

*Not E-mailing Albert: A Legacy of
Collection, Connection, Community*

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Selina sent me a poem she'd written called "E-mailing Albert" (see Marsh, this issue, 252). It's a great poem, a kind of ode or monologue, directed specifically at Albert Wendt, outlining the frustrations and questions of a relatively new Pacific woman scholar working in the hallowed corridors of an English department in which Albert himself worked for a number of years. I love Selina's poem, and I love the way the poem is both an e-mail *to* Albert and an "e-mail" *about* Albert. I love the way Al is the alleged recipient/addressee of the e-mail but really it's intended for all of us. I especially love the juxtaposition between the reverence in which he is held and the accessibility implied by the production of an e-mail called "E-mailing Albert." I'd never write it myself. I'd never write a poem called "E-mailing Albert." I've probably only e-mailed Albert about three times in my entire life.

I don't e-mail Albert because I'm shy around him: he's a genius, amazing, imposing, charismatic, compelling. When I'm hanging out with most people, I am normal and able to string a sentence together; when I'm talking to him, I am that eighteen-year-old first-year university student in his New Zealand Literature lectures all over again. I don't e-mail Albert because back in Auckland, when I took his undergrad classes, or his writing course, or his Pacific Literature master's class, e-mail hadn't yet become the dominant mode of communication between teacher and student that it is today. I also don't e-mail Albert because he hasn't been my research supervisor or boss so I haven't established a regular online relationship with him around logistical things, like times to meet and tasks to finish. These days, if I am going to write an e-mail to someone in the area of Pacific literary studies, it's far more likely to be Selina, or Teresia, or Anna Christiansen, or Ka'imipono, or Brandy, or ku'ualoha, or Keith, or Chad, or one of my

students. Last week, I e-mailed Robert Sullivan. Tonight, I'm reading an essay e-mailed to me by a student who has spent a year sweating away on an honors research project about three Pacific women poets: Tusiata Avia, Karlo Mila, and Selina. The idea that it is possible to e-mail someone else in the field of Pacific literary studies—even that there *is* a field of Pacific literary studies—relies on a series of connections and relationships.

In my view, while I recognize his enormous personal creative and critical outputs, one of the major contributions Albert Wendt has made to the region *as a region* has been the production of literary anthologies. Treatments of Wendt's work tend to focus on his individually authored fiction, poetry, drama, and scholarship, and it has not failed to surprise me that little critical attention has been directed at his work as an anthologist. In some ways, his work as an editor of anthologies is a form of service to the field: behind-the-scenes work that is more about making things possible than it is about standing in the limelight. Rather than being a distraction from his literary or critical contributions, however, the nature of anthologizing is exactly what marks his contribution to Pacific literary studies. Wendt's anthologies demonstrate his commitments to the production of more and more writing; to a regional emphasis; to the promotion of complexity, nuance, and juxtaposition; and to the close links between writing, history, and politics.

With a focus on his three regional anthologies *Lali*, *Nuanua*, and *Whetu Moana*, this essay explores two important strands of Wendt's work as an anthologist: collection, the production of a record; and connection, the production of a region (Wendt 1980, 1995; Wendt, Whaitiri, and Sullivan 2003). Finally, I reflect on the ways in which these two strands have both produced and nurtured a sense of Pacific literary community. It seems instructive to note that along with Wendt's regional anthologies he has edited "national" collections—*Some Modern Poetry from Fiji*, *Some Modern Poetry from Western Samoa*, *Some Modern Poetry from the New Hebrides*, *Some Modern Poetry from the Solomon Islands* (Wendt 1974a, 1974b, 1975a, 1975b)—and was involved in editing a landmark Fiji-based regional journal, *Mana*. In his introductory essay to *Lali*, and again in his introduction to *Nuanua*, Wendt suggested a clear link between these earlier collections (especially *Mana*) and the three regional anthologies. Although I focus on the regional anthologies in this essay, I do this with the acknowledgment that there is further critical work to be done about these early national collections and about *Mana*.

COLLECTION

The act of producing an anthology is an act of producing a record. Although it is fair to argue that a single-author monograph or collection also attests to aspects of the time and place in which it is produced, a multiple-author literary collection brings together a range of perspectives from many voices and thereby conveys more broadly a sense of what Witi Ihimaera described in his introduction to a Māori anthology as “an opportunity to say to the present, ‘This is how we are,’—to say to the future, ‘This is how we were’” (1992, 18).

Barbara Benedict, who has written about the rise of the English-language literary collection in the eighteenth century, described the production of a collection as an act of “gathering together”: “Both the terms ‘anthology,’ derived from the Greek for a collection of flowers, and ‘miscellany,’ meaning a dish of mixed fruits designate a collection: literally, a gathering together of objects, in this case literary works” (2003, 236). Benedict has argued that it is no coincidence the genre of the literary collection appeared during the historical period in which various other forms of collecting were also on the rise. Indeed, the practice of collection is closely allied to the specific mode of European colonial expansion, which was fanatical about the collecting, categorizing, and cataloguing of plants, animals, ideas, materials, and people. Isn’t it ironic that this distinctly colonial mode of collecting, which underpinned most Pacific-Europe relationships and from which the Pacific has ultimately suffered a great deal, produced a genre that has served the Pacific so well?

Since the 1950s, when “new literatures in English” (as they might be outdatedly but helpfully described) began appearing around the anglophone world, moves were made to collect various examples of those literatures. While collections of creative works by white anglophone writers had appeared earlier in settler countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States, nonwhite writers seldom enjoyed inclusion in those anthologies. Partly as a result of the difficulty of accessing space in the white publishing world, and partly as a result of the large number of factors that led to the greater proportion of short pieces by Indigenous and other nonwhite writers, literary collections of shorter pieces by multiple writers proved to be particularly important to the development of national and regional literatures. This opportunity to “gather together” writing from a range of sources in order to produce a nuanced and multivoiced

perspective on a time or place is particularly helpful in a regional anthology of the Pacific: a region whose immense diversity compelled Wendt to describe it as “so vast, so fabulously varied a scattering of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature” (Wendt 1976). Indeed, in a region “crisscross[ed],” as Epele Hau‘ofa would say, by Indigenous, indentured, enslaved, settler, colonizing, and transient peoples, along with the underlying multiplicity implicit in a region with twelve hundred Indigenous languages that covers a third of the earth’s surface, the anthology seems an obvious and important mode of publication.

In the context of critical conversations about a relationship between colonialism, the nation, and the novel—about which Benedict Anderson’s discussion in *Imagined Communities* is oft-quoted (1991), and which Firdous Azim usefully named “the colonial rise of the novel” (1993)—questions concerning the prevalence of shorter forms (especially poetry and the short story) in these anthologies of “new” literatures take on new significance. Existing published writing from the Pacific seems to favor the shorter genres, and whereas most white anthologies publish a selection of pieces from the larger existing corpus of each writer’s works, in the Pacific, a far greater number of writers than we might expect are represented solely in anthologies and do not publish single-author publications. I would suggest this is tied to questions of publishing and to questions of form.

The production and circulation of writing is inseparable from politics. First, the ability to write a lengthy piece such as a novel requires the economic independence and time that enables a writer, as Virginia Woolf put it, to have “a room of one’s own” (1929). For people in the Pacific (as in other marginalized communities) these financial and time resources may not be readily available. While Woolf focused on the relationship between gender and the production of writing, the literal capacity (not ability, but capacity) to write is also affected by class, race, and the urgency ascribed to activities and pressures other than writing: social responsibilities, cultural norms, political activity, and so on. Wendt gestured to this in his explanation for the writers who appeared in *Lali* but were not included in *Nuanua* fifteen years later: “One of the main features of our writing is the large number of writers who publish a few pieces and then disappear, perhaps quite appropriately, into the civil service, politics, the professions and business” (1995, 8).

Once writing has actually been produced, the politics of publishing become visible. Accessing opportunities to publish in (what amount to) racist national or local publishing scenes is difficult even when longer

single-author writing has been produced. At the same time, whereas an anglophone “postcolonial” publishing scene has made this kind of access to publishing possible for nonwhite writers from many non-Pacific countries, the habitual blindness on the part of most postcolonial scholars and publishers with regard to the Pacific has restricted access to these avenues of publishing.

Quite apart from the questions outside the act of writing, writers themselves may be making choices about writing in genres other than the novel: shorter pieces may be produced simply because they are what people want to write. Whereas there is a temptation to assume that one would publish a novel if one could, many scholars and writers in the Pacific and in many other Indigenous contexts have argued that, for example, poetry as a form bears closer resemblance to the ongoing oral literary arts of the communities than does the novel or short prose. Given that a book of poetry requires a large number of poems, and that publishers can be reluctant to invest in poetry because for economic/market reasons, anthologies provide publishing opportunities for poets who may not otherwise have a mechanism to distribute their work.¹ Finally, perhaps the high number of Pacific writers whose short works are collected in anthologies compared to those who write novels suggests a failure on the part of the novel itself. To be clear, if the novel as a literary form is tied to the nation and modernity, perhaps a lack of engagement with the novel in turn demonstrates that particular configurations of the nation and modernity do not hold such appeal for some in the Pacific. Although this question of the relationship between genre and anthologies deserves further consideration beyond the scope of this essay, suffice to be clear for now that literary collections in the Pacific, and specifically Wendt’s literary collections, have brought into circulation a large number of Pacific writers whose relatively short oeuvre or relatively short individual pieces would not have managed a publishing life on their own.

At the end of the day, anthologies are about selection (who gets to select? who does not? who is selected? who is not?) as much as they are about collection. The record that is produced in an anthology is securely located in subjectivity and politics. The anthology is not a divinely ordained orchestration: writers and texts do not fall out of the heavens perfectly formed and in the right order, but require sourcing, coaxing, editing, ordering, and introducing. Editing is as creative and “fictional” an act, perhaps, as any of the creative pieces contained in the resulting anthology. Lest those of us in literary studies fall into an All Blacks supporter-derived mode

of analysis in which a team wins because of its own strengths and loses because of the faults of the coach, we should seek to center the role of the editor in the production of the successful as well as the unsuccessful literary collection. Wendt is not the only editor of Pacific literary collections, and yet he is—to my thinking—the most significant in terms of the timing, the scope, and the shifting modes of collection that each of his anthologies engages.

The politics of editorship has significantly inflected—even shaped—the parameters of Pacific writing. While the politics of editorship are always fraught and complex, these have become particularly prominent in the Pacific. Because the collections have become sites of intersection and encounter for Indigenous, diasporic, and settler communities in the region, anthologies cannot help but foreground the competing claims these various communities make about authority, authenticity, sovereignty, and power. It is possible, and perhaps instructive, to divide Pacific anthologies into those put together by—to use the words of Vilsoni Hereniko and Sig Schwartz (1999)—“insider” editors and “the rest.” While nonindigenous editors produced the first collections of Pacific literature (for example, New Zealand-based Bernard Gadd’s foundational 1977 *Pacific Voices: An Anthology of Writing By and About Pacific People*), their selections tended to include European writers resident in the region and, at the same time, strikingly fewer Indigenous writers than the later anthologies. It would be easy to claim that the explosion of Indigenous and nonwhite writers in, for example, the anthologies published by Wendt and by Marjorie Crocombe and her coeditors (1992) reflects an increase in practicing Indigenous writers by the time anthologies were edited by Indigenous editors, but the remarkably different demographics of the writers included in two simultaneous publications suggests that this claim doesn’t sufficiently take into account the influence of Indigenous editors. In 1980, the same year that Wendt’s *Lali* collected the writing of 43 different nonwhite Pacific writers, Chris Tiffin and Helen Tiffin’s *South Pacific Stories* collected (according to the biographies included in the book) the writing of 10 white writers and 4 nonwhite writers (Tiffin and Tiffin 1980). While the latter publication was the result of a SPACLALS writing competition in 1978/1979,² and so the editors’ prerogative to source material was somewhat limited by the range of people prepared to submit work for competition, this difference still seems rather striking.

The question of who gets to select the items in a literary collection finds a particularly salty and compelling example in the Pacific with the

controversial choice of C K Stead as editor of the *Faber Book of Contemporary South Pacific Stories* (1994). This situation has been treated elsewhere, including an important discussion in Hereniko and Schwarz's "Four Writers and One Critic" (1999), but in the context of the present discussion about Pacific anthologies and anthologists it is worth recalling the timing of the publication vis-à-vis other anthologies. The editorship of Stead, a prominent Pākehā (white New Zealander) critic known for his condescending and derisive views toward Pacific writing,³ inspired four of the Pacific's most established writers—including Wendt—to remove their pieces in protest. The withdrawal of Wendt, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, and Witi Ihimaera was a singular and effective act of protest that pointed out both the problems of continued Eurocentrism in the treatment of Pacific literatures and the significance of anthologies as spaces of production and contestation in the region. The *Faber* anthology came out in 1994: by then, Wendt's *Lali* was fourteen years old and had enjoyed numerous reprints; Ihimaera's coedited collection of Māori writing, *Into the World of Light*, was about the same age; and the first volume of his Reed-published multivolume anthology *Te Ao Marama* had come out in 1992 (Ihimaera and Long 1982; Ihimaera 1992). As well as sidelining the achievements of Wendt and Ihimaera as editors by overlooking their capacity to perform that role instead of Stead,⁴ the *Faber* anthology also fails to recognize that Wendt's and Ihimaera's earlier work as anthologists in the 1980s was instrumental in providing the opportunity for writers in the *Faber* collection—and, indeed, the field as a field—to enjoy recognition in the first place. Several discussions of Wendt's *Nuanua* identify its genesis at least in part as a response to the *Faber* collection. As in the case of the Tiffin and Tiffin anthology of 1980 compared to *Lali*, there is a striking difference between Stead's and Wendt's "guest lists" for the *Faber* collection and *Nuanua* respectively, despite these anthologies being published only a year apart.

The *Faber* is the collection Wendt didn't edit: what about those he did? The production of any literary collection is underpinned by a combination of the taste and the politics of the editor. (Of course, the editor who claims to collect on a nonpolitical or unpoliticized basis has, by implying that it's possible to edit an anthology outside of politics, made a rather clear political point.) In his introduction to *An Anthology of Twentieth Century New Zealand Poetry*, Vincent O'Sullivan wrote: "A new anthology of New Zealand poetry demands a clear-cut choice. Should its editor select a body of verse on lines that follow the contours of the country's develop-

ment, the kind of collection that also provides material for the sociologist and historian, or one where each poem is included simply because it seems good poetry?” (1970, 1).

The balancing of “taste” and “politics” is even more complex for anthologies of writing from communities that haven’t been represented in publication. Collections of writing by women, queer, Indigenous, migrant, working class, and other marginalized communities necessarily adopt an explicit consciousness about the community being represented. An important aspect of collection, then, is the introductory essay, in which a skilled editor will take seriously the opportunity—and perhaps obligation—to carefully and suggestively frame the writing that follows. In my view, some of Wendt’s best critical writing is found in these introductory essays, and one of the topics to which Wendt has returned in each of these essays is a self-conscious discussion about the parameters of his choices about what is included in each of the anthologies. Having acknowledged this most overtly editorial aspect of his work as an anthologist, the scope of this essay demands that we be satisfied with recognizing the pertinence of questions about the relationship between literary taste and politics in the act of collection, and perhaps we can return to this matter at another time.

It is worthwhile to take time to consider any shifts in Wendt’s own editorship of these three regional anthologies, whose publication dates span twenty-three years. These shifts are dictated as much by changes in Wendt as by changes in the region, and each produces a record not only of a different time but also of a different editorial perspective from a different place. In my view, we must avoid characterizing Wendt, or his anthologizing work, as if he is disconnected from space and time: each anthology is a product of its political, geographical, and historical context.⁵ When *Lali* came out in 1980, Wendt was the director of the University of the South Pacific (USP) Centre in Western Sāmoa and had held various teaching roles in Sāmoa for a number of years. Several countries in the Pacific were just entering a phase of formal independence, and Indigenous communities in Aotearoa, Hawai‘i, and Australia were moving into new levels of resistance to internal colonialisms. By the time *Nuanua* came out in 1995, he was the first Pacific Islander to be appointed professor of English at the University of Auckland, having moved there after spending time in Fiji as chair of Pacific literature at USP between 1982 and 1988. Notably, his time at Fiji was not only a time of intense creative production but also the time of the 1987 coups. Finally, Wendt coedited the 2003 collection *Whetu Moana* with Māori writer scholars Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan,⁶

a collaborative relationship that came largely out of his relationship with *tāngata whenua* (Indigenous people) in Aotearoa. That book was copublished in New Zealand (Auckland University Press) and Hawai‘i (University of Hawai‘i Press), ensuring that a collection of Pacific literature was available to both the Commonwealth and North American anglophone publishing circuits simultaneously. In 2004, I attended an event at which that book was celebrated in Hawai‘i, on Wendt’s arrival as the inaugural Citizen’s Chair at the Department of English at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, a position that he held in Hawai‘i until 2008. This move away from individual editorship toward collaborative editorship is significant because it provides another example of Wendt’s ongoing commitment to nurturing the relationship between collection (his work as an anthologist) and connection and, ultimately, community.

CONNECTION

The act of producing a Pacific anthology is an act of producing a region. The various Pacific anthologies each produce different Pacifics; some do and some don’t include Aotearoa, some include only Indigenous writers, and some include diasporic and settler writers as well. The scope and shape of the region has been reconfigured in each anthology. Gathering texts from around the region (that is, not organizing them at the level of the nation-state) creates, mobilizes, and manifests a regional community that resembles Wendt’s and Hau‘ofa’s Oceania. In the Pacific, an added dimension to the work and position of anthologies is the size of various Pacific nations and, thus, the size of their writing communities, readerships, publication infrastructures, and distribution networks. Although some Pacific nations have had success with self-publication,⁷ anthologies of Pacific literature not only bring together these literatures with Others, but also make possible their mobility to Other places.⁸ At the same time, texts from the larger Pacific nations—Aotearoa, Hawai‘i, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji⁹—that have managed to publish and distribute collections at the national level also benefit from being brought into relationship with Other Pacific places,¹⁰ and so anthologizing at the Pacific level both complicates and recontextualizes these texts in interesting ways.

It seems possible to argue that one of the important functions of the anthology is to create a sense of “us.” Barbara Benedict described the anthology-produced community in this way: “Because of their cooperative means of production and multiple authorship, anthologies are mate-

rial expressions of a kind of community, and their format also directs readers to understand them as vessels of a common enterprise, even while registering the independence of each author. . . . Often the community is in fact created by or for the anthology itself, rather than serving as the basis of it (2003, 242). The important thing, of course, about Ihimaera's description of the anthology quoted earlier in this article [255], is his use of the inclusive plural pronoun "we:" "how we are . . . how we were." Similarly, in the introductions to his anthologies Wendt has written with a strong sense of transition between "'me/my/I" and "us/our/we."

In *Lali*, which appeared in 1980, Wendt's introduction was a somewhat "wriggled around" version of his essay "Towards a New Oceania," which in turn was an introductory essay for *Mana* volume 1, number 1, in 1976. After *Lali* opens with a description of its title, a new paragraph starts with Wendt's now immortal words "I belong to Oceania," echoing precisely his 1976 opening. The first pronoun, then, in Wendt's introduction to *Lali* is personal and singular: "I." As in the earlier essay, the plural pronoun appears in the second paragraph: "In spite of the political barriers dividing our countries, an intense creative activity is starting to weave firm links between *us*" (Wendt 1980, xiii; emphasis added). Wendt's introduction to *Nuanua* again uses the plural pronoun, and although it later speaks from his individual position ("for me") it starts the anthology with an assumption—and thereby the production—of a "we": "In many of *our* Pacific languages *nuanua* means rainbow. . . . the richness and variety of *our* literature, both oral and written (Wendt 1995, 1; emphasis added).

The introduction to *Whetu Moana* works a little differently. At first it seems like it will not speak from the position of the Oceanic "we," when colonial images of the region are listed in the opening lines and are followed by the clause "it is also home to many thousands of people who have learned over the centuries to survive extraordinary hardships." This sounds a little "outsider-ish" in its language and its generalization, but is balanced immediately after by the editors' statement (remember this anthology is coedited): "The romantic ideas and images held by outsiders about the Pacific have plagued our people." This oscillation between outsiderly and insiderly voice continues throughout the piece. For example, a sentence that starts with "Our view of the world is unique" is followed by a sentence that begins with the phrase "The people of Polynesia." Perhaps one of the reasons for this slight difference is that the editorial voice in this case is itself a plural voice. Besides an Oceanic "we" in the introduction there is also an editorial "we" as Wendt, Whaitiri, and Sullivan

speak from their collaborative position, for example: “That is why we have called this anthology *Whetu Moana*” (Wendt, Whaitiri, and Sullivan 2003, 1). Significantly, in none of these anthology introductions is this plural pronoun coercive: it doesn’t produce a singular or monolithic “Pacific-ness” or “Oceanic-ness” but recalls again Wendt’s description of our lovely Oceania: “so vast, so dazzling a creature.”

Who, then, is the “we” in each of Wendt’s collections? One of the effects of the inclusive plural pronoun is its implicit recognition of a Pacific readership: the “our” might be a Pacific “our” on whose behalf Wendt writes, or it might be an “our” in which a Pacific reader is not only included, but prioritized. It’s quite a radical act when Wendt finishes the introduction to *Lali* by writing about “the warmth and love of our mother, the Pacific” because in that phrase—in which the phrase “our mother” connects him and me and others who share “our mother”—he simultaneously makes me visible and forces the non-Oceanic reader to read over my shoulder instead. If we wish to credit Wendt with the production—or at least the foregrounding—of a regional consciousness, what is the scope of the region implied by this “we”? Each time a region is produced by a collection, borders are either pointed out in an introduction or implied through the selection of texts. In every “Pacific” anthology a slightly different Pacific is imagined, or produced, and in this way slightly different connections are forged between those whose works are represented in the collection. One of the problems of collection in the Pacific is the difficulty of producing criteria by which certain writers and communities might be admitted or omitted. For example, Wendt’s anthologies have been distinctive for their refusal to collect writing by white writers about the Pacific, and yet, in order to “protect” the collections in this way, it becomes very difficult to include, for example, Fiji Indian writers and Māori writers in the same collection. After all, *Lali* and *Nuanua* include Indigenous and nonindigenous writers from Fiji on the basis of their affiliation with a country that’s a part of the independent Pacific (Fiji), and *Whetu Moana* includes Māori writers on the basis of our affiliation with Polynesia, which provides a way to recognize only the Indigenous writers from New Zealand rather than later settlers from outside the region. This means that the modes and practices of collection can have real implications for the connections that are made possible by any anthology.

Often the Pacific produced in anthologies is demarcated as much by absences as by presences. First, there is a very strong bias for Polynesian texts in the Pacific canon¹¹—something that Teresia Teaiwa has rightly

called a “Polynesian hegemony” in the context of Pacific studies—and this is observable in Wendt’s anthologies as well. Micronesian material is particularly light. Indeed, I am guilty of perpetuating this hegemony by virtue of the fact that in this essay I have allowed *Whetu Moana*, an anthology of Polynesian poetry, to stand in as a Pacific anthology.¹² Second, until *Whetu Moana* there was a bias against the inclusion of Māori and Hawaiian (and Indigenous Australian) writers in Wendt’s Pacific anthologies and in several other key texts that “produce” the field of Pacific literature, such as Subramani’s *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation* (1985).¹³ These two trends require contextualization as much as correction. In his introduction to *Nuanua*, Wendt described his tendency in that book to favor the countries represented at USP: “Through my work at the University of the South Pacific from 1975 to 1987 I helped encourage, foster and publish that writing, particularly in the countries of that university’s region. So I drew mainly on the literatures of those countries” (1995, 5). This description of Wendt’s collection process gestures not only toward a reason for the biases for or against certain communities but also toward the importance of Wendt’s personal connections to his work as an anthologist. One of the reasons it is interesting to reflect on Wendt’s physical and occupational locations at the time each anthology was published, as we did earlier in this essay, is because we get a sense of his personal and professional mobility. Wendt’s own sense of Oceania is surely drawn from his connections that come from time spent in Sāmoa, New Zealand, Fiji, and Hawai‘i and working at a regional university (USP), and these connections in turn influence his collections, which again in turn influence the connections we might make between different places in the region on the basis of the way that region is produced in the anthologies.

As a Māori reader, I recognize Wendt’s description of “the warmth and love of our mother, the Pacific” from stories I have grown up with, and yet neither of Wendt’s “Pacific” anthologies include Aotearoa (or Hawai‘i). Māori and Hawaiian writers are only included in his third anthology, whose Polynesian centrism shifts the focus away from the “independent” Pacific that Wendt first sought to center. Paradoxically, or perhaps just unexpectedly, the use of “Polynesia”—a term long derided for its colonial origins and connotations—enables a rather radical re-viewing of Aotearoa and Hawai‘i. Often the “Pacific” (perhaps The Real Pacific) is imagined as being made up of all the independent nations in the region, which enables a huge range of countries to be included in its scope but also can fail to acknowledge others. Rather than looking at the homelands of Māori and

Hawaiian people and seeing the white nations of New Zealand and the United States, this “Polynesian” anthology looks at them and sees the configurations of those places outside of colonialism: Aotearoa and Hawai‘i. Using the term “Polynesia” as the central tenet of collection excludes those parts of the Pacific that aren’t in Polynesia, but it also enables two particular communities to be included alongside work from places we’d expect to see represented in a “Pacific” anthology: Welcome, Māori and Hawaiian writers.¹⁴ Perhaps this is a manifestation of Wendt’s rather brilliant formulation of “post-colonial” in his introduction to *Nuanua*: a way of looking at Aotearoa and Hawai‘i “around, through, out of, alongside and against” their occupying settler states of New Zealand and the United States, respectively (Wendt 1995, 3).

COMMUNITY

In the area of Pacific literary studies, Albert Wendt has been central to the production of collections that in turn create connections, and finally, community. Although it’s easy to make lofty claims about the impossibility of describing the impact of a single person on a field, I’m not just talking about passive influence; I’m talking about Wendt’s conscious and laborious production of communities of scholars and communities of writers.

In 2008, I was in Hawai‘i and was invited to Albert and Reina’s home for lunch, along with Robert and Anne and Ka‘imi and Walter. There we were, Robert and Ka‘imi and I: friends, colleagues, fellow teachers, and fellow writers in this marvelous world of Pacific literature. We’re lucky. Our generation of Pacific people got to read anthologies and writing and scholarship Wendt produced before we came to understand ourselves as participants in a field of Pacific literary studies. We are connected not only through our shared affiliation to this ocean—which is, after all, “so vast, so dazzling a creature”—but also through the person who described our beloved ocean with those words.

There is a real value in talking about Albert Wendt as an individual writer or individual critic—his writing provides ample material for critical consideration—but I believe that if we only focus on his individual writing and scholarship we do not do him justice. *Lali*, *Nuanua*, and *Whetu Moana* are highly significant for their simultaneous achievements of producing a record (of writing, of politics, of voices) and producing a region (Wendt’s Oceania, in a series of incarnations). Each of the introductions to these anthologies contains critical depths and nuances that haven’t yet

been considered in this essay, and each of the anthologies contains a huge number of literary texts that have yet to enjoy critical attention. As a “baby scholar” in this field, I find it both nurturing and challenging to embark on some of this work through my own teaching and research, and through the study and research of my students. Indeed, while preparing to teach the first-ever Pacific literature course at Victoria University of Wellington in 2008, I realized that Wendt’s description of Oceania in his seminal essay “Towards a New Oceania” (which he wrote the year after I was born) anachronistically but poignantly describes how I feel about the legacy of his own anthologies: they “nourish . . . my spirit, help . . . to define me, and feed . . . my imagination” (Wendt 1976, 49).

So, Albert Wendt. I’ll never really be in a position to write a poem called “E-mailing Albert”: I’ve barely made an impression in your e-mail inbox. Next time I’m in a lather about my job, or have a new thought about Pacific literature, or want to offload about some aspect of this field in which we work and live, I know I will probably address my e-mail to someone else. And yet, as a member of this marvelous community of scholars and writers you have been instrumental in bringing together, “not e-mailing Albert” is a way of e-mailing you after all.

* * *

WHAT I PAID FOR *my copies of LALI, NUANUA, and Whetu Moana*: NZ\$120.
The legacy of collection, connection, and community produced by Albert Wendt’s Pacific anthologies: Priceless.

Notes

1 This is changing somewhat with the Internet, in terms of absolute access, and Selina Tusitala Marsh’s Pasifika Poetry Web site (<http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/pasifika/index.asp>) or perhaps Web sites such as Planet Tonga (<http://www.planet-tonga.com/>) provide rich examples of virtual spaces where this is possible. However, I would caution that we need to be aware of the ongoing question around the access people in the Pacific have to that technology as well as the relative “seriousness” with which literature distributed through the Internet is taken in conservative spaces such as schools and universities.

2 SPACLALS is the South Pacific Association of Commonwealth Language and Literary Studies, the “South Pacific” branch of the international organization ACLALS, and the only professional association for Pacific literary studies.

3 In their essay on the episode, Hereniko and Schwarz recorded Keri Hulme’s

description of Stead's "extensive history of insult and attack" on Māori and Pacific writers, and Robert Robinson's description of Stead as the "Tonya Harding of New Zealand literature" (1999, 55, 62).

4 Indeed, the job could have been performed by any of several other editors whose work demonstrated deep commitment to, and familiarity with, literature in the Pacific, for example, Paul Sharrad or Don Long.

5 Sharrad's biography of Wendt is surely an exemplary text to which we might turn in order to more carefully consider this context (2003).

6 I have borrowed and adapted the term "Pacific writer scholars" from Winduo 2000.

7 See, for example, anthologies and collections from Solomon Islands (Maka'a, Kii, and Crowl 1996), Niue (Thomas 1997), and Sāmoa (Va'ai and So'o 2002).

8 This is particularly important given that the region is crisscrossed by various publishing networks, including the major split between North American and Commonwealth English-language publishing, as well as the idiosyncrasies of small distribution networks. It can be much easier to purchase a text written hundreds of miles away than one from the next island. This is all, of course, further complicated in the case of non-English language publications, whether in Indigenous languages or other colonial languages of the Pacific, perhaps most notably French.

9 It seems significant that all of these nations are also the hosts of universities. The publication energies at the University of the South Pacific have been crucial to the dissemination of much Pacific writing, both through the distribution of single-author and multiple-author collections, and also through the production of literary journals, among which *Mana* is preeminent. Significantly, the Society for South Pacific Arts in Suva published a collection of poetry by one Māori writer, Evelyn Patuawa-Nathan, in 1979. Her inclusion in the "South Pacific" could be linked to her diasporic position, given that she was based in Sydney.

10 It would be easy to oversimplify this process; as the recent *Whetu Moana* has demonstrated, the writing communities of various Pacific places live all over the world and particularly all over Oceania.

11 Perhaps another layer of bias would be for Papua New Guinea texts over other Melanesian texts or over Micronesian texts.

12 Of course, Polynesia too is unevenly represented, because francophone and hispanophone Polynesia are not included here either.

13 The question of how or whether Indigenous Australian writers fit within Pacific anthologies is rather complex, and warrants another, separate discussion.

14 Additionally, diasporic writers are able to take their place as Pacific (or at least Polynesian) writers because of the system of ordering which doesn't force them to be repatriated to homelands that may well provide crucial affective and genealogical ties and yet may also marginalize or challenge the perspectives of the diasporic writer. The work of Karlo Mila, for instance, appears differently under

“M” for “Mila” than it would in a “Tonga” (or “New Zealand”) section of an anthology: it’s not that her work doesn’t belong in an anthology of Tongan writing, but rather that Mila is held in relationship with both Tonga and the Pacific region when she’s not required to speak to or about “Tonga” in so many words (see, eg, Mila 2005, 2008).

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Abstract

Albert Wendt's literary and critical legacy in the Pacific is well documented and loudly acknowledged; what is less widely recognized is his work as an anthologist. This article explores the impact of Wendt's literary collections, focusing on the extent to which the regional anthologies have produced not only a record of writing in the Pacific but also connections between writers. Unlike the regional and national anthologies of elsewhere, which perform the task of representing the canonical tip of a large body of work, anthologies in the Pacific have often had a different job. Pacific anthologies have become archives of writing, repositories of elsewhere unpublished texts, sites of contestation, and—perhaps most significantly—articulations of a region.

KEYWORDS: Albert Wendt, anthology, Pacific literature, Oceania, regionalism