exception seems to be the 1991 establishment of the literary journal *Storyboard: A journal of Pacific imagery*, published from the Department of English and

Applied Linguistics at the University of Guam. It has begun to feature the work of new Micronesian writers north of the equator. But hands-on research within the area may also reveal some surprising results. In islands where the politics of publication often exclude the indigenous population, self-publication may be an option. For example, during a morning spent at Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific at Port Vila, I came across several self-published books that have eluded electronic detection, like Hermara Ramarui's *Palauan Perspectives* (1984), the first collection of Palauan poetry I'd come across apart from Valentine Sengenbau's *Microchild: An anthology of poetry*, published in 2004 (Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities) and Mildred Sopo's *A questioning mind* (1987).

Additionally, the dispersal of students from these regions to larger island metropolises with a more developed publishing infrastructure that can specifically cater to marginalized voices has produced many firsts. Of note is Pohnpeian poet Emelihter Kihleng's first collection of poetry written in English, *My urohs* (2008), published by Kahuāomanoa Press, an independent press based in Hawai'i dedicated to providing a forum for new and student writers. Hawai'i is a meeting point for many North Pacific students, writers, and academics attending universities and/or sponsored by major organizations like the East-West Center at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, which is committed to nurturing East-West contacts across disciplines.

Any discussion of the development of Hawaiian literature itself, however, necessarily considers questions surrounding terminology and definition that are prefaced by wider arguments surrounding ongoing colonization and social histories of displacement, indentured labor, and migration that affect identity. In this ongoing colonial context, where America, Japan, and other foreign interests continue their military and touristic endeavors, exactly who and what is Hawaiian, local, kama'aina, Kanaka Maoli, or haole is fiercely debated. In mainstream criticism and literary production, the phrase "Hawaiian writer" has come to refer to any literature written by anyone resident in Hawai'i. From the late 1970s, the rise of noncommercial presses successfully operating without affiliation to a college or university gave space for grassroots voices to sound out a Hawai'i-centric local sensibility that has risen, in large part, from the Asian indentured laborer communities from the early nineteenth century. One of the longest-running publishing houses, Bamboo Ridge, was founded by Darrell Lum and Eric Chock in 1978. *Bamboo Ridge: A Hawaii writer's quarterly*, edited by Lum and Chock, helped launch the careers of many successful Hawai'i-based writers, including popular third-generation Japanese American author Lois-Ann Yamanaka (1996).

But many Native Hawaiians have sought to distinguish their voices from what they consider melting pot, assimilationist projects and policies that threaten their unique status as Kanaka Maoli. In 1999 the publication of *Ōiwi: A native Hawaiian journal*, published by nonprofit Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, signaled a landmark development in indigenous publication. *Ōiwi* builds upon the strong literary tradition established by the long history of Kanaka Maoli literacy.

The emergence of specialist publishers in the Pacific has been an important development in terms of establishing and developing creative writing in book culture. Worthy of mention include Vanuatu's Black Stone Publications and Samoa's Niu Leaf Publications, which cater to local needs while managing some international

presence. The infrastructure is usually small and vulnerable, as they are dependent upon one or two individuals (the late Grace Mera Molisa and Momoe Malietoa Von Reiche respectively). Pacific-based publishers with a more developed infrastructure are often affiliated with universities and educational institutions and include Mana Publications, Institute of Pacific Studies (Fiji), Pacific Writers Forum (Fiji), The Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture (Fiji), The University of Hawai'i Press, Pandanus Books (Research School for Pacific Asian Studies, Australian National University), Centre for Pacific Studies (University of Auckland), and various University of the South Pacific Centre presses. A few, like Huia Publishers in New Zealand, are able to remain specialized in mainstream publishing.

There are also several journals of note produced by tertiary institutions. The University of Hawai'i Press publishes *Manoa*, a biannual journal publishing critical and creative writing from America, Asia, and the Pacific with select issues focusing on the Pacific (see, for example, volume 5(1), 1993), while its Pacific Islands Monograph Series provides an important publishing outlet for Pacific-based research. The University of Hawai'i Press's Talanoa: Contemporary Pacific Literature series has reprinted key canonical texts by Albert Wendt, Patricia Grace, Hone Tuwhare, Alan Duff, Witi Ihimaera, Epeli Hau'ofa, John Kneubuhl, and Victoria Kneubuhl, which has made them available to contemporary audiences and accessible to the North American market. In conjunction with the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, UH Press also publishes *The Contemporary Pacific*, a biannual journal with critical writings covering social sciences and humanities developments in the Pacific region. Island-based journals like Fiji's *Dreadlocks* series (*Dreadlocks indentured*, *Dreadlocks interrupted*) are beginning to enjoy a higher profile throughout the region and beyond.

What must not be overlooked are the all-important school journals, which are vehicles for mass publication and which now provide important archival sources for early poetry. For example, Vanuatu's national library in Port Vila holds numerous publications including *The Gong: Magazine* produced by the pupils of British Secondary School, published from 1971 onward; *Rorgarea Form Three: Magazine* produced by the pupils of British Secondary School; *Onesua magazine*; and a beautiful, colored, digitally produced magazine, *Malapoa College: Literary supplement*.

To return to regional definitions of the Pacific literature, Paul Sharrad defines Pacific literature as that which comes from the indigenous populations of Oceania: from Guam in the north to New Zealand in the south; PNG in the west to French Polynesia and Rapanui in the east. He excludes Aboriginal writing from Australia, arguing that its outlook is more "continental" than "oceanic," but he acknowledges important commonalities due to their indigenous status and ongoing colonial subjugation (2003). While pointing out that the geographical biases in literary reception and criticism of Pacific literature favors the South, he concedes that it is the most logical emphasis, covering the most prolific areas around Polynesia and Melanesia. As a formal area of study, the strongest critical and creative production of Pacific literature covers the Anglophone southwest of Oceania, centered around the critical and creative organizations based around the University of Papua New Guinea and the University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

Sharrad's biography, *Albert Wendt and Pacific literature: Circling the void* (2003), is at the same time an in-depth critical

assessment of Pacific literature through the lens of the work of its most prolific author. For other critical surveys of the development of Pacific literature in this region, see Va'ai's *Literary representations in western Polynesia: Colonialism and indigeneity* (1999), Keown's *Pacific Islands writing* (2007), and the three major anthologies of Pacific literature (with the last focusing solely on poetry) edited by Albert Wendt, *Lali* (1980), *Nuanua: Pacific writings in English since 1980* (1995), and *Whetu moana: Contemporary Polynesian poems in English* (2003), also edited by Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan. Another landmark development was the 1994 conference in Hawai'i titled *Theorizing Pacific Literature: Inside Out*. Although not the first conference to theorize about Pacific literature, it was one of the first international conferences to consciously do so "from the inside out," enabling a significant number of Pacific Island writers and scholars to participate. The subsequent publication, *Inside out: Literature, cultural politics, and identity in the New Pacific* (1999), demonstrated the growth of interest in culturally, politically, and historically contextualized critical frameworks within which to view this literature.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on this remarkable writing, mainly from the South Pacific region. To give some insight into the creative energies it peruses, it will delve selectively into writing that highlights hallmark themes and aesthetic issues in the development of Pacific literature and its criticism.

Mana: The Beginning

There is a difference between literature "on" the Pacific and literature "of" the Pacific. Before the 1960s, most writing on or about the Pacific and its peoples was written by nonindigenous authors. Such writings and imaginings played a significant part in the ideological colonization of the Pacific by the Western world. Since the mid-1970s, an increasing number of critics have documented how Maori and Pacific Islanders were contained, categorized, and to a certain extent controlled through various stereotypes (see Wendt 1976a, 1980, 1995; Subramani 1975, 1978, 1985, 1989; Grace and Ihimaera 1978; Sharrad 1993a; Pearson 1968, 1984; Sinclair 1992; and Krauth 1978). From early first-contact voyage accounts (Cook, Bougainville, Byron, Carteret, Wallis, and, as Pearson [1984] points out, through the bias of editors like Hawkesworth), to missionary writings like that of Vicesimus Knox, who wrote the influential "On the Savage Manner of South Sea Islanders and the Best Means of Improving Them" (Subramani 1985), to the literature and art produced by canonical masters of the West (Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Somerset Maugham, James Michener, Jack London, and artist Paul Gauguin), racist and stereotypical constructions of islanders were formed and perpetrated. In these texts Pacific Islanders are either exoticized, as seen in the stereotypes of the noble savage and golden people, or demonized, as in the stereotypes of children of nature or black devils (Wendt 1976a), or simply part of a passive backdrop to European action. In his seminal essay "Towards a new Oceania," Wendt (1976a) argues that these reflected changing trends in European thought rather than actual Pacific realities. Often, literature on the Pacific revealed what Said called the orientaling eye/I, where, according to the norms and categories of knowledge of the West, indigenous peoples are constructed as different, as the exotic Other (Said 1979). African American feminist

critic bell hooks notes that many Western ideologies have enough influence to penetrate our self-perceptions: "They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'" (hooks 1992). An ocean away, Wendt acknowledges this forced "otherness" and subsequent self-alienation in terms of language: "To some extent, I am still a stereotyped tourist wandering through the stereotyped tropical paradises, a cliché viewing the South Seas through a screen of clichés" (Wendt 1976a). Sinavaiana describes the Americanization of eastern Samoa as another "rudely imposed story about who we are." But the story remains unfinished. She notes:

Having internalized the dynamics of this embattled plot—as have all colonized peoples—I now look for words that can reconcile the combatants. I look for stories that can cut through the veils of shadow that flutter across our faces, threatening to smother the spirit, to extinguish the breath. (Sinavaiana 1995)

Said (1994) argues that "[t]he power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming or emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them." Unblocking our stories is one of the many ways of exposing, exploring, and deconstructing the various ideological colonizations of the mind. Writing and storytelling are an integral part of "decolonizing the mind" (Thiongo 1986).

Polemical in tone, didactic in nature, and indicative of early postcolonial literature elsewhere, first-wave writing from the Pacific reacted against the negative influence of colonialism. Eurocentric ideologies inherent in colonial education and religion were often the subject of derision, as demonstrated by Ruperake Petaia's satirical poem "Kidnapped" (Petaia 1980: 10):

*I was six when
Mama was careless
she sent me to school
alone
five days a week*

*One day I was
kidnapped by a band
of Western philosophers
armed with glossy-pictured
textbooks and
registered reputations . . .*

*. . . Each three-month term
they sent threats to
my Mama and Papa*

*Mama and Papa loved
their son and
paid ransom fees
each time
Mama and Papa grew
poorer and poorer
and my kidnappers grew
richer and richer
I grew whiter and whiter . . .*

The ability of the empire to write back (a play on words by Salman Rushdie; see introduction to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989) enabled the voicing of a Pacific consciousness in the public literary realm. Literature "of" the Pacific not only allowed a critiquing of literature on the Pacific, but aided in creating and affirming indigenous cultural production. Gramsci defines "hegemony" as a consensual domination through the influence of ideas and institutions (see also Said 1994). The majority of English departments (the institution) in the Pacific, and literature (the medium of ideas) being taught within these departments, generally continue to affirm Eurocentric hegemony. Despite being superseded by the United States and Russia in international political and economic power, Britain remains the center of cultural production within Commonwealth countries (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989).

Destabilizing that Eurocentric canon in the Pacific is as vital today as it was thirty years ago. Today, Pacific children are still being colonized through a Eurocentric education that has little relevance to their lives. In "Reality," a poem by Tongan poet and scholar Konai Helu Thaman, a young boy has achieved success in Western education, yet upon returning to his island, discovers that the books and blackboards have little use. The last stanza compares images of Western education with decay, in contrast with "Pacificness" and growth:

*I see my teacher
Sitting on a sterile rock
Near the beach
Selling green coconuts
What do I do now?
An old man close-by whispers,
"Come fishing with me today
For you have a lot to learn yet." (Thaman 1987)*

Trained as a teacher, Thaman relates how she felt she was part of the conspiracy of colonialism while teaching Tongan children English realities:

I know Shakespeare was/is a great writer . . . and Wordsworth too—but can you tell me why 13-year-old Tongan children should memorize "Daffodils" when they do not even have any idea what daffodils are, or look like? (Hereniko 1992)

Thaman saw it as her responsibility as an educator to place culturally relevant and affirming material into the hands of Tongan schoolchildren—thus beginning her career as one of the most prolific and well-read poets in the Pacific. Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is again used as a kind of postcolonial trope almost two decades later in the works of Sia Figiel in her novella *Girl in the moon circle* (1996) and her collaborative spoken word compact disc with Teresia Teaiwa, *Terenesia* ("Daffodils: The native version"). From Thaman to Figiel, writers have rejected the exclusive primacy of a Eurocentric canon and, like Pulitzer Prize winner Toni Morrison, have written what they wanted to read.

The core group of catalyst organizations involved in the dissemination of critical and creative works in the Pacific are centralized in Fiji: The South Pacific Creative Arts Society (SPCAS), The Institute of Pacific Studies, and The Pacific Writer's Forum. The South Pacific Association of Commonwealth Literatures and Languages is an important organization that usually changes its

presidency every three to six years. When it has been in the South Pacific (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa), Pacific literature has flourished under this additional forum for publication and critical discussion. It is the role played by SPCAS, however, that is frequently found at the hub of any discussion surrounding the genesis of Pacific literature.

Initially established as the Writers Society in Fiji in 1972 by New Zealander Ken Arvidson with the involvement of Ron and Marjorie Crocombe and Albert Wendt, the society became the South Pacific Creative Arts Society in 1973. Based at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji, the society consisted of volunteers, among whom were now notable and influential authors Joe Nabola, Raymond Pillai, Howard Van Trease (Vanuatu Center), and Konai Helu Thaman. In 1973, Cook Islander Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe proudly launched *Mana*, the society's four-page literary section in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*. Due to overwhelming response from the public, it became independent and was launched as a literary biennial in English in 1976. It was the Pacific's first international literary publication and continues to be instrumental in fostering and disseminating writing in and beyond the Pacific. To this day it plays a central part in fostering and disseminating indigenous Pacific voices. For example, in 2000 a special issue of *Mana* focused on the Cook Islands. Edited by two established local writers, Jean Tekura Mason and Vaine Rasmussen, it showcases song, chant, story, essay, and poetry from the year 2000 with new writers appearing alongside the work of published poets (Audrey Brown). Rasmussen's second collection of poetry, *Te-ava ona*, was published by *Mana* (Suva) in 1999 while Mason's first collection, *Tattoo = tatau*, was published in 2001.

As founding editor in its first edition, Marjorie Crocombe wrote:

The canoe is afloat. The flow of creativity in poetry, drama, storywriting, as well as other forms of creative expression from painting to wood sculpture has expanded enormously (in Oceania). Hidden talents are being developed, ideas are being expressed, confidence is growing, and the volume and quality increase all the time. (introduction)

By 1974, the literary canoe was indeed afloat. As waves of change in power and technology beat upon island shores, increasingly indigenous writers emerging from a Western education began voyaging in their literary canoes and increasingly gained shoreline access. This was quite a feat considering that Pacific literature is comparatively young, having arisen from one of the last regions in the world to receive literacy. Prior to 1960 there was a virtual absence of published fiction.

By 1975 the University of the South Pacific had employed Wendt, who began organizing and teaching courses in creative writing at the English Department. The various creative writing courses coupled with access to a publishing outlet provided the necessary stimulus for the growth of Pacific creative writing in significant ways.

Political upheaval and the politics of decolonization predominated during the late 1960s and 1970s in the Pacific. Indigenous peoples began entering educational and political structures previously dominated by colonials. Indeed, colonizing powers seeking to divest themselves of regions now actively fighting for independence

began grooming individuals to take over via educational scholarships to New Zealand and Australia. Crocombe observes the effects on literature:

People all over the Pacific were wanting to express themselves and to have their thoughts communicated to others in their own countries and through the Pacific—even beyond it if there was an interest (Crocombe 1973).

As the globe continued to shrink, anticolonial struggles for self-determination by indigenous peoples the world over provided sources of inspiration, strength, and comradeship. Tertiary institutions established in the islands typically became the centers in mediating anticolonial consciousness. Universities were also the largest facilitators of writing in English. These institutions enabled a fertile milieu in which people gathered, shared, and developed ideas about the decolonization movements occurring throughout the Pacific. Notably, the universities of Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific in Fiji became two of the most influential centers of political thought and change. These institutions produced and consumed much Pacific writing—fiction and nonfiction.

In 1980 Wendt gathered together representative poems, short stories, and excerpts of novels and edited *Lali: A Pacific anthology*, the first collection of Pacific literature written in English. A *lali* is a hollowed-out log, beaten with one (or two) heavy sticks, used to gather, summon, and inform people of impending events. This collection contains some of the first "drum beats" of voices sounding out through the Pacific to the Pacific—calling islanders to listen to and read the writings of their own people. Acknowledging that many of the works published were the first works of the writers, Wendt stated his intention to "capture the essence and spirit of the beginnings of our literature before it ages, divides, branches into more 'sophisticated' journeys and forms and techniques." The literary beginnings of the Pacific possessed the "raw power of innocent anger, joy, and lament" (Wendt 1980). The writing addressed what Wendt called the *aitu* (evil spirits) of colonialism: racism, oppression, corruption, and societal changes wrought by rapid modernization.

Fervent excitement, expectation, and hope surrounded this first wave of literature. First-wave writing was, not surprisingly, characterized by its tendency to vilify "the colonizer," reacting against a history of domination replete with racist stereotypes that aimed to pacify indigenous voices. According to Subramani (1985), this reaction formed "an inner dialectic of the new literature." As evidenced in other writings that emerged out of similar colonial contexts, early Pacific literature was typically "nationalistic, angry, protesting, lamenting a huge loss" (Wendt 1995). Albert Leomala's poem "Kros" is often used to best exemplify this stage. From the then New Hebrides (an independent Vanuatu from 1980), Leomala challenges the power of the English language and the ideological weight it has bandied about by prioritizing Pidgin, the local common creole used among Ni-Vanuatu. In "Kros" he uses it to protest missionization in a bare, direct, and confrontational manner:

<i>Kros mi no wandem yu</i>	<i>(Cross I hate you</i>
<i>Yu killim mi</i>	<i>You are killing me</i>
<i>Yu sakem aot ol</i>	<i>You are destroying</i>
<i>We blong mi</i>	<i>My traditions</i>
<i>Mi no wandem yu Kros.</i>	<i>I hate you Cross.) (Wendt 1980)</i>

Colonial and indigenous people were often seen in "irreconcilable opposition." As a result, much of the fiction from the Pacific Islands espoused unwavering "political and social commitment, with a heavily tragic, pessimistic vision of our times." Writing vented individual political awakening and assertion against colonial domination and exploitation. Other poetry attempted to reconstruct past losses and is thus "a fabulous storehouse of anthropology, sociology, art, religion, history, dance and music" (Wendt 1995).

A lull occurred in the middle of the 1970s. Wendt points out that the fledgling writers who began the literary movement were also the urban educated of the islands. These people became the new leaders in government, education, and business, rapidly filling positions of authority and power in their growing and independent island nations. As such, the demands of either attaining self-determination or administering it quickly consumed their time and focus. Some authors wrote later through a different outlet (Beier 1980). Others never wrote again (Wendt 1980).

Ironically, some writers became the embodiment of the type of colonialism they had earlier rejected and protested in their writing. Despite colonial administrators giving way to "native sons," the structure of oppressive power relations remained the same. In many situations, the process of colonialism merely saw a change of skin color of those in power. To borrow an image from Fanon, although the new civil servants had black skins, many continued to wear white masks (Fanon 1968). For many, independence held a "false gleam"—a common metaphor of postcolonial writers like Achebe (1958) and Thiong'o (1986). Neocolonialism became the subject of derision in much writing, captured by Thaman's widely published poem "Uncivil Servants":

*Many of my friends
Are civil servants
With uncivil thoughts . . .*

*But they cannot erase my existence
For my plight chimes with the hour
And my blood they drink at cocktail parties
Always full of smiling false faces
Behind which lies authority and private interests.
(Thaman 1980)*

Samoan poet and artist Momoe Malietoa Von Reiche personifies the town while metaphorically connecting human obesity with internal corruption and material consumption in her poem "This Town." The experts—both indigenous and foreign—work to the detriment of her people:

*This town is puffing with faalavelaves,
Panting with a brain overload of
Experts and crooked lawyers,
Wheezing with conniving politicians and
Gregarious customs officers.
This town is going to die suddenly
Of constipation.
(Von Reiche 1988)*

Two years later Maori produced their own anthology with *Into the world of light: An anthology of Maori writing* (Ihimaera and

Long 1982), which surveyed literature from the previous ten years. Maori writing began to flourish from 1970, a decade during which Maori were published in all the literary genres (see Ihimaera and Long 1982). Like Hawaiians, Maori, despite being Tangata Whenua, found themselves a minority in their own country, forming 10 percent of the total New Zealand population by 1960 (Ihimaera and Long 1982). Like the Hawaiians, they refused to be marginalized. While mourning the losses of the past, Maori literature centered on reclaiming traditional stories and critiquing Maori/pakeha race relations and conflicts. In the realms of creative writing, they have actively contended with life-changing events, voicing their grief, anger, protest, endurance, strength, *mana*, and *aroha* in response to colonization and its resultant eviction from the *whenua*—and consequently from their traditional ways of life—and the move to modernization, its dependence upon a cash economy, and the subsequent rural-to-urban drift for Maori in search of paid employment.

Literature is one way of processing the past, asserting identity, and validating experiences that were previously denigrated. The noticeable absence of a glossary in this anthology indicated that despite popular opinion, New Zealand was not a monolingual, monocultural society. Maori literature, and its steady growth, argued for the need to reconsider New Zealand's national identity as bilingual and bicultural. Maori fought alongside Europeans in the World Wars—if they were considered good enough to fight for the "mother country" of England, then they should be considered equal to Europeans in all fields of life. Rowley Habib's Maori Battalion war poetry carries the subtext that the indomitable Maori spirit will fight until victory is won and justice is served, both on and off the battlefields. "Ka whawhai tonu, ake, ake, ake" is commonly used as a refrain in contemporary Maori protest movements. Nga Pitiroirangi's "Orakau" reads

*Again the storming of the troops of the pallsades.
Again the repulse.
Again the storming,
And yet again the repulse. Wave upon wave.
Through a day and a night and another day . . .*

*And the women and children in battle.
Again the use of sticks for bullets.
And still the invaders come
Their numbers seem limitless.
For every man who falls two move up to take his place.
They seem indestructible.
The spirit of the defenders fails.*

*Yet through the ordeal, the sinking morale
These words are still able to be uttered.
'Friend, this is the word of the Maori.
Ka whawhai tonu, ake, ake, ake.'
We will fight forever and ever and ever.
(Ihimaera and Long 1982)*

What is commonly considered a second wave of writing is captured in Wendt's second anthology, *Nuanua: Pacific writing in English since 1980*, published in 1995. The *nuanua* (rainbow) imagery symbolizes

the diversity of cultures and languages, of fauna and flora found in Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia . . . also . . . the richness and variety of our literatures, both oral and written. (Wendt 1995)

Issues surrounding colonization and decolonization still thematically predominated the writing, undoubtedly a reflection on their impact in people's lives. Wendt writes:

Colonialism, racism, modernization, and their effects on us remain major preoccupations in our literature. A sense of profound loss still pervades that writing. At the same time in those countries struggling for their independence the writing is full of anger and hope. (Wendt 1995)

Subthemes included loss of pride and self-esteem, loss of traditional skills due to urbanization, alienation from a Westernized society, the effects of modernity and materialism on local cultures, corruption of indigenous elite, discussion surrounding identity politics, and internal forms of oppression within society.

Writers tended to veer away from vilifying colonists or attacking simplified power oppositions and turned criticism inward. Hereniko observes "more experimentation in language as writers become confident enough to speak in their own unique voices, sometimes critically about their own cultures or leaders" (Goetzfridt 1995: foreword). Writing that critiqued patriarchy and women's disempowerment also surfaced (Marsh 2004). July Makini (Sipolo) from Solomon Islands and Molisa from Vanuatu became two leading Melanesian poets who critiqued the position of women within their own societies and also, for the first time in this medium, publicly proffered "a woman's views" (Sipolo 1981). They challenged the uncritical use of "tradition" and argued that custom was being used as a cultural bulwark to keep women from becoming empowered in rapidly modernizing societies. Molisa critiques *kastom* (Vanuatu-specific customs) and argues that it is often used as a patriarchal tool to keep women (and other less privileged groups) oppressed. Her often quoted poem "Custom" notes:

*Inadvertently
misappropriating
"Custom"
misapplied
bastardised
murdered
a Frankenstein
corpse
conveniently
recalled
to intimidate
women
the timid
the ignorant
the weak. (Molisa 1983)*

Molisa's deliberate use of the English word "custom"—as opposed to its Vanuatu dialect *kastom*—subtly critiques the seemingly sanctified belief that all *kastom* stems from unadulterated, untainted, pure forms of tradition. Using the word "custom"

signifies the modern influence and manipulation inherent in the shaping of seemingly traditional belief systems.

In her second collection of poetry, *Colonised people* (1987), Molisa parallels the oppressive power relations behind colonialism with that of patriarchy and sexism. Molisa states in the introduction:

In a state of oppression Women are multiply oppressed compared with Men. Such is clear in Vanuatu. Vanuatu is now free of foreign colonial domination but NiVanuatu Women are still colonised.

With stronger, more confident developments in theme came increasingly indigenous shifts in literary style. Despite the anger voiced in blatant antiwhite, anti-Western, anticolonial, anti-Christian content in the first wave, Hereniko notes the irony in the use of structures and forms used to express this anger, which in some ways worked against itself (Goetzfridt 1995: foreword). Wendt (1995) observes the commonly used modernist style of writing imitating the realist mode adopted by English canonical writers such as Eliot, Yeats, and Pound. He describes the style as containing "deliberate ambiguity and complexity, irony, unified structures and characterization, the search for originality and uniqueness, and the concealment of artifice in the hope of transcending time and place." It became apparent that decolonization was a journey, not a destination. Writers like Molisa and Makini continue to lead the way for others to use creative writing as a vehicle for voicing other forms of internal oppressions.

Recent Pacific literature leans toward more personal explorations of the Pacific psyche. Increasingly, contemporary writing focuses on a pan-Pacific identity brought about by frequent physical and educational mobility, rapid urbanization, and the influx of modern technology. For example, Fijian Joseph Veramu's novel *Moving through the streets* (1994) allows a creative glimpse into the lives of youth in the rapidly urbanized and intensely integrated city of Suva.

A strong current of writing is being produced by the Pacific diaspora. Established Indo-Fijian writers Satendra Nandan, Subramani, Mohit Prasad, and Vijay Mishra have written of diaspora and the *girmit* (Indian migrant laborer) experience, some, as in Nandan's case, since 1976 (*Faces in a village*, the first book of poetry in English to be published in Fiji). For urban second- and third-generation Pacific Islanders a common focus is the exploration of multicultural identities. Of Banaban, Gilbertese, and African American descent, Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa states in her collection *Searching for Nei Nibnanao* (1995) that her poetry is a means through which she navigates her way through life with "the joys and pains of a mixed cultural identity and a feminine gender" (Teaiwa 1995). Niuean-born John Puhiaatau Pule's *Shark that ate the sun* (1992) weaves song, legend, chant, myth, and poetry—in prose and epistolary form in both English and Niuean—in his tale of a Niuean family's migrant experience in New Zealand. Samoan-born, New Zealand-educated performance poet and author Sia Figiel's novel *Where we once belonged* (1996) lyrically examines Samoan life and transforming identities through the eyes of a young adolescent girl. Figiel's novel won the 1997 Booker Prize for First Book in the Asia/Pacific region and was a finalist for the Commonwealth Writers Prize, evidence of her ability to culturally cross over and produce culture-specific works grounded in universal themes. Figiel's novel was recently adapted for the stage (by Dave Armstrong, directed by

Colin McColl and Dave Fane) and premiered in Wellington, New Zealand, in 2008 to critical acclaim. Tongan and New Zealander poet Karlo Mila's first poetry collection, *Dream fish floating* (2005), was propelled into New Zealand mainstream literary consciousness when it won a national prize for Best First Book. Several of her poems have been featured in the national secondary school exam in 2006–2007. Her second collection, *A well written body* (2008), is a collaborative project with artist Delicia Sampero. In 2008, a nine-poet Pasifika performance show called *Polynation* traveled from New Zealand to premiere at the Queensland Poetry Festival—the first show of its kind. There is evidence everywhere that indigenous writers are not content to be confined to the cultural margins in New Zealand or anywhere else.

Recent developments in Melanesian writing has seen several exciting "firsts." In 2008 *Tōghān*, the first novel written (in French) by Ni-Vanuatu Marcel Meltherorong was published by Alliance Française of Vanuatu. Hopefully this significant voice will be translated into English soon. If the reception of *Vārua Tupu* is anything to go by, the demand by Anglophone readers for Francophone literature remains strong. Poetry remains the leading genre for publication within the Pacific. Makini published her third collection of poetry, *Flotsam and jetsam*, in 2007 while Thaman has published her fifth, *Songs of love* (1999).

Anthologies are beginning to capture the eclectic cultural mixes now demographically significant in urban centers from Suva to Auckland. Writers' collectives such as Fiji's Niu Wave Writers Collective published the popular anthology *Niu waves* (2001), which includes an essay on the genesis of the collective and how it was formed by a small group of dedicated poets reading at Trapps, a local bar in Suva. Tipping their hat to the collective, a collection of fiction and poetry titled *Niu voices: Contemporary Pacific fiction volume 1* was published in New Zealand in 2006. These writers were selected from a national writing competition for Pacific Islanders sponsored by Huia Publishers (New Zealand's only Maori-owned mainstream publishing house) and *SPACIFIK* magazine (a contemporary magazine aimed at Maori and Pacific communities). *Niu voices* is indicative of Huia Publishers' recent moves to broaden their focus on Maori writing—undoubtedly helped by Mila's national award in 2005. But mainstream publishers have long realized the value of indigenous writers who are able to cross over into a mainstream readership. For example, Reed Publishers (now Raupo) in Auckland has long been the publishers for leading Maori author Witi Ihimaera. In a recent project, Ihimaera edited and selected fiction for *Get on the waka: Best recent Maori fiction* (2007), a volume showcasing the work of established Maori authors since 2000. In a sweeping gesture that started in Fiji and traverses the Pacific, the anthology *Writing the Pacific* (2007) suggests further crossing of cultural and geographically imposed boundaries.

From Fiji's intimate, personal weekly readings based in a local bar, to New Zealand's nationally advertised writing competitions, to the collation of previously published writers, to the inclusive sweeping of the region for both new and established writers, it is clear that the process of anthologizing aptly caters to the unique, geographical and sociocultural-political terrain within the Pacific, between each island, within each island, within each cultural group, and within each relationship formed between writer and publisher.

In addition to this overview is the brief consideration of filmic

texts. Film and literature have stories at their heart. Maori filmmaker Merata Mita views film, more so than literature, as a natural progression from oral storytelling:

History contains stories and therefore stories are very important. It doesn't surprise me that there's a reaching towards film and video which is strongly a visual kind of storytelling from a people who have strong oral traditions. I mean, we didn't go in for writing. We had carefully coded inscriptions that became carving or koro patterns which the keepers of that knowledge would decipher. (Mita 1996)

Dynamic Samoan-born, New Zealand-bred filmmaker Sima Urale has gained international recognition for her work. Like Pule, she also explores the experience of a Polynesian family that has migrated to New Zealand. Urale privileges the view of the child in *O tamaiti* (The children) (1996). The film, with its sharp black-and-white images, relies heavily on visual and aural effects rather than on dialogue. In silence, Urale gives voice to the voiceless. Her acclaimed docudrama *Velvet dreams* (2005) inverts the anthropological lens and creatively examines Western fetishistic consumerism of an exoticized Pacific. The mainstream film hit *A Samoan wedding* (2006) was written and performed by the Auckland-based comedy troupe The Naked Samoans. Its New Zealand release title, *Sione's wedding*, was considered too ethnic-specific for an overseas market. It succeeded in both the difficult genre of comedy and in overseas distribution, but it also received criticism within the Samoan community around issues of representation. The particular brand of comedy performed by The Naked Samoans (often risqué) has gained a foothold in the overseas market—as proven by their commercially successful adult cartoon series *bro'Town* (www.brotown.co.nz/index.html). But so has the phenomenally popular Samoan comic duo Laughing Samoans (Tofiga Fepulea'i and Eteuati Ete), who specifically cater to a local, island-style sense of humor (www.laughingsamoans.com).

The Pacific Islands Film Festival, organized by Pacific Islanders in Communications and based in Hawai'i, holds annual film festivals that showcase films by indigenous people. Increasing numbers of Pacific Islanders are writing, directing, and producing their own stories on film and video. The organization grows stronger every year. The crossover between film and theater is becoming increasingly common. For example, Fijian playwright Larry Thomas has made several successful films (1999, 2002, 2004a, 2004b) as has Hereniko (2004).

Similarly, locally run theater has grown. Kumu Kahua Theatre was founded in 1971 and remains committed to producing plays about life in Hawai'i, by Hawai'i's playwrights, for Hawai'i's people. Victoria Kneubuhl, of Hawaiian/Samoan descent, has had many of her plays produced by Kumu Kahua, which also boasts a one-hundred-seat theater. Another long-running theater group has been Vanuatu's Wan Smol Bag Theatre, established in 1989. Taking full advantage of the strength of orality and performance as a central mode of entertainment and communication in Vanuatu, the immensely popular theater engages in "entertainment education," drama created to convey issues central to the health and vitality of a growing nation (half the population is under twenty-nine years of age). Topics such as AIDS, teenage pregnancies, and environmental concerns are dramatized (and now frequently filmed for DVD) and

followed by an informative discussion with the audience. Working in conjunction with nongovernmental and donor organizations, Wan Smol Bag is largely coordinated by scriptwriter and actor Jo Dorras (see www.wan-smolbag-theatre.org).

The growing productivity of Auckland's Pacific Theatre (founded by Justine Sime-Barton), and Christchurch's Pacific Underground Theatre in New Zealand has ensured a Pacific presence in the past decade in Auckland theater. Rarely does a theatrical season pass without the staging of a play or plays by Pacific playwrights, including the work of Nina Nawalowalo, Jason Greenwood, David Fane, Oscar Kightley, The Naked Samoans, Makerita Urale, Dianna Fuemana, Leilani Unasa, Fiona Truelove, Sia Figiel, Victor Rodger, or the Black Friars (www.blackfriarscompany.blogspot.com), to name a few. The existence of national funding bodies such as Creative New Zealand, with a dedicated Pacific Committee, has been instrumental in fostering the Pacific arts scene.

As access to the Internet increases, the future holds endless possibilities. There are literary websites designed and coordinated by Pacific peoples ranging from promoting global multicultural writing (see, for example, Samoan poet Doug Poole's global poetry site, Blackmail Press at www.nzpoetsonline) to specifically Pacific poetry. In 2006 Pasifika Poetry Web (www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/pasifika) was established in coordination with the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre. It is the only website of its kind dedicated to audio, text, and audiovisual reproduction of Pasifika poetry. Poems, alongside contextual interviews with poets, are used as teaching resources at the University of Auckland and among secondary schools. Pasifika Poetry Web uses available technology to embrace Pacific epistemologies. Knowing by doing, seeing, hearing, and performing, the site takes poetry "off the page" and onto the screen where performance poets like Samoan and New Zealand writer Tusiata Avia's multimodal work can be more fully realized. Her work reflects other exciting developments of urban-based diasporic Pacific writers whose cutting-edge contemporary work is characterized by the fusion of genres such as poetry, dance, song, chant, and drama. SistaNative (www.sistanative.com) and Latai Taumoepeau are Tongan sisters and artists who are based in and perform throughout Australia. While unpublished per se, they have a huge presence on the Internet, where their performance poetry and dance is posted. The advent of sites like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Bebo have created another dimension to Pacific literary creativity and public access to these texts. Here writers can post writings and performances for free downloading. Whereas an enduring public voice was largely the domain of print media and endorsed by a book culture, here publication in public space has shifted from the hands of publishers into those of creators. This forum increasingly suits writers who feel marginalized from the politics of mainstream publication.

In one of the first Pacific literature course books within the Pacific, Subramani, teaching at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji at the time, addressed the sometimes antagonistic diverse demographic within Fiji's borders by writing:

Reading imaginative literature is one of the ways of breaking geographical and cultural barriers and participating in the larger universe and understanding the human condition (1994).

Pacific literature offers a bridge on which to cross into other geographical and cultural borders. This was argued by Wendt, who has often promoted the idea that Pacific literature should be read side by side with texts of history and other disciplines, not to seek anthropological truth, but to catch a glimpse of some of the humanity of the object—thus seeing it as subject. Breaking down strict demarcations allows insight into the imagination, experience, and emotional reality of a place through some of its people. Such an exercise would render a whole and more informed understanding of the people and places of the Pacific. For literature—song, chant, dance, oratory, proverb, myth, legend, poetry, short story, novel, theater, autobiography, biomythography, and film—is embedded with the histories, values, epistemologies, and humors of a people.

Hence, the importance of anthologies in the Pacific. The pivotal role of editors and anthologists like Wendt, Crocombe, Cliff Benson, Larry Thomas, and Witi Ihimaera, to name a few, has allowed creative, diverse, established, and developing collective voices to cross over into each other's literary borders and meet in a communal space.

If creative writing is visualized as a metaphorical map tracing spiritual and cultural landscapes, the reader, alongside the author, can explore the peaks and valleys of the human experience. Insight takes place from the emotional truths as well as the scientific ones—each shedding light on the other. We come to know a little more about other people and ultimately about ourselves as we continue to express, to examine. This visualization is, thus, an open invitation for ongoing dialogue:

Therefore,
friend,
before the wind shakes
and the sky gathers
let us sit a moment
by the hum's edge
and the fringe of light,
the quiet water under
the bullfrog's assertion
where the finger of water
points into silence.

There our words
will find the delicate filaments
that anchor brain to belly or heart,
words to tease other words
and words
that bear unseen
the source
which we must touch
to see.

("Invitation," Pio Manoa, in Wendt 1995)

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