

motivations and reactions of individuals, families, communities, and institutions that are uncovered through the application of ethnographic methodologies.

On the other hand, this is not a book for those looking for a rigorously argued theoretical statement on the societal transition process, the nature of development, the unfolding of rural social and class differentiation, or aid project evaluation, although all these topics are part of the author's narrative. While there are hints that the writer is reasonably theoretically informed herself, there is little in the way of theoretical exposition in the text.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, but the book does suffer at times from the lack of a central framework to guide and focus the discussion. Too often, basic background information is not systematically presented to the reader; for instance, the simple fact that around one hundred village fisheries projects had been approved by 1985 is not provided until seventy pages into the book. There is no national-level summary of the nature and performance of the Department of Fisheries rural program or its fish-marketing network. Similarly, the author does not always provide a clear structure to her argument. There are sections where readers could be forgiven for wondering whether they have a travelogue, a diary of an anthropologist, a consultant's report, or an academic treatise in their hands. In the early parts of the book in particular, there are constant switches between anecdote, case-study material, and personal incidents that happened to the author, resulting in a

loss of direction and focus made worse by a lack of generalization and theorizing on patterns and processes. I do not wish to argue for a linear mode of exposition, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the experiences of fieldwork, but these features of Rodman's style can become distracting and frustrating when other issues have not been given adequate coverage. However, this is an important contribution to the literature on Pacific fisheries and rural development. It is an enjoyable read, in language readily accessible to undergraduate students, professionals outside the universities, and community leaders in the Pacific Islands.

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The Frigate Bird, by Alistair Campbell. Pacific Writers Series. Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1989. ISBN 0-7900-0046-6, 135 pp. NZ\$19.95 + tax, paper.

With the reduction of Longman Paul's activities to "educational" publishing (strange term: as though literature is not educational), it is good to see not only Penguin picking up reprints of some of their titles (notably Hau'ofa's and Wendt's) but Heinemann, now merged with Reed in New Zealand, entering the local cultural arena with a new Pacific Writers Series. Heinemann has, of course, published Pacific writers before—Witi Ihimaera being a notable case in point—but it is a positive sign of the state of the literary arts in the region that a series should be started to match the well-established

African and Caribbean Writers Series. This new selection is even more attractively packaged, with colorful artwork suggesting vitality and confidence. I hope Pacific writers and especially Pacific readers will demonstrate equal confidence in their literary output. Unfortunately twenty New Zealand dollars or even ten American dollars for a regular-to-small-sized paperback is way beyond the means of the people who ought most to be interested in the series.

This is a perennial problem with the Pacific and poses real questions for writers and publishers alike about who they are producing for and what might constitute an "appropriate technology" for Pacific audiences. Failure to answer such questions will simply perpetuate the outward flow of information to developed nations (a form of neocolonialist exploitation of the Third World). There, academics may, through the few courses in postcolonial literatures that are offered, get some material back to small numbers of Islanders studying at the tertiary level. This is not to say that writers should not go to international publishing houses, or that a Pacific Writers Series is a bad thing. Far from it. In this case, though, there ought to be a mode of production which ensures that Cook Islanders (who, like other Pacific readers, need quality reading materials of any kind) have ready access to a book set partly in their islands and written by one who is partly from their islands.

Alistair Campbell has a solid reputation as a poet, with nine books to his credit, including some darkly evocative spiritual explorations of his roots in the Cook Islands and the tragic loss of his

parents there when he was a child. In the foreword to Campbell's first novel, Albert Wendt points out that this material forms the basis of the creative invention of *The Frigate Bird*. Amid poetic imagery, this is a first-person record of mental breakdown by someone living in New Zealand who returns to the Cooks, fails to find more than vague spiritual menaces, and flees, only to end up in an asylum back in New Zealand. While in Tongareva, however, he does obtain some clues about the nature of his predicament, and meets a similarly disturbed woman who shows promise as someone who might draw him out of his self-absorbed paranoia.

Because of the mental condition of the narrator, the story develops in a staccato succession of encounters ("There's no fluency in my movements—it is stomp, stomp, stomp, on my wooden legs." [4]) with people who are little more than archetypal creatures of his psychodrama (*The Purple Lady*, *Big Mouth*, *Living Doll*, *Fat Boy*). They are colorful if insubstantial: indeed, as with just about all the elements of the narrative, their "real" existence is very much in doubt. Up to a point they need no personalities of their own because the text's vitality is to be found in the feverish energy of a tortured imagination and the compulsiveness with which its creatures are set down on the page as a form of therapy. (The desperate narrator clings to Yeats' dictum, "Words alone are certain truth." Characteristic of the underlying subtlety of this apparently simple story is the unmentioned irony that there is a companion poem that negates the confidence of the assertion, and in fact the

writer's words continually reveal how the uncertain truth of subjective experience proves more compelling than any fixed explanation or objectified psychoanalytic text.)

There are drawbacks in this kind of narrative, of course. Anyone who has been buttonholed by a garrulous eccentric will know the terror, truculence, and finally tedium to come: it is the Ancient Mariner syndrome, and we are the Wedding Guest. Campbell's narrator parades his paranoia, peppers his story with rhetorical questions about his health, then begins a third chapter: "Well, here I am back in my motel in Rarotonga and feeling no better. I'm bitterly disappointed" (26). There's a distinct possibility the reader will retort, "So am I!" and close the book. Fortunately the story moves along at a brisk pace, and there is sufficient mystery in its early stages, at least about the degree of reality attached to some of the characters and the possibility of a conspiracy against the protagonist, for us to put up with the self-centered monologue. The author also knows just when to modulate the narrator's mood or shift his perception of things to revive our expectation of escape from this closed mental circle:

I am on deck now, waving goodbye, as the ship throbs and edges away from the wharf. Across the widening expanse of white water, churned up by the screws, I see a handsome couple approaching the loo where I experienced the shower of rocks, but it holds no fear for them. The man courteously opens the door and stands aside while the woman enters, then follows her in and closes the door behind him. There's togetherness for you!

I hear someone behind me snigger, and I turn round and see Big Mouth grinning wickedly.

'A tight squeeze, eh?'

The same thought has occurred to me, and I laugh. (24-25)

There are also some nicely gothic, Bosch-like moments:

What does the Devil look like? His face is that of a huge insect, brown and armour-plated, with hundreds of eyes. That's all I'm allowed to say. And the Praying Mantis is his courtier at table. Courteous to your face, but look away and—wow!—he's crunching your head like a stick of celery. (8)

Campbell also comes up with some aptly descriptive metaphors, such as when the protagonist experiences a sudden bout of alienation while having sex with his girlfriend: "Something gave way, quite gently, like a fine strand of wool, or a puff-ball soundlessly expiring in its dust" (32).

The half-Cooks, half-white narrator undergoes Western psychotherapy, including "a painful course of injections in [the] backside" (47) and the constant threat of electric shock treatment, but it is through dreams and the spirit visitation of his sister that he approaches the root of his problems and attempts to make contact with the shade of his grandfather to undo a family curse. Childhood memories merge with descriptions of assorted crazies in the asylum until the story starts to sound like an autobiographical essay rather than imaginative fiction, but yet again a character suddenly is transformed, and fantasy impinges menacingly on daily life. A reverse shift to the bizarre detail of "reality" occurs when-

ever the story begins to bog down in the clichés of the unconscious.

Unfortunately, the plot tends to become aimless for lack of a sense of "logical" progression toward a resolution of the mental games. Campbell, in fact, plays with the idea of an endless loop of madness (130), but sidesteps into more dramatic fantasy. In a way, the reliance on traditional spiritual beliefs to effect an ending to the story is reminiscent of Patricia Grace's *Potiki* and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*, and, like those books, Campbell's demands an extra effort to suspend disbelief on the part of the rationalist reader. Here, on the face of it, high drama is followed by all the trite sentimentality of an island homecoming and a waiting redemptive lover. It seems pretty unsatisfactory. However, the constant shifting of tenses, of levels of reality, of mood, of place suggest perhaps that the literary modes are being ironically set in counterpoint as well, so that we have a deliberate mix of the "Western" fictional model of mental breakdown (à la Janet Frame or *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*) and the Pacific tradition of high-drama entertainment such as the Samoan *fagogo*. If this is the case, we not only have an artful attempt by a bicultural writer to reach both of his potential audiences, but we have an ending that is decidedly ambiguous: two possible tragedies coexisting with romantic comedy.

I am still not certain of my final response to this novel, but it does deserve a wide readership, which it repays with enjoyment, both at the level of simple storytelling and also in the appreciation of what looks like an

elaborate writerly shape-changing in which artlessness and artifice form an intriguing mix.

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Southern and Eastern Polynesia, Volume 2 of Russia and the South Pacific, 1696-1840, by Glynn Barratt. Pacific Maritime Studies Series no. 7. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. ISBN 0-7748-0305-3, xx + 302 pp, maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, indexes. US\$35.95.

Speaking from the forbidden city of Vladivostok, closed to Westerners for decades because it serves as home port to the Soviet Union's Pacific fleet, Mikhail S. Gorbachev in July 1986 outlined dramatically a new direction in Soviet foreign policy. He shifted attention away from Europe momentarily to remind his audience that the Soviet Union is also very much an Asian power, one that intends to increase its role as such in the next century. A flurry of activity followed the much-acclaimed Vladivostok speech, including a quickly convened conference of diplomats and scholars in Australia to discuss the implications of a heightened Soviet presence in the Pacific. Trade and diplomatic negotiations since 1986 have begun to make explicit Gorbachev's posturing, while journalists and political scientists alike expend significantly more energy than before on the image of the Soviet Union as a country situated firmly on the Pacific Rim.

Gorbachev gave a political geography lesson to the majority of observers