

# Introduction

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In recent decades, global attention has converged on the Pacific Region as a geopolitical strategic nexus. The vast inner expanse of Oceania was once considered ‘the hole in the doughnut’,<sup>1</sup> as Tongan writer Epeli Hau‘ofa ironically puts it, where nuclear tests were carried out virtually unimpeded. In the typical destruction–preservation logic of post-contact history, this region is now viewed as a unique ecological treasure-trove and the site of major climate change challenges. Given the historical and environmental stakes, a selection of cross-disciplinary essays that take the *Bounty* as their point of departure aims to offer readers an enriched understanding of the history and culture of the Polynesian Triangle – a vast region of Oceania made up of over 1,000 islands spanning from Hawai‘i in the north, to Rapa Nui/Easter Island in the east and Aotearoa/New Zealand in the south-west. It seeks to provide nuanced perspectives on how the region and its people have been represented across a range of media, including literature, material culture and film. In a collective effort to think this world in its complexity, this volume aims to reorient the *Bounty* focus away from the West,<sup>2</sup> where most *Bounty* narratives and studies have emerged, to the Pacific, where most of the original events unfolded. It delves into the history and culture of the Polynesian Islands touched by the *Bounty* events and it embraces them within a wider fold of their relation to the West. Engaging with ‘culturally patterned way

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1 Epeli Hau‘ofa, ‘The Ocean in Us’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol 10, no 2, 1998, p 397.

2 Throughout the book, the West is meant as the ‘geographically imprecise but widely accepted cultural and ideological divide between rich and poor, colonizer and colonized, metropolitan and post-colonial’ (Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p 16).

or ways of experiencing and understanding history',<sup>3</sup> it examines Pacific Island histories and historicities and their representations in literature, films and culture. Far from abiding by narratives of the 'vanishing native', it celebrates Oceanic vitality.

This volume therefore launches on a discursive journey across the Pacific Ocean, exploring those Polynesian Islands impacted by the *Bounty*, and navigating the reverberations of the *Bounty* events in the West and their backwash to the Polynesian Islands, from the late 18th century to the present time. It also largely shifts focus from famous *Bounty* figures, such as Sir Joseph Banks, Captain William Bligh and Fletcher Christian, who come to contemporary readers almost as dramatic actors having been reimagined in print, cinema and mythology for over two centuries. Instead, it pays more attention to the 'little people on both sides of the beach' as documented by historian Greg Denning:

I wanted to write the history of people whom the world would esteem as 'little'. I wanted to write history from below. Not of kings and queens. Not of heroes. Not of writers of constitutions, saviours of nations. 'Little people'. Those on whom the forces of the world press most hardly. I wanted to celebrate their humanity, their freedoms, their creativity, the ways they crossed the boundaries around their lives, the way they crossed their beaches.<sup>4</sup>

Denning's phrasing may seem to carry a whiff of condescension; yet it is well known to Pacific scholars that his 'little people on both sides of the beach' are as important as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'subalterns'.<sup>5</sup> His expression best fits our purpose: to investigate the *Bounty* heritage from the standpoint of the beach. The beach is a metaphor for culture contact and conflict in the Pacific Islands. It is this liminal place that transforms Islanders and voyagers, islands and ships, each time it is crossed. Referring to the *Bounty*, we will analyse the way newcomers – however 'little' they may look – create new islands, and how these changes may occasionally impact the world. This volume's 'little people' do stand 'on both sides of

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3 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierny, 'Introduction: The Historicization of Anthropology', in *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches*, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierny (ed), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990, p 4; cited in Chris Ballard, 'Oceanic Historicities', *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol 26, no 1, 2014, p 102.

4 Greg Denning, 'Writing, Rewriting the Beach: An Essay', in Alun Munslow & Robert A Rosenstone (eds), *Experiments in Rethinking History*, New York & London, Routledge, 2004, pp 30–55, 54.

5 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Hannel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

the beach': they are Polynesian or European or, as beaches are crossed and remade, no longer one without the other, but bound together in processes of change.<sup>6</sup> Among these people are *Bounty* sailors, beachcombers,<sup>7</sup> Pitcairners and indigenous Pacific Islanders of the past and the present. Our collection also examines the works of some renowned Western writers and actors who, turning mutineers after their own fashion and in their own times, themselves crossed the beach and attempted to illuminate the 'little people' involved in the *Bounty* narratives. These prominent writers and actors put in the spotlight characters who were disregarded on account of race, class or geographical distance from the dominant centres of power. These people are 'little' only because they have been silenced. Theirs is 'the silence of those who for one reason or another had no voice, or whose voice was never their own but always someone else's'.<sup>8</sup> Inspired by Denning's empowering voice, our purpose is to fill that silence.

'Smallness is a state of mind', Epeli Hau'ofa famously stated. These essays accordingly balance the smallness of *Bounty*-related events against the vastness of Hau'ofa's 'sea of islands'.<sup>9</sup> They investigate how generations have been fascinated by a relatively anecdotal mutiny while overlooking its capacious Oceanic frame and holding the Pacific Islands as a mere backdrop to the event. The time seems ripe for a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary scholarly volume to ponder the part these islands may actually have been playing in relation to the *Bounty*, and to the world.

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6 Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774–1880*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1980.

7 'Beachcombing [is] the act of repudiating western civilisation by jumping ship, crossing the beach and attempting to join an island culture' (Edmond, 1997, p 17).

8 Denning, 1980, p 32.

9 Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2008, p 31.

## *Bounty* history in a nutshell

The seeds of the *Bounty* mission were sown in Tahiti in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.<sup>10</sup> During James Cook's first exploration of the Pacific in 1769, botanist Joseph Banks enjoyed a three-month stay in early contact Tahiti.<sup>11</sup> The episode was best remembered in Britain for Banks' boisterous appreciation of local *vahine*,<sup>12</sup> but Banks had a connoisseur's eye for native plants, too, and he had noticed the multiple virtues of 'uru, or Tahitian breadfruit. The large fruit needed hardly any care, its 30 or so varieties could be harvested from large robust trees over a good part of the year, it had strong nutritional value and it could be fermented into *māhi*, which kept for months. Back in Britain, Sir Joseph Banks became president of the Royal Society and botanical advisor to King George (known as *Kini Iore* to Tahitians). He suggested transplanting breadfruit saplings to the British West Indies in order to secure cheap food for British plantation owners' slaves. The plan, however, was delayed until Britain had fought (and lost) the American War of Independence. By that time, the British West Indies were no longer supplied by the former 13 colonies, and hurricanes had devastated the West Indian island plantations where thousands of slaves were starving to death. The breadfruit mission was finally agreed upon. Banks had a small coastal trader refitted into a cutter and renamed *Bounty*. He recommended William Bligh, an officer who, like him, was a Tahitian old-timer: as sailing master, Bligh had spent three months in Tahiti in 1777 during Cook's third voyage and had meticulously charted the Pacific. On 23 December 1787, HMAV *Bounty* sailed for the South Pacific under the command of Lieutenant Bligh.

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10 For 'a succinct, even-handed account' of the *Bounty* events (Edmond, 1997, p 274, n 6), see OHK Spate's *Paradise Found and Lost* (London, Routledge, 1988). This Introduction's *Bounty* narrative has been inspired by the following texts, Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and the Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); Caroline Alexander, *The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty* (London, Harper Perennial, 2003); Anne Salmond, *Bligh. William Bligh in the South Seas* (Auckland, Penguin Viking, 2011); Vanessa Smith & Nicholas Thomas (eds), *Mutiny and Aftermath: James Morrison's Account of the Mutiny on the Bounty and the Island of Tahiti* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2013); and Robert W Kirk, *Paradise Past: The Transformation of the South Pacific, 1520–1920* (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland, 2012).

11 For discussion of the 'discovery' of Tahiti by Europeans, see Anne Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island: The European Discovery of Tahiti* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2009).

12 *Vahine*: Tahitian for 'woman'.

When Tahitians sighted the ship on 26 October 1788, they may have thought her arrival untimely. They were well into *Matari'i-i-raro* or *tau o'e*, the season of scarcity, and visitors meant an unplanned strain on their resources.<sup>13</sup> They nevertheless showered the Europeans with massive gifts of food and warmly welcomed former and new acquaintances. They probably relished the compensating prospect of garnering iron tools and, with some luck, British guns and ammunitions that might help tip balances in local warfare. Little did they suspect that the *Bounty* visitors intended to collect over a thousand breadfruit plants, for which they would need to spend over five months in Tahiti.

The *Bounty's* arrival was also untimely for the British. The Admiralty had postponed the ship's departure from Britain for so long that, reaching Cape Horn at the start of austral winter, the small vessel had been unable to round it due to extreme weather conditions. After many failed attempts, she had turned the long way around Africa. By the time the *Bounty* finally anchored in Tahiti, full breadfruit season was over and Bligh had no option but to remain there much longer than any Western ship before. Durable connections were thus allowed to develop between Tahitians and their European visitors. Both sides got to know each other's cultures better and often adopted them. At the end of their prolonged sojourn, the *Bounty* men had gained not only plants, but also a keen taste for Tahitian hospitality and a correspondingly sharp resentment of ship discipline. As for several Tahitians, they had developed an ever stronger appetite for iron and firearms and an increased familiarity with British ways of life, which impacted their daily lives. They had also contracted several diseases, many of them fatal.<sup>14</sup>

The *Bounty* eventually left Tahiti for the West Indies on 4 April 1789, loaded with a massive cargo of breadfruit. The existing tensions between Bligh and Fletcher Christian, his acting master, soon became acrimonious. A mere three weeks later, near the Friendly Islands (today's Tonga), tensions reached a climax when, in front of all, Bligh stingingly accused Christian of stealing coconuts. Mutiny broke out the following morning, on 28 April 1789: it was a rash affair, a matter of a few hours, under the leadership of Christian and a handful of men who seized the arms chest

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13 Tahitians had already given provisions to the *Lady Penrhyn*, a British convict ship that had left Tahiti only three months before the *Bounty* arrived.

14 Diseases that were innocuous to Europeans could prove fatal to non-immune island populations. For a thorough study of encounters between Tahitians and the *Bounty*, see Vanessa Smith's *Intimate Strangers: Friendship, Exchange and Pacific Encounters* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

and the ship. Bligh and 18 loyalists were ordered on board the *Bounty's* launch. Twenty-five men remained on the *Bounty*, some against their will. The *Bounty's* mission had been disrupted and most of the breadfruit was thrown overboard into the Pacific Ocean.

The reasons for the mutiny have been the subject of extensive conjecture and are only briefly discussed here. The most obvious reason, and the one favoured by both Bligh and popular *Bounty* mythology, is that the mutineers pined for Tahiti. If Tahitian allurements are indeed to account for the mutiny, then much of the onus may be on the Admiralty and Banks: the *Bounty* lingered in Tahiti as a result of their shoddy planning.<sup>15</sup> The Admiralty and Banks erred in their management not only of time, but also of living space, for the *Bounty* proved far too small for such a long journey. Being less than 27.5 metres long, she was not rated a Navy ship, on which account Bligh was not made Captain, but Lieutenant – a less imposing rank to his crew. Banks had had the commander's great cabin converted into a nursery for plants, which further dented the symbols of Bligh's authority. Allotted a small pantry for a cabin, Bligh virtually shared his living quarters with master's mates and midshipmen, which made it all the harder for him to engender respect. The absence of other commissioned officers on board led to Christian's appointment as acting master. Neither was Bligh afforded with marines to ensure his security and impose his orders.

In this context, Bligh resorted to food rationing as a method of discipline, for which he was deemed niggardly. His propensity to verbally abuse his men was also a source of dissent. In his eponymous study of Bligh's bad language, Greg Denning highlights his 'offensive', 'abusive and intemperate' expostulations.<sup>16</sup> In sharp contrast with *Bounty* mythology, however, Bligh did not resort to physical violence. He was, on the contrary, an inordinately nonviolent commander and a lighter flogger than most. 'On his two voyages to the Pacific in the *Bounty* and the *Providence* he

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15 See William Bligh's reports, *A Narrative of the Mutiny, Letters 1782–1805* (Safe 1/40 and Family Correspondence, Safe 1/45, The National Archives, London); Minutes of the Proceedings of a Court-Martial on Lieutenant William Bligh and certain members of his crew, to investigate the cause of the loss of HMS *Bounty* on charges formulated by Captain William Bligh (PRO Adm 1/5328, part 2, published in Owen Rutter (ed), *The Voyage of the Bounty's Launch as related in William Bligh's Despatch to the Admiralty and the Journal of John Fryer* (London, Golden Cockerel Press, 1934)); and William Bligh, *Mutiny on Board HMS Bounty*, Pete Goss (foreword) (London, Adlard Coles Nautical, 2014). See also Rolf Du Rietz, *Peter Heywood's Tahitian Vocabulary and the Narrative by James Morrison: Some Notes on their Origin and History* (Banksia 3, Uppsala, Sweden, Dahlia Books, 1986).

16 Denning, 1992, pp 55–59.

flogged fewer of his crew, actually and proportionately, than any other captain who came into the Pacific in the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Bligh was much less of a flogger than Captain Cook whose name, in contrast, remains untarnished. Tahitians could also have testified that, unlike Cook, Bligh did not take Tahitian hostages to retrieve fugitives,<sup>18</sup> nor did he have any Islanders' ears cut off to chastise thieves.

Once separated from the *Bounty*, the severely overloaded and under-provisioned launch reached Timor under Bligh's command, losing only one man to Tongan attackers. The 48-day passage of 3,618 nautical miles,<sup>19</sup> in an open boat on rations suited to five days, has gone down in the annals of European maritime history as a masterful achievement, and Bligh was liberally acclaimed upon his return to Britain.<sup>20</sup>

As to the mutineers on the *Bounty*, they now had to hide from the Royal Navy to escape hanging for their crime. Under Christian's command, they sailed to Tubua'i in the Austral archipelago, then back to Tahiti where they picked up Tahitian partners and livestock in order to settle back on Tubua'i where, Christian presumed, they should be sufficiently distant from the usual courses followed by European ships. As may be presumed, Tahitians were astounded to see the *Bounty* reappear on 6 June 1789 without Bligh and with a reduced crew. Although many were suspicious of the fabricated tales they were delivered by their returning visitors, some lovers and *taio*<sup>21</sup> nevertheless agreed to accompany them to Tubua'i, 480 kilometres to the south.<sup>22</sup> The inhabitants of Tubua'i, however, resisted the would-be settlers for three months.<sup>23</sup> Eventually forced to take to the sea again, the *Bounty* sailed one last time to Tahiti. At that stage, her crew had resolved to split up. One smaller group comprised of Christian

17 Denning, 1992, p 62. See also Salmond (2011, p 316) for a comparison with Captain George Vancouver.

18 Islander hostage-taking eventually cost Captain Cook his life, as Bligh witnessed in 1779.

19 6,701 kilometres.

20 Bligh was court-martialled and proven innocent of the loss of His Majesty's ship. See Rutter (1934).

21 A *taio* is a friend with whom one exchanges names and has a long-lasting privileged relationship. For a thorough examination of the concept of *taio*, see Smith (2010).

22 Among them was Hitihiti, who had travelled with Cook in 1773–74, and was later to accompany Bligh on the *Providence* for the second breadfruit mission.

23 For more on the *Bounty* in Tubua'i, see Smith & Thomas (2013, pp 56–87); HE Maude, 'In Search of a Home: From the Mutiny to Pitcairn Island (1789–1790)' (*Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol 67, no 2, June 1958, pp 104–31); Alecia Simmonds, 'Friendly Fire: Forced Friendship and Violent Embraces in British–Tahitian First Contact' (*Melbourne Historical Journal*, vol 37, 2009, pp 115–36); and Salmond (2011, pp 245–51). It may be noted that among the mutineers' Polynesian lovers was Te'e'chuteatuaonoa, a Tubuaian who found herself in the trying situation of supporting the *Bounty* settlers against her own people.

and eight mutineers chose to leave Tahiti forever and roam the Pacific Ocean in search of some remote uninhabited island; with them went six Polynesian men and 12 Tahitian women – some of them abducted – including Mauatua, Christian’s wife; and Te‘ehuteatuaonoa, known as Jenny, who later provided valuable reports on the events.<sup>24</sup> The other, larger group of 16 *Bounty* men elected to remain in Tahiti – among them the loyalists to Bligh. All were given their share of arms and ammunitions and engaged in what Rod Edmond names ‘a mass act of beachcombing’.<sup>25</sup>

Tahitians were now faced with a new kind of European visitor – one who came to stay indefinitely.<sup>26</sup> For the first time also since European contact had occurred 20 years before, the balance of power was unequivocally in the Islanders’ favour: the small group of stranded outsiders was vulnerable and depended on Islanders for shelter, food and protection. Tu, or Taina, the chief of Matavai where most of the *Bounty*’s crew were hosted, took control of their much coveted muskets, and made them act as mercenaries. As a result, Tu succeeded in dramatically subduing local rivals and, in the aftermath of the *Bounty* mutiny, the history of Tahiti was changed forever. Tu’s son’s investiture established the reign of the Pomare dynasty, which lasted until Tahiti and its surrounding islands were annexed by France nearly a century later on 29 June 1880.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from two mutineers who kept attacking Tahitians and were murdered in skirmishes, all the *Bounty* residents in Tahiti were eventually captured in March 1791 by HMS *Pandora*, a warship that had been sent to apprehend them. During her return voyage to England, the *Pandora* ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef, drowning four of the *Bounty* mutineers. The remaining 10 who reached Britain were court-martialled

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24 Mahuata is also known as Maimiti, or Isabella; and Te‘ehuteatuaonoa as Tohimata, or Jenny. The other Polynesian women were Tinafanaea, partner of Tubuaians Tetahiti and Ohu; Mareva, or Moetua, partner of Tahitians Manarii, Teimua and Niau; Toofaiti, or Nancy, partner of Tararo; Fa‘ahutu; Opuarei; Te‘o, or Mary; Teatuaitea, or Sarah; Teraura, or Susannah; Tevarua, or Sarah; and Vahineatua, or Prudence. For biographical information, see Paul J Lareau’s *HMS Bounty Genealogies* (Little Canada, MN, PJ Lareau, 1994), which is based on graduate student Pat Bentley’s research work at the University of Hawai‘i on ‘The Women of the *Bounty*’.

25 Edmond, 1997, p 64.

26 American John Brown, who left the *Mercury* on 2 September 1789, just three weeks before the *Bounty*’s ultimate return, was the first beachcomber in Tahiti. See Salmond (2011, pp 255–57).

27 For more on Tahitian colonial history, see Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (Boston, Yale University Press, 2010); and Bruno Saura, *Histoire et Mémoire des Temps Coloniaux en Polynésie Française* (Papeete, Au Vent des Îles, 2015). On beachcombers, see also HE Maude, *Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1968); and Dening (1980).

in September 1792. Four men were acquitted upon Bligh's written recommendation, two were found guilty but pardoned, one was released on a legal technicality and three were hanged. Bligh did not attend the trial: he was already away on his second breadfruit mission to Tahiti, which he successfully completed on HMS *Providence* that same year.

On the *Bounty*, Christian and eight mutineers, together with the 18 Pacific Islanders, sailed on for three-and-a-half months in search of a suitably off-chart island. On 23 January 1790, they reached Pitcairn, which had been incorrectly charted by Carteret in 1767 and then again by official writer Hawkesworth in 1772 – a combination of errors that proved providential to the mutineers. The island was suitably difficult to find and to land, and it became their final destination. It was also conveniently uninhabited, although the presence of some *marae*, *papae*,<sup>28</sup> petroglyphs and various stone tools bore testimony to former Polynesian settlements. The mutineers destroyed the *Bounty* to lessen the risk of being found. Within three years, living conditions on Pitcairn dramatically deteriorated, owing to alcoholism, illness and, most infamously, brutal treatment of the Polynesian community: most mutineers abused and exploited the exiled Islanders, denying the men any stake on Pitcairn land and claiming the women for themselves. The resulting bloodshed led to the massacre of all men on the island but two mutineers. When Pitcairn was eventually found by the American *Topaz* in 1808, there were remaining nine Tahitian women (out of the initial 12), one male survivor (mutineer John Adams, enlisted as Alexander Smith) and 25 children. They were living a devout life under the strict rule of Adams, who had grown into a pious patriarch and was granted amnesty by the British Admiralty. In 1817, Te'ehuteatuaonoa was eventually allowed to sail back to Tahiti.

The next generations of 'Anglified natives'<sup>29</sup> lived a self-enclosed, self-sustained life, regulated by unswerving observance of Church of England ritual. The few passing ships that touched at remote Pitcairn invariably marvelled at their unique lifestyle, and spread their renown throughout the world as an Eden-like, close-knit and austere simple community. The tiny island, however, could not support a rapidly increasing population and, in 1856, 66 years after their forefathers' landing in

28 *Marae*: Polynesian place of worship; *papae*: stone house platform.

29 Vanessa Smith, 'Pitcairn's "Guilty Stock": The Island as Breeding Ground', in Rod Edmond & Vanessa Smith (eds), *Islands in History and Representation*, London, Routledge, 2003.

Pitcairn, the community of 194 people – with only eight surnames among them, including three newcomers<sup>30</sup> – had no choice but to evacuate to the larger Norfolk Island.<sup>31</sup>

Norfolk was less isolated, chillier and, most grievously for the Pitcairners, it was not theirs. They had inherited a strong Polynesian bond to their land: their immediate ancestors, together with their own placenta, lay buried on Pitcairn, so that was where they belonged. It was their *Fenua Maitai*, or Good Land. As early as 1858, one McCoy and two Young families returned to Pitcairn, to be followed by a further four families in 1863.<sup>32</sup> They are the foundations of today's Pitcairn population. Many youths from the ensuing generations moved away from both Pitcairn and Norfolk and spread the names of Christian, Young, McCoy, Adams and the like around the world. Between 1886 and 1890, a large portion of the Pitcairn community became members of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, which remains the Island's dominant creed today.<sup>33</sup> In the second half of the 20th century, scientists started investigating the pre-European Polynesian settlements of Pitcairn and Norfolk.<sup>34</sup> United States, New Zealand and Australian forces used Norfolk as an airbase during World War II and it is now part of the Commonwealth of Australia. In contrast, despite the opening of the Panama Canal and a growing number of visiting ships, Pitcairn has remained relatively isolated. A British colony

30 The three outsiders were John Buffet, John Evans and George Hunn Nobbs. Joshua Hill stayed from 1832 to 1838, when he was ordered to leave.

31 There was a previous, failed attempt at moving the Pitcairn community to another island when, in 1831, the whole colony removed to Tahiti, but returned home after only a few weeks: 'a venture that took sixteen Pitcairner lives from the epidemics that were rampant on Tahiti' (my thanks to Herb Ford for privately reminding me of this information). Other island choices (Hawai'i, Huahine in the Society Islands, Juan Fernandez in Chile) were discarded because they did not offer to host the whole Pitcairn community. For more information on 19th-century Pitcairn, see the following publications: John Barrow, *A Description of Pitcairn's Island and its Inhabitants* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1854); Diana Belcher, *The Mutineers of the Bounty and their Descendants in Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands* (New York, Harper Brothers, 1871); Walter Brodie, *Pitcairn's Island and the Islanders in 1850* (London, Whittaker & Co, 1851); M Burrows, *Pitcairn's Island* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1853); Rev Thomas Boyles Murray, *Pitcairn: The Island, the People and the Pastor* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1853); Kirk (2012); ASC Ross & AW Moverley, *The Pitcairnese Language* (London, André Deutsch, 1964); and Smith (2003).

32 For more on the families returning from Norfolk, see Sven Wahlroos, *Mutiny and Romance in the South Seas: A Companion to the Bounty Adventure* (Massachusetts, Salem House Publishers, 1989).

33 My thanks to Herb Ford for informing me about the Seventh-day Adventist faith on Pitcairn. For a relatively recent travelogue account of life on Pitcairn, see Dea Birket, *Serpent in Paradise* (New York, Anchor Books, 1998).

34 First interest in the Polynesian settlements of Pitcairn from the West arose notably with Thor Heyerdahl's 1955 archaeological expedition. See Thor Heyerdahl, *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island* (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1958). For a more groundbreaking study of Pitcairn's Polynesian settlements, see Kirk (2012).

to this day, with a population of around 50, the legendary island actively campaigns for newcomers, advertising a unique lifestyle inherited from HMAV *Bounty*'s settlers and their Polynesian wives.<sup>35</sup>

## Pacific *Bounty* source material

However fascinating the destinies of the *Bounty* officers, mutineers and their descendants might be, it is shocking to realise how prolific Western narratives about the European individuals have been so far, and how few narratives exist about the Polynesians whose lives were severely affected by the *Bounty*. Notably, anonymous hundreds of Islanders were killed in relation to the events. Because, as JM Coetzee argues, 'we can comprehend the deaths of others only one at a time',<sup>36</sup> we need to consider these deaths both individually and collectively. For example, in 1789, one Polynesian in Mangaia in the Cook Islands was murdered by the *Bounty* mutineers while they were searching for a settlement.<sup>37</sup> In 1790, five were murdered by the *Bounty* residents in Tahiti and Mo'orea. Added to those were the collateral casualties of the *Pandora*: two men killed in Tahiti, another one at Nomuka, Tonga, in 1791. These numbers, however, are small compared to the bloodsheds that occurred during the three-month attempt by the *Bounty* escapees to establish a permanent settlement in Tubua'i in 1789, and the hundreds of lives lost to firearms among the Pa'ae and Fa'a'a warriors whom the *Bounty* men fought in order to ensure their protector Pomare II's power in Tahiti in 1790. This tragic list continues with the Polynesians who agreed to exile themselves with their *Bounty* *taio* in Pitcairn. Twenty years or so after the events, the narrative of the only surviving avowed mutineer, John Adams, can hardly be said to have been informative: as Greg Denning muses, 'he told the story of the mutiny to anyone who asked, a little differently to each'.<sup>38</sup> Although Te'ehuteatuaoona provided valuable information about life on Pitcairn,<sup>39</sup>

35 Immigration leaflets were handed out to the general public by a delegation from the Pitcairn Island Government at the first *Bounty* International Festival (Papeete, Tahiti, 25–27 Oct 2013). For more information, see [www.immigration.gov.pn](http://www.immigration.gov.pn) and [www.pitcairn.pn](http://www.pitcairn.pn). For more on Pitcairners, see Harry L Shapiro, *The Heritage of the Bounty: The Story of Pitcairn through Six Generations* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1936).

36 JM Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, London, Profile Books, 1999, p 18. Coetzee makes this argument about humans in this quote.

37 For the *Bounty* mutineers' search for a permanent settlement before Pitcairn, see Maude (1958).

38 Denning, 1992, p 329.

39 Teehuteatuaoona (Jenny), [Narrative I], *Sydney Gazette*, 17 July 1819; and Teehuteatuaoona (Jenny), [Narrative II], *United States Service Journal*, 1829, pp 589–93.

can we ever know in detail what happened in Tahiti and on the other islands where the *Bounty* escapees searched for a settlement – Tubua‘i, the Tongan archipelago, the southern Cook Islands and the southern Lau Group of Fiji? Will the killings of ‘the little people from the indigenous side of the beach’ ever be fully registered and documented? Will some of those unnumbered Polynesian victims’ names come down in history records, too? Other casualties will probably never be fully identified, including the men and women who succumbed to the European diseases spread in Tahiti by the *Bounty* residents, which cut a deadly swathe through the Pacific Island population.

In the South Pacific, history and historicities originally were – and still are, to some extent – transmitted performatively and in local languages, through landscapes and seascapes, mythology, social organisation, people’s bodies and memories.<sup>40</sup> To this day, however, most indigenous Pacific Island records of the *Bounty* seem to have been lost. In Europe, what became the European written source material was promptly subjected to the distorting process of influential elites. Because a few personal destinies were at stake, the manner in which the *Bounty* events were reported could mean life or death and can therefore hardly be seen as reliable.<sup>41</sup>

When, at the time of first contacts – shortly before the *Bounty* events – European explorers started recording Tahitian historicities, their conditions could not allow for accurate representations of the Islanders’ everyday circumstances: these were extraordinary encounters between mutually unintelligible strangers. The incoming strangers were alien to Tahitian language and culture, and what they were shown and told was obviously filtered and shaped not only by their individual experiences,

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40 My warm thanks to Christopher Ballard, my colleague at the University of French Polynesia, Tahiti, for allowing me to attend his seminar ‘On the Beach: Introduction to Pacific History’, Sep–Nov 2016. For more on Pacific history and historicities, see David Armitage & Alison Bashford (eds), *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People* (Basingstoke & New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2007); Denning (1980); Denning, *The Bounty: An Ethnographic History* (Melbourne University History Monograph no 1, 1988); Denning, ‘Ethnography on my Mind’, in B Attwood, *Boundaries of the Past* (Melbourne, The History Institute, 1990, pp 14–21); Denning (1992); David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013); Matt K Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples and Cultures* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011); Max Quanchi & Ron Adams (eds), *Culture Contact in the Pacific: Essays on Contact, Encounter and Response* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993); Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1985); Thomas (2010).

41 For an excellent and exhaustive *Bounty* bibliography, including *Bounty* source material, see Salmond (2011, pp 490–92, n 1).

but by their collective cultural perspectives as well, and, perhaps most significantly, by what the Islanders were willing to show their visitors in the very peculiar context of those visits. Any written source material from the contact period needs to be contextualised and analysed in an attempt to underscore the writers' cultural foundations. Whenever possible, European documents and perspectives should be compared and contrasted with Pacific Islander views, tales and writings.<sup>42</sup>

The first European written source material on Tahiti was provided by British Captain Samuel Wallis (he stayed over a month in 1767),<sup>43</sup> French Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (nine days in 1768) and James Cook (several stints of many months from 1769 to 1777).<sup>44</sup> A Spanish Catholic mission also temporarily settled on Tahiti (10 months in 1774). After Cook was killed in Hawai'i in 1779, European ships stopped visiting Tahiti, not only because his violent death had belied idyllic representations of South Sea Islanders,<sup>45</sup> but also because most fleets were engaged in the American War of Independence. The first European ships to return to Tahiti were, in 1788, the convict ship *Lady Penrhyn* and, three months later, the *Bounty*. The *Bounty* mutineers provided major written records on Tahiti, because Boatswain's Mate James Morrison and Midshipmen Peter Heywood and George Stewart made on-field observations for approximately one-and-a-half years. Here is Morrison's opinion of the Tahitian records left by Wallis, Bougainville and Cook:

the Idea formd of this Society and of the Inhabitants of this Island in general by former Voyagers could not possible extend much further then their own opinion, None having remaind a sufficient length of time to know the Manner in which they live, and as their whole system was overturned by the arrival of a ship, their Manners were then as much altered from their Common Course, as those of our own Country are at a Fair, which might as well be given for a specimen of the Method of living in England – and such was always their situation as soon as a ship Arrived

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42 For penetrating studies of the Polynesians' reactions to Cook and Bligh, see Salmond (2011) and Smith (2010).

43 In the same year, Wallis' *Dolphin's* companion ship, the *Swallow* – which had become separated from her upon entering the Pacific Ocean – sighted the island of Pitcairn. Captain Carteret marked it down on his British chart as a hardly accessible and presumably uninhabited island, an indication that appealed to Fletcher Christian in 1790.

44 On board Cook's *Endeavour* (1768–71) was Sir Joseph Banks, and on board his HMS *Resolution* (1776–79) was William Bligh – two people who were to set off the *Bounty* mission in the following decade.

45 For more on the myth of Pacific cannibalism, Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005).

their whole thought being turnd towards the Visitors, & all Method tryd to win their Friendship. Meantime they were forced to living in a different way of life that they might the better please their New friends.<sup>46</sup>

Although the *Bounty* observers' journals were lost, records from Morrison, together with brief summaries of Heywood and Stewart, were preserved.<sup>47</sup> Morrison's account of Tahitian society, history and culture and Heywood's Tahitian dictionary were rewritten in England from memory. It must be borne in mind that Morrison and Heywood were then awaiting trial for mutiny, and presumably pandered to the British missionaries who could be powerful advocates in the court of public opinion; the budding London Missionary Society (LMS) was eager for any accounts of Tahitian 'savagery' that might encourage their plans to evangelise Tahiti.<sup>48</sup>

After the *Bounty*, Tahiti was never more without European residents, who produced additional written source material. British ships stopped there on their way to or from the nascent penal colony in Botany Bay, New South Wales. They stopped at Tahiti for provisions and, sometimes, as with the *Mercury* in 1790, to dispose of a troublesome crewman. The *Pandora*, Captain George Vancouver's *Discovery* and *Chatham*, and the crew of a shipwrecked British whaler, the *Mathilda*, all touched Tahiti between the departure of the *Bounty* (1789) and the return of Bligh on the *Providence* and the *Assistance* (1792).<sup>49</sup> Whaling and trading also started bringing visitors to the Island, consistently adding to the number of beachcombers. Altogether, 15 ships came to Tahiti in the 30 years after the first contact (1767–97).

And then the missionaries arrived.<sup>50</sup> The LMS's *Duff* was first sighted on 5 March 1797 – a date still celebrated as a national holiday in Tahiti, which gives a measure of the event's lasting impact. In terms of written source material, the first missionaries used the ethnographic information of Heywood and Morrison as a foundation for their own observations on the particulars of the culture they were concomitantly striving to eradicate. The subsequent missionaries' writings were numerous and

46 Smith & Thomas, 2013, p 262.

47 For more on Morrison, see Smith & Thomas (2013). For more on Heywood and Morrison, see Du Rietz (1986).

48 See Smith & Thomas (2013); Smith (2010, p 254).

49 For a full examination of Bligh's third stay in Tahiti, see Salmond (2011, chpts 17–21).

50 For more on that period, see Jonathan Lamb, Vanessa Smith & Nicholas Thomas (eds), *Exploration and Exchange: A South Seas Anthology, 1680–1900* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000); and the London Missionary Society Archives, SOAS, University of London.

some, like William Ellis' *Polynesian Researches* (1829), John Williams' *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises* (1837), and JM Orsmond's information recorded in *Ancient Tahiti* (1928),<sup>51</sup> provide much relied-upon written source material on Tahiti. Because the authors were writing with a mission to prove that the native Islanders were a benighted people in need of Christian salvation, it seems reasonable to assume that their reporting may be prejudiced, self-glorifying and self-exculpatory.

## Navigating *The Bounty from the Beach*

Just as the *Bounty* mission originated in Tahiti, the project of a collective volume on *The Bounty from the Beach* saw the light of day in Tahiti – a vantage point from which to observe the non-universality of the Western position. When the first *Bounty* International Festival was held in Papeete, Tahiti, in 2013,<sup>52</sup> I had been engaged in Pacific Island field research for 14 years at the University of French Polynesia. I introduced students in Anglophone Pacific Island studies to this portion of their history and culture and the way it was represented in literature and movies; they were so actively interested, and so thrilled to contribute to the Festival through round tables, workshops and cultural shows, that I could not refrain from probing the matter further. The groundbreaking Pacific *Bounty* studies of scholars Greg Dening, Rod Edmond, Anne Salmund, Vanessa Smith and Nicholas Thomas inspired me to further contribute to mapping the *Bounty* from this side of the world.

*The Bounty from the Beach*, therefore, takes readers on a discursive Pacific journey along some of the *Bounty's* routes. As no single book could possibly explore all *Bounty*-related topics, this volume will be partial and selective in its itineraries. It nevertheless aims to follow some of the bearings of the *Bounty's* course, progressing with the ship through time and space. Just as it crisscrosses the ocean, this discursive journey equally ranges far and wide across disciplines, methodologies and scholarly styles. Its multidisciplinary course strongly contributes to illuminate the multiple ways in which the 'little people on both sides of the beach' cross diverse groups and identities. Its eclectic approaches converge to examine the

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51 Orsmond's notes were put together by his granddaughter, Teuira Henry, and published after her death.

52 [www.bounty-tahiti.net/](http://www.bounty-tahiti.net/). See also Delphine Barrais, *La Dépêche* (Papeete, Tahiti, 26 Oct 2013, p 21).

colonial dimension of *Bounty* studies and representations, and highlight how these ‘little people’ have been silenced across disciplines. Together, our wide-ranging studies make a Pacific Island-centred exploration of the *Bounty* heritage.

In the first chapter, ethno-linguist Jean-Claude Teriierooiterai, who graduated at the University of French Polynesia, reconstructs the lifeworlds and practices of Oceanian Islanders through evidentiary bases: he contextualises the *Bounty* events by embracing both conventional history and vernacular historicities, looking at the *Bounty* from the indigenous side of the beach. Weaving together chronicles and lore, archives and Polynesian cultural practices, he embarks on a maritime history of the South Pacific,<sup>53</sup> comparing and contrasting European documents with Pacific Islander records. He examines the writings of European voyagers on contact history, including during the *Bounty* period, in relation to Pacific Islander non-textual sources. Following Epeli Hau’ofa’s dictum that ‘We cannot read our histories without knowing how to read our landscapes (and seascapes),’<sup>54</sup> he deciphers seascapes, landscapes and skylscapes, toponyms and unpublished Tahitian legends about the stars that Polynesian navigators used to read to navigate the ocean. Engaging polyphonic voices ‘from the indigenous side of the beach’, he extends our appreciation of the possibilities of *Bounty* history in the Pacific.

Following this first wide-angle Pacific perspective, the second chapter zooms in on some specific Oceanic journeys and makes a landfall on pre-*Bounty* Pitcairn. Archaeologists and ethno-historians Guillaume Molle and Aymeric Hermann, trained at the University of French Polynesia, investigate the Polynesian settlement of Pitcairn. By highlighting pre-*Bounty* Pitcairn’s close contact with the rest of Central Eastern Polynesia, they confirm the ongoing interconnectedness of this region prior to European contact. Complementing Teriierooiterai’s argument, they challenge Western perceptions of Pacific Island history by further bringing the historical agency of Pacific Islanders into focus, thereby shedding new light on Pitcairn’s alleged social and cultural isolation. Like Teriierooiterai, they look at the *Bounty* from the indigenous side of the beach and try to reconstruct the lifeworlds and practices of Oceanian Islanders through evidentiary bases. But their style and methodology are

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53 The term ‘South Pacific’ includes ‘not just those islands that lie south of the equator; it covers the whole region, from the Marianas, deep in the North Pacific, to New Zealand in the south’ (Hau’ofa, 1998, p 396).

54 Epeli Hau’ofa, ‘Past to Remember’, in Hau’ofa, 2008, p 73.

distinctly different, prioritising a formal archaeological study. The way this chapter gives voice to ‘the little people on the indigenous side of the beach’ is, therefore, contrapuntally, more conventionally analytical.

The next leg of journey, in Chapter 3, brings readers forward in time, to consider the Islanders and the *Bounty* sailors in Tahiti just before the mutiny (1789). University of London doctoral student Rachael Utting’s critical analysis of museal institutions and culture is largely concerned with hermeneutic perspectives and is, therefore, in turn, keenly distinct in its scholarly approach. The chapter highlights how the strangers from the *Bounty* crossed the beach and ‘went native’. It discusses a letter written by Bligh that describes the *Bounty* mutineers’ body markings – involuntary markings such as scars and wounds, and voluntary ones such as Polynesian and Euro-American tattoos. The study of *tatau* designs charts some of the ways ‘the little people on both sides of the beach’, Polynesian and Western, interacted during the *Bounty*’s five-month stay. It highlights how, through acts of body modification, the sailors and prospective mutineers attempted to reclaim their own bodies from the subjectification of the British Royal Navy, while the Islanders asserted their social, political and cultural agency and proved to be predominant in the self-presentation of identities.

Chapter 4 prolongs Utting’s discursive call at Tahiti in the years around the *Bounty* mutiny (1788–91), but this time in the mode of a literary critical analysis. This volume’s editor parses the way ‘the little people on both sides of the beach’ – Islanders and *Bounty* beachcombers – are represented in *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932), a widely read historical novel by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall. Its American authors had both crossed the beach in the 1930s – they were based in Tahiti and had married local *vahine* – and yet their representation of the *Bounty* in Tahiti proves to be predominantly from ‘the strangers’ side of the beach’. Referring to the works of Pacific historians and anthropologists, critics in colonial studies and narrative theorists, this essay approaches the Tahitian narrative in Nordhoff and Hall’s novel from an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural perspective. It highlights the narrative strategies used by the novel’s Western authors to focus mostly on the British ‘little people on the beach’, while occluding the Islanders. The chapter illustrates the textual processes by which the Tahitian characters are merely ‘exoticised’<sup>55</sup> through the filter of Western values, producing contingent historical fiction and strongly inflected colonial discourse.

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55 Jean Bernabé, *Éloge de la Créolité*, with Patrick Chamoiseau & Raphaël Confiant, bilingual edition, MB Taleb-Khyar (trans), Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p 76.

The fifth chapter is also a literary exegesis. It journeys back to Pitcairn, as Sorbonne Professor Jean-Pierre Naugrette revisits post-*Bounty* literary representations of the mutineers and their descendants, through Jack London's short story 'The Seed of McCoy' (1911). By the time London sailed the Pacific Ocean, Pitcairn was democratically governed by James Russell McCoy, a great-grandson of the *Bounty*'s McCoy. In London's fiction, 'Anglified native' McCoy navigates the ocean the ancient Polynesian way, from 'the chart of his memory'.<sup>56</sup> Building on Teriierooiterai's argument, Naugrette illuminates that London concomitantly draws another chart, a richly intertextual one. An expert in Anglophone literature, he demonstrates that London's narrative unfolds in the wake of two of Robert Louis Stevenson's major writings on the Pacific Islands: *In the South Seas* (1896, posthumous) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894). Stevenson's Pacific works are strongly critical of colonial discourse and policies, vindicating the little people on the indigenous side of the beach.<sup>57</sup> Naugrette's essay, therefore, reads McCoy's cruise as a literary exorcism of the ill-fated *Bounty* mutiny, where the 'little' man from Pitcairn asserts commanding agency and is turned into a potential God-like figure.

Chapter 6 examines the cinematic descendants of Nordhoff and Hall's *Mutiny* novel. Literature and film critics Professor Roslyn Jolly and Dr Simon Petch, from the University of New South Wales and University of Sydney respectively, dissect the nuances of Marlon Brando's performance as Fletcher Christian in MGM's 1962 film *Mutiny on the Bounty*. This sixth essay pits a Wildean, dandified Christian against a cruel and irrational Bligh-in-command. Christian's ironic detachment is seen as existential armour against the absurdities of the postwar world of the film's production, as exemplified by escalating atomic testing in the Pacific Islands. The protagonists' developing conflict leads into an exploration of what it means to be a 'gentleman', albeit 'on the beach',<sup>58</sup> in the 1960s. It also highlights the Cold War colonial powers' deadly contempt for 'the little people on the indigenous side of the beach'.

56 Jack London, 'The Seed of McCoy', in *Tales of the Pacific*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics, 1989, p 94.

57 See Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2009); see also, Sylvie Largeaud-Ortega, *Ainsi Soit-Île. Littérature et anthropologie dans les Contes des Mers du Sud de Robert Louis Stevenson* (Paris, Honoré Champion, 2012).

58 'On the beach' is a 19th-century geolectal expression meaning 'destitute' in the Pacific. See Roslyn Jolly, 'Introduction', *South Sea Tales* (Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 1996).

The seventh essay, by Princeton University graduate now Denison University historian Adrian Young, takes us back to Pitcairn. The offspring of *Bounty* female Islanders and male British sailors have made a new island, with an indigenous side of the beach that is now hybridised. Through a study of material culture, this final chapter blends together histories and texts. It enhances the *Pacific Bounty's* 'diversality'<sup>59</sup> by charting the exchange and dissemination of *Bounty* artefacts during the last two centuries, from Pitcairn to the rest of the world. The descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers on Pitcairn and Norfolk islands have given out relics as a means of negotiating their relationship with the outside world. Through them, Pitcairners have fashioned an identity for themselves as romantic, pure, pious and loyal. Once placed in museums and private collections, *Bounty* relics have become sites of captivation, drawing in and retaining the sympathetic interest of collectors while serving as a medium through which outsiders can project their own images of Pacific life. This chapter therefore pulls together the volume's strands of history, historicities and imaginary representations, through a final examination of the records of 'the little people on the beach', their very bodies and surnames sometimes raised to the status of British national treasures. It establishes that, as in ancient Polynesian times, a small-sized Pacific Island like Pitcairn is connected to the wider world through an elaborate network of trades and exchanges – even by the garbage washing onto its shores as a result of the global environmental crisis.

'It is now very strikingly no longer the case that the lesser peoples – formerly colonised, enslaved, suppressed – are silent or unaccounted for', Edward Said wrote in his 1994 Afterword to *Orientalism*.<sup>60</sup> This cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary collection of essays around the *Bounty* capitalises on a widely shared fascination for the *Bounty* story in order to draw scholarly attention to the Pacific Islands. Expanding on an anecdotal occurrence in British maritime history, it highlights the Islanders' powerful agency throughout history, from the times when their ancestors sailed the ocean long before the Vikings started exploring the Northern Hemisphere, through the periods of contact and post-contact with Westerners, to the present. It throws light on the Western colonial discourse that undertook

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59 'Diversality' is the opposite of 'the totalitarian order of the old world, fixed by the temptation of the unified and the definitive ... it opposes to Universality the great opportunity of a world diffracted but recomposed, the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities' (Bernabé, 1989, p 114).

60 Edward W Said, Afterword, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994 (1978), p 348.

to stifle and silence this agency, and the neo-colonial policies that have been applied to Oceania, and still are: hegemonic moves that have led to global environmental nuclear and ecological hazards. As a whole, the collection contends that what unfolds in this vast ocean matters: the stakes are high for the whole human community.

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