Reading as Cousins: Indigenous Texts, Pacific Bookshelves

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DOROTHY GREEN LECTURE ESSAY

But I am not for adoption.
I love my land […]
My land is my race, my joy
My birth of pain,
So with a jet's roar
Goodbye beautiful Fiji.

(Jack Davis "Farewell Fiji,"
lines 8, 9, 15–18)

I write as a Māori scholar and poet, and also, because I'm Māori, as a *Pacific* scholar. My work seeks to restitch the stories of my people back into the wider Pacific region and to understand how the threads that previously held them together unravelled over the past two centuries. The thread I stitch with is literary studies, but the needle I hold is an alloy of Indigenous Studies and Pacific Studies. A legacy of colonialism in the Pacific region has been the wresting apart of interconnected Pacific sites and peoples. For several decades many (in the Pacific, at its edges, and beyond) have sought to recall and reignite our longstanding connections with each other that have felt less pressing over the past centuries as we have dealt with our respective colonial states and empires. Most of this decolonising work in our region involves rethinking the ocean as *presence* or perhaps *substance* rather than *absence*. Scholars working alongside (and as) activists, poets, community members, knowledge holders, voyagers, and filmmakers turn attention to the ocean as an Indigenous Pacific space. We find that tracing *back* inevitably ends up tracing *outwards* towards each other. How far out do we trace? And who do we find when we follow Indigenous histories of connection?

The Impossible Photograph

There is a photograph from 1974 in Oodgeroo Noonuccal's papers in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. Noonuccal stands between Cook Islander academic, historian and anthologist Marjorie Crocombe, and Indigenous Fijian playwright (now parliamentarian) Jo Nacola. They are wearing fabulous fashions from the time and are in conversation, each holding a glass or cup, during a writing workshop in Fiji. Fiji had recently gained political independence from the British empire in 1970 and was host of the main campus of the multi-country University of the South Pacific (USP), a new institution for a new era of education and cross-regional cooperation in the Pacific, opened in 1968. At the time, Crocombe and Nacola were academics and heavily involved in the South Pacific Creative Arts Society, a group of Pacific writers and artists from across the region. I think about this image as "the impossible photograph" because conventional accounts of national, Indigenous and Pacific literatures don't provide a way to make sense of this photograph, or even to imagine it exists.

"The impossible photograph" held at Fryer Library, University of Queensland, "Margie, Kath, Jo [Nacola], Fiji, nd" UQFL84 Noonuccal, Oodgeroo *14.229*

Fiji, Nacola's home where this photograph was taken, has complex literary traditions that have mostly been traced by non-Indigenous scholars. For several years, there was a lively critical conversation about the literature of Fiji, although the main site of this work, the USP Department of English, has become less energetic in its interests due largely to changes in academic staff but also perhaps to questions of nationalism and the nation becoming increasingly vexed in Fiji in recent years. Fijian politics of race and Indigeneity, especially during the years of Bainimarama's reign, have privileged multicultural narratives of Fiji's national literature and stifled opportunities to engage Indigenous-authored texts on their own terms. Yet, I hope that new energy in the study of Fijian literature via the Fijian language program at USP will also reopen conversations and bring appropriate recognition to Indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) writers who write in English language, like Nacola.

Crocombe's home, the Cook Islands, is connected to New Zealand's Pacific empire; it remains, along with Niue and Tokelau, part of the "Realm of New Zealand." Crocombe had already been intensely interested in the region's production through writing; she completed a masters at the University of Papua New Guinea and, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, published a number of works on topics connected to early Pacific writing (Crocombe et al.). Although Cook Islanders are the gold medal winners in most events at the Pacific literary Olympics, Cook Islands literary history is less well treated in literary studies for pragmatic reasons of institutional capacity and scholarly focus. The small but feisty Rarotonga campus of USP, through the leadership of Debbie Futter-Puati in connection with Mama Marjorie Crocombe herself and researchers such as Tai Parema Trego, has been reckoning with Cook Islands

literary legacies as have some New Zealand-based postgraduate students, such as Emma Ngakuraevaru Powell, Marylise Dean, and Stacey Kokaua.

Of course, the third person in this photo, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, is familiar to anyone in Australian literary studies. Although Noonuccal's writing is surely foundational to any discussion of Australian literatures, what inquiries and expertise would a scholar of Australian literature need in order to see this photo in the Fryer library and respond by saying, "Ah yes, cool photo, Noonuccal in Fiji with Crocombe and Nacola. Of course."? Between Fiji literary scholars (who have found themselves with plenty to focus on in terms of the complex relationship between the various communities who call Fiji home), Cook Islands literary history (which does not lack texts but lacks literary scholars working in literature departments), and Australian national literary history (which is well stocked with scholars but seems to prioritise domestic focuses for Indigenous writing and to only engage the Pacific minimally), who will trace the networks that lead to (and from) this photograph?

Arguments about the consequences of focusing scholarly attention on national literatures have been made by numerous scholars, including many connected to ASAL. I think of the incomparable Pākehā scholar Lydia Wevers, who delivered the Dorothy Green lecture in 2008, and who passed away in 2021. Having moved to Vancouver in February 2022, I was unfortunately unable to attend the public farewells for Lydia, but I cherish memories of a final coffee and chat we shared shortly before her passing. Our paths crossed when I arrived in my first academic job at Victoria in Wellington in 2005 and she was head of the Stout Centre for NZ Studies. She invited me to give my first academic talk, talked books and co-supervised students with me, and spent literally hours in her office with her door closed while I sat across from her desk crying into cups of tea about how my first academic job was going. It was Lydia who first told me about ASAL—she valued so deeply the community and intellectual work of this association—but I always replied, "Sounds cool, Lydia, but I don't study Australian lit," which became less true over time as my transnational Indigenous interests and academic posts expanded. In 2014, when I moved to take up a position on Dharug country at Macquarie University, I attended my first ASAL conference. In her 2008 lecture, which was published in the 2009 issue of *JASAL*, Lydia predicted a shift in critical engagements with Indigenous literatures that would emerge from the new (at the time) interdisciplinary scholarly association NAISA (Native American and Indigenous Studies Association), and the work of global Indigenous literary studies more broadly.

I agree with Lydia about the potential for Indigenous-centred/Indigenous-focused interdisciplinary communities, scholars, and critical work to transform the conversations in national sites, especially given the dominance of social sciences in institutional Indigenous Studies in this part of the world. One tangible expression of the transformative potential of Indigenous-centred literary scholarship Lydia described can be found in Chadwick Allen's Dorothy Green lecture delivered at UNSW Canberra back in 2016 (Allen). (These Indigenous literary critical contributions are reciprocal, of course; there is a clear genealogy of Indigenous Australian scholarship present in my own critical work, and I am deeply mindful of the privilege and opportunity to have initially shared these thoughts as a keynote alongside First Nations literary scholars Jeanine Leane and Evelyn Araluen in *nipaluna*.) But, Indigenous-centred/Indigenous-focused interdisciplinary conversations are also shaped by contexts of history, politics, and resourcing. Indeed, neither of my own "interdisciplinary" fields, Indigenous Studies and Pacific Studies, has developed ways to assume this photograph exists either, and I suggest this is connected to the complicated relationship between the two fields and the many things that fall into the gaps between them.

Indigenous Studies and the independent Pacific are largely mutually lukewarm about each other. In *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation*, Indo-Fijian literary scholar Subramani fixed his gaze on writing from newly independent Pacific states connected to the

University of the South Pacific and his own base in Fiji. He jettisoned Indigenous Australian and Māori writing in the book's opening pages, arguing that these are better treated within the national literary studies of their occupying states, and sidestepped the US Empire of which Hawai'i is a part (Subramani x–xi). My current research (and all of my work) directly refutes the forced repatriation of Indigenous writing from New Zealand, Hawai'i, and Australia to the framing (or possession?) of our respective colonial states. More broadly, the Pacific has a complex relationship with the concept of indigeneity. Some sites in the region clearly meet a definition of "Indigenous" that suggests Indigenous peoples need to be living in an oppressive relationship with a state dominated politically, if not numerically, by others: Aotearoa and Hawai'i, but also Guam, all of the French and American colonies / dependencies/ territories / possessions / departments in the region, Rapanui (Easter Island), and West Papua. However, when we engage "Indigenous" not merely as a category but as a critical analytic, there are possibilities to engage a wider range of sites in discussion, including many of the Pacific sites which are self-governing.

Reciprocally, Indigenous Studies isn't sure about what to do with the Pacific region either, partly because of the domination of scholars and resources from Anglophone settler colonies in NAISA and other networks, and partly because of the institutionalisation of the disciplines and networks/mobilities of Indigenous Studies scholars in settler rather than independent states. Some of this "who's in and who's not" then becomes habit or structure: anthologies, collections, conferences, class syllabi, and journals are sites where people learn who they expect to see in Indigenous Studies. I worry that our enthusiasm for connection with certain kinds of Indigenous people can feel awkwardly like it resonates with colonial networks and desires. How can we decolonise our relationships with other Indigenous peoples?

I have not attended to specific national or transnational literary fields in order to undermine them. Instead, I have attempted to foreground their various reasons for not telling stories that make the impossible photograph feel possible. Certainly, Indigenous Studies and Pacific Studies emerged from very different conversations and struggles, as did their respective offshoots or side-shoots, Indigenous literary studies and Pacific literary studies. And certainly, it is risky to argue too strongly for New Zealand, Australia, and Hawai'i to "reconnect" with the Pacific when the first-world settler states in these places mean we have access to resources and microphones that can dominate the rest of the region, and many parts of the Pacific have histories of violent struggle to remove themselves from Australian and New Zealand colonialism. Likewise, there is a risk of contributing, in the case of Aotearoa and Hawai'i, to the ongoing domination of Polynesian voices in the region. However, we all lose something important when contemporary disciplinary and political configurations obscure the dynamic Indigenous-produced (literary) networks that were affirmed throughout the twentieth century.

Lateral Genealogies

Genealogies stretch wide as well as back. In a pivotal moment in Māori writer Patricia Grace's first novel, *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (1978), the central character Linda goes to her grandmother's house to insist she attend Linda's wedding. The grandmother refuses to support the partnership, and Linda responds by reciting her own genealogy:

> Then I began to recite the old names to her, the ones from the wall and the ones from before then, and the ones before that. It was strange to hear these old things in the new voice, my voice that had never sounded them before. And if I faltered here and there my father and uncle joined in with me, until I stopped. "But that's only the trunk of the tree," I said, "the length." And she nodded, waiting for me to go on. "Now these are the branches that spread everywhere," and I continued

> the recitation, linking every name with every name until there were no more.
> "And every branch reaches out," I said. "Touches every other." (Grace 100–101)

On one level Linda makes the point to her grandmother that she is related to everyone and so needs to go outside the immediate region to find a partner. More broadly, she affirms by this recitation that she remembers who she is and how she connects, and assures her grandmother that this marriage will add to, rather than remove her from, their family network. Significantly, this strategic recitation moves in two directions.

The first genealogical direction is described as a series of names. "The ones from the wall" refers to the practice of hanging photographs of deceased family members on the back wall of a meeting house—they are often still in living memory, or were known by people that still-living people knew. The two layers of people beyond them ("the ones before them" [ancestors] and "the ones before them" [deities and non-humans]) are known only through the recitation of names. For a few years, I have worked on a project called "Writing the New World: Indigenous Texts 1900–1975" which pushes back on how the mid-70s has become a mythical origin story for Indigenous writing in many sites. I seek to understand the texts that were published by Indigenous writers between the period we associate mostly with first encounters and unpublished manuscripts and groaning belly-full colonial archives at the pre-1900 end, and the supposed "firsts" of the 1970s and beyond. Our celebratory stories of our beloved publications and writers of the 1970s have unfortunately obscured so many writers and texts that came before. My project seeks to name the ones from the wall—the ones we in living memory know—including, of course, Patricia Grace herself, but I have also sought the names of the ones from before them—the ones whose names have been forgotten. Not because the names we already know aren't worth knowing, but because we get to experience them in new ways when they are understood in a broader context, as continuity rather than as origin. I agree with Linda that it feels "strange to hear these old things in a new voice," and this "strange[ness]" is increased by my sense that I *should* have known these names already. Also, like Linda, I am aware that this is not a job for one person. She describes the limit of personal knowledge as "falter[ing]" ("if I faltered here and there my father and uncle joined in with me")—but such limits of personal recollection enable connection, require a network of thinkers, and demand collaboration and reciprocity. When you claim to know everything, or presume everything is knowable by yourself, there is no need for anyone else. Faltering—not being exhaustive, but also *not striving to be exhaustive*—makes space for others. So far, so good. We like literary genealogies that go back in time. We recover the lost texts. We re-write histories and have to make more room on our pages and PowerPoint presentations to fit in all the new names. We find out about "new" "forgotten" writers. We work collaboratively. We think about the broader contexts of power, imperialism, disciplinarity, and violence that render some texts—some names—invisible to the point we don't even imagine they existed in the first place. We theorise this. We teach it. Probably most of you do this. I do this. We could leave it here, and for the rest of this paper I could explore Māori literary genealogies. But how rude would it be of me at a conference in Australia explicitly themed in relation to Mabo to only talk about Māori literature? How rude—and how colonial. How settler-ish. After tracing the genealogy, Linda's recitation remains incomplete: "Now these are the branches that spread everywhere . . . And every branch reaches out . . . Touches every other."

I could have focused my research energies entirely on Māori writing—goodness knows that work needs to be done—but instead, I have worked with sixteen other Indigenous researchers (undergraduate and postgraduate students, and community researchers) to find, analyse, share, and contextualise texts by Indigenous writers (with a focus on periodicals and creative works) in four different Pacific sites: Aotearoa, Fiji, Hawai'i, and Australia. Together we have reconnected with so many writers. A mind-blowing range of people publishing their

words in English and six Indigenous Pacific languages. We have found such a range of periodicals, we're speaking and writing about what we found, and we've made a podcast to share some of our research findings and to encourage more. Some of the students have commenced or completed postgraduate research on specific texts; several have presented or published collaboratively about their work. This part of Linda's genealogy is inclusive—"linking every name with every name"—and its purpose is relational rather than possessive. Linda names in order to "link": not to collect, but to connect. My thinking about lateral genealogy, that emerges from reflecting on this passage in Grace's novel, also owes a partial debt to Pākehā historian Tony Ballantyne's concept of horizontal mobility: "the forms of movement and cultural traffic that linked colonies in the 'periphery' together" (Ballantyne). Engaging lateral branches of Indigenous writing is not an attempt to extend dominion over a larger territory or to know more for the sake of possessing more. Lateral extension has a deliberate purpose: to trace, recall, understand and affirm connection. But who am I to trace these lateral genealogies?

Methodologically, my multi-site research raises questions. My decision to trace the branches means I spend much time writing about Indigenous contexts and texts to which I have no genealogical connection. This is worth noting. Elsewhere I argue that being an insider to any one Indigenous community doesn't make you an insider in any others (Te Punga Somerville). At the risk of stating the obvious, these questions also connect to a Māori scholar standing on Palawa country to speak alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait thinkers in a conference about Mabo. Many Indigenous scholars have challenged the western academic presumption that *who* is doing research is irrelevant, to the extent that anyone should be able to research anything. We in the academy feel strongly about academic freedom because we know what happens when academic freedom is curtailed, and when there are political or other forms of interference in knowledge production. And yet, the risks are clear: individual researchers may think they can study what they want, but risk doing it in ways that reproduce harm on particular communities or detract resources from research that is urgent for those communities; they may inadvertently or deliberately repeat dominating patterns of controlling knowledge production about certain peoples or places; and they are part of structures that may harm communities beyond the academy and (through structural racism) reinforce barriers to Indigenous people within those institutions. Jennifer C. Nash describes the tension between calling for non-Black scholars to cite and engage Black women's work, and the risk that "successful" take up of this call can backfire in terms of institutional effects where calls for Black women scholars can be made to appear redundant. Nash writes:

> While I am compelled and at times even seduced by the rhetoric of "citing Black women," I also find myself troubled by what Angela Harris described as the "trotting out" of Black women "onto the page (mostly in footnotes)" as evidence of the authors' (real or fictitious) political commitments. (87)

Presence of Indigenous acknowledgements without presence of Indigenous scholars is not what we have been arguing for in the academy. We are no longer silenced by redundant patronising arguments about lack of capacity on our part. This is not the grounds for a generative conversation.

Perhaps thinking about "insiders" and "outsiders" might feel like well-trodden ground or irrelevant or like I am trying to be a social scientist, but it is a necessary conversation in literary studies too. These arguments do not come out of a desire for non-Indigenous scholarly absence as much as they foreground what is gained by Indigenous scholarly presence. Calling for more Indigenous scholars, for Indigenous-focused projects to be guided by Indigenous scholars, and for research to respond to the desires and concerns of Indigenous communities,

is not about merely substituting non-Indigenous bodies with Indigenous bodies who can then find the same answers to the same questions, or even different answers to the same questions. These arguments are also not about Indigenous researchers drawing on vast repositories of "culture" or "innate knowledge" in ways that both undermine the work and scholarly training of Indigenous scholars and disenfranchise those Indigenous researchers who *for reasons connected to colonialism in the first place* are not in close proximity to the language or culture of their ancestors or close relatives. Instead, I have observed that when Indigenous peoples are engaged in research, the questions themselves are different.

So! Nothing about us without us. But! Here I am, a non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander scholar working on Indigenous Australian writing, a non-iTaukei scholar working on Fijian writing, and a non-Kanaka scholar working on Hawaiian writing. I do have lived and accountable relationships with Indigenous people in each of these sites, and in specific contexts I am happy to outline these in ways I hope are generative and respectful rather than defensive and appropriative. Even though I did not just pick the four sites of my project at random, however, I'm still an outsider to three of these communities. And, I am Māori, but I am affiliated to specific *iwi*/tribes, so I am an outsider to many Māori texts and contexts, too. So, "nothing about us without us" is meaningful for work connected to the trunk of the tree, but for the branches I argue that we need collaborative relationship-based work. I think Indigenous scholars should be central to the branch work as well as the trunk work: the division of labour cannot be "Natives do the genealogies of their own people and settlers do the cool transnational networks." When Linda describes "branches that spread everywhere," she emphasises the dynamic, multi-layered, interlocked network of which she is a part. We risk thinking we are engaging in intellectual sovereignty by only researching "our own" but in a way that actually affirms the logics of our occupying settler states, agreeing with Subramani that settler state borders reign supreme, not noticing or responding to the many ways in which the branches are already so closely intertwined, and leaving Indigenous sites without specific expertise or resourcing to fend for themselves. And focusing only on "our own" may well mean that as Indigenous literary scholars we collectively miss opportunities to pose for photos during tea-break chats that produce impossible photographs that, after enough connections and reconnections, will feel like *possible* photographs. When we study Indigenous nodes but not Indigenous networks, we miss the opportunity to learn about each other and ourselves in new ways. As Fijian poet and lawyer Pio Manoa wrote in 1976: "the more we read poems from the other islands the more we get a sense of belonging together" (Manoa 61).

Australia and the Pacific: "Belonging Together"?

What forms of "belonging together" are there between Australia and the Pacific? Why should expertise in the Pacific be considered a vital part of Australian literary studies? How, and why, could the impossible photograph become the possible photograph? The late Melbourne-based Fijian historian Tracey Banivanua-Mar had a clear vision of the connections between the histories of places now chopped up by twenty-first century imaginaries. Teaching alongside Indigenous Australian thinkers as a Melanesian person, she reckoned throughout her too-short scholarly career with Pacific presence in, and connections to, Australia. Of her sole-authored monographs, her first book focused on South Sea Islanders and Blackbirding and her second, published shortly before her passing in 2017, is the phenomenal *Decolonisation and the Pacific*. Banivanua-Mar traces the divisions in the Pacific region that have been reinforced by separations between the politically "independent" Pacific (such as Fiji) and the parts of the region still under formal external colonial rule or living in settler colonialism (such as New Zealand, Hawai'i, and Australia). Following Banivanua-Mar's lead, I wish to recite the names of Pacific branches we might think of as reaching out for Australian branches; some Australian

branches, reciprocally, reach out to the Pacific. The degree of detail below about each branch should not be understood as a comment on the complexity or significance of that branch. I hope these gestures will, however, make visible and invite other scholarly engagements alongside those that are becoming familiar. How, to extend Pio Manoa's framing, might Australia and the Pacific "get a sense of belonging together" by reading "poems from the other islands?"

The home islands of several Indigenous Pacific communities are located within the current territorial boundaries of Australia. The Torres Strait Islands are culturally and historically part of the Melanesian region. Not seeking in any way to undermine Torres Strait Islander claims and connections with the state of Australia or with Aboriginal communities, or indeed to overstate the utility of anthropological framing of "-nesias" in the region, I suggest that an important additional possibility for engaging Torres Strait Islander writing is to read those texts in relation to the Pacific. I have taught *Butterfly Song* beside *Benang*, but it could just as beautifully sit alongside the Tom and Lydia Davis novel *Makutu* (Cook Islands), the Victoria Kneubuhl novel *Murder Casts a Shadow* (Hawaiian/Samoan), or indeed Brandy Nalani McDougall's poem "Lei Niho Palaoa" (Hawaiian). The forced migration of Pacific peoples to Australia through the process of Blackbirding has produced the longstanding South Sea Islander communities in Australia but also recollections of enslavement and indenture all around the Pacific region both from "source" islands of plantation labourers and from other Pacific sites (including Sāmoa, Fiji, Hawai'i).

Another Pacific site long part (and yet not part) of Australia's political boundaries is the Norfolk Islands. Currently an external territory of Australia, Norfolk Island has complicated and rich connections with the region especially (although not only) through the presence of Pitkern islanders (themselves descendants of Tahitian people) who migrated there in the mid-nineteenth century. Its connection with Australia is also complex: it has served as a site for primary production, incarceration and leisure. Since 2016, Norfolk Island's previous forms of limited self-government were quashed, against the preferences of local people on the island, and decision-making powers were shifted to New South Wales. How might it be possible, or controversial, to engage Norfolk/Pitkern writing in the context of, or alongside, Australian literature and Indigenous Australian literature?

Australia has a long legacy of colonialism in the Pacific, most prominently Papua New Guinea but also other islands. There is a huge corpus of writing by PNG people both in PNG and in Australia, stretching from the 1932 autobiography *The Erstwhile Savage* by Ligeremaluoga to the Queensland-based Jacaranda Press that published many key PNG texts including Vincent Eri's 1970 novel *The Crocodile,* and in many periodicals produced here in Australia and there in what is now PNG. How quickly we naturalise contemporary borders of settler states by pruning colonies from how we remember who those states were (and who was forced to be part of those states) through the twentieth century. When I was just a short way into "Writing the New World" I realised that in the period 1900–1975 it should be impossible to talk about Indigenous texts connected to Australia without recognising PNG as part of Australia through that period; likewise, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue, and Tokelau when talking about New Zealand, and indeed Rotuma when talking about Fiji. Connected to its colonial role in the Pacific, Australia has played an ongoing role in regional Pacific organisations. Australia was a major player of the South Pacific Commission (an organisation established by the "Canberra Agreement" and from which the Australia-edited review periodical *Pacific Reading* emerged), and Sydney was the editorial base for *Pacific Islands Monthly*, the vast and unique regional commercial magazine which has produced an incredible archive of work about and by the region. The contribution of *PIM* to the story of Pacific literature is well known in the region: in the early 1970s, Crocombe collaborated with *PIM* to produce a guest-edited section called *Mana* for Pacific writers and this led to the journal *Mana* and to the more sustained publishing arm of the Fiji-based South Pacific Creative Arts Society.

So many Australia-based companies and organisations have published key original texts and translations for distribution around the Pacific.

The migration by "choice" of Pacific peoples to Australia either directly from the Pacific region or as a part of migration patterns from New Zealand (in racist immigration speak this is referred to as "back door" migration) has provided another shelf to the Australian bookcase of Pacific writing. Single-author publications by Pacific people who live in Australia include the novels of Celestine Hitiura Vaite (Tahitian), poetry by Lili Tuwai (Fijian), poetry and non-fiction by Evelyn Patuawa-Nathan and Jean Riki (NZ Māori), and literary contributions of people like Winnie Akata Siulolovao Dunn (Tongan) at Sweatshop in Western Sydney. Dunn's 2017 article "From Pacific to Pasifika" in *Sydney Review of Books* is a foundational piece about Pacific representation and writing in Australia (Dunn). As more Pacific people are working in Australian universities and cultural institutions, our collective understanding of Pacific presence and contributions to Australia has expanded. A key site where this work is occurring is the Oceania Working Party of the Dictionary of Australian Biography, chaired by Professor Katerina Teaiwa (Banaban / i-Kiribati / African American). In terms of Māori literary history in Australia, which has overlapping but also specific stories to tell, I have written elsewhere about how, by the time Māori children read and wrote in the first mission schools in Aotearoa, there had already been Māori people writing in Norfolk Island and, yes, in Australia (mostly Parramatta). As well as writing by Pacific people who have migrated to Australia, there are long histories of Pacific travel to Australia. To choose a few examples: Tupaia on Cook's ship, who sketched Aboriginal people he saw here; Māori people who have been present in Parramatta, Sydney, and surrounding areas since the early nineteenth century; Samoan missionaries en route to or from what is now PNG; and Rotuman minister Fuata Taito's direct descendant Mere Taito is engaging with his 1940s published memoirs *My Own Story* and *The Aborigines of the North* in her PhD thesis.

As well as tracing the mobility of Australian borders into the Pacific, and of Pacific people to Australia, intellectual and creative movements reconfigured the relationship between Australia and the Pacific. Paying attention to intellectual and political movements, in his *Pasifika Black*, Bermudian scholar Quito Swann traces the movement of Black internationalism through the Pacific region and moves between communities articulating themselves as "Black" in the islands conventionally understood as Pacific as well as in Australia. In this light, the artificial borders between "Australia" and "Pacific" are rendered less important than networks of connection on the basis of Blackness. Likewise, in literary collaborations and anthologies produced in Australia and elsewhere, Indigenous Australian voices sit alongside voices from other Pacific peoples: consider the special issue of *Ora Nui* edited by Anton Blank and Kerry Reed-Gilbert that brought together Māori and Indigenous Australian writers in a range of genres; the "Honouring Words" and "Honouring Theatre" collaborations with Indigenous writers or theatre practitioners from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada; and the anthologies *Skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing* and *Without Reservation: Indigenous Erotica*. More recently, Dunn's 2022 anthology *Another Australia* again brings Indigenous Australian and Pacific voices (on the basis of being "writers of colour") together.

Can Australian Literary Studies really say it knows Australia if there is so little formal, critical, or institutional commitment to all of this Indigenous Pacific writing? Is it really possible to teach or write about twentieth-century Australian literature and not mention New Guinea? Who, will undertake the research, teaching, service, and institutional work, that traces connections between Pacific and Indigenous Australian literary worlds when no one has been hired in an Australian university specifically to teach Pacific literatures? Literary scholars Mandy Treagus and Paul Sharrad have done a huge amount of teaching and supervision in the context of their work as a Victorianist and Postcolonialist respectively; other literary scholars

may teach and research some Pacific texts, and Katerina Teaiwa teaches Pacific creative texts within the Pacific Studies programming at the ANU. How, then, might we in literary studies generatively grapple with the relationship between Indigenous peoples from Australia and Indigenous peoples from the Pacific?

Reading as "Cousins"

When I encountered the impossible photograph, I had already been interested in Noonuccal's 1973 article "Aboriginal Literature," where she writes: "It would also be to our benefit to meet with and know writers of New Zealand and the Pacific and of other lands where the indigene has made his or her way into the field of literature" (Noonuccal 9). The "our" of "our benefit" here is Aboriginal. The article itself is a published version of an oral presentation Noonuccal gave that year at the first Aboriginal Arts Seminar in Canberra. The introduction to the issue of *New Dawn* in which Noonuccal's essay appears recalls the seminar as having brought together 200 people—including Māori, Native American, Indian, African and New Guinean. In her essay, Noonuccal writes:

> In looking at the New Zealand and Pacific field, last year, I came back to Australia with a feeling of excited expectation at what I had seen there. Poets and writers are really emerging and we should be encouraging Australia to accept responsibility not only to Australian indigenes but also our Indigenous *cousins* of other countries as well. (Noonuccal 9, my italics)

(*Cousins. We'll come back to this word.*) Just one year earlier, in September to October 1972, Noonuccal had toured around New Zealand under the auspices of the Citizen's Association for Racial Equality; in the same year, she was a guest lecturer of USP in Fiji, and earlier in 1973 she had attended the Third Niugini Arts Festival.

I initially went to the Fryer Library because I wanted to find out more about Noonuccal's trips to other places. There was plenty to find. For example, a boarding pass for an Air Pacific flight to (or from or inside) Fiji was tucked inside a paper conference program from January 1980: the fifth triennial conference of the Association for Commonwealth Language and Literary Studies, an academic association formed in 1964 that is widely recalled as one of the initial sites of academic engagement with the literatures of the postcolonial world. At that ACLALS conference in Suva, which attracted scholars from around the world who were working on African, Pacific, Indigenous, South Asian, Caribbean, and settler writing at a wide range of institutions, she participated in the first of two plenary sessions titled "The Writer's View of Commonwealth Literature." The session was chaired by Albert Wendt (Samoan writer, artist, and educator based at USP) and included Subramani (Indo-Fijian literary scholar based at USP), Pio Manoa (Indigenous Fijian poet and lawyer mentioned above), Olaf Ruhen (Australian writer), and Les Murray (Australian poet). Whenever she travelled to Suva, Noonuccal was connected with a community of Indigenous writers and educators connected to the South Pacific Creative Arts Society (SPCAS). This Society had actually emerged in 1972 in response to the very successful first South Pacific Arts Festival hosted by Fiji the same year. When the first issue of the multi-genre SPCAS publication *Mana*, edited by Cook Islander Marjorie Crocombe, was published in 1973 after much of its content had previously been published in the Sydney-produced *Pacific Islands Monthly* mentioned above, it included a poem by Jack Davis with the note "Mr Davis, An Australian Aboriginal author and poet, wrote this poem when he left Fiji after the South Pacific Festival of Arts in May, 1972." So, Davis had been in Fiji too, hanging out with "Indigenous cousins of other countries," as Noonuccal puts it, and is also inextricable from the origins of SPCAS.

Davis's poem "Farewell Fiji" articulates points of connection and departure between the islands of Fiji and his home. The poem treats Fiji in the first stanza and Australia in the second before making a final move back to his present liminal position in the last two lines: "So with a jet's roar / Goodbye beautiful Fiji" (Davis lines 17, 18) The pivot between the two—which also serves as a point of connection—occurs at the end of the first stanza where modes of colonial rule are directly compared: "The calm of the resident European / I mean, home he is always frantic" (lines 6, 7), and this pivot is affirmed in the opening of the second stanza: "But I am not for adoption. / I love my land" (lines 8, 9). The contrast between the two sites is not only due to differing colonial patterns: the "beaut[y]" of Fiji is contrasted with the harshness of Australia ("Harsh, dominant."); while Fiji may be "beautiful" it is less familiar than Australia and unnamed Fijian "mountains" in the first stanza stand alongside named sites in the second: "Ayers Rock, the Olga's / Rising up, indomitable" (lines 13, 14). Indeed, while Fiji is described mostly in terms of sound ("soft voices," "whispering," "laughter," "calm"), Australia is described in relation to visuality and movement: "dominant," "Moulder of men," "rising up," "Kaleidoscopic in the summer haze." When the final lines of the poem return to the moment of Davis's departure/return, we find him viewing Australia, his cherished "land," from the tarmac ("with a jet's roar") from a perspective that has been made possible by his time in Fiji. The poem offers an example of ethical Indigenous connection: graciously acknowledging the specificities and "beaut[y]" of the land and people of the place he has been visiting as well as specificities of their respective oppression.

As a scholar of Pacific literatures, my first instinct is to read the poem alongside Hawaiian poet Haunani-Kay Trask's "Returning the Gift," which she wrote in response to attending a gathering of Indigenous writers in the US. Like Davis, Trask farewells and memorialises the historic gathering by drawing attention to connections but also playing up differences both of landscape and of experience. Neither poem is saying "my country is better than yours." Like Davis, her poem of farewell is offered as a gift of thanks and acknowledgement. Someone well versed in Davis's other work may well read the poem in other ways, and this is as it should be. But I also like living in the world where writing by Trask and Davis / Davis and Crocombe / Hawai'i, Fiji and Australia, are in conversation. But on what basis can this conversation work, with a particular balance between resonance and difference?

Let us return to the "cousins' in Noonuccal's phrase above by turning to another text that talks about cousins: a 1979 poem "Education Week" written by Māori poet Evelyn Patuawa-Nathan who was based in Australia at the time. I have spoken about, written about and taught this poem—about a class trip to a local jail for a group of Aboriginal children and their teacher—in a lot of places now. I often encourage readers of the poem to think about the value and remarkable productivity of close observation and careful reading (the kids read the names, the poet/teacher read the kids, and we as readers of the poem read all of this) and I also note that it draws attention to the place of writing—of archives—in Indigenous scholarly and community work. In *Opening Doors*, alongside the many poems based in Aotearoa and within specifically Māori contexts, there are four poems focused on Australia: two about Māori experiences in (actually, burial in) Australia, and two that represent perspectives of Aboriginal people and critique the colonial state while centring Indigenous agency. Years earlier, in 1960, Patuawa-Nathan wrote a lengthy obituary and artistic biography of Albert Namatjira for *Te Ao Hou,* a New Zealand state magazine for Māori. So, she had been thinking and writing about points of connection between Māori and Aboriginal people for a while.[1]

The kids in "Education Week" identify "names" (proximity, genealogy, family, ancestry) among "comments" and then "reach" for them. By the end of the poem the "reaching" of the Indigenous children towards the writing of their own relatives reframes the space from one of disconnection to one of connection and agency. Even in empty, tightly controlled, violent, impossibly imperial spaces, there is always prior Indigenous presence, and this

presence can be reframed and multiple. I draw attention to the echo of the word "reach" from when Linda recites her genealogy in *Mutuwhenua* and says "every branch reaches out" (101). Like Linda, these children engage in a self-conscious and deliberate act of genealogising. Neither Linda in *Mutuwhenua* nor the speaker in Patuawa-Nathan's poem describe accidental proximity. As with Linda and her grandmother, the utterance or reading of names profoundly restructures and realigns significant family relationships. As with Linda who doesn't argue for the merits of her white fiancé but focuses instead on the multidimensional Indigenous network of which she is a part, the children standing in the "bare concrete cell" centre Indigenous relationships through deliberately connecting with multigenerational genealogies ("cousins / and brothers / and fathers") that in turn decentre non-Indigenous over-writing of the space *even as it provides*, as a by-product rather than the goal, new perspectives from which to engage non-Indigenous encounters with Indigenous peoples. These final three lines of the poem are structured according to three different kinds of close family relationship. The kids "reach"

> for names of cousins
> and brothers
> and fathers. (Patuawa-Nathan lines 12–14)

I like thinking about the final word "fathers" standing in for ancestry, genealogy, history—this is the primary reconnection that occurs and is centred in this space—the thing that is *learned* in education week despite the plans of the state or the town or the teacher to structure the intellectual and moral knowledge experienced. The aspirations of the settler "education" system are eclipsed by the aspirations of young Indigenous people whose capacity to read and reach turns empty space (*terra nullius*) back into ancestral and family space. But what about the brothers and cousins? Why are they there? And, what do "cousins" add that "brothers" don't already suggest in terms of generational proximity?

Cousins are relatives with whom you share one family network, but not another. In some contexts, your cousins may be like close siblings, and in others you may feel like virtual strangers. The cousin relationship speaks to connection on the basis of certain familiarity, but without forcing different Indigenous peoples to pretend that all of our experiences are comparable or familiar or legible or even visible to each other. With a nod to Noonuccal, I have been thinking about cousins as a way of thinking about Indigenous–Indigenous connections. The possibility of the concept was originally prompted in response to a passage in Tahitian novelist Chantal Spitz's 1991 novel, published in English in 2007 as *Island of Shattered Dreams*. The central character Tetiare spends years travelling around the Pacific region in search of what Spitz describes as "cousins":

> Tetiare has finally come home, after years of wandering round the Pacific, in a vain attempt to heal the wound in her soul. She has met the *cousins* who came with them long ago in their big canoes, born of the same dream of freedom, but who stopped where the wind had blown them on tiny hopeful islands, over the centuries forgetting the ones who journeyed further. She has found them again, so similar in body and soul, yet made different by the various foreign governments that have been squatting on their land. She has discovered them, peoples of the first people, attempting through little disorganised movements to shake off the Foreigner and immerse themselves again in their origins, to be themselves, the lost children of this huge family in search of one another.
> (Spitz 121, my italics)

The cousins in *Island of Shattered Dreams* are deeply connected, but their connection is produced by acknowledging, rather than sidestepping, differences that are produced by two distinct processes: their cultural and historical contexts connected to the deepest histories ("origins") of the region; and the ways they have been "made different" by the foreign governments "squatting on their land." For Tetiare, Indigenous connection is not coincidental, disinterested, or accidental. Her connection with Indigenous people from across the region is consciously motivated and reciprocal and its purpose is "to heal the wound in her soul;" the restoration of these Indigenous links is both the foundation and purpose of decolonisation: "the lost children of this huge family in search of one another."

To be clear, then, I am proposing that "cousins" (Noonuccal's "cousins," Patuawa-Nathan's "cousins," Spitz's "cousins," Linda's cousins as lateral branches) could be a close-enough-yet-loose-enough relationship to enable us to think productively and ethically about Indigenous–Indigenous connections. In the context of Pacific literary studies and Indigenous Australian literary studies in particular, our respective worlds overlap, connect, resonate, and "reach" in more ways than we might have considered. And, what's more, this reaching has been reciprocal: some aspects of Pacific writing are connected to Australia, and some Indigenous Australian writing sits on Pacific metaphoric (and perhaps physical) bookshelves. We don't often see "our" texts on each other's bookshelves. Some reasons for this are theoretical and methodological. Some are pedagogic. But some are pragmatic.

I present these thoughts hoping that they make a contribution to how we collectively think about the Study of Australian Literatures, and also with the hope they are heard unequivocally as being in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty in this place. Certainly, Pacific literary studies should never be weaponised against Indigenous literary studies in Australia. I am not arguing for crumbs from the table that should have been diverted to Indigenous literary studies to go to the Pacific instead. I am saying: don't make us scrap over crumbs. I am asking: what kind of loaf of bread are you even cutting in Australian literary studies? I have made a deliberate decision to not write directly about Mabo here. Instead, I have written in response to, in acknowledgement of, and in solidarity with the Mabo decision. I've made an argument about what becomes visible when we turn down the volume on state boundaries and turn the volume up on the transnational conversations in which Indigenous communities have been engaged for so long. Hopefully, this will also set the scene for interesting thinking about potential further conversations *and actions* in the future. Mabo demands a change in power relations and control over resources. It is also surely about the many worlds that are possible when we understand there is an absolute forest of Indigenous literary trees here, there, and everywhere . . . with so many branches reaching out, touching every other.

i used to want to tell them to move over because they take up all the room
but there's no room
there is no room

no walls, no room—just links and connections and space

you're not at the centre; there are no centres
you're just standing there
one node in a massive network
like the rest of us

NOTES

[1] I want to be very clear that although I am proposing some ways of reading this poem, we will not sidestep the fact that this poem is about Indigenous incarceration. I am deeply mindful that when I delivered the lecture on which this essay is based I stood on an island that has served both nation and empire as a carceral space in particular and violent ways, and although I am here teasing out possible metaphoric work the poem can do, it would be unethical and complicit to proceed without noticing and naming and refusing to sidestep the ways that "local jail[s]" and "small concrete cell[s]" function not just as a site but as a tool of ongoing colonialism and genocide—and Indigenous death—in Australia.

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