in a hunting society, is the hunting of game. . . . The Puyuma hunted any game the mountain provided, and, more specifically, in a ritual context, monkeys and deer. It was forbidden to keep game for oneself; it had to be passed on. However, in a farming society, individuals possessed private property, which could be handed down, and which became a source of covetousness and theft. The brothers discovered shame with Takio, the rice cake thief. . . . The group has passed from an activity based mainly on hunting, gardening, and gathering, to another based on farming. In the former society, men were hunters, and it was they who exercised the functions of shamans. . . . Men took the game from nature, but they knew that their catch depended on the biruas’ [spiritual beings] goodwill, and they had to ‘give them their share’” (188–189). The rite of the deer and the ritual “feeding Takio or his mountain” (189), Cauquelin argues convincingly, are part of the same quest: fertility.

Chapter 8 is appropriately illustrated to deal with material civilization, and a short, last chapter, as previously indicated, takes stock of the present situation. Josiane Cauquelin’s The Aborigines of Taiwan: The Puyuma; From Headhunting to the Modern World is the ideal book to allow one to become acquainted with the Austronesians’ homeland. Herein is to be found the essence of twenty fruitful years spent gathering data and insights by a colleague fluent in both Puyuma and Chinese. A rare work!

SERGE DUNIS
Université de la Polynésie Française


In the Introduction to Postcolonial Pacific Writing, Michelle Keown notes that, while a number of Pacific writers have received international recognition, their works (and the region itself) remain marginal within the worldwide institutions and industries of postcolonial scholarship. This assessment suggests that one of her book’s ambitions is to make the case for inclusion and broadened, better-informed discussion. An implied tactic in this regard is to demonstrate how readily Pacific texts (here “Pacific” is limited to “Polynesian” and Māori texts written in English) respond to postcolonial treatment, and how analogous Pacific texts are to other postcolonial literatures. At the same time, Keown suggests that postcolonial theory can deepen the appreciation of—and thicken the analysis of—Pacific responses to colonial incursion, without becoming a neocolonial imposition of terms. The central tactic here is to posit a dialectical relation between postcolonial approaches (the anticolonial global) and an emerging canon of indigenous texts (the pan-Pacific regional). In this dialectic, postcolonial refers to “theoretical issues” (11), and Pacific refers both to the creative texts produced by indigenous writers and the Pacific-specific sociocultural contexts, epistemologies, and narrative strategies inscribed within them.

Keown structures her book as both
a critical introduction to Pacific literature, engagingly angled toward students of postcoloniality unfamiliar with the region’s indigenous writing, and a detailed series of close readings of established Pacific writers. Each chapter begins with a biographical headnote about the author; summarizes the author’s works, trajectory, narrative modes, and principal themes, often through reference to interviews Keown herself conducted with the authors; supplies compact historical and cultural contexts for individual works; and applies concepts from postcolonial theory to individual texts.

What organizes Postcolonial Pacific Writing thematically is Keown’s argument, signaled by the book’s subtitle, that in Pacific literature, as in much postcolonial literature, authors self-consciously present history as registered on the body. Representations of markings on individual bodies (scars, diseases, fistulas, dismemberments), along with representations of internalized responses to skin and body (impaired self-image, mental ailments, ambivalence, narcissism), are read as commentaries on the state (condition, health, corruption) of the indigenous body politic. Because the works selected for discussion are in several senses built around corporeal imagery, Keown centralizes theorists who analyze the body, such as Frantz Fanon and Julia Kristeva. Their approaches seem invited in that, as Keown shows, the authors she discusses have each made the Pacific body—so fetishized in colonial literature—into a locus from which to examine the wounds of colonialism in order to chart a course toward recovery from psychosocial ills.

In the first half of her anatomy of Pacific literature, Keown discusses “Polynesian” writers, beginning with an overview of Albert Wendt as the writer whose work “offers the most sustained exploration of the metaphorical properties of the human body as a medium for exploring the dynamics of colonialism and independence in the Pacific region” (16). In chapter 1, subtitled “Race, Allegory, and the Polynesian Body,” Keown shows how Wendt’s works reject Orientalist depictions of Islander bodies and refigure the body as “a vehicle for presenting new conceptualizations” of Islander positions in contemporary Oceania (18). In chapter 2, on “the Polynesian female body,” Keown reads Sia Figiel’s work as both a critical interrogation of idealized images of the Polynesian body, whether in anthropological literature or contemporary media myths, and an inside narrative of the subject formation of girls growing into their bodies within sometimes violent settings. Chapter 3, on satire and scatology as means of “Purifying the Abject Body,” argues that Epeli Hau’ofa’s Kisses in the Nederends (1987) “sets out to metaphorically liberate the indigenous body” (61). Through illuminating comparisons with the works of Jonathan Swift and other satirists, and a tracking of Hau’ofa’s inversions of ethnographic frameworks, Keown demonstrates how Kisses embraces what has been made abject (here, a fistulated anus) as a cathartic release from exclusionary dialectics. The conclusion of Postcolonial Pacific Writing returns to Wendt—in particular his 1996 essay “Tatauing the Post–Colonial Body” (Span 42/43:15–29)—to argue that
the tattoo (which is discussed in several of Keown’s chapters) can be read as a “testament to the resilience of Polynesian peoples” (193).

Keown describes chapter 4, on “Mental Illness and Postcoloniality” in Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s work, as a bridge to her book’s second half. Born in the Cook Islands, Campbell grew up in New Zealand and remains based there, and Keown regards his treatment of psychosocial responses to “neo-colonial pressures” as “consistent with the work of the Māori writers who are discussed in the four remaining chapters” (13). The “Polynesian” authors dealt with legacies of colonialism, postcolonial corruption, and the effects of neocolonial commodity culture; in contrast, Campbell and the Māori writers engage an ongoing colonialism. Keown presents The Frigate Bird (1989) as an autotherapeutic narrative engagement of a psychosis and ego fragmentation created by Campbell’s repression of his Polynesian heritage within racist institutions. The “oscillating patterns of the narrator’s manic-depressive illness” are seen as approximations of the “problems of identification resulting from his cross-cultural ancestry” (97).

Where Keown sees Campbell’s writing as figuring the personal as microcosmic, she approaches Keri Hulme’s The Bone People (1985) in chapter 5, “Remoulding the Body Politic,” in terms of its investigation of “psycho-social dysfunction as an expression of a broader cross-cultural disharmony within New Zealand society” (162), and as a modeling of healing paradigms in which violence must first be acknowledged and interrogated, and a phase of “auto-destructiveness” and “self-disgust” associated with false essentialism passed through, before regeneration and reconciliation are possible.

If Hulme proposes a socio-poetics in which “diverse and manifold cultural tissues” are woven into a “new national identity” (125), for Keown, Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace—in different ways—exhibit binaristic thinking. Chapter 6, “Disease, Colonialism and the National Body,” analyzes the representation of responses to the 1918 pandemic in Ihimaera’s The Dream Swimmer (1997) as “an allegory for colonial incursion” and the formation of twentieth-century Māori nationalism (127). Where Ihimaera figures disease as an attack on Māori bodies and as a catalyst for political organizing, Patricia Grace in Baby No-Eyes (1998) uses another health scandal—the mutilation of a Māori fetus for research purposes—as “a metaphor for the continuing oppression of the Maori people” (148). In chapter 7, “Language and the Corporeal,” Keown parses Grace’s prose for ways in which it resists Pākehā hegemony through its mobilization of Māori narrative, linguistic, and cultural codes. This enables Grace’s semiotized language or “signifying process” to enact “both a direct and subtextual attack upon material and social obstacles” (168). Chapter 8, on the “Narcissistic Body” in Alan Duff’s Once Were Warriors (1990), locates an underlying wounding/healing structure similar to those Keown has previously discussed. Beneath Duff’s gritty depiction of domestic and other forms of abuse, Keown argues, is a canny critique of self-destructive or nihilistic aspects of contemporary Māori behavior as
related to a narcissism that indexes a “widespread socio-cultural malaise” (177).

The above sketch cannot do justice to the complexities of Keown’s arguments, but hopefully it raises questions about methodology that come up when assessing postcolonial Pacific writing and *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*. While Keown simply touches on such questions by suggesting that not being open to theorizing “from the outside in” threatens “theoretical insularity,” her critical position is clearly embodied in a practice described as itself an examination of how postcolonial theories “may be deployed productively . . . without compromising the necessary attendant focus upon local social-economic and cultural factors” (195). Likewise, though not directly articulated, her views on culture and politics are registered in the course of her reading, particularly in her representations of Māori approaches to “nation.” I had reservations, in places where the psychoanalytic language gets thick, about the appropriateness or critical payoff of providing clinical diagnoses for the conditions of her indigenous subjects: the universalization of the unconscious seems an unstable approach to cross-cultural study. Nevertheless, I found Keown’s study impressively grounded in postcolonial “new literatures”; wide-ranging in its references to New Zealand secondary scholarship (Keown is Pākehā) while steeped in postcolonial theory; and responsive to indigenous socio-poetics, history, and narrative modes (particularly Māori). Given that the texts she selects are among those most readily available from US and New Zealand publishers, this canon-solidifying book—with its extensive bibliography—seems primed to be a useful supplement to Pacific literature syllabi. In these senses, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* makes a significant contribution to a potentially wider conversation about Pacific literatures that has, most notably among Pacific writers and scholars themselves, remained understandably wary about how and on what terms to proceed.

**PAUL LYONS**

_University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa_

* * *


A decade ago there were few Māori novels that took place outside of Aotearoa New Zealand, yet recent years have witnessed a whole new geographical imagination in the literature. Witi Ihimaera’s *The Uncle’s Story* (2000), for instance, details the experience of Māori in the Vietnam War, connecting diverse landscapes and histories across the Pacific through the literary frame of the wartime diary, particularly as it is circulated and interpreted by family and ultimately the audience of the novel. Patricia Grace’s novel *Tu* deepens the historical frame by inscribing the legacy of Māori involvement in both world wars. This literary turn to the transnational geographies of war may say much about our current historical moment of global militarization. Yet these novels cannot be reduced to contemporary political events, as