



# Isles of Voices:

## Scotland in the Indigenous Pacific Literary Imaginary

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# Isles of Voices:

## Scotland in the Indigenous Pacific Literary Imaginary

*Michelle Keown*

This article explores literary encounters between Scotland and the Indigenous Pacific, beginning with an overview of Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific writings, and responses to his work by Indigenous Samoan writers Albert Wendt and Sia Figiel, before going on to investigate imaginative engagements with Scotland in the work of Indigenous Pacific writers with Scottish descent (including Keri Hulme, Witi Ihimaera and Trixie Te Arama Menzies). The article concludes with an analysis of Cathie Koa Dunsford's Orkney trilogy, one of the most extended literary dialogues with Scotland evident in the corpus of contemporary Indigenous Pacific writing. As I will argue, Indigenous Pacific literary engagement with Scotland has intensified in the last few decades: where earlier generations of mixed race writers tended to identify themselves primarily with reference to their non-European ancestry (in keeping with the counterdiscursive aims of much Indigenous and postcolonial writing that emerged from the 1960s onwards), landmark Indigenous literary anthologies and single-authored works published during and beyond the 1980s bear witness to a more explicit acknowledgement of the Scottish strands in Pacific genealogies and historical trajectories. There are long-established literary links between Scotland and the Indigenous Pacific (witnessed for example in comparisons between Scottish and Maori histories of colonial oppression in the work of Stevenson and other nineteenth-century writers such as Rolf Boldrewood, discussed further below), but within New Zealand in particular – in which all Indigenous writers discussed here have lived and worked at some point in their careers – the renewed engagement with these links also resonates with recent historical scholarship that has countered a previous bias towards English and Irish settler constituencies by exploring the distinctive and significant contributions Scottish migrants have made to the composition of New Zealand society.<sup>1</sup> A related development within recent New Zealand film and popular culture (as well as historiography) is a strategy of projecting Pakeha 'settler guilt' onto the English pioneers, with New Zealand's Celtic communities identified more closely with Indigenous Maori due to their own histories of colonial oppression and displacement.<sup>2</sup> Such trends have arguably had a bearing on the renewed interest in links between Scotland and the Indigenous Pacific in the work of writers discussed in this essay, adding new dimensions to discursive homologies established within the nineteenth-century context with which this essay begins.

## The ‘Scottish Pacific’: Nineteenth-Century Foundations

Sustained encounters between Scotland and the Indigenous Pacific date back to the early-to-mid nineteenth century, when Scottish missionaries, colonial administrators and settlers established a substantial presence in the region.<sup>3</sup> The pivotal role Scots played in the expansion and administration of the British empire is well documented, but as John M. MacKenzie points out, Scots also developed ‘an extraordinary reputation for radicalism within the British empire’, in some cases instituting or advocating reforms in colonial policy to protect Indigenous socio-political interests.<sup>4</sup> Such interventions were not limited to missionaries and colonial administrators: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *A Footnote to History* (1892), written shortly after he took up residence in Samoa (in an attempt to improve his failing health), is a particularly notable example of Scots radicalism in action. While not an outright condemnation of European colonialism *per se*, the text criticizes the wrangling for power amongst British, German, and US settlers and colonial forces in Samoa, and prompted Sir John Bates Thurston, the incumbent British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, to issue *A Regulation for the Maintenance of Peace and Good Order in Samoa* (1892), which was clearly designed to curtail Stevenson’s involvement in Samoan politics. Only the intervention of a fellow Scot, Foreign Secretary Lord Rosebery, prevented Stevenson from being deported from his adopted country.<sup>5</sup>

Stevenson’s travel writing and private correspondence reveal that he was not entirely free of the colonial ideologies and prejudices of his time: these are evident, for example, in his repeated infantilization of Pacific peoples and cultures, and his subscription to social Darwinist theories on the putative imminent extinction of Oceanic peoples.<sup>6</sup> However, his own intervention into Samoan colonial policy was made in part as a result of his sense of cultural affinity with Pacific Islanders, expressed elsewhere in his writing through analogies drawn between Pacific Island and Scottish Highland culture. In his travel narrative *In the South Seas* (posthumously published in 1896), for example, he equates the deleterious effects of colonialism in the Marquesan islands with the socio-economic deprivation suffered by Highlanders as a result of English cultural hegemony:

In both cases an alien authority enforced, the clans disarmed, the chiefs deposed, new customs introduced, and chiefly that fashion of regarding money as the means and object of existence. The commercial age, in each, succeeding at a bound to an age of war abroad and patriarchal communism at home. In one the cherished practice of tattooing, in the other a cherished costume, proscribed. In each a main luxury cut off: beef, driven under cloud of night from Lowland pastures, denied to the meat-loving Highlander; long-pig, pirated from the next village, to the man-eating Kanaka. (p. 14)

At first glance, Stevenson’s homology follows familiar conventions within nineteenth-century travel writing and amateur ethnography, deploying a common strategy by which the strange is

rendered familiar through a comparison with the author's home culture.<sup>7</sup> Further, the final sentence of the excerpt is marked by a lightness of tone that, in referring to the complex social ritual of cannibalism as a 'luxury' among Marquesans, rehearses a familiar discursive formulation in which social practices within colonized cultures are trivialised or lampooned for the entertainment of metropolitan readers.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as Nicholas Thomas points out, Stevenson's comparisons between Scots and Pacific Islanders, like those of his compatriot Sir Arthur Gordon (governor of Fiji from 1875-80), are distinctive among broader social evolutionary theories of the late nineteenth century in that they equate Pacific cultures with the recent (Scottish) past rather than the beginnings of European civilization.<sup>9</sup> Such a strategy therefore eschews the 'denial of coevalness' that marks much colonial anthropological discourse, as well as the fictions of other fin-de-siècle writers such as Joseph Conrad.<sup>10</sup>

Further, in elaborating on his sense of affinity with Pacific peoples, Stevenson reveals that he was able to use 'points of similarity' between Scottish and Oceanic cultures to elicit information from, and establish a rapport with, the Islanders he met on his travels:

When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism: Michael Scott, Lord Derwentwater's head, the second-sight, the Water Kelpie – each of these I have found to be a killing bait; the black bull's head of Stirling procured me the legend of *Rahero*; and what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the *Tevas* of Tahiti. (pp. 15-16)

This passage again associates Pacific Island cultural practices with those of a relatively recent Scottish past, and Stevenson's assertion that his own history and folklore helped him to 'learn' and 'understand' about Pacific cultures indicates a certain receptiveness to, and respect for, Oceanic peoples. In this context it is significant that, after resolving to settle in the Pacific, Stevenson experimented with writing fictional narratives that blended European and Oceanic storytelling conventions and were circulated to Polynesian as well as Western readers. His stories 'The Bottle Imp' (1891) and 'The Isle of Voices' (1893), for example, feature Polynesian central characters and oral storytelling conventions (to the bafflement of many of his British and American readers), and copies of *Ballads* (1890), his volume of Polynesian and Highland poems and legends, were given to members of the Hawaiian and Tahitian royal families. 'The Bottle Imp' was also translated into Samoan and circulated widely among Indigenous readers, who affectionately dubbed Stevenson 'Tusitala' (meaning 'writer of tales').<sup>11</sup>

### **Stevenson's Legacy in Indigenous Pacific Writing**

Stevenson's Pacific writing, and his decision to reside in Samoa during the final years of his life, have had a marked and enduring impact on Indigenous Samoans. As Samoan poet and

editor Savea Sano Malifa points out, Stevenson was held in high esteem by many Samoans of his time due to his advocacy of Samoan political self-determination. His support for Samoan political prisoners during protracted feudal wars in the early 1890s was rewarded when, on their release, those same prisoners carved him a track (subsequently known as the ‘road of gratitude’) to the summit of Mount Vaea (near his homestead), and his 1894 funeral was attended by large numbers of Indigenous mourners who provided valuable ‘ie toga (ceremonial woven mats) to cover his coffin.<sup>12</sup> Albert Wendt, one of Samoa’s best known Indigenous authors, argues that Stevenson has entered into ‘legend’ in Samoa: born in 1939, Wendt recalls the details of Stevenson’s burial (on Mount Vaea) as among the first ‘facts’ he learned from his grandmother and parents, and reveals that most of his generation had to memorise Stevenson’s poem ‘Requiem’ (1887) – part of which is inscribed on the writer’s grave – at school. As a schoolboy in Samoa Wendt also read *Treasure Island* (1883) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and while studying for an MA in History in New Zealand he came across *A Footnote to History*, which, Wendt avers, ‘showed [Stevenson’s] astute and perceptive and enthusiastic support for our struggle against the foreign powers and colonialism’, and was informed by his own experience of ‘the Scottish anti-colonial struggle’.<sup>13</sup>

Wendt has also paid tribute to Stevenson in his own fiction: in his 1974 novella *Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree* (later incorporated into the mid-section of his 1979 novel *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*), a tubercular young Samoan named Pepe begins writing an autobiographical novel in the hope of becoming an Indigenous version of the Scottish author: ‘I decided to become the second Robert Louis Stevenson, a tusitala [...] but with a big difference. I want to write a novel about me’.<sup>14</sup> As Pepe gazes out his window towards Mount Vaea, he reflects that ‘If my novel is as good as Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* I will be satisfied’ (p. 157). Like Stevenson in his Pacific writings, Pepe draws upon Western and local storytelling conventions: his narrative is no simple imitation of colonial literature, but rather one that draws on Pacific ‘tall tale’ traditions (in which speakers attempt to outdo each other in telling increasingly outlandish and inventive stories).<sup>15</sup> As he contemplates his imminent death, Pepe constructs himself as an iconoclast who, in rebelling against neo-colonialism on the one hand, and the putative tyranny of traditional Samoan hierarchical power on the other, is simultaneously an incarnation of Pepesa (a trickster figure from Samoan mythology) and the anti-establishment existential ‘heroes’ of Albert Camus’s fiction and philosophy.<sup>16</sup> His often polarised points of cultural reference, and his increasingly nihilistic behaviour, are also redolent of the existential desperation of the ontologically divided central character in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

A more extended act of homage to Stevenson takes place in Wendt’s 2003 novel *The Mango’s Kiss*, parts of which are set in the late nineteenth century and feature a ‘magician of words’, Leonard Roland Stenson, whose character is based largely around Stevenson’s. Stenson, like Stevenson, has consumption, lives in a ‘white red-roofed house’ on the slopes of Mount Vaea, and is the author of an array of fictional works including *The Island of Treasures*, *The Earl of*

*Bellingtroy*, *The Tide at Falelima* and a partially completed novel, *Weir at Lammington* (the titles of which are, of course, thinly disguised versions of *Treasure Island*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, 'The Beach of Falesá' and *Weir of Hermiston*). The correspondences are not exact – Stenson is English, and marries a woman named Rebecca who (unlike Stevenson's wife Fanny) was younger than himself – but in most other respects he is manifestly a fictionalized version of the Scottish author. In this context it is significant that Stenson is represented as a sensitive, compassionate man who makes a strong and positive impression on a perceptive Samoan girl – Peleipu – who has recently learned English and to whom Stenson gives several of his books during her visit to his homestead. Stenson also leaves the remainder of his book collection to Peleipu in his will, and in speculating on the reasons why he would have chosen to do this after meeting Peleipu only once, Stenson's friend (and fellow Englishman) Barker surmises that

you saw right into his skeleton [...] When he got to know you, he saw the meaning very quickly: he was just a sick, dying European in exile; a poor benighted consumptive who believed in nothing. [...] Without knowing it, you made him see so very clearly, starkly, the futility of it all.<sup>17</sup>

Barker's suppositions are broadly corroborated in the inscriptions on the title pages of the three books Stenson gave Peleipu during her visit to the homestead: Stenson thanks Peleipu for 'bringing to the heart of an exile the radiant joy of youth', and praises her 'gift of seeing', observing finally that 'There is little at the end of our journey. Perhaps just the courage to face the Night and our Maker. Just a brief glimpse of the fierce light in Peleipu's eyes' (p. 113). Wendt himself describes this more extended literary 'tribute' to Stevenson as an example of his 'taking the outsider literary myth of the writer/artist adventuring in Paradise and reclaiming him ... for Samoa and myself'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, both novels arguably enact a process of 'indigenizing' Stevenson, who attains honorary 'insider' status by virtue of his choosing to live (and die) in Samoa, and (in *The Mango's Kiss*) by showing the receptiveness and sensitivity towards Pacific peoples that is evident in the travel writing discussed above. Rather than being interpreted as a writer who superimposes Romantic and other Western discourses upon the Pacific from a colonizing 'outsider' perspective, Stevenson/Stenson is depicted as a figure whose twilight years and literary legacy are interwoven with the narratives and lifeways of a people for whom he develops a profound respect. Significantly, Wendt reveals that 'I'd like to imagine that Stevenson would have been a fan of our writing' had he lived long enough to witness the emergence of post-independence Samoan literature.<sup>19</sup>

Wendt's approach to Stevenson's legacy contrasts radically with that of a younger Samoan writer, Sia Figiel, who in her 1996 novel *Where We Once Belonged* (a coming-of-age narrative focused on a 13-year-old Samoan girl, Alofa Filiga) associates Stevenson's legacy with an exploitative commercialization of the Western stake in Samoan history, embodied in the Tusitala Hotel in Apia (Samoa's capital):

Tusitala was the name nineteenth-century Samoans gave the tuberculosis-stricken Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who once lived in the biggest house in the whole of Samoa and had servants to cook for him, and to sing to him, and to make him and Fanny ‘paradise happy’, and wiped his sick arse, too [...] and hers, too, whenever it was needed. Tusitala means ‘writer of stories’ in English, or ‘a Japanese-owned hotel’ [...] depending on who’s doing the translation or defining.<sup>20</sup>

Figiel’s acerbic reference to Stevenson’s search for a ‘paradise’ has some validity when considered in relation to his preconceptions about Oceania: in a letter written in spring 1875, for example, he recounts a meeting with an ‘awfully nice’ public servant from New Zealand who told him ‘all about the South Sea Islands till I was sick with desire to go there; beautiful places, green for ever; perfect climate; perfect shapes of men and women, with red flowers in their hair; and nothing to do but to study oratory and etiquette, sit in the sun, and pick up the fruits as they fall’.<sup>21</sup> However, *In the South Seas* charts an incremental process in which Stevenson sets aside many of his presuppositions and gains a more sophisticated understanding of Pacific lifeways, and much of his Pacific fiction features an Oceania stripped of Romantic associations and attuned to the complex interplay between Western and Indigenous cultural milieux.

When Figiel’s dismissal of Stevenson is considered in terms of the wider discursive and ideological issues explored in her novel, however, it becomes clear that her attack is made in the context of a sustained feminist critique of various male purveyors of ‘exoticising’ myths about the Pacific, including Paul Gauguin and Herman Melville.<sup>22</sup> Figiel has also pointed out that her particular narrative style and subject matter, with its specific focus on Samoan female subjectivity and colloquial language, has developed ‘because of what was missing from Wendt’s work’.<sup>23</sup> In this context her critique of Stevenson can be interpreted at least in part as an iconoclastic gesture, countering the predominantly masculinist focus of much of Wendt’s early writing, as well as his affiliative allusions to the work of various ‘Western’ male authors including Camus and Dostoyevsky (as well as Stevenson).<sup>24</sup> It is tempting to view Wendt’s depiction of Stenson in *The Mango’s Kiss* as a counter-critique of Figiel’s caustic representation, particularly given that the narrator emphasizes that (in contrast to the opulent, servant-infested mansion described in Figiel’s novel) Stenson’s home is ‘smaller’ if more ‘solid’ than ‘most Apia homes’, and almost devoid of waiting staff (p. 90).<sup>25</sup>

### **Indigenous Pacific Writers with Scottish Descent: Literary Legacies**

Scotland’s legacy in the Pacific is also explored in the work of Indigenous writers with Scottish descent, many of whom were born in ‘settler-invader’ colonies (such as Australia and New Zealand) in which large numbers of Scottish emigrants settled during and beyond the nineteenth century. A substantial Scottish diasporic community also developed in Hawai‘i (where Scots were routinely appointed as overseers during the plantation era), and intermarriage between Scots and native Hawaiians was common. One of the most famous products of such alliances was Princess

Victoria Ka‘iulani Cleghorn – daughter of the Hawaiian princess Miriam Likelike, and the Scottish entrepreneur Archibald Cleghorn – who was heir to the Hawaiian throne at the time of the 1898 U.S. annexation of Hawai‘i.<sup>26</sup>

As noted earlier, until relatively recently, Indigenous Pacific writers with European descent have tended to identify themselves primarily with reference to their non-European ancestry, but since the dawning of the new millennium many have begun to acknowledge non-Indigenous strands in their genealogies. This development becomes evident, for example, when comparing the biographical notes included in Albert Wendt’s four landmark edited collections of Indigenous Pacific writing and poetry. Where in the earlier collections *Lali* (1980) and *Nuanua* (1995) biographical notes for authors of mixed race generally identify only their Indigenous ancestry, in the more recent Polynesian poetry anthologies *Whetu Moana* (2003) and *Mauri Ola* (2010), a substantial number of mixed-race contributors acknowledge one or more European bloodlines in addition to their Indigenous ancestry. Several of these authors – including Michael Greig, Phil Kawana, Susana Lei‘ataua, and Brandy Nalani McDougall – claim Scottish descent, though the poetry selected for inclusion does not explore these ancestral links.

A number of other established Pacific writers, however, have explored their Scottish descent at some level in their work. From her first poetry collection *Uenuku* (1986), for example, Trixie Te Arama Menzies has identified herself as being of dual Maori (specifically, Tainui) and Scottish descent, and in her lyric poem ‘Anzac’ (in her 1988 collection *Papakainga*), she draws attention to her Caledonian ancestry during a meditation upon a photograph of her great uncle Robert, who died in the Battle of the Somme during the First World War. The poem’s scope broadens into a consideration of the cost to Indigenous Pacific peoples of more recent military activity, specifically French nuclear testing in French Polynesia (which took place between 1966 and 1996 in the Tuamotu archipelago). There was vigorous opposition to France’s nuclear programme both within French Polynesia and across the wider Pacific, and Menzies’ poem expresses the anger of Indigenous Pacific peoples who viewed the tests as a new chapter in the history of French colonial incursion into Oceania: ‘The French think we are primitive / And pouf! Bomb our waters’.<sup>27</sup> Menzies explores the resonance of the term ‘primitive’ within the context of French Romanticism, associating its antonym – ‘civilised’ – with capitalist corruption, and issues a call to arms, arguing that if to be primitive ‘means remembering our blood’, then ‘some of us claim cannibal ancestry’. In envisaging vigorous protest against nuclear imperialism as a continuation of her ‘cannibal’ ancestry, Menzies also appeals to a history of anticolonial resistance associated with her Scottish genealogy, referring directly to Robert the Bruce (who, at the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn, defeated Edward II’s invading English army and re-established an independent Scottish monarchy). In terms analogous to Stevenson’s, then, Menzies makes explicit links between Scottish and Pacific legacies of colonial incursion, but in contrast to Stevenson’s prevailing social Darwinist view of a Marquesan culture declining towards extinction, Menzies emphasizes the resilience of her Maori and Scottish ancestors and points towards linked histories of martial

resistance to imperial rule.

Menzies' fellow Maori writer Witi Ihimaera, also of Scottish descent,<sup>28</sup> makes a more extended analogy between Maori and Scottish anticolonial resistance in his 2009 novel *The Trowenna Sea*, in which medical doctor Gower McKissock, the son of a Scottish woman displaced during the Highland Clearances, helps secure a pardon for Maori prisoners exiled to a penal colony on Maria Island (off the east coast of Tasmania) during the 1840s. McKissock, and his wife Ismay Glossop, are fictional characters, but their migration from the UK to New Zealand, and then Australia, is based in historical fact, following the trajectory of two nineteenth-century Scottish migrants, John Jennings Imrie and his wife Elizabeth Bailey. The Imries took under their care five Maori prisoners who were exiled to Van Diemen's Land (as it was then known) in 1846, having been convicted of insurrection as a result of their involvement in protests against the expropriation of Maori land in colonial New Zealand. Ihimaera's narrative emphasises the dubious nature of the convictions, as well as the widespread outrage among the settlers of Van Diemen's Land (and Britons further afield) at the treatment of the Maori prisoners. The McKissocks, and the Imries (who also appear as more minor characters in Ihimaera's narrative) play a key role in securing the eventual release of the prisoners, and their sympathies for the Maori are represented at least in part as a result of their own experience of English colonial aggression (particularly during the Highland Clearances). Shortly before his departure to the antipodes, for example, McKissock discovers that his mother was raped by Englishmen during the Strathnaver Valley clearances, which took place from 1814 following a decision by the Countess of Sutherland (and her husband the Marquis of Stafford) to turn this part of their estate over to sheep farming. These events, coupled with McKissock's knowledge of the ways in which the British Government sought to suppress Scottish Jacobitism and clan loyalties in the wake of the 1745 uprising, instil in him an intense antipathy towards the English. During his experiences as a settler and doctor, first in New Zealand, and then in Van Diemen's Land, McKissock develops a deep sense of affinity with Pacific peoples whom he views as similarly subject to English colonial repression. He makes a comparison between the exile of Highlanders during the Clearances and the displacement of Tasmanian aborigines sent to Flinders Island in the 1830s, for example, and on the death of one of the Maori prisoners, Hohepa Te Umuroa, he compares the lamentations of Hohepa's compatriots with the 'ancient Scottish dirges' sung by his exiled mother Ailie.<sup>29</sup> He also becomes a convict emancipist, viewing British prisoners as victims of a vengeful colonial motherland, and when Van Diemen's Land becomes self-governing he exults: 'We owed England nothing' (p. 261).<sup>30</sup>

Like Ihimaera and Menzies, Maori author Keri Hulme also has Scottish ancestry, but an added strand of Englishness in her genealogical profile has arguably inspired a less agonistic exploration of racial identity and politics in her work. In an autobiographical essay published in 1993, she celebrates her primary bloodlines:

I gained an early awareness of being part of a large and varied family that was old, as human families go. It stretched back to the Norman conquerors of England; it stretched back beyond the arrival of Takitimu [one of the 'great fleet' of canoes said to have transported Maori to Aotearoa/New Zealand]; it stretched back to border reivers and Orkney fisherfolk. I was taught, unequivocally, love and respect for all my ancestors.<sup>31</sup>

Hulme's pride in her various ancestral links, which stretch across both sides of the colonial dialectic, contributes to a discursive exploration of Scotland's legacy in the Pacific that differs significantly from Ihimaera's and Menzies'. Links between Hulme's Scottish and Maori ancestry, for example, are explored primarily through a shared relationship with the sea: both Maori and Orkney Scots have customarily relied heavily on fishing as a means of sustenance and livelihood, and Hulme's creative writing and poetry are infused with the minutiae of the lives of 'fisherfolk', based in her own considerable experience, as a coastal dweller, of this way of life. (She lives in Okarito, a small settlement on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island). This lifestyle is explored extensively in a number of autobiographical poems in her 1982 collection *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)*, whose title references the fishing village (on the east coast of the South Island) in which she was living at the time. 'Ends and Beginnings', for example, describes the process of weaving flax kits to hold 'silverbelly eels / the way my tipuna [Maori ancestors] did',<sup>32</sup> while 'October' alludes to the practice of catching whitebait, another traditional source of sustenance for Maori that is referenced widely in Hulme's writing. 'Hokioi' (addressed to the eponymous native New Zealand bird) obliquely links her coast-dwelling existence with her Orkney ancestry, claiming a legacy of 'lone islands / with deep kilts of kelp' (p. 24). 'Leaving my bones behind' harks back again to Hulme's Maori fishing heritage, designating Maui (a trickster and demi-god said to have caught Aotearoa/New Zealand's North Island with an enchanted fish-hook) as 'fisher of this land' (p. 33), and goes on to describe her own way of life as piscator and writer, engaged in 'building word castles in the air' alongside 'pulling nets' and 'fishing in the wild man-tide' (pp. 36, 37). In an interview with John Bryson, in which they discuss the linked practices of fishing and artistry in Maori culture, Hulme avers:

The tradition of the fisher-artist is based firstly on the fact that to be a good fisher you must be a good observer. You must have patience. [...] And because fishing always [...] contains an element of luck, you must be attendant upon signs [...] [and dependent on] whether the fates actually like you. So, if you were a fisher, this wasn't expected to be your only skill. You had to be good at invocations, prayer chants. We were, and I think still are, a people to whom balance and form and decoration and inherent rightness are extremely important, the balance of the artistic and the practical.<sup>33</sup>

Fisher-artist figures of the type Hulme outlines here are widespread not just in her poetry but also in her fiction, which contains rich autobiographical seams featuring isolated creative women who share Hulme's professed love of fishing (as well as food and drink). In Hulme's Book-

er-prize-winning novel *The Bone People* (1984), for example, the daily routines of Hulme's fictional avatar Kerewin Holmes revolve not only around artistic expression but also the catching, cooking and eating of fish and other foods, with precise details about specific recipes and ingredients woven into the narrative. In Hulme's magical realist, metadiscursive short story 'Floating Words' (1989), the narrator (a writer and coast-dweller whose character is again based on Hulme's) entertains an unexpected guest who turns out to be 'an imaginary clone' of herself 'turned real'.<sup>34</sup> This time, Hulme explores the Scottish side of her ancestry: on arrival, the guest immediately helps herself to a bottle of Laguvulin Scotch whisky, which she imbibes liberally along with milk which is later described as 'clabber' (a soured and thickened dairy product used in Scottish cooking). As the narrator drinks with her avatar, 'drowning in unreality', the guest begins to take on further Scottish attributes:

Half a bottle gone, half a bottle to go. There she sits, sipping whisky curds, feet propped up on a stool, sharkskin boots too close to my thigh. She wears her hair plaited in a short thick club covering the back of her neck. She has seven silver rings on her fingers, and her shirt is earth-red. The kilt is new, hand-woven hodden, with no elaborate pleats, a simple drape and fold secured by a thin black belt. The kilt is different: I hadn't ever visualised the kilt. (p. 12)

Here, then, Hulme offers a witty excursus on her own penchant for weaving elements of her own biography into her work, building the encounter between her literary doppelgängers to a dramatic climax which prompts the narrator to meditate upon the dangers of blending autobiography with fiction:

It could have been disastrous: it could have been my end. After I'd got rid of Kei-Tu, I became very leery about who I fantasised: it was one thing putting people down on paper, quite another to have them lying, vomit-covered and comatose drunk on the floor (a whole bottle of Laguvulin, even when ruined by two litres of milk, does that to the most hardened drinker). (p. 13)

Although playful, these references to the 'imaginary clone' taking on Scottish attributes point towards the resonance of Hulme's Orkney heritage within her writing, suggesting that her Scottish ancestry is an important component of her aesthetic vision. Such connections are also implicit in *The Bone People*, where Kerewin's irrational fear that her unwanted guest, Simon Gillayley, has died in the night prompts her invocation of a traditional Scottish prayer for protection:

Frae ghosties an ghoulies  
 an longlegged beasties  
 an things that gae bump!  
 in the night  
 guid God deliver us....<sup>35</sup>

Critic Erin Mercer interprets the quotation as a manifestation of a distinctly gothic strain in Hulme's novel, but Hulme has also pointed out that she learned the invocation from her maternal uncle, whose mother was the daughter of Orkney shopkeepers.<sup>36</sup> Significantly, Hulme's Orkney heritage is kept alive not only through her writing but also through certain social rituals: she lights bonfires on the beach, for example, to mark the births and deaths of family and close friends, following a long-established Scottish (and wider European) tradition of ritual conflagrations: 'Hogmanay fires, solstice fires, fires for celebration and fires for grieving. Some with wine or whisky, some with the water of tears'.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Fisher-Artist: Cathie Koa Dunsford's Orkney Trilogy**

Hulme's writing, and her Scottish ancestry, have served as a source of inspiration for Maori-Hawaiian writer Cathie Koa Dunsford, who has written a novelistic trilogy set in Orkney. Though not of Caledonian descent, Dunsford became interested in writing about Scotland after performing (as an Indigenous storyteller) at the Edinburgh Festival, and during a later visit to Orkney, she 'fell in love' with the islands and has subsequently published two novels – *Song of the Selkies* (2001) and *Return of the Selkies* (2007) – set in this location, with a third (*Clan of the Selkies*) forthcoming in 2014.<sup>38</sup> The novels feature Cowrie, a storyteller and eco-activist of Indigenous Maori and Hawaiian ancestry who also appears in various other Dunsford novels; all are eco-thrillers in which Cowrie (whose ethnicity and personal attributes closely correspond with those of her author) joins forces with other Indigenous eco-activists in order to combat environmental threats.<sup>39</sup> In the Orkney trilogy these hazards include, *inter alia*, the Dounreay Power Station at Caithness (radioactive particles from which contaminated the Pentland Firth, posing a threat to Orcadians), and commercial fish farming (which has released harmful organic waste into the sea and compromised more traditional Orcadian fishing methods).<sup>40</sup> Cowrie, like Keri Hulme's various fictional avatars (and Dunsford herself), is a practised fisher-artist, and Dunsford pays homage to Hulme at various points in the Orkney novels. *Song of the Selkies* carries a dedication to Hulme, accompanied by a message in which Dunsford expresses her hope that the novel will help Hulme's Kai Tahu (South Island Maori) ancestors 'swim with' her Orcadian ancestors. Cowrie draws parallels between Maori and Orcadian culture throughout the novel, arguing 'we are all fishers and island people with much in common' (p. 64), and pays direct tribute to Keri Hulme as a fellow fisher-artist (specifically, a 'whitebaiter' with 'a whisky tale or two' [p. 65]), also lending a like-minded Orcadian woman her copy of Hulme's *The Bone People*. Further, included in the novel's preface (and referenced again towards the end of the book) is a quotation from *The Bone People* that encapsulates the spirit of communalism and collective activism that infuses Dunsford's Cowrie novels:

They were nothing more than people, by themselves. Even paired, any pairing, they would have been nothing more than people by themselves. But all together, they have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new,

something strange and growing and great. (p. 4)

Hulme's formulation is rooted primarily in Maori philosophy, which privileges the collective over the individual, but in Dunsford's Orkney novels, it also encompasses the particular transformative energies of groups of women, both Indigenous and Orcadian, who work together to combat the environmental and cultural crises outlined above. *Return of the Selkies*, for example, features an Orcadian woman named Caitlin Hulme (a further nod to Keri Hulme) who joins forces with Cowrie, Sasha (an Inuit storyteller-activist) and a group of other local women to try to force the closure of Dounreay by raising awareness of the environmental damage and health hazards caused by the facility. In exploring such collaborations, in both novels the third-person narrator, like Cowrie, draws extended parallels between Orcadian and Maori/Pacific cultures, most commonly focused around a shared passion for fishing, storytelling and communal endeavour, but also in a common antipathy towards (neo)colonial exploitation. In *Song of the Selkies* for example, during a discussion about the recently established Scottish Parliament, an Orcadian man avers that the English 'stole our hearts and souls as well as our voting rights and our land in the seventeen hundreds, and we've done well to rip 'em back again' (p. 160), while in *Return of the Selkies*, the Dounreay Nuclear Power Station – established by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the Ministry of Defence – is viewed as another chapter in the history of English exploitation of Scotland's natural environment. On learning of health problems suffered by Scottish workers at the facility, Orcadian fisher-artist Morrigan remarks 'Those bastards think they can rule us still' (p. 2), while Cowrie draws parallels between activities at Dounreay and French nuclear imperialism in the Pacific (pp. 126, 146).

Notably, Dunsford situates Orcadian and Indigenous Pacific resistance to environmental degradation and exploitation within the context of shared animistic beliefs, focused in particular around shape-shifters who migrate between human, animal and spiritual realms. Morrigan, for example, is a selkie (a seal able to take human form), while during a magical realist narrative sequence, Cowrie takes the form of a turtle in order to rescue two other selkies from a shark attack (pp. 148, 164). This episode extends upon a conceit in Dunsford's earlier novel *Cowrie* (1994) in which Cowrie's journey in search of her ancestry parallels that of Laukiamanuikahiki, the Turtle Woman of Hawaiian mythology. Dunsford's narratives represent Orcadian and Indigenous Pacific mythopoeic traditions as living historical archives, embraced as part of a rich cultural 'heritage', but also as a vital component of the quotidian lives of contemporary peoples from these islands (pp. 174-75). In this sense, Dunsford's novels continue the dialogue between Scottish and Pacific storytelling traditions that was initiated by Stevenson in the 1890s, and significantly, among the Orkney narratives she invokes is the tale of 'The Book of the Black Art', which – in focusing on a diabolical magical object that must be sold for less than its purchase value, and returns to its owner if abandoned – is an undocumented but possible source for Stevenson's 1891 story 'The Bottle Imp'.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to Stevenson, however, Dunsford posits Scots and Pacific peoples not as victims of inexorable modernization, but rather as agents of resistance to the colonizing thrust of a modernity that is now most visible in its environmental violence. Her

work is also distinctive in locating the discursive encounter between Scotland and the Pacific in the northern hemisphere, rather than tracing the southward trajectories explored in the work of others authors discussed.

## **Conclusion**

The various literary works I have discussed in this article bespeak the manifold material and discursive links between Scotland and Oceania that have developed in the wake of Stevenson's first contributions to the Pacific literary imaginary. As I argued in the introduction, the more intense engagement with Scotland in recent Indigenous Pacific writing has developed alongside a more nuanced exploration of Scottish (and wider British) settlement in the Pacific that is evident in recent historiography and other forms of cultural production. Within New Zealand in particular, scholars have countered a previous historiographical bias towards English and Irish ethnicities, and have often emphasized the ways in which the Presbyterian faith of Scottish emigrants led them to adopt 'more egalitarian views on social and gender relations' than was putatively evident in other British migrant communities.<sup>42</sup> Such formulations, as well as an accompanying emphasis (within New Zealand historiography, literature, film and popular culture) on putative commonalities between Scots and Pacific peoples – primarily, shared histories of colonization and martial resistance to English hegemony – clearly resonates with the work of many of the writers discussed in this essay. As outlined above, there is ample evidence to support claims for the pivotal role Scots played in opposing and mitigating some of the most deleterious effects of British colonialism in the Pacific, but as John MacKenzie argues, a significant proportion of recent Scottish historiography has 'downplayed' the pivotal role Scots played in supporting and advancing British imperial agendas, perpetuating a 'powerful myth' of Scots radicalism and liberalism at the expense of an attention to Scottish complicity with British colonialism.<sup>43</sup> While the Indigenous writing discussed in this essay is in keeping with this dynamic to some degree, tending to emphasise those aspects of Scottish culture that resonate with Pacific cultural values and histories of anticolonial resistance, it is notable that many of these literary explorations are well-grounded in historical evidence, from Stevenson's advocacy of Samoan political self-determination, to the efforts of John Jennings Imrie and Elizabeth Bailey on behalf of the Maori prisoners exiled to Van Diemen's Land in 1846. Further, Keri Hulme's work is evidence of the varying and multifarious responses to Britain's legacy in the Pacific amongst Indigenous Pacific writers, eschewing a recent tendency, within New Zealand popular culture and creative production, to project settler guilt onto the English migrant (with Irish and Scots posited as more ambivalent agents of empire due to their own histories of oppression by the English). Contrastingly, Hulme embraces and celebrates her English genealogy alongside her Maori and Scottish bloodlines, and is one of a number of contemporary Indigenous Pacific writers acknowledging English strands in their family histories.<sup>44</sup> Given this burgeoning interest among Indigenous Pacific writers in exploring European elements of their genealogies, coupled with the increased attention to the Scottish stake in Pacific history discussed above, one would expect this dialogue with Scot-

land to continue into future chapters of Oceania's literary history.

## NOTES

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1 See for example James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); *The Heather and the Fern: Scottish Migration and New Zealand Settlement*, ed. by Tom Brooking and Jennie Coleman (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003); and Jim Hewitson, *Far Off in Sunlit Places: Stories of the Scots in Australia and New Zealand* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998). Belich's book does not focus solely on Scottish migration, but he describes the 'leading influences' on New Zealand's Pakeha (white settler) community as 'Anglo-Scots', and makes the (albeit speculative and possibly exaggerated) claim that 'Outside Scotland itself, there probably is no other country in the world in which Scots had more influence. [...] New Zealand is *the* neo-Scotland' (p. 221).

2 In *Being Pakeha Now* (Auckland: Penguin, 1999), for example, historian Michael King emphasizes his status as a descendant of 'displaced Irish' immigrants in comparing Maori and Pakeha migration histories in New Zealand, implying that Irish settlers in New Zealand were involuntary migrants and therefore less easily designated as aggressive, exploitative colonists (in comparison to, say, English settlers) (p. 235). In Vincent Ward's film *River Queen* (2005), set during the 1860s, Irish and Scottish soldiers besieging a Maori Pa (fortified village) convey an ambivalent attitude towards the 'British' settler cause for which they are fighting, joining with their Maori opponents in a song in which the devil is cast as an Englishman.

3 In both Australia and New Zealand, the vast majority of Scottish migration occurred from the 1840s (following the British annexation of New Zealand, and the introduction of assisted migration), with dramatic upturns in the 1850s and 1860s during the gold rushes in both countries. Ian Donnachie, 'The Making of "Scots on the Make": Scottish Settlement and Enterprise in Australia, 1830-1900', in *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society*, ed. by T. M. Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), pp. 135-53; Terry Hearn, 'Scots Miners on the Goldfields, 1861-70,' in *The Heather and the Fern*, pp. 67-85. The first Scottish missionaries arrived in 1801 as members of the London Missionary Society expedition to Tahiti. Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Phantassie: Tuckwell, 2001), p. 230.

4 John M. MacKenzie, 'A Scottish Empire? The Scottish diaspora and interactive identities', in *The Heather and the Fern*, pp. 17-32 (pp. 22-3). Tíree emigrant Donald Maclean, for example, who served as Native Minister in New Zealand between 1877 and 1880, tried to ensure that white colonists regularly purchased their land from chiefs who had undertaken sales of their own free will (though officials who succeeded him served settler interests, dishonouring promises he had made to Maori). In Hawai'i, various Scottish settlers helped to preserve the autonomy of the Indigenous monarchy prior to US annexation in 1898, while Sir Arthur Gordon, governor of Fiji from 1875-80, tried to protect Indigenous political structures where possible, and restricted European immigration to the colony. Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, pp. 232, 235, 236. See also Tom Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); *Scotland and the British Empire*, ed. by John MacKenzie and Tom Devine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

- 5 Roslyn Jolly, 'Introduction', in Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. ix-xxxiii (p. xliii); Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, p. 238.
- 6 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), pp. 27, 31. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text. See also Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 167, 170.
- 7 See James Stuart Duncan and Derek John Gregory, 'Introduction', in *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, ed. by James Stuart Duncan and Derek John Gregory (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-13; Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
- 8 Betty Hagglund, 'The Journeys of Anne Grant', in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 41-54 (p. 47).
- 9 Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 252.
- 10 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 31. See also Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
- 11 Michelle Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 43; Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, pp. 186-8).
- 12 Savea Sano Malifa, 'Thank You Robert Louis Stevenson Foundation. Thank You Samoa', *Samoa Observer*, 3 September, 2012, n. p. <<http://www.samoobserver.ws/editorial/742-thank-you-robert-louis-stevenson-foundation-thank-you-samoa>> [accessed 29 April 2013].
- 13 Albert Wendt, 'Tusitala: The Legend, the Writer and the Literature of the Pacific', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Best Pacific Writings*, ed. by Roger Robinson (Auckland: Streamline, 2003), pp. 9-11 (pp. 9-10).
- 14 Albert Wendt, *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), p. 159. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.
- 15 See Paul Sharrad, *Albert Wendt and Pacific Literature: Circling the Void* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003); Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing*, p. 175.
- 16 Michelle Keown, 'The Samoan Sisyphus: Camus and Colonialism in Albert Wendt's *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 37.1 (2002), 49-64.
- 17 Albert Wendt, *The Mango's Kiss* (Auckland: Vintage, 2003), p. 114. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.
- 18 Wendt, 'Tusitala', p. 10.
- 19 Wendt, 'Tusitala', p. 10.
- 20 Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged* (Auckland: Pasifika, 1996), p. 88.
- 21 Jolly, 'Introduction', p. ix.
- 22 Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 42-7.
- 23 Subramani, 'Interview', in Sia Figiel, *The Girl in the Moon Circle* (Suva: Mana, 1996), pp. 121-32 (p. 129). See also Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*, p. 38.
- 24 Keown, 'Samoan Sisyphus'; Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*.

25 In reality, Stevenson's domestic arrangements in Samoa fell somewhere in between Wendt's and Figiel's contrasting representations: as Michael Fry points out, numerous biographers 'have observed how he lived on Samoa like a Highland chief, gathering relations and dependants round him in a kind of clan, even dressing his servants in lava-lavas of Royal Stewart tartan', *Scottish Empire*, p. 232.

26 Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, p. 235.

27 Trixie Te Arama Menzies, *Papakainga* (Auckland: Waiata Koa, 1988), p. 10.

28 Ihimaera has Lowland Scots ancestry on both sides of his family (personal communication, 19 November 2012).

29 Witi Ihimaera, *The Trowenna Sea* (Auckland: Reed, 2009), p. 437. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

30 Similar connections between Scottish and Maori exile and anticolonial resistance are made in Ihimaera's 2011 novel *The Parihaka Woman* (Auckland: Vintage, 2011), where Dunedin Scots offer their support for Maori prisoners from Parihaka exiled to Otago in the 1880s for resisting European confiscation and occupation of their ancestral land.

31 Keri Hulme, 'What I Believe', in *What I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Twenty-two New Zealanders*, ed. by Allan Thompson (Wellington: GP Publications, 1993), pp. 78-85 (p. 82). Through her Orkney forebears, Hulme also has Norse and Faroese ancestry. Keri Hulme, 'Stories, Songs, and Sisters', in *Cherries on a Plate: New Zealand Writers Talk About Their Sisters*, ed. by Marilyn Duckworth (Auckland: Random House, 1996), pp. 124-47 (pp. 128-29).

32 Keri Hulme, *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1982), p. 52. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

33 John Bryson, 'Keri Hulme in conversation with John Bryson', *Antipodes*, 2.8 (1994) 131-35 (p. 134).

34 Keri Hulme, *Stonefish* (Wellington: Huia, 2004), p. 12. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

35 Keri Hulme, *The Bone People* (London: Picador, 2001), p. 43. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

36 Erin Mercer, "'Frae ghosties and ghoulies deliver us": Keri Hulme's *the bone people* and the Bicultural Gothic', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 27 (2009) 111-130 (pp. 118-19); Hulme, 'Stories, Songs, and Sisters', p. 128; Personal communication, 26 October 2012.

37 Keri Hulme, 'What I Believe', p. 85.

38 Cathie Koa Dunsford, *Song of the Selkies* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 2001) and *Return of the Selkies* (Matakana: Global Dialogues Press, 2007); Personal communication, 1 November 2012. Further references to these editions are given in parentheses in the text.

39 Cathie Koa Dunsford, *Cowrie* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1994), *The Journey Home* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1997), *Manawa Toa: Heart Warrior* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 2000), *Ao Toa: Earth Warriors* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 2004), and *Kaitiakitanga Pasifika* (Matakana: Global Dialogues Press, 2012). Further references to these editions are given in parentheses in the text.

40 The environmental dangers explored in Dunsford's texts are based around her meticulous research into available scientific documentation, including reports produced by organisations such as the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). See Dunsford, *Return of the Selkies*, p. 233.

41 Dunsford, *The Journey Home*, p. 25; Ernest W. Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland* (London: Batsford, 1975), p. 57. On publishing 'The Bottle Imp', Stevenson acknowledged as his source a melodrama of the same name (by Richard Brinsley Peake) first performed at Covent Garden in 1828. As Roslyn Jolly points out, Peake's play was

itself based on a German folktale that Stevenson seems not to have encountered directly, but given that Stevenson draws on Scottish folklore elsewhere in his writing, it is possible that he may have come across the tale of the Book of the Black Art (which may be of Norse origin given that Orkney and Shetland were a Norwegian province for 200 years before being annexed to Scotland in the late 1460s/early 1470s). Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 72, 270; Marwick, *Folklore of Orkney and Shetland*, p. 14.

42 Tom Brooking, 'Introduction', in *The Heather and the Fern*, pp. 11-15 (p. 13).

43 MacKenzie, 'A Scottish Empire?', pp. 19, 22.

44 Others include, *inter alia*, Hinemoana Baker, Serie Barford, Bub Bridger, Jaq Carter, Michael Greig, Phil Kawana, and Selina Tusitala Marsh.