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Reading Paul Gauguin's *Noa Noa*
with Epeli Hau'ofa's *Kisses in the
Nederends: Militourism, Feminism,
and the "Polynesian" Body*

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This is a time of widespread socioeconomic and political turmoil in the islands, and there is a real danger that conditions will push most Pacific island intellectuals into a kind of "realism." They may begin to feel that they must be realistic because in the present situation, attention to what ought to be done rather than what is done will, in Machiavelli's words, bring ruin rather than preservation. Such a realism, by its narrow focus, biases the reflection of issues to be studied in favor of an interpretation of reality based on fear and hate, upon the limitations of possibilities, emphasizing what cannot be done. . . . Is it not precisely the obligation of the intellectual to extend the realism of the immediate. . . ?

—Simione Durutalo

Simione Durutalo articulately identified one of the problems for Pacific Island scholarship: "The tourist transnationals and nuclear-imperialist powers have profited from . . . myths of "floating South Seas paradises," which have become so pervasive and institutionalized that the theoretical practice of studying these island societies cannot escape being engulfed by them" (Durutalo 1992, 207). This chapter takes its cue from Durutalo at two key moments: what he called tourist transnationals and nuclear-imperialist powers, I have renamed and analyzed as a "militourist" complex;¹ and, whereas he invoked general paradisiacal myths about the South Seas, I have chosen to

focus on the "Polynesian" body as a dominant figure that has been appropriated into militourist discourses.

As a woman of culturally mixed and displaced Banaban, I-Kiribati, and African American ancestry, educated within and beyond the Pacific Islands, I find myself regularly confronting the "Polynesian" body—both "real" and imaginary. In militourist contexts I find myself identifying with the "Polynesian" body: it seems to have liberating qualities; yet I am also resentful of it: it overshadows the specificities of my own identity. The dreadful irony is that the power of the "Polynesian" body owes much to the militourist complex even as that same complex disempowers Polynesian bodies.

Paul Gauguin's *Noa Noa* and Epeli Hau'ofa's *Kisses in the Nederends* serve as discussion pieces because of their particular relevance to militourism and related constructions of the "Polynesian" body. The two books are at once highly unlikely and delightfully contradictory literary companions. Each a critical commentary as well as an extension of the realism of its respective milieu (*Noa Noa*'s the fin-de-siecle France and its colonies, that of *Nederends* the late-twentieth-century Pacific Islands), the two yield a wealth of possibilities for critically comprehending the discursive effects of militourism and its reification of the "Polynesian" body.

THE READINGS

Conceived as a promotional text for Gauguin's Tahitian paintings upon his return to Paris in 1893, *Noa Noa* was produced in collaboration with the symbolist poet Charles Morice but did not materialize until Gauguin had returned to Tahiti. There exist three versions of *Noa Noa*: the first Morice published in excerpt form in 1896; another, in book form with appendices of Morice's poetry, appeared in 1901; and another, which was Gauguin's own draft, was sold to a print merchant in 1908. Beginning with Gauguin's arrival in Papeete, the narrative documents his search for a pure Tahiti unadulterated by Western influence. With occasional pretenses at ethnography—a chapter on Tahitian mythology has become an issue of some controversy among Gauguin scholars—*Noa Noa* is more impressive as a commentary on the physiques and eccentricities of various Tahitian characters (Anderson 1978, x–xi). The central event of this narrative of Gauguin's first Tahitian sojourn is his love affair with Tehura, a character based on his thirteen-year-old wife Teha'amana, who quiet as the fact was kept was not Tahitian, but Rarotongan.

The Penguin edition now out of print, *Kisses in the Nederends* has been reprinted by the University of Hawai'i Press. It was written in six months and was not revised so as to maintain what the author calls its "raw, not cooked" quality. Against the plethora of "insanely romantic" (Albert Wendt's words)

notions about the Pacific propagated by the media, Oilei's fart on the first page of *Nederends* provides welcome relief. Set on the fictional Pacific island of Tipota, the narrative follows Oilei's search for a cure for his infected anus. His discomfort increases when a succession of herbal, psychoanalytic, and other medical treatments not only fail but also multiply the number of people on the island who know of his ailment. Steadfastly supported by his no-nonsense wife, Makarita, Oilei is eventually cured by a combination of radical surgery and ideology: he is not only the reluctant recipient of a white feminist's anus, he is a co-opted disciple of the Third Millennium Foundation. Professing a solution to the rampant human destruction exemplified by the nuclear arms race, the basic tenet of the Third Millennium Foundation is this: "It is only when you are able to lovingly and respectfully kiss your own anus and those of your fellow human beings, that you will know you have purified yourself of all obscenities and prejudices, and have overcome your worst fears and phobias" (Hau'ofa 1987, 101).³

MILITOURISM AND THE "POLYNESIAN" BODY

Militourism is a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it. The roots of militourism in the Pacific go back as far as Ferdinand Magellan's first (and last) encounter with the natives of Guam in 1521. Much has been made in the scholarship of the violence that has come to characterize relations between colonizer and colonized, but the militarization of the Pacific by imperialist powers has often had less to do with island natives than with the Pacific as a strategic and commercial space where European, American, and Asian desires are played out. Nonetheless, inasmuch as the military violence Magellan's crew wreaked upon Guam is paradigmatic of imperialist relations in the Pacific, so is the initial desire for "R & R." The opportunity for rest and recreation that the Pacific Islands have afforded foreign sailors, whalers, and traders over the last five hundred years has been sophisticatedly commodified for tourists in the late twentieth century.

Militourism is particularly evident in states such as Guam, Hawai'i, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia, which are still negotiating colonial relationships. Although military forces and tourism provide employment and social mobility for many Islanders, they also drain or pollute natural resources, endanger sacred sites, and introduce unhealthy "convenience" goods. In Hawai'i, while many native Hawaiians are homeless and landless, U.S. military bases, as well as such tourist-dependent enterprises as hotels and golf courses owned by transnational corporations, occupy large tracts of land, use up water, and pollute native fishing grounds. Guam's demographics have

been shaped by militarism and tourism working in almost perfect tandem: Chamorros in the service of the U.S. military constitute the bulk of Chamorros living abroad, and U.S. military bases and transnational hotel corporations on Guam bring with them and attract their own human resources. In French Polynesia nuclear testing at Moruroa and Fangataufa has eroded reefs and poisoned sea and human life, belying paradisiacal advertisements for Club Med at Borabora.

Fiji is an interesting case of militourism operating in a postcolonial Third World context: Fiji military forces—manned predominantly by indigenous Fijians and with extensive experience as part of the United Nations peace-keeping forces in the Middle East—successfully staged two coups in 1987 with the ostensible purpose of ensuring indigenous rights; next to sugar production, tourism is the nation's second largest industry, with indigenous people practically insured by the constitution as both permanent landowners and labor for that industry. As imperialist powers have done in Guam, Hawai'i, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia, in Fiji a nationalist power established a military presence to guarantee a duly pacified island paradise for tourists.

Militourism is complex. It goes beyond the simple presence of military bases and tourist resorts on the same islands or in the same archipelagoes. Often, the tourist industry capitalizes on the military histories of islands. World War Two sites in Guam, the Solomon Islands, and Kiribati have become major tourist attractions. A more bizarre example of militourism is a recent proposal to turn the Bikini Lagoon nuclear test site into a tourist dive park. The tourist industry in the Pacific also capitalizes on the native warrior as a romantic though peripheral icon—with carvings, photographic images, and live performances of war dances and chants also serving to enhance the tourist experience (although it is the "Polynesian" *wahine* which is the central icon of militourism). Altogether, tourism is able to flatten, tame, and render benign the culture of militarism. The military, in turn, endorses the industry by patronizing hotels and related facilities during R & R leaves. As disturbing as the number of Japanese tourists in Waikiki, for instance, is the number of men with military "crew" cuts cruising the very same streets. The tourist industry can also facilitate military operations during times of crisis. Recently in Tahiti there were riots after the first nuclear bomb was detonated by the French at Moruroa. The additional security forces flown in from France were accommodated at hotels in Papeete—living alongside tourists who had been stranded there. While the gendarmes and legionnaires were loading their rifle magazines, the hotel was asked to ensure that there were enough popular reading magazines to keep the tourists entertained through the emergency. This collaboration between militarism and tourism effects complex processes of displacement and social mobility for Islanders, affecting the physical, mental, and emotional health of island bodies.

Simione Durutalo noted the role that the image of paradise played in en-

abling militourism, and integral to that myth of the South Seas is the body—the "Polynesian" body: "Hollywood and hula dancers give Westerners a fairly accurate idea of the physical appearance of Polynesians. They are brown-skinned, generally tall, with hair straight to curly and often of superb physique. . . . Writers on Polynesia have always been tempted to use their most flattering adjectives" (Keesing 1945, 10). Taken from a typical text of a popular anthropological genre, this quote illustrates well the process of figuring the "Polynesian" body which works so well for militourism.⁴ The cultural, historical, and political complexity of Polynesia—which comprises the Cook Islands, Easter Island, the Hawaiian archipelago, the Marquesas, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk, and Pitcairn, Rotuma, the Samoas, the Society Islands, Tonga, the Tuamotus, Tuvalu, liminal places like Fiji and Kiribati, and outliers like Pukapuka and Tikopia—is often sacrificed at the feet of the "hula dancer." Although because of history and demographics it is formidably rivaled by Samoan, Maori, and some Tongan icons, the hula or *tamoure* figure, which is closely identified with the Cook Islands and Hawai'i but more closely identified with Tahiti, still dominates the exoticist and tourist imaginary of the Pacific. And displayed in museums and private collections, reproduced in books and on postcards, mass-produced on T-shirts and dinnerware, Gauguin's Tahitian paintings have introduced and entrenched exoticist notions about the Pacific to peoples all over the world. As Bengt Danielsson noted, "Many artists have been fascinated by the sensuous charm of the Polynesians, and the most celebrated of these, Paul Gauguin, paints in *Noa Noa* a picture of Tahitian life in the eighteen-nineties which is as true today" (Danielsson 1986, 11).

The equation of the Pacific with "Polynesia" and "Polynesia" with Tahiti is the result of imperialist and colonial histories and hierarchies in the region. In an exposition on eros in "Polynesia," Danielsson frankly stated the case:

In the Pacific, as the ocean is called (with as little justification for half of it lies north of the Equator and it is far from the Pacific), there are three large island groups: Micronesia and Melanesia in the western and Polynesia in the eastern half. This division is based on decisive cultural and racial differences between the three island groups. *The many attractive qualities of the Polynesians, however, have made us forget the other Pacific peoples, and in the popular consciousness the South Seas have long ago come to mean just Polynesia* (Danielsson 1986, 13; my emphasis).

The Kanak nationalist Susana Ounei has criticized the way the figure of the "Polynesian" is used by the French tourist industry to discursively erase (while French military and police forces suppress) indigenous rights struggles in New Caledonia: "When they introduce a picture of New Caledonia overseas, they always introduce the picture of New Caledonia with beautiful beaches and a *wahine*—a Polynesian woman—who dances the *tamoure*. But

they never show the picture of the Kanak people. The Kanak people are us—the black people—who live there” (Ounei 1992, 163–64).

There are several problems with the construction and manipulation of the “Polynesian” body to which Ounei refers, for not only is it gendered and sexualized, it is also situated at the top of a racial and cultural hierarchy of Pacific Island natives. Although it may be argued that the “Polynesians” have received their fair share of racist appellations, my point is that within a militourist economy, the “Polynesian” body is given the privilege of representing the Pacific as a whole.

Despite his own anticolonial and feminist persuasions, “the sensuous charm” of Gauguin’s images have been vulnerable to militourist appropriation.⁵ Reading *Noa Noa* together with Gauguin’s paintings,⁶ Peter Brooks notes that the Tahitian body Gauguin constructed is the same one employed by the tourist industry for luring consumers: “The Club Med vision of paradise of course includes a warm brown body without much in the way of clothing. The “primitivist” version of exoticism that so attracted Gauguin differs from “orientalism” in its preference for simplicity, including a sensuality that is not alluringly hidden within seraglios but, with another kind of allure, placed in the open, naturalized” (Brooks 1990, 53). Thus aestheticized, this naturalized body remains vulnerable to exoticist and tourist appropriations. Brooks observes further that “Gauguin is interested in a polymorphous bodiliness, but when it comes to foregrounding, touching, and representing a body, it must be clearly gendered as female, albeit a female body that breaks from the traditional Western sense of female gracefulness, that is more powerful and compact, less distinct from the male” (Brooks 1990, 67). Thus, what was at first sought out as a “polymorphous” “Polynesian” body gets textualized as female and Tahitian. This might not seem so problematic if Gauguin had not understood that his first model and wife, Teha’amana, was Tongan, (although she was, according to Bengt Danielsson, originally from Rarotonga). By insisting on making Teha’amana “perform” for him and “inform” him as a Tahitian (he found most Tahitian women to be either too “tainted” by European blood or too evocative of cannibal pasts), Gauguin enacted a significant set of cultural substitutions.

EXOTICIST AND MILITOURIST METONYMIES

1. Gauguin’s Teha’amana as “still life”
Rarotongan/Tongan ==> Tahitian ==> “Polynesian” ==> Pacific Islands
2. “Polynesian” hula or tamoure dancer as “mobile”
half-caste/part-European <==> “Polynesian” <==> Pacific Islands
(1 = 2)

The diagram represents what James Clifford has called “a metonymic condensing of identities.” In other words, the “Polynesian/Tahitian” wahine is a sign that may be imposed on women of many groups or that many groups can appropriate.⁷

Gauguin’s Teha’amana is inscribed as still life, always in repose, and then made to resignify “polymorphous” mobile “Polynesia.” Although an obvious contrast to the image of the “Polynesian” hula dancer, both images are easily absorbed into “Club Med visions,” since Hollywood and naive anthropologists have helped entrench notions that the lives of “Polynesians” come to not much more than languorous days and erotic nights. These two images of the “Polynesian” body also converge at moments of “exoticization” and “naturalization.” Incidentally, the feminized, exotic, and natural body is not only easily displaced by military force and appropriated by the tourist industry, it also figures as a romantic image in some (Western) antimilitourist propaganda.⁸ Epeli Hau’ofa’s inscription of the body in *Kisses in the Nederends* problematizes both militourist constructions by “naturalizing” the body without pandering to the exotic. Moreover, *Nederends* opens up feminist possibilities for comprehending the “Polynesian” body.

MILITOURISM, FEMINISM, AND THE “POLYNESIAN” BODY

With Oilei Bomboki, Hau’ofa has fashioned a Pacific Island body that takes what John Hovell identifies as an inspiring “Dun Mihaka” stance—better known in Fiji as *va cucu*, a lewd thrusting out of one’s bum—toward the tired and tiring images of noble and ignoble savage that have dominated representations of the Pacific for centuries. Informed by what he knows of northern Polynesian outlier cultures, Hovell goes on to declare that “Hau’ofa’s hero speaks with the body: we readers must read with ours.” (Hovell 1988, 296) Tongue-in-cheek, (as Hovell himself wonders, “Whose tongue? Whose cheek?”), Hovell prescribes the athletic position of placing one’s nose in one’s own bum as the most authentic way of approaching *Nederends*.⁹ I apologize to Hau’ofa and others if I take a less “authentic” approach to reading *Nederends*.

My interest, of course, is in interrogating the “Polynesian” body. In his review of *Nederends*, Rod Edmond noted that “The privatization of the Polynesian body followed the arrival of the missionaries in the wake of Bougainville, Cook and other late eighteenth century explorers. However, although Polynesian culture was extensively Christianized this privatization of the body was far from complete and a tension between public and private, collective and individual, official and unofficial remained” (Edmond 1990, 151). Thus, in his focus on the politics of laughter in *Nederends* (which he calls *Kisses* throughout his review), he unproblematically calls upon the “Polynes-

sian" to inform his reading. I would argue that Hau'ofa's "Polynesian" body is less "Polynesian" than one would at first think; this is its strength.

John Hovell also stresses the significance of obscure Polynesian outlier influences in *Nederends* but what is more clearly apparent is the predominance of Fijian influences among the characters. A quick survey of the names will demonstrate this: Oilei, Makarita, Marama Kakase, Dr Tauvi Mate, Constable Dau Butako, Losana Tonoka, Ratai Mboso Tawamundu, Seru Draunikau, Dr Kanikani, Kailoma Jones, and even the auspiciously-named Thimailomalagi.¹⁰ Although Fiji is clearly marked as a place distinct from Tipota in the narrative,¹¹ for me, the cultural significance of the Fijianness of Tipota and *Nederends* lies in Fiji's hybridity. Half "Polynesian" and half "Melanesian," Fiji—and Tipota by extension—thus resist full appropriation into Gauguinesque militourist fantasies which would reify the "Polynesian" body and demean other Pacific bodies. Furthermore, because it is hybrid and fictional, Tipota is not an "authentic" cultural complex that can be commodified for tourism. Unlike Gauguin, whose search for an authentic Tahitian led him to conflate identities and reconstruct and aestheticize a body that has contributed to the hegemony of militourism and its "Polynesia," Hau'ofa creates a "Polynesian" body that is unmistakably counter-hegemonic.

Reading *Nederends* seriously, in terms of the overdetermining and undermining role of militourism in the Pacific, I cannot agree with Hovell that it is "more of a licking than a spitting," more of an invitation than a challenge. While reading in the mode of transubstantiation, Hovell claims that farts in the tropics do not stink—"toads squashed on the road, yes, but farts, never" (Hovell 1988, 301)—disputing Hau'ofa's own claim to the contrary. I suggest instead, that Hau'ofa's strategy of making the "Polynesian" body fart and stink, necessarily apprehends militourist notions. Oilei's anus is perhaps the most radical literary site available for critiquing Gauguin's and other Gauguinesque representations of the "Polynesian" body.

Hau'ofa's focus on the anus avoids the typical phallocentrism of Pacific Island novels, but this fact alone will not endear him to feminist readers. A gross feminist analysis would dismiss *Nederends* because male characters dominate its narrative. A more subtle feminist analysis, however, might choose to read "in the margins," finding the spaces where female characters are best represented. Although Hau'ofa does a lot in terms of representing women's verbal practices, he actually does little in the way of representing the female body. A critical segment in the narrative where Oilei recounts "seeing" Makarita for the first time, is really less about visualizing the body and than an intuition about it (*Nederends*, 57–59). This strategy of representing the female body—a representing that is not representing—successfully counters Gauguinesque and militourist emphases on the visual; it is a strategy that is also feminist in the sense that it does not objectify the body.

An occasion where Oilei seems to offer Makarita the threat of domestic

violence is likely, however, to concern feminist readers (*Nederends*, 3). Pushing his "transubstantiation" reading, Hovell suggests that "what appears to be an offer of violence is actually the intimate and secret language of domestic felicity" (Hovell 1988, 299). In *Noa Noa*, Gauguin, too, had noted that violence between Maori men and women—more the men hitting the women than the other way around—was simply an emotional release. In response to Gauguin's discovery that she had been "unfaithful" to him, Teha'amana's alter ego Tehura is made to cry out, "You must strike me, strike me many, many times; otherwise you will be angry for a long time and you will be sick" (*Noa Noa*, 145). Whether and where domestic violence seems to be culturally sanctioned, those who have chosen to speak out publicly against it and provide services for battered women and children to change their situations are commonly identified with Western feminist movements.

Globally, feminism has laid extensive claims to discourses on gender and the body, but in Pacific scholarship it seems slow to gather momentum. The largest "feminist" presence in the literature is constituted by feminist anthropology. Major texts and collections include Marilyn Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) and *Dealing with Inequality* (1987); Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre's *Family and Gender in the Pacific* (1989); Jolly's "The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu" (1987).

The bulk of indigenous, local or regionally produced "feminist" or women-centered literature exists in the form of conference proceedings, aid-funded research, and surveys. *Women Speak Out! A Report of the Pacific Women's Conference* (Griffen 1976), *Women's Voices on the Pacific: The International Pacific Policy Congress* (Foerstel 1991) are typical of this literature; clearly in the mode of "political activism," such documents stand as testament to the various problems that affect the body—some of which include malnutrition, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, nuclear testing, lack of legal redress—and all of which are intimately linked with militourism in the Pacific.

More extensively analytical texts like *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam* (Souder 1992), and "Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization: The View of an Hawaiian Feminist" (Trask 1989) illustrate that those praxes among island women that might best pass for feminism are often culturally-informed and consciously directed towards movements for sovereignty in militourist contexts.

Ground-breaking feminist literary criticism emerged from Arlene Griffen's University of London M.A. dissertation "The Different Drum: A Feminist Critique of Selected Works from the New Literature in English from the South Pacific" (1985). In this work Griffen explicitly named the misogyny of writers like Wendt, Subramani, and Pillai, but did not claim as feminist the works of women like Konai Helu-Thaman, Momoe Malietoa von Reiche, Jully Sipolo, Grace Molisa, Vanessa Griffen, and Prem Banfal.

Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth (Emberson-Bain 1994)

bridges the artificial gaps between scholarship and literature, political activism and art, and points toward the development of an integrated analysis that would provide strategies for apprehending both the cultural and the political processes of militourism.¹² I believe that an as yet untapped literary resource for feminist and antimilitourist possibilities also lies (ironically) in masculinist (not necessarily misogynist) texts like *Noa Noa* and *Nederends*.

Because *Noa Noa*'s bodies are vulnerable to militourist appropriation, and because Hau'ofa's *Nederends* is incisive in its critique of militourism, reading them together has become for me a method of tackling that cultural and political complex. In response to militourism, Pacific Island women have generally taken two positions. The first is that of "cultural performer"¹³ exemplified by Gauguin's Teha'amana, a Rarotongan performing as a Tahitian performing as a "Polynesian" performing as a "South Seas" Pacific Islands native, who is also signified by a hula/tamoure dancer. The second is that of the "political activist."¹⁴ Militourist figurations of the "Polynesian" body—in the mode of either Gauguin's Teha'amana or the tamoure dancer—have been more directly critiqued by "Polynesian" activists. In her article, "Lovely Hula Hands," Haunani-Kay Trask describes the grotesque commodification of native cultures typical of the tourist industry in Hawai'i.

The product, or the cultural attribute (is transformed), much as a woman must be transformed to look like a prostitute, i.e., someone who is complicitous in her own commodification. Thus hula dancers wear clown-like make-up, don costumes from a mix of Polynesian cultures, and behave in a manner that is smutty and salacious rather than powerfully erotic. The purpose is entertainment for profit rather than a joyful and truly Hawaiian celebration of human and divine nature (Trask 1993, 191).

Thus Trask takes on an image similar to the one arrested by Susanna Ounei. Together, their critiques of militourism's "Polynesian" body cover the range of racial, cultural, and gender problems involved. Together, and with other "political activists," especially from the sovereignty movements in Hawai'i, Guam, Belau, Kanaky, and Aotearoa and the movement for democracy in Fiji, they have offered the media images of women that disturb if not challenge militourist notions about the Pacific.

One can read Makarita's character as a prototype of the political activist. Although initially skeptical about Babu Vivekanand's "love your anus as you love yourself" philosophy, when she is finally branded with the mark of the Third Millennium, Makarita is integral to her husband's successful treatment and recovery (*Nederends*, 149). Hau'ofa is of course working in satirical mode, but one cannot help but reflect that many Pacific Island women come to political consciousness and take up activism when the bodies of their loved ones are affected—or infected—by large and previously mysterious forces. The

prototypical female political activist in the Pacific thus has specific island or tribal loyalties, and as Trask and Ounei's critiques have demonstrated, political activists do not easily accommodate the image of the "Polynesian" wahine. Yet, it would seem that "Polynesian" performers and political activists need to engage each other more directly; that political activists who are trying to resist and dismantle militourism could begin some "fifth column" strategizing with "Polynesian" performers in the tourist industry.

EXTENDING THE REALISM: FROM READING TO WRITING

Reading Gauguin's *Noa Noa* with Hau'ofa's *Nederends* has inspired me to move from reading to writing; to write and extend the realism of the immediate. To write performance and activism. Against militourism. This is my fantasy . . . and it *can* become a reality:

After Gauguin left, Teha'amana migrated to Fiji with her Tahitian husband and their son and now runs the Polynesian dance revue at the Raffles Tradewinds in Lami. Makarita kissed Oilei's arse one last time before quitting the Third Millennium Foundation and catching the first flight out of Tipota to take up a position at the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement's office in Suva where she is assistant director for research on militarism.

Teha'amana and Makarita meet for the first time when a regional environmental organization holds its biennial conference at Raffles Tradewinds hotel. The two women are inadvertently seated next to each other at the gala dinner and floor show. When the dancers come out in full Polynesian regalia to pulsating drums, Makarita sniffs,

"This is Fiji, not Tahiti! Why isn't there a *meke* instead of that cliched tamoure?!"

Offended, Teha'amana responds, "Excuse me! My girls put a lot of hard work into these dances."

"Your girls, are they? How come none of them looks like a real Polynesian like you? They're all obviously half-caste or part-European, or Fijian girls with straightened hair!"

"Well, I never!! The girls are all pretty in their own right. As far as I'm concerned, as long as you can shake your arse you can dance in my show. I'd like to see you get up there you fat cow!"

"Who are you calling a fat cow? You were nothing more than a white man's concubine in Tahiti—what have you got to show for it now?"

"Well, I certainly never kissed Gauguin's arse, which is better than you can say."

At the challenge, Makarita needed no more encouragement. She got up on the dance floor and shook her arse as if her life depended on it, face contorted and arms flailing. But the "Polynesian" dancers misread her cue and immedi-

ately came over to surround her, a mass of shaking hips, sweet-smelling leis, grass skirts, and smiles. Makarita quickly realized the joke was on her and let out an ecstatic *kaila* (shout).

In the end Makarita and Teha'amana collaborate on an anti-militourist *ta-moure*, which becomes wildly popular all over the Pacific, being performed everywhere from family reunions to school talent shows and, ironically, also in hotels and military bases. Teha'amana's girls become spies and agents for the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, accomplishing the decolonization of Hawai'i, French Polynesia and Kanaky, and continuing the struggle for democracy in Fiji.

NOTES

I would like to thank Vilsoni Hereniko and Tisha Hickson for making it possible for me to participate in the 1994 conference on theorizing Pacific Islands literature at which this article was first presented as a paper. I appreciate the comments given to me at the conference, especially those from discussants Tom Farber and Paul Lyons. My thanks, too, must go to James Clifford for directing and encouraging my analysis of these texts, and to Epeli Hau'ofa for taking time to talk with me about his novel. Most of all, however, I pay homage to the spirits of Teha'amana and Makarita. Down with militourism!

1. *Militourism* is a neologism suggested to me in 1994 by Louis Owens, who was one of my professors at the University of California, Santa Cruz. From a feminist standpoint, Cynthia Enloe has written extensively on the ideological and material links between militarization and tourism (Enloe 1990). A number of Pacific scholars and activists have also identified militarism and tourism as overdetermining and undermining factors in Pacific Islands cultural and political economies (see Durutalo 1992, Ounei 1992, Trask 1993).

2. I place this term in quotation marks in order to question the legitimacy of the category and to suggest that what might be reified as "Polynesian" may not necessarily be Polynesian. The quotation marks suspend definition and fossilization, allowing for more fluid understandings of culture and identity in the Pacific.

3. Hereafter, the text will be cited by an abbreviation of its title (*Nederends*) rather than by the author. The same will be done for *Noa Noa*; that is, the texts, rather than the authors are being privileged in my analysis.

4. Despite recent attempts to call them into question, anthropological categories established in the 1830s have continued to determine cultural and political discourses in the Pacific. Even the politically correct have found it difficult to discard the terms *Melanesia*, *Micronesia*, and *Polynesia* from their vocabularies. Notwithstanding their colonial origins, the terms, of course, have provided fruitful rallying grounds for nationalist and regionalist movements across linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

5. On Gauguin's feminist leanings, Wayne Anderson writes:

Gauguin's commentaries on the rights of the artist are so tightly interwoven with those on the rights of the woman as to lead one to suspect that creation and pro-

creation had never undergone separation in his maturity. "Women want to be free. . . . The day a woman's honor is no longer located below the navel, she will be free." But Gauguin's own behaviour with regard to native women would soon thoroughly undercut what degree of virtue he had summoned on behalf of the feminine from the implanted spirit of his maternal grandmother, the workers' and women's liberationist, Flora Tristan (Anderson 1978, xxviii).

6. Peter Brooks has also recommended that *Noa Noa* be read in conjunction with Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, (Brooks 1990, 53), but to me such a combination seems highly neurotic; Epeli Hau'ofa's *Kisses in the Nederends* serves as a much needed antidote to *Noa Noa's* romantic delusions.

7. James Clifford made these comments in relation to earlier formulations of this article while I was a student in the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

8. For examples, see Dennis O'Rourke's poster for the anti-nuclear video documentary *Half-Life* (1985) and in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Tok Blong SPPF (South Pacific People's Foundation) newsletters. As my extracts from his work indicate, although the late Bengt Danielsson was well-known for his criticism of France's nuclear policy in the Pacific, he was not loathe to romanticizing "Polynesian" life.

9. Hovell finds the not impossible, but certainly difficult acrobatic configuration of placing one's nose in one's own bum to be the most exciting and probably the most authentic point of departure in approaching Hau'ofa's novel (Hovell 1988, 303). Unfortunately, this tongue-in-cheek analysis leaves little room for serious consideration of the implications of Hau'ofa's Pacific Island body.

10. *Oilei* is the Fijian version of the Polynesian *ae*, an exclamation of surprise, frustration, regret, or mourning. *Makarita*, is Fijian for Margaret; *Marama Kakase*, means lady gossip; *Dr. Tauvi Mate*, is Doctor Sick; *Constable Dau Butako*, translates as the thieving constable. Losana Tonoka's first name does not translate, but her last name has rather rude connotations ("poke it"). The spelling of *Ratai Mboso Tawamundu* does not conform to the current orthography, and reflects some colonial corruption, but essentially means "chief and boss forever." For Seru Draunikau, the noun, *seru*, means comb, but it is also a first name that does not necessarily translate; the emphasis here is on the last name, which means "black magic," or native medicine. Dr. Kanikani in English would be Doctor Scaly Skin—a reference to the skin condition that results from overindulging in the native beverage of Fiji, *yaqona* or *kava*; *Kailoma Jones*, is Half-caste or Mixed Blood Jones; and finally, *Thimailomalagi* translates as "heavenly fart."

11. On p. 32, Marama Kakase and Losana Tonoka are interviewed on a Tipotan radio station and disclose that they have been invited to attend a conference on traditional medicine in Fiji.

12. *Malignant Growth*, as the publication has ominously come to be known, grows out of a network of women and development, which met during the 1993 U.N.-sponsored conference for small island states held in Barbados. The collection includes notable articles by vanguard feminists like 'Atu Emberson-Bain, Claire Slatter, and Vanessa Griffen—all of Fiji; impassioned testimonies from political activists and scholars like Guam's Laura M. Torres Souder, Susanna

Ounei-Small of Kanaky, Cita Morei and Isabella Sumang of Belau; and poignant poetry by several of the article writers and testimony givers, in addition to work by Caroline Sinavaiana of American Samoa, Dewe Gorode of Kanaky, Vanuatu's Grace Mere Molisa, and Vaine Rasmussen from the Cook Islands, among others.

13. I place this term in quotation marks because I do not see it signifying a discrete identity, and suggest that cultural performance can accommodate political activism.

14. I place this term in quotation marks because I do not see it as a discrete identity and suggest that being an effective political activist in the Pacific requires cultural performance.

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