Re-writing Colonial Discourses: “Paradise” and “Savage” in South Sea/Nan’yo/ Pacific Writings

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Representation of the Pacific and its islanders has been a site and a mode for the West’s cultural and political suppression of them ever since James Cook’s voyages in the late eighteenth century. But especially since 1960s it also has been a locale for indigenous resistance. In Western texts such representation often reflects images of non-Europe or of “paradise” and “savagery.” These motifs have been indispensable to depict colonialist desires. Borrowed or appropriated by indigenous writers, the motifs have been able to function as a tool for defying and transforming colonial discourses.

South Sea writing by writers such as Robert Michael Ballantyne, Herman Melville, Pierre Loti, Robert Louis Stevenson, Paul Gauguin, and Somerset Maugham, has usually been cited as a case in point to illustrate such colonial illusions and textual oppression. But as this essay will suggest, the colonialist writer has not always followed or strengthened the framework of “paradise” and “savage,” and likewise the (ex-) colonized writer has not necessarily attempted to abrogate or subvert this discursive formation. I will examine Stevenson’s text first, and then Japanese writer Atsushi Nakajima’s short stories. These European and, especially non-European colonizers’ anti-colonial discourses are rarely discussed in “postcolonial studies.” Third, I will deal with Guamanian historian Chris Perez Howard’s biographical and historical text with its background of imperialism of Japan and US, and lastly, Western Samoan writer and critic Albert Wendt’s novel, focusing on their textual strategies for responding to colonial discourses and creating self-representations. These last two cases will serve to relativize and revaluate Stevenson’s and Nakajima’s work and to show the complexity of the issues of subjectivity and agency in Pacific writing.

R. L. Stevenson’s fictional story “The Beach of Falesá” can be separated from other South Sea writings such as Melville’s Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847), Loti’s Le Mariage de Loti (1880), and Stevenson’s own account of his experience in the South Pacific, In the South Seas (1896). These texts are all
closely related to the theme of paradise lost, and Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858) extols the introduction of Western civilization and Christianity. In contrast to such idealization, according to Stevenson’s letters to Sidney Colvin from Vailima in Samoa, after the idea for the story “shot through me like a bullet” in November 1890, he wrote and reworked it over the next year, and finished the self-styled “first realistic South Sea story” in September 1891:

There is a vast deal of fact in the story, and some pretty good comedy. It is the first realistic South Sea story . . . everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance and ended in a kind of sugar candy sham epic . . . You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale, than if you had read a library . . . . But there is always the exotic question; and everything, the life, the place, the dialect - traders’ talk, which is a strange conglomerate of literary expressions and English and American slang, and Beach de Mar, or native English the very trades and hopes and fears of the characters, are all novel and may be found unwelcome to that great, hulking, bullering whale, the public.³

For Stevenson, in “The Beach of Falesa” the Western tradition of portraying the South Pacific as a romantic paradise forms the groundwork on which a totally different adventure is erected. The various editorial changes attest to the difficulties of making such a change. As Neil Rennie suggests, there is little coincidence between the romantic factual *In the South Seas* and the fictional “Falesa” although Stevenson declared that the latter included “a vast deal of fact.” ⁴ While he does not completely reject the “paradise myth,” his hard-wooed prescription of the “facts” allows “Falesa,” as Rod Edmond asserts, to “[offer] Pacific writers a less antagonistic model to work on.” ⁵

The narrator, an island trader, Wiltshire, arriving at the village of Falesa on an imaginary South Sea island, marries an island girl, Uma, in a counterfeit ceremony organized by Case, a local trader. Wiltshire soon discovers that his own trade-store is taboo to the natives, who have a superstitious fear of Uma. Realizing that Case has tricked him, and ashamed of his own role in the mock marriage, Wiltshire asks a visiting missionary to conduct a proper marriage between Uma and himself, and then proceeds to investigate the deceptions practiced by Case, who controls the islanders by playing upon their superstitions. In the climax of the story Wiltshire exposes Case’s trick.
Wiltshire has come to the island in need of recuperation. He feels and smells the breeze of “wild lime and vanilla”: “the look of these woods and mountains, and rare smell of them, renewed my blood.” This Edenic scene appears to be an archetypal opening of South Sea story. The natives are depicted as dupes: they are so innocent that Case can manipulate them as he pleases. But it is a perverted Eden: Uma makes a fetish of his document certifying that she “is illegally married to Mr. John Wiltshire for one week, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell when he pleases” (13) - it is a negative version of a “familiar scenario.” The analogy between Polynesians and children is a commonplace of Stevenson’s South Sea writings.

Using such stereotyped motifs of “paradise” and “savage,” the text centers the traditional colonial discourse of cross-cultural love and adventure romance. According to Mary Louise Pratt the marriage plot in colonialist texts is a “romantic transformation of a particular form of colonial sexual exploitation.” The transracial love romances mystify actual colonial relations, allegorizing a colonial illusion in which a feminine colonized submits voluntarily to a masculine colonizer, and often end up with the departure for home of the European male, leaving his native lover to wilt and die. In “Falesá” there is something of this but also demystifying of the romance as part of a sordid trade. In “Falesá” Stevenson transmutes the colonialist cross-cultural love romances. Wiltshire abandons nostalgia and makes up his mind to live and work together with Uma all his life. Uma turns “a powerful big woman” (86) instead of being ruined.

“Falesá” is also a quest story where Wiltshire makes a nocturnal exploration into the jungle and murders Case to put an end to their rivalry. Elleke Boehmer points out that adventure romances inculcated an “imperial ethos” in public schools and brought the Empire to its “climax of self-regard.” In her words: “Empire both stimulated and satisfied the wildest imaginings.” In many stories about the Pacific these imaginings took the form of cannibal savagery and white victory. In Stevenson’s tale savagery is acted out more amongst the white men than the “savages” they trade with. The violent rivalry between Wiltshire and Case represents the moral decay of imperial adventure. The story exposes a white man’s trick, and lays bare colonialist material greed.

Furthermore “Falesá” includes tales told by Uma, which unlike Case’s productions remain undiminished at the end of Wiltshire’s yarn. Uma attempts
to prevent her husband from entering Case’s bush by recounting local tales of
devil women who bewitch Falesán young men, and of a spirit in the form of a
boar that once chased her. Wiltshire rejects Uma’s stories as he does Case’s
writing. But unlike Case’s false certificate her tales are not cited as her speech
but incorporated into Wiltshire’s realist story. Stevenson juxtaposes Western
realist and fraudulent literate discourse with indigenous fables as a counter-
narrative mode, which are vulnerable to, and modified by, colonialism.

Wiltshire is an ambivalent character. While reiterating a self-affirming
colonialist discourse - “I’ve come here to do them [Kanakas] good, and bring
them civilisation” (27) - he rounds on the passing missionary, Mr. Tarleton,
ironically and self-tormentingly: “I’m just a common low God-damned white
man and British subject, the sort you would like to wipe your boots on” (42).
As an ordinary, unredeemed colonialist he ends his narrative with concern
about his half-caste daughters: “I can’t reconcile my mind to their taking up
with Kanakas, and I’d like to know where I’m to find the whites?” (86). While
ambivalence brings him to this quandary, the ending reveals fundamentally
racist beliefs which make Stevenson’s story atypical though it may be
unacceptable to Pacific writers today. Indo-Fijian writer and critic Subramani
argues: “Naturally the European writer cannot be expected to treat Samoan
subjects or characters in the same way as [Samoan writer] Wendt. . . no
Samoan writer will turn to him [Stevenson] for insight into his culture or
people, although he might learn a great deal about the craft of fiction.”
Notwithstanding such reservations, “Falesá” has something in common with
postcolonial Pacific writing in its attempt to revise standard colonial
discourses.

Colonialist romances using the motifs of “paradise” and “savage” in the
“South Seas” have been reproduced not only in the Western great world
powers. Japan, which Westernized itself through importing cultures and
institutions from Western countries and in turn expanded itself into Asia and
the Pacific to vie with those Western powers, also produced romances set in
nan’yo (the South Seas). These were mass-produced especially in the 1930s
and early 1940s. Keizo Shimada’s cartoon story Boken Dankichi (The
Adventures of Dankichi) and Yoichiro Minami’s story Midori no Mujinto (The
Green Uninhabited Island) are typical of those narratives, both serialized in
the then most popular boys’ magazine, Shonen Kurabu (Boys’ Club). (The
former appeared from June 1933 to July 1939, and the latter from January to
In *Dankichi* Dankichi, a Japanese boy, relieves the cannibals on a South Sea island from their poverty and "unenlightenedness" by civilizing the island and Japanizing them. *Midori* depicts the adventure of a castaway Japanese family on an isolated island in the South Pacific, who cooperate with the uncivilized natives to battle against the evil white pirates. In those days, as the author of *Dankichi* comments, "the South Sea Islands [Micronesia] was a mandated territory under Japan, and the discourse on its advancing southward was spreading abroad in the form of the exploitation of the south; all Japanese people's eyes were turned towards the South Seas, so the South Sea island was ideal as Dankichi's stage."

Atsushi Nakajima spent about eight months (July 1941 to March 1942) in Koror, Palau, Micronesia, as a civil servant of the Nan’yo cho, a gaichi (the overseas territories of Japan) government office, which Japan established in Koror in 1922 after it possessed Micronesia (except Guam) as its mandated territory in 1920. Although his duty was to investigate the islands in order to edit the Japanese language school textbook for native children, Nakajima abhorred the duty. His stay in Palau was incidental to his finding a climate suitable for his health and improving himself as a writer, just as Stevenson sojourned in Samoa. Immediately before leaving naichi (the main islands of Japan), Nakajima finished writing a story, "Hikari to Kaze to Yume" ("Light, Wind, and Dreams"; published in 1942), modeled mainly on Stevenson's *Vailima Letters* (1895) describing his life in Samoa. The story is heterogeneously composed of both the diaristic accounts by the protagonist, Stevenson, and the omniscient narrator's biographical and historical descriptions. It represents Nakajima's own view of literature, exoticism, primitivism, and anti-colonialism, through the eye of Stevenson, who so blended in with the Samoan community as to be titled "tusitala," the teller of tales.

Nakajima focused on "storytelling" or orality in writing, which modern Japanese "literature" tended to neglect. Those modern Japanese "literary" writings, especially novels (the form appropriated from Europe), which surrounded Nakajima, were written in the Japanese language which had been Westernized linguistically and epistemologically. Their transparent, disinterested narration, supported by modern scientific discourse, produced a fictional and political space, homogenizing various differences and assimilating "others" into the "Japanese." For Nakajima it was an "ugly" "hybrid" space.
The text “Hikari” implies Nakajima’s centrifugal resistance against such centrifugal Westernized Japanese literature. He demonstrates his position by translating and appropriating Stevenson’s text in his unique style using Chinese expressions. (Nakajima comes from a family of scholars of the Chinese classics.) He opposed normative Western values both by reshaping borrowed Western textual form and by using local literary textual tradition. In this sense he is similar to Pacific writer Wendt, who will be mentioned later.

But seen in the light of the motifs of “paradise” and “savage,” the text depicts Samoa and its islanders as multifarious stereotyped images: exotic, beautiful, dismal, unenlightened, comical, cunning, vigorous, gentle, or clever. In the text they are pitiable beings needing to be more civilized and saved from Western colonialism. The main action of the story follows Stevenson; Stevenson’s contemplation occupies the center of interest. It is no more a story about Samoans than is Stevenson’s “Falesá”

During his actual stay in the Pacific Nakajima could not become a “teller of tales” like Stevenson. He was almost always suffering from endemic diseases or his chronic asthma attack (of which he died late in 1942, aged 33) and was swamped with his official duties. After returning to naichi, Nakajima wrote nan’yo stories entitled “Nanto-tan” (“The Tales of the South Sea Islands”) and “Kansho: Mikuroneshiya Junjok-sho” (“The Atolls: A Selection of the Records of a Tour of the Islands in Micronesia”), based mainly on his own experiences and materials he had collected on the spot. (“Nanto-tan” and “Kansho” were, together with his other stories, published as Nanto-tan in 1942.) Basically these stories are not told through Stevenson’s but through Nakajima’s own eye.

They are composed of three and six short pieces, respectively. As its subtitle suggests, the six pieces of “Kansho” are stories about the experiences and impressions of the protagonist-narrator, “I” (Nakajima), in nan’yo. And so is the last story of “Nanto-tan,” “Niwatori” (“Hens”). In the early part of “Niwatori” the narrator says: “In short, I cannot still grasp what the islanders are. And it seems to me that the more opportunities to come in contact with them I have, the more rises the incomprehensibleness of their mentality and mood. The natives’ feelings are getting more and more incomprehensible to me in the third year than the first that I came to nan’yo, and even in the fifth more than the third.”14 In the last part, too, he emphasizes the “fact that the South Sea people are still totally inscrutable to me” (372). Although Nakajima wrote “Niwatori” after the model of a diary by an ethnologist and artist,
Hisakatsu Hijikata, whom he had become acquainted with in Koror, Nakajima created the expression “incomprehensible islanders” for himself.

This “incomprehensible nan’yo” is a theme penetrating “Nanto-tan” and “Kansho.” It stands in contrast to both Western and Japanese colonial discourses. Above all Nakajima had to resist his own epistemic framework restrained by Western fiction. In “Mahiru” (“Midday”) of “Kansho” “I” (Nakajima) reproaches himself: “you are not looking at the islanders. You are just looking at copies of Gauguin. You are not looking at Micronesia, either. You are merely looking at faded reproductions of the Polynesia Loti and Melville depicted” (399). In addition, as is suggested in “Mariyan” (“Marian”) of “Kansho,” he felt disgusted with “hybridized,” Japanized Koror: “Neither the tropical nor the temperate looks beautiful here... In this place the things which ought to have tropical beauty are shriveled up through the castration by the temperate-civilizational, and those which ought to have temperate beauty only present unbalanced feeble looks under the tropical climate and nature” (403). For instance, in “Fubutsu-sho” (“An Abridgement of Things South Sea”) of “Kansho” the narrating “I” takes notice of “an Indian-ink-painting-like scene” which is “quite different from Gauguin’s paintings” (my emphasis). At the same time he repeatedly points out that the islanders’ Japanese is faltering despite their Japanization for over twenty years: the vanity of Japanese assimilationism.

In “Kansho” Nakajima attempts to destabilize his cognitive constellation through the “incomprehensible nan’yo.” “Sabishii Shima” (“A Lonely Island”) tells of an island where people are on the way to extinction because of their scientifically inexplicable sterility. The attitudes towards the narrator of a young native woman in “Kyochikuto no Ie no Onna” (“A Woman in a House with Red Jasmine Trees”), and of a native juvenile delinquent, Naporeon, in “Naporeon” (“Napoleon”), are both enigmatic to him. He never judges their behavior from his existing knowledge or from his images of the islanders as “amorous” or “cunning.” No matter how much they are Japanized, Nakajima depicts them as unknowable “others...” not as knowable domesticated “others” as in colonialist discourses.

By appropriating European fiction Nakajima also expresses the idea that the colonizer from naichi and the colonized in gaichi are mutually “others.” In doing so he dismantles the ambivalence of colonial discourses, in which the colonized subject is vested with its identity with, and its alterity to, the colonizer simultaneously. In “Mariyan” the eponymous young Kanaka woman
of the noblest family in Koror has been educated in naichi and is a well-read person: “her mind is no longer Kanaka” (402). Nevertheless, when the narrator finds on the table in her house a Japanese version of Loti’s *Le Mariage de Loti*, Mariyan complains to him that the real South Pacific is not depicted in the book (in contrast to him in “Mahiru,” who cannot help but project Western writers’ representations of the South Seas into the Pacific before him). Mr. H (probably Hijikata) says to her teasingly, “‘When you get married next time, your partner ought to be from naichi’” (409). (Mariyan is so “civilized” that native men are no match for her.) But she does not approve of his idea: she says, “‘Though I made friends with some men from naichi, none of them has ever been back here again once they went home’” (410). In other words, she firmly and sarcastically refuses to fall into the same trap as Rarahu, a Tahitian woman in Loti’s story she has read, who marries Loti, a French naval officer. He is ordered home, and she dies of illness in solitude. In Stevenson’s “Falesá,” as we have seen, Wiltshire throws out indigenous fables Uma has told him. In “Mariyan” Mariyan in turn counterattacks Western colonial fantasy.

Whereas “Niwatori” (of “Nanto-tan”) and “Kansho” are composed of the narrator’s recounting of his own experiences, in the other first two stories of “Nanto-tan” “Kofuku” (“Happiness”) and “Fufu” (“A Married Couple”) the “I” narrates Palauan legends. In the two stories “I” appears only as a narrator. He is not a neutral or transparent narrator, but he does not make his presence felt as a character as in Nakajima’s other nan’yō stories. Unlike the narrator of “Falesá,” who depreciates local tales, the attitude of the narrator of “Kofuku” and “Fufu” towards those legends is valuefree.

In the two stories Nakajima creates the more “incomprehensible nan’yō” by using the form of “legend” originating in oral community, and in doing so he allegorizes and appropriates the colonialist discourse of the “liberation” of miserable, servile “savages.” Colonial allegorical discourse of “liberation” dehistoricized by use of stereotyped “paradise” and “savage” is reallegorized, destabilized and transformed in these two pieces.

The tale which the narrator tells in “Kofuku” shows how the positions of a “pitiable,” “ugly,” “timid” manservant and his “spiteful” master, the richest elder in his village, are reversed. The manservant, accepting as his fate his miserable life and the exploitation by his master, comes to have a dream night after night where he exchanges his condition with that of his master. On the other hand, his master also comes to have the same dream every night. Before
long the manservant becomes more and more animated, and the master, more and more emaciated. Both of them come to believe firmly that the world in dreams is more realistic than that in the daytime. In the text Nakajima suggests that fiction is closely related to reality and attempts a textual critique of the actual exploitation.

In “Fufu” “T” tells a “tale of Gira Koshisan and his wife Ebiru,” introducing the Palauan customs of women’s scuffling over a man in public and of unmarried women’s servicing of men. Kosisan, a “meek,” “pitiful,” “servile” islander, is under the rule of his despotic, jealous wife, Ebiru, who often seeks and wins such scuffles. He is too accustomed to her tyranny to escape from her, but when finding the faithfulness of Rimei, a beautiful woman, who has served him and is so strong as to defeat Ebiru, he finally runs away from Ebiru to Rimei. Ebiru, left by her husband, soon finds herself a new rich partner bereft of his wife. In this tale it is not outsiders but an islander, Rimei, who delivers Koshisan from the tyrant, Ebiru. Furthermore not only the oppressed (Koshisan) but also the oppressor (Ebiru) and the savior (Rimei) are incapable of living without depending upon others.

Both of the stories have a close connection with actual colonial invasions. In “Kofuku” “bad diseases” (“white men” introduced) have already “invaded” the Island of Koror. In “Fufu” the narrator explains that the custom of unmarried women’s service for men has been abolished in the period of Germany’s occupation and that the other one of women’s public fighting over men still remains in existence under Japan’s rule. Contrary to Nakajima’s other nan’yo stories describing what he has seen and speculated about, they are stories about the islanders. He compelled himself to regard them as incomprehensible “others” in order to resist the West’s and Japan’s colonial discourses on the Pacific. But explicit expression of resistance would have been subjected to censorship. In addition, many writers had been unable to elude an intertextual framing of the Pacific and had reproduced stereotypic images of the islanders. Only by connecting his stories to “legends,” that is, a code of oral culture, could he write the stories about the islanders themselves.

Japan’s colonialism, which Nakajima implicitly portrayed as incongruous, is retold from a different position in Mariquita: A Tragedy of Guam (1986). The author, Chris Perez Howard, was born in Guam, Micronesia, in 1940 of an American father and a Guamanian Chamorro mother, and was brought up in the US. Mariquita is a story about his mother’s life: her happy girlhood, love
and marriage with his father, and her suffering and mysterious death under Japan’s invasion during World War II. But Mariquita is not a simple biography. The author writes in the preface: “I never realized that the history of Guam was so confusing and so often contradictory. To try and decipher the truth from conversation so richly embroidered with imagination was also difficult. But the most difficult was trying to remain emotionally uninvolved when the story was about my mother.” He, therefore, wrote this story both as “history” and as “literature.” Actually he weaves photographs, letters, diaries, newspaper clippings, etc. of those days into the text through “research” on the records and testimony on Guam and his mother. (It is emblematic that the images of a community and that of a mother overlap each other.) In presenting Guam from this “scholarly” perspective, he tells the story from a viewpoint of the “other” - an American.

For him, however, the relation to Guam is not only an emotional one that should be overcome in terms of objectivity. In his words: “Since returning to Guam I have sought information about my Chamorro heritage and, as a result, discovered another identity - my Chamorro self” (iv; my emphasis). Mariquita came out in print from the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. It says on its flyleaf that “Storytelling was an important feature in the Chamorro culture as it was the way to remember things for years to come” (i). This book is, in his words, “written with the hope that people will know through the life of one girl, the sad history of the occupation of Guam” (89). In Mariquita Perez Howard fills the role of being representative of the Chamorro people and culture, or telling a story of the “self” to the “others” authentically.

Accordingly it can be said that the author is literally both the self and other to the Chamorro culture. Not only the author but also the text itself is heterogeneous both in form as stated above, and in content. In Mariquita the generic and cultural syncretism in race, language, church, education, architecture, marriage, fashion, food, etc. is depicted positively. An embodiment of this happy syncretism is the eponymous heroine, a girl of high birth, “part Spanish, Filipino, Chinese and a direct descendent of the last full-blooded Chamorro” (2). Although she has a “face which held all the beauty and mystery of the Pacific” (2), she is never a stereotypical Pacific girl: her life and sense of values are so Americanized that she is reprimanded by her American husband for her lack of “pride in her own culture” (38) this episode symbolically suggests that indigenousness of the colonized
("Chamorro-ness") is "discovered" by the colonizers (Americans). For him Mariquita ought to be a "comprehensible other," both assimilated and differentiated: his reprimand implies the anxiety concealed behind colonialist desire which Nakajima's "incomprehensible nan'yo" blackwashed.

Guamanians, however deeply Americanized as Mariquita was, have never been regarded as Americans ever since the US military captured Guam in place of Spain in 1898. For America and Europe "Chamorro" implied voluntarily domesticated natives - good non-Westerners (Others) - a signifier to justify their colonization. From the position of Guamanians like Mariquita, that is "a fact which upset Mariquita because she considered herself to be an American" (36).

Mariquita represents the prewar Guam as follows: "Life on Guam was peaceful and harmonious. . The relationship between the Americans and Guamanians was overtly one of friendship and mutual respect. Racial prejudice, if any existed, was hidden " (23). Although inequalities are alluded to, it might be no exaggeration to say that in Mariquita Guam is described as a "modern syncretic paradise." instead of an "immaculate paradise" in Melville's Typee. The "paradise" is maintained relatively easily because of Guamanians' essential "propensity for harmony" and American soldiers' "exemplary character" (23).

It is the Japanese Imperial Forces that destroy the peace and harmony of Guam and Mariquita's newly-married life. The people run about trying to escape the ravages of the war. Her husband is imprisoned and taken away to Japan. Mariquita thinks "how much she hate[s] the barbarians who [disrupted] their happy life" (62: my emphasis). The "cruelties" of Japanese soldiers and the "fear and hardship" of Guamanians during the Japanese naval rule from March 1942 to March 1944 are depicted in some detail. Mariquita exposes from the viewpoint of the colonized the ostensibility of the Japanization of Guam and delusiveness of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," which Nakajima's nan'yo stories suggest vis-à-vis Japan's mandated territory from a colonialist point of view. While the Guamanians are "confident that the Americans soon would liberate them" (63), the "evil deeds" of Japanese soldiers attempt to make a victim of Mariquita: she is attached to the army as a "comfort woman." One day she is tortured when disobeying the head taicho, and is led away to the woods by a Japanese official. It seems that she was killed there, but her body was never found despite a thorough search by her relatives, friends, and American troops which
was conducted after “the Americans had liberated the island of Guam” (86).

Thus Mariquita represents the Japanese as the incoming colonizers - as, as it were, “modern evil savages.” Although in the text there appears no such savage as is depicted in European fiction, the act of “barbarity” is handed over to the Japanese. Despite the author’s emotional investment in the drama of his mother’s death, he attempts an objective, “factual” treatment of history. The transparent omniscient narrative where he is a quiet character Chris is objectified through the epilogue which is told by the first-person narrator. There he writes, for instance, “The sadness I feel for those who suffered injustice at the hands of the Japanese is deep, but I do not hate. The wanton bombing of the island by the Americans, especially the city of Agana, which had to be bulldozed to restore any semblance of order, to the extent that the old Spanish bridge now only points to where a river once existed, is to me equally unjust” (88). Moreover in this text, as in Stevenson’s “Falesá,” it is the colonizers that take on “savagery,” instead of the islanders as in European colonial discourses.

But unlike Stevenson’s or Nakajima’s stories we have already seen, Mariquita reproduces a colonial discourse as it is - a happy marriage between a white man and an indigenous woman, their reluctant painful separation, and her tragic death - that was depicted in Loti’s works and so on. Furthermore a variation of colonial illusions is played out in the text: the colonized (Guamanians) admire the domination and assimilation by the colonizer (Americans), and the Western civilization (the US) delivers good natives (Guam) from evil savages (Japan). In Mariquita the motifs of “paradise” and “savage,” which have been produced repeatedly in Western colonial discourses, appear in a different form but not quite as a strategy of “colonial mimicry.”

Through the employment of the motifs of “paradise” and “savage,” Mariquita successfully sets up a counter narrative to Japan’s imperialism and self-fraudulent assimilationism. In the work, however, these motifs simultaneously function as the backing or tolerating of the US regime, which trained the author to English and its institutions of “literature” and “history.” Mariquita’s appropriation of colonial discourses will need to go through the “double process of cleaving” cleaving to and from the West in order to relativize its own historiography and to write back to such normative discourses more radically.
There is more acute consciousness of the image-making function of art in Western Samoan writer Albert Wendt. For him the real world of Oceania has been strongly shackled by various clichés and stereotyped images:

Up to a few years ago nearly all the literature about Oceania was written by papalagi [person of European stock] and other outsiders. Much of this literature ranges from the hilariously romantic through the pseudo-scholarly to the infuriatingly racist; from the ‘noble savage’ literary school through Margaret Mead and all her comings of age, Somerset Maugham’s puritan missionaries / drunks / saintly whores and James Michener’s rascals and golden people, to the stereotyped childlike pagan who needs to be steered to the Light. The Oceania found in this literature is largely papalagi fictions, more revealing of papalagi fantasies and hang-ups, dreams and nightmares, prejudices and ways of viewing our crippled cosmos, than of our actual islands.

To some extent the Pacific writer has become accustomed to viewing his/her world through the fictions created by outsiders, as we have seen in Perez Howard’s work. This is true of Wendt himself, who went to secondary school, teacher’s college, and university in New Zealand.

Wendt’s tripartite saga *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (1979) follows several generations of change in a Samoan family. The central section (“Book Two”) entitled “Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree” declares his intention to “write back” to colonial representation such as Stevenson’s. The narrator and protagonist, Pepe (Pepesa), looks out through his hospital window towards the hill where Stevenson is buried, and thinks: “If my novel is as good as Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, I will be satisfied.” He decides to become “the second Robert Louis Stevenson, a tusitala or teller of tales” (158) after contracting tuberculosis, which is the same illness as gnawed Stevenson’s life. Indigenous writer Pepe (like Nakajima) acknowledges colonialist writer Stevenson as his mentor.

But there is “a big difference” between his “novel” and Stevenson’s (and Nakajima’s) tales in that he says “I want to write a novel about me” (158). Stevenson spent his last four years (September 1890 to December 1894) in Samoa and he learned the language and culture. But Pepe never relies on him for discernment into Samoan culture or people. The autobiographical structure of the text corresponds to this protagonist’s manifesto to write a “novel about
the self.” Pepe writes in a “very poor grammar” (159) the “novel” casting glances at Pepe’s childhood, education, love, friendship and his imminent death in and away from the village of Sapepe. But Book Two is not merely a story of Pepe’s life. It is also a quest for the aitu (spirit) which was lost through civilization and Christianization.

Samoa represented in the text is a parody of the paradise myth. For the exotic, refreshing tropical scenery of European fiction, Wendt substitutes the lava field in Savaii. His characters are not “noble savages.” In other words, he borrowed the motifs of “paradise” and “savage” from Western colonial fiction, centered them in his text as colonialists had done, and transformed them to resist stereotypes depicted in such fiction.

Lava has a multi-faceted image. Tagata, the friend of Pepe, tells him: “The lava spreads for miles right into the sea. Nothing else. Just black silence like the moon maybe. . . . But in some places you see small plants growing through the cracks in the lava, like funny stories breaking through your stony mind. . . . it made me see things so clear for once. That being a dwarf or a giant or a saint does not mean a thing. . . . That we are all equal in silence, in the nothing, in lava. I did not want to leave the lava fields. . . . but then you cannot stay there for ever because you will die of thirst and hunger if you stay” (207-8). Lava signifies the dialectical repetition of fire and aridity, eruption and desolation, or life and death. Paul Sharrad points out that it also reveals “an iconoclastic rebirth, radical freedom for the individual and possibilities for self-realization in a more authentic mode of living that is as opposed to the fixed tyrannies of indigenous tradition as it is to slavish consumerist fixations stemming from the domination of western modernity.”

Tagata, the dwarf, nick-named “flying-fox,” is seized with a dark vision of the lava field and commits suicide. He has no choice but to commit suicide because the “flying-fox” who counts for nothing in Westernized society must find his home in darkness. Multiple ideas and images on Tagata man, maggot, vagrant, a free man, lava, and darkness are antithetic to “happy-go-lucky” Pacific islanders in colonialist fiction.

Tauilopepe, Pepe’s father, a powerful chief, struggles for the fulfillment of his secular dream through his plantation, “Leaves of the Banyan Tree.” Tauilopepe corrupts the ancestral land by his obsessive pursuit of worldly success through opening up the plantation by manipulating traditional values through the new forces gained by Christianity and colonialism (this is narrated in Book One “God, Money, and Success”). His desire is a reflection of the
external reality, the growing bourgeois idealism represented in Apia, the
capital city of Western Samoa. For Pepe (and Wendt) he is one of the Pacific
"mimic men," fruitlessly and incessantly pretending and seeking to be
different from what they are or to divorce themselves from fa'a Samoa (the
Samoan culture and way of life). At the same time, ironically, Tauilopepe
disrupts the Western illusory paradise image on the South Pacific by adopting
Western pragmatism.

In contrast, for Pepe, the external reality has lost its significance, and he
finds his self-sufficiency in interiority. Although being named after the
Sapepean legendary hero Pepesa, he is, unlike the legendary hero, imprisoned
in his own inferiority: he is incurably sick and his reflections are affected by
his fate. Pepe is an antithesis both to the local and outsider's traditional epic
hero.

Susana, Pepe’s wife, is also antithetic to both patriarchal and colonialist
traditions. She appears as a beautiful and obedient girl that is, an
embodiment of stereotyped image of Pacific women. But she becomes selfish
and cold towards her husband as soon as she marries him. What is important
for her is not her husband but “God, money, and success,” a slogan her
powerful father-in-law Tauilopepe holds up.

Toasa, the figure of authority in Sapepe, represents the old Samoa. Toasa,
the tuaa (senior orator) in Sapepe, is an incarnation of Samoan myth and
history: he had introduced Tauilopepe and Pepe into the myths of “lions and
aitu” that supported Sapepe and Sapepean history. Pepe assimilates the myths
whereas Tauilopepe rejects them as fabrications just as Stevenson’s Wiltshire
repudiates Uma’s fables. Toasa’s death means, for Pepe, the loss of a center,
for Sapepe, further fragmentation of fa’a Samoa, and for readers, the loss of
an exotic, idyllic, paradisal scene.

In Book Three (“Funerals and Heirs”), unlike the first-person narrative in
Book Two, the omniscient narrator in Book One reappears and tells of the rest
of Tauilopepe’s life after Pepe’s death. Book Three has two new Samoan
characters, Lalolagi and Galupo, far more Westernized than Tauilopepe and
Pepe who were both expelled from school in Apia. In Wendt’s text the
isolation and the sense of alienation Nakajima’s Mariyan has in indigenous
society are, as it were, re-written from its indigenous viewpoint. Lalolagi,
Pepe’s son, is brought up under Tauilopepe’s protection and goes to school in
New Zealand. When Lalolagi returns to Samoa, he is an unauthentic being.
Because of his individualism he cannot enjoy the fullest confidence of
Sapepean people and even of Tauilopepe who has laid his hopes on him as the successor to his empire. Lalolagi is short of such intelligence and reflection as to relativize the Western standard of value in which he is immersed.

Galupo professes himself Tauilopepe’s illegitimate son to stand as a candidate for an heir to his property. Galupo has spent his youth devouring Western philosophical and literary books before appearing in front of Tauilopepe to give leadership to his native village. Although Tauilopepe does not take his word that he is his son, Tauilopepe and Sapepean people cannot help but acknowledge him as a new leader succeeding to Tauilopepe because, unlike Lalolagi, Galupo has intelligence and consideration as well as activity and courage. In this sense Galupo is an epic hero synthesizing Tauilopepe and Pepe.

But on the other hand, Galupo is enigmatic. The text does not tell whether his allegation as Tauilopepe’s child is true or not. Galupo is so contemplative and Machiavellian that to the reader his real identity and intentions remain incomprehensible. Galupo is a stranger not only to outsiders but also to Samoans themselves. And for Galupo his mundane success is insignificant under the influence of Pepe. Galupo contemplates: “the real fall is when one’s eyes open inwards and find nothing. As Pepe must have done, and as I’ve done. I’m worth nothing and, knowing that since I was a child, I’ve been able to do the things I’ve done without any regrets or guilt” (363).

Pepe’s and Galupo’s appropriation is one that has passed through the double process of appropriation and rejection. Their metonymic indictment (their target is Tauilopepe, a “mimic man”) is carried out both by borrowing, taking over, or appropriating the ideological, linguistic, and textual forms of the colonial power and by moving away from colonial definitions, transgressing the boundaries of colonialist discourses on the South Pacific. In other words, Wendt’s textual metonymic strategy describes a displacement of value represented as “paradise” and “savage” in Western discourses through stereotypes, myths, multiple and contradictory belief, and jokes, and produces the enigmatic signifier, Galupo, (the signifier of “colonial mimicry”) as the effect of cultural fusion.

The descriptive frame of “paradise” and “savage” despite the transforming of its contents has been inherited not only in Western writings but also in Japanese and Pacific ones. Stevenson, Nakajima, Howard, and Wendt, as we have seen, have repeated, centered, and transmuted the traditional
representation of Edenic paradise and cannibal/noble savage in the Pacific, juxtaposing various cultures of both colonizer and colonized in their texts.

Colonialist love romance in Western fiction devolves to Stevenson’s, Nakajima’s, and Howard’s texts. It is, on the one hand, transformed and written back to in Stevenson’s and Nakajima’s South Sea/nan’yo stories, and on the other, emulated in Howard’s anti-colonialist Pacific writing. This shows that colonial discourses have been carrying at both fixity and fluctuation, and that both colonial and postcolonial discourses include ambivalence and contradiction.

Stevenson’s anti-colonialist textual strategy in his fiction is partly resonant with Nakajima’s and Wendt’s. They attempted to “liberate” their texts from colonialist South Sea or nan’yo writing by using orality such as fables, legends, and myths. Their texts represent the Pacific as an indeterminate, ambivalent, cross-cultural place, and have anti-heroic protagonists failing to feel at home in any cultures. Uma, Mariyan, and Susana are/become all transcultural, brave women antithetic to a romantic innocent Pacific virgin.

The motifs of “paradise” and “savage” as a projection of colonialist desires are demythified or historicized in different ways in the non-Western texts of Nakajima, Howard, and Wendt. The differences are closely related to their subjective positions. For the three the Pacific is the “other,” “another self,” and the “self,” respectively. It may be said that Nakajima is a colonizer colonized, Howard, a half-colonizer-and-half-colonized, and Wendt, an ex-colonized. Their “hybrid selves” are different from one another.

But more decisive to such differences is whether or not in their texts the three attempt not only to appropriate the two motifs and transform their contents but also to reappropriate the frame itself. In this sense Nakajima’s can be regarded as a prelude to Wendt’s work. In other words, contrary to the relative celebration of syncretism in Howard’s text, Nakajima’s and Wendt’s attitudes towards syncretism are more ambiguous. Both of them accepted (their inside/outside) heterogeneousness as reality and used their own heterogeneousness as the textual weapon to declare their angst against the heterogeneous realities instead of admiring “purity” or valorizing mythic past.

In contrast to Mariquita’s “harmonious syncrctic paradise” based on essentialism, Nakajima’s “incomprehensible nan’yo” and Pepe’s “lava” are fugitive interventions in the general scheme of colonial discourses. And though Wendt does not depict it in his work, the world of “Leaves of the Banyan Tree” which Galupo, the enigmatic epic hero, has taken over from
Tauilopepe will synthesize those romantic antitheses. It is a provisional space produced politically from the Pacific as a multicultural entity. Wendt argues: “What is the post-colonial body? It is a body ‘becoming,’ defining itself, clearing a space for itself among and alongside other bodies, in this case alongside other literatures. I’m saying it is a body coming out of the Pacific, not a body being imposed on the Pacific. It is a blend, a new development, which I consider to be Pacific in heart, spirit, and muscle; a blend in which influences from outside (even the English language) have been indigenized, absorbed in the image of the local and national, and in turn have altered the national and local.”

NOTES

1. Although, of course, this taxonomy includes some controversial problems, in this essay the three categories are regarded for convenience as the writing on the Pacific by writers from Europe/America, Japan, and the Pacific Islands, respectively. (“Nan’yo” is “the South Seas” in Japanese.) On the problematics of the terms of “Pacific” and “Literature” (“Writing”), see John O’Carroll, “A Sketch of a Problematic,” Mana 9.2 (1992).


11. Ibid., p. 32.


15. Chris Perez Howard, Mariquita: A Tragedy of Guam (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1986), p. vi. Subsequent page numbers in parentheses refer to this work.

16. For the colonizer, however, the very fact that the colonized write novels similar to his own destabilizes the border of "self/other." See Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), passim.

17. See Boehmer, op. cit., passim.

18. On examining Mariquita, however, it is of importance to give consideration to Simon During's argument: it is difficult for postcolonial thought to concede "the consent of the colonised to colonialism," "not just because such consent brought with it new forms of constraint, but because it muddies current post-colonial politics." Simon During, "Post-Colonialism," in K. K. Ruthven (ed.), Beyond the Disciplines: The New Humanities (Canberra: Highland Press, 1992), p. 95.

19. Subramani evaluates Wendt's work as follows: "Wendt started with the situation in the South Pacific in which there was no commonly
recognised literary language or store of techniques. One of his achievement is that he has invented for himself a discourse rich in Oceanic imagery, mythology and colloquialism, and invested and enriched the borrowed form of the novel with a variety of narrative styles derived from oral tradition and literature.” Subramani, op. cit., pp. 142-43.


