sis in which Tanga is contrasted with change in a number of other Melanesian societies, yet I find the integration of the two perspectives not completely convincing. As it is, the cultural analysis in part 2 remains quite separate from the description of practice and history in part 1. Although I understand that a proper description of a cultural system—which is a major accomplishment in itself—may require an abstraction from practice, a number of questions remain unanswered (and even unaddressed), questions that concern the integration of a cultural and a historical analysis. Foster remarks that the mortuary rites have remained remarkably stable from 1933, when they were studied by Bell, until 1985, the time of his own fieldwork. However, as his historical analysis clearly demonstrates, the context of the feasts has changed dramatically. In 1985 the rites belong to a constructed domain of kastam that is sealed off from bisnis, which comprises the economically important commodity relations. What effect does this opposition to bisnis, characterized as Foster claims by a completely different sociality, have on the meanings within the kastam domain, so brilliantly analyzed? Foster suggests that the process of separation has exercised a conservative force on the mortuary rites (244), but he offers no further elaboration. It would have been helpful if he had given more information about the cultural logic of the bisnis domain and the influence of kastam concepts in that domain. How do people succeed in keeping these domains separate in their daily practices? Evidently there must be conflicts of meaning and interpretation, for example in the management of land, which belongs both to the domain of kastam (lineages are the recognized titleholders in land) and to the domain of bisnis (households exploit the coconut groves). A proper integration of the new Melanesian ethnography and the new Melanesian history would require an analysis of the (changing) practice of a cultural logic, and, in particular, an analysis of competing cultural logics and their mutual effect in the practice of daily life.

Although Foster’s study has not, in my view, fully realized its ultimate ambition, this does not detract from it as an important and extremely thorough book that makes an exciting contribution to a new Melanesian anthropology.

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Subramani’s Altering Imagination is a collection of essays, reviews, speeches, and narratives; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In 1974, Subramani left a secure post in the civil service in Fiji to join the faculty at the University of the South Pacific, in part because he was a writer and in his own words “the pursuit of writing was a reality at the University.” He went on to edit Mana Review and later Mana Journal (a regional literary journal), and in 1978 his story “Marigolds” won the South Pacific Association of
Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies’ short fiction competition. Subramani is now professor in literature at the university.

In the introduction to *Altering Imagination*, Subramani recounted the sudden devaluation he felt for one hundred years of history and the contemporary Fiji murder case—both subjects of fictional narratives he was working on just prior to the 14 May 1987 “bloodless coup” in the Fiji Islands. That event and its aftermath evoked an artistic conversion for Subramani. He experienced a new vision of the role literature plays in public life. He declared in this book that reading and writing are political activity connected to a struggle for liberation; that the initial task in reconciling is coming to terms with images and stereotypes that shape attitudes toward race and cultural difference; and implicitly that the task of reconciliation is the business of Pacific writers who in some ways are like politicians restructuring reality into a world they wish it to be.

This book represents Subramani’s commitment to that task. Part 1, “A Reconciling” begins with a piece he wrote in 1976, some time after Fiji gained independence, in which he examines the ways writers who visited the Pacific represented the islands and Islanders in their writing. He added a section to the piece in 1994, after the coup had “defamiliarized” his familiar world. In that section, Subramani commented on the cargo cult dimension to Fiji’s coups, and concluded with the idea that dreams can work for health when they reveal what is possible, and work for distortion when they falsify experience, a comment on the double-edged sword people wield when they restructure reality.

Subramani wrote the next piece, “Images of Fiji,” as an address in 1977 and delivered it in Brisbane on the occasion of accepting his award for “Marigolds.” This piece foreshadowed the events that were to follow ten years later. In “Images of Fiji,” Subramani acknowledged the different realities such writers as Albert Wendt, Konai Thaman, Jo Nacola, and Raymond Pillai constructed in their works. He pointed out that both indigenous Fijians and Indians regarded themselves as victims ten years before the coups, and in a now ironic harbinger of disaster he called for writers “to avoid reinforcing principles of prejudice” and urged them to work toward “shared symbols and assumptions that might ultimately assist in national integration”—a national integration that the current reality in Fiji attests never took place. Subramani is still working variations on that theme of national integration.

In 1988, a little over a year after the first coup, Subramani delivered the keynote address at the Pacific Writer’s Conference at the Commonwealth Institute in London. That talk, “The Writer, Pluralism and Freedom,” is included in Part 1. In this speech, Subramani elaborated his earlier remarks about similarities between writers and politicians: both restructure reality, both share problems of credibility and their plots running out of control, and both conceal meaning through cover-ups and multiple interpretations. He suggested that postmodernist fiction is the most
appropriate form of literature for our time, because earlier conventions of realistic fiction and ideologies of the Pacific Way have outlasted their relevance. According to Subramani, the value of postmodernist fiction lies in its “ability to expose how things work, how culture is constructed, and reality manufactured.” It achieves this aim by laying bare its own conventions.

In Part 1, another longer piece “From the Web of Memory into Forgetting,” a narrative, stands out. This memory, or as Subramani would have it “someone else’s memory of my childhood,” explores the blurred line between fiction and reality as the author recounts his return to the village of his childhood as his mother lies dying. That the occasion falls in the middle of “our troubles in the country” further blurs the fiction-reality line. The narrative ends with death: the death of Subramani’s mother and the death of the community where he grew up, both of which are paralleled and emphasized by the death of the familiar world of Fiji public life brought about by the coup. But the last word in the narrative is hope; and hope is what this book is about.

A series of reviews concludes Part 1. In two of the reviews, Subramani commented on plays by Larry Thomas (“Just Another Day,” which focuses on rootless, placeless people living in a dislocated nowhere land) and by Vilseni Hereniko (“Sina Ma Tinilau,” which he described as a musical fantasy pervaded by a spirit of carnival). In another review, Subramani examined Joseph Veramu’s Moving Through the Streets, a novel peopled with “a new generation of young Fijians searching for meaning without support from the dominant culture.” Subramani also reviewed a week’s worth of French films, which he referred to as “a feast of film culture,” and what he called new Indian cinema, whose quest for “alternative, authentic values” is expressed in its “rejection of the formulaic ending of commercial cinema.” These reviews contribute obliquely to Subramani’s exploration of the theme that art restructures reality, but at times they seemed peripheral to the central idea of the book.

All of the pieces in Part 2, “A Responsibility,” are postcoup addresses Subramani delivered on such occasions as the Fiji Teachers Union Conference, TISI Sangam Educational Conference, Ra Library Awareness Week, and the Twenty-fifth Anniversary celebration at the University of the South Pacific. All of the addresses echo the call for new directions at a time in history when people are shattered and confused. The spirit is one of urgency for the restoration of human dignity and honor. Subramani calls for new directions in education that celebrate pluralism as the overriding reality of the human condition. He describes the greatness in leadership that will be necessary to heal the dislocations in society, and relates the hope for a multicultural Fiji to the crucial role of imagination, which can be cultivated and nourished by “deliberate efforts of education.”

The most provocative of these addresses is “Educating the Imagination.” This piece interprets the meaning of all the separate pieces in the book. In a world characterized by enormous change in social and politi-
cal life, in science and technology, the old mindset fixed on racial difference and cultural superiority imprisons people by their inability to read the world. The prison can be unlocked by transforming the map of reality promoted by politicians, whose main power derives from control of material resources, into a richer tapestry created through the power of alternative discourses and their appeal to the imagination. Only by first imagining a social transformation that re-visions the old realities can a people begin the quest for a better life.

Subramani addressed and dedicated this book to the people of Fiji. But in a broader sense it represents a record of thought about and imaginative response to reality in Fiji that fills in gaps and brightens the focus for any reader of works written about the Pacific by Pacific Island writers.

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Alban Bensa has worked as an anthropologist in New Caledonia for a quarter of a century and gathered insights from both his fieldwork in the center-north of Grande Terre (the main island) and his activities in the larger arena of a politically divided French Overseas Territory, as shown by his 1990 book, Nouvelle-Calédonie: un paradis dans la tourmente. This new book assembles thirty-six essays written between 1984 and 1995 in forums ranging from anthropological journals to the Bulletin de Psychologie and Le Monde to the more overtly activist Le Banian and Kanaky. That diversity of audiences reflects Bensa’s central theme: how to do anthropology in a highly politicized context? Bensa has labored, not during the heyday of colonial rule, but during an era of troubled, often violent decolonization, with all its contestations of meaning and representation.

In the title essay, “Ethnologie en marche” (Ethnology in action), Bensa reminds his readers that anthropology once treated indigenous Pacific societies like museum objects, as if they were neatly bounded by beaches, timeless, and composed of traits that could be measured exactly by detached observers whose “scientific data” were then taken off to distant academic institutions and used in intellectual debates about functionalism or structuralism. But when peoples like the Kanak revolt against foreign domination and attempt to take charge of their own destiny again, they reveal that they were connected to outside pressures and events all along. Bensa admits wondering at first what his role should be, as nationalist leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou was already representing Kanak culture in dialogue with and resistance to French colonization. (Recent articles in the Journal de la Société des Océanistes have reevaluated Tjibaou’s Melanesia 2000 project.)