

waka kuaka

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SPECIAL ISSUE:

in a room, in a house, on an island, in an ocean



The Polynesian Society

Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland, New Zealand

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Cover image: Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Sunday Best*, plastic outdoor chairs, plastic primer, enamel paint. Image courtesy of Enjoy Contemporary Art Space. Photograph by Cheska Brown, Nov. 2022.

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AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

SPECIAL ISSUE:

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CONTENTS

Contributors to This Issue 5

ANDREA LOW

in a room, in a house, on an island, in an ocean 9*Articles*

HUNI MANCINI

*We Carry Their Voices: An Indigenous Pacific Archivist on
Preserving Oral Histories* 15

JIMMY MA'IA'I

*Uso 4 Life (2021): Exploring Memory and Self-Identity Through
Installation Art* 36*Shorter Communications/Talanoa*

LANA LOPESI and ANDREA LOW

Radical Inclusion: On Pacific Arts Aotearoa 65

MARAMA SALSANO and MERE TAITO

*Haerenga/Sal Faiva: Two Indigenous Women and Their
Creative Practice Doctoral Journeys* 77

RUBY MACOMBER

a poem for Itu'ti'u aunty 96

Curatorium

EMILY PARR and CORA-ALLAN TWISS <i>Reflections on Encountering Aotearoa</i>	98
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Reviews

Lopesi, Lana (ed.): <i>Pacific Arts Aotearoa</i> . SONYA WITHERS	113
Jonassen, Jon Tikivanotau Michael: <i>Pe‘e Māori: Traditional Cook Islands Chants</i> . LIAM KOKA‘UA	115
Schwartz, Jessica A.: <i>Radiation Sounds: Marshallese Music and Nuclear Silences</i> . IRENE KARONGO HUNDLEBY	120
Exhibition Review. <i>To Move Between: Healing and Resistance</i> . Alanis Obomsawin, Artspace Aotearoa, 2 Sept.–4 Nov. 2023. ALEXANDRIA HAWLEY	123
Schulz, Joy: <i>When Women Ruled the Pacific: Power and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Tahiti and Hawai‘i</i> . PAULINE REYNOLDS	126
<i>Publications Received</i>	129

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Marama Salsano (Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Wairere) is a māmā, writer, ringatoi (artist) and PhD candidate at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka, New Zealand, where she works within the broad field of Māori and Indigenous literary studies. Marama's creative writing has been recognised in national fiction competitions and has been published in various anthologies and journals. In 2023 her fiction was longlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, and she was a finalist in the Pikihuia Awards for Māori writers. Her current visual work includes contemporary paintings of upoko whakairo (carved heads) on wood, fabric protest banners and object poetry.

Mere Taito (Rotuma (Fiji): Malha'a and Noa'tau) is a creative writer based in Kirikiriroa Hamilton in Aotearoa New Zealand. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtākou exploring the impacts of reading Rotuman archival multilingual texts on the writing of multilingual poetry. Her study positions digitally authored multilingual poetry as an effective language-learning resource for Rotuman language regeneration in Aotearoa. Her creative work has been published widely in anthologies and journals such as *Bonsai* and *Best New Zealand Poems*. She is co-editor of the anthology *Katūivei: Contemporary Pasifika Poetry from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Massey University Press, 2024).

Cora-Allan Twiss is a multidisciplinary artist who actively regenerates Niue hiapo (barkcloth) practices by way of artwork, performance, installation and curation. Cora-Allan was awarded the Creative New Zealand Pacific Heritage Artist award (2020) and an Arts Foundation Springboard award (2021) and completed a McCahon House artist's residency in Waitākere (2021). She has been widely exhibited in Aotearoa and has showcased work in Canada, Niue, Australia, the USA and England.

Sonya Withers is an Aotearoa-born Pacific creative with gafa (ancestral links) to Scotland and Sama'i, Falelatai, Sāmoa. A senior design lecturer at Toi Rauwhārangī College of Creative Arts, Massey University Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa, she teaches across textile design studio projects and critical and contextual studies. Sonya has worked in fashion and on projects that have facilitated the presence and influence of Pacific peoples in museums and creative spaces.

in a room, in a house, on an island, in an ocean

ANDREA LOW

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

ABSTRACT: Each of the writers in this special issue, from essayists and reviewers to poets and interview subjects, addresses chains of connection. Through many different pathways they articulate and critique discontinuities created in colonial contexts. Memory and systems of memory, from storytelling to whakapapa (genealogical ties) to colonial archives and museums, are responded to in both material and abstract ways, creating fine networks and continuities at personal and institutional levels. Disconnection and connection are the themes that bind this special issue of *Waka Kuaka: The Journal of the Polynesian Society* as we seek to amplify the words and images of Indigenous poets, artists, archivists, creatives and curators and their innovative and unconventional approaches to reclaiming memory and history making.

Keywords: Pacific art, Indigenous art, Te Rā, museums, Indigenous poetry, archives, Indigenous data sovereignty

The title of this piece is a quote from “Time to Write”, a 2022 poem by Alice Te Punga Somerville. The line is a palindrome of sorts, in that it could be read from either direction. Toggling between presents and pasts and places, the phrase forms links between micro and macro spaces, collapsing and expanding the view from either end in a dynamic loop. In the chain of indefinite articles in Somerville’s line—a room, a house, an island, an ocean—idiosyncrasies are conjured, creating space for subjectivities to multiply, reshaping the given and acceptable into something unbounded and uncontainable. Most often the chain is to whakapapa (genealogies), to memory and to histories that lead to oceans and back again.

The room where I sit to write this introduction to the special issue is an open-plan office in Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, upstairs from thousands of Indigenous treasures in storage or on display on the floors below. Documentary Heritage—manuscripts, ephemera, publications, images and digital treasures—number in the millions. The collections have been amassed in many different ways but in general are reflective of colonial dispossession, often resulting in ontological and epistemological discontinuities in the communities from which they have come. It is a profound disruption whereby genealogical links are broken—ancestors no longer known, identities lost—and discontinuities are manifold. In a museum with such a large colonially sourced Indigenous collection, provenance is not

evenly distributed (Soares 2020), and memory is denied, thereby producing and reifying social inequalities. How then can Indigenous people reclaim their right to memory in institutions narrating colonial pasts (Tupinambá 2023)?

An example of memory reclamation led by Indigenous weavers and researchers is on display at the museum. Te Rā,¹ the last known Māori sail, is on loan from the British Museum and is currently on display in *Te Rā: Navigating Home*. The opportunity to show Te Rā was negotiated as part of a collaboration with Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū² and extends on from the Royal Society Te Apārangi Marsden-funded project “Whakarahia Anō te Ra Kaihau! Raise Up Again the Billowing Sail!”³ It has been over 200 years since the sail was last seen in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 1922 Te Rangihiroa (Sir Peter Buck) set a challenge for a replica of the sail to be made, and 100 years later, the Te Rā Ringa Raupā weavers’ group⁴ completed Māhere Tū ki te Rangi, a strand-for-strand younger sibling to Te Rā. Kahutoi Te Kanawa, a highly accomplished weaver and curator at Auckland Museum, describes raranga (weaving) as pivotal in Māori cultural practice (pers. comm., March 2024). The development of the capabilities of weavers and the understanding of materials specific to Aotearoa has been accomplished over centuries. The loaned return of Te Rā is a reminder of discontinuity, of gaps and disassociations created by the absence of taonga (treasures) from Indigenous hands and minds. Māhere Tū ki te Rangi exemplifies a way in which Indigenous knowledges are preserved and are a source of technology and innovation, transmitted through nonlinear, practice-led methodologies underpinned by the importance of whakapapa (genealogical ties) and of the connection of materials and processes to tikanga (protocols) and to the whenua (land) and moana (ocean).

In addition to material investigations and recreations, photogrammetry and 3D modelling were conducted during the Marsden project. This combination of methods and analysis by weaving experts represents some of the transdisciplinary ways that knowledge and memory are reclaimed. Ultimately, as Catherine Smith, a core member of the Marsden project, said: “We need to document Te Rā and communicate the knowledge contained within her to the wider community so it won’t ever be lost again” (Workman 2018).

Weaving and the transdisciplinary approaches described above are akin to the methodologies employed by the artists, poets and writers foregrounded in this special issue of *Waka Kuaka*. Their inclusion is in part a response and addendum to the Pacific research methodologies explored in the 2023 special issue, where editors Marcia Leenen-Young and Lisa Uperesa looked at the growth and impact of emerging Indigenous scholars and the genealogies connecting them. The academic realm is one part of the growth of Indigenous research, but it also extends into art and cultural practices as diverse as the revival of hiapo (Niuean barkcloth), installation art and literature. The cover image, an artwork by Jimmy Ma‘ia‘i, is titled *Sunday Best* (2022).

The brightly coloured stack of chairs is a memory but also a nod to gafa (genealogical ties), connecting to a theme throughout this special issue. As an editorial choice it also represents the ways each of the contributors is engaged in retrieval and protection of cultural knowledge and the subjective and idiosyncratic approaches the authors choose in order to remake or forge continuities, including art making and poetry.

Archives are also increasingly affected by the presence of more Indigenous archivists seeking to improve access to Indigenous collections using Indigenous epistememes. Huni Mancini is an archivist at the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound (AMPS), and her focus on core archival methods and data sovereignty are interwoven with her own formative experiences—experiences that underpin and determine Mancini’s commitment to serving communities and creating continuities.

Mancini’s recollection of the Tongan dance mā‘ulu‘ulu is echoed in Jimmy Ma‘ia‘i’s exploration of memory and experience within the practice of installation art and sculpture. For both writers, who they are and what they do are intertwined and deeply inform their emplaced positionality—a commonality they share with the poets Marama Salsano, Mere Taito and Ruby Macomber, who ground their contributions, as Mere says, “in meaningful experience”, whether it be Land Back protest, recognition of Rotuman diaspora or a digital workshop in Naarm (Melbourne).

Likewise for the visual artists and writers who feature in the Curatorium, a biannual feature in *Waka Kuaka*. The Curatorium was originally devised as a way for me and art historian and curator Nina Tonga to reflect on current issues in the contemporary arts of the Pacific. In this edition, however, we have handed over the feature to Cora-Allan Twiss (Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Tumutumu, Niue—Liku, Alofi) and Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Moana, Pākehā). The pair, along with Cora-Allan’s father, Kelly Lafaiki, went on a voyage along the coast of Aotearoa New Zealand on board the *Heritage Adventurer*. Their Curatorium takes the form of a talanoa (exchange) between the two artists, each reflecting on parallels and encounters between the whenua and Cook, Tupaia and Taiata, and the shipboard artists of Cook’s voyages.

Foregrounding the voices of artists is also an intention of *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* (2023), the subject of my long-distance talanoa with artist, curator, writer and academic Lana Lopesi. In an anthology that spans decades of Pacific arts practice in Aotearoa, she has centred artists’ voices in a groundbreaking way for the arts in Aotearoa, and, as Lana and I reflect, this breaks the pattern of it usually being the work of curators like her, Nina and me to describe and situate artists and their work. *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* is a significant volume that once again reclaims the right to memory and to a storied history that speaks not only to Pacific audiences but to art and social history in Aotearoa in the way in which Lopesi articulates and manifests the plurality of contemporary Pacific creative expression.

In an earlier issue that marked new directions for *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, an undertaking was made to “expand by engaging wider communities and emerging scholars, as well as established scholars, of the Pacific” (Pouwhare *et al.* 2022: 350). Most of the contributors to this issue are new to *Waka Kuaka* and are part of the intention to prioritise transdisciplinary practices. In the same issue there was a reference to Ron Crocombe’s observation in 1992 that the first issue in 1882 had more “Polynesian authorship” than the latest copy he had received. As I mentioned earlier referring to museum contexts, uneven distribution of provenance produces and reinforces inequalities. The same can be applied to authorship. It was Te Rangihoroa who not only issued the challenge to weavers in 1922 but also compared the Polynesian Society to “a canoe venturing uncharted seas” (Firth *et al.* 1992: 219). Perhaps the journal has not had an installation of plastic chairs on the cover before or featured poetry or the words and images of two Indigenous artists contemplating the coastline of Aotearoa from a ship, but it is hoped that these forms of expression provide some new coordinates for navigating from the room to the ocean and back again.

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Mahalo nui (huge thanks) to all of the new and returning authors who managed their contributions around busy schedules of work, studio and study. Mahalo also to our peer reviewers, whose work is so valuable to *Waka Kuaka* and to both our emerging and established writers. In particular thank you for your openness to reviewing writing that spans transdisciplinary approaches. I am new to this experience of editing an entire issue, as opposed to focusing solely on reviews, and I have even more appreciation for the work of editor Marcia Leenen-Young and the editors before her. Marcia’s support for the shift in content for this special issue has been insightful and encouraging. As always, Mona-Lynn Courteau’s editorial work and Hamish Macdonald’s design have helped us all shine.

NOTES

1. Te Rā (ca. 1785), or The Sail, is primarily made from harakeke (*Phormium tenax*), feathers of kāhu (swamp harrier), kererū (native pigeon) and kākā (native parrot), and remnants of dogskin. Te Rā is on loan to Auckland War Memorial Museum by the Trustees of the British Museum (Oc,NZ.147).
2. The exhibition at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū was titled *Te Rā: The Māori Sail* and ran 8 July–23 October 2023.
3. “Revitalising Cultural Knowledge through Analysis of the Māori Sail, Te Rā”, led by project founders Rānui Ngārimu, Donna Campbell and Catherine Smith. <https://teraa.co.nz/>
4. Mandy Sunlight, Ruth Port and Rouati Waata travelled to the British Museum in 2010 to see the original sail. The three weavers are current members of Te Rā Ringa Raupā, along with mentor Dr Maureen Lander, Tessa Harris and Puhirere I Te Ata Rangi Waata. Past members include Makareta Jahnke, Maikara Ropata, Kerrin Taylor and Delwyn Cunningham.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are te reo Māori unless otherwise stated.

gafa	genealogical ties (Samoan)
harakeke	New Zealand flax (<i>Phormium tenax</i>)
hiapo	barkcloth (Niuean)
kāhu	Australasian Harrier
mā‘ulu‘ulu	a Tongan group dance
moana	ocean
raranga	weaving
talanoa	verbal exchange (multiple Pacific languages)
taonga	treasure
tikanga	protocols
whakapapa	genealogical ties
whenua	land

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WE CARRY THEIR VOICES: AN INDIGENOUS PACIFIC ARCHIVIST ON PRESERVING ORAL HISTORIES

HUNI MANCINI

Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland

ABSTRACT: This paper considers how Western archives can incorporate Indigenous Pacific ways of transmitting customary knowledge systems in their practice and queries how this knowledge might sit alongside traditional archival methods. Through personal memories and accounts as an Indigenous Pacific archivist, I explore the possibilities of oral history as a way to preserve intangible cultural heritage and consider some of the challenges that are encountered as well. Rather than discussing audio preservation techniques, this paper is intended to focus on the core archival methods that are enlisted to preserve data about Indigenous collections, such as arrangement and description, as well as recent developments in digitisation, access and Indigenous data sovereignty. Drawing on my own examples from the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound (AMPS) as well as other selected repositories in Aotearoa New Zealand, I consider how Indigenous voices are increasingly being incorporated into archival practices and, by extension, how our histories are being told and shaped.

Keywords: Pacific archive, archival practice, audiovisual archive, digitisation, Indigenous data sovereignty

In the archive there is a stillness, an air of silence animated by the low hum of electronics: servers buzzing, computer screens flickering, wires, old analogue equipment. I load an audio file into a software program with a few clicks of the mouse. Its waveform unfurls on my screen, a horizontal axis of blue lines accentuated by vertical peaks and dips. I press play and ambient sounds flood the speakers. The magnetic tape hisses, jumps and crackles as it winds along, the swell of laughter, singing voices, traffic passing by. Inflections of a bygone era. I'm transported to the memory of learning mā'ulu'ulu, a Tongan group dance, as a young girl. After church on Sundays in the middle of winter, we would pack into the cold hall for rehearsal, kept warm by the movement of bodies swaying together. This is one of my earliest memories as a young Tongan-Italian girl, a memory which seems so personal and yet is connected to a wider story of Pacific diaspora and migration. As I come to work in the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound (AMPS) at the University of Auckland, first as a cultural collections assistant and eventually an archivist, it is my memory of learning my Tongan culture living seemingly so far away from the islands that gives me an understanding of my need to connect, and to help others connect also.

AMPS is an audiovisual archive dedicated to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage—oral traditions, ceremonies, festivals—recorded as moments of contemporary relevance as well as historical importance (AMPS n.d.). The preservation and transmission of these moments helps to counter the effects of climate emergency, diaspora and the associated patterns of loss of language and cultural knowledge. Archives are a resource that make it possible for communities to reconnect with their traditional and contemporary culture (Buchanan 2007: 44; Cook 2013: 95).

This paper considers efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage by oral history archives, and some of the challenges that are encountered in the process. Rather than discussing audio preservation techniques, it instead focuses on some of the core archival methods used to preserve relevant data and cultural information, such as arrangement and description, digitisation and community engagement (Michetti 2016: 59–60). Drawing on examples from the AMPS and other selected repositories in Aotearoa New Zealand, I consider how the inclusion of many voices can be incorporated into the shaping and telling of our histories (Flinn *et al.* 2009: 71–72).

ORAL HISTORIES

Sound is a conduit, a connector of memories, beings, generations. It allows us to communicate with and understand one another. Sound is all around us, ubiquitous, always available, and yet at the same time it is out of reach, beyond our grasp, because it does not last. When a sound is created it reverberates in the air for a while and, unless it's recorded, it's gone again.

Oceanic peoples have always used sound to preserve a record of the past. Oral traditions such as song and dance, oratory, storytelling, genealogy and countless more are interlaced with a wealth of poetic skill, meaning and mnemonic devices which together aid the remembering of important information (Mahuika 2019: 1; Wheeler *et al.* 2024: 3). They are our monuments and written documents. UNESCO defines oral tradition as intangible cultural heritage, as each expression is ephemeral in nature (UNESCO n.d.). Lilomaiava-Doktor writes, “Oral tradition is at the heart of Indigenous cultures. Despite being central to Indigenous histories, oral sources and ancient stories have not been fully incorporated into scholarly understandings of land and ‘place’” (2020: 121). Pacific oral traditions are greatly varied due to the geographical makeup of the region. Tuimaleali‘ifano and D’Arcy note that the transition from a preliterate to a literate state in the Pacific has occurred in just 200 years, and “the impact of this phenomenal revolution” is still ongoing (2023: 294; see also Parsonson 1967). They state that in documenting oral traditions, the role of Pacific anthropologists and historians “continues and must evolve as a collaboration” (Tuimaleali‘ifano and D’Arcy 2023: 294).

Oral history is generally defined as the documenting of history or particular events in history through recorded interviews with people who have lived through the events, using audio, video and transcription technologies (Hutching 1993: 1; Ritchie 2003). The personal narrative of an event is perhaps the defining feature of oral history, which can support the establishment of historical opinion by professional historians and other academics (Pasaribu 2016: 326).¹ Oral histories share the tacit perspectives, thoughts, opinions and understanding of the knowledge recorded in its primary form, providing a fuller, and at times a more accurate, picture of past and current events than do written histories. Oral histories are unique in that they contribute viewpoints and perspectives that fill in the gaps and silences in documented history, sometimes correcting or even contradicting official and written sources (Nkala and David 2015: 82).

However, for Indigenous peoples this definition is only a small part of the picture. Nēpia Mahuika writes that “Indigenous peoples have their own ways of thinking about, practicing, and defining oral history” (Mahuika 2019: 1). Wheeler *et al.* state that in the past, non-Indigenous scholars have divided Indigenous oral narratives into two types: oral history (first-person) and oral tradition (histories and teachings handed down from the past). They add that Indigenous scholars reject this division as artificial, stating, “Oral histories of individuals are part of oral tradition, as are stories and teachings, songs, chants, ceremonies, and histories about significant events” (2024: 2). Indigenous oral history therefore “includes personal stories, family stories, and community stories that may, in their telling, incorporate information about culture and tradition” (p. 3).

Oral traditions are sometimes considered unreliable as a source of historical information in favour of written sources (Mahuika 2019: 84; Ockert 2019; Thane 1999: 161). The prevalence of written sources about Indigenous oral traditions can result in a misrepresentation of those traditions (Burnett *et al.* 2023: 347). The challenge to legitimise oral histories is compounded for Pacific historians: as Leenen-Young writes, there is a “marginalisation of Pacific voices in history” (Leenen-Young 2021: 37). But in the absence of a balanced narrative it is increasingly important to preserve a record of events, both past and present, using technological means.

AMPS was established within the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland, in 1970 to preserve intangible cultural heritage from throughout the Pacific using audiovisual technologies (Moyle 1992: 220). At that time decolonisation processes had already begun in Oceania, and by the late 1970s a number of Pacific nations had achieved independence by transitioning from colonial rule to full or some form of independence. There was a growing concern that many of the older traditions had already vanished or were undergoing rapid change as a result of increasing urbanisation and

Westernisation (McLean 1978: 1). It was also a period of great advancement in technology, which gave researchers and communities the ability to record the way oral traditions were being sung, performed and expressed—“capturing the airs”, as Sir Apirana Ngata referred to it (Ngata 2004: xxiv–xxv).

AMPS’s holdings date as far back as 1910 and span the full range of audio formats from then until now. Each format has its own materiality and characteristics. Digital preservation is the latest iteration in a long line of formats, each one designed to outlive those that came before. Our earliest recordings hail from Sāmoa with copies of wax cylinder² audio recorded by Governor Wilhelm Solf in 1910. The cylinders are now held by the Ethnological Museum of Berlin. Richard Moyle, ethnomusicologist and previous director of AMPS, obtained copies from the museum and deposited them into the archive for research purposes.

These early recordings provide a window into a period of German occupation in Sāmoa under the protectorate, which ran from 1900 to 1914, and are an example of the historical significance of some archives in the AMPS repository. Governor Solf, in office between 1900 and 1911, has been remembered for his “assault on Sāmoa’s traditional authority structures” (Archives New Zealand n.d.). As the newly appointed governor, Solf abolished the office of Tupu Sili (king), leading to unrest among the Maloa o Sāmoa (Samoan council of chiefs). Orator chief Lauaki Namulau’ulu Mamoe (Davidson 1970: 267) formed the Mau a Pule resistance movement in opposition to the German colonial administration, a movement which continued to gain momentum under New Zealand’s administration of Western Samoa.

Along with material held in other national government repositories such as Archives New Zealand and the Alexander Turnbull Library, AMPS audio recordings further enhance our picture of that time. A song from one of the Wilhelm Solf cylinders provides a good example.³ The song may be listened to here.  The track begins with a short announcement by a man in German, followed by a group of men singing a cappella in Samoan. The track is two minutes and twelve seconds in total. When listening to each of the Solf recordings, the voices of men and women emerge like waves across generations, across time itself. Their harmonies pierce through the distance: they sound joyous, vibrant and close—almost as they would today. Hearing those voices is so significant to history and culture and reflects the various ways that we can remember the past, as opposed to a linear view that is represented by papers, still images and the written word alone.

Yet, when you listen to them, they also reveal the cracks of the past. The crackling, scratching, pulsating sounds of the cylinder are symptoms of technical decay and almost obscure the voices entirely. These cracks indicate the passing of time from then until now. Despite being tools of preservation and resilience, the recordings’ deterioration also reveals an ongoing vulnerability; even technology is at risk of loss over time.

WEAVING MULTIPLE STRANDS

A core part of my work with Pacific audio collections is arrangement and description (A&D). A&D is one of the fundamental aspects of archiving, along with preservation and engagement. A&D is the stage where materials are brought under intellectual and physical control in order to give form to a collection, as well as the inventory which grants access to it (Meehan 2014: 63). In the process of arranging and describing, archives follow strict rules and standards set out by Anglo-American organisations like the Library of Congress (2019) and the Society of American Archivists (2022).

A question that always arises for me when undertaking A&D is: who has the power to define how the past is interpreted? Galleries, libraries, archives and museums (also known as the GLAM sector) have a part to play in upholding such power (Schwartz and Cook 2002: 1–2).⁴ Pandora Fulimalo Pereira writes, “Western museums have had two primary objectives—the collection and the display of history” (Pereira 2022: 375). And when we look closer, these collections often reflect the troubled encounters between colonists and the people and cultures they colonised (p. 375). Not only does recordkeeping and archiving play a crucial role in the progression of colonial and oppressive regimes (Evans *et al.* 2018: 129), Indigenous collections have also been rendered inaccessible to intergenerational successors (Hall and Love 2018: 63).

The cultural impact of collecting from Indigenous communities can vary for the oral history archive as the recording of oral histories requires the participation of those being recorded. Much of AMPS’s material was acquired by anthropologists and researchers in collaboration with those they recorded; the performance of a selected song or story was arranged between the recordist and performer, and performers were made aware of their being recorded. However, for much of the twentieth century, in which the bulk of collecting of the AMPS materials took place, human ethics processes were not fully developed, and agreements between recordist and recorded were oftentimes informal. In some circumstances there may have been an element of trust or good faith in the recordist, under the agreement that they would supply copies of the recordings in the future. In some cases that promise was never fulfilled, or if it was, those copies were lost to time (Moyle 2018: 497; see also Gunderson and Woods 2018).

Over time AMPS collections become further compromised by custodial neglect. A number of items in our collections, such as the Solf cylinder recordings, were recorded with Indigenous peoples’ consent but failed to include any accompanying information to identify them. Information such as the names of speakers or performers, village or island locations, exact dates, song or dance titles and composers are lacking in many of our records. The absence of basic information creates weak records, rendering the material

inaccessible in many cases. It sends the message that the humanity of these peoples and cultures are of little importance. Such gaps and silences are all too common within archives.

This lack of information is known as dissociation: the loss of data, objects or object-related data caused by a loss of relevant information, context and meaning over time (Cato and Waller 2023). Dissociation is one of ten agents of deterioration that threaten heritage objects—alongside pests and elemental damage—according to the Canadian Cultural Institute, a government agency in Canada (Canadian Cultural Institute 2017; Gloucestershire Heritage Hub 2023). Dissociation occurs when active care is not taken to preserve data and information about the collection. The result is a loss of objects or object-related data or the ability to retrieve objects or associate them with data. Dissociation affects the legal, intellectual and/or cultural aspects of an object, in contrast to the other nine agents of deterioration, which mainly concern the physical state of objects.

Another unique characteristic of dissociation is that loss in value for one or a few objects within a collection can reduce the value of the collection as a whole (Cato and Waller 2023). Dissociation results from the natural tendency for ordered systems to fall apart over time. It might begin with the processing methods of the collector and depositor of material and then be upheld by institutional practices, together leading to a flattening or whittling down of living cultural heritage in order to produce quantifiable objects of knowledge. In other words, by preserving something we can sometimes decontextualise and smother it. Through archival practice, living heritage becomes something that happened but that is no longer happening. It becomes apart from us rather than a part of us.

AMPS, now integrated into the university's library system, is at a point where it must "retrieve" information that was lost in order to improve its records and maintain good care of its collections as well as create updated processes that are more current. In the context of Indigenous collections, the challenge of updating practices has added complexity. Harris *et al.* posit that ephemeral cultural forms like oral traditions expose the limits of the archive, stating that "an archival record can only store the shadow of a song or dance" (2022: 1), and in order for it to be known, the song or dance must also be embodied. As such, heritage institutions present a limit for cultures that are embodied, ephemeral and lived. And as long as the viability of the Western archive is situated in a colonial historical framework, it is constantly at risk of slipping into irrelevance (McCracken and Hogan-Stacey 2023: 1–2). In their essay on dissociation within a First Nations conservation context, Bennion and Kelly-Mundine describe that they use a "holistic approach to conservation ... to reconcile these ontologies, enabling a two-way approach to cultural conservation, shifting focus from a materially based model to a relationship-based model" (2021: 171). In other words, increased involvement of Indigenous

communities must now take place in all aspects of archival practice in order for appropriate preservation of and access to Indigenous collections to take place.

Two recent examples in Aotearoa New Zealand shed some light into how cultural heritage repositories have begun to incorporate Indigenous Pacific knowledge systems into their practice. First is the Pacific Collection Access Project (PCAP) at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, which ran from 2016 to 2019 (Pereira 2022). The project, which was managed by Pasifika staff and occurred as part of the museum’s Teu Le Vā framework, invited members of Auckland’s Pasifika communities to share and exchange their knowledge of heritage objects such as tools, ornaments, musical instruments and carvings (Auckland War Memorial Museum n.d., 2016). With their input, the PCAP team was able to enhance and improve the museum’s records, storage and understanding of its Pacific collection, as well as increase public access and engagement with the Pacific collection in ways that are more embodied, inclusive and collaborative for both the Pacific communities and the museum.

Second is Digital Pasifik, a project hosted by Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa National Library of New Zealand in collaboration with the National Library of Australia. Active since 2019, the project takes the form of an aggregator website allowing for the discoverability of Pacific collections held by various GLAM and tertiary institutions around the world (Digital Pasifik n.d.). The project enables Pacific peoples to see, discover and explore items of digitised cultural heritage that are held in these disparate locations and who may not be aware these items or records exist. So far they have partnered with hundreds of institutions across the Asia–Pacific, the United States, Europe and more (Bulamaibau 2021). Similar to PCAP, the Digital Pasifik team works alongside cultural knowledge holders from around the Pacific to identify collection material, using this information to improve collection records and generate examples of meaningful engagement (Raea 2023) where participation and co-creation is paramount.

Working to weave multiple narratives into the archive is a new and welcome challenge and champions the notion that history is told not by a single source but by many. Hoakalei Kamau‘u, leader of the Hawaiian contingent at the South Pacific Festival of Arts in 1976, stated, “In Hawai‘i we have a saying: A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okāhi—all knowledge does not come from one school.”⁵ Indigenous methods of knowledge sharing are collective and the transmission of oral traditions is plural, requiring many voices to participate in situation over time. The concept of plurality can be found in the variety of oral traditional forms and in the ways in which the content of those forms is ordered and sequenced. The question then becomes, how might AMPS incorporate Indigenous Pacific ways of transmitting customary knowledge systems? How might these sit alongside traditional archival methods? We might look to Indigenous oral traditions in the Pacific for clues.

In Aotearoa an example can be seen in Sir Apirana Ngata, who drew correlations between whakapapa (genealogy) and archival practice. In his paper “The Terminology of Whakapapa”⁶ Ngata explored the various material ways in which whakapapa is recited by Māori:

Pervading all is the idea of order, sequence and arrangement, and in boastful mood there is a suggestion of dressing and adornment, a lifting of pedigrees from out of the ruck. (Ngata 2019: 26; see also Ngata 2021: 322)

Here he uses archival terminology (order, sequence, arrangement) to express the way in which genealogy is memorised and transmitted. Ngata describes a range of concepts used by Māori for memorising and reciting whakapapa. Each conception resembles that of meeting houses, weaving, twining and fishing techniques. For example, he starts off with the concept of aho or kaha, which translates to line, string or cord. Within this concept is the method of takiaho, the act of tracing incidents or personnel strung along a string (aho) upon which ancestors were strung one by one (taki). When the string was lifted up (hāpai), the ancestors were displayed (2019: 22).

In the Pacific, the concept of line of succession is also found to characterise oral traditions. In Tonga, the term tala-ē-fonua means telling of the land and its people, and according to ‘Okusitino Māhina, it is a mode of representing past and present events about the land and its people (fonua), passed down through generations by word of mouth (tala) (Māhina 1992: 1). In the Tongan language, the word fonua also means placenta, in addition to land. A child comes from their mother’s fonua and when they die they go back to the fonua. The umbilical cord, also called fonua, is buried in the land after birth, because in the Tongan worldview, people themselves are the land.

Forms of tala-ē-fonua in Tongan oral tradition can encompass the divine language of the extraordinary, to which tales (talanoa), myths (talatupu’a), legends (fananga), chants (laulau), poetry (ta’anga) and oratory (tufunga lea) belong (Māhina 1992: 4). For example, telling fananga, known as legends and folk tales, is largely the province of the elders, who are “the living repositories of a wealth of folklore often overlooked by their families in the face of ever-increasing European influence” (Moyle 1987: 170; see also Fanua 1982: 2). While fananga have an ability to retain collective memory, there is also room for the storyteller’s own creative interpretation (Helu 2012: 55; Moyle 1995). In this way fananga are fluid and ever-changing, with room for the story to change depending on the person telling it. Each story is grown from the structure and scaffolding of existing tellers. They are the work not of one voice but of many, over countless generations.

Collective knowledge sharing is commonly found in the Pacific. Tongan scholar Epeli Hau’ofa believed in an individual’s right to be custodian of their own knowledge, so that their realities would be not only learnt and

understood but shared (Taufa 2021: 42). But what might this look like in practice? We might look to an example from Sāmoa, the method of *su'ifefiloi*, a traditional form of storytelling where composers thread together different vignettes in the creation of one long narrative. Galea'i describes it as a "threading of different types of songs to make one very long song for a special occasion" (Galea'i 2005: iv). Lopesi describes how the *su'ifefiloi* methodology comes from "the process of selecting, then sewing or stitching various flowers to create an ula or flower garland, which combines many different parts to create something new" (Lopesi 2021: 127). The result is a tapestry made up of a wide array of styles and voices that explore and express Samoan themes, culture, history, perspectives and voices. What's more is that each shift in language, point of view, voice and form gives new meaning and function to *su'ifefiloi* (Galea'i 2005: xv–xvi). Like Ngata's conception of *whakapapa*, methods of preserving, organising and transmitting oral traditions are multifaceted, complex and well-defined. Increased involvement of Indigenous communities is required to accurately represent Indigenous collections and move away from the colonial structures embedded in archival practice. In our work with Indigenous collections, it is now vital to embrace Indigenous values and knowledge-keeping practices and necessary to expand Western colonial archival notions of provenance, original order, custody and ownership (Punzalan 2023: ix).

DIGITISATION, ACCESS AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY

A plurality of voices remembering and telling our history enables the archive to become porous, a living and breathing space. By engaging the perspectives and voices of cultural knowledge holders we lift them up to coexist alongside Western institutions. This is fast becoming a standard for all repositories. McCracken and Hogan-Stacey write:

Being accountable to Indigenous peoples means working with and alongside Indigenous communities to manage, understand, and work with archival records connected to, by, or about Indigenous peoples. (2023: xv)

At AMPS our current focus on digitisation means we can preserve our past and thereby future-proof our collections while also extending our reach to a plurality of voices with the use of digital tools.

AMPS has embarked on a major digitisation project to preserve its undigitised audiovisual recordings, which are mostly recorded on open-reel audio tape and cassette, to ensure these recordings will continue to be accessible. The project is in partnership with Memnon, which specialises in the migration of legacy media to digital formats. Memnon had recently launched a facility in Lower Hutt under contract to the Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua to run *Utaina*, a mass project in collaboration

with National Library, Archives New Zealand and the Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision archive to digitise their audiovisual collections (National Library 2024). Through this partnership we can ensure AMPS's recordings will be preserved and accessible well into the future (Hamill 2023).

The digitisation of audiovisual material is perhaps more pressing than that of paper or object-based repositories. This is because the technology to read magnetic tape is fast becoming obsolete, and archives need to ensure content acquired in that medium can continue to be accessed through multiple preservation copies that are compatible with current and emerging technologies. As a Māori and Pacific oral history archive the challenges AMPS faces in entering the digital space are multifaceted, ranging from technological to the need to respect cultural diversity, and we often strive to meet somewhere in the middle. On one hand the digital space allows us to extend our reach and promote our collections online. But on the other hand problems of ownership and sharing of restricted or culturally sensitive material online arise (Bow and Hepworth 2019; Whaanga *et al.* 2015). To navigate this tension we are guided by the recommendations set out by the Indigenous data sovereignty movement in addition to archival standards of practice (University of Auckland 2023).

Indigenous data sovereignty (IDS), sometimes referred to as data sovereignty in short, is a term increasingly being used in communities, research, policy and practice (Pacific Data Sovereignty Network 2022; Royal Society Te Apārangi 2023; Taylor and Kukutai 2016). The “movement has emerged in response to poor data practices, from the conceptualisation of data items through to reporting of data about Indigenous peoples” (Lovett *et al.* 2019: 26), and prioritises Indigenous peoples' control and governance over their own cultural and intellectual property. Policies set out by IDS groups are grounded in Indigenous understandings of sovereignty that challenge dominant “data sovereignty” discourse and practice and support and expand global human rights instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Kukutai *et al.* 2020: 655).

One example is the CARE principles (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics), which we adhere to at AMPS. Developed by a consortium of Indigenous data experts, CARE recognises the movement toward open data does not fully engage with Indigenous peoples' rights and interests (Global Indigenous Data Alliance 2018). They expand on the existing principles within the open data movement (e.g., FAIR: findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable), which primarily focus on characteristics of data that will facilitate increased data sharing among entities while ignoring power differentials and historical contexts (Global Indigenous Data Alliance 2018). The principles are applied to storage of physical and digital material. Just as all of AMPS's physical material is held and digitised within New Zealand borders, all digital preservation files are also fully stored on campus on secure local servers.

In addition to storage, we refer to these principles in our use of online tools connecting our users with our collections. The creation of a strong online presence is an integral first step toward extending our reach to communities, researchers and other key stakeholders. Since 2021 we have begun to migrate our outdated legacy databases over to our new information management system, ArchivesSpace (AS), a cloud-based platform that allows us to properly identify, share and update information about our collections. In the near future we will also be able to stream digitised audio through the platform using secure university web streaming links. Not only will our new platform give users an ability to browse our collections in greater detail, it will also allow them to be able to listen to them at any time without having to request access first. This will make access to our collections more equitable for people in the wider Pacific region, who will no longer need to have the means to travel to our premises and will be able to listen to this material at their own discretion.

At the time of writing, we have entered 108 collections into AS; many of these are brief records indicating to our users the basic scope of material, and will be expanded in more detail over time. So far we have expanded a number of these resources to a higher level of detail, for example the Richard Moyle Niue recordings.⁷ While this resource has been enhanced to a high level of detail, it still contains some missing information, and is an example of how we can always find ways to improve our records over time.

We plan to “open up” our doors and our collections, both onsite and online, and invite cultural expertise to enhance our records where needed. For example, this year we have embarked on two major projects to enhance the Richard Moyle Niue and Polyfest collection resources with the help of key community members and cultural experts in light of two major upcoming events: Niue’s 50th anniversary of independence in 2024 and Polyfest’s 50th anniversary in 2025. Using AS as both a discovery and input tool will give us the ability to work with cultural experts to gain feedback and provide us with any further information they might know about a recording, such as the names of performers, composers, dates, locations, use of language and so on. This will foster a more participatory means of engagement and record enhancement that is in line with the wider GLAM sector, such as those of PCAP and Digital Pasifik.

This year AS will also become a hub of information about our new permissions process, where we acknowledge Indigenous cultural intellectual property rights alongside those of copyright holders. This work is relatively recent for heritage organisations, although a small sample of Indigenous partnerships can be found in Aotearoa (Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision 2020), Australia (NSLA 2023) and the United States (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage 2023). For AMPS this is a major development, as in the past ownership has been granted solely to the depositor, which in most cases is the researcher or broadcaster who created the recording.

Often recordings made in communities were done with the understanding that they would receive copies, but over time that sometimes did not occur. AMPS now has a responsibility to not only make its holdings known to those communities but allow the rightful return of agency around how those recordings might be represented and shared (Caswell 2018: 22; Flinn *et al.* 2009: 71–72; McCracken and Hogan 2021: 25).

The rapidly changing landscape of digital technology poses an ongoing challenge as we navigate our adoption of new tools. Already during our migration to AS we have encountered issues with web crawlers, which aggressively harvest information from our resources for search engines like Google. While we want our collections to be discoverable through the likes of Google, we must also be mindful that restricted and sensitive cultural material could end up widely available online, forcing us to implement measures to safeguard that from happening. Along with the advent of AI technology, there is an ever greater need to be diligent about making sensitive cultural information available online. In working with aggregators like Digital Pasifik and DigitalNZ, we must ensure that our own platform continues to be compatible with theirs, so that whenever we switch to a new system their users are still able to discover our collections.

AN INVENTORY OF MANY TRACES

We cannot always predict what information will be of value to others, especially the younger generations. But we can do our best to ensure they are given access to that information, so they have the ability to decide what they wish to do with it.

Improving online access allows us to respond to new modes of intergenerational language and cultural transmission (Widlok 2013: 3–4). By harnessing the power of database schema and search tools, we can cater to diverse user search behaviour in ways that cannot always be anticipated or predicted. Wherever someone is in the world, they can always connect to their cultural heritage without the need for a traditional archival finding aid or reading room. As our stories continue to expand under the forces of migration and globalisation, there is a need to expand our ways of remembering as well (Mahuika 2019: 78–84). As McCracken and Hogan-Stacey write, community-based archival description can involve elders, knowledge holders, youth and other Indigenous community members (2023: 46), whose participation works to decentre the language and overall authority of the archivist.

Being raised in the diaspora, between the United States and New Zealand, I wasn't always surrounded by the songs and stories of my people but rather by television, radio and the internet. I relied on information from repositories and searching the internet for information about my cultural roots, in addition

to whatever knowledge I could glean from family and church. I encountered music in mechanical ways: on CDs and cassettes or downloading files online, taking many painstaking hours over a clunky dial-up connection. As an avid researcher of this knowledge it has been a privilege to process our Tongan collections in AMPS. One that stands out to me personally is the Kingdom of Tonga collection recorded by anthropologists Wendy Pond and Garth Rogers between 1967 and 1975.⁸ I first came across the collection while packing up the archive in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, when we were forced to move out of the old Human Sciences Building at the University of Auckland for renovation. It was then that I discovered the breadth of the collection, which included open-reel tapes, transcripts and research papers, including handwritten and typed transcripts of oral histories and events surrounding the coronation of King Tāufa‘āhau Tupou IV in 1965. But most importantly for me, the collection contained some of the few sources of information about the Niua Islands, and in particular Niuatoputapu, an island in the northernmost region of Tonga, where my grandfather was from but about which he spoke very little.

Fast-forward to 2023, when I finally had time to process the material in our new premises in the General Library, University of Auckland city campus. This was an example of a very detailed collection, deposited with a wealth of information provided by Wendy Pond and Tupou Posesi Fanua, a lawyer and researcher for the Tongan Royal Palace, with whom Wendy collaborated throughout her research in Tonga. I took in as much as I could about the Niua as I went. I heard the Niua dialect and learned of their gods, chiefs and longstanding independence from Tonga from the multiple oral histories that were recorded in the region and transcribed into English. But I also learned that my own experience of gaps and silences can show up in unexpected ways.

One recording, a tau‘a‘alo (paddling song), was composed by an old chief, Loketi Lapuka, and performed at a faikava (kava-drinking) gathering in Hihifo, Niuatoputapu, in 1969. The tau‘a‘alo is an ancient song, sung while paddling to maintain rhythm and synchronicity. When it was transcribed and translated by Pond and Fanua, they recognised that there were two levels of meaning to its complex lyrics:

Fie tau ē pea fokotu‘u
 ‘Alu ‘o tau ‘i Futuna tu‘u
 Kae tuku ‘a Niua ni ke toka

Want to fight? Then stand up
 Go and fight in Futuna. Stand up!
 But leave Niua in peace
 Leaving Niua to be the loser.

These opening lines convey the use of *heliaki*, the Tongan art of metaphor, to celebrate the heroic eighteenth-century history of Niuatoputapu (Herda *et al.* 2017: 444; Kaeppler 1993: 497). In line 10, the nickname *Niua-teke-vaka* (Niua-which-repels-boats) is referred to. This comes from a time when the island's governing *Mā'atu* chiefs had become so powerful they were able to maintain political autonomy from Tongan rule (Pond 1990: 207). But the translators, Pond and Fanua, found Lapuka was also commenting on the generation of younger people of the twentieth century who were leaving the island to seek work and status in Tongatapu, "leaving Niua to be the loser". This *tau'a'alo* is a window into the helpless condition of modern-day Niuatoputapu, according to Lapuka—a land without leadership, living in the illusion of its past glory (Pond 1982: 31).

I thought about my grandfather, Fine Halapua, who left home for the metropolitan Tongatapu to pursue his studies with the Anglican Church, where he would meet Lesieli Pale, my grandmother, who was from the chiefly village of Lapaha. Seeing this journey through Lapuka's lens has a reparative effect for me, connecting me with a part of my own story that I had not known and which had been made silent or absent by forces much bigger than myself. This *tau'a'alo* showed me that my personal story of separation from cultural knowledge and information is part of the wider story of diaspora and migration. With Lapuka's voice in mind, I might lay claim to my own branch of experience, situating it within a larger narrative, seeing myself as one strand amongst many that intersect, overlap and coexist. Connection is an important role of the archive—to make space for a network of voices, connecting us to one another in ways that can be unexpected, inclusive and restorative.

CONCLUSION

In the West, we are often told the past is always getting away from us, a distance that expands as we face towards the illusory, impossible horizon. But in the Pacific, and for many Indigenous peoples, our way of thinking about the past is different. We look to the past with our back to the future, always learning from the past and focused on sustaining our world for those that come. This is encapsulated by the Māori *whakataukī* (proverb) "*Ka mua, ka muri*"—walking backwards into the future. In this way of thinking, the past catches up with us in unexpected ways, not in the way we'd like to think—not a simple projection forward—but rather in the way bodies, circuits, connections take unpredictable and counterintuitive forms.

The story of the past is never done; it is always forming and being formed by us. It is a tapestry woven of elements that alternate between what is told and untold, what is visible and the weight of what is left unsaid, what we thought we knew but now see through a different lens. This balance creates a tension that shapes us.

How might the archive hold these distances alongside the intimacies? How might they be strung together like words in a song, like flowers on a garland, or recordings on a ribbon of magnetic tape? When lifted up they display the wholeness of bodies, adorning the full weight of our histories.

Our oral traditions were designed with this understanding in mind, in the way they were meant to be embodied by us, to be living, breathing reminders, through forms of daydreaming, storytelling, the ecstasies of art and music, the poetic intricacies of language. Forms of “leaving” are not the opposite of authentic presence but rather forms of fluidity that shape the way we remember.

Cultural heritage archives engaging and collaborating with a range of community voices is an example of creating spaces of social inclusion and belonging, rather than bodily dissociation and emotional deprivation. It is a reminder that in addition to online discoverability, we must make space for human ways of remembering, the real lives and deeply personal histories that are embedded in the taonga (treasures) that we hold. In doing so, we reinstate the life-giving practices that ensure preservation and pleasurable and affectionate ways of connecting.

NOTES

1. Oral history is no longer only the occupation of “professionals”, as many examples of community oral history projects can be found today.
2. The wax cylinder is the earliest commercial audio recording technology. Wax cylinders are extremely fragile and prone to melting, shattering and erosion each time they are played. Due to degradation and the lack of appropriate technology to play them, preservation copies are often the only means of listening to these early recordings today.
3. Neither AMPS nor the Ethnological Museum of Berlin have a translation of this song or any further information about the recording. The track is titled “Liebes- und Tanzlied, 2 Männer (2stimmig, eur. Terzen)”. Wilhelm Solf cylinders, track 1, AMPS 2022/54, series 3, item 3/2/1, Richard Moyle Samoa recordings, Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland.
4. Traditionally this power has been held by Western institutions, but in recent years this has been challenged by the establishment of Indigenous- and First Nations-led libraries and community archives (Caswell 2018: 22; Flinn *et al.* 2009: 71; Hall and Love 2018: 63–64; McCracken and Hogan 2021: 22).
5. H. Kamau‘u, Hawai‘i: 1976 South Pacific Arts Festival, 76/215.01, Mervyn McLean SPAF 76, 10 March 1976, Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland.
6. “The Terminology of Whakapapa” was written by Apirana Ngata in the late 1920s to early 1930s, and copies of the original text survive in the Ngata family, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Bishop Museum in Hawai‘i. The paper was published in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 2019 (Issue no. 1) and again by Te Papa Press in 2021 in *Hei Taonga Mā Ngā Uri Whakatipu | Treasures for the Rising Generation: The Dominion Museum Ethnological Expeditions 1919–1923*.

7. Richard Moyle survey of traditional music of Niue recordings, AMPS 2022/104. A list of these recordings can be viewed at: https://archives.library.auckland.ac.nz/resources/richard_moyle_survey_of_traditional_music_of_niue
8. Wendy Pond and Garth Rogers Kingdom of Tonga recordings, 1967–1975, AMPS 2022/68, Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services. https://archives.library.auckland.ac.nz/resources/wendy_pond_and_garth_rogers_kingdom_of_tonga_recor

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are Tongan unless otherwise stated.

aho	line, string, cord (New Zealand Māori)
faikava	informal kava-drinking gathering
fananga	legend, folk tale
fonua	the land and its people, placenta, umbilical cord
hāpai	to lift up (New Zealand Māori)
heliaki	Tongan art of metaphor
kaha	line, string, cord (New Zealand Māori)
laulau	chant
mā‘ulu‘ulu	a Tongan group dance
su‘ifefiloi	a Samoan traditional form of storytelling (Samoan)
ta‘anga	poetry
taki	one by one (New Zealand Māori)
takiaho	line of descent (New Zealand Māori)
tala	word of mouth
tala-ē-fonua	telling of the land and its people
talanoa	tales
talatupu‘a	myths
taonga	treasures (New Zealand Māori)
tau‘a‘alo	paddling song
tufunga lea	oratory
ula	flower garland (Samoan)
whakapapa	genealogy (New Zealand Māori)
whakataukī	proverb (New Zealand Māori)

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Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Fa'alautaliga*, reclaimed ifilele (kwila), garden twine, 2021.

USO 4 LIFE (2021): EXPLORING MEMORY AND SELF-IDENTITY THROUGH INSTALLATION ART

JIMMY MA'IA'I

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

ABSTRACT: Among Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific diaspora, contemporary discussions of culture and identity are highly complex and multifaceted. Through postcolonial theoretical standpoints and creative outputs, many Pacific artists have sought to explore and express these complex discussions in order to further understand themselves in a postcolonial setting. Having mixed-heritage ancestry can compound this complexity, adding multiple contexts to already multiplicitous discussions. This article contextualises components from the author's body of work *Uso 4 Life*, an art installation conceived from formative memories and experiences pertinent to the development of the artist's identity as a mixed-heritage Samoan. It also explores how installation practices can be used as a basis for such investigation.

Keywords: *Tusi'upu Sāmoa*, mixed heritage, identity, 'afakasi, diaspora, Pacific art, fa'asāmoa, installation art, sculpture

VAILELE

I remember a trip to Sāmoa with my mum, dad and sister, where we stayed with my grandfather at his house in Vailele. He was working on his dictionary, *Tusi'upu Sāmoa* (2010), at the time. My grandfather's house was more like a fale pālāgi (European-styled house) than a traditional fale (house). A diamond-mesh fence surrounded the house to keep the dogs at bay, a slingshot at the ready as a further security measure. The property at Vailele was dense with tropical vegetation and planted crops: sugar cane, pineapple, coconuts, breadfruit, kūmara (sweet potato). We spent a day working in the garden, where I was given a sapelu (machete) to chop down a small tree. I watched my grandfather strike this tree with precision and intent, reminding me of my dad's abilities with the sapelu back home. Our sapelu in Auckland (Fig. 1) has a homemade handle that, even as an adult, is too big for me to use comfortably. It is bound with green insulation tape, a homage to my grandfather's homemade adze, which was bound with thin green twine. The experience of using the sapelu made me "feel Samoan". Perhaps it was because my grandfather had entrusted me with his sapelu, or even something to do with being a young boy doing feau (chores) to help

his grandfather. In any case, it was a feeling that resonated with me as a half-Scottish, half-Samoan child, blissfully unaware of the complex histories of the generations before me.

Experience and memory have shaped the development of my Samoan identity and represent the core of my body of work *Uso 4 Life*. This body of work was a response to the research question: How can the complexities of intergenerational, mixed-heritage Samoan identities be represented through installation practice? *Uso 4 Life* examined the external and internal factors that have contributed to the development of my personal cultural self-identification. It aimed to speak to and celebrate the broader community of mixed-heritage Samoans living in Auckland, including the ways this identity has been shaped and, indeed, changed through intergenerational



Figure 1. Dad's sapelu, 2021. All images are the author's.

experiences. Using autoethnographic, practice-led research methods, this installation-based creative practice and corresponding research work in unison to express the multiplicities and unique nature of Pacific self-identity.

‘O LE ‘ĀMATAGA

(THE BEGINNING)

Uso 4 Life centred on recounting and exploring the process of ethnic and cultural self-identification through the development of my own Samoan identity and the broader contexts within which this development has taken place. I recounted and unpacked formative memories foundational to my Samoan identity and expressed them through a variety of creative and artistic modes. In this sense, it was memory-based and autoethnographic.

The secondary objectives of this project sought to explore the environmental, political, social, economic and historical factors that contributed to the formation of my own identity specifically, as well as complex Pacific identities more broadly. I examined these concepts within geographic and conceptual postcolonial contexts, the former determined by Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, as city in a settler colonial state—the place where I was born and raised—and the latter as the theoretical and conceptual lens through which to understand the long and complex history of this city, its Samoan inhabitants and the cultural expression and identity formation therein. Indeed, Auckland is often referred to as the world's largest Polynesian city; it is a city where Pacific people are demographically considerable, and thus it is receptive to, and reflective of, Pacific culture. However, the history behind this demographic presence and cultural expression and its often vexed contemporary state is still fraught. Damon Salesa's (2017) concepts surrounding segregation, cultural marginalisation, deprivation and economic neglect are key to capturing this nuance both in my surrounding research and in my creative outputs.

The installation *Uso 4 Life* intended to echo these concepts by converting the exhibition space into a segregated site, a partitioned area where culture, in the form of sculptural artefacts, is “flourishing”. These artefacts were composed of various media, including glass, ceramic, plastic and reclaimed wood, with each artefact responding to the research question in various ways.

Examining the various subcultural phenomena in which Auckland's Samoan communities engage proved to be a wellspring of inspiration. This examination influenced many of my artefacts and the conceptual framework upon which my research was based. Food, for example, is an indicator of the ethnographic landscape of a particular suburb. If these suburbs have a large Pacific population, you will likely find a number of takeaways and dairies offering an array of Pacific delicacies. Most of the dairies in Avondale—the suburb in Auckland where I live—stock a variety of taro, pisupo (canned

goods) and some frozen meats like *povi māsimā* (corned beef). While not all of these vendors are from the Pacific islands, they satisfy the demand of the area's inhabitants.

Car culture is another example of cultural adaptation in Auckland. On one of my visits to Sāmoa as a child, I noticed that the car scene was uniquely Samoan. The iconic buses were adorned with airbrushed murals and bright paint jobs, Christmas lights illuminated the cars at night, and limousine spoilers were affixed to their boots. Although it has been some time since I have been able to visit Sāmoa, I believe the car scene amongst Auckland's Samoan communities stems from the car culture in Sāmoa and has been adapted to reflect the accessibility of cars, parts and modifications available here. This adaptation is echoed throughout the many facets of Samoan life in Auckland and exemplifies the resilience of their inherent cultural structures.

A SEGREGATED SITE

A common misconception, critiqued by Lana Lopesi (2018), is that Auckland city is “the largest Polynesian city in the world”; in reality, the majority (53.4%) of the city's Pacific population is concentrated in South Auckland (Stats NZ 2020). The significance of this—as the site for the exploration, construction and performance of Samoan diasporic identities—was critical to this project. This claim about Auckland is often rolled out during the many Pacific language weeks, Polyfest (the annual secondary school performing arts festival) or the city's Pasifika Festival. More evidence of this performative inclusivity is demonstrated in marketing campaigns, government publications and television advertisements that feature deeply cultural symbols, smiling Pacific faces and Pacific motifs.

Though this claim may be demographically and statistically accurate, with two-thirds of New Zealand's Pacific population residing in Auckland and considering that one in four babies born in Auckland are of Pacific descent, the sound-bite utilisation of this statistic obscures the lived realities of many Pacific people. Indeed, this statement signals that our Pacific communities are celebrated, nurtured and meaningfully included in society. However, as Damon Salesa (2017) states, South Auckland is a “city within a city”, a condensed “Polynesian city” and a segregated city that is split into “ethnoburbs”. The Pacific neighbourhoods or ethnoburbs “are highly likely to experience ‘extreme concentration’ and deprivation” (p. 22, quoting Poulsen and Forrest 2008: 237). This combination of marginalisation, concentration and deprivation forced South Auckland's inhabitants to find alternative, often creative, means of cultural expression, representation and income. This community's resilience and resourcefulness have led to the establishment of cultural and creative hubs where the cultures of our diaspora have been able to prosper. So, while Pacific cultures may be able to flourish in Auckland, this is largely self-made and is born from the experience of segregation and marginalisation.

These findings have relevance for the experiences of children of Samoan immigrants living in Auckland, as they reveal that societal marginalisation, practices of assimilation and the condensing of Pacific populations into ethnoburbs often result in social, economic, cultural and political deprivation. Pacific communities have used this very segregation, through cultural strengthening and communal resilience, to manifest and nurture their self-determined cultural hubs. Thus, in sites such as South Auckland, immigrant communities have made major efforts to preserve their cultural identities, culminating in forms of political resistance. Auckland is, therefore, a necessary site to interrogate the construction, negotiation and performance of diverse, diasporic Samoan identities, through which modes of political resistance are expressed and must be attended to.

WHO'S REAL?

"There are no true interpreters or sacred guardians of any culture. We are all entitled to our truths, insights, and intuitions into and interpretations of our cultures."—Mauaiaivao Albert Wendt (1976: 54)

A common experience, and a constant discussion throughout my research, was that of the children of Samoan migrants being referred to as "*fia pālāgi*" (Franklin 2003; McGrath 2002). The term *fia pālāgi* literally means someone who wants to be *pālāgi* (European): a person of Samoan descent who may have little to no ability to speak the Samoan language and limited knowledge of *fa'asāmoa* (Samoan culture). This may be by choice (someone of Samoan descent who rejects their Samoan identity in an attempt to "pass" as European) or due to a perceived lack of cultural competency (someone of Samoan descent who identifies with their Samoan background but does not carry the cultural skills that the broader Samoan community may expect them to hold).

My father's experience with this tension saw *pālāgi* racism directed towards him as a Samoan and New Zealand-born Samoans labelling him as *fia pālāgi* or an '*afakasi*—a term used to describe someone of mixed Samoan ethnicity. The term '*afakasi* has derogatory connotations, denoting someone with mixed heritage as being lesser or genealogically inferior to those with "full" Samoan heritage. For him, he was neither "European enough" nor "Samoan enough". His experiences, however, are necessarily understood as distinct from those of his father, who was born to two Samoan parents in Sāmoa, was a *matāi* (head of a family; titled person), spoke Samoan and was able to meet the cultural, political and societal expectations of a Samoan elder. From an autoethnographic perspective, my experiences, particularly throughout my childhood, were different still. I was welcomed by both my Samoan and *pālāgi* classmates and peers. Samoan parents were intrigued to find out just how Samoan I was and would ask, "*O ai lou igoa?*" (What is your name?). To my Samoan friends, I was their *uso* (brother). In contrast,

pālāgi parents showed little interest, an opposite reaction to the perplexed responses my father encountered. These experiences—and the distinctive social, political, economic and cultural contexts that shape them—give rise to nuanced processes of constructing and expressing Samoan diasporic identities. These processes parallel the versatility of fa‘asāmoa and have particular relevance for the children of mixed-heritage Samoans, whose grasp and performance of fa‘asāmoa has adapted (and continues to adapt) to the needs of a new and constantly changing environment.

Fa‘asāmoa is, to many Samoans, an inherent way of being, one which holds courtesy, politeness and respect at its core and can be seen to function “as a basis of identity and solidarity” (Keddell 2006: 50). It is foundational to Samoans in Sāmoa and is also a symbolic and performed connection to Sāmoa for those estranged from their homeland. My great-aunt, Aiono Dr. Fanaafi Le Tagaloa (Aiono 1986), observes that the foundations of fa‘asāmoa rest on sociocentric values stemming from the fa‘amatāi system, a system of chiefs that structure and organise Samoan society and social relations. Many island-born Samoans see fa‘asāmoa as the identifier of a “real” Samoan—a signifier of cultural authenticity—and may denounce those who cannot speak the language and perform fa‘asāmoa adequately as being lesser, or *fia pālāgi*, an *‘afakasi*. April Henderson (2016: 319) states that

while Samoan language ability remains a critically important arbiter of authenticity for those who are themselves fluent (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga 2000), can this continue to be the case for numerous diaspora-raised Samoans—and even some raised in Apia or Pago Pago—who may no longer speak Samoan? There are indications that those with minimal Samoan language competence may believe they can still be “100% Samoan” regardless of language ability (Wilson 2010).

This notion of being “100% Samoan” not only is a product of colonial scientific racism and associated theories of blood quantum but is also a profoundly non-Pacific way of conceiving of genealogy and relationality. It also ignores the complexities that shape the processes of identity construction in the diaspora (Suaalii-Sauni 2012). Such conceptions deny the “right of people to self-define their ethnicity, including being able to claim more than one” (Keddell 2006: 46). Keddell highlights the multiplicitous nature of mixed-heritage identity by acknowledging the individual’s decision to define their identity and/or ethnicity on their own terms. This decision, especially for the Samoan diaspora, is influenced by “the dynamics of social interactions and external conditions that influence the constructs of peoples’ lived realities” (Leafe 2017: i).

It is from these concepts surrounding cultural legitimacy that many of my decisions pertaining to materials arise. For example, the frequent use of

plastics within my work is a signifier of fakeness—the “not-real”. Yet the usage of such materials is also an act of ownership, celebration, humour and, ultimately, acceptance. By pairing the plastic with organic materials related to cultural memory and cultural performance, I explore a symbolic and tangible synthesis between the “real” and the “fake”—the Samoan and the non-Samoan.

POST(?)COLONIAL

Questions and explorations of identity, cultural expression, dislocation and reclamation have become central aspects of diasporic Pacific communities. Though this has been a lived experience that exists as a personal and internal navigation for Pacific people, the late twentieth century saw this exploration introduced to academic institutions, art galleries, theatres, bookshops and political spaces. Facilitated by a wave of newly educated and enfranchised Pacific activists, academics, authors and artists, Pacific communities crafted new channels to articulate their experiences of culture and identity. I use these early articulations as the theoretical foundation for my artistic practice.

Counter-critiques, like those offered by subaltern and postcolonial studies and their postcolonial theories and theorists, have provided a vocabulary for expressing diasporic Pacific experiences. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994), with her focus on positionality, reclamation of space and reorientation of personnel, enabled minority communities to speak back to institutions that had long suppressed them and their communities’ voices. Frantz Fanon (1961) explored the impacts of the dehumanisation and subjugation of colonised communities central to colonial objectives, enabling settler colonial and once-colonised communities to reflect on how these newfound realities have affected their pasts. Edward Said’s (1978) consideration of the process of “othering” as a Western-constructed term to facilitate homogenisation, oppression and colonisation provided a lens through which to rethink dominant narratives that depict Europe (and, by extension, the West) as the benchmark, thus enabling more realistic global representations.

With its roots in South Asia and the Americas, however, postcolonial theory can often overlook the particularities of the Island Pacific and associated diasporic communities, despite the region’s experiences resonating with the realities of their peers in other parts of the Global South. Fundamentally, this work finds resonance with a more region-specific intellectual tradition that, though conversant with the principles of postcolonial thought, considers and applies the specificities of the Pacific experience.

In 1970, Ratu Mara, the first Fijian prime minister, presented an address to the United Nations General Assembly in which he coined the term “the Pacific Way” (later published as the title of his memoir; Mara 1997). This term referred to the transition of the many Pacific Islands from colonisation to independence (Lawson 2010). The Pacific Way became the basis for

anticolonial discourse throughout the Pacific, from which a postcolonial Pacific political identity was formed. This burgeoning sense of “Pacifitness” gave these Island nations the impetus to self-define their postcolonial, political and cultural identities. Bernard Narokobi’s *Melanesian Way* (1983) similarly offered a pathway towards a more nuanced self-identity, socially, culturally, geographically or politically, for the western Pacific.

Thought leaders such as Epeli Hau’ofa (2008a) similarly championed the task of reevaluating the hegemonic Western discourse that presented Pacific islands as tiny islands in a far-flung ocean, devoid of land mass and thus devoid of power. Instead, he presented a Pacific-centred place- and people-based system that insisted that the Pacific region is an ocean state whose strengths lie in the vast ocean space and the interconnections therein. Others, such as Teresia Teaiwa (2016), have used their academic and artistic platforms to articulate this ocean-centric notion and contribute to this decolonial recalibration. Teaiwa’s oft-cited prose, “We sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood” (quoted in Hau’ofa 2008b: 41), speaks to the longevity of the Pacific ontological frame. Indeed, Indigenous Pacific ontologies represented by Pacific postcolonial thought existed long before Western involvement and colonisation of the region, and because of resilient communities and thinkers like Mara and Narokobi, these have endured.

Importantly, however, this process of recalibration, reclamation and decolonial practice—characteristics found in my work—is an ongoing collective project. Indeed, and as Wendt (1976) reiterates, the need for decolonisation in regard to its effects on culture and history is more important than ever: “The chill continues to wound, transform, humiliate us and our cultures. Any real understanding of ourselves and our existing cultures calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us” (p. 50).

MĀNATŪA

(MEMORIES)

“We are what we remember.”—Maulaivao Albert Wendt (2015: 8)

Maulaivao Albert Wendt encapsulates the importance of memory in a Pacific context: a blended temporality that rejects the clean-break narratives of Western conceptions of past, present and future to insist instead that our pasts are living, ever-present and carried by cultural performance and human connection. Oral history plays an inherent role in this cultured outlook as an essential means of knowledge dissemination throughout the Pacific. Memory is, therefore, a symbiotic experience between the personal, the independent and the collective, and the past, the present and the future; each facet shapes and is simultaneously shaped by the other.

Sāmoa exemplifies this in the numerous forms of oral genres: *alagā'upu* (proverbs), *tauloto* (poems) and *pese* (songs) (Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2020). According to Samantha Lichtenberg (2011: 36), these oratory expressions are “more than words and memories[;] these stories are the original strands of Samoan culture, realities that make up the world of a people and place”. I believe this statement has implications on a personal level, too. The stories, memories and experiences my father and grandfather shared undoubtedly shaped how I engage with our culture and understand my Samoan identity. However, my lived realities, experiences and memories are just as pertinent to the development of my self-identity; therefore, there must be room to adapt. Indeed, to insist that Samoan culture is, and has always been, homogeneous and static is to deny the fluidity and agency that have enabled Samoan society to flourish for millennia. Not all Samoan experiences are the same, even in a familial setting; my experiences differ from those of my father, and my father's from his. Thus, I explored the differences in these experiences and the gradual shifts necessary to adapt to an ever-changing social landscape.

Oftentimes throughout this project, I have looked back on various moments and personal experiences and realised the profound effects that they have had on the development of my self-identity. These moments have defined who I am today as a mixed-heritage Samoan. Geertz (1973) states, “The important thing about the anthropologist's findings is their complex specificness, their circumstantiality” (p. 23). The artefacts featured in the *Uso 4 Life* installation held specific personal value, derivative of memory and experience in order to strike commonality with the greater mixed-heritage Samoan community.

PRECEDENTS

Pacific artists operating in Auckland have varied artistic intentions, practices and outcomes. These artists have provided alternative ways of representing Pacific experiences in the diaspora and together have established a creative platform to contribute to the landscape of Pacific art.

Fatu Feu'u often comes to mind when referencing Samoan contemporary art for his innovative hybridised paintings and fine arts practices. At the time of Feu'u's emerging career, there was very little Pacific representation in New Zealand's art world. Alongside the resurgence of Māori art in the 1980s, Feu'u forged a path for Pacific artists to follow. However, even as Feu'u's career was growing, Auckland was undergoing—and indeed had already undergone—some significant societal changes.

After World War II, and at the request of the New Zealand government and its business sectors, vast numbers of Pacific peoples immigrated to New Zealand (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2021). New Zealand's economic boom, which began during the recovery from the Great Depression, continued through to the postwar years when pastoral exports and large-scale

domestic manufacturing resulted in low unemployment and high personal spending. Importantly, however, the postwar economic boom that New Zealand experienced was aided by the cheap labour offered by the newly arrived Pacific migrants. Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Samoa's prime minister from 1976 to 1982 and son of the first co-head of state of Sāmoa, suggests three reasons why Pacific people made the journey to New Zealand: "job opportunities, money, and most importantly their children's education", which to many Samoans are considered vital to having a successful life (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2021).

However, the so-called "land of milk and honey" would run dry before long, with Pacific people largely feeling the brunt of the recession. In 1968, an amendment was made to the already problematic and prejudiced Immigration Act of 1964, which the Norman Kirk-led Labour government of 1974 utilised in allowing the police authority to "ask people to produce not only a valid passport, but also a permit to enter and remain temporarily in New Zealand, as well as other evidence of identity" (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2021) and incarcerate those who did not comply. This prejudice worsened as the New Zealand economy took significant blows at the hands of United Kingdom decision-making. New Zealand was looking for someone to blame, and from the mid-1970s the then prime minister Robert Muldoon, using populist and nationalistic tactics, forced the blame onto the Polynesian "overstayers". This fearmongering led to the dawn raids of the late 1970s, which would see police forcibly entering Polynesian households around central Auckland (Ponsonby, Grey Lynn and Herne Bay) in the early hours of the morning in search of those living in the country on visitor permits. People who had once been encouraged to immigrate to New Zealand were now deported en masse.

The prejudiced oppression that Pacific people experienced at the hands of the New Zealand government inspired Pacific youth to collectivise. The most notable example is the Polynesian Panthers, a Pacific rights group whose headquarters was based in the newly established Pacific hub of Ponsonby. Inspired by the African American Black Panther movement, the Polynesian Panthers compared their experiences of racism and marginalisation to those of their American counterparts and sought to support Pacific communities in Auckland. Such support included legal aid services for those threatened with deportation, homework clubs for Pacific youth, political lobbying, large-scale public protests and companion services for children who would be left behind in New Zealand after their parents were deported (Ana'e 2020).

My grandparents, Jennifer Stewart and Semisi Ma'ia'i, married in 1964—noting it was unusual for pālagi and Samoans to wed at the time—and relocated to Sāmoa in 1966. They returned to New Zealand in the 1970s and immediately struggled to find a place to live. According to my grandmother,

they decided she would do the negotiations under her maiden name, Stewart, and try to keep my grandfather “out of sight.” They eventually settled in Kumeū, west of Auckland, where they were largely “insulated from the unrest” (Jennifer Ma'ia'i, personal communication, 2021). However, my grandfather, an elder at the Newton Pacific Island Presbyterian Church, was privy to the goings-on around the central areas and kept his passport on him just in case. Eventually, my grandfather established his practice as a general practitioner in Whenuapai (West Auckland), where many Samoan people would travel to have their medical concerns assessed by a familiar face in a familiar language. The “locals” were resentful of this Pacific influx and were astonished that this Samoan man, my grandfather, was not some labourer but, indeed, a general practitioner. My father and his brother were also subject to this pervasive gaze, having gone through the historically elitist Auckland Grammar School in the societal wake of the dawn raids.

The events of the dawn raids and the subsequent formation of the Polynesian Panthers signalled a shift among the Polynesian youth in Auckland and redefined what it meant to be “Pacific” in New Zealand. Artists who had grown up during these times began to express frustrations and critique the hegemonic structures and institutions that had attempted to stifle their culture and, ultimately, their identity.

Michel Tuffery is arguably one of the more recognised contemporary Pacific artists in New Zealand, with his iconic *Pisupo Lua Afe* (1994) and *Povi* series. *Pisupo Lua Afe* resonated with me for its use of reclaimed materials and its sharp social commentary on the relationship between New Zealand and Sāmoa and the introduction of livestock to the island nation. Tuffery details his frustration with the deforestation of land in parts of Sāmoa to accommodate livestock. His concerns arose when he witnessed fertilisers and other agricultural run-off seeping into the waterways and ultimately into the reef. Another concern, Tuffery explains, is the amount of pollution found in and around the villages, which, at the time, Sāmoa could not effectively dispose of. The onus, Tuffery adds, is on the companies themselves, since they are importing these goods to Sāmoa, much like the agricultural initiatives that damaged the Samoan ecosystem (“APT3 / Michel Tuffery”, 2018). All of these concerns are heavily linked to New Zealand's relationship with Sāmoa, the economic and political presence that has steered Sāmoa to a more Western, globalised existence.

Another artist, Siliga David Setoga, has produced works with a similarly astute critique of New Zealand–Sāmoa relations. *(Influ)enza* (2008), a work still relevant today, displays fruit boxes emblazoned with a subverted, satirised version of the Enza fruit logo. This work functions on many levels. It invokes the history of New Zealand's role in the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic in Sāmoa and the subsequent loss of 22 percent of Sāmoa's population

(Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2020) whilst also commenting on New Zealand's dependency on Pacific workers. In an eerily accurate demonstration of foresight, Setoga's work also serves as a commentary on the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme implemented by the governments of Australia and New Zealand around the time Setoga created *(In)flu*enza and providing the people of the Pacific with seasonal employment in the countries' orchards. While the policy initially allowed for 5,000 RSE migrants a year, this number has steadily increased, with 19,000 RSE migrants arriving on New Zealand shores in 2022/23 (New Zealand Immigration 2023). The New Zealand government promoted the RSE scheme as a "triple-win" initiative benefiting the Pacific labour market, bolstering economic growth throughout the Pacific and increasing the financial standing of immigrant workers. However, as KDee Aimiti Ma'ia'i (2019) states:

[W]e might question the extent to which these benefits have been realised, and indeed whether it is a "triple win" policy, for while New Zealand has reaped benefits, the same good harvest has not been enjoyed by the Pacific. (p. 1)

As the RSE scheme is predicated on seasonal and *cyclical* migration, RSE migrants may only work in New Zealand for seven months per year and at the same time are encouraged to participate in indefinite repeat migrations. In this sense, the particularities of the RSE scheme have meant that RSE migrants are a highly productive yet legislatively disposable population. Indeed, as John Gibson and David McKenzie (2014) note, "RSE workers ... picked an average of 54 percent more fruit per day than New Zealand contract labour, and 82 percent more than backpackers and working holiday makers" (p. 203). This productivity is not, however, adequately reflected in the economic benefits for Pacific RSE workers. Of the average NZ\$12,000 that an RSE migrant makes per season, \$6,500 is spent on predeparture and living costs such as accommodation (paid by the employee to the employer). This suggests, then, that New Zealand, rather than Pacific people, is the primary beneficiary of this supposed triple-win initiative and implies that New Zealand's colonial force over the Pacific is still very much present today.

Importantly, however, Setoga and Tuffery speak to a particular generation of Samoan culture and identity in New Zealand, that of the children of first-wave Samoan immigrants. This generation's experiences are markedly different from mine, and my work functions within this cultural "grey area". The grey area I am referring to is not a "third space" or a state of hybridity. Instead, it steps beyond these binary models and leans more towards a state of multiplicity (Bhabha 2015; Bhabha and Rutherford 2006).

Graham Fletcher's *Lounge Room Tribalism* is a series of paintings featuring Polynesian artefacts in modernist-style home settings. In my opinion, the placement of the objects in these Western settings speaks to the

commodification and fetishisation of Indigenous artefacts, a phenomenon made popular by the primitivist movement and the establishment of ethnographic museums (Mallon and Tonga 2020). This could also be interpreted as an example of an artwork or artefact's value being increased or enhanced when it is situated in foreign or unusual contexts. Siapo (barkcloth), for example, viewed in its original context, has an undeniable artistic value; however, its uses are primarily ceremonial. The same can be said of the tānoa ('ava (kava) bowl): the craftsmanship and skill required to carve such a bowl are immense, and, much like the siapo, it is a work of art, albeit with practical ceremonial functionality.

This phenomenon of decontextualisation has become increasingly more common, fuelled by tourism industries throughout the Pacific. Tourism has created a demand for commodified versions of once traditional artefacts. Sāmoan siapo, for example, has gained use in non-traditional ways. It is often used in jewellery, handbags, placemats, wall hangings and other home décor to accommodate the demand created by tourism. This “non-traditional” display of the cultural artefact, whether in a gallery space, an ethnographic museum or someone's home, changes the reading of the artefact from something ceremonial into a curio, a colonial bounty or an expression of one's culturedness.

‘O A‘U O LO‘U ‘ĀIGA

(I AM MY FAMILY)

During the second year of my undergraduate degree, my grandfather, Papaāli'i Dr. Semisi Ma'ia'i, sadly passed away. His passing provoked feelings of cultural disruption and dislocation. I felt as though my link to Samoan culture was lost, and I was compelled to learn more and explore this connection on my own. I have continued to seek further understanding about what it means to be a mixed-heritage Samoan, and how my identity has been shaped through personal and shared experience and the gifting of intergenerational knowledge.

Much of this exploration has surfaced during my making process, which has often proven to be meditative, allowing me the space and time to recall and reminisce. Part of the *Talofa™* work (Fig. 2), for example, involved dismantling plastic 'ula (garlands) and adhering the individual flowers onto a backing (not pictured). During this monotonous process, I refined concepts surrounding colonial influence and its effects on the Pacific. Further, I explored plastification as a theme and the meaning of the word plastic in relation to mixed-heritage identity.

This exploration continued into the last year of my bachelor's degree with the works titled *Sāmoasonite* and *Sāmoasonite and Friends* (Fig. 3). These works were centred around the idea of being “plastic”—lacking in the socially



Figure 2. Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Talofa™*, ceramic, enamel paint, 2019.

constructed (and policed) cultured markers of ethnic identity—in relation to one's culture. Similar to the *Talofa™* works, I took an item that has strong cultural connections to the Pacific and is simultaneously made of plastic: the red, white and blue chequered woven plastic bag often derogatorily referred to as the “Samoan suitcase”. This bag is synonymous with travel and migration throughout the Pacific and is, therefore, directly connected to New Zealand's Samoan diaspora and their New Zealand-born children. The treatment of the bags involved disassembling their physical form and, once deconstructed, cutting the formless material into strips. These strips imitated the faux-thatching found on a Samoan-styled fale on Avondale's Rosebank School grounds in Auckland. Though it is made from nontraditional synthetic materials, it serves as a site for the school's Pacific cohort to be represented in their environment and to connect with their culture. This deeply resonated with me as a mixed-heritage Samoan dislocated from their culture, and thus the concept of the *Sāmoasonite* works was solidified.

The regular use of plastic throughout my work not only refers to the challenges that mixed-heritage Samoans face in affirming their own identity but also speaks to broader themes of neocolonial trends in Samoan–Australasian relationships (Mallon *et al.* 2012). If we are to understand neocolonialism as the imposition and control of former colonial powers over



Figure 3. Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Sāmoasonite 2.1*, mixed media, 2020.

their former territories, we must locate and assess the imbalances and impacts of uneven international relations. Indeed, even though in 1962 Sāmoa was the first island in the Pacific to regain its independence, the talons of colonisation remain firmly embedded. These trends may be seen in the aforementioned RSE scheme, structurally inequitable trade relations, negligent climate policy, increased pollution and inefficient development and aid policies. Such examples ensure that New Zealand is able to retain the benefits of empire despite Sāmoa no longer being a New Zealand colonial outpost.

On the surface, the *Sāmoasonite* works act as a form of reclamation, taking back the “Samoan suitcase” with the aim of recasting derogatory stereotypes to instead instil pride in the users’ community—a badge of honour, perhaps.

They also function as an entry point to cultural engagement. The act of making the plastic imitation thatching displayed an ad hoc attempt to fashion a traditional Samoan item, reflecting the imitation fale at the school. This engagement demonstrates an example of knowing *about* the culture but not *knowing* the culture, which is a consistent theme throughout my work.

These themes of the traditional/introduced, organic/inorganic and real/fake continued to appear throughout *Uso 4 Life* by way of traditional materials, artefacts and symbols.

The objects featured within the installation were inspired by these key concepts:

- i) Memory and experiences
- ii) ‘Afakasi/“plastic”
- iii) Neo/postcolonial relations with Sāmoa
- iv) The segregated site

Uso 4 Life was a representation of my personal, formative memories. These memories, formed either in New Zealand or Sāmoa, have pertinence to my understanding of, and engagement with, my Samoan culture. Within this work, there was an exploration of materials that echoed my exploration of culture. The concepts and ideas explored within the work inspired the material choices. For example, the presence of plastic in most of the artefacts is related directly to the notion of being an ‘afakasi or plastic Samoan.

The installation space, or the *Segregated Site*, was derived from the concept that Auckland is a segregated city, divided into social, ethnic or economic ethnoburbs. If these have a large Pacific population, they are likely to face high population density, socioeconomic deprivation and political and social neglect. However, despite this marginalisation, these Pacific neighbourhoods often manifest themselves as hubs for Pacific cultures to flourish, where language, cuisine, culture, collectivity and community exploration can thrive. This idea of cultures flourishing resonates throughout this body of work through the artefacts within the *Segregated Site*; the materials, the bright colours, the lights and the symbols all celebrate Pacific culture.

IFILELE

(KWILA)

Ifilele (kwila; *Intsia* sp.), a hardwood native to Sāmoa and used by communities to sustain life and culture, was traditionally used for weaponry, construction and handicrafts. In the 1970s, however, a forestry initiative was implemented by an American multinational, followed by New Zealand and Australia, which saw the native hardwood industrialised and exported for use in interior decorating, outdoor furniture and decking. The commercialisation

process for this species similarly occurred in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands at the hands of Japanese, Australian and New Zealand foresters. I was fortunate enough to procure some of this exported ifilele that had been used as decking timber at my brother-in-law's family home. Though it is over 20 years old, and despite its rough and weathered surface, the wood remained untarnished with its integrity intact.

By reimagining and recasting the ifilele decking timber towards more traditional forms—whilst still maintaining its scars from its past—my use of the wood demonstrates a reappropriation of “Pacific plunder” and reclamation of Indigenous material. The industrialisation of ifilele for non-Pacific commercial intent in line with *pākehā* (New Zealand European) priorities—cast adrift as decking timber and thus stripped of its sacred and cultured position in Samoan communities—springs from the same industrial machine that brought Pacific people to New Zealand in the mid-twentieth century, that commodifies Pacific labour and that relegates Pacific social, cultural and economic well-being to the fringes of society. It is this context that renders a critique of the clubs I made out of the ifilele necessary.



Figure 4. Ifilele decking timber, unprepared, 2021.

Since the wood has been cut into decking planks (Fig. 4), the material required extensive preparation to get it to a point where it could be workable. I first removed the nails left behind from their previous existence and brushed off excess moss, dirt and detritus before finally cutting the planks to a uniform width. From here, I put the planks through a thickness planer and exposed the wood's original colour. This treatment left the planks with a uniform width and thickness, and from here, I was able to laminate the planks together. The lamination process for the blanks of each artefact differed slightly. For example, the blanks for the clubs were laminated to roughly match the shape of the finished product to allow for a more straightforward carving experience. The blank for the bowl was laminated in an overlapping pattern to provide more strength. Though traditionally these artefacts are carved by hand with adzes and chisels, I used a combination of techniques, including woodturning, carving, power carving and various finishing techniques.

There are four artefacts in this installation that have been fashioned using the reclaimed ifilele: a pair of fa'alautaliga (ear-shaped clubs), an uatogi (war club), which has taken the shape of a baseball bat, and a tānoa. Each of these artefacts is made to loosely resemble its traditional counterpart, with the exception of the introduced, plastic or foreign materials.

FA'ALAUTALIGA

The fa'alautaliga are inspired by a fond memory I have of my first trip to Sāmoa. I recall being obsessed with the clubs found at the maketi (market) in Apia: the patterns, the shapes and the materials. I eventually convinced my grandparents to buy one for me, a touristic form of a fa'alau fa'i, a wooden spear with serrations below the blade, engraved with "Pacific style" patterns, which I still cherish to this day.

My fa'alautaliga (Fig. 5) do not share this same adornment. Aside from the nail holes from the material's past form, they are patternless. The omission of the "Pacific" patterns demonstrates a form of humility, an acknowledgment of the tufuga (experts) and the skill required to execute this traditional art form. This reflects a level of respect for the rich history of Samoan craftsmanship and an awareness of my positionality as a diasporic mixed-ethnicity Samoan in that I am not trying to make a historically accurate fa'alautaliga (Fasavalu and Reynolds 2019). On the other hand, the attempt to create a "traditional" artefact exhibits the desire to engage with my Samoan culture without the guidance of an elder or a tufuga (Gershon 2012). These attempts to engage in one's heritage are common amongst dislocated diasporic Samoans, especially if they are of mixed heritage. Unlike their counterparts in Sāmoa, our understanding of fa'asāmoa is often a diluted version, and thus, we must navigate through our culture on our own.



Figure 5. Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Fa'alautaliga* (detail), reclaimed ifilele, garden twine, 2021.

The clubs also feature green plastic lashing around the handle, again referencing the theme of the organic alongside the inorganic, exemplifying the concept of being a plastic Samoan. The green twine is an intergenerational reference. According to my dad, my grandfather fashioned his own adze for use on their farm. He wrapped the handle with green gardening string, not Paracord, jute or plastic twine but a fine green string, tightly bound around the handle. My father emulated this green wrapping with our sapelu, making his own handle and binding it with green electrical tape. Though it's a little faded now, it remains as trusty as ever.

In order to make these clubs “flourish” within the *Segregated Site*, I finished the clubs using a series of sandpapers, making them extremely smooth to the touch, and gave the clubs a wax coating to give them a lustrous shine. This shine also indicates their personal value to me—they are polished and maintained because they are a treasure.

UATO GI

The other club, the uatogi (Fig. 6), is also made from the reclaimed ifilele. I made a blank similar to a baseball bat blank and turned the bat using a lathe. This club was initially meant to take the shape of a more traditional club; however, the more time I spent making the bat, the more time I had to contemplate the reading of this club and how the final shape would contribute to this installation. I began to see that there was space to portray development within my self-identification through this bat; the fa‘alautaliga echoed a traditional club and



Figure 6. Jimmy Ma‘ia‘i, *Uatogi*, reclaimed ifilele, polyurethane, insulation tape, 2022.

demonstrated an engagement with something cultural, while the bat resembles something Western or foreign. Thus, this Westernised “club” aims to mirror the influence of Western culture on New Zealand’s Pacific diaspora.

The bat-styled uatogi offers another further-reaching concept regarding the Samoan diaspora in the United States. The film *My Crasy Life* (1992), by Jean-Pierre Gorin, follows the lives of members of the gang Sons of Samoa. Migrants from both Tutuila (American Samoa) and Western Samoa adapt to the American way of life whilst maintaining a connection to their Samoan heritage through church and family. The young men had found themselves in a world that totally contrasted with the one they had grown up in—a world that ultimately failed them. Evidence of this failure can be seen when the young men are asked about their schooling, and in response, one describes a fight involving a school counsellor at age 10. This fight would see the boy incarcerated, exemplifying the failure of the colonial structures and their inability to accommodate cultures that differ from those they were designed to benefit. My “bat” makes reference to the Seattle Mariners baseball caps the gang members wear and gang violence, but it is also in conversation with the ideas surrounding colonial hegemony and its mishandling of our Pacific peoples.

NOFOA

(CHAIRS)

The plastic outdoor chairs I exhibited are commonly used in Sāmoa and are linked to another pertinent memory of my time there. I noticed that my aunt was sitting on a stack of these chairs as if they were being put into storage. When asked why she had configured her chair this way, she informed us that it was to avoid the chair legs from breaking beneath her. After learning this, I began to spot these stacked chairs wherever we went.

The chairs (Fig. 7) are meant to seem humorous on the surface. In my experience, a typical Samoan reaction to someone falling over, tripping up and even breaking a chair would be to laugh it off. The humorous nature of these chairs is clearly displayed in the splayed legs and bright, childish colour scheme. The shine, also found in the various wooden objects, aims to show a level of resilience—an armour of sorts. The chairs also reflect the effects of New Zealand’s colonial presence in Sāmoa, the introduction of plastics and the importation of foods high in sodium and cholesterol, such as corned beef or pisupo.

TĀNOA

In the early-to-mid-2000s, like many other children my age, I became obsessed with Beyblades, toys associated a merchandise-driven manga series from Japan. Beyblades are essentially spinning tops that competitors use to battle each other in a plastic “arena” to see whose top can stay spinning the longest. Both the Beyblades and the arena were very expensive. My friends and I overcame this financial barrier by fashioning our makeshift



Figure 7. Jimmy Ma‘ia‘i, *Nofo i lalo*, plastic outdoor chairs, heat-formed legs, plastic primer, enamel paint, 2022.

“Beyblades” out of plastic bottle tops, using a string and a pencil as the winding mechanism. There was, however, something missing: the arena. My dad, whom I had roped into the Beyblade phenomenon, suggested we use our tānoa to do battle. And so we did.

In this context, the bowl was no longer used for the ‘ava ceremony but instead as a toy. That is not to say I wasn’t aware of its cultural significance. Instead, I offered a new interpretation of the tānoa (Fig. 8). In order to emphasise these concepts, I added a plastic foundation, a set of legs much larger in diameter than most Samoan tānoa, giving the bowl a childish, almost toy-like characteristic. This memory offers the most concise reading of the carved, wooden objects: the contemporary, Western, often naive engagement or interaction with a traditional, cultural item.



Figure 8. Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Tānoa*, reclaimed ifilele, resin, 2022.

CONCLUSION

Installation practices often act as outlets for expressing one's culture and identity, immersing the audience within the artist's experiences and ideas (Kadirkaikobad *et al.* 2016). Installation is a highly versatile practice that allows for a variety of production modes and displays, and it has the capacity to address a wide scope of artists' concerns (IMMA 2018). Thus, the possibilities for expressing the complexities of multifaceted subjects, such as identity and culture, are vast. The exploration of these complexities was expressed through each of the artefacts within this installation. The material decisions, the treatments of these materials and the modes of display all relate to the aforementioned concepts and provide a personal insight into my experiences and memories pertinent to culture and identity.

This project set out to explore intergenerational changes in identity and culture through the lens of memory and experience. Employing autoethnographic methods of research and making resulted in a deeper understanding of my own identity; like the boy with the sapelu, it has made me feel Samoan. These personal memories rest within the broader historical contexts of Samoan diasporic communities in New Zealand, which have simultaneously informed this work. Colonialism, hegemonic discrimination, socioeconomic and environmental disparities, and Western influence and integration are all factors that shaped this exploration and the outcomes of the installation. However, this work was an extension of myself, and I am an extension of my 'āiga (family). I believe that as long as I exist, I will continue to further this understanding, creating new memories through new experiences.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are Samoan unless otherwise indicated. The Samoan glosses are based on definitions appearing in *Tusi 'upu Sāmoa* (vol. 1) by Papaāli'itele Dr Semisi Ma'ia'i.

'āiga	family; relation
'afakasi	colloquialism denoting someone of mixed heritage
'ava	kava; a special drink made from the root of <i>Piper Methysticum</i>
alagā'upu	proverb
fa'alau fa'i	wooden spear with a diamond-shaped blade and serrations below the blade
fa'alautaliga	ear-shaped club
fa'amatai	system of chiefs that structures and organises Sāmoan society
fa'asāmoa	the culture of Sāmoa
fale	house; abode
fale pālagi	European-styled house
feau	chores
fia pālagi	someone who has adopted a European way of living
ifilele	kwila, a Samoan hardwood or ironwood (<i>Intsia</i> sp.)
kūmara	sweet potato (New Zealand Māori)
maketi	market
mānatūa	to remember
matāi	head of a family; titled person

nofoa	seat; chair
pākehā	New Zealand European (New Zealand Māori)
pālagi	abbreviation of papālagi; a European person
pese	song
pisupo	canned goods
povi māsima	corned beef
sapelu	sabre; machete
siapo	cloth made from mulberry bark
tānoa	a ceremonial bowl used for 'ava ceremonies
tauloto	poem
tufuga	expert
uatogi	war club
'ula	necklace; garland
uso	brother

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Jimmy Ma'ia'i, *Uso 4 Life* installation preparation, 2022.

SHORTER COMMUNICATIONS/TALANOA

RADICAL INCLUSION: ON *PACIFIC ARTS AOTEAROA*

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ABSTRACT: *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* (Penguin), edited by author, curator and academic Lana Lopesi (University of Oregon), was published in November 2023. The book is crammed with profiles of many Pacific artists, collectives and movements across the contemporary arts scene in Aotearoa New Zealand and gives voice to the artists themselves, with more than 95 artists documenting their own experience. This piece is a long-distance talanoa (conversation) between Lopesi and Andrea Low, a curator at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum. They discuss the genesis of the book and why it is important not only to record the breadth and depth of Pacific contributions to the cultural landscape of Aotearoa but also to contextualise those contributions in unexpected ways.

Keywords: Indigenous arts, Pacific artists, Pacific arts, talanoa, contemporary Pacific art

Pacific Arts Aotearoa (Penguin, 2023), edited by Lana Lopesi, is an anthology of contemporary Pacific art and artists that contextualises the diversity and range of Pacific artistic engagement in Aotearoa New Zealand. While significant in number, Pacific artists have not been equitably represented in the New Zealand art historical canon, a reflection of the marginalisation of Pacific peoples across many dimensions of life in Aotearoa New Zealand (Salesa 2017) and of their absence from the creative industries' permanent teaching staff (Naepi 2019) and underrepresentation in institutional exhibitions and collections. This book is pivotal and recalls an earlier publication that mapped the influence of Pacific artists: *Speaking in Colour: Conversations with Artists of Pacific Island Heritage* (Te Papa Press, 1997), in which ten artists spoke to Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira about their lives and work. All ten artists represented in the earlier book are present in *Pacific Arts Aotearoa*, some posthumously. Lending urgency to the concern expressed by Lopesi and Ioana Gordon Smith in 2019, and quoted in *Pacific Arts Aotearoa*, that "our stories, our histories, might disappear before we have even assessed their

significance” (p. 13), Mallon and Pereira followed their first effort with *Pacific Art Niu Sila* (Te Papa Press, 2002), a book that made a deep impression on Lana Lopesi as a high school art student and which she credits as a personal driver in the conceptualisation and realisation of *Pacific Arts Aotearoa*.

Leone Samu Tui’s graphic chart “9 Reasons Why Pacific Research Is Important” (Leenen-Young and Uperesa 2023: 11) is as relevant in an art context as it is in an academic one. Intentions to reclaim space, reaffirm worldviews, recognise roots/routes and, perhaps most importantly, replenish capacity are foundational structures for artists looking to see their creative practice reflected in society. *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* reveals the work, experience and range of Pacific creative endeavours, allowing for emerging artists, curators, writers and dancers to build on the groundbreaking work of not only those that went before but those that are still here.

I (Andrea Low) had contributed a chapter to *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* on adornments by Pacific jewellers and artists held in the Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum collection but had mostly dealt with Lana’s assistant editor, Faith Wilson. I had not spoken directly with Lana about the book prior to the talanoa (conversation) presented below. We have worked more closely together in my role as a member of the advisory board of *Marinade*, an arts journal started by Lana and curator Ioana Gordon-Smith, and I was familiar with writing by Lana, in particular her impressive thesis, “Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries” (Lopesi 2021b), and two important books, *False Divides* (2018) and *Bloody Woman* (2021a). Her curatorial work on the exhibition *The Commute*¹ with four other curators at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane in 2018 is still creating waves and changing the conversation on the mobility and locatedness of Indigeneity today. The talanoa took place over a number of weeks as we fitted our responses in around our day jobs, Lana as a writer and academic in the Race and Ethnic Studies department at the University of Oregon and mine as Associate Curator Contemporary World at Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Andrea Low:

First, congratulations on the production of *Pacific Arts Aotearoa*! How did the idea for this book come about, and was it always imagined as something so big and comprehensive?

Lana Lopesi:

The project started as a digital project called the Pacific Arts Legacy Project, which was the brainchild of Makerita Urale from Creative New Zealand.² In the first Covid-19 lockdown, concerned with artists being out of work and conscious of the Pacific art community’s calls for more written art history,

she saw the opportunity to commission artists to write their stories and pay them to do that. So, it started as a project of 10 commissions, which grew to 20, then to 40 with the help of Lagi-Maama,³ who commissioned stories by our elder mama and papa artists, and it was published online with *The Pantograph Punch*.⁴

I think we always had visions of it being a book, or at least we'd sort of joke "this could be a book", but it wasn't the initial intent, as we were focused on the digital version in the context of a pandemic. But as soon as the online project launched, Claire Murdoch from Penguin Random House reached out and saw the potential of the project, and that's how those conversations began. Claire as a publisher has been behind important Pacific books like *Tangata o le Moana* (Māhina-Tuai *et al.* 2012) during her time at Te Papa Press. So really the vision and heart of Makerita and then Claire is a huge part of the project coming into the world, and both of them seeing the value in the stories of Pacific artists.

It did feel really important to show breadth and depth, which to me was about the dynamism of Pacific arts. Also, I think honestly, the book could be bigger, which feels ridiculous when we're talking about a book of 544 pages, 120-plus contributors and 300-ish images. But once you start thinking about artists and the breadth of our stories, really we're just getting started.

Andrea:

There are many voices represented in the book and, uniquely, there are a lot of artists talking about their own work as well as the perspectives of researchers and writers.

Lana:

The artists' voices are the core of the book, just as they were the core of the online project. Very rarely are artists asked to write their own stories—it's usually people like me and you doing that—so it was really important to flip that emphasis and give it back to the artists and their voices. Something really unique happens when you give that space over to artists to tell their story. In addition to that, having researchers and writers—many of whom are also incredibly important voices in the Pacific arts, whether they be writers, curators, historians or producers—was also vital to provide the opportunity to focus on an art form or an exhibition or a moment. Artists weren't asked to write the history of Pacific arts but just to write their own story in whatever way made sense to them, and then in the collective of all the voices and all the perspectives, that's where we get some kind of sense of the bigger story.

Andrea:

The Pacific arts bench is deep! There are still so many artists not included, and not everyone from the digital project is in the book.

Lana:

I think it's really important to remember that this book is just the tip of the iceberg, and one book can't and shouldn't stand in for six decades of Pacific artists not being written about. We did ask a number of people who weren't interested or weren't able to submit in the end, as well as some people who were in the digital project and decided not to do the book. And the other thing, too, is that many people in here are long overdue for their own monograph. There's a lot of work to be done to actually fill the void of Pacific art histories.

Andrea:

As you said before, artists weren't asked to write the history of Pacific arts. That, in a sense, fell to you with collating most of the 40 original commissions for the digital project and then commissioning 50-plus more for the book. Unlike a typical art historical approach, the stories are categorised not by practice but by themes. In "Y2K" (chapter 7) alone, the multiplicity of approaches is amazing. Leafa Wilson/Olga Krause, who writes her own story in the chapter, is a self-described "art anakema (misfit, anathema)", but that could be applied to so many in this volume. How hard was it to develop the ways you have united each chapter and devised the themes?

Lana:

It was both hard and easy, I suppose. Many of the artists fit either chronologically or thematically within a particular theme or time, and many of the artists are written about within the chapters—either as belonging to a time frame or through a theme like enduring practices or doing it yourself—so having them there is useful for readers who might want to read more in depth about a particular person and also hear that artist's voice. Where it gets tricky is that many artists are uncategorisable, or maybe defy easy categorisation, and could feature in many places in the book. And when putting a book together, at some point a decision needs to be made; hopefully we made some good decisions, and I also hope that some of those decisions of placement are exciting and unexpected.

Andrea:

Your own life has been immersed in a broad spectrum of arts from the outset—in the book you mention your father in the hip hop music world, a

world that's been dominated in Aotearoa by Māori and Pacific musicians; the influence of artists like Fatu Feu'u at high school; attending Polyfest with your Samoan language nest class; and, significantly for this book, the influence of Pandora Fulimalo Pereira and Sean Mallon's book *Pacific Art Niu Sila*, which came out in 2002. It's easy to underestimate the impact of these experiences.

Lana:

I guess so. I mean, they all individually seem insignificant, but I suppose when thinking about it, it's thinking about all the creativity I was exposed to at a young age. Both of my nanas—my English and Samoan ones—were creative in their own ways, whether in sewing, quilting, weaving, braiding, gardening or drawing, and so these were things I was exposed to. I used to sew with my nana at a young age. I remember when I went to intermediate and we made cushions in our soft materials class, I was showing my classmates how to thread the sewing machine. I never thought the creativity around which I grew up was special until those kinds of moments, where you realise, okay, maybe it's not normal to know your way around a sewing machine at 10 or to spend a full Saturday painting in your bedroom at 15. My mum is a graphic designer, so she's creative too. She taught me my way around InDesign during my high school years—she still helps me now—and so when I went to art school at Elam,⁵ I would pass on what I knew of InDesign, like it was passed down to me. Now, my biggest creative outlet is my PowerPoint slides—how things change!

Andrea:

That background of creativity is a common denominator, of course, but also it's thought I have had reinforced by this book is the transdisciplinary capacity of so many of the artists. Is this the gig economy/gig worker/career portfolio market at work? Or are there other social dynamics that you've noticed?

Lana:

I think that's the nature of being an artist, at least in my experience: that you just are creative and that way of thinking infiltrates all areas, but also it's necessary to survive financially as an artist. Very few artists in the book had a full-time arts practice that is solely about making art, and those artists who did had support networks selling and marketing their work and people to manage their administration. What seemed more common for people was a hustle in their work, and also bursts of making and exhibiting that were flanked with various jobs, careers or hustles, or also time out to have families or care for family members. So, the read that this is a gig worker portfolio is really interesting, and I think it's also just that's the most plausible way to make art.

Andrea:

Why is it that Pacific people have such an impact on the arts, right across the board, from all popular musics to dance, from opera to what Leone Samu Tui calls the “kitchen table” jewellers, theatre, painting, sculpture, comedy, animation and filmmaking to Yuki Kihara’s selection for the Venice Biennale?

Lana:

That’s the question, right? In one of the pieces in the book Jonathan Lemalu talks about opera and writes, “I believe that what I do as an opera singer is in part an extension of my culture’s oratory and performance practice traditions” (p. 379). I think that’s such an important point: that while opera seems so far away from Indigenous practices, when you break it down it’s about storytelling, oratory and music, and those are things that have existed in Pacific worlds since forever. So, there’s the chapter in the book about enduring art forms, and we might think more immediately about things like tatau (tattooing), siapo (barkcloth) making or dance, but we can also think about things like poetry, painting and theatre, because when you break down what is at the heart of those art forms—metaphor, symbology, comedy, performance—those things too have existed in Pacific worlds since forever.

Andrea:

Earlier you mentioned the importance of Makerita Urale’s instigation for the collecting of artists’ stories in their own words. How important is it to have Pacific people represented in arts and cultural institutions?

Lana:

This book would not exist now if it wasn’t for Makerita and that idea that led to the digital project. And, of course, there was a whole team of people and body of authors, photographers, designers, editors and what have you that made it possible, but still it took a Pacific person in a position of power, with a seat at the table, to have that initial vision and gather the collective that then made it possible. I think it’s vital to have Pacific people in arts and cultural institutions. But I think representing people is not enough: it’s about having people within these spaces that have power and resources behind them. This project, the advocacy behind it and the funding required for a book of this scale required a phenomenal amount of work behind the scenes. That was only possible because of people like Makerita and her wider team. So, if we don’t have people in spaces, then these kinds of things don’t happen.

Also, one thing worth mentioning is that I knew really early on that this needed another person working on it, and I really wanted to bring Faith

Wilson in because she's a phenomenal editor and a great writer, and also someone knowledgeable about the arts. So, an internship was created for her at Penguin, funded by Creative New Zealand, and she project-managed the book and has subsequently been hired by Penguin as a project editor. I think the representation of Pacific editors within publishing houses is also really important and something that I hope also continues to grow and increase, so our stories stop being underestimated and so, too, our buying power.

Andrea:

The intergenerational and interdisciplinary reach of this book is vast. I can't think of another space where you will find poet Alastair Campbell, 1990s hip hop group Sisters Underground, curator Jim Vivieaere's pioneering art exhibition *Bottled Ocean*, visual artist Ani O'Neill and jazz singer Mavis Rivers, for example, all contextualised together. It is an education as much as anything, an expression of the "history making" of this book.

Lana:

Isn't that just so indicative of the incredible nature of Pacific arts and artists—it is so vast! That vastness, or what I've described elsewhere as dynamism, is one of the big takeaways that I hope people leave with. I hope it draws those otherwise separate moments together so people can see this bigger, wider web within which the moments exist—like moments of the movement.

Andrea:

These influential cornerstones of Pacific arts have been like a coded language, in a sense, because they are absent from the mainstream record. Vela Manusaute's comment on page 273 about the stereotypical roles offered to Pacific performers and the importance of reclaiming the power and making the creative work ourselves is an important one. This DIY approach means that the "socials"—YouTube, thinking particularly of Lisa Taouma and The CoconetTV, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok—are culturally significant means of communication and reaching intergenerational audiences not served by mainstream media.

Lana:

Yes, they are absent from the mainstream record, but people know, right, so it's about taking what's held in memories and in casual conversations and giving them their moment and also placing them in the record so our stories can be remembered for as long as the book exists in the world.

Andrea:

Moana cosmopolitanism, a phrase and concept developed by you in your thesis, is a thread in this book as well. Many of the artists exemplify that notion of “globally routed, yet locally rooted” (Lopesi 2021: 1).

Lana:

I think simplistic depictions of Pacific subjectivity are really a result of the colonial imaginary that tries to confine complicated Pacific lives to unidimensionality, which is so quickly disproven when you think about the range in the book. Pacific lives have always been complex and multilayered and, I would say, have also always been cosmopolitan in that there has always been travel and exchange across the ocean. Pacific artists make this complexity really clear, especially when we look at all of their work together, as in a volume like this. It’s become glaringly obvious that there’s no one way to be a Pacific person, and by extension there’s also no one way to be a Pacific artist, and so we see all of these incredible innovations in Pacific art that draw on rooted Indigenous cultures and routed cosmopolitan worlds.

Andrea:

Your work with Ioana Gordon-Smith on *Marinade* strikes me in this way too—foregrounding voices and movements and ideas, as well as subjectivities. Cultural averaging is at play in the day-to-day of Pacific lives, but this is a force in the other direction.

Lana:

I’m just not that interested in waiting for inclusion, and I am actually not very interested in inclusion within the systems that we have now. I feel like it takes too long, and it also feels conditional on what the people of the time want or how you can be of use to the person who includes you. So why not start your own thing?

It’s ironic that I say that while working in academia, but I think there’s ways that you can be within institutions and not be waiting for their validation. You can build your own things, find your own moments of joy, and that’s what *Marinade: Aotearoa Journal of Moana Art*⁶ is for me. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Ioana Gordon-Smith, the journal’s cofounder and my coeditor, and it’s so much fun to think with her, our advisory board and the authors and artists we work with. I guess ultimately I feel really strongly that our art is important and deserves serious attention and consideration, and that’s what *Marinade* is, and it’s what *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* is too.

Andrea:

The methodologies of *suʻifefiloi* and transdisciplinarity, which you employed in your PhD, seem to be at work here—can you expand on that?

Lana:

Suʻifefiloi was a methodology that I used for my PhD. The term was borrowed from Samoan novelist Sia Figiel. Broken down, *suʻi* means to sew or stitch and *fefiloi* means mixture, so the idea is about stitching together a mixture of things to create something new. Figiel uses it to talk about stitching or sewing *pua* (flowers) and daffodils to describe her process for writing as a postcolonial literature.

I love this, because I just think it describes being an Indigenous Pacific person in the diaspora, where there is a kind of remixing happening all the time. We have to be careful not to fall into traps of self-essentialising and romanticising ourselves, our islands and our cultures, and I think *suʻifefiloi* offers a culturally grounded way to think about the combining that happens every day, which is not a melting or blending but a process of combining multiple things that hold themselves and their forms but exist in relation to other elements.

Andrea:

The book itself provides a holistic vessel for the multiplicity of voices you engage—there are over 95 pieces by artists across a huge variety of practices.

Lana:

It's also the right to range for me. Pacific people (and all people) have the right to range, and the right to exist across every spectrum possible in terms of creative expression, lived realities and aesthetics, and so on, and for me the place of the collective voices is also to remind ourselves of this. Every one of these artists is Pacific art, and yet they're also so different, and isn't that so exciting?

Andrea:

You've written a chapter on collectives. In your view, is there a propensity for Pacific people to work in this way as a solution—strength in numbers—when resources are so stretched?

Lana:

Every collective has their own reason for forming, and I definitely wouldn't want to centre the art world in that decision. Speaking for myself, I love working collectively—ideas are better, the work is better, and it's more fun. We're in an individualised world that works to keep us apart. That just feels lonely and boring.

Andrea:

In your introduction you say, "The creative production from our communities far exceeds our socioeconomic realities" (p. 13), in defiance of the negative narratives that are so readily applied to Pacific lives in Aotearoa.

Lana:

That line from Karl Pulotu-Endemann that "[t]he arts is the only arena in which Pacific people are not in the deficit" (p. 13) really stuck out to me, because I think it is really telling. Pacific people are not well represented in statistics around education, health, income, poverty, you name it—and yet our artistic production across the range of art making is prolific. It goes back to your earlier question about why Pacific people have such an impact on Pacific arts—you can't separate the art from the people, and in many Pacific contexts the arts are part of Pacific lifeworlds.

Andrea:

I'm interested in an issue that comes up in the chapter on internationalism (chapter 8). At FESTPAC⁷ 1995, some contemporary Pacific performers were excluded because of a perceived contemporary/heritage arts divide, but also a notion that they didn't represent Aotearoa, because they were not Indigenous to Aotearoa, thus underscoring a sense of Pacific people as indigenous but not Indigenous. How (if at all) can Pacific people in diaspora represent their own cultures as part of an Aotearoa New Zealand delegation?

Lana:

We see the representation of Pacific diasporic artists now in FESTPAC with the New Zealand delegation, which is great. I also think since 1995, people have had the conversation about Pacific and Māori relationality a bit more, or maybe feel more comfortable with it—this acknowledgement of relation before colonisation, but also the place of non-Māori Pacific people as guests in Aotearoa New Zealand. We have capacity for all of it, and it's important

that every Indigenous experience is represented. I think where we have to be careful is that diasporic representation doesn't also stand in for Pacific representation from the islands. If we include everyone and widen that space, then we have something much richer.

NOTES

1. *The Commute*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 22 September–22 December 2018. Featured artists: Natalie Ball, Hannah Brontë, Bracken Hanuse Corlett, Chantal Fraser, Lisa Hilli, Carol McGregor, Ahilapalapa Rands and T'uy't'atnat-Cease Wyss. Curated by Lana Lopesi, Freja Carmichael, Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Léuli Eshrāgi and Tarah Hogue.
2. Creative New Zealand is a government agency that supports and promotes the arts in Aotearoa New Zealand.
3. Lagi-Maama Academy and Consultancy is a cultural organisation based in Aotearoa New Zealand, founded by Toluma'anave Barbara Makuati-Afitu and Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai.
4. See <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/categories/pacific-arts-legacy-project>.
5. Elam School of Fine Arts, Waipapa Taumata Rau The University of Auckland.
6. Andrea Low is a member of the *Marinade* advisory board, which also includes Peter Brunt, Seuta'afili Patrick Thomsen and Luisa Keteiya Tora. <https://www.marinadejournal.nz/>
7. The Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FESTPAC) has been held every four years since 1972. The thirteenth festival was originally scheduled for 2020 but was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be held this year, 10–21 June, in Hawai'i.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are Samoan.

fefiloi	mixture
pua	flowers
siapo	barkcloth
su'i	sew, stitch
talanoa	conversation
tatau	tattooing

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HAERENGA/SAL FAIVA: TWO INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND THEIR CREATIVE PRACTICE DOCTORAL JOURNEYS

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ABSTRACT: This article showcases the creative work and haerenga/sal faiva (journey/creative journey) of two writer-scholar-artist creative-practice doctoral candidates—Marama Salsano and Mere Taito—who recently completed international arts residencies in Canada and Melbourne, respectively. Specifically, Marama Salsano contemplates Indigenous generosity and resistance through poetry and reflections about the creation of her *LandBack* fabric banner at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Canada, and Mere Taito presents digitally authored visual poems that were inspired by the in-person, residential gathering of her Creative New Zealand/Creative Australia digital arts fellowship in Melbourne. Ultimately, the authors of this paper draw strength from their Pacific roots and ever-widening Indigenous spaces, which allow their creative doctoral research to flourish.

Keywords: Indigenous creative practice PhD, Māori literature, Rotuman literature, Rotuman ancestral knowledge, toi Māori, Māori art, creative writing, Indigenous poetry, digital art

For the authors of this article, our work within the academy represents an intergenerational endurance of lifelong Indigenous-focused research. We are both on our own haerenga/sal faiva (journey) and we are guided at once by our ancestors, our peers, our relations—both human and nonhuman—and our descendants. The structure of this article begins with Marama Salsano’s reflections and accompanying poem, before flowing into Mere Taito’s reflections and digital poetry.

MARAMA SALSANO: INDIGENOUS GENEROSITY AND RESISTANCE

I recently watched a video of a Spanish kuia (female elder) making bobbin lace and my eyes could not keep up with her hands, which seemed to move autonomously. Muscle memory is a glorious thing. I imagine the whakapapa (genealogy, layers) of lace-making, similar to the whakapapa of all toi (Māori art), to be sustained by the generosity, support and guidance of multiple communities from multiple times in multiple places and spaces. While I need to practise more before the multiple genres of my toi practices dart



Figure 1. *LandBack* banner installed during the *Akunumustitis* (Natural Law) Ecological Engagement Through the Seasons open studio evening on 25 October 2023 at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Banff, Canada.

back and forth instinctively so as to blur the eyes of my future mokopuna (grandchildren), as a Māori (Indigenous New Zealander) writer-scholar-artist and descendant from Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Wairere iwi (tribes), I will continue to embrace toi that is multifaceted, multiformed, multitongued and multigenred. For Indigenous creatives like me who engage with work that resists Eurocentric narratives in multiple forms, Indigenous generosity is crucial to our work. Here, I contemplate Indigenous generosity and resistance by discussing my *LandBack* banner (see Fig. 1) that I created during an Indigenous visual arts residency in Canada, and end with a poem that was inspired by both the banner and my residency experiences.

The *LandBack* banner was created in October 2023 during a four-week visual arts residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Canada and was later exhibited as part of *Ma Tika! Maranga! Get Up! Stand Up! Toitū Te Tiriti*, the 2024 Waitangi Day exhibition at the Arts Village in Rotorua, Aotearoa New Zealand.

The *Akunumustitis* land-based visual arts residency provided me with time and space to engage with ngā atua Māori (Māori other-than-human ancestors) whilst being physically present on Treaty 7 whenua (land) in southern Alberta, Canada. Like the *Toi o Te Tau Hou* exhibition I took part in earlier in the year—where 20 Māori and Pacific artists from around

Aotearoa produced work as part of the Matariki ki Waikato programme—the Akunumustīhi residency brought together a diverse group of eight Indigenous artists as well as Indigenous faculty. For four weeks we shared kai (food), stories, art techniques and knowledges in workshops that included eco-dyeing, pine needle and birchbark basket making, cyanotype photography, earth pigment making, buffalo bone tool making, buffalo hide scraping and drum and rattle making.

For three of the four weeks in Banff, the background of what was to become the *LandBack* banner hung on my studio wall. Part of a torn bedsheet that had been left at Banff by a previous artist, I connected with the fabric as soon as I encountered her in the remnants/rags pile of the dye room on the first day visiting our studios. However, it took me three weeks and multiple conversations with ngā atua Māori and other Indigenous artists to understand what it was that she was meant to become. The banner, which I have also used as a scarf and as a blanket, represents a wahine Māori (Māori woman's) approach to global, Indigenous calls for self-determination amidst continued colonisation that is encapsulated in the phrase Land Back. The banner was created wholly using gifted, thrifted, found and borrowed resources from whānau (Indigenous kin) at Banff. Sacred Ktunaxa ochre is stained across the bottom of the sheet, which was “flipped upside down so earth becomes sky / & sky becomes earth” (see poem below), representing the ways in which wāhine Māori must often navigate and make sense of settler-colonial, Judeo-Christian patriarchal influences and institutional systems that were not built for us. About such academic spaces, Alice Te Punga Somerville (2017) asserts, “Every day is a manifesto day when you’re an indigenous person in academia: every day involves lines in the sand, things that need defending, purposes and strategies that need to be clearly (re)stated. The stakes feel high; the structural supports feel low” (p. 66). Resisting Eurocentric narratives inside academia thus becomes a lifelong project that is made easier with the support of Indigenous whānau. Creating/crafting/critiquing within academia allows our mokopuna to see our iwi literatures, as Craig Womack (1999) states, as the canon, the tree, and not merely branches “waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk” (p. 7). For me, crafting the *LandBack* banner is a vein on a leaf on a branch of the main trunk of toi Māori, which includes all manner of written, oral and visual art.

The brown *LandBack* letters were cut from remnant fabric in the dye room, and the colourful ribbons that form words were left over from another Indigenous artist's project. The ribboned presence on the banner reflects the vibrancy of Indigenous possibilities when we realign our sky and earth, or when we have our languages back, our sacred sites and rites back, tribal autonomy and body justice. The dark-red painted kupu (words) speak of wa / hi / ne: of generational codes (ne) extending across (hi) time and space

(wa), of body sovereignty and body decolonisation in progress. Threads are purposefully left unfinished and untrimmed, symbolically making space for other wāhine to pick up threads and carry on resistance work in their own lives.

Indeed, it is still difficult for Indigenous women in settler-colonial educational institutions. If it were smooth sailing, poems like Alice Te Punga Somerville's (2022: 74) "An Indigenous woman scholar's prayer" would not exist, and prayers like "*May I meet Indigenous vice-chancellors, presidents, professors, and deans; / may they not all be men*" (p. 74) would not need to be uttered. If it were smooth sailing, questions like, "Why isn't my professor Māori?" (McAllister *et al.* 2019) or "Why isn't my professor Pasifika?" (Naepi 2019) would not still be urgent. As a wāhine Māori doctoral candidate, resisting Eurocentric narratives is ongoing and tiring. Yet, both Mere and I undertake creative/critical and critical/creative work inside and outside of settler-colonial spaces. We do this work for our future whanaunga (relations) who choose to enter these institutions, and in doing so, we seek to honour our ancestors and "carry shared histories forward in new ways, with old and new materials" (Harkin 2020: 156). This also lessens the burden on our mokopuna to "remember when we are no longer here to tell them" (Watego 2021), for if we do not carry forward our shared histories and truths inside these institutions, who will? If we do not ask thousands of Indigenous questions (Te Punga Somerville 2022) that encourage even more Indigenous questions and threads for our mokopuna to pick up and follow, who will? (Spoiler: it will be the same non-Indigenous vice-chancellors, professors, deans and decision-makers who continue to speak about and for us and raise and ask questions on our behalf.) Remembering all this and leaning heavily into my whakapapa helps—as does telling my stories, my way. Resistance is also made easier through the generosity of Indigenous scholars and creatives—past, present and future—whose influences continue to shape my various toi practices, and the practices of our next generations of mokopuna.

Wa / hi / ne

1.
the seed of me is a tangle of fibrous roots
stitching LandBack banners
& tino flags to urban landscapes
roots hook over & under land
crocheting pockets of pouhine across social media
the seed of me cyberconnects whenua to whenua &
whenua to whenua to whenua

the root of me is sacred yellow ochre
stained like blood across a torn duvet sheet

then flipped upside down so earth becomes sky
& sky becomes earth
wāhine harvest uku amidst the stars
catch planets in oceans
& grow poetry from the land

the root of me is a mess of coloured ribbons
fashioned into kupu that speak to wāhine desires
Indigibabies want LandBack—YES
but sacred sites and rites also
tribal autonomy & body justice too
justice for incarcerated bodies
justice so the throats & ears & skin
of our mokopuna only ever feel our languages

i paint words onto my duvet in taniwha blood
the kupu speak of wa / hi / ne
of generational codes extending across time & space
of body sovereignty & body decolonisation in progress
always in progress
cos we don't have lifetimes to erase patriarchy's scars
instead wai māori is our medicine & our memory
& our whenua holds the genetic DNA of us all

2.
the ghosts of women surround me atua rei
who were present when sky & earth upturned
whose bodies are lighter than air
turning dense like pounamu around my ankles thighs
ribs & mind when i cry or doubt or stumble

wāhine ghosts taught me to desire myself
to trace the curve & strength of my shoulders
the hip dips & handfuls of flesh
perched just above my thighs
the puku pouch below which sits
my mother's whenua inside my grandmother
inside Hinetapuārau inside Papatūānuku inside me
how can i not love myself when i am all this & more

one day soon i too will be a pounamu ghost
holding my mokopuna tight or is it they who hold me
i'll kēhua in & out of their dreamscapes
wearing tulle skirts fuchsia tights
& golden tiki earrings that dangle to my waist

our mokos will narrate stories & poems & essays about us
 in all the wonderful ways that we cannot begin to imagine
 & we'll remind them that they will never be
 more beautiful young desirable & loved
 than they are in this present moment
 & in every moment thereafter

3.

i have a stingray on my back who comes to life at night
 the ink in her veins merges with mine &
 we swim Kiwa's ocean from island to island to island
 at the edge of the Pacific Parawhenuamea portals us inland
 to pools of ochre & painted archives on leaves stones & rākau
 we bleed kōkōwai from spine to arm to hand to fingers
 & saturate ourselves into this whenua
 into the collective memory of us

my phone lights up at night but we can't sleep anyway me & Whai
 fluorescent lights displace ngā whetū & not even our gills
 help us breathe tonight the night before Whiro
 me and she splash acrylics across canvas floor & wall
 we use āniwaniwa house paints named
 Sassy Smitten Sputnik Bedazzle
 Funtasia Infinity Dalek Lucifer
 the colours of happy capitalism & delusion

every night toi Māori saves our lives me & Whai
 our bodies crave whenua uku kōkōwai earth
 the taste of ancient bodies on our tongues
 & mica flakes crusted to our tails
 if blood flows in reverse on this whenua
 ngā toto o ngā tūpuna will still converge

4.

i dream of protest flags dripping with sequins & spider venom
 dried fish scales covered in biodegradable glitter
 & midnight poetry from grandmother pūngāwerewere
 whose cosmic contemplations make protest flags obsolete

i dream of wāhine who embody Indigibarbie Indiginerd
 Indigipoet & Indigiscuse-you vibes all at once
 wāhine who ctrl-alt-delete the meme of academia
 & instead open doors fix doors design doors construct doors
 to buildings we have fashioned in our wa / hi /ne likeness—
 which is to say the generational vibrations of all whenua

This section of the poem does two things: it lists the institutional structures of academia that constrict Indigenous ways of being and knowing—identified through the literary and scholarly might of Rūparake Petaia, Teresia Teaiwa, Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Haunani-Kay Trask—and it purposefully disrupts them. I imagined this section of the poem as a literature review or annotated bibliography “gone rogue”. I imagined a student submitting this poem as a requirement for a lit. review/annotated bib. type of assignment and unsettling the compliant university teacher assessing the script against a rigid writing rubric. Its form is poetic. The scholars are identified on a first-name basis as if they were close acquaintances. There is a sense of exclusivity here that implies that only those in the fold know the full identity of these creatives and scholars and their corresponding texts. There are no page numbers or in-text references. The stylistic and symbolic structural violation let loose on the lit. review/annotated bib. structure raises the question— why do we insist on staying in institutions that place us in situations where we feel compelled to go rogue? Why do we put up with the fear and disrupted harmony? Why don’t we just leave? The company of insecure “haole [European] men” (or women) in the presence of “Native women” (or men) can be draining on Indigenous well-being, but we stay and persist because, as Borja-Quichocho-Calvo (p. 34) concisely writes in the second part of her poem,

We must
birth possibilities
and cultivate realities
in a place that was not created for us
and carve space for ourselves anyway.

My creative-practice research at the University of Otago, Aotearoa’s oldest university, is positioned to achieve all of the above: “birth possibilities”, “cultivate realities” and “carve space”. The critical reading of archival Rotuman multilingual texts (Rotuman textual history, literary studies) in order to write multilingual poetry (creative writing studies, literary studies) for the purpose of Rotuman language regeneration in the diaspora (applied linguistics, Indigenous studies) using digital technology (design) is a four-strand interdisciplinary weave of creative-critical possibilities and realities that is unequivocally Rotuman-centred. It is my heart’s wish that some young, up-and-coming Rotuman scholar in the future will read my thesis and see the gaps and spaces I have carved and, in turn, plug, extend and carve more gaps to their own nerdy heart’s desire. The long-term effect of research like mine and Marama’s is an intergenerational endurance of lifelong Indigenous-focused research within the academy. Swallow that academia.

Hanging out in the courtyards of universities as opposed to leaving is also strategic. These metaphorical courtyards breed opportunities for complex and purposeful Indigenous networking. There is always someone who knows someone who knows of a conference, scholarship, residency or gathering that seeks genuine Indigenous participation. These golden nodes of information are shared either on social media, through group mails, in chats or in casual conversation. Then there is, of course, the reading of a research article that diverts your attention to unexpected sources of information and opportunity. I came upon the Creative Australia (CA) and Creative New Zealand (CNZ) 2024 Digital Fellowship this way while reading up on Pacific poets who have a visual or digital element in their works. One flip of a page led to a click that led to another, and, as they say, the rest is history.

I have recently returned from the three-day meet-and-greet component of the 2024 CA and CNZ Digital Fellowship in Naarm (Melbourne). We were warmly and traditionally received in a smoking ceremony by Uncle Perry Wandin, an elder from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country, the traditional owners of land on which the city of Melbourne is built. The fellowship is aimed at developing the digital skills of ten artists—five from Australia and five from New Zealand—with both in-person and online workshops and mentoring collaborations over a period of six months. On the in-person programme was a session that piqued my interest—a 2.5-hour Bush Animal Workshop facilitated by Aunty Bronwyn Razem, an elder from Gunditjmara country in southwestern Victoria. I wondered about the digital medium Aunty Bronwyn would be using and whether we would be drawing, layering, collaging, animating or making the bush animal interactive. Aunty Bronwyn offered none of the above. Facing the group, she gathered and arranged her materials and tools around her. Aunty Bronwyn had three bags: one for dried grass which she called hay, the other for balls of woolly and not-so-woolly threads, and the third for glass animal eyes and plastic noses, the kind you would buy from a two-dollar shop. I was confused, and yet very intrigued. My mind was tripping over itself like a faulty fuse. But ... ahem ... I mean ... where were the digital tools? Shouldn't we be on our tablets or laptops? Dried grass? Really?? To her wide-eyed digital nerdy apprentices, she said these words to this effect: "Watch closely as I make these animals because when I am done, you will all have to make one."

I must have pulled a face at this because, unlike Marama, I am not the best at handling any type of textile-related object, even woolly thread. To clarify, a *LandBack* banner is way above my textiles capability. I almost break out in rashes imagining myself stitching one together. If you have a sewing machine, do not offer it to me for use. I will break the needles and we will not be friends anymore.

“What would you like me to make?” Aunty Bronwyn asked. We chose a dingo and leaned in with curiosity to see what Aunty Bronwyn would do next. She clumped and shaped the dingo’s hay body using her hands before wrapping woolly thread around the back and belly, making sure not to overlap the threads too much or have twigs sticking out through the gaps of thread (Figs 2a–c). She split hay clumps into ears, wrapped them and then moulded the head with more hand-shaping and thread-wrapping. She repeated the moulding, splitting, shaping and thread-wrapping process for the tail, hind and forelegs. To finish the dingo, she trimmed all the hay that had escaped the woolly threads and pressed deep-amber glassy eyes and a plastic nose into the dingo’s face for personality and character effect. Our 2024 Digital Fellowship dingo was born (Fig. 2c).



Figure 2. Photo collage of the making of a dingo bush animal with Gunditjmara country elder Aunty Bronwyn Razem: a) hay-clumping and moulding, b) thread-wrapping to create the dingo’s form, c) the close-to-finished dingo, d) my attempt: some kind of mouse. 2024 Creative Australia (CA) and Creative New Zealand (CNZ) Digital Fellowship in-person gathering, Naarm (Melbourne).

Throughout Aunty Bronwyn's process of creative-making, I watched her closely. She was seated and her feet were firmly placed on the floor. From this place of *grounding*, her hands moved between grass, thread and bags to either shape materials or fetch tools, all of which were touchable and tangible objects. Driving this force of creativity was intergenerational and cultural knowledge passed on to Aunty Bronwyn from her own elders. The presence of ancestral knowledge hovering over the workshop room was unmistakable. This knowledge held her in place: *tethered* her to her chair and manifested itself in this flurry of activity that transformed loose hay into a recognisable form. But what does this all mean in the context of digital creative practice, I wondered? How can we apply tethering and grounding from a hands-on workshop like Aunty Bronwyn's to digital creative practice? And how do we navigate the calamities of digital technology while creating with it? For starters, Aunty Bronwyn's dingo-making was useful in reminding me that any digital data created by a human person on any device metaphorically exists in clouds, but in reality, they are stored and "tethered" to tangible storage devices, servers of various sizes and data centres scattered around the globe. To state the obvious, such digital repositories are constructed by human persons with supple flesh and hard bones. Digital technology, therefore, as a tangible tool is driven by creative knowledge stored in tangible places like soft warm bodies, a.k.a. the Indigenous human brain. To this effect, then, digital creativity can be grounded in culture, language, land, flora, fauna, sea and ancestral knowledge: all the glorious things that make our bodies pulse and thrive, and us human. This was a good starting point for me to conceptualise the tangibility and grounding nature of digital technology and its many creative possibilities and outputs.

However, as with all types of technology, there are challenges with digital technology use. Aunty Bronwyn's workshop reminded me of this too. Wrapping thread around the body of the bush animal, for example, requires an extra pair of hands (Fig. 2b); the right texture of hay can be sometimes difficult to source, and the bush animal can morph into a grotesque creature in novice hands, as mine did. I had intended to make a mouse, but it turned into a half-chihuahua-half-piglet, giving new sense to the term "bush animal" (Fig. 2d). I wrote the visual poem "a star map of virtual sickness" (Fig. 3), in the first instance, to capture the challenges of working with digital technology in a creative space, but the poem can also be a response to many different and difficult online interactions that the reader may have experienced. Poetry is all-encompassing like that.

I play on the ideas of seasickness and homesickness as metaphorical consequences that could prevail if we do not ground or tether our digital practices to meaningful experiences. It has to *be more* than just showing off technical functionalities and playing with bells and whistles. The QR codes,

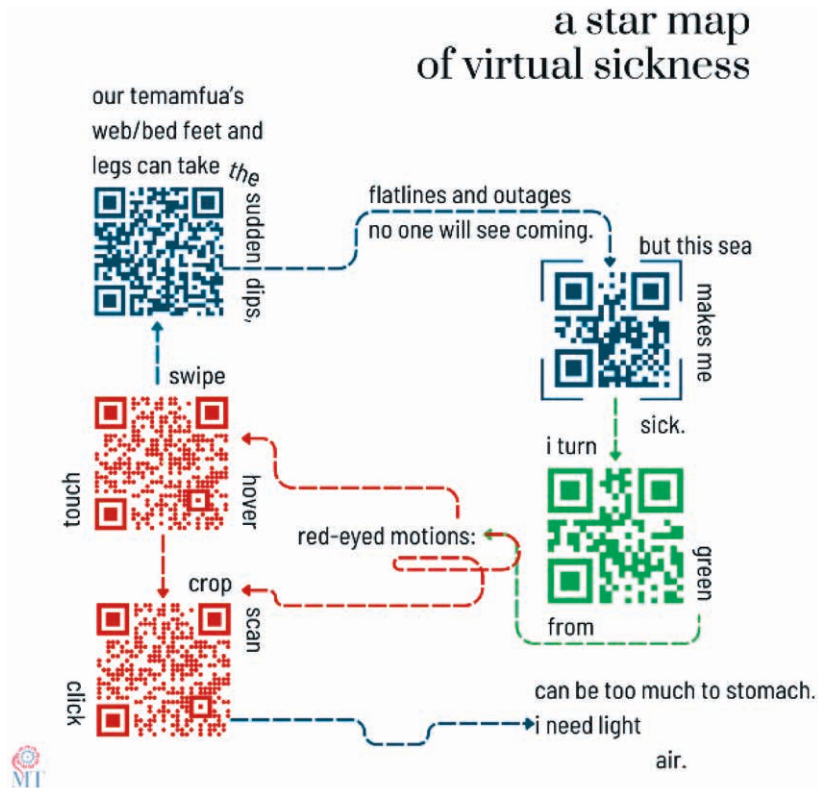


Figure 3. Poem 1: “a star map of virtual sickness”. Visual poetry digitally created in Canva Premium. Visual features: image, colour, visual sequencing, text effects (bending, vertical placement).

twisting arrows and vertical and falling placement of text I have used in the poem have both a visual and semiotic function. The QR codes represent navigational stars, and the use of twisting arrows and falling text amplifies creative-making experiences fraught with unpredictability, discontentment, trouble or danger, which can all be “too much to stomach”. QR codes sourced by Canva are either active or inactive, which further magnifies the sometimes fickle nature of creating with digital technology. Nevertheless, fickleness and unpredictability need not be our reality with digital creative practice. We can certainly carve new realities and create new possibilities of doing and making with digital technology. I explore this idea in “how to redraw a star map of virtual sickness” (Figs 4–6).

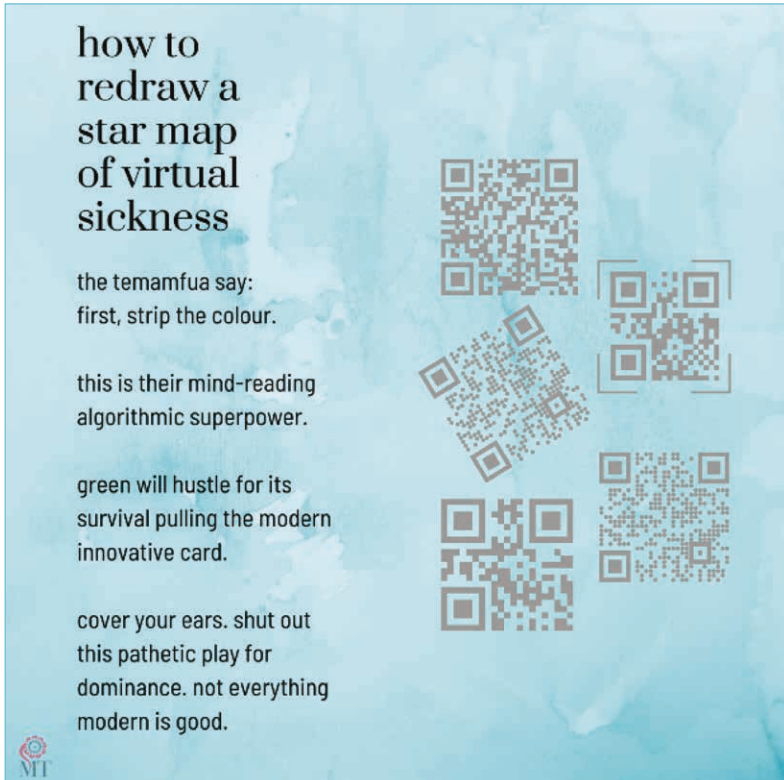


Figure 4. Poem 2: “how to redraw a star map of virtual sickness” (page 1). Visual poetry digitally created in Canva Premium. Visual features: image colour shift, watercolour texture background fill blue (sea).

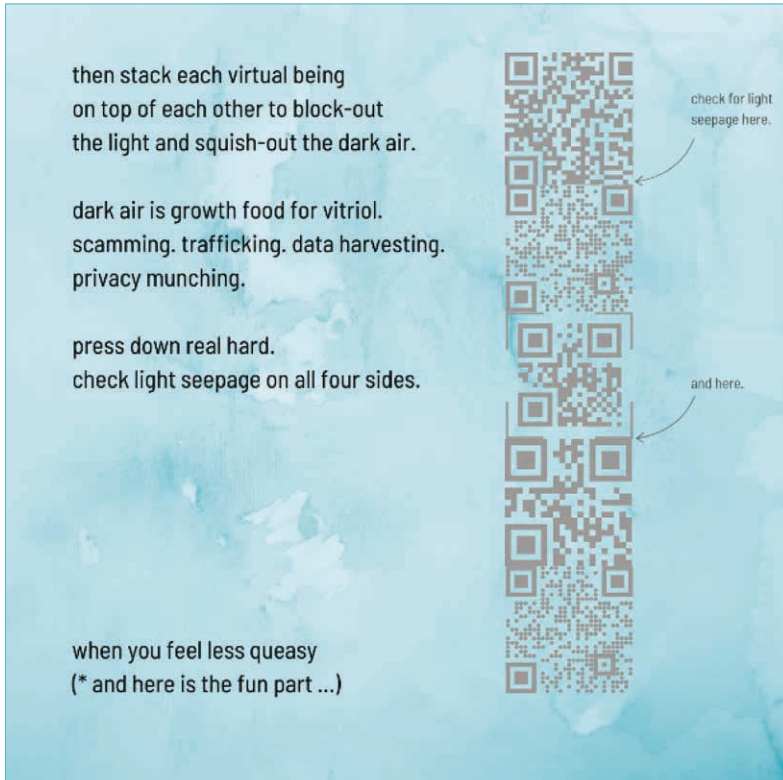


Figure 5. Poem 2: “how to redraw a star map of virtual sickness” (page 2). Visual poetry digitally created in Canva Premium. Visual features: image position shift, image labelling, as above.



Figure 6. Poem 2: “how to redraw a star map of virtual sickness” (page 3). Visual poetry digitally created in Canva Premium. Visual features: image position shift, iconic line-slashing, text effects (vertical placement), background colour shift brown (earth, land).

The solutions I offer in the redrawing of the star map are deliberately playful, literal, metaphorical and visually obscure. Obscurity cements its place in the poem because it opens up many possible readings. What I hope is not lost on the reader is the need to lean on ancestral knowledge of the *temamfua* (elders, ancestors) and Indigenous contexts such as land (a.k.a. home!), flora, fauna, language, family and community groups to make digital creative practice meaningful. Literally and figuratively slashing one's way through the codes in a downward backslash effect and changing the background fill to earthy brown brings the practitioner to a firmer place of stability and meaning (Fig. 6). When we ground ourselves as creative digital practitioners in this way, "no one gets sick down here".

To conclude, "a star map of virtual sickness" and "how to redraw a star map of virtual sickness" would not have been written had I not been hanging out in the courtyards and corridors of academia. I would not have met Aunty Bronwyn. I would not have sat in her bush-animal-making workshop and absorbed her warmth, generosity, wisdom and creativity to argue and carve a place for Indigenous knowledge in creative digital poetic practice. Finding Aunty Bronwyn through the 2024 CA and CNZ Digital Fellowship while reading up on Pacific poets that engage with visual or digital technology reminds me of Te Punga Somerville's (2022) poem "Fryer Library, UQ", in which she writes (p. 53),

*You sit in an air-conditioned archive
Working your way through boxes of paper
Underneath a picture of David Unaipon
And you don't feel as lonely
In this university place
As you have felt in others
Surrounded by people*

Indeed, may Indigenous scholars like Marama and I persevere in Western academies. May we find many more Aunty Bronwyns and David Unaipons as we research, write, argue and fight for Indigenous values. May moments of loneliness be rare, but most of all, may we never leave. However, should we find ourselves drawn to other paths of intellectual and creative engagements, may we often sojourn back to the courtyards of academia to add, build and strengthen the networks of opportunities for meaningful Indigenous engagement that hang out there.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are New Zealand Māori unless otherwise stated.

āniwaniwa	rainbow
atua rei	goddesses
haerenga	journey
haiŋaegaga	conversation, discussion (Rotuman)
haole	European (Hawaiian)
Hinetapuārau	ancestor of the Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki tribe
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kēhua	ghost, haunt
Kiwa	an early Māori navigator
kōkōwai	red-brown clay
kōrero	conversation, discussion
kuia	female elder
kupu	word(s)
maramataka	Māori calendar linked to the environment
mokopuna (mokos)	grandchildren, descendants
ngā atua Māori	Māori other-than-human ancestors
ngā toto o ngā tūpuna	ancestral blood
ngā whetū	stars
Papatūānuku	mother earth
Parawhenuamea	goddess of water that springs from the earth
paru	dirt
pouhine	a weaving pattern
pounamu	greenstone (jade) native to Aotearoa New Zealand
puku	stomach
pūngāwerewere	spider
rākau	tree
sal ŋaiva	creative journey, coined from the words “sal(a)”, meaning road or journey, and “ŋaiva/ŋaivav”, used to refer to someone who is very skilful in making things with their hands, e.g., weavers, canoe builders (Rotuman)
taniwha	supernatural being
temamfua	elders, ancestors (Rotuman)
tiki	carved figure
tino	short for tino rangatiratanga (Māori self-determination)

toi (Māori)	(Māori) art
uku	whitish clay
wahine, wāhine (Māori)	(Māori) woman, women
wai māori	freshwater
whai	stingray
whakapapa	genealogy, layers
whānau	Indigenous kin
whanaunga	relations
whenua	land, placenta
Whiro	the first night of the new moon

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a poem for Itu'ti'u aunty

She asks, what use it is to be fluent
when the land can't

hear her?

Itu'ti'u rock faces droop in her absence
and there is

nothing left
but guilt and swollen

accents gasping for air.

There is

origin story for everything, her mama says

even diasporic daughters;
the first to dance at fara and

the last to press palms in prayer.

Daughters who hold tēfui to warm clavicle

and trace

the curve of a lost lineage against their body

the weight of

a wave so

the ocean
doesn't seem so big

when traversed with diaspora daughters in mind,

but you

cannot write rhymes about disembarking boats you never knew the name of.

Daughters who don't know the hanuju of their mothers
so we

write each other in false familiarity

return with iri from a Henderson dollar store
wave them fast enough
no one can tell

the difference
but darling
a metaphor cannot make Itu'ti'u remember you

the way your skin can
so let me write you home

so even the turtles of Sol Onau may
hold you
and land

never forget
your diasporic joy

your shape
in the sand

—Ruby Macomber, Rotuma (Itu'ti'u, Oinafa), Fiji (Taveuni), Ngā Puhi, Pākehā,
Waipapa Taumata Rau The University of Auckland

GLOSSARY

The terms included in this glossary are Rotuman.

fara	a Rotuman celebration where communities travel from village to village as part of av mane'a (the Christmas season)
hanuju	story
iri	fan
Itu'ti'u	a district of Rotuma
Sol Onau	a small island near the southern coast of Rotuma
tēfui	garland



Aotea (Great Barrier Island), Emily Parr, 2023, 35mm film.

CURATORIUM

REFLECTIONS ON *ENCOUNTERING AOTEAROA*

EMILY PARR

Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau | Auckland University of Technology

CORA-ALLAN TWISS

Artist; Independent Researcher

ABSTRACT: This Curatorium piece reflects on a two-week sea voyage along the coast of Aotearoa New Zealand undertaken by the authors, artists Cora-Allan Twiss (Ngā Puhī, Ngāti Tumutumu, Niue—Liku, Alofi) and Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Moana, Pākehā). From the journey, Cora-Allan produced a significant body of work, which exhibited as *Encountering Aotearoa* at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 2023 and is forthcoming at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū in 2024. Using hiapo (Niuean barkcloth), whenua (earth) pigment and other natural resources, the works document whenua (land) from the perspective of the moana (sea), engaging with histories of navigation and encounter, and in particular, the legacy of Captain Cook's eighteenth-century voyages of "discovery". Also included in the exhibition are moving-image pieces filmed by Emily, who accompanied Cora-Allan and her father, Kelly, on board to record the journey and Cora-Allan and Kelly's daily reflections. This piece includes excerpts from these reflections, stitched together with Emily's own observations from the voyage. It draws together threads that situate the project and Cora-Allan's research on the HMS *Endeavour*, captained by Cook, such as the role of the Tahitian navigator Tupaia, the documentation produced by artists and botanists on board and the extractive approach to whenua. Retracing sites of early encounter, Cora-Allan reorients the imperial imaginary to a decolonial one, creating works that record memory, history and the whakapapa (genealogical ties) and mauri (vital essence) of Aotearoa.

Keywords: hiapo, barkcloth, whenua/earth pigments, voyages, Tupaia, Captain Cook, decolonial imaginary

On the afternoon we left the docks, the colour fields were inverted around the horizon—bright sea, dark sky. After a karakia (blessing) to begin our journey safely, Cora-Allan went straight to the top deck with graphite and a little book in hand. Through my camera, I observed her observing, sketching the shape of the whenua (land) as we sailed from the Port of Bluff at the



Cora-Allan sketching Aotea (Great Barrier Island) from the ship's deck. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.



Kelly's map. Emily Parr, HD video still (2023).



Kelly and Cora-Allan reflecting on day 12 in the observation lounge. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.



Cora-Allan painting and Kelly journaling in their cabin. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.

southern tip of Te Waipounamu (South Island), Aotearoa New Zealand. Cora-Allan's pāpā (father), Kelly Lafaiki, was nearby, making reference snapshots for later. My footage from this first day tremors from the ship's vibration (there are tricks to filming on a vessel—I just hadn't learnt them yet). This is how some of our days on board the *Heritage Adventurer* began. On others, we greeted the dawn alone—she with sketchbook, me with camera—as we became familiar with the decks and their sheltering places. A year and a bit before we boarded this 124-metre-long expedition vessel, Cora-Allan was dreaming up the project Encountering Aotearoa from a tiny rowboat named *Koro*. Bought during her 2021 McCahon House artist's residency, *Koro* enabled a different way of looking at the whenua: afloat in the Manukau Harbour, she began to draw the land from the sea.

Cora-Allan is a celebrated hiapo (Niue barkcloth) practitioner, and in the last few years, she has expanded into painting with whenua (earth) pigments. She possesses the fierce dedication required for the revitalisation of ancestral practices and is also deeply research-driven. Cora-Allan's preoccupations include the voyages of Captain James Cook, the artworks and field recordings made by those on board Cook's ships and the role of the Tahitian navigator Tupaia on the *Endeavour* in 1769. It was these interests, and her desire to continue painting the whenua from the moana (sea), that brought us on board the *Heritage Adventurer*. Over a fortnight in March 2023, we sailed the eastern coastlines of Te Waipounamu and Te Ika-a-Māui (North Island), from Rakiura (Stewart Island) to Waitangi, crossing Te Ara-a-Kewa and Te Moana-o-Raukawa (Foveaux and Cook Straits), visiting significant sites from Cook's voyages. Pāpā Lafaiki was there to support Cora-Allan: his duties included preparing our schedule for each day and keeping records in his journal and Polaroid book. I was there to document our journey through moving-image pieces to accompany the body of work Cora-Allan was creating. Retracing places and events that were foundational in the colonisation of these islands, the resulting artworks powerfully reorient ways of seeing and storytelling, of encountering Aotearoa.

HE TOKA TŪ MOANA: A ROCK STANDING FIRM IN THE SEA

On our first evening on board, Cora-Allan and I sat together in the observation lounge to record. It was the quietest place on the ship, somewhere to welcome tranquillity after a long day. The windows gave an expansive view over the ship's fore: sea and sky were nearly the same shade of blue this particular dusk. Cora-Allan had chosen a whakataukī (proverb) that resonated with her, "he toka tū moana" (a rock standing firm in the sea)—a tikanga (practice) that continued each day of our journey. She shared that the whakataukī refers to a rock that is immovable, even as strong ocean currents and waves pass it. The process of getting here had felt like the rough waters, while her

practice and knowledge of materials was the rock. She said, “My dad being on board has kept the project and me strong as a rock.”

There were a few ways in which our contemporary voyage mirrored Cook’s earlier ones: like Tupaia had his apprentice, Taiata, Cora-Allan had her father to support her, and like them, we were the only people of Moana (Pacific) descent onboard. Tupaia, let alone Taiata, is not a well-known character in the Pākehā (New Zealand European) imagination (and certainly not among our fellow passengers, many of whom were international tourists). These are the kinds of histories, of Indigenous lives and experiences, that Cora-Allan takes an active role in resurfacing through her work. By the time we disembark, everybody knows of Tupaia. That evening, I asked Cora-Allan to expand on these parallel relationships—Tupaia and Taiata, Cora-Allan and her pāpā—and their connection with the whakataukī.

Experiencing some “interesting” historical narratives shared by the tour bus driver really made me think about Tupaia’s role, and how he would be sitting on a boat talking about these southern ocean spaces with all these British men, who were sailing those spaces as though they knew them and not really using or referring to him as a valid knowledge system on board. I find Tupaia’s role as an artist using Western materials beautiful because it was the beginning of documentation that was archived from Pacific knowledge holders on Cook’s voyages. I know that his painting of a Māori man trading a kōura (rock lobster) for tapa (barkcloth) with Joseph Banks is an important and widely seen image. One thing I think people may not have seen is the string around the kōura. When the kōura was being traded for the tapa cloth, the Māori pulled that string so that they could have that kōura back. I like that part of the story because it maybe explains a little bit of the cheekiness (whakatoī) of Māori, and their steadfastness in their roles as traders.

I find Tupaia’s role on board really interesting because in Taiata, he had a family member with him. Me having my dad mimics that. I think about Tupaia’s experiences of coming upon this new land and how it must look so similar but feel so different in regards to the coolness and the climate. Also, the sounds of te taiao (the natural world) would have been different. In regards to the whakataukī “he toka tū moana”, I can imagine that being able to hold on to knowledge systems that were important back home and not being heard during such an important trip would have been really hard. However, I do know that during the trip Tupaia spent a few days on land, and the crew didn’t necessarily know where he was. Maybe part of that strength was him having his own space to explore Aotearoa in that first contact period by himself, without Pākehā around him—for him to connect as a person from the Pacific with the local tangata whenua (people of the land).



Cora-Allan sketching Tamatea (Dusky Sound) from the ship's deck. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.



Kelly's Polaroid book. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.

DOCUMENTING A VOYAGE: DE/COLONIAL IMAGINARIES

Between the three of us, our journey generated a multitude of records and depictions: cyanotypes, phone photos, charcoal sketches, Polaroids, HD video, whenua (earth) pigment paintings, 35 mm film photos, journal entries, glitter-pen drawings, sea-soaked hiapo. Questions and practices of documentation permeated our trip. What distance lay between our documentation and that produced during Cook's voyages? How does our position as Indigenous people determine our ways of seeing and, in an expanded sense, of listening and feeling? Documentation is political, and Ngāti Porou/Clann Dhònnchaidh artist Natalie Robertson's reflection on the role of the camera comes to mind: "Telling stories through camera-based practices ... can motivate acts of cultural and environmental reclamation. Whose hands the camera is in reflects how the act of witnessing is undertaken—through whose eyes do we see?" (Robertson 2016: 134). This follows Ngāti Apa/Pākehā filmmaker Barry Barclay's argument that "the camera on the deck" operates within Western ideological landscapes, while the camera ashore, in the hands of Indigenous peoples, has an ancient—rather than nation-state oriented—outlook (Barclay 2003: 7–8). Without wanting to take Barclay too literally, what happens when this departure is reversed, the camera shifting from shore to deck, in the hands of an Indigenous woman? What might pass through the aperture—a portal—when it is opened to the relations and rhythms of *te taiao*?

Nearly halfway into our voyage, Cora-Allan and I were in the observation lounge again. She mixed soot from burnt resin of the kauri tree into ink, making sure I could hear the stickiness she aimed for. Some of the kauri gum came from McCahon House. The whakapapa (genealogy) of materials is important to Cora-Allan: she explained that each type of material she uses has a lineage and is connected to a person or place that has influenced her. This was a precious window in which to paint—spare time was rare on the expedition. Cora-Allan would wake early to paint and continue into the night. The ship was sailing from Whakaraupō (Lyttelton Harbour) for Tōtaranui (Queen Charlotte Sound) and we were bathed in sun, but our minds were on the atmospheric fiords of Tamatea (Dusky Sound).

Over the week, I began to share Cora-Allan's preoccupation with the documentation produced during Cook's voyages. After visiting Tamatea ourselves, it was clear that Cook's second-voyage artist William Hodges's renderings of the sounds, and the Māori inhabiting them, reflected a romantic European sensibility.¹ His soft light, delicate palette and rounded forms were alien to the depths of tone, cleft and emotion we experienced. The colonial imaginary was at work. Samoan scholar Lana Lopesi asserts that from the

sixteenth to twentieth century, this imaginary was “institutionalised through mechanisms like the census, cartography and museums. The Moana as an idyllic region of disparate and dislocated islands occupied by noble savages and dusky maidens is a prime example of a colonial imaginary” (Lopesi 2021: 64). Documentation from Cook’s voyages (and others like them) spread throughout Europe, furthering the settler-colonial project. Imaginaries have power: this one contributed to the expropriation of Māori land. As Cora-Allan outlined landforms with the freshly mixed ink, I asked for her thoughts on the paintings produced during Cook’s voyages.

As we were going through Tamatea, I was interested in the fact that the artists on Cook’s ship were so important to the documenting of space and to the archiving of their new “adventure”. The roles of the artists and botanists on board, especially Tupaia, the Tahitian navigator, played an important part in the objects and images that we see from that time. I’m really interested in how whenua was captured because those paintings were then used for colonisers to sell land and get people to settle here. Those paintings weren’t solely going to act as trip souvenirs—they were going to be used to monetise the whenua, to make it interesting and enticing for people to come and buy land that wasn’t their own. Being in the Tamatea area—where William Hodges painted the waterfall—and us seeing how the waterfall was just dripping—it wasn’t this bountiful waterfall that he painted—reaffirmed that what they painted was a fantasy place. They painted a land that would be easy to settle in. For Māori, this was very much a transitory space for fishing, for gathering materials, for gathering pounamu (greenstone), and so to publicise that space as liveable—all I think about is how it was very much a journey of money-making.

The paintings and the roles of artists on board remind me of the roles we still have as artists—how we make art, how we are talking about the whenua, how we as Māori and Pacific people want to engage with and document the whenua. It’s really interesting to have studied all these landscape images, and then to be here in the place where they were made and decide how I want to paint them myself. I don’t want to reproduce what’s been done. With all my works being from te taiao and natural materials, that in itself is an action of redeption. Using Māori pigment practices and Pacific cloth encapsulates a new journey, a new sense of self and being able to identify the whenua how I want to, how we want to, and to give my works names that will give the whakapapa back to these spaces. The Māori names should be used first because they were there first.



Cora-Allan's hiapo cyanotypes drying on her cabin window. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.



Cora-Allan beating fallen plant material into hiapo on Te Wharawhara (Ulva Island). Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.

RETRACING SITES OF EARLY ENCOUNTER

On the *Heritage Adventure*, we retraced sites of encounter. The first few days still ring clear in my mind. We followed Cook's crew ashore at places renamed "Astronomer's Point", "Pickersgill Harbour", "Luncheon Cove", "Indian Island". We heard about the firsts that happened there: first beer brewed, first European ship and house built. The lasts were present through negative space: tree stumps without their trunks, a hāngī (earth oven) pit of a small whānau (family group), the absence of an abundant seal population. I did my best to not disturb the understorey, to move lightly, to greet the inquisitive birds. I pressed my hand to branches, rocks and mosses, meeting their mauri (vital essence) with my own. We cruised over hundreds of jellyfish in the Zodiac and trailed a pod of dolphins into the sun. I felt incredibly moved by the unfathomableness of it all as we flew across the sound.

It was easy to imagine a time before settler-colonisation in the ancient forests and fiords of Tamatea. According to researcher Anna Boswell, early voyaging accounts of European encounters on these shores indicate the visitors' inability to understand the systems of relation already in place (Boswell 2014: 37). Boswell describes the ensuing actions of settlers as the "unmaking" of a world: "felling the ancient forests of Aotearoa/New Zealand, draining the country's swamps, diverting its waterways, carving up its newly dried-out surface into alienable parcels of farmland, and sowing swathes of pasture in a place which hitherto had none" (Boswell 2020: 4). Before embarking on the journey, Cora-Allan had intended to harvest whenua pigments and beat plant life into hiapo. Rather than continue the legacy of extraction that Cook's ships left in their wake, she chose not take anything tangible from the whenua. Instead, she soaked hiapo in water that was returned to the moana. She used pigments already gifted or harvested herself. She placed plant life on treated paper and hiapo, letting the sun reveal their forms. Making cyanotypes became a process Cora-Allan described as "archiving without taking from the whenua". She engaged histories of empire expansion with decolonial practices: every stroke of whenua pigment or beat of hiapo was a kind of restoration.

Settlers definitely benefitted, and still benefit, from those spaces. So, in my painting and documenting of the area, it was really important that I didn't take from the space. I wanted to take whenua pigments, grind them down, use them for my paintings—but that's taking again. I wanted to take samples and beat them into hiapo, but then I didn't want to do that with live plants because that's taking again. Even though I know those things would have produced beautiful pieces, I didn't want to take again from the space that historically is just take, take, take, take, take. And that's what we learnt from that area. How much was taken.



Kelly reflecting on Cora-Allan's practice as we sailed Te Tai Rāwhiti (the East Coast). Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.



Cora-Allan sketching Aotea (Great Barrier Island) from the ship's deck. Emily Parr, HD video still, 2023.

The beginning of my work, in regards to William Hodges's paintings and Joseph Banks's botany collections, was to look at ways in which to give the mauri back to that space. I think that's what the cyanotypes were, too. Taking photographic reliefs and prints on hiapo itself, but leaving whatever was giving that trace there where it lives. Not taking it, letting it exist continually in that space. These cyanotypes, for me, represent memory, history and looking at the whakapapa and the mauri of the space.

* * *

During a day at sea, with Te Tai Rāwhiti (the East Coast) visible through the cabin window, I asked Cora-Allan's father about his maps stuck to the mirrors, and his thoughts on the shifts we observed in her practice. "She can go on forever, I suppose. It's all up to the mountains." From the ship's decks, the world around us changed constantly. As Pāpā Lafaiki pointed out, the photos he snapped on his phone became vital documentation of the shifting light, clouds and colours for Cora-Allan to paint from later: "That's the way nature's gonna be. You've just gotta follow it. It just does its thing." This strikes the tenor of our voyage: we understood that the best way to "encounter" Aotearoa was with an open heart, and a responsive attunement to the ecosystems we were lucky enough to briefly inhabit.

On our final day on board the *Heritage Adventurer*, Cora-Allan conceived a whakatauākī (proverb): he tāngata he taonga; the people are the treasure. After visiting the Treaty Grounds at Waitangi, Cora-Allan and I sat on the beach at Kororāreka (Russell). Pāpā Lafaiki was on a nearby bench, guarding the model *Endeavour* his daughter had just purchased from the museum. That morning, our fellow travellers had heard the history of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) from a Māori perspective. They were welcomed into the meeting house with a pōwhiri (welcome ceremony), and Pāpā Lafaiki—who is more comfortable quietly observing from a corner near the coffee machine—was nominated as our "chief", taking up the wero (challenge) and speaking on our behalf. I can readily admit to a certain emotional permeability, but Cora-Allan and her dad are more like he toka tū moana. On this day, we were all moved. Reflecting on the trip and the significance of ending at Waitangi, Cora-Allan felt that the narrative on board had shifted. Our stories, as Māori, had come to the fore. She also felt ready to relinquish the painting plans she had made before we embarked on the journey and instead create a body of work that would hold the stories, names and mauri of our encounters: "Something else is going to happen. But I'm ready for all the stirring. This place has caused a stir."

NOTE

1. See Hodges's 1773 painting *A View in Dusky Bay, New Zealand*.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are New Zealand Māori unless otherwise stated.

hāngī	earth oven
hiapo	barkcloth (Niue)
karakia	blessing
kōura	rock lobster
mauri	vital essence
moana	sea
Moana	Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa/The Pacific Ocean; people of Pacific descent
Pākehā	New Zealand European
pāpā	father
pounamu	greenstone
pōwhiri	welcome ceremony
tangata whenua	the people of the land
tapa	barkcloth (Samoan)
te taiao	the natural world
tikanga	practice
wero	challenge
whakapapa	genealogy
whakatauaāki	proverb (originator known)
whakatauki	proverb (originator unknown)
whakatoī	cheekiness
whānau	family group
whenua	land, earth

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REVIEWS

LOPESI, Lana (ed.): *Pacific Arts Aotearoa*. Auckland: Penguin Books, Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, 2023. 544 pp., ack., afterword, contribs., foreword, gloss., index, intro., notes, timeline. NZ\$65.00 (hardcover).

SONYA WITHERS

*Sama'i, Falelatai, Sāmoa; Aotearoa New Zealand
Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa | Massey University*

I want to begin by acknowledging previous publications that have participated in this journey of documenting the rich history of Pacific creative practice. There is a plethora of positioning in terms of the concept of “art” and its interpretation and labelling across the Pacific. Karen Stevenson’s provocatively titled *The Frangipani Is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985–2000* (2008) presented the artist’s insights on contemporary Pacific art in Aotearoa New Zealand. Prior to Stevenson’s book there was *Speaking in Colour: Conversations with Artists of Pacific Island Heritage* (1997), featuring interviews with Pacific artists, and then *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimension of Contemporary New Zealand Arts* (2002), both edited by Pacific curators Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira. These publications began to map the influences of social historical events in Aotearoa and the Pacific as a trigger point for the production and movement of Pacific arts practice.

This publication builds on what others have begun—cataloguing the expansive landscape of Pacific arts in Aotearoa—and does so by including the voices of the artists themselves. The authors of the contributions represent a range of backgrounds and approaches, from community collectives, fine artists, filmmakers, musicians and craft practitioners to curatorial pieces, narratives and, at rare points, visual and redacted essays. There are 11 chapters, each featuring titles that will spur the imagination for Pacific readers: for example, “Seeding the Vanua”—how did the Pacific arts start out in Aotearoa?—or “Practising Endurance”, reciting key collectives and artists that have come together to support Pacific peoples’ wellbeing in Aotearoa, whether through social engagement or craft revitalisation practices. Through many of the contributions, the voices do not isolate the artworks themselves but take the reader on a journey, welcoming them into their lounge room, pointing out their family members and their migration to Aotearoa from abroad. Acknowledging gafa (genealogy) and its importance to the artist in conceptualising their practice is a theme throughout the book. The stories of ‘āiga (family and extended family) are diverse, displaced and at times

underpinned by light-hearted hyena laughs throughout their recollection. A standout chapter, “The Pacific Question” (Chapter Four), opens with an excerpt from the late Jim Vivieaere: “Today the art of the Pacific Islanders is still trapped within its category” (p. 179). Perhaps we politicise our own traps through the labelling and categorising of Pacific arts and its identity politics as a dominant feature for the conception of Pacific arts and its potential parameters. Hastings-McFall critiques this through her contribution (and art practice) in which she navigates her own identity politics and their relationship to the category of Pacific arts, exclaiming, “I’m not even a proper coconut!” (p. 204)—a phenomenon many Aotearoa-born Pacific peoples have encountered through their upbringing. Despite these challenges, the book also illustrates the voices of collectives that were started in the back of a state house, such as theatre and music company Kila Kokonut Krew, or the use of the internet to create a myriad of spaces for Pacific arts and critical discussions in response to “the Pacific question”.

Ioana Gordon-Smith highlights the power of disrupting traditional positioning of critique through comment sections online: “While there is an element of personality discords that bias the comments, these comments suggest that the Pacific arts community was not always the single-opinion-holding community” (p. 323). The post-Y2K era saw successful online spaces such as Pimpiknows.com and the now offline Hashtag500words as significant and inclusive alternatives beyond the institutional scholarship on contemporary art that in turn connected Pacific audiences and creatives to Pacific art, practice and the gallery space.

The chapters of the book do not present a linear journey through Pacific arts in Aotearoa but rather many routes of response, critique and practice in addressing “the vexing question” of the classification of Pacific arts in Aotearoa, as Pereira is quoted in Chapter Four. Towards the end of the book, a new question on Pacific arts is positioned speaking to the most recent turn of Pacific expressions across the third, fourth and fifth generations of Pacific artists, evidencing the space for infinite possibilities of interpretation and interrogation towards “that” question, and in doing so, along with levels of criticality among our Pacific artists and audiences, forgetting the old trope of Eurocentric gazes and instead working towards critiquing “the Pacific category and its institutionalization, in the same way their predecessors had done in the 1990s” (p. 447).

Unfortunately, even a book of this scope cannot capture the expansive and lively nature of Pacific arts in Aotearoa. As acknowledged by the editor, not all artists are featured, and some perhaps are yet to be recognised on paper. Like the publications mentioned earlier in this review, this book is not “the” publication on Pacific arts in Aotearoa but rather “an” expansive piece of documentary participation in the worlds of Pacific arts in Aotearoa. Fortunately, the varied sociocultural positionings documented

model experiences of grit towards the conception of successful shows and collectives and even the hard truths on rejection from some of our own leading arts trusts. These insights provide a gafa for the next generation of makers (and audiences) to work from or critique towards new reflections on Pacific arts and their place in Aotearoa.

The heftiness of this publication is a representation of the layered and complex obligations and responsibilities taken up by the editor and the contributors in their attempts to capture the broad intersections of Oceanic creative practices and their place in Aotearoa.

After reading this publication, I hope that in the future the documentation of our creative practices can be shared through different formats such as podcasts, performing arts festivals, fashion shows or film documentaries—formats that equal the institutional mana (authority) a publicised book provides for the canon of Pacific arts and our Pacific artists. I am thinking about our grandparents (who might struggle to read the small text) and our young people (who roll their eyes when presented with reading for study). However, I can imagine this publication being the va'a (canoe) an emerging or established creative is navigating as they move towards new worlds of Pacific arts across Aotearoa.

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JONASSEN, Jon Tikivanotau Michael: *Pe'e Māori: Traditional Cook Islands Chants*. Rarotonga: Mana Heritage Publications, 2022. 280 pp., biblio., list of chants, photos, plate, tables. NZ\$50.00 (softcover).

LIAM KOKA'UA

Ngāti Makea Ārera, Rarotonga

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

Pe'e Māori was the last book published by Jon Tikivanotau Michael Jonassen before he died in 2023. To use a kama'atu (verse of wisdom) published in one of his earlier works, *Kama'atu* (2005: 123):

Na te rima 'uru'uru tena i rave.

It was done by hairy (accomplished) hands.¹

Jonassen was a highly respected tumu kōrero (oral historian) of the nation commonly referred to as the Cook Islands, or, as he called it, ‘Avaiki Manavanui. Pāpā Jon also held the traditional title of Tikivanotau Mata‘iapo Tūtara from the island of Aitutaki, which out of respect I will use here. Pe‘e Māori is a name for the Indigenous chants of ‘Avaiki Manavanui. Māori, as in Aotearoa New Zealand, is our word denoting Indigeneity.

The use of Tikivanotau’s own pare kura (red feathered headdress reserved for chiefs) on the cover page is a beautiful symbol of authenticity and mana (authority) and is indicative of what is to come. The image of the pare kura is one of many examples of the deep symbolism represented by objects composed of natural materials that are often used by orators and the relationship between the meaning of pe‘e and the material culture of ‘Avaiki Manavanui. Throughout the book Tikivanotau features many photographs from his own personal collection, spanning decades, to provide visual examples of oratory, dance and their associated material culture.

The real richness of the book is, of course, the pe‘e themselves, almost all of which have been committed to paper for the first time. Any aspiring ‘Avaiki Manavanui orator would recognise immediately the value in accessing these oral traditions. What is additionally useful is the detail Tikivanotau goes into to explain the context for each category of pe‘e.

Macrons and glottal stops are extremely important in the twenty-first century for our ‘Avaiki Manavanui people to learn pronunciation of our Māori words, as the majority of our people in the diaspora as well as many in the islands are second-language learners. Glottal stops are used in the book in most places where they should be, but some are missing, such as in words that include the prefix ‘aka-. Macrons are used, as far as I can tell, only in places where Tikivanotau believes there should be a lengthening of the vowel to produce oratorical effect. This is useful in terms of knowing how to use this lengthening in a particular word for artistic emphasis but could be detrimental for second-language learners simply wishing to know the correct pronunciation of a word. Readers in the latter group would benefit from having a copy of Jasper Buse and Rautiti Taringa’s *Cook Islands Māori Dictionary* (1996) to cross-reference a particular word from within a pe‘e with its dictionary entry, which will have accurate diacritics added.

Tikivanotau provides an impressive 19 categories of pe‘e, equating to 19 chapters dedicated to covering pe‘e of all types of origin and purpose, many of which were composed by Tikivanotau himself. Another important chapter is an extremely informative ‘Akamārama (Introduction) that establishes the cultural context of pe‘e, something that is crucial to understanding. An extremely useful addition in the ‘Akamārama is a template to equip the reader with the basic knowledge of how to compose their own pe‘e, this information normally being quite well guarded within our culture.

I found the ‘Ātui‘anga manako (Weaving Ideas) section within the ‘Akamārama chapter interesting, as it details a key element of the composition of pe‘e. I have been composing basic pe‘e for around three years and have appreciated how Tikivanotau has described a process of “weaving ideas”. One must often consider the context of where the pe‘e will be recited: family backgrounds of the key individuals, the cultural event in question, the land the pe‘e is being recited on. In Aotearoa I have also found acknowledging the iwi (tribe) or hapū (subtribe) whose land we are on is just as vital, regardless of whether it is an ‘Avaiki Manavanui cultural event taking place or not. Sections in the ‘Akamārama explaining what a chanter should wear or carry while reciting a pe‘e are extremely useful, because as far as I know this has not been explained elsewhere.

In the section titled ‘Akateni‘anga (Pronouncing), Tikivanotau acknowledges the accents of not just individual islands but even individual tribes, as well as people’s personal style of chanting—these are important pieces of information. He uses the example that certain words, while pronounced the same, can actually mean different things across the six different language dialects of ‘Avaiki Manavanui. He also provides useful explanations to assist second-language learners in their pronunciation of Māori words, such as the *d* sound in *t* and the “missing *h*” in certain words (e.g., (*h*)ua, *pō(h)iri*).

At the end there is a chapter on *kōrero kama‘atu* (wisdom verses), which appear to have been extracted from Tikivanotau’s earlier publication, *Kama‘atu* (2005). Despite the repetition I think it useful to have included these selected *kama‘atu* in this book, as they can convey deep cultural meaning and can easily be incorporated into the composition of new pe‘e.

Stylistically, the font type used through the book is beautiful, as are the *tātatau* (tattooing) and carving motifs subtly displayed at the start of each chapter, which add yet another deep layer of cultural knowledge to the book. Tikivanotau’s English translations of the pe‘e are literal, which is a double-edged sword; if the reader has little cultural or contextual knowledge, they may not appreciate the deeper meaning of words. For example, *Vaeruarangi* does indeed mean “heaven’s spirit”, but it is specifically an *ariki* (chiefly) title of *Aitutaki* and could be translated as “Chief *Vaeruarangi*”. I do acknowledge here that the book is likely designed for ‘Avaiki Manavanui people who already have some knowledge of their own cultural contexts.

Tikivanotau drives home important messages for the aspiring orator. For example, one should have *papa‘anga* (genealogy) to a particular tribe if they wish to recite a tribal pe‘e. He issues a challenge to the reader that they have a “responsibility” to add to their family’s *kete* (basket) of chants, as many such *kete* are becoming “empty”. He also provides provenance for many chants in the book.

Interestingly, Tikivanotau explains that the phrase “Iō kōkou” (ē-kokō, “a shout of triumph of glee” (Buse and Taringa 1996), sometimes pronounced as Ī-ē-kō-kō or other variations), often included in pe’e Māori, is actually a reference to ‘Io, the “Almighty God” of ‘Avaiki Manavanui ancestors. Tikivanotau explains that ‘Io was not generally mentioned in everyday conversation, which is a convenient explanation for his significant absence from ‘Avaiki Manavanui literature (whether written by European or Māori authors), and one we have also received from some Māori cultural authorities in Aotearoa, such as Te Mātorohanga in his teachings. This representation of ‘Io as the supreme deity over the other deities is not one I personally buy into, and in my opinion it may reflect an attempt to merge the Christian God into Māori spirituality. I also think sound of the word ‘Io has a special frequency. I do think the explanation that ‘Io was the “Almighty God” enables Tikivanotau to safely discuss pe’e Māori without backlash from certain groups in ‘Avaiki Manavanui who are staunchly Christian. Such groups are disapproving of ‘ētene (heathen) practices, of which pe’e are included, alongside tātatau, consumption of kava and references to the old gods of our ancestors such as Tangaroa, and perhaps, ‘Io.

On page 39 Tikivanotau gives his own interpretation of the word karakia (prayer chant), breaking down the word to mean, “Ka rā ki ‘ea?” (Where will the blessings fall?). I disagree with such attempts to break down core Polynesian words which likely have thousands of years of use and cognate forms across our region. I have also seen this attempted by Māori in Aotearoa (such as breaking down the word “Māori”) and personally believe certain words should be viewed in their entirety. This said, one of the things for which I most respect Tikivanotau is that he stuck to his guns in refusing to use the name imposed by the coloniser to refer to our island nation. In the book Tikivanotau uses a number of names to refer to the nation, generally favouring ‘Avaiki Manavanui. I am inspired to know someone of his standing in our community (as well as former High Commissioner to New Zealand) expressed his dissatisfaction with our current national name and was doing something about it by normalising his own Māori name for our nation.

Despite my frankness in reviewing certain aspects of this book (it would be a disservice to Tikivanotau’s intellectual legacy to not engage in honest critical dialogue), I do believe *Pe’e Māori* is one of the most significant contributions to ‘Avaiki Manavanui cultural literature since the art of writing was introduced to our shores. I believe it will sit alongside classics such as the manuscripts of other revered ancestors such as Teariki Tara’are and Māretu. I leave with a pe’e mate (death chant) taken from the book (pp. 111–12):

Auē. E metua. E ‘akaperepere,
Kua oki ki Avaiki i roto i te pō.
Kua ‘oki ki ō Tangarōa. Ararā,

O te pou. Kua 'akaruke mai.
 I tāna i rave. Kua tuku mai i tana,
 I moemoeā. Na tatou i 'apai,
 Kite meka meka 'ōpengā.
 Kia akameitaki ia te Atūā,
 No te au mea kātoatoa.

A parent, a loved one, has returned to the land of origin in the night.
 Returned to Tangaroa.
 Left behind what he has done.
 Left behind the dreams and aspirations that we need to finish.
 Bless God for all that happens.

Note

1. In keeping with journal policy, the extracts featured here reproduce spellings and diacritical marks exactly as published in the book under review.

Glossary

The terms in this glossary are Cook Islands Māori (Rarotonga dialect) unless otherwise stated.

ariki	chiefly
'ētene	heathen
hapū	subtribe (New Zealand Māori)
iwi	tribe (New Zealand Māori)
kama'atu	verse of wisdom
karakia	prayer chant
kete	basket
mana	authority
papa'anga	genealogy
pare kura	red feathered headdress reserved for chiefs
pe'e Māori	Indigenous chants
pe'e mate	death chant
tātatau	tattooing
tumu kōrero	oral historian
vaeruarangi	heaven's spirit

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SCHWARTZ, Jessica A.: *Radiation Sounds: Marshallese Music and Nuclear Silences*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. 312 pp., ack., biblio., illus., index, notes. US\$30.95 (softcover).

IRENE KARONGO HUNDLEBY

Lau-Mbaelelea, Solomon Islands

Independent Researcher

On 1 March 1954, the unfathomable occurred in the pristine atolls of the Marshall Islands. A nuclear bomb—over one thousand times the size of the Hiroshima atom bomb—smashed the coral forms beneath the sea, lit the sky on fire and filled the Marshallese atmosphere with irradiated poisonous dust that blanketed the islands and their people. *Radiation Sounds: Marshallese Music and Nuclear Silences* (2021) begins with descriptive accounts of the horrors experienced by the Marshallese people following the detonation of Castle Bravo (pp. 1–2). Details of the 67 explosions they endured between 1946 and 1958 and the ongoing physical, psychological and cultural repercussions are sobering. Jessica A. Schwartz's introduction lays bare these historical events, examines the diversity in attitudes and offers insight into complex polarities in thinking and being: we are introduced to the victor and the victim. Schwartz invites us into local Marshallese epistemology via the lyrics and stories of their suffering. As the injustices amass, we are left with a greater sense of the overbearing neocolonial stance and political hunger for power that drove the USA through the Cold War. Schwartz unravels Marshallese song testimony to show how the USA's refusal to acknowledge, compensate appropriately and be transparent with data continues to violate.

Radiation Sounds explores nuclear silences and Marshallese sounds through the Atomic Era. This work is the culmination of ethnographic fieldwork that Schwartz, a US American researcher, conducted in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from 2008 to 2010 (p. 3). This text is ambitious and delivers fresh narratives and previously undocumented Indigenous perspectives with an emphasis on singing practices, composition and performance. In addition to her observations, Schwartz includes comprehensive theoretical discussion on topics such as sonic politics, Indigenous Marshallese concepts and the subversive effect of militarism on matrilineal customs (pp. 30–40). Marshallese people generously offer the reader access to their experiences over 75 years of US militarism, coerced evacuations and relocations, irreversible diseases and medical testing. These stories are emotively expressed and archived through Marshallese music. Each song has been created to document, protest or preserve ancestral culture, memories, events and (in)action.

It is a testament to Schwartz's own ethical stance that Indigenous Bikinians and Rongelapese have chosen to share with her the concepts and details

behind their lyrics and testimonies (chapters 2 and 3). Schwartz draws attention to how Marshallese have “suffered for science” through testing, medical procedures and biomedical research (pp. 9, 205). Research involving the social sciences and environmental sciences has been no exception. Throughout *Radiation Sounds*, there is a common weft: Marshallese asking, singing, pleading for respect. A couple of months after Schwartz began her fieldwork, Rongelapese women stated she was the first researcher (over decades) to have ever consulted with them using a human subject consent form. This is a stark reminder to researchers to resist complacency in ethical process and to consider the “material-discursive chain” in which disciplines sit (pp. 205–6). Present-day Marshallese are still actively petitioning the USA to provide access to information about their medical cases, be transparent about the experiments to which they were subjected and acknowledge the ill advice, pressure and harm caused intergenerationally. Schwartz untangles US government agreements and actions that have occurred in the name of national security and in the guise of creating and protecting “global harmony” (pp. 9–10, 38–40, 44–47, 125–26). She also brings attention to how the USA has justified its geopolitical acquisitions and upheld secrecy in the pursuit of security—to the detriment of the Marshallese people (pp. 20–23). Aside from the issues of data sovereignty and declassification, dehumanisation adds a layer of emotional toxicity. She describes a 1957 newsreel where seven Marshallese men visit Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago for radiation and biomedical testing. John Anjain, the magistrate of Rongelap Atoll and a Marshallese leader, is openly referred to as a “happy, amenable savage”, and members of the collective group are also observed as “savages” (Pilger 2016: timestamp 0:28). This example of “polite” discrimination reveals how Marshallese have been cast as second-class citizens (pp. 70–74). While this attitude may not be entirely surprising to Indigenous people in the Pacific—myself included—dehumanisation is the foundation for all of the above human rights breaches. Schwartz distances herself from these attitudes and clearly states that one objective of *Radiation Sounds* is to move towards narratives that centre Indigenous Marshallese experiences (pp. 20, 69, 121). She examines their musical forms to purposefully break “the totalizing narratives of postwar living or overcoming that is endemic to the Enlightenment historical narrative” (p. 20). The Marshallese testimonies shared in *Radiation Sounds* counter the popularised bomb narratives that have previously censored them.

Marshallese music, sounds and silences communicate dislocation, brokenness and physical disturbances that echo the intense pain of their experiences. Many Marshallese have lived short lives in irradiated bodies riddled with cancer and thyroid diseases, while bereft of quality treatment. Schwartz describes onomatopoeic Marshallese language that reiterates and

reverberates to acutely deliver these messages (pp. 26–27, 50, 142). She explains the significance of the throat in Marshallese culture, considered the “center or seat of the soul”, the equivalent of the Western “heart,” to bring new cognisance (pp. 28–29). I am struck by the potency and power of the Marshallese voice, particularly techniques of sung/performed protest that include unconventional use of register (p. 142), defiant parading of thyroid scars (p. 125) and vulnerability presented through compromised broken voices (pp. 88, 93–95, 102). These accounts of activism¹ have been created to awaken people, especially those in power, to the effects of radiation, nuclear fallout and displacement.

The Bikinians, Rongelapese and other Marshallese are dislocated from their ancestral homelands. Consequently, they have experienced decades of cultural adjustment and change. There are new generations that have never set foot on their homeland atolls, and displacement has taken a toll on customs and traditions. Schwartz cites an example told to her by Lijon MacDonald, a prolific Rongelapese singer-songwriter (pp. 114). As a young person Lijon grew up learning ancestral chants, familial stories and knowledge from her elders (Schwartz 2012: 2–4). She shared with Schwartz how her people used a specific chant when they travelled between the islands of Ailinginae and Rongelap on journeys to gather food. While their schooner battled in the huge waves, this song would give them strength and guide them. In 2009, Lijon stated that her people no longer sang this song, as they no longer travelled across that stretch of water to their irradiated atoll. Similarly, the traditional matrilineal roles of women have markedly changed over time due to the introduction of non-Marshallese thinking. Schwartz discusses in detail the extent of matrilineal disenvoicing and silencing of feminine voices and the subsequent uprising of women through protest (pp. 50–52, 55–56, 83–98). Another notable change has emerged in recent years, as new Indigenous Bikinian campaigns focus on promoting hope and uplifting traditions and culture. Peterson Jibas refers to this as the consolidation of three aspects, “government, church and *mantin majel* (Marshallese custom)”, where music is the connecting thread that is weaving culture back into their lives (p. 189).

Radiation Sounds is a demanding read that is visceral, cerebral and one that challenges official narratives. As a text, it is dense and poses numerous concepts and is appropriate for an academic interdisciplinary audience, including those studying and working in anthropology, history, environmental studies, Pacific studies, politics and ethnomusicology. I would be delighted to see Schwartz make this information accessible to Indigenous Pacific audiences, for many Pacific people have experienced neocolonialism and militarisation and have actively protested for Pacific nuclear freedoms and on behalf of their brothers and sisters in the Marshall Islands and French

Polynesia. Perhaps this book will also encourage Indigenous Marshallese researchers to document their own stories in the future. Certainly, all people would benefit from these fundamental human rights lessons. The songs and stories are significant and powerful, and the critical notions therein demand to be common knowledge.

Note

1. “Artivism” is a portmanteau word combining “art” and “activism”. Artists use their artforms as a way to communicate injustice or to educate and increase awareness. The goal is to fight for social change and motivate people towards change.

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Exhibition Review

To Move Between: Healing and Resistance. Alanis Obomsawin, Artspace Aotearoa, 2 Sept.–4 Nov. 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

ALEXANDRIA HAWLEY

Diné

Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland

Film plays an important role in Indigenous activism and representation, with an increasing number of directors and producers sharing stories from their own perspective as First Nations and Native American people. The growth in the North American film industry and increasing inclusion of Indigenous voices is thanks to Alanis Obomsawin’s (Abenaki Nation) nearly 60-year career with the National Film Board of Canada. Artspace Aotearoa, a contemporary artist-led gallery, presents their annual programming in response to a question that guides their curatorial practice throughout a given year. In 2023, they asked, “Where does my body belong?” While the curatorial shows each answer this question distinctly, they also provide gallery visitors with a string of ongoing conversations, contributing to layered understandings of place and belonging.

To Move Between: Healing and Resistance showcased the last 50 years of Alanis Obomsawin's work in First Nations film. The exhibition was a timely enquiry into belonging, relationality and what happens when these ways of being are interrupted and restored. A singer and storyteller, Alanis Obomsawin is renowned across Indian Country and the film industry for her commitment to truth telling and her investment in the wellness of future Indigenous generations. Four films were exhibited, along with documentary heritage and artist drawings, courtesy of Obomsawin and the National Film Board of Canada. This exhibition marked Alanis Obomsawin's third visit to Aotearoa, coinciding with her 91st birthday.

The reflective floors and grey walls of the Artspace Aotearoa gallery offered a soothing retreat from the bustle of Friday afternoon on Karangahape Road. The exhibition map labelled the east wall with the first work, "1", and I wondered if this was intentional, to move in the direction of sunrise to sunset. A flat-screen television was mounted at standing height with speakers evenly attached to each side. *Sigwan* (2005) poured softly into the gallery space. Viewers followed the story of a lonely young girl who finds refuge in the forest with her relatives from the Bear Clan. They offer comfort and medicine to the girl, who feels that she is not welcome in her own community. Through acts of kinship, a cheerful resolution is found, and the girl is reunited with her village. The speakers and long, minimal bench centred in front of the television screen contributed to the subtle storytelling environment of the short film's installation. Sitting there, I was reminded of my niece and my own Bear Clan relatives in Dinétah (Navajoland), waiting for my return.

A dark curtain separated off the south screening space. *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) was projected on the wall in full scale. Wireless headphones, hung on the shoulders of four folding chairs, eliminated external sound and created an almost private viewing experience within the gallery. The award-winning documentary followed the Mohawk Resistance camp of Kanehsatake, where Obomsawin spent 78 days filming the standoff between Mohawk land defenders, the Quebec police and the Canadian army. For the viewer, seated in a cushioned chair and safely veiled behind a thin curtain, the screening of *Kanehsatake* served as a poignant reminder of ongoing settler violence and Indigenous land struggles overseas. The screening was accompanied by the original film poster and reproduced archival drawings of the north shores of Montreal, on Mohawk land.

Along the west, a tube television rested at an incline, facing up. The retro viewing experience was enhanced by two headphone sets plugged into the television. *Poundmaker's Lodge: A Healing Place* (1987) told the story of an Indigenous-run alcohol and substance use support centre located just outside the city of Edmonton, revealing through individual interviews and

group sessions how substance use took root in First Nations communities. Obomsawin positioned the story within the larger context of colonisation and the lasting impact of forced assimilation on Indigenous lives. Further, she demonstrated how culturally based interventions within Native communities are crucial in the healing journey for our relatives living with addiction.

The Cabinet, an additional space on the west side of the gallery, contained documentary heritage of moments throughout Obomsawin's career. The adjoining Reading Room screened *We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice* (2016) on a flat-screen television mounted below a bookshelf. While this was the longest film exhibited in the gallery, I didn't feel the passing of time or a pressure to leave before the documentary was finished. I was grateful for the pocket of privacy this installation provided as I reflected on my own grandparents' experiences in a federal Indian boarding school.

The layout of the exhibition demonstrated thoughtful consideration for the viewer's experience. The installation showed clear intention for gallery visitors to engage with each of Obomsawin's films in their full length. The speakers and headphones, with obvious utilitarian purposes, contributed to distinct storytelling environments. Often the narrator in her work, Alanis Obomsawin's voice flowed from the headset and into the listeners' ears.

While I moved through the space in the natural direction of the sun, a particular order was not necessary. The screenings emanated a sense of interconnectedness and spoke freely to one another, creating a single, non-linear narrative that floated throughout the gallery. During my visit, I reflected on how beautiful my First Nations relatives were. I was comforted by familiar Native faces and voices and saw glimpses of my own family in each film. Across the ocean and over 10,000 kilometres away from my homelands, *To Move Between: Healing and Resistance* created a liminal space for me to exist, fully, in two places at once.

The inclusion of Alanis Obomsawin's work as part of the 2023 curatorial theme is incredibly fitting. While the North American continent is effectively Indigenous land, it is cut across by arbitrary borders and settler governments. Tribal nations existing along the US–Canada border, including the Abenaki of the Northeastern Woodlands, must navigate government-imposed regulations of belonging on our own land. Obomsawin's work presented some of the earliest narratives told from a distinctly Indigenous perspective, shifting Indigenous North America out of the Western gaze and into our own canon. To see her work positioned in the contemporary art space, in an international context, was a welcome blessing.

SCHULZ, Joy: *When Women Ruled the Pacific: Power and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Tahiti and Hawai'i*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023. Series: Studies in Pacific Worlds. 166 pp., appendices, illus., index, maps, photos. US\$50 (hardcover/e-book PDF/e-book EPUB).

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Joy Schulz's *When Women Ruled the Pacific: Power and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Tahiti and Hawai'i* is a small, handsome book with an introduction, chapters dedicated to each of four chiefly women—Purea and 'Aimata of Tahiti and Ka'ahumanu and Lili'uokalani of Hawai'i—and a conclusion. Following these are two appendices, notes, a bibliography and an index. This book represents the first extended study of these women together in one volume.

The introduction opens with the arresting description of Purea meeting Captain Samuel Wallis of the HMS *Dolphin* in 1767 at Matavai Bay, Tahiti. Schulz also introduces Ka'ahumanu of Hawai'i and highlights how both women held enough mana (divine power or political authority) to negotiate and develop relations with the British and American visitors to their shores. Foreigners misunderstood who these women were: the British assumed Purea was a queen in the English sense; in fact she was one (albeit very ambitious) of a group of ari'i (high chiefs); and Ka'ahumanu was kuhina nui (regent) during the time of Kamehameha II.

The author states that “no previous studies have shown the dominance of Polynesian women in wielding political power during these encounters and despite the unique threat foreigners posed to their rule and their people's independence” (p. 3). Schulz's objective becomes clear at the very start, which is to “correct the narrative by highlighting a historically unparalleled transcolonial queenship” (p. 3). Furthermore, by “rewriting traditional histories of contact from women's perspectives” she hopes to show that in pre-contact times, patriarchal power was not the norm on those islands. The themes examine how transnational contact altered political and gender models in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tahiti and Hawai'i and how the adoption of Christianity affected power struggles between British, French and American imperialists.

A brief description of the peopling of the Pacific is summed up by Cook's often quoted question: “How can we account for this Nation spreading itself so far over this vast ocean?” (p. 5). Schulz discusses the similarities between Tahitian and Hawaiian social and political structures, and the importance of genealogy in chiefly lineages which highlight links to the gods which in turn

ensured spiritual mana; and how matriarchal power and a mother's lineage was at least equal to a father's genealogy with regards to chiefly status.

English and American efforts to spread Christianity throughout the Pacific were outwardly selfless affairs where Christians "pledged their lives to foreign lands and peoples" (p. 6). The London Missionary Society's first target was Tahiti, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions worked in the Hawaiian Islands after an initial contact with Indigenous nations in the American West. These missionary efforts affected the political and cultural landscape of both places. During and following these missionary endeavours came international trade, which led to a range of new problems and complexities as colonists and others arrived.

The complexities around gender structures of pre-contact Tahiti and Hawai'i is a focus of this work; and while differences in race, nationalist anxieties and religious narratives were all significant in unravelling the islands' power dynamics, Schulz argues that foreign patriarchal ideals were perhaps the most oppressive influence affecting how these female political rulers functioned.

Following the introduction, four chapters discuss the extraordinary lives of two Tahitian *ari'i*: Pūrea, whose title name was Tevahine-*'ai-roro-atua-i-Ahurai* (ca.1720–ca.1775), and Pōmare IV, or Vahine-o-Punuatera'*itua* 'Aimata (1813–1877); and two Hawaiian *ali'i* (high chiefs): Ka'ahumanu (1768–1832) and Lili'uokalani, or Lili'u Loloku Wālania Kamaka'eha (1838–1917). These chapters are explored through the lens of gender and power dynamics and the impact of missionary and colonial oppression.

I found the chapter on 'Aimata compelling, partially because in 1831 she generously took in my Tahitian foremothers and their children during a brief return to Tahiti after 41 years on Pitcairn Island, despite Tahiti being on the brink of civil war. Throughout her long reign, 'Aimata was often left vulnerable, her appeals to the British Queen Victoria to come to her aid were left unanswered, and the betrayal by one of her chief advisors, the missionary George Pritchard, is beautifully, heartbreakingly told. Such detailed inclusions of characters like Pritchard in 'Aimata's chapter are insightful and valuable. Therefore, the preceding chapter's exclusion of the high priest Tupāia—Pūrea's close advisor—who was highly influential in negotiations with Wallis is most puzzling.

Language is a powerful portal to a people's culture and worldview, and a reason to consult the community one is writing about. Using the word queen rather than the appropriate Indigenous terms was evidently a conscious choice made by the author, but it intensifies the Western representation of these women. There are some spelling mistakes—e.g., "Rai'atea" (pp. 16, 23), "Ra'iatia" (pp. 4, 5)—and misuses of the glottal stop mark or 'eta (Tahitian) and 'okina (Hawaiian).

As this book is suited to an academic audience, such details are critical. Overall, however, this book is a valuable revision of the lives of these extraordinary women, and I would hope that in the future Indigenous scholars will take up a challenge to write about these women from within their own cultures.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED *

December 2023 to March 2024

- BAGNALL, Kate and Peter Prince (eds): *Subjects and Aliens: Histories of Nationality, Law and Belonging in Australia and New Zealand*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2023. 196 pp., ack., figs., index, table. AU\$39.95/free (softcover/EPUB). <http://doi.org/10.22459/SA.2023>
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* The inclusion of a publication in this list neither assumes nor precludes its subsequent review.

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