



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

'No ordinary sun'

Citation for published version:

Keown, M 2020, 'No ordinary sun': Indigenous Pacific Cold War literature. in A Hammond (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Cold War Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 651-676. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38973-4_33

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1007/978-3-030-38973-4_33](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38973-4_33)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

The Palgrave Handbook of Cold War Literature

Publisher Rights Statement:

This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030389727>

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



‘No Ordinary Sun’: Indigenous Pacific Cold War Literature

Michelle Keown (University of Edinburgh)

Indigenous Cold War literature from the Pacific Islands encompasses a geographical area covering almost one third of the globe and containing one of the most heterogeneous groups of cultures and languages in the world. This chapter is therefore selective, focusing on some of the major literary and socio-political trends and inter-relationships within the region from the end of the Second World War through to the end of the 1980s. Like other regions of the globe, such as the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia, the Pacific has been subject to multiple colonial incursions and administrations that have played a key role in generating the conflicts and movements explored here. In analysing these colonial legacies, I engage with all three geocultural areas of the Pacific as devised by French explorer Jules-Sébastien Dumont d’Urville in 1832: these are Polynesia (translating as ‘many islands’), Melanesia (‘the black islands’) and Micronesia (‘small islands’).¹ This tripartite categorisation of indigenous Pacific cultures is still widely used but also contested by indigenous Pacific conceptualisations of the region as a vast ‘sea of islands’ interlinked by interpelagic systems of trade and migration (which existed for centuries before contact with Europeans). New Zealand Maori call the Pacific *Te Moana Nui a Kiwa* (The Great Ocean of Kiwa, legendary Polynesian explorer and guardian of the sea) and there are many other indigenous labels used across Oceania.²

Multiple terms for the Pacific have been coined by outsiders in the centuries following European incursion. Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, who landed on the island of Guam in 1520, named the ocean the ‘Pacific’ due to the unusually calm waters that enabled him to become the first European to reach the region from the Atlantic. During the eighteenth century, when advances in maritime technology expedited European exploration and settlement, British explorers commonly described the region as ‘The South Seas’ or ‘The South Sea Islands’, terms that became synonymous with Romantic conceptions of the Pacific as an

¹ See d’Urville, ‘On the Islands of the Great Ocean’, trans. by Isabel Ollivier, Antoine de Biran and Geoffrey Clark, *Journal of Pacific History*, 38: 2 (2003), p. 165.

² See Michelle Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (2007).

Arcadian paradise. Their French counterparts deployed the label *l'Océanie* (Oceania) to similar ends. The term 'South Pacific', first used by the Western Alliance military forces during Second World War operations in the Pacific, has been widely used since but is misleading in that, as Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa notes, it incorporates 'not just those islands that lie south of the equator' but rather 'the whole region, from the Marianas, deep in the North Pacific, to New Zealand in the south'.³

Since the era of decolonisation began in the early 1960s, however, 'Pacific Islands Region' has been used to differentiate the smaller islands of the Pacific from neighbouring hegemony, Australia and New Zealand, and in that sense is the most appropriate label to use in this chapter. However, as Hau'ofa notes, although the term bespeaks the increasing socio-political autonomy of these islands, it has also served to underscore their 'declining importance' to the West since the end of the Cold War, when the Pacific lost its strategic importance for protecting the US, New Zealand and Australia from communist military incursion.⁴ Other more recent regional labels such as 'Asia-Pacific' – a term widely used by international agencies and multinational business corporations – also marginalise the smaller islands of the Pacific in favour of the larger, more economically powerful Southeast Asian nations. This trend is similarly witnessed in the 1989 establishment of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which includes wealthy regional hegemony such as Australia, New Zealand and the US, but excludes all Pacific Island countries except Papua New Guinea (which is endowed with rich mineral deposits). Within such designations, as Hau'ofa notes, the Pacific Islands region is placed largely under erasure, becoming the 'hole in the doughnut' of the Pacific Rim.⁵ Such effacements have had serious consequences for the islands, perhaps most notably in the use of various locations across the Pacific for nuclear weapons tests staged by Britain, France and the US during the Cold War.

This chapter discusses indigenous literature emerging from this epoch-shaping phase of nuclear colonialism in the Pacific, but also covers a variety of other Cold War modalities in the region, including the various millenarian, decolonial and social movements that emerged in the decades following the Second World War. These range, *inter alia*, from the Melanesian 'Cargo Cults', through the Kanak nationalist movement in New Caledonia and the indigenous protest against US military operations in Hawai'i in the 1970s, to crises such as the Fiji coup

³ Hau'ofa, 'The Ocean in Us', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 10: 2 (1998), p. 396.

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 396.

⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 397.

and the Bougainville secessionist movement in the 1980s. In exploring these contexts, I engage with the legacies of several dominant powers in the Pacific, particularly Britain (and its former settler colonies Australia and New Zealand), France and the United States. Soviet influences in the Pacific are explored with reference to the imbrication of indigenous nationalist movements with international socialist and communist ideologies.

The Emergence of Indigenous Pacific Literature

Although the indigenous literary material I discuss engages with events dating back at least to the Second World War, it is worth noting that indigenous Pacific literatures in English, and in other languages introduced by Western colonial forces in the Pacific (including France and Spain), only gathered momentum from the 1960s, when a rather belated era of decolonisation began with the independence of (former Western) Samoa in 1962. However, these indigenous literatures can be situated within a longer *durée* that dates back to the early nineteenth century, when Western missionaries first developed orthographies for indigenous Pacific languages. The missionaries taught Pacific Islands people to read and write, first in their own vernaculars and then in the colonial languages, primarily in order to disseminate the Bible and other Christian tracts. Once literate, Pacific Islanders began to produce their own written texts, including life writing and genealogies, as well as mission-inspired publications.

The missionaries generally discouraged Islanders from writing fiction and it wasn't until 1960 that the first indigenous Pacific novel – Tom and Lydia Davis's *Makutu* – was published. This narrative – which took the form of a realist adventure story narrated by an English doctor – did not break significantly with the modes and conventions of British literature and is generally viewed as a precursor, rather than progenitor, of the anti-colonial indigenous literature that emerged towards the end of that decade.⁶ By this time, New Zealand Maori and Western-educated Pacific Islanders (such as Samoan author Albert Wendt) had already begun publishing individual creative pieces in metropolitan literary journals, magazines and newspapers, with Maori poet Hone Tuwhare publishing his *début* poetry collection, *No Ordinary Sun*, as early as 1964. However, the first major phase of indigenous literary efflorescence was to begin in Papua New Guinea, where the establishment of a national university in 1966 brought substantial numbers of budding indigenous Pacific authors together for the first time. Ulli Beier (a German-Jewish scholar who had played a key role in fostering

⁶ See Subramani, *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), p. 14.

Nigerian literature and art in the 1950s and 1960s) established a creative writing course at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in 1967 and published a wide range of his students' work in literary anthologies. Although these were primarily targeted towards Western readers, he also established his own local poetry imprint (Papua Pocket Poets) and the journal *Kovave*, which served local writers and readers.

The next wave of creative efflorescence emerged from the University of the South Pacific (USP), established in Fiji in 1968 to prepare islanders from a number of independent and decolonising Pacific territories for self-government. Many of the authors discussed in this chapter originate from the 12 countries served by the USP's central and satellite campuses: the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. I also engage with material from Hawai'i and other parts of the 'American' Pacific, as well as with publications from French territories in the Pacific (including New Caledonia and French Polynesia).

The Spread of Nationalist and Millenarian Movements

Indigenous Cold War literatures and cultures in the Pacific have been inflected markedly by the events and aftermath of the Second World War, which brought many Pacific Islanders into sustained contact with Western cultures and commodities for the first time. Previous interactions between islanders and outsiders were generally limited to hierarchical and strictly regulated relations with Western planters, traders, missionaries and government officers. With the advent of war in the Pacific, however, many islanders served as carriers and labourers for both Axis and Allied forces and some fought alongside Americans and Australians in island regiments or as Japanese Army auxiliaries.⁷ These experiences of fighting, working, eating and sharing leisure time with Western and Japanese army personnel radically transformed the attitudes of many islanders towards their colonial administrators, laying the foundations for a variety of post-war millenarian, nationalist and other social movements.

These forces of change were unevenly distributed across the Pacific. Some areas were untouched by combat, while others witnessed intense and protracted violence, as well as widespread destruction of villages and plantations.⁸ War broke out in the Pacific in December 1941 with the Japanese attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i. Japan subsequently

⁷ See Geoffrey M. White and Lamont Lindstrom, *The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), p. 4.

⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 5.

captured a range of other US military bases in Guam and the Philippines, routed British forces in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya, and fortified the Micronesian territories (now known as Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Marshall Islands) that it had seized from Germany during the First World War. It therefore had an ideal staging post from which to capture the oil-rich Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and to expand further into the Pacific in pursuit of its imperialist ambitions.⁹ The Japanese forces extended south and south-east, invading the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), New Guinea and parts of Papua (under Australian colonial jurisdiction at that time) and the Solomon Islands. In May 1942, however, the Japanese were turned back from a seaborne invasion of central Papua by US military forces in the Battle of the Coral Sea. A month later, at the Battle of Midway, the US forces repelled the Japanese Fleet and retained a vital submarine refuelling base at Midway Atoll, north-west of Hawai'i. For a short period, Japan continued to gain territories, including the phosphate-rich islands of Nauru and Banaba (one of the Gilbert Islands) in August 1942, but thereafter progressively lost ground to the Americans, who recaptured Allied territories on their way north and north-west towards Japan.¹⁰ As the Cold War began, these captured islands were incorporated into the UN-sanctioned US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (formalised in 1947), allowing America to establish a string of military bases from Hawai'i through Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands to Guam and the Philippines. These were intended to head off potential communist incursions from the Soviet Union and China and to draw fire from the US mainland in the event of war.¹¹

The most intense and protracted conflict during the Pacific War took place in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, where thousands of Papuans and New Guineans, and hundreds of Solomon Islanders, served as soldiers, agricultural labourers and carriers of supplies and wounded troops. Contact with American soldiers, whose friendliness and generosity contrasted radically with the behaviour of British, Australian and German colonial administrators, helped to trigger the emergence of a number of anti-colonial and millennialist movements in the region during the Cold War. Notably, many Melanesians were struck by the

⁹ See Michelle Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 81.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 83; and Stuart Firth, 'Colonial Administration and the Invention of the Native', in Donald Denoon, et al., eds, *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 296.

¹¹ See Jane Dibblin, *Day of Two Suns: US Nuclear Testing and the Pacific Islanders* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 194; and Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing*, p. 90.

putative equality between Black and white American soldiers, subsequently resisting pressure by the British and Australian colonial forces for islanders to return to their former positions after the war ended.

These dynamics are explored in some detail in the 1989 autobiography of Solomon Islander Jonathan Fifi'i (born on Malaita, an island located east of Guadalcanal). His experiences working with American military forces were recorded and transcribed by anthropologist Roger Keesing and published under the title *From Pig-Theft to Parliament: My Life between Two Worlds*. This text formed the basis of a 2002 play (entitled *Fifi'i*) by Julian Treadaway, a scene of which dramatizes a conversation between Fifi'i and a Black American soldier who compares the treatment of Melanesians by the British to the abuse of African slaves in the US, exhorting Fifi'i and his compatriots to resist British colonialism after the war ends.¹² Fifi'i serves as a choric figure as well as a character in the drama, and his interjections, which punctuate the historical vignettes around which the play's action is structured, are closely based on anti-colonial sentiments recorded in Fifi'i's autobiography:

[The British officers] were trying to keep us 'natives' in our proper place so that their companies could go back to making money from our work. They tried their best to keep us from getting any ideas or acquiring any possessions that would make us think that we were human beings, not natives whose place was to serve and work for white people. Older men on Malaita are still angry about what they did to this very day.¹³

Later sections of the play explore the involvement of Fifi'i and his peers in the Malaitan post-war 'Ma'asina Rule' movement, one of the most effective anti-colonial resistance movements to emerge during the Cold War. 'Ma'asina' is a word from the 'Are'are language (spoken in south Malaita) denoting the relationship between members of a family, and proponents of the movement were committed to non-violent protest against the British colonial administration, bringing it to a standstill by refusing to pay taxes or to work for the government or white plantation owners, advocating instead self-rule under local chiefs. Members of the movement also cultivated communal gardens, opting out of the exploitative capitalist economy established by the British by growing and selling their own food rather than relying on the 'pittance' paid

¹² See Treadaway, *Fifi'i* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 2002), p. 74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

to them as plantation labourers.¹⁴ As the movement spread through the eastern and central Solomons in 1946-47, the British administration arrested leaders on Malaita, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal, imprisoning hundreds of islanders, including Fifi'i himself. The ending of the play celebrates the ways in which the movement laid the foundations for greater political autonomy, medical treatment, education and, finally, independence in 1978, but also laments the fact that, in the post-independence era, the national government failed to transcend colonial models of governance and to re-establish the communal values that regulated precolonial village society.¹⁵

In its exploration of the tensions between Western capitalism and indigenous communal values, Fifi'i's narrative also touches upon another consequence of American wartime incursions into Melanesia: the emergence of millenarian movements. Commonly described as 'cargo cults', these developed as a result of the nexus between Christianity, indigenous belief systems and indigenous desire for the technologies and commodities that American (and Japanese) military forces brought to the Pacific during the war. The millenarian movements sprang up in various locations in which US and Japanese military bases were established, but had notable pre-war antecedents, such as the Tuka movement that emerged in Fiji in 1885 and the so-called 'Vailala Madness' that thrived in the Papuan Gulf between 1919 and 1922. These drew on Melanesian (and often Christian) religious beliefs and rituals in order to account for, and emulate, the material wealth that Westerners brought with them to the Pacific. They were underpinned by a set of beliefs and traditions common to a wide variety of Melanesian societies, particularly the idea that humans exist not as isolated individuals but rather as members of a community of people and spirits, with generations of ancestors providing models of good conduct for the community and rewarding the faithful with high social status and material wealth. When missionaries, colonists and Western military forces brought new technologies and commodities to Melanesia, islanders coveting this 'cargo' in many cases imitated Western cultural practices and infrastructures in the hope of receiving goods. For example, they would meld Melanesian practices with Christian religious ritual, stage military drills and marches using improvised weapons, and establish makeshift airstrips ready to receive deliveries of the desired cargo. It is of some significance that, after receiving commodities from US military forces during the Second World War, Melanesians had these seized by British and Australian colonial officials after the Americans had left. This act of confiscation, combined

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

with traditional aspirations for material reward and general dissatisfaction with colonial rule, created the social and political conditions in which new millenarian movements were to flourish.¹⁶

Anthropologist Lamont Lindstrom has explored whether the term ‘cargo cult’ first appeared as a product of white guilt about the failure of capitalist development in colonial settings or (in pseudo-Orientalist terms) as a device used ‘both to excuse and to justify [Western] domination of the colonized’, who were posited as irrational, anomic and resistant to Protestant or capitalist work ethics.¹⁷ As Lindstrom points out, pre-war resistance to colonialism was often interpreted as a kind of ‘madness’ by colonisers. A corresponding fear of the putatively volatile energies of millenarianism is evident in a wide range of Western literature focused on ‘cargo cults’, a notable example being Australian Randolph Stow’s 1979 novel *Visitants*, in which an outbreak of millenarian fervour in a Papuan community sparks mass hysteria, vandalism and murder. Other Western authors adopt a more comi-satirical or even parodic stance on Melanesian millenarianism. An example is John Marsh’s ‘The Surprising Gospels of John Frum: He Who Swept Sin Away’ (1968), a series of fictional testimonies by islanders from Tanna (in Vanuatu), where a millenarian movement sprang up in the early 1940s. The John Frum movement focused on a folk hero who appeared to foresee the arrival of Americans, who duly arrived in the Anglo-French condominium (then known as the New Hebrides) during the Pacific War. When the Americans had left, John Frum followers built more landing strips to encourage American aeroplanes to bring back the large quantities of cargo witnessed during the war, also re-enacting military drills and raising the American flag at ceremonial events.¹⁸ Marsh’s composition embeds the story in Cold War geopolitics, incongruously linking the red crosses widely evident at ritual events with communist colour symbolism (but also, farcically, with the attire of Santa Claus).¹⁹

Indigenous Pacific Cold War literature offers a wider, more nuanced spectrum of responses to post-war millenarian movements. For example, the nineteenth-century origins of

¹⁶ See Peter J. Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford’s *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific* (1984), Michelle’s Keown’s *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (2007) and Lamont Lindstrom’s *Cargo Cult: Strange Stories of Desire from Melanesia and Beyond* (1993).

¹⁷ Lindstrom, *Cargo Cult: Strange Stories of Desire from Melanesia and Beyond* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ See Lindstrom, *Cargo Cult*, p. 92.

¹⁹ See Marsh, ‘The Surprising Gospels of John Frum: He Who Swept Sin Away’, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 39: 10 (1968), p. 85.

millenarianism are explored in *Cargo* (1971), a play by Niuginian author Arthur Jawodimbari. This is structured around the arrival of Anglican missionary Albert Maclaren on the north coast of Papua in the 1890s, where he establishes a mission station and attempts to gain converts in the village of Orodere. Significantly, Jawodimbari's play was written while he was a student in Ulli Beier's creative writing course at the University of Papua New Guinea. Beier, having played a key role in supporting indigenous art and literature in Nigeria, introduced his Niuginian students to a broad spectrum of African literature with the objective of fostering a similar burst of creativity in the Pacific. Jawodimbari's play, which Beier situates in the vanguard of a nascent Niuginian theatre movement, bears similarities to nationalist African texts such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), delineating the divisive effects of Christianisation and Westernisation in an indigenous village community while also championing indigenous oral culture (the play is written in English, but contains a wide variety of idioms clearly translated from Papua New Guinean oratory).²⁰ In the notes that appear with the list of dramatis personae, Jawodimbari indicates that the Orodere villagers 'confused their traditional beliefs with Christian beliefs', representing millenarianism not as some kind of 'madness' but rather as a product of unequal intercultural exchange.²¹ The cohesion of the village community starts to break down when one elder decides to send his sons to Maclaren's mission school. It is suggested that the elder is attracted to the new religion because Jamba, one of Maclaren's existing Melanesian converts, tells the villagers that the missionary's proselytising contains 'magic words, so that his ancestor or God could stop us from dying, and give us plenty of pigs and taros to eat'.²² Another convert tells the elder (Umo) that his sons, by learning to read and write at the mission school, will be able to emulate the power of 'white men' who 'send messages far across the sea' that summon 'canoes [...] with goods'.²³ Unfortunately, the gift of literacy brings disaster when Umo's sons, who assist in unloading a shipment of Maclaren's 'cargo', read the label 'Pure soap' on a box and mistakenly assume that, because 'Pure' is the name of their tribe, the cargo is meant for them and not the white man. Umo is shot while trying to requisition the cargo and Maclaren calls in the colonial police in order to suppress what he (anachronistically) designates a dangerously subversive 'cargo

²⁰ Beier, 'Introduction' to Beier, ed., *Five New Guinea Plays* (Milton: Jacaranda Press, 1971), p. viii.

²¹ Jawodimbari, 'Cargo', in Beier, ed., *Five New Guinea Plays*, p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

cult'.²⁴ Although the villagers appear to surrender, this is represented as a pragmatic decision (given that Maclaren's party is carrying guns) and the end of the play presents this transitional moment as a protonationalist one. Ewa, one of the warriors within the village, exhorts his compatriots to 'take up your spears and shields and be men again. Remember, only this village is defeated, but the whole tribe of Pure is large and spreads over all this land [...]. We will get our cargo'.²⁵ Jawodimbari's play was first performed in Canberra only five years prior to Papua New Guinea's independence from Australian colonial rule, and these closing, choric remarks register a decolonising imperative redolent of Frantz Fanon's pronouncements, in *Les Damnés de la Terre* (The Wretched of the Earth, 1961), on the role of literature in motivating 'the people' to overthrow colonial rule.²⁶

In 1975, another UPNG graduate, Kama Kerpi, produced a text entitled 'Cargo', this time a short story. The narrative explores millenarianism within the same context of incipient anti-colonial nationalism, but its treatment of the exploits of schoolboys at a residential Catholic mission school is leavened with humour. Significantly, Kerpi completed a university research project on peace-making processes within the Chimbu province of the Highlands (where he was born) and later became involved in reconciling hostile factions during clan skirmishes in the area.²⁷ Such dynamics are explored in his short story, where schoolboys from rival clans compete to discover the secret location of their white Reverend's wealth, which they believe to be hidden beneath an outdoor lavatory near the holy man's house. Two of the boys (notably named Cain and Abram) follow well-documented millenarian practices by re-enacting Catholic rituals (including reciting passages from the Bible, drinking sacramental wine and dispensing holy water) in the hope that this will help them obtain the cargo that they believe the white man is diverting from them. (Significantly, they compare this with indigenous cultural practices such as slaughtering pigs in order to convince dead ancestors to fulfil the desires of the living.) The two boys then lie in wait for the Reverend to visit his latrine in the dead of night, hoping to follow him 'down the passage to the underworld'.²⁸ However, their plans are thwarted by two boys from a rival clan, who creep up to the outhouse from a different direction but are scared off when the Reverend suddenly throws the door open and surveys the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by C. Farrington (1961; New York: Grove Press, 1991), p. 22.

²⁷ See Ulli Beier, 'Notes on Contributors', in Beier, ed., *Voices of Independence: New Black Writing from New Guinea* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 250.

²⁸ Kerpi, 'Cargo', in Beier, ed., *Voices of Independence*, p. 59.

area with his torch. The four boys confront each other and trade factional insults and a ‘few punches’, but eventually acknowledge that they have a shared objective and discuss the possibility of ‘teamwork’ for the purposes of ‘obtaining our dead people’s cargo’.²⁹ Although the reference to collaboration puts a hopeful, even nationalist cast on the narrative, the last sentence refers to a moonlit landscape in which ‘nothing changed’ and it is not clear by the end of the story whether the boys will actually join forces.³⁰ Although the latrine scenario is humorous, it prefigures various African narratives of post-independence disillusionment, such as Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1988), in which a critique of conspicuous consumption culminates in a memorable scene in which a corrupt politician escapes pursuit by crawling into a pit latrine (enacting the well-established Freudian link between money and excrement).

Socialism, Capitalism and Development in Pacific Literature

Many nationalist Niuginian writers have rejected capitalism as a system that underpins colonial material exploitation and indigenous expropriation. John Kasaipwalova, for example (who was born in 1949 on Kiriwina in the Trobriand Islands), encountered international socialism while studying at the University of Queensland and decided to abandon his degree in Veterinary Medicine in favour of attending his home university (UPNG) and becoming involved in local nationalist politics. He initially studied law but switched onto Beier’s creative writing programme, becoming one of the central figures in the nascent Niuginian literary movement.³¹ He was also one of the leaders of the Black Power movement within UPNG, along with fellow author Leo Hannett, who in 1972 published an important essay entitled ‘Niugini Black Power’. Here, Hannett comments, *inter alia*, on the likelihood that political independence from Australia will not entail economic independence, given Australia’s substantial investments in Papua New Guinea mining and agriculture. As he puts it, ‘[w]e cannot hope to plan for our welfare and development as long as our capital and human resources remain subject to the interests of overseas monopolies’.³² Niuginian historian John Waiko also notes how low wages (and racial prejudice) under the colonial administration kept the majority of Niuginians outside

²⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

³¹ See Beier, *Decolonising the Mind* (Canberra: Pandanus Press, 2005): p. 8.

³² Hannett, ‘Niugini Black Power’, in F.S. Stevens, ed., *Racism: The Australian Experience. Volume 3: Colonialism* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1972), p. 47.

the paid employment sector, particularly before the formation of trade unions in the 1960s.³³ The Niuginian Black Power movement, which gathered momentum in the early 1970s, helped foster socialist sensibilities at a broader national level, with quotations from ‘Lenin, Marx and Engels’ invoked at rallies.³⁴ Hannett argued that Niuginian independence could be expedited with the support of members of the ‘Eastern Power bloc’ and William Hawari, another Black Power member, was sponsored by the Australian Labor Party to study trade unions in Australia and founded the Niuginian National Labour Party on his return home.³⁵

Black Power rhetoric abounds in Kasaipwalova’s 1971 poem *Reluctant Flame*, first published in the Nigerian Pan African Pocket Poets series. Using imagery redolent of Aimé Césaire’s nationalist epic *Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal* (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land, 1939), Kasaipwalova figures colonialism as a white ‘chill’ and ‘thick fog’ that must be dispelled by the volcanic energies and ‘flame’ of anticolonial nationalism.³⁶ He expresses rage at the destructive effects of colonial education, racism and capitalist exploitation, using excoriating Black Panther rhetoric (‘I hate you as a panther hates a / motherfucker’; ‘your boot is on our necks’; ‘you have trampled the world over’).³⁷ Alluding to Black creative and anti-racist movements elsewhere in the world (including Black American music and the anti-apartheid movement), Kasaipwalova asserts that ‘Napalm cannot burn out the flames the guerrillas now open’ and exhorts Niuginians to ‘take your fuel from these brother flames’ to throw off ‘white bastardry’.³⁸ Not long after publishing his poem, Kasaipwalova left UPNG to found the Kabisawali movement in the Trobriands, a self-determination and cultural revivalist movement that entailed establishing locally-run trade stores, building a local creative arts centre and producing artefacts for the tourist trade.³⁹ He still continued to publish literary works, including a range of plays, but followed the path taken by many Pacific authors of the

³³ Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 164.

³⁴ John Ryan, ‘Man with a Cause – Or a Political Opportunist?’, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 42: 4 (1971), p. 50.

³⁵ Hannett, ‘Niugini Black Power’, p. 46. For the sponsoring of Hawari, see Kwasi Nyamekye, ‘East Sepik: Issues, Parties and Personalities’, in David Hegarty, ed., *Electoral Politics in Papua New Guinea: Studies on the 1977 National Elections* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1983), p. 240.

³⁶ Kasaipwalova, ‘Reluctant Flame’, in Ulli Beier, ed., *Black Writing from New Guinea* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 61.

³⁹ See Kirsty Powell, ‘Self-Help and Festival in the Trobriands’, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 46: 8 (1975), p. 29.

independence era who become closely involved in building the infrastructure of the new postcolonial states.

Another Pacific author, Epeli Hau'ofa, took up his pen to produce a series of comi-satirical short stories (first published in Pacific literary magazines and later collected in a 1983 volume entitled *Tales of the Tikongs*). These reflect upon the ways in which anti-colonial nationalist ideals became compromised with the formation of indigenous elites and development of Western aid dependency in the postcolonial Pacific. Born in Misima (Papua New Guinea) to Tongan missionary parents, trained in anthropology and economics in Australia and Canada, and appointed as Deputy Secretary to the King of Tonga before pursuing a long academic career at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, Hau'ofa had ample opportunity to observe the politico-economic vicissitudes of the Cold War Pacific. The stories in *Tales of the Tikongs* are set on a fictional Pacific Island, Tiko, allowing Hau'ofa to allegorise events from a broad range of Pacific Islands directly affected by Cold War political developments. This oblique approach draws on Tongan storytelling practices, which use the 'tall tale' as a medium through which to critique particular individuals and institutions. Because it is considered rude to offer such criticisms directly, the satire is instead conveyed through humorous allegorical tales shared in storytelling circles. Each individual attempts to outdo the previous orator by infusing his or her narrative with increasingly exaggerated and ribald plot embellishments.⁴⁰ Many of the stories in *Tales of the Tikongs* satirise the ways in which the Cold War superpowers and their allies competed for economic and political dominance over the Pacific through international economic development and aid programmes, featuring a range of development 'experts', political advisers and predatory diplomats from the USSR, the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Broadly speaking, the Cold War in the Pacific witnessed an alliance between the last four of these nations against a perceived Soviet threat to security in the region. In 1951, Australia, New Zealand and the US signed the ANZUS collective security agreement, in which all three nations pledged to cooperate in 'strategic denial' of any form of Soviet regional access and influence.⁴¹ New Zealand was suspended from ANZUS in 1986 after the government

⁴⁰ See Michelle Keown, 'Freeing the Ancestors: An Interview with Epeli Hau'ofa', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 32: 1 (2001), p. 73; and Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 62.

⁴¹ See John C. Dorrance, 'The Soviet Union and the Pacific Islands: A Current Assessment', *Asian Survey*, 30: 9 (1990), p. 920.

established a nuclear-free zone in its territorial waters, partly in protest at continuing French nuclear testing in French Polynesia, but also in response to the US policy of neither confirming nor denying whether its warships carried nuclear weaponry. Nonetheless, throughout the Cold War New Zealand remained ideologically aligned with the UK, the US and Australia in countering the putative threat of Soviet political and economic activity in the Pacific.

In his story 'The Second Coming', Hau'ofa indexes these alliances and tensions in a satirical tale set in a post-independence Tiko apparently free of 'the running dogs of Imperialism and Capitalism'.⁴² Indeed, the population is set on a course of 'National Development towards Tiko taking its rightful place among the nations of the free world', with power resting 'in indigenous hands and no others'.⁴³ Tikong Sailosi Atiu, the main protagonist in the tale, has just been appointed Director of the Bureau for the Preservation of Traditional Culture and Essential Indigenous Personality, following the departure of his English predecessor, 'imperial running dog Mr Eric Hobsworth-Smith', a 'graduate in anthropology and prehistoric archaeology from the University of London, where he had read all there was to be read on the habits and peculiarities of native peoples in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania'.⁴⁴ Sailosi, who has developed a predilection for 'fancy English words', colonial British attire, 'cocktail parties' and conspicuous consumption as a result of working under Hobsworth-Smith, gets partway towards purging himself of 'foreign influences' and restoring 'his essential indigenous personality' before the threat of foreign influences reappears:

[The] former imperial countries, having lost the world, developed pangs of conscience for their past overenjoyment of native peoples everywhere [and] felt so depressed when natives took to dancing lascivious twists to the sound and the rhythms of the balalaika that they started sending [...] overpaid experts and emissaries in limousines to the former colonies to right the wrongs and recapture their fickle affections.⁴⁵

Here, Hau'ofa satirises Western paranoia surrounding the perceived 'Soviet threat' to the Cold War Pacific, which had prompted the United States to establish a string of forward bases

⁴² Hau'ofa, 'The Second Coming', in Hau'ofa, *Tales of the Tikongs*, new edn (1983; Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), p. 48.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 48. At this point, the narrator indicates that the 'stage' is 'set for Tiko to skin her own pigs' (traditionally highly prized commodities across Oceania) and 'so control her Manifest Destiny' (*ibid.*, p. 48).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

through the Micronesian territories that it had captured from Japan (and incorporated into the US Strategic Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in 1947) and to monitor and influence political developments across Polynesia and Melanesia to ensure that Oceanic regimes did not become subject to communist influences.⁴⁶

Despite the circulation of numerous conspiracy theories throughout the Cold War, Soviet influence in the Pacific Islands Region was minimal compared to other parts of the world. As John Dorrance notes, aside from its influence on trade union activity in the Pacific (supported primarily by Marxist and other leftist Australian and New Zealand trade unionists and levied mainly through the regional Pacific Trade Union Community), Moscow's involvement in the region only picked up in the latter half of the 1970s and was largely unsuccessful. For example, its proposals for commercial and infrastructural assistance in Tonga were rejected by island authorities due to their diplomatic ties with New Zealand and Australia, an outcome that also resulted from its approaches to (former Western) Samoa soon afterwards.⁴⁷ As mild as these overtures were, they prompted the US, Australia and New Zealand to increase aid and economic development support to the Pacific region. After the reputation of the US was damaged in the late 1970s and early 1980s due to its refusal to recognise island state jurisdiction over migratory species of fish within their Exclusive Economic Zones, Kiribati (in 1985) and Vanuatu (in 1986) concluded fisheries agreements with the Soviet Union, although even these arrangements were short-lived as the Soviet Union quickly decided profit margins were not sufficiently high to justify investments in infrastructure. In the final years of the Cold War, Soviet activity in the Pacific was limited to regional diplomacy focused on nuclear issues, French Pacific colonial policies, and the desires of island states to diversify their economies to reduce reliance on foreign aid (by this stage, the Pacific Islands were the most aid dependent region per capita in the world).⁴⁸

In *Tales of the Tikongs*, Hau'ofa represents the Western response to the 'Soviet threat' as a scramble for neo-colonial economic control of the Pacific. In 'The Second Coming', after Sailosi orchestrates the dismissal of various indigenous deputy directors who question his

⁴⁶ See David Robie, *Blood on Their Banner: Nationalist Struggles in the South Pacific* (1989).

⁴⁷ Dorrance, 'Soviet Union', pp. 913, 917.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 911, 916. Some Pacific Islands governments did capitalise on Western paranoia about the Soviets on occasion. In 1966, for example, Samoan Prime Minister Fiame Mata'afa, frustrated at the failure of the US, Canada, Britain and Australia to provide vital aid for reconstruction work following a hurricane, announced that he was considering turning to the 'Communist bloc' for help (see R.F. Rankin, 'Samoans Support Threat to Seek Red Aid', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 37: 11 (1966), p. 33).

abuse of his privileged position, he returns from ‘six-months’ overseas leave’ to find Hobsworth-Smith back in the office, having ‘shaved his handle-bar moustache, softened his stiff upper lip somewhat, and donned the Tikong national dress instead of his standard safari shirt, Bengali shorts, and knee-length socks’.⁴⁹ Though Hobsworth-Smith is appointed as Sailosi’s deputy, he soon resumes effective control of the organisation in a neo-colonial power grab. Similar figures appear elsewhere in *Tales of the Tikongs*. ‘The Tower of Babel’, for example, details the sinister machinations of Alvin ‘Sharky’ Lowe, an Australian development loans consultant with ‘experience in handling natives in New Guinea, Thursday Island, and in a certain humpy settlement outside his gentle hometown of Alice Springs’.⁵⁰ After Lowe coerces impoverished Tikong fishermen into taking out large international development loans to purchase fishing equipment from international firms that grant him generous sales commissions, the narrative charts the economic ruin of one of his victims, Ika Levu (which translates as ‘small fish’ in Fijian). It also introduces a further plot strand in which fellow Tikong Toa Qase (whose name translates as ‘chicken man’ in Fijian) attempts to diversify from ‘successful small-time market gardener’ to ‘big-time chicken farming’.⁵¹ Qase takes out a development loan enabling him to purchase ‘six thousand infant chickens flown in from New Zealand’, but his capitalist venture sits uneasily with traditional Tikong cultural practices requiring the sharing of resources with ‘relatives and neighbours’ and his chicken stocks are incrementally wiped out by hungry compatriots.⁵²

The early fiction and verse of Samoan author Albert Wendt, Hau‘ofa’s contemporary, explores similar political themes, albeit within a darker, more nihilistic framework. For example, his 1976 poetry collection *Inside Us the Dead* contains excoriating denunciations of the indigenous post-independence élite, figured as ‘vampire men and bitches / [who] feed on the gut of your dream’, while his 1977 novel *Pouliuli* offers an extended critique of conspicuous consumption, with corrupt politicians and clergy represented in scatological terms as obese figures ‘trapped in their excreta and stench’.⁵³ The narrative is focalised primarily through Faleasa Osovae, a powerful elderly *matai* (elected leader) and the most respected *ali‘i* (hereditary chief) in his village, whose disgust at the political corruption, elitism and

⁴⁹ Hau‘ofa, ‘Second Coming’, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Hau‘ofa, ‘The Tower of Babel’, in Hau‘ofa, *Tales of the Tikongs*, p. 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵³ Wendt, ‘What You Do Now, Brother’, in Wendt, *Inside Us the Dead: Poems 1961 to 1974* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1976), p. 48; Wendt, *Pouliuli*, new edn (1977; Auckland: Penguin, 1987), p. 14.

materialism he observes in his compatriots manifests as bouts of nausea and vomiting. Osovae does not lay the blame for the social ills he witnesses entirely at the door of the colonising *palagi* (whites), but the narrative includes analeptic vignettes registering moments in which the younger Osovae is disturbed by scenes of white capitalist excess, including the deluge of commodities that enter Samoa in 1942 when the US military establish a base at Faleolo (the site on which Samoa's international airport is currently located).⁵⁴

Grace Mera Molisa, a ni-Vanuatu poet and feminist activist, explored the impact of capitalist development and economic exploitation upon women in a series of poetry volumes published during the 1980s.⁵⁵ Poems such as 'Pregnancy Blues' (1983) and 'Custom' (1983) register the isolation of married women in a post-independence Vanuatu in which colonial power structures have bequeathed ni-Vanuatu men greater power and status. More generally, 'Vatu Invocation' (1983) critiques neo-colonial incursions into Vanuatu through the 'technical advisors / investors / and entrepreneurs' from metropolitan centres such as London and Paris, capital cities of the former colonising nations of Vanuatu, whose fractured governance of the former New Hebrides under a joint condominium was pejoratively labelled 'pandemonium'.⁵⁶

The Cold War and the 'Nuclear Pacific'

A major legacy of the Second World War was the dawn of nuclear imperialism in the Pacific. As Hau'ofa notes, long-established Western understandings of the island Pacific as a realm remote from metropolitan centres of power and comparatively 'empty' of people enabled Britain, France and the United States to undertake nuclear testing 'with minimum political repercussions to themselves', carefully selecting sites over which they had colonial jurisdiction.⁵⁷ For Britain, these included Christmas and Malden in the Northern Line Islands; the French tested on Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls (in the Tuamotu archipelago, French Polynesia); and the US used Bikini and Enewetak atolls in the Marshall Islands. Britain also gained permission from the government of Australia, its former settler colony, to test at Maralinga, Emu Field and Monte Bello Island. The tests not only caused significant environmental damage and health problems for the indigenous peoples of these zones, but also

⁵⁴ Wendt, *Pouliuli*, p. 55.

⁵⁵ See her *Black Stone* (1983), *Colonised People* (1987) and *Black Stone II* (1989).

⁵⁶ Molisa, 'Vatu Invocation', in Molisa, *Black Stone* (Suva: Mana Publications, 1983), p. 25.

⁵⁷ Hau'ofa, 'The Ocean in Us', in Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), p. 46.

created what have been termed ‘nuclear dependencies’ in French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands.⁵⁸ Significantly, while the majority of Pacific Islands states had achieved independence by the end of the Cold War, a substantial number of the heavily militarised Pacific Islands remain under US and French colonial or semicolonial jurisdiction to this day.

Shortly after the nuclear era was inaugurated by the US bombing of Japan, the testing of atomic and then hydrogen bombs took place in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958, with a final series of tests at Johnston Atoll and Christmas Island (by then an Australian territory) in 1962. France’s Pacific nuclear testing programme began later (1966) but lasted much longer (periodically until 1996), generating a significantly larger proportion of regional and international protest (and protest literature) than the US testing.⁵⁹ I have elsewhere written at length about the Marshall Islands nuclear programme, many disturbing details of which remained classified until the early 1990s, when an international investigation into the effects of radiation on the human body resulted in the US being compelled to share information about its testing programme with the Marshallese government.⁶⁰ Partly as a consequence of these belated disclosures – which revealed that Marshall Islanders were deliberately exposed to nuclear fallout and unknowingly enrolled in a research project to chart the effects of radiation on the human body – some of the most compelling indigenous anti-nuclear literature, in particular the work of performance poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, has been produced many years after the official end of the Cold War and consequently is not discussed in detail here. However, it is important to note that a selection of Jetnil-Kijiner’s anti-nuclear poems, some of which were published in her 2017 debut collection *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*, draw on the testimonies of female victims of radiation exposure published in the 1980s. Two of these women, Lijon Eknilang and Darlene Keju-Johnson, wrote accounts of their exposure to fallout (and resulting health problems) during the 1 March 1954 BRAVO bomb test at Bikini, termed the ‘day of two suns’ by witnesses from the islands to the east of Bikini, who initially mistook the orange glow of the explosion for a second sunrise and the resulting fallout for

⁵⁸ See Sasha Davis, *The Empire’s Edge: Militarization, Resistance, and Transcending Hegemony in the Pacific* (2015).

⁵⁹ See Michelle Keown, ‘Waves of Destruction: Nuclear Imperialism and Anti-Nuclear Protest in the Indigenous Literatures of the Pacific’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 54: 5 (2018), pp. 585-600.

⁶⁰ See Keown, ‘War and Redemption: Militarism, Religion and Anti-Colonialism in Pacific Literature’, in Keown, Andrew Taylor and Mandy Treagus, eds, *Anglo-American Imperialism and the Pacific: Discourses of Encounter* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 25-48.

snowflakes.⁶¹ ‘No Ordinary Sun’ (1964), a poem by New Zealand Maori author Hone Tuwhare, commemorates this event in a lament for the destructive impact of the bomb on the natural environment. In her spoken-word composition ‘Bad Coconuts’ (2007), Teresia Teaiwa (of I-Kiribati and African American descent) notes the insidious effects of nuclear irradiation upon a staple traditional food source from the Marshall Islands to French Polynesia: invoking the nursery rhyme dictum ‘[a]n apple a day keeps the doctor away’, Teaiwa points out that in the irradiated islands of Bikini, Enewetak, Moruroa and Fangataufa ‘a coconut a day will kill you’.⁶²

Teaiwa is one of a number of indigenous Pacific women writers who has worked in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement (NFIP), formed from a coalition of non-governmental organisations that met in Fiji in 1975. The NFIP has supported various campaigns not just against nuclear imperialism (helping to bring about the Rarotonga Treaty for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone in 1985), but also against other large-scale military operations such as the US testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles at Kaho‘olawe Island in Hawai‘i, the mining of uranium in Australia and the dumping of radioactive waste in the Pacific by Japan.⁶³ Other Pacific women authors who have been involved in the NFIP include ni-Vanuatu poet Grace Mera Molisa and Kanaky poet and activist Déwé Gorodé. The latter wrote two anti-nuclear poems, ‘Clapotis’ (Wave-Song) and ‘Zone Interdite’ (Forbidden Zone), when she was jailed in Camp-Est prison, Noumea, for ‘disturbing the peace’ during 1974 anti-colonial protests at local law courts. These poems express solidarity with the indigenous peoples of French Polynesia as fellow islanders under French political control. ‘Wave-Song’, in addition to referring directly to the nuclear testing in Moruroa, draws on oceanic imagery in a manner which evokes indigenous understandings of the Pacific as an interconnected ‘sea of islands’⁶⁴ that transcend colonial geopolitical divisions. The poem’s ambit stretches across the

⁶¹ See Jane Dibblin, *Day of Two Suns: US Nuclear Testing and the Pacific Islanders* (1988). The accounts by Eknilang and Keju-Johnson are found in *Pacific Women Speak: Why Haven’t You Known?* (1987), an edited collection by Women Working for an Independent and Nuclear Free Pacific.

⁶² Teaiwa, ‘Bad Coconuts’, *Terenesia: Amplified Poetry and Songs by Teresia Teaiwa and Sia Figiel* (Honolulu: Hawai‘i Dub Machine, 2010), n.p.

⁶³ See Stuart Firth and Karin von Stokirch, ‘A Nuclear Pacific’, in Denoon, et al., eds, *Cambridge History*, p. 356; and Michelle Keown, Andrew Taylor and Mandy Treagus, ‘Introduction’ to Keown, Taylor and Treagus, eds, *Anglo-American Imperialism and the Pacific: Discourses of Encounter* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 17.

⁶⁴ Hau‘ofa, ‘Our Sea of Islands’, *We Are The Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), p.27.

entire Pacific Ocean from West to East, making links between Gorodé's own experience of French colonial oppression in New Caledonia, the nuclear testing in French Polynesia and the Chilean colonisation of Rapa Nui/Easter Island.⁶⁵ 'Forbidden Zone', while focusing more specifically on the nuclear testing zones in French Polynesia, also situates the islands within a broader context of exoticist French representations of the Pacific as a paradise which is now being 'poisoned' by nuclear radiation.⁶⁶

A number of Ma'ohi (indigenous Polynesians) have also published anti-nuclear works. The most extended critique of French nuclear testing appears in Chantal Spitz's 1991 novel *L'île des Rêves Écrasés* (Island of Shattered Dreams), but there are also a range of anti-nuclear poems by first-generation Ma'ohi poets Hubert Brémond, Henri Hiro and Charles Manutahi published in a 1982 trilingual (English, French and Ma'ohi/Tahitian) special issue of the journal *MANA*. Henri Hiro became directly involved in the Ma'ohi anti-nuclear movement from the 1970s, organising numerous demonstrations against French testing in Moruroa. A number of his poems in the *MANA* issue lament the fact that the economic dependency generated by French military investment in Polynesia has caused many Ma'ohi to abandon traditional subsistence activities (including fishing and agriculture). All three poets in the volume are redolent of French Romanticism in their emphasis on the 'fatal impact' of French military imperialism upon Ma'ohi culture: in 'Polynesia', for example, Brémond describes the 'man made thunder' (nuclear bombs) and consumer capitalism as having 'killed' Ma'ohi values, leaving the culture 'inhumane' and 'withered out'.⁶⁷ However, the three poets also express anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments, calling upon Tahitian deities connected with the natural environment to rise from their 'torpor' (as Hiro puts it in 'Tomorrow is in Your Hands') to aid Ma'ohi resistance to French colonialism.⁶⁸ These poems, like other anti-nuclear Pacific literature, are informed by long-standing beliefs (as recorded in oral traditions and cosmologies) in the vital importance of a balanced relationship between humans and the environment.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See Gorodé, 'Clapotis', in Gorodé, *Sharing as Custom Provides: Selected Poems of Déwé Gorodé*, ed. and trans. by Raylene Ramsay and Deborah Walker (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004), pp. 42-3.

⁶⁶ Gorodé, 'Zone Interdite', in Gorodé, *Sous Les Cendres Des Conques* (Nouméa: Les Éditions Populaire, 1985), p. 117 (my translation).

⁶⁷ Brémond, 'Polynesia', in Marjorie Crocombe, Ron Crocombe, Kauraka Kauraka and Makiuti Tongia, eds, *Te Rau Maire: Poems and Stories of the Pacific* (Rarotonga: Ministry of Cultural Development, 1992), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Hiro, 'Tomorrow Is in Your Hands', in Crocombe, et al., eds, *Te Rau Maire*, p. 65.

⁶⁹ See Hau'ofa, 'Our Place Within: Foundations for a Creative Oceania', Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean*, pp. 71-7.

Similar values are evident in 1970s indigenous protest literature centred on the island of Kaho‘olawe (off the south coast of Maui in Hawai‘i), a site of traditional Hawai‘ian religious worship that had been used as a US military bombing target since 1941. Like various islands in Micronesia, the US state of Hawai‘i remains heavily militarised to this day, with nearly 30 per cent of the land of O‘ahu (where the Hawai‘i’s capital city Honolulu is located) controlled by the military. By the mid-1970s, a substantial native Hawaiian protest movement had developed in opposition to the continued military exploitation of the island. In 1976, a grassroots organisation called Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (*ohana* means family or clan group) was formed with the aim of halting US military activity on the island, carrying out a series of occupations of the island in 1976 and 1977 and arguing that the despoliation of Kaho‘olawe contravened the native Hawai‘ian principle of *malama ‘aina* (protection of the land). The group’s protests and petitions eventually resulted in the cessation of military operations in 1990, with the title of the island returned to the people of Hawai‘i in 1994. The campaign was supported by various Hawai‘ian creative writers as well as activists, with two landmark anthologies of poetry and prose published in 1984 and 1985.⁷⁰

Legacies of Military Imperialism in the 1980s

The final years of the Cold War witnessed other legacies of military imperialism in a series of violent conflicts that broke out in Fiji, New Caledonia/Kanaky and Bougainville (a province of Papua New Guinea). The Fiji coups (the first of which took place in 1987) had their roots in British colonial policies that created entrenched divisions between indigenous Fijians and Indian indentured labourers, some 60,000 of whom came to work on plantations (primarily the sugar estates of the Australian-owned Colonial Sugar Refining Company) between 1879 and 1916. The British colonial administration, mindful of the detrimental consequences of indigenous land alienation in Hawai‘i and other islands, decided to protect indigenous Fijian landholdings, and to this day over 80 per cent of Fijian land remains in indigenous ownership, with Fiji Indians largely dependent on the granting of leases by the owners.⁷¹ Colonial policies kept Fiji Indians and indigenous Fijians largely segregated, and although ex-indentured labourers and free Indian migrants gradually established a strong foothold in trade and commerce, the British administration reacted to a multiracial strike in 1959 by splitting the

⁷⁰ These were Rodney Morales’s edited *Ho‘i Ho‘i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm and Kimo Mitchell* (1984) and Dana Naone Hall’s edited *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (1985).

⁷¹ See Satendra Nandan, *Fiji: Paradise in Pieces*, ed. Anthony Mason (Adelaide: CRNLE, 2000), p. 22.

unions along ethnic lines, thus protecting the interests both of European traders and Fijian chiefs, who feared the unions would undermine their traditional authority.

As David Robie notes, the British ‘official empathy’ towards indigenous Fijians, which intensified when Fijians enlisted in large numbers during the Second World War (while many Indians held back after the colonial government refused to grant pay and conditions equal to those of British soldiers), later played into the postcolonial tensions that culminated in the 1987 coup.⁷² The Alliance Party, which had held power in the Fijian government almost constantly since independence in 1970, was courted by the US through the early 1980s, particularly when the government temporarily banned nuclear-armed and powered vessels from Fijian ports in 1982. Its indigenous Fijian leader, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, lifted the nuclear ban in 1983 after pressure from the US; the following year, he was invited to the White House by President Reagan and learned that Fiji was to become the first South Pacific country to receive US military bilateral aid (some \$300,000 per year, mainly for buying small arms). In 1986, Defence Department official Paul Wolfowitz justified the spending by describing Fiji as one of America’s staunchest allies, not just because of its lifting of the nuclear ban but also because of its support on ‘international issues’ including the US condemnation of the 1983 ‘KAL’ incident, when Soviet pilots shot down a Korean Airlines passenger plane that strayed into Soviet airspace. Mara himself had adopted an explicitly anti-Soviet stance during the 1982 election campaign, when he alleged that the National Federation Party (which more strongly represented the interests of Fiji Indians) had received a \$1 million donation from the Soviet Union.

In spite of this strong international support for the Alliance government, local Fijian disillusionment with its nuclear stance and its inefficacy in addressing socio-economic inequalities led to the founding in 1985 of the Fiji Labour Party, a genuinely multiracial party with a social democratic, non-aligned and nuclear-free agenda. In late 1986, the Labour Party formed a coalition with the National Federation Party and, despite being maligned in newspaper advertisements as a ‘communist coalition’ with links to Cuba, the coalition won the 1987 election and came to power under the leadership of indigenous Fijian Timoci Uluivuda Bavandra. Even though Bavandra ensured a balance between Fijians and Indians in his cabinet, he was branded an Indian ‘puppet’ by members of the Alliance Party and within a week of the election the Taukei Movement (named after the Fijian word meaning ‘indigenous Fijian’) was formed, beginning a campaign of destabilisation that culminated in the military coup on 14

⁷² Robie, *Blood on Their Banner: Nationalist Struggles in the South Pacific* (London: Zed Books, 1989), p. 207.

May 1987. The coup was led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, who claimed to be acting on behalf of Indigenous Fijians concerned about racial discrimination and who also falsely alleged that members of Bavadra's cabinet had pro-Soviet and pro-Libyan sympathies. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was one of several international newspapers that reported allegations of CIA involvement in the coup, while many Fijians saw the coup as an attempt to prevent younger, progressive indigenous Fijians from undermining the authority of traditional Fijian rulers.⁷³ After a period of unsuccessful negotiations, a second coup was staged in September 1987, after which Fiji was declared a republic and Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau (an Indigenous Fijian) was appointed President with Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara as Prime Minister. A new constitution (implemented in 1990) severely disadvantaged Fiji Indians, reserving most political offices for indigenous Fijians. Although a subsequent constitution reopened the Prime Ministerial role to citizens of all ethnicities, tensions rose again in May 1999, when a multiracial coalition led by Mahendra Chaudry – Fiji's first Indian Prime Minister – came to power, only to be overthrown in a further military coup in 2000.

These later events fall outside the historical scope of this chapter, but the 1987 coup gave rise to a large corpus of literature that engaged with the geopolitical currents that were influencing local politics. This is apparent in Arlene Griffen's edited anthology *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post Coup Writing from Fiji*, originally published in 1990 to commemorate the death of Dr Bavadra and reissued in a revised, expanded edition in 1997. Bavadra died of cancer in November 1987, but many viewed him as a martyr felled by the traumatic events of 1987 and his non-partisan, racially inclusive stance is celebrated by Indian as well as Fijian writers in Griffen's anthology. In 'Elegy: Dr Timoci Bavadra', Sudesh Mishra salutes Bavadra as 'Noah to our Ark', a political saviour who, paradoxically, was a 'priest without a creed' in his commitment to bridging the ethnic divide between Indians and indigenous Fijians.⁷⁴ Another poem, 'Detainee II', is focalised through the anxious mind of Som Prakash, a lecturer at the University of the South Pacific (USP) who was arrested and detained for two weeks in 1988 after criticising a recently published biography of Colonel Rabuka.⁷⁵ In the aftermath of the 1980s coups, many intellectuals were arrested and interrogated, including indigenous Fijian

⁷³ See *ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

⁷⁴ Mishra, 'Elegy: Dr Timoci Bavadra', in Arlene Griffen, ed., *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-Coup Writing from Fiji*, new edn (1990; Suva: Christmas Club, 1997), pp. 127-8.

⁷⁵ See Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing*, p. 123.

sociologist Steven Ratuva, who in an autobiographical essay recalls being labelled a ‘Soviet-sponsored peace activist’ during one of his many arrests by the ‘military bureaucracy’.⁷⁶

During the 1970s, the USP had been a cradle for the regional ‘Pacific Way’ movement, which sought to unite Pacific Islanders against Western colonial powers, emphasising cultural commonalities between Pacific peoples and celebrating putatively ‘Pacific’ values (such as communal ownership, reciprocity and respect for the land and other people).⁷⁷ The movement lost momentum in the 1980s when, following the decolonisation of the majority of the countries served by the USP, Pacific Island politics became more parochial and introspective. Yet traces of it remained in neo-Marxist ideologies that flourished on the Fiji campus before being suppressed following the 1987 coup. Within this context, it is significant that ‘Letter to the Colonel’ (1988), a poem written by Tongan USP scholar Konai Helu Thaman, combines socialist politics (evident in references to the ‘workers, farmers, miners [and] women in the fields’ who have suffered as a result of the economic downturn triggered by the coups) with references to the *kava* ceremony as a means to rediscover the communal ethics that regulated and united Pacific cultures across the centuries.⁷⁸ Other USP academics offered a more oblique critique of the divisive ethnopolitics that inflected the coups. Rotuman playwright Vilsoni Hereniko, for example, staged his play *The Monster* in October 1987, escaping censure at a time of high political sensitivity by refashioning the events of the coup into an allegorical, post-apocalyptic fantasy. The play features two Beckettian beggars (Ta and Rua) who struggle for control of a basket of food and other necessities and who in the 1987 performance were cast as an indigenous Fijian and a Fiji Indian, thereby allegorising political tensions. The standoff is resolved when Ta and Rua defeat a monster who tries to gain control of the basket and the pair share the resources fairly between them, offering a symbolic resolution to a political situation that Hereniko viewed as ‘hopeless’ at the time.⁷⁹

The 1980s also witnessed turbulent political events in other parts of the Pacific. In New Caledonia (originally a French colony that evolved into a *Territoire d’Outre-Mer* after the Second World War), the Kanak (indigenous) nationalist movement which had begun in the 1970s entered a new phase with the establishment of the FLNKS (*Front de Libération de*

⁷⁶ Ratuva, ‘Coup Coup or Cuckoo?’, in Griffen, ed., *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ See Sina Va‘ai, *Literary Representation in Western Polynesia: Colonialism and Indigeneity* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 1995), pp. 33-5.

⁷⁸ Helu, ‘Letter to the Colonel’, in Griffen, ed., *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew*, p. 227.

⁷⁹ See Hereniko, *The Monster*, in Hereniko, *The Monster and Other Plays* (Suva: Mana, 1989), p. 89.

Nationale Kanak et Socialiste) in 1984. Several members of the movement, including author Déwé Gorodé, had witnessed the power of French social movements while studying in Paris in the 1960s and 1970s and were former members of the neo-Marxist PALIKA (Parti de Libération Kanak), formed in the late 1970s. Founding member Élie Poigoune stated that PALIKA aimed for ‘a Cuban-style socialist party without a small Melanesian bourgeoisie’, seeking to eradicate capitalism and to expel the Société Le Nickel (SLN), a French company that had long exploited New Caledonia’s rich nickel deposits.⁸⁰ The founding charter of the FLNKS also opposed ‘capitalist and imperialist exploitation [of New Caledonia] by foreign interests’ and, in protest against the lack of progress towards Kanak independence, staged an ‘active boycott’ of the November 1984 election, burning ballot boxes and papers and erecting barricades to prevent people voting.⁸¹ Two weeks later, ten unarmed Kanak activists were slaughtered in an ambush at the Hienghène River staged by *caldoches* (French settlers, who had outnumbered indigenous Kanaks since the 1960s), who were later acquitted on the grounds that they had acted in self-defence. Gorodé dedicated her poem ‘La rivière pleure’ (The Crying River, 1985) to the victims, transforming reports of the victims’ blood staining the river water into a meditation on the loss of Kanak land and sovereignty that galvanised the independence movement. Using imagery redolent of animistic, anthropomorphic poetry produced by indigenous writers elsewhere in the Pacific, Gorodé describes the river weeping ‘tears of blood’, the mountain emitting ‘echoes of mourning’ and the forest enveloping a ‘gaping wound’ that implies a homology between the bullet-ridden bodies of the slain activists and the plunder of Kanaky’s natural resources.⁸² Violent conflict between Kanak nationalists and *caldoches* (euphemistically termed *les événements*) continued for the next four years, culminating in the deaths of 19 Kanak activists on the Loyalty island of Ouvéa in May 1988, after French police laid siege to a cave in which the activists had taken 27 gendarmes hostage. A political compromise was subsequently reached with the June 1988 signing of the Matignon Accords, which established a framework for determining New Caledonia’s constitutional future. The Accords were signed by French Prime Minister Michel Rocard and FLNKS leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou and, although Tjibaou was assassinated by one of his own followers in 1989, the Accords held firm and resulted in public spending on social and economic

⁸⁰ Quoted in Robie, *Blood on Their Banner*, p. 95.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

⁸² Gorodé, ‘La rivière pleure’, in Gorodé, *Sous Les Cendres Des Conques* (Nouméa: Les Éditions Populaire, 1985), p. 83 (my translation).

development and improved educational and training opportunities for Kanak communities. A decade later, the Noumea Accords provided for irreversible devolution of certain state powers over the following 15 years and for a 2018 referendum on independence (narrowly defeated by a 56.4 per cent majority).

As the Cold War drew to a close, its legacies were still playing out in violent conflict within other parts of Melanesia. 'Brata na Susa' (Brothers and Sisters), a 1992 poem by Papua New Guinean author Rita Mamavi Pearson, explores the imbrication of Papua New Guineans both in the Bougainville Civil War (which began in 1988) and in the West Papuan struggle against Indonesian occupation. Plans for West Papuan independence from Dutch colonial rule had been sabotaged in the 1960s when Indonesia invaded West Papua in 1961 and, after persuading the Dutch to leave by promising to offer a vote on Papuan self-determination within seven years, staged a series of 'consultations' in 1969 that excluded or coerced anyone opposed to the incorporation of West Papua into Indonesia.⁸³ Although the incorporation was immediately and violently opposed by Papuans, Indonesia's actions were sanctioned by Australia, New Zealand, the US and a majority of other nations in the UN Assembly. Decades of West Papuan guerrilla resistance, answered by Indonesian military repression, have followed, resulting in a flow of refugees and militants across the border between West Papua and Papua New Guinea (which gained its independence from Australia in 1975). In October 1988, not long before Pearson's poem was written, the Papua New Guinean Foreign Minister Michael Somare protested to Jakarta about the fact that Indonesian troops had made seven cross-border raids (in search of West Papuan guerrillas) in that year alone.

A few months later, civil war broke out in Bougainville, a large island to the east of Papua New Guinea that had been incorporated into the German province of New Guinea before being taken over by Australia during the First World War. When Papua New Guinea became independent, it retained Bougainville as a province named the North Solomons (though Bougainville had attempted to secede and become independent at the time). Through the 1980s, local resentment was building over the exploitation of Bougainville's rich copper reserves, primarily by Australian mining company Conzinc RioTinto Australia (CRA), with a 20 per cent share of profits going to the Papua New Guinean government. Owners of the land on which the CRA-owned Panguna copper mine was located were paid extremely low rents, and amidst growing concerns about environmental damage from the mine, and disruption caused by expanding numbers of overseas workers coming to the area, local landowner Francis Ona

⁸³ See Robie, *Blood on Their Banner*, pp. 59-60.

led an attack on the mine in 1988. Ona subsequently founded the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), a guerrilla force comprising (mainly young) local men, and in 1989 further attacks on the mine were followed by full-blown civil war, triggering the closure of the mine and – after Ona unilaterally declared independence – a Papua New Guinean blockade that prevented food and medical supplies from reaching Bougainvilleans. It took almost a decade for the conflict to be resolved.

Pearson's 'Brothers and Sisters' offers a strident denunciation of the colonial territorial claims that laid the foundations for these Cold War conflicts, noting that the 'border lines' that divide Melanesians were originally established by British, German, French and Dutch invaders who 'grovelled for the Pacific / Like dogs fighting over pig bones'.⁸⁴ Specific recent conflicts are referenced in the poem, including the Bougainville secessionist conflict and the Indonesian raids across the border with Papua New Guinea, with Pearson lamenting the widespread 'slaughter' that has blighted Papua New Guinea's postcolonial era.⁸⁵ She condemns the involvement of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (which evolved from the Australian Army land forces established in the colonial era) in various regional conflicts, including the attacks on other parts of the Solomon Islands during the Bougainville civil war and the suppression of the Santo secessionist movement in Vanuatu in 1980. (Notably, the latter was supported by the French government, resentful about giving up its stake in the condominium, as well as by the Phoenix Foundation, a right-wing American organisation seeking a capitalist refuge from the 'socialist west'.)⁸⁶ Pearson also laments the fact that geographically contiguous islands once interlinked through indigenous trading networks have remained alienated from one another since the decolonisation era. The Torres Strait Islands – populated by Melanesian peoples – remain part of Australia even though the most northerly of these is located only 2.5 miles from the Papua New Guinean mainland and is proximate to the border with West Papua. The poem ends with a plea for Pacific peoples to remember that 'We are brothers and sisters'.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Although Pearson's aspirations were fulfilled with regard to the Bougainville conflict, at the time of writing this chapter another spate of violence is unfolding in West Papua, where

⁸⁴ Pearson, 'Brata Na Susa'/'Brothers and Sisters', in Crocombe, et al., eds, *Te Rau Maire*, p. 50.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁸⁶ Robie, *Blood on Their Banner*, p. 76.

⁸⁷ Pearson, 'Brata Na Susa', p. 51.

protests against arrests and racist abuse of Papuan students falsely accused of damaging an Indonesian flag during Independence Day celebrations have resulted in an influx of Indonesian security forces and an internet blackout designed to hamper communication between protesters.⁸⁸ There are strong parallels between the struggles of the West Papuans and those of the people of East Timor which, following a Timorese declaration of independence from Portuguese colonial rule in 1975, was swiftly occupied by the Indonesian military and claimed as Indonesia's twenty-seventh province in 1986. It is significant that although Australian and American intelligence agents were closely monitoring the widespread killings of East Timorese after the Indonesian occupation, both governments failed to criticise Indonesia's actions, with the US abstaining from a UN General Assembly resolution condemning the military intervention.⁸⁹ Robie argues that the US adopted this stance for strategic reasons: not only is Indonesia the world's fourth most populous nation, but its proximity to Timor Sea oilfields and the Ombai Straits – one of the most crucial deepwater passages in the world for US defence purposes – played a key role in America's tolerance of the violence in East Timor, which Amnesty International estimated had claimed one third of the indigenous population – some 200,000 people – by the time East Timor became independent in 1999.⁹⁰

In the post-Cold War era, the US has continued to consolidate its military interests in the Pacific, with the Soviet Union replaced by China and North Korea as the greatest perceived threats to US security in the Asia-Pacific region and with islanders from Guam, American Samoa and Hawai'i disproportionately represented among US army casualties in the 'war on terror'. Indigenous Pacific literature continues to chart the vicissitudes of this global superpower, as witnessed, for example, in the ecopoetry of Chamorro author Craig Santos Perez (which exposes the environmental and social costs of the US military build-up on Guam), in the videopoems of Marshallese author Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner (who emphasises the intergenerational health problems resulting from US nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands during the Cold War) and in the verse of native Hawaiian poet Brandy Nālani McDougall (who, like compatriot Haunani-Kay Trask, explores the deep ecologies and indigenous narratives that predate US incursions into Hawai'i). Indigenous authors continue to explore the legacies of

⁸⁸ See Helen Davidson and Kate Lamb, 'West Papua: Indonesia Claims Province Has 'Returned to Normal' amid Internet Blackout', *Guardian*, 23 August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/23/west-papua-indonesia-claims-province-has-returned-to-normal-amid-internet-blackout> (accessed 27 September 2019).

⁸⁹ See Robie, *Blood on Their Banner*, p. 48.

⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 49.

French nuclear testing in the Pacific (which finally ended in 1995) and Kanaky has witnessed the emergence of new literature recording the continued impetus towards self-determination (as witnessed, for example, in the arresting performance poetry of Paul Wamo). But as we progress further into the twenty-first century, current literary trends suggest that it is the environmental and human health costs of Cold War geopolitics – in the form of residual nuclear contamination, the continued exploitation of oil and mineral resources, rising sea levels and other effects of global warming – that will feature prominently in the indigenous literatures of Oceania in the decades to come.