**Introduction: Pacific Waves: Reverberations from Oceania**

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It is a truism today to say that the Pacific region of Oceania, surrounded by the world’s largest ocean, tends to disappear in contemporary postcolonial and global discourses, which focus instead on the Pacific rim nations at its edges. This is the second special issue of a journal published in the UK within the last year (see Kennedy and Wilson 2017; Keown 2018 PAGES TO COME), featuring new critical perspectives aimed at remedying this absence, which the Tongan intellectual and writer, Epeli Hau’ofa, images as “the hole in the donut” (2008, 37). This special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* emerges from a postgraduate conference convened at the University of Sussex in November 2015. The conference title, which evokes intersecting metaphors of waves and reverberations, is used to signal the forms of current enquiry into the region’s cultural production as one that registers and resists, even as it is shaped by, the political and social forces of decolonisation and economic neoliberal globalization. These include the exploitation and marginalisation of indigenous people and resources (Stewart-Harawira 2005, 185): large scale international migration and dispersal of Pacific Islanders, hybridisation of identities, refugeeism, climate change, US military and nuclear imperialism, and other traumatic legacies of imperial colonisation. The urgent need for such research appears in what the editors identify as the issue’s leitmotif, the poem “Wave Song” by Kanaka New Caledonian writer, Gorodé Déwé, who spearheads a Pacific antinuclear protest movement. Michelle Keown in her article, “Waves of Destruction”, indicates how the poem develops the versatility of the wave image:

Gorodé posits the movement of the waves as conveying ripples of protest from Oceania’s easternmost island, Rapanui, against the violence of the Chilean political regime that holds jurisdiction over “Easter Island”, and subsequently bearing witness to the nuclear violence “infecting the sky” over Moruroa. The wave also holds the potential to “carry” indigenous Pacific peoples forward in their resistance to imperialism, gathering and imparting radical energies through its transoceanic trajectories (Keown 2018, PAGE; citing Gorodé 2004, 42).

To extend the wave metaphor further, the six articles and two interviews published here might be read as constituting new ripples of research, bridging Oceania and the northern hemisphere, catalysed by contemporary indigenous and global transformations of Pacific culture

Re-energisings of Pacific cultures including its diasporas in Pacific rim nations like New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and the USA, have helped fan the demand for greater awareness of economic, environmental and nuclear threats to Pacific communities which are given imaginative expression in writing, art and story-telling across multiple genres and ethnicities: Polynesian, Hawaiian and New Zealand Māori. The ongoing need for such recognition is a concern of globally oriented criticism. Michelle Keown and Stuart Murray (2013), in “Our Sea of Islands: Globalization, Regionalism and (Trans)Nationalism in the Pacific”, for example, point out that the Pacific region is often marginalised in contemporary postcolonial and diaspora theory because of problematic, contested framings of Oceania’s identity which is “impossible ever to fully articulate because of its immense size and diversity” (607). Otto Heim (2017), addressing “decolonisation in the island world” (919), concurs: the Pacific’s vastness and extensive oceanic links have meant its exclusion from larger regional and global frameworks and a long-term sensitivity to the forces of (neo)liberal globalisation, which has caused heightened precarity and disproportionate representation of Pacific Island people as precarious among the world’s populations (922). Pacific decolonisation, therefore, registers at an everyday level the impact of globalisation in terms of migration, resource extraction, nuclear testing, global warming, finance, trade and debt. These issues and encroachments dominate all other postcolonial conditions such as those also found in other decolonised regions like the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia: local-global tensions, multicultural and multilingual forms of regionalism, post- and transnational movements, cultural exchange and continuities with precontact cultures.

Heim posits an “island logic” as an alternative to free-market neoliberal norms, “an epistemic resistance [ … ] based on histories of alternative practices” (2017, 924) . The most prominent form of counterhegemonic “alternative modernity” (925) appears in the new strategic regionalism which has emerged to increase a sense of belonging, offer protection against the vicissitudes of global market forces, and inspire artists and writers (Keown and Murray 2013, 612). Embodied mainly in influential essays by Epeli Hau’ofa, and locating the sea, source of indigenous Pacific epistemologies, as the basis of a “regional interpelagic identity” (Keown 2018, PAGE), these theories project sharing and solidarity through reimaginings of Oceania drawn from postcolonial, diasporic discourses of mobility, exchange and spatiality. Albert Wendt’s (1976) manifesto of a “New Oceania” claims that “so vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths” demands a leaping imagination if it is to be captured in art (49); while Hau’ofa’s concept of “our sea of islands” (1994; Heim 2017, 925) acclaims the integrative possibilities of such creative metaphors: “the development of new art forms that are truly Oceanic, [ … ] allows our creative minds to draw on far larger pools of cultural traits than those of our individual national lagoons” (2000, n.p. cited by Keown 2018, PAGE). The oceanic framing of this new regionalism appears in the continuities of islands, oceanic linkages between island locations, journeys across waterways, and the transmission of indigenous oral cultures and cosmographies, aimed at overturning the colonial cartographical concepts of scattered landmasses, fragmentation and global insignificance. Another framework comes from the neologism “tidealectics”, coined by the Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite and developed by Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007), to provide a model that is utilised in several articles in this issue: based on the circular movement of tides and ocean currents and the back and forth paths of diasporic islanders, tidealectics is a counter to “the linear and materialist biases” of colonialism (2).

Cross-disciplinary and comparative research into the Pacific region blends indigenous and European epistemologies and theories: distinctive lexical formations and local inflections appear in the hybridised nomenclature and revitalised colonial discourses of contemporary writing and criticism. Paloma Fresno (2013), for example, identifies patterns of the “trans/local”, a term drawn from migration and diaspora studies, in articulating attachments to various host- and homelands, which draw on “new Pan pacific formulas resulting from the combination of global trends and reformulated local traditions” (203)**.** The terms “pasifika” or “spasifika” originating from the Samoan transliteration of the word “Pacific”, as Karin Hermes points out in her article here, are used of the transgenerational Pacific culture of Aotearoa New Zealand, framed by the pan-Pacific identity of the New Zealand born (“NZ Borns”, “Polys”, “PIs”). Such terms and panethnic labelling indicate “transplanted and reinvented Pacific cultural traditions” (Spoonley and Bedford 2012, 145, 151) that reflect new spheres of influence. The cultural impact of recent decades, opened up by expanded patterns of travel and resettlement, and the global transformations facilitated by the electronic media and their new, youthful audiences, are discussed by Stephen Gin in his article on the media platforms used by Samoan writer Lani Wendt Young. Michelle Keown shows how figurative patterns in poetry by New Zealand Maori, Hone Tuwhare, Marshallese poet, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Kanaky New Caledonian poet, Déwé Gorodé challenge the “depersonalising rhetoric of atomic discourse” (Keown 2017, 940; 2018, PAGE) with revised indigenous discourses: the apocalyptic nuclear sun is a monstrosity that reverses nature’s generative power as evinced in the devastation wreaked on Marshall Islanders who suffered irradiation following US detonation of hydrogen bombs in the 1950s .

These revised discourses build on critiques of colonial and imperial stereotypes of the Pacific; satirical and defamiliarising techniques in the works of Gorodé, Jetñil-Kijiner, and Samoan performance-artist Sia Figiel, for example, have helped demote western romanticised notions of an island “paradise” (Keown and Murray 2013, 609–610), although remnants of such myths linger on in the fantasies associated with the tourist industries, the holiday resort and cruise boat adventure. Post-war US militarization of the Pacific which promoted such Hollywood labels and clichés has been reconfigured in the revised regional alliances and changing politico-economic formations associated with the Asia Pacific, the regional construct that has become the institutional framework of neoliberalism. Comprising, among others, the supranational regional nations of Australia and New Zealand, having abandoned their former colonial Commonwealth affiliations, the Asia Pacific is formed of overlapping organisations designed to promote trade and economic cooperation, like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Rim of the Pacific (military) Exercise (RIMPAC), based in Hawaii which emphasises the territorial balance of power under US leadership. Despite the acknowledgment of an inherently greater plurality in these alliances, the shape of the Rim spells out its limitations and hence the limits of a Pacific rim discourse (Heim 2017, 921): the disjunction between its totality and the particular interests it is supposed to serve. Contemporary Pacific cultural production aims to transcend this gap with its revised colonial and indigenous discourses and global modes of dissemination comprising transoceanic intersections, linkages, and connectivities as “new forms of world enlargement” (Keown 2017, 945).

The cultural production of this vast, complex region, therefore, continues to construct and benefit from dynamic systems of cross cultural influence and exchange between the island cultures and Pacific rim countries like New Zealand, Australia, the USA and Japan. These nations are hosts to new diaspora collectivities and the accompanying “processes of syncretism, creolisation and Indigenization that are evident with multigenerational communities” (Pirbhai 2009, 19). Cultural producers, artists, critics, writers and intellectuals are enmeshed in the circuits of social, economic and cultural ties encompassing island societies such as Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Hawaiʻi and the Cook Islands and linked by transpacific organisations like the South Pacific Creative Arts Society (SPCAS). They are cemented by regional antinuclear activity against French and US testing, allegiances with the Pacific rim nations over issues like global warming and resource extraction, and relocations of Pacific peoples to metropolitan centres like Auckland, Sydney, Honolulu, and Los Angeles, now homes to burgeoning diaspora communities.

The study of a region as diverse and expansive as the Pacific draws on a range of comparative, interdisciplinary research methods used in the social sciences, and arts and humanities to which this special issue can only gesture. The articles included here share an interest in indigenous Pacific literary production and the cultural heritages which inform its historical and contemporary models. Developing the interdisciplinary perspectives of global literary and cultural studies, medical humanities, transnational and diaspora studies, and art history they examine new trends in electronic publishing and dissemination through social media platforms, condemnations of neo-colonial nuclear testing, narrative reconfigurings of home and belonging in the diaspora, the politics and poetics of hybrid identities across Oceania, the cultural production of hybrid Pasifika communities, the harnessing of subversive humour for a liberationist agenda, Pacific influences on the European art movement of surrealism, and indigenous, decolonising approaches to the trauma suffered during colonisation.

The opening article by Michelle Keown concerns the legacy of US nuclear imperialism in the Pacific, focusing on the Marshall Islands, a laboratory for US experimentation in nuclear technology from 1946–1996. Referring to a UK-government funded project she has been working on recently, she discusses the indigenous Pacific protest movement by writer and performer artist-activists that is drawing international attention to the long term effects of irradiation on the Marshallese Islanders, which include extensive, long-term serious health problems and forced displacement. The orally-based writing of eco-poet and environmental activist, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner as well as other authors from Aotearoa New Zealand, Kanaky New Caledonia and Tahiti French Polynesia, Keown demonstrates, have established a global presence, and the voice of pan-Pacific indigenous protest gives a new viability and resonance to precolonial conceptions of the Pacific as a cross-cultural, networked space. Literature’s changing mediascape -- electronic dissemination through the Internet and YouTube and social media promotion through sites like Facebook and Twitter -- has contributed to the global success of the indigenous protest movement, and Stephen Gin, in his article, shows how Samoan writer Lani Wendt Young has also been using online media network to revitalize precolonial Samoan story telling traditions and myths and reach a globally dispersed audience. Young publishes the texts of *Telesā,* a four-book fantasy romance series, as eBooks and uses paratextual materials to develop a multilateral dialogue with her reading communities whose response becomes part of the performance. Gin argues that this modernisation of the Samoan fāgogo traditions of oral story telling in a contemporary indigenous mode of production and exchange, challenges western single-author narrative models by harnessing the imaginative potential of an internet-connected Pacific, and global audience.

Indigenous Pacific liberation comes not just through the protest of environmental and antinuclear activists or performance-based engagement with the internet and social media; cultural expression is also unleashed in subversive humour and non-elite imagery that are features of Pacific writing from Albert Wendt to the hybridised art and performance modes of the *tangata Pasifika* in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addressing themes of laughter and irreverence in Tongan writer Epeli Hau`ofa’s novel *Kisses in the Nederends*, Juniper Ellis explores how humour and a revised tātatau acquire a “planetary” indigeneity. Hau`ofa’s protagonist is the owner of/possesses a particular anal tattoo, which “leads from behind to create a nonviolent revolution for world peace” (Ellis 2018, PAGES). As a comedic signal of connectedness and belonging that expands to include Oceania and the planet, this anus overcomes fears and taboos to counter imposed views that limit indigenous bodies according to the logics of colonialism and capital, to save the world.

The powerful, unpredictable forces of indigenous modes of orally-based story-telling that can undermine the western assumptions and epistemological frameworks informing the reading of such narratives, are also the focus of Emily Kate Timms’s article. Timms refers to the North American indigenous engagement with intergenerational historical trauma to argue that contrary to commonly held beliefs about the efficacy of the “talking cure”, Maori and Hawaiian story telling does not always promote health and wellbeing. Referring to Patricia Grace’s *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) and Georgia Kaʻapuni McMillen’s *School for Hawaiian Girls* (2005) Timms establishes that story-telling is precarious, dangerous and only ever a potential space of healing. She concludes by arguing for the need for further decolonisation of trauma in relation to Pacific literature, and for more culturally sensitive readings of oral rites in relation to colonial trauma.

Indigenous innovation in the novel genre and the new cultural production of the decolonised Pacific informs Janet Wilson’s examination of the shifting representations of home and belonging in Pasifika diaspora writing of Aotearoa New Zealand. Focusing on the motif of the return, she identifies narrative representations of a radical break from the expectations of a colonised culture, that the island homeland should be a place of settled belonging. The recuperation of indigenous forms and Polynesian myths inspires reconceptualizations of home and identity in novels by first generation Samoan diaspora writers Albert Wendt, *Sons for the Return Home* (1975) and Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged* (1996) and the Niuean islander John Pule, *The Shark that Ate the Son* (1992), that subvert essentialized ideas of belonging, place and self. In the cultural production of the recent generation of New Zealand-born Pacific islanders, as in the play *Fresh off the Boat* (2005), the concept of arrival is foregrounded, and the island homeland, a place for visiting rather than settlement, is constructed from a distance.

The cultural production of the tangata Pasifika is also the dominant context for Karin Hermes’s reading of contemporary poetry by Pasifika writers Karlo Mila, Grace Teuila Taylor, Selina Tusitala Marsh, the late Teresia Teaiwa and francophone writer Chantel Spitz, which focuses on their shared history of migration and on the new, hybrid identities that arise in the diaspora. Hermes pays close attention to these writers’ identities as women, academics, poets and mothers in order to explore how cultural identity interacts with modernity from a female perspective. By arguing that the intermingling of ethnic and cultural identities stimulates a process of identity formation that can be traced through these poets’ work, Hermes reveals the empowering potential of poetry for female performer-writers working with and between oral heritages, the written word and live internet-streamed performance.

In her interviews with the Native Hawaiian poets Brandy Nālani McDougall and Noʻukahauʻoli Revilla, Emma Scanlan uncovers the connections between poetry and genealogy, creativity and testimony, that infuse their work with *mana wahine* (feminine power). Revealing the intimacy these poets feel between their cultural, political and personal identities as *Kanaka Maoli wahine* (Native Hawaiian women), these interviews offer an insight into the process and intentions behind the soul-shifting words of two of Hawaiʻi’s eminent contemporary writers.

In the final essay of this issue, “Oceanic metamorphoses”, Will Atkin traces networks of Pacific influence back to the cultural milieu of Europe in the mid-20th century, through the French surrealists’ concern with Easter Island culture particularly, and indigenous Pacific culture more generally, as a source of “magic”. The “magic” or “analogical” worldview the surrealists perceived in Pacific culture offered a form of symbolic slippage that the group believed had the potential to reinscribe and reinterpret “rational” western culture from within. In this way, Atkin argues, Pacific art, from the material culture of Easter Island to Marquesan ornamentation, provided a crucial point of reference for the surrealists’ revolutionary project in post-war Europe.

This special issue aims to expand the limited space afforded to research of and about the Pacific in postcolonial studies in the UK and to augment and diversify current perspectives of Pacific cultures. As a snapshot of the directions current research is taking in literary and media studies, the environmental humanities, and art history among others, these articles demonstrate the attention that non-indigenous scholars are paying to the cultural, political and social sensitivities of Oceania today. Not surprisingly, given that 2018 marks the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Captain James Cook’s first epic expedition to the South Seas, this publication coincides with a renewed interest in the Pacific: a new BBC TV documentary series on the art of the Pacific, a special issue of the Paris-based academic journal, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 41(1) on *“*Unsettling Oceania*”,* and the major exhibition of the region’s art, “Oceania” currently showing at the Royal Academy of the Arts in London, supported by New Zealand, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Papua New Guinea. Like this magnificent exhibition, the scholarship collected here acknowledges the expanse and diversity of artistic and cultural production in the Pacific, and is intended to signal a ripple of European-based responses from which further conversations can emerge.

To round out this issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (but not as part of the special issue), is included an interview with Homi K. Bhabha undertaken at Goethe University, Frankfurt in 2016 on the occasion of the conference “Africa’s Asian Options”. In this interview, “Even the dead have human rights”, Bhabha ranges over a number of topics such as his engagement with Africa, especially in his work on Franz Fanon, his early research on Naipaul and the Caribbean, the temporality inherent in the aesthetic practice of graphic montage as found in the installations and movies of William Kentridge, the affects of suffering in the Syrian civil war, and the impact of the current refugee crisis in Germany.

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