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**From the outside looking in: identity in  
selected Fijian short stories written in  
English**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Arts  
at Massey University

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## **Abstract**

Construction of colonial identities in Fiji were built upon the premise of British superiority and difference from others, as they were in other parts of the colonised world. Colonial discourse regularly employed stereotypes to reduce other communities into simple and therefore controllable concepts. Fiji's post-colonial voices have had to write their ways out of these reduced roles and clear a space for representations of life in Fiji that differ from earlier elucidations. The body of writing which began to emerge in the 1960s is represented here by a selection of short stories by a number of authors writing from and about Fiji.

The main focus here is on the ways identities which emerge from these stories pull the texts together into a definable body of writing, despite the diversity of writing positions, and despite some gender-based distinctions highlighted by Arlene Griffen and Shiasta Shameem. It is concluded that identities are more difficult to negotiate when outside opinions or forces are powerful. This observation is discussed in relation to the movement of characters from innocence to experience, the affect of progress on communities and individuals, the representation of women in the texts, and the position of individuals who travel to or from Fiji or who are descendants of migrants.

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## Preface

The Marquis de Sade asks the question, "Of what use are novels?" He answers this by writing "the novel is . . . the representation of secular customs, and is therefore, for the philosopher who wishes to understand man [sic], as essential as is the knowledge of history" (in Strobbe, 304). Building upon de Sade's idea, I initiated this research to understand something of life and culture in Fiji by reading the writing from and about this nation, more specifically the relatively recent writing of short fiction in English, thus discovering some of the issues that characterise life in post-colonial Fiji.

The approach used here to read the selected texts began as a working through of the conclusions made by two Pacific women, Arlene Griffen and Shiasta Shameem, who provide gender-based interpretations of some selected Pacific texts in the case of Griffen and selected works by Fijian-Indian authors in the case of Shameem. However, the focus of my analysis has shifted to provide a broader vision of writing from Fiji, thus subverting critical models based on simple binaries based on gender.

In this reading, aspects of the texts that make the stories resonate with the particular tensions that characterise Fijian life are identified. I also acknowledge that there are many differences to be found in this body of writing and some of these differences are distinguished. This type of reading looks at the ways women are represented in the texts, but also looks at wider issues relating to identity formation. The focus here is on how identities are constructed in relation to the different pressures that exist outside the main characters of each story.

My perspective as a reader is in one sense as an outsider: I am classified as an "ex-pat" by the immigration authorities in Fiji and as a *kaivalagi*<sup>1</sup> by

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<sup>1</sup> European.

those I live amongst. I am English, born to working-class English parents who emigrated to New Zealand in search of a more prosperous and less socially restricted life. As I grew up in New Zealand, I frequently identified with my English roots, and still do. I sense somehow that I belong to both countries and also to neither. It is as though I have slipped between the cracks. The sense of being caught in between two places has intensified since I married into a Fijian family and into a culture that is quite alien to my own. I am outside by way of my heritage, and yet, through marriage, I am inside the Fijian family structure and therefore the culture with all its relative freedoms and encumbrances. This is a very uncomfortable place to write from and the tension I have experienced while writing has made it hard, nearly impossible at times, to carry on with this research.

The resistance I have felt to being easily categorised reflects something of the difficulty that ensues when simple binarisms are used to classify anything or anyone. I hesitate therefore to label myself as anything other than a reader. But as for the issue of technically being an outsider because of my British origins, I lean on Gayatri Spivak's directive that,

the position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women . . . cannot be held as a theoretical presupposition . . . for it predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity. Whatever the political necessity for holding the position, and whatever the advisability of attempting to "identify" with the other in order to know her, knowledge is made possible and sustained by irreducible difference, not identity. What is known is always in excess of knowledge. (in Suleri 11-12)

It is from this position of being irreducibly different that I have attempted to read the selected texts, and I hope that the following analysis provides an effective overview for those readers who wish to understand something about life and culture in Fiji, both past and present.

## Chapter one

### Introduction

#### Gender politics as a critical model

With so much debate over how to approach contemporary writing from developing countries, creating a model for reading Fijian based texts proved difficult here. A description of how the critical approach in this study was reached is therefore provided to give a picture of some of the aesthetic issues that need consideration when reading the selected texts.

Two Pacific-based critics, Arlene Griffen and Shiasta Shameem, were the main focus initially for this reading. Their gender-based analyses of fictional writing from the Pacific and more specifically from Fiji provided the kernel for the critical approach adopted in the following work and therefore their ideas will be introduced first.

Griffen's analysis of Pacific works of fiction differs from that of other Fijian critics such as Subramani, Vijay Mishra, Satendra Nandan, and Raymond Pillai, who have concentrated on cultural and aesthetic issues. Instead, Griffen emphasises the way women and men are represented in the texts she selects, focusing on the representations of women in writings by various Pacific authors, including Subramani, Vanessa Griffen, and Pillai, from Fiji. Her analysis is from a feminist perspective and she explains that for her,

Feminist criticism is a political form of criticism which seeks to highlight in literature as in life the struggle between the sexes and to take an anti-patriarchal stand in that struggle. It militates against any comfortable acceptance of open misogyny and covert sexism.

("Ideology" 1-2)

Griffen works on the basis that writing plays an important part in constituting readers' views of women and social relations and therefore can also be instrumental in provoking resistance and change by providing readers with

alternative views of women ("Feminist" 2-3). Griffen argues in her dissertation, "The Different Drum," that if the ideologies underpinning the texts she studies are not acceptable when analysed from a feminist perspective then the texts can be deemed denigrating to women. For her, such writing only serves to perpetuate the traps women find themselves in as doubly colonised members of Pacific society.

Shameem makes similar observations, specifically about selected Fijian Indian writers. She writes that she is no longer satisfied with reading male-centred fiction: "short stories and novels where man [sic] is the central character and the focus of critics' attentions" (2). She identifies various stereotypical representations of female characters such as the "prattling of women," their "shrill voices," and the overall passivity of women in such fiction. For Shameem, these stereotypes, coupled with misogynist imagery and symbolism, clearly undermine the celebration of such writing as "some of the best literature coming out of the Pacific today" (2). Shameem restricts her focus to Fijian Indian authors, but her ideas are closely aligned to Griffen's broader appraisal of Pacific writers.

While making many valid observations of the texts, in the end Griffen and Shameem perpetuate the kind of biological essentialism Sneja Gunew discusses as part of her study on subjectivity. Gunew argues that if two unified subjects are used to create the sort of binarism assumed by Griffen and Shameem, whereby "men" and "women" form an oppositional model, there will be a seesawing between "contending unified subjects." Instead "the emphasis should shift to a decentred subject or to subjects-in-process in order to open up different kinds of discursive resistances" (114). Both Griffen and Shameem create a distinction between men's and women's writing, upholding the latter as being superior to the former, based upon their similarly voiced assertions that female writers tend not to write misogynistically whereas the male writers generally do.

It is Griffen and Shameem's criticism of Pacific and more specifically Fijian literature that initially acted as the focus for this thesis. However, while the desire to see writing evolve in the Pacific that does not fix women into predetermined, often stereotypical, roles is laudable, it seems too simplistic to demarcate Fijian literature as either misogynistic or not. As an alternative, the following reading is an attempt to understand the way identities operate in the selected texts. While I agree here that stereotypes can be found in the stories, this is not exclusive to the female characters or the texts written by women. Just as stereotypes simplify the world by placing subjects into reductive roles, so does any vision of a group of texts that simply tries to place them into two boxes labelled misogynistic or not.

#### A question of aesthetics

There are those who are of the opinion that using the title "Fijian literature" is not warranted. For instance, Subramani, a Fijian Indian writer and literary critic, is of the opinion that because Fiji has not produced a writer of the calibre of Albert Wendt, who is celebrated as worthy of study by Western critics, the literature that has been created "is not sufficient to sustain the title 'Fijian literature,' nor is it secure enough to be offered for close scrutiny" ("Images" 44). Subramani wrote this two decades ago and may well have modified his opinion about whether or not the writing that exists deserves such a label. However, I have included his comment in order to challenge the idea that a "literary giant" has to appear to validate the writing that already exists. This theory is an assumption based on Eurocentric aesthetic models (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffen 117) which demand that a certain quality and quantity of writing is needed before a national literature can be formed.

Paul Sharrad identifies the problem of using external European-based standards to judge writing from the Pacific. He points to the way that "passing recognition even in the islands themselves is founded on old and prejudicial

Eurocentric values," and that Pacific literature "'sneaks in' under the umbrella of Commonwealth, or third world, or post-colonial literary studies, but is generally not conceded sufficient primary or secondary output to warrant independent consideration" (4). If Pacific literature merely "sneaks in" to a larger group of writing such as Commonwealth literature and is not considered to have generated enough material to "warrant independent consideration," then this does not leave much hope for Fijian literature to be considered in its own right since it is, using this particular model, subsumed by Pacific literature. Sharrad's comment that there needs to be an "inspection of the critical apparatus that demands 'a body' of knowledge of a certain bulk or form" and a broadening of definitions of "text," "literature" and "culture"<sup>1</sup> is used as one of the assumptions of this study of Fijian texts. To accept that the writing emerging out of and about Fiji can be considered independently is to resist the delimitation of such texts to the margins, instead clearing a space for them to be read without prejudice.

Arlene Griffen has the view that if texts are judged using Eurocentric aesthetic standards, then the "intrinsic qualities" (in "Interview" 13) of developing post-colonial voices are not always appreciated. Though a degree of condescension can be read into this description, the view that using aesthetic standards from outside to judge writing from Fiji can undermine the uniqueness of such works is also considered in this reading. Griffen asks the question, "is there a black aesthetics which can encompass all kinds of third world writing successfully without setting up its own version of hide bound critical practices?" (in "Interview" 13). But terms such as "black aesthetics" and "third world" also deny the specificity of Fiji, Fiji itself being unique in the Pacific and

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<sup>1</sup> Arlene Griffen, in *SPAN*, records her reservations about Sharrad's own literary selection. Griffen reports that Sharrad justifies his limited choice of critics by saying that for editorial reasons, "several diligent promoters of this field have been omitted, that there are few indigenous critics represented, and that interviews and commentary by writers themselves" are excluded. Instead, a short list of further reading is added to "make up the loss" (Rev. of *Readings* 135).

also in the developing world. The Pacific has many different voices and locations; there are specific histories and post-colonial spaces from which works emerge. Therefore, any attempt to find a unifying critical approach that covers all can result in merging and therefore undermining this variety of positions.

Jennifer Byrnard identifies the tendency of Western theorists to ignore the plurality of peoples, interests, contexts that exist in the developing world, as an unspoken interest to maintain the binary opposition of us and them and its accompanying power relations (178). Thus, to swallow up Fijian writing under the umbrella of third world literature, or to subsume accepted critical positions under black aesthetics would be, to use Caren Kaplan's analysis of a politics of location in a feminist context,

problematic when it is deployed as an agent of appropriation, construing similarity through equalisations when material histories indicate otherwise. Only when we utilise the notion location to destabilise unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities can we recognise and work through the complex relationships between women [read: post-colonial voices] in different parts of the world. (139)

In the end, because of the problem of finding an appropriate critical apparatus with which to view the writing emerging from post-colonial Fiji, the approach adopted in this reading is that suggested by Katherine Mayberry who labels herself a white feminist who studies black writers. She suggests that a critical method be developed "that allows us to write sensitively, tentatively, and respectfully, that more faithfully represents our position as students of the texts, not masters" (A48). This is compatible with the fact that my authority as a reader of Fijian texts is not exclusive. This reading does not try to preclude other readings and should not be considered as speaking for the text. This is

merely a presentation of what was found in these texts by one reader; more specifically as a voice speaking outside the text. As Stuart Hall states:

Of course, the "I" who writes here must also be thought of as, itself, "enunciated." We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always "in context," positioned. (392)

What can be concluded with certainty is that the emergence of the new literature from voices in the post-colonial developing world has "necessitated a questioning of many of the assumptions on which the study of 'English' was based" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 4).

#### Identity: essentialism versus representation

The assumption that identities are hard to pin down is at the basis of Hall's model which presents identity formation as a production which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representations. Thus, there is, according to this model, no fixed idealised self. Existence emerges as a process of being. Hall also applies this model to the concept of cultural identities when he writes:

Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continual "play" of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names given to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narration of the past. (394)

This leads onto a definition of identity as it is used here. I have focused on the tensions, compromises and negotiations that make up the various characters to avoid treating identities in essentialist terms. In this study, I see identities

increasingly fracturing, as forces outside become more prominent. This pattern emerges in a variety of overlapping circumstances in the selected texts.

In the stories which depict home, growing up, and the increased tensions that accompany growth and departure from home, outside pressures are central to character formation. Linked to the depictions of characters in relation to home and childhood are the representations of individual people and communities in relation to colonial-based forces which still affect post-colonial Fiji. In this reading such forces are represented by the term "development," a word that encompasses not only the changes made by the colonial government in Fiji, pre-independence, but also the ongoing changes that have occurred post-independence. Changing educational, employment and housing structures create tension for many of the characters represented, particularly in terms of their inner sense of self and expectations from outside. Similarly, representations of female characters reveal the way women often have to negotiate a double bind of not only colonial oppression but also patriarchal domination. In this selection of texts the judgements of others are integral to the ways female characters emerge. Identity is also represented as a sliding between dual perceptions of being inside and outside. This type of character formation relates in particular to ways representations of Fijian Indians emerge against a historical context of indenturement and displacement, but it is not exclusive to the situation of being a migrant race, relating also to other situations where a sense of acceptance of or by outside communities is absent. In each of these circumstances, identities emerge from the interplay between inner and outer forces, and the greater the tension between these forces, the more fractured the characters' identities become.

### Writing in English

See Kam Tan writes: "Surely, post-colonial cultural texts do not merely find expressions in English alone" (153). In the case of Fijian literature there are of course written and oral traditions in the various dialects of the Fijian Indian and indigenous Fijian people respectively, but the formation of a national literary identity has consisted in the main of writing in English. Having said that, writing from Fiji in native languages does exist and at least two of the writers discussed in this selection, Satendra Nandan and Joseph Veramu, are bilingual publishers.

Subramani describes Fiji's emerging literature as still being at a "formative stage" ("Artists" 317) in that for indigenous Fijian writers there has been a translation from a highly developed oral tradition to writing in a language that is relatively new to Fiji's indigenous population. Indian writers in Fiji face a situation like that described by Aruna Srivastava, who for Indian writers writing in English, discusses the "pervasive influence" (73) of the imperialists' language which remained long after Britain granted India independence. According to Srivastava, Indians who write in English "must constantly be aware that they are continuing to displace their own tradition, that they are not only working in, but also valorising, the language of their (former) colonisers, to the detriment of others" (73). The issue of writing in English is, as Norman Simms writes, "fraught with political as well as intellectual implications" (101).

The problems associated with writing in English are central to the context out of which Fijian literature is emerging since despite independence the remnants of the imperialist centre remain embodied in the adopted language. The term "post-colonial," therefore, which is often read as "after the colonial era finished," can give the wrong impression given the powerful ongoing effect colonialism has had on nations such as Fiji. However, despite such colonial influences, Salman Rushdie argues that

those peoples who were once colonised by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it . . . they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers. (in Degabriele 3)

This thesis presents an attempt to categorise the selected works in terms of the writers' different approaches to negotiating identity in a world that is influenced by the colonial past. I am interested in the ways writers of Fijian literature have carved out a definable territory for themselves within the boundaries of writing in English.

#### Selected works

Arlene Griffen defines Pacific literature, and this affects how Fijian literature is defined since it is one of the many island nations that make up the Pacific, as "that writing produced by people who have been born in small Pacific countries and who have lived a good part of their lives there so that they have partaken of the Pacific way of life, regardless of their particular ethnic heritage" (in "Interview" 12 ). While I disagree with her narrow definition of Pacific literature, it is useful to borrow Griffen's view that writers should have meaningful knowledge of an area they are writing about, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Included in my selection here are two writers who write from outside of Fiji. By including these authors I test how far Griffen's statement can be taken, widening her definition to include writing that represents Fiji regardless of whether or not authors have spent "a good part of their lives there." Pillai's view that all writing must be considered as "fish that comes to the net" ("Prose Fiction" 2) is also useful to consider when deciding what should be included.

Wendt's anthology *Lali* provides a useful overview of the contemporary writing emerging from Pacific nations between 1960 and 1980, and therefore served as a useful starting point for discovering what has been written from and

about Fiji. In this anthology, Wendt tries to capture the beginnings of Pacific literature. Following on from this, Wendt's *Nuama* is representative of Pacific writing in English since 1980. His two collections have been invaluable in giving my selection of texts some chronological depth. In addition, Stead's anthology was referenced to provide texts by writers from locations outside Fiji. I lean heavily upon anthologies because these are representative of the most well-known Fijian short stories that have emerged since 1960.

However, I did not restrict my search to just anthologies but also read and include here discussion of some lesser known works which appear in other sources: *Mana*, a journal of language and literature from the South Pacific; *The Mana Annual of Creative Writing*, a special collection of creative writing that has appeared in *Mana*; *Creative Writing from Fiji*, edited by Stanley Atherton and Satendra Nandan; and *South Pacific Stories*, edited by Chris and Helen Tiffin. Pillai, in his paper "Prose Fiction in Fiji," points out that Fiji is represented by a variety of writers from Fiji, including native Fijians, Fijian Indians, part-Europeans, and Rotumans, but he notes the reluctance of Fijians to write fiction about themselves. Instead, others such as Vanessa Griffen and Subramani have attempted, from their limited view points, to explore the Fijian mind (3-4). Pillai lists three Fijian writers who show promise, including Akanisi Sobusobu (4), whose story I have discussed in this thesis, along with stories by Makereta Waqavonovono and Joseph Veramu, two other indigenous writers. Discussion of two Rotuman writers, Maniue Vilsoni and Vilisoni Hereniko, is also included, along with Satendra Nandan, Subramani, Raymond Pillai and Prem Banfal, four Fijian Indian authors. In addition, Vanessa Griffen, Virginia Were, and Janet Sinclair, who I will label under the heading "other writers," each write from different cultural perspectives and localities outside Fiji. Their short stories were added, in part, to avoid essentialist racist positions and also to test the boundaries of what can be included under the

label "Fijian literature," based on the assertion that texts included under this label should resonate with images and issues from Fijian life.

I focus here on the short story form, because it is the most commonly used form by the majority of writers. I was able, therefore, to facilitate an effective comparison between male and female writers, in part to test the criticisms made by Griffen and Shameem that the writing by Subramani and Pillai in particular tends to be misogynistic and that the writing by women such as Prem Banfal and Vanessa Griffen provide an alternative to this sort of stereotyping of women.

#### Thesis overview

Having in this first chapter provided an outline of my position as a reader in terms of some relevant critical models, the reasons behind using "Fijian literature" to group together the post-colonial writing which has emerged since 1960, the way identity exists inside representation and how this is explored in my reading of the texts, the issues that surround writing in English, and lastly, text selection and genre, I will now summarise the remaining four chapters.

In chapter two I explore the relationship between colonial discourse and post-colonial writing, whereby I view the latter as having to write itself out of stereotypes used in the former. I place emphasis upon understanding colonial positions and this is explored in relation to a colonial writer, Beatrice Grimshaw, who travelled to and through Fiji's main islands. By studying the way Grimshaw's narrative persona is formed, I was able to not only gain insight into the way the marginalised other is often represented in colonial discourse, but also discover the spurious nature of colonial constructions of colonial identities.

In chapter three I explore various post-colonial texts written by indigenous Fijian, Fijian Indian, and Rotuman male authors. Then in chapter four I provide an analysis of writing produced by indigenous Fijian, Fijian

Indian, and "other" female authors. In these chapters I have tried to represent Fijian life at its fullest by providing a text selection which communicates a variety of situations and subject positions. I did this because my aim is to show that despite the variety of representations of Fijian life, definite patterns emerge relating to identity which link the texts together into a definable body. Here, connections between the texts which relate to the way outside pressures destabilise identity positions are the focus, but I also acknowledge differences, particularly in relation to the ways male and female writers represent female characters in the texts.

In chapter five, I present my conclusions, arising out of my position as a reader, and the context out of which post-colonial texts from and about Fiji have arisen. I show how the selected texts are pulled together by the ways identities emerge, and this in turn provides a unique, collective representation of historical and contemporary life in Fiji. I also discuss here the issue of how women are represented in the texts and I show that women are represented in both male and female-authored texts in a variety of difficult positions. I aim here to leave the reader with a more complex vision of post-colonial Fijian literature which avoids simple binarisms.

## Chapter two

### Historical Context and Colonial Discourse

#### Colonialism in Fiji

The European powers that gradually discovered and colonised a large proportion of the globe are described by the Marguis de Sade as

turbulent, ferocious, uneasy, born for the misfortune of the rest of the world, catechizing the Asian, enchaining the African, exterminating the citizen of the New World, still searching the middels of the seas to subjugate misfortunate islands. (in Strobbe 305)

These colonising powers finally came to the "Feejees," an archipelagic nation consisting of over 300 islands, after two crucial events. First, Lieutenant William Bligh, adrift after the mutiny on the *Bounty*, stumbled upon and later charted some of these 300 islands in 1789 (Gravelle 1: 13-16), and second, the *Argo*, an American schooner, struck a reef, and its crew were carried ashore by native Fijians in 1800. After the arrival of the *Argo*, cholera and dysentery proceeded to decimate whole villages, and most of the crew, who were also affected by these diseases, never made it home (Gravelle 1: 27-31). However, through at least one of those few that survived, Oliver Slater, news reached Australia that Fiji was rich with sandalwood, a valuable commodity in China (Seth 6). Thus, the time of the sandalwood traders, or "beachcombers" as they were commonly known, began.

Then came the missionaries, the planters, and the traders, and the often painful process of colonisation grew in momentum. Eventually a Council of Chiefs, lead by Cakobau, ceded Fiji to Britain on October 10, 1874 and British rule of Fiji commenced (Seth 11). Under British rule the nation turned to agriculture as a source of revenue and under the first British governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, the indenturement of Indians for the purpose of providing

an agricultural labour force was sanctioned (Gravelle 2: 65). After indenture periods were completed, most of this imported population stayed on in Fiji and their descendants now make up at least half of Fiji's population (Subramani, "Images" 43).

Fiji gained its formal independence in 1970 on October 10 and Fiji's first Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, led Fiji as an independent nation (Seth 48). However, in 1987 a coup, led by the then Brigadier Sitiveni Rabuka, reminded the world that Fiji is a country that has a strong indigenous culture living along side a largely landless but nevertheless powerful Indian population that forms an important part of Fiji's economic backbone.

It is out of this history of colonisation, indenturement and a subsequent search for independence that a post-colonial literature written in English began to appear in the 1960s after decades of British literary dominance. This "new" literature was part of a larger body of post-colonial Pacific literature which, according to Griffen, has "parallels with post-colonial writings from Africa, India and the Caribbean" ("Different Drum" 11). Vijay Mishra more specifically argues that Indo-Fijian fiction has links with its Indo-Caribbean counterpart ("Indo-Fijian" 60).

#### Colonial discourse about the Pacific

Conventional European writing about Oceania is described by Albert Wendt as ranging from the "hilariously romantic through to the pseudo-scholarly to the infuriatingly racist" (Introduction *Lali* xiv). Wendt later writes in *Nuamua*, Introduction, that in colonial poetry and fiction the indigenous people are usually viewed "as exotic, as peripheral, as extras in the epic, as stereotypes" (2). Also, colonial writers of non-fiction commonly viewed the Islanders as "specimens to be studied and analysed" (2), or subjects to be "'saved', domesticated, 'civilised' or developed" (2). Thus, certain tropes for writing about the South Pacific began to be accepted.

Subramani describes how the stereotypes that were employed by colonial writers to categorise the indigenous people polarised them into a noble savage-evil savage dualism:

the accounts of the South Pacific by early explorers like Bougainville, Banks and Wallis gave currency to the familiar images of the noble savage and South Pacific paradise, which became the stock-in-trade of many South Seas idylls, and later the cinema industry and tourist trade. The idealistic accounts of Bougainville and others provoked an opposite reaction, particularly in the writings and teachings of the Evangelical missionaries.

("South Pacific" 76)

Subramani also emphasises the significant influence colonial texts have had on post-colonial writing since 1960: "reactions to the stereotyped images created by European writers form an inner dialect of the new literature" (78). There are many diaries, journalistic pieces, and travel logs, written in the ways Subramani describes, that reflect the colonial experience in Fiji in its many forms.

Just as for de Sade reading novels reveals something of the human condition (in Strobbe 304), for the reader, reading colonial discourse reveals not only the process of subjugation of marginalised communities, but it also exposes the colonial position, a position which was often characterised by misrecognition and misrepresentation of the local people. I read and include here a text by Beatrice Grimshaw, British travel writer, in order to discover and present something of the context out of which post-colonial texts from and about Fiji have had to emerge, and also to discuss the way colonial discourse of this type reveals much about the construction of colonial identities.

Beatrice Grimshaw: "A Lady in Far Fiji" (parts 1 and 3)

With ignorance of a culture goes the denial of its integrity.

Because culture is expressed symbolically, and thus has no fixed meanings, it is often invisible to others, especially to powerful others. (Cohen 199)

Beatrice Grimshaw wrote "A Lady in Far Fiji," a short non-fiction account of some of her experiences in Fiji, around the turn of the century. In it she details her travels through the interiors of both Viti Levu, and Vanua Levu, the two largest islands of Fiji. Grimshaw was a prolific writer of travel books and her work remains an interesting example of the conventional British response to the people of Fiji as well as other places in the South Pacific. But the discourse she employs also reflects much about her own identity not only as a privileged Westerner, but as a woman travelling alone.

The first part of Grimshaw's journey takes her from Ba, at the northern part of Viti Levu, down through the interior of the island. She describes this trek in part one of what is a three part report on her travels, written for *The World Wide Magazine*. Part one details how she rides on horseback, accompanied by three native Fijian guides, Manassa, Nasoni, and Joni, over the Naloto Range, on to Nandungu, and then Nambuknya, two villages in the interior. Part three portrays her trip from Labasa, a sugar cane town in Vanua Levu, into the Macuata area, to the village Naduri, and then back to Labasa through the Segaga district. For her trip into Vanua Levu's interior, she is accompanied by Gideon, an interpreter from Suva, and several casual, unnamed guides.<sup>2</sup>

Grimshaw's account of Fiji can be read as part of a wider process of justifying the colonising process through the writing which was generated

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<sup>2</sup> The focus here is on parts one and three only. I chose to restrict my analysis to the beginning and end of Grimshaw's journey for the sake of brevity.

during that time; a justification aimed less at those in the new lands and more to those back home reading about events taking place in the farthest reaches of the Empire. Colonial discourse was important for its powers of interpretation and justification of the rapacious (Scarr 45) acquisition of land which characterised much early colonial activity.<sup>3</sup> This was not specific to Fiji or the Pacific. Robert Carr analyses the North American experience in relation to the way colonial discourse was integral to justifying the machinations of the colonisers:

With the spread of Anglo-Americans across the continent and the containment if not extermination of Native American tribes, as well as the annexation of half of Mexico, narratives of the history and geography of North America changed from justifications of genocide to histories and images of Anglo-Americans on the continent that erased the original peoples altogether, collapsing them with the value of the landscape as capital, barriers to it, or outmoded people--species, destined for extinction in the ineluctable march of "progress." (154)

Grimshaw's text, while specific to the Fijian context, reveals a similarly deleterious motive behind her writing.

Grimshaw first describes Fiji in terms of Britain's claim to it: "It is a British Crown Colony, it is valuable, it is interesting, it is beautiful" (1: 217). The detail that Fiji is deemed "valuable" is positioned first, indicating that this is one of the primary reasons Grimshaw is eager to explore the land's potential. Grimshaw's interest in the value of the land is revealed more overtly when she describes Viti Levu: "Withal there are ten thousands of acres all over the island

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<sup>3</sup> Fortunately the colonial attitude towards land acquisition in Fiji did not wholly succeed in displacing native Fijians from their land, thanks to the efforts of Sir Arthur Gordon who eventually determined that native resources should largely be under native control (Scarr 85-86).

unused and unoccupied; yet white settlers and planters seldom or never come to try their luck" (1: 217). And later, she notices that,

all the earth was thickly clothed with dense, rich, reedy grass, six to ten feet high, excellent food for horses, cattle, or sheep, while at every mile or two twinkling streams or deep-voiced torrents furrowed the heart of the valleys. (1: 221)

The already developed areas of Fiji are largely under the auspices of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, an organisation Grimshaw admits "there is no escaping . . . save in the far interior" (1: 218). Therefore the land is described in terms of its capital value, or in the case of the unused native lands, its potential usefulness for farming.

Not only is the land described in terms of its usefulness to further the colonial aims, but also the principal ethnic groups living in Fiji, listed as Indian, Polynesian, and Fijian labourers, are described as forming "a very large item indeed in the census returns of the islands" (1: 218). They are defined in terms of their relationship with the Empire's penchant for numbers, and are therefore represented as capital value.

Grimshaw justifies the colonial position by privileging the British paternal, imperial view which delineated the native Fijians as savages in need of British control. At the same time Grimshaw must negotiate her position in relation to the indigenous Fijians whom she marginalises, and the Empire which she upholds. I look now at the ways Grimshaw attempts to maintain her superior position.

Colonial texts served the Empire by distancing the world of Western privilege from the realm of the marginalised other. Grimshaw's position is no different. To justify her narrative stance, she uses the dualism of civilised versus uncivilised to create detachment. Her rational world belongs to civilisation, while the world of the natives is depicted as still potentially savage. Ba is portrayed in part one as "the last fortress of civilisation" (1: 218) as she

heads out "towards the black, lonely country of the brown men and women, away from white faces . . . right into the wilds" (1: 218). Also, in part three, Labasa is depicted as the "only oasis of civilisation on Vanua Levu" (3: 425). Labasa is awarded this distinction due to the presence of a Colonial Sugar Refining Company estate--a symbol of the Empire in Fiji.

Grimshaw further justifies the colonial position by establishing the uncivilised nature of the native Fijians. She presents Western influence in Fiji as a civilising force, while also reminding the reader how close to the surface the primitive Fijians still lurk. This is exemplified in her reaction to Nasoni's traditional fire making skills:

[I] certainly did not expect to see a twentieth-century Fijian, who dressed in "store" cotton stuffs and went to church five times on a Sunday, performing this famous savage feat. It was my first example of a truth most thoroughly rubbed in by subsequent events--that the Fijian's civilisation is only varnish-deep. Cannibalism has been abandoned, cruelty and torture given up, and an ample amount of clothing universally adopted, yet the Fijian of to-day, freed from the white control and example that have moulded all his life, would spring back like an unstrung bow to the thoughts and ways of his fathers. (1: 220)

Grimshaw interprets Nasoni's traditional knowledge as proof that "white control" is necessary in order to maintain "the Fijian's civilisation." By privileging two common features of Western culture: wearing cotton and attending church, over an aspect of indigenous Fijian culture: fire-making, Grimshaw maintains a distance between her world and Nasoni's traditional world. Also her comment that "the Fijian's civilisation is only varnish-deep" furthers the sense of difference between the Fijians and the British that Grimshaw requires to justify her own narrative stance. In order to produce authenticity, and therefore the illusion of having just proclaimed an objective

fact, Grimshaw finishes by writing "This is a truth doubted by no man [sic] who knows the inner life of Fiji" (1: 220).

Grimshaw assumes that "uncivilised" signifies a society without morals or restraint. Thus the underlying argument here is that native Fijians need to be controlled by the British to protect them from themselves. She establishes that the natives are given to excessive behaviour, and that beneath the happy exterior, the native Fijian has "a spring of darkness and melancholy," which is symptomatic of the "lives of gloom and terror" (3: 429) experienced by those who lived before the British invaded.

In addition, Grimshaw notices that the farther away from "civilisation" she treks, the "rougher and wilder" (3: 425) the native people get. On Vanua Levu, she observes that the native people "boldly and rudely, swagger past" (3: 425). Also, after Gideon, her guide from Suva, meets Tha Levu, a "reformed" cannibal, and becomes hard to "control," Grimshaw assumes that Gideon has made a

curious jump-back towards the primitive type . . . . My civilized, obliging, English-speaking courier, with the bright, intelligent face and sunny smile, had utterly disappeared, and in his place I had a slouching young savage, sullen, disrespectful, and careless, with a flattened, stupid face unlit by any spark of good humour. (3: 435)

Thus, a native Fijian who shows any sign of disrespect, rebellion, independence, is deemed by Grimshaw as immature ("young"), uncivilised ("savage"), and ugly and foolish ("flattened, stupid face").

Not only does Grimshaw depict the native world as essentially savage beneath the thin veneer of British civilisation, but this world is portrayed as less real than civilised life. This is illustrated when Grimshaw recalls her meeting with a white settler in the interior of Vanua Levu. She describes the "real meal at a real table in the smartest and cosiest of the three 'white' houses that, together with a saw-mill and its buildings, formed the settlement of Tumba" (3:

430). That her existence outside the realm of the indigenous Fijians operates in a more rational world is also alluded to when she returns to Labasa: "at the resident magistrate's house in Lambasa I shut my eyes, skipped a racial and moral gap of some thousands of years and felt firm ground underfoot" (3: 436). Grimshaw also portrays the world of the native Fijians as childish. This perception is illustrated in the way she describes the native communities she visits: "The little village looked indescribably quaint and pretty in the slanting rays of the early sun . . . clustered on their tidy little green like toys on a table" (1: 222-223); "All the pretty toy houses dotted about the neat little lawns were quiet" (1: 224); "I shall always retain pleasant memories of fairy-like fortresses among starry orange-groves" (3: 436). The Fijians themselves are described as if they are children: "my three men were three children of Nature, which meant three useless babies in trouble of any kind" (3: 430). By treating her guides as though they are children she is able to justify her own arrogant, paternalistic [sic] attitude.

Grimshaw's position as a superior voice depends on the split between the civilised and uncivilised, adult and childish worlds of the British Empire and the native Fijian respectively. And yet, Grimshaw's position is destabilised by the way she portrays her motives for taking the treks. Her decision to travel into the interiors of the main islands is characterised by her desire to act out her own childhood fantasies: "it seemed to me, walking about that plantation--a mere private experience, unsupported by much capital--that I had stepped right back into childhood and the pages of that marvellous book [*Swiss Family Robinson*]" (1: 217). Her perceptions of the world of the other, therefore, are extensions of her own imaginary world. The connection between her imagination and her sense of unreality when she is in the native Fijians' world, away from the civilising power of the Empire, conflates these two worlds and undercuts Grimshaw's attempts to remain detached. By overlaying the native Fijian world with her childish imaginings, Grimshaw also creates a way to

domesticate perceived dangers. Sara Suleri argues that the picturesque was used in India by colonising women to domesticate subcontinental threats "into a less disturbing system of belonging" (21). Thus, Grimshaw's reduction of Fijian architecture to "toys on a table" (1: 222), village compounds to "neat little lawns" (1: 224), and grown men to "impulsive children of Nature" (3: 436) are her attempts to domesticate the scenes around her.

According to Suleri, some women's narratives display no acknowledgement of the victims around them since this would necessitate the writer confronting her own confinement within the colonial system. The writing therefore is performed in a way that is characterised as "decorous curiosity that must remain impervious to the art of discrimination" (94-95). Similarly, Grimshaw does not connect with the victims she observes. An example which illustrates this is her recollection of the Fijian women:

It is not often that a Fijian woman gets a chance of making herself prominent, or getting the best of anything; she is simply a drudge and a slave as a rule, eating the leavings of the men, doing all the hardest work, and being pushed into a corner at once if such a rarity as a white visitor passes through. This is done because it is not modest for her to talk to, or even look at, strange men, also because she is a dog and a slave, and does not count. (1: 221-222)

The harshness of this view shows Grimshaw's effort to detach herself. She also uses an amused tone to do the same: "the remark was interesting to me, as an unconscious outbreak of heredity" (1: 222), and "It was rather a novelty to take one's morning tub to the sound of a hymn [sung by the women] eulogizing one's clothes, remote ancestors . . . but a tour through the Fijis is one continual succession of humorous novelties" (1: 222).

Concerning another colonial writer, Suleri writes that "even when her writing seeks to enclose the Indian into a picturesque repose, the Anglo-Indian is simultaneously mapping out her own enclosure within such an idiom" (78).

Similarly, Grimshaw's lack of desire to connect in any way with the victims of the Fijian culture, here the under-privileged women, and her use of stereotypes and generalities, signifies a resistance to acknowledge her own limited position as a white woman in what was then deemed largely a man's world.

According to Claudia Knapman who wrote *White Women in Fiji*, an analysis of the roles European women played in establishing Fiji, the position of white women caused much debate amongst historians. Susan Ash writes, "The safety of white women in the Empire became an ongoing ideological question, linked inextricably to the legitimization of colonial power" (348). Most of the time Grimshaw identifies herself as a courageous woman travelling through "black monstrous peaks" (1: 220) and "wicked hills" (1: 220). She identifies herself with explorers such as "Stanley, Burton and Speke" (1: 218) and conjures up a sense of danger whenever the opportunity strikes. But this again is in part a creation of her own making, an identity she slips into, perhaps to escape the limitations she faces as a woman in a patriarchal society. Grimshaw's vulnerability is revealed at times, such as when she forgets matches during the first part of her journey (1: 219), and when she wishes she could go into hysterics towards the end (3: 430). In the end, despite the bravery she displays, she still describes herself using colonial (masculine) ideas of travel.

The illusion of detachment also privileges Grimshaw's perspective as though it is objective. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that colonial writers' "claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created" (5). Simon Gikandi uses Lacan's mirror stage as a useful interpretation of the colonial stance:

the colonial subject has recognised itself in an ideal I, but this form of identification is also a misrecognition because the externalised image is achieved only at the cost of self-alienation, and the subject can never assimilate this idealised image because it has not existence except in the imaginary" (19).

Grimshaw, in her text, creates the illusion of speaking as an "ideal I" through her construction of rational and unreal states of being and her sense of superiority. However, these constructions cannot be sustained and she becomes just another voice constructed by a text.

Suleri argues in her book *The Rhetoric of English India* that at the root of the desire for detachment is a fear of the other. She has the view that anxiety underpinned the colonising experience not only for the colonised but also for the colonisers themselves. For Grimshaw to create similarities between the two worlds would destabilise her sense of a privileged perspective which is central to the colonial attitude towards the other. She creates detachment in a number of ways: by establishing a dualism between civilised and uncivilised, real and unreal; by reducing the Fijian world to that of a childish fantasy; by avoiding attachment to the victims she sees, particularly the women; and by shielding herself behind a sense of amusement. But Grimshaw's use of these methods also writes her into the same patriarchal, rational, civilised idioms she uses to delineate native Fijian communities.

Grimshaw's narrative seems on one hand to overturn the notion of the white woman's fragility and subsequent need for protection in the Empire by positioning herself within a dangerous situation that calls for bravery. However, the position of brave explorer also suggests the opposite and therefore confirms the ideology of "the attendant myth of white women's vulnerability" (349). Grimshaw's work must ultimately be seen as contributing to the negative effect conventional European writing has had on South Pacific literature since she embraces many of the colonial stereotypes used at the time to describe the native Fijian. In addition, this piece and others like it reveal much about the colonial voices that wrote about Fiji, confining not only the colonised into a particular dialectic, but also those who so defined them.

### Fiji's post-colonial voices

Remembering Fanon is a process of intense discovery and disorientation. Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, or putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. (Bhaba 121).

The new wave of writing that began in the 1960s has challenged the way the people of the South Pacific had in the past been forced to view their world through fictions created by outsiders. It is this colonial literary framework that Fijian and Indo-Fijian writers alike are writing themselves out of, to form a new type of literature which portrays the various strands of Fijian society by those from outside the dominant colonial and colonising discourses.

Wendt argues that "post-colonial" does not merely mean "after," but also "around, through, out of, alongside, and against," and contemporary Fijian literature in English has been "inventing and defining itself, clearing a space for itself in relation to colonial . . . literature" (Introduction *Nuamua* 3).

Post-colonial voices are represented by those who occupy marginalised positions in those cultures affected by the imperial process; "emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft 2). Here Ashcroft uses the model of centre and margin, whereby marginality becomes a source of creative energy. Suleri, however, highlights the way this paradigm in certain contexts only "serves to hierarchize the emergence of nation in 'first' and 'third' worlds" (3-4). So although marginality becomes a source of creative energy for those writing about things Fijian, it is important not to reify this emergent literature in English as totally separate from or inferior to colonial writing. This chapter on colonial discourse is included to acknowledge the continuity, the connections between post-colonial and colonial writing.

## Chapter three

### Fijian Short Stories by Male Writers

In this chapter I read a selection of works by six authors: Joseph Veramu, Maniue Vilsoni, Vilsoni Hereniko, Santendra Nandan, Subramani and Raymond Pillai. An explanation is needed at this point concerning my choice to include Nandan's text "from *The Wounded Sea*" which is actually taken from a longer work, *The Wounded Sea*. I discovered this narrative in Stead's anthology. Stead writes that his collection of short stories represents "contemporary short fiction in English from the South Pacific" (Introduction x). I assume here, therefore, that his comments apply to Nandan's story since he makes no exceptions. I will treat "from *The Wounded Sea*" in the same way.

While the selected stories in this chapter provide different views of life in Fiji, I read them for ways to link the texts together, particularly in relation to the pressures characters experience. In Veramu's "Onesimo" and "A Day in the Life of a Vagabond," and Vilsoni's "A Fond Farewell," life becomes more difficult to negotiate as characters get older. "A Fond Farewell," also shares similarities with Hereniko's "The Unfinished Fence," and Nandan's "from *The Wounded Sea*" in the way each of these texts portray the effects of education or employment pressures on individual people and also, in Vilsoni's text, communities. In "from *The Wounded Sea*," and Subramani's "Tell Me Where the Train Goes," the dual themes of indenturement and displacement are explored. Subramani's text also portrays the dangers of living in a close community, a theme which is also explored in chapter four. That identities are sometimes caught between a sense of belonging and being alien is portrayed in Subramani's "Dear Primitive," while the position of Fijian Indian women in post-colonial Fiji is explored in the last three stories: Subramani's "Kala," and Pillai's "To Market, To Market" and "Laxmi."

### Joseph Veramu

Veramu was born and educated in Fiji and has a BA from the University of the South Pacific. Formerly a schoolteacher, he is now a lecturer in Education at the University of the South Pacific. He has published short stories and poems in *Mama* and elsewhere, and writes in both English and Fijian (Wendt, Contributors *Nuama* 401-2; Stead, Notes 284). I chose Veramu's work to read here to give some space to representations of indigenous Fijians by an indigenous Fijian male writer. Here Veramu depicts a Fijian school teacher in the first story and a homeless boy in the second. Both stories explore identity in a contemporary urban context.

#### **"Onisimo"**

In this story, Veramu focuses on the bitterness and disillusionment experienced by a middle-aged primary school teacher, Onisimo Viti. Onisimo dislikes everything about his existence, including his childless marriage. The only thing he enjoys is teaching his young students, and his relationship with his students is set up in opposition to the way he relates to other people. The differences in the ways Onisimo relates to people in turn reveals his own sense of himself. Onisimo's judgements of those outside himself coupled with the perceptions others have of him reveal the limitations he faces, his obsession with youth which verges on sexual deviancy, and his sense of despair.

The narrative first sets up a picture of all that Onisimo loathes. He recollects those people that he dislikes: the young girl at Lucky Eddy's<sup>4</sup> whom he labels "tactical," "stupid," "artificial" and "too young"; the "tall, burly" prostitute whose children, "pugnacious brats," he pities; "the Kasalu family who were forever begging"; and the young people with the stereo who play songs that are "too sentimental" (120). Some of the phrases that are used to reveal

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<sup>4</sup> A well-known bar in Suva.

Onesimo's dislike for his surroundings are extreme: "Onesimo hated" (120), "He was filled with revulsion" (120). The strength of his reactions to those around him signifies a degree of self hatred. This connection is confirmed when Onesimo's series of complaints shifts to his failed dreams, which he associates with his youth: "His darling ambition had been to be a lawyer, but fate had not been kind to him" (120). Onesimo's failure to attain this goal is projected onto a force outside himself--fate. His identification with failure, then, is shaped by a force other than himself and his internal disillusionment is projected externally onto those around him.

Onesimo's relationship with his wife also creates tension. She is represented as "forever complaining" (120). His inability to provide for her material desires and her refusal to have children are the two prominent features about their relationship which trouble Onesimo and frustrate his roles as provider and father. Onesimo is also labelled by his colleagues as "henpecked" (120). Like his career, his marriage has failed his expectations.

Set up in opposition to this series of antagonistic relationships is Onesimo's relationship with his students. The only aspect of Onesimo's existence which offsets the more jaundiced view he holds about the rest of his life is his role as a teacher: "He felt a sense of usefulness, and the pupils respected him. It seemed to Onesimo that they held him in such high esteem as one who was omnipotent. The pupils loved him, like children loving their fathers" (121). Through his role as a teacher he gains a sense of power and authority. However, his relationship with his students is criticised by the reactions of the other teachers who see his desire to help the students during lunch times as merely a "pretext" (121). And in particular, Mr Vagabace, "who disliked Onesimo" (121), highlights the children's sexuality: "These pupils were easily encouraged by instincts that goaded them to satisfy their faculties for physical expression" (121). Thus, Onesimo's attraction to his students is tainted by sexual undertones. The sexual liaison with the young girl at Lucky Eddy's

who "knew he was old enough to be her father" (120) also establishes the possibility of Onisimo's sexual motive.

The connection between Onisimo's attachment to his students and his obsession with his own youth is also established: "His pupils fired his imagination with his youthful longings" (121). But Onisimo no longer has access to "his youthful years when he had been so happy and carefree and had loved life" (121). This time is possessed only by his students: "Onisimo knew that there was a barrier between him and his charges. He had longed to penetrate it" (121). This could be read as Onisimo wanting to be young again, but his lost youth cannot be regained simply because of the barrier of time which separates him from his students. Onisimo desires to appropriate their freedom, to make up for his lack of choice. Since fate has denied him happiness he turns to someone more vulnerable, his pupils, to in turn exploit them. The interpretation that he might desire to exploit them sexually is also suggested here by the words "barrier," and "penetrate."

Onisimo's desire to somehow connect, albeit illegally or not, intensifies when he carries Akanisi, a student who has fainted, to the staff room. Through the physical contact he experiences, he momentarily identifies with her youthfulness, but after the initial elation there is a sense of self-alienation: "as soon as he placed the lass on a couch he felt what he really was, old lean and leached of energy" (121). Ultimately there is no relief for Onisimo who gives himself at the end to disillusionment, despair, and alcohol, and his obsession with youth is replaced by an acceptance of inevitable death.

One interpretation is that Onisimo has been exiled psychologically from what he imagines he once was. He is dispossessed because of fate and cannot return to a physical and mental state he remembers once possessing. This desire links Veramu's story to Satendra Nandan's representation of India in "from *The Wounded Sea*," discussed below, as a state of being which can no longer be experienced. A barrier exists between the India that used to be and

the Fiji that is. Here a barrier exists between past and present. Also, Onesimo's failure to fulfil certain expectations he has once held is a theme which connects Veramu's story with Prem Banfal's trilogy of short stories, discussed in the next chapter.

### **"A Day in the life of a Vagabond"**

In this story the daily activities of a homeless Suva paper boy, Samu, are depicted. Samu's identity is defined by what he sees himself as, by the way he relates to his vagabond friend Kanaci, and by the way he is treated by the people he meets on the bus and in town. Urbanisation, and the resultant poverty and displacement this modern-day trend is causing, is explored in Veramu's depiction of Samu's daily struggle to survive.

Samu's destitution is mirrored in his imaginings of the sun, rising "like a spirit without any worries" (158), and in his "daydreaming of riches and envying the people who slept in proper beds and ate good food" (158). These daydreams are part of his process of self-definition. He wishes to be free of his worry and his poverty, but he is defined by the narrator as "only a young newspaper boy, uneducated, no home, no family" (158). He sees himself living in opposition to the life he wishes he had.

Samu's friend Kanaci is his main comfort as he roams the streets of central Suva selling papers. Kanaci, who is older, has a life that is even more disturbing than Samu's due largely to his involvement in dangerous robberies which sets him at odds with the authorities. Samu compares his own lack of bravado with Kanaci's heroics and, in his comparison, compares Kanaci with film star James Bond. But just as the world of glamour and bravery they experience at the cinema is illusory, so too is Kanaci's bravado. The older vagabond admits to Samu, "I really low down because I steal" (160). Kanaci represents what Samu may become given a few more years on the street, after poverty drives the younger boy to more desperate means of obtaining money.

The information that Kanaci was once a paper boy before graduating "to shoe shining and then to robbing" (159) further establishes this trend.

Samu's relationship with the people on the streets, particularly the tourists, provides further insight into his character. While not everyone is unkind--an Indian woman gives him a tip, and a "kind-looking" (162) elderly tourist asks why he is not at school and then gives him money--these acts of kindness are equally matched by acts of either coldness or aggression, such as when he is labelled by a Fijian man as a "stupid no-bath, son of a monkey" (158), and when a "burly European tourist" pushes him aside (162). Thus, Samu is either pitied, ignored, or pushed away and these reactions only serve to confirm his own sense of being worthless and inferior.

The cinema becomes a way to escape the "cold monotony of life" (162). The cheap violent films provide fantasies into which he can escape. His identity during these films is transformed and he becomes "a new person living a life of luxury with plenty of women and food" (162). The use of imagination to create another self, an alternate existence, is a feature of some of the other stories; namely, "Tell Me Where the Train Goes" and "Kala" by Subramani, and Pillai's "Laxmi." But his dream of a new life remains unfilled and he is left at the end of the narrative faced with spending another night sleeping rough, alone and unclaimed.

By positioning Samu alongside Kanaci and in turn positioning these two boys in relation to the other vagabonds who are mentioned such as Jone, Sevo, and Bero, Veramu creates a sense that Samu represents not only an individual situation, but he also represents a social phenomenon associated with modern-day urban Suva. The spectacle of young homeless boys such as Samu must be seen in contrast with the depiction of a traditional Rotuman family and community where home is central, in the next story, by Maniue Vilsoni. However, the forces of progress which inevitably alter communal social structures, and which have shaped Samu's identity also affect even close-knit

societies such as the one in "A Fond Farewell." Thus, degrees of social change are explored in both these stories. The theme of homelessness is also touched upon by Vanessa Griffen in "Afternoon in Town."

#### Maniue Vilsoni

It is noted in *Mana* that Maniue Vilsoni, at the time of the following text being published in the same, was a teacher at Malhaha Primary School, Rotuma (Notes 115). I selected a writer who depicts Rotuma since this small island is included as part of the Fiji group of islands despite its people's separate ethnic origins. The story read here provides a vision of life on the island as seen through the eyes of a local boat worker.

#### **"A Fond Farewell"**

In this text the narrator, a Rotuman dinghy worker, depicts the life he leads with his wife Va, and their daughter Marieta. Various moments that map stages of Marieta's growth from infancy to adolescence are remembered by her father as he and his wife prepare to say goodbye to their daughter: Marieta is leaving the closeness of her family to obtain further education on one of the main islands of Fiji. Through the various stages of her development Marieta experiences an increasing awareness of the opinions of others and is increasingly affected by outside forces that disrupt not only her life and the lives of her parents, but also that of the community. Along with the changes Marieta experiences, the reader gains insight into the way her father's identity is also changed by tensions from without.

The narrator's memories of Marieta's early years such as "her joy in chasing the falling fava leaves" (24), "endlessly discovering new delights," and her fearlessness when learning how to swim, collectively testify to her safe and uncomplicated existence within the confines of her parents' home, and her lack of apprehension of the world outside. However, the pain Marieta experiences

when she puts out the candle with her fingers on her first birthday signifies the pain that comes with growing older and as she grows she becomes increasingly aware of the opinions and dangers of the wider community.

Firstly, she becomes aware of her family's poor economic status within the community, largely through the judgements of others. Instead of playing easily with those of her age as she did as an infant, she is teased at church "when the tuirara announced the family contributions to the plate offerings" (26), and at school the other children poke fun at her during lunch time, "showing off their billycans of corned beef and rice" (27). Secondly, Marieta faces the issue of her sexuality as she comes of age. While her father watches her develop into "a pretty, modest young lady" (27), Va instructs her in "proper behaviour and Rotuman protocol" (27), and she warns her daughter of the dangers of the "show-off boys" (27). Lastly, she leaves her family and the island community altogether: "From inside the dinghy my Marieta stared back at me, looking vulnerable, helpless and very unsure" (27). The impression here is that she will face more pain and more tension away from Rotuma, her home. Up until this point the struggle to survive has largely rested on her parents, but now Marieta faces tension related to economic survival--the expectation being that she will become well-educated and raise herself above the subsistence life of her parents.

Just as Marieta's identity is transformed through external pressures, the narrator's identity is also shaped by what is expected of him according to family and community protocol. After Marieta's birth he is instructed by his father to "assist and contribute to the welfare of the village" (23). He is expected to become a good provider not only for his family but for the community as a whole. However, the "almost back-breaking labour" (17) the narrator has to perform as a dinghy worker is not enough to raise the family's economic status above poverty level and there is a sense that he has not fulfilled the earlier expectations of his family to provide well. This is confirmed when Va

expresses anger that he did not buy Marieta a better ticket for the journey to Fiji, and when the narrator identifies himself as "just an ordinary poor villager" (26).

The narrator's struggle to provide and the way this affects Marieta is, however, symptomatic of how powerful colonising forces also affect the family and community. These colonising forces are represented here by "The Co-operative" (17), the organisation that employs the dinghy workers, and "the colonial style wooden hospital in Ahau" (22). The narrator describes how in the village people "invested in goodwill, kinship and sharing; materialistic things were not paramount" (23). But this traditional communal approach to materialism is positioned opposite the institution of the colonial system and the accompanying economic and educational status it brings. This narrative is therefore not only Marieta's story. The sub-text is a commentary on how Rotuma's people have had to face the break up of their families and community due to economic pressure. This connection is confirmed in the text when the narrator mentions, in relation to Marieta's imminent departure, that other families were experiencing "something similar" (21), and later, "Other fathers . . . must have felt the same hurt too" (27). By making it clear to the reader that Marieta is only one of a group of children leaving Rotuma, the sense of grief which underpins the text is intensified.

Vilsoni's focus on the way Marieta experiences more pain as she develops towards adulthood is an issue Banfal in her trilogy, and Griffen in "Candle Glowing Orange" also focus on. In addition, leaving home to obtain an education is explored by Banfal in "A Moment of Passion" and by Nandan in "from *The Wounded Sea*." And the way close communities are affected by the colonial education and capitalist-based economic structures is a sub-text that links "A Fond Farewell" to "One Friday Night" by Margareta Waqavonovono.

### Vilsoni Hereniko

Also Rotuman, Hereniko is well known for his contributions to creative writing. According to Wendt, Hereniko was educated in Fiji and in England, has a PhD in literature, and taught literature and theatre at the University of the South Pacific. He has written and directed plays in Fiji and Hawaii and has also published short stories and non-fiction. He is presently Assistant Professor of Pacific literature at the Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii, and editor of the Talanoa series (Contributors *Nuamua* 398). In the following story Hereniko explores the experience of an uneducated indigenous Fijian working overseas.

#### **"The Unfinished Fence"**

In "The Unfinished Fence" the issue of leaving home, raised in Maniue Vilsoni's story just discussed, is taken a step further. Hereniko positions Jimi in isolation from his family and community in Fiji, working illegally in a foreign country which isn't specifically named, but which is probably New Zealand or Australia. Jimi's identity emerges through the relationship he has with his family back home, through his identification with his employer, Mrs Davidson (he relates to her loneliness), and through the way he is treated by the authorities.

Firstly, Jimi's observations about his life back in Fiji reveal a close community which is based upon co-operation, and warm family relationships, particularly with his wife. This is set up in opposition to his life as a foreigner, a life Jimi feels at odds with. An indication of the alienation Jimi feels is indicated by his decision to walk to work: "he did not feel comfortable on the crowded bus among strange and indifferent people" (70). His sense of self is split, therefore, between being known and loved by his family, and being positioned in a place where he is unknown and not cared for.

The only exception to the sense of alienation that Jimi experiences as a foreigner is in the relationship he has with his employer, Mrs Davidson, an

elderly woman who is also isolated from her family: her husband is dead and her children are distant. Her isolation is symbolised by the fence Jimi is finishing off for her. Their two lives intersect in their separate but similar experiences of loneliness and in their "love of letters" (71), and Jimi becomes a source of comfort for Mrs Davidson. That the fence remains unfinished could be interpreted as a breaking down of the social and ethnic barriers that exist between Mrs Davidson and Jimi. However, another reading of the unfinished fence is that it represents the way they never completely connect.

In the end Jimi's roles as friend and employee to Mrs Davidson are disturbed when two police officers question him in the street. The police speak to Jimi as if he is a child. Jimi's treatment by the police echoes the way Grimshaw, discussed in chapter two, treats her guides. The police assume Jimmy is an illegal worker--while this information is not spelled out in the text, it is implied by the detail that Jimi is visiting this country on a tourist visa. His growing sense of fear and alienation testifies to the power the authorities have over his life. In more ways than one, "the written word had so much power over both of them" (71). Not only do written words draw Jimi and Mrs Davidson together into a common bond that breaks down social and ethnic barriers, but that bond is also shattered by written words that define and limit Jimi's identity.

While Hereniko does not overtly explain what happens to Jimi, what is clear is that the police follow him to his flat, and he does not make it back to Mrs Davidson's house. The fact that Jimi's choices are limited by a powerful other, here the police, link Hereniko's story to Veramu's "Onisimo." In the case of Veramu's protagonist, Onisimo's choices are limited by what he perceives as fate, whereas here Jimi faces a more tangible force.

### Satendra Nandan

Born in Votualevu, Nadi, Fiji, Nandan is one of Fiji's more prolific writers and has published poetry, short stories and longer works. He was educated in Fiji, India, England and Australia, has a PhD in literature, and in 1982 was elected for Fiji's Parliament (Wendt, Contributors *Nucama* 399). In this story Nandan explores the difficulties faced by Fijian Indians in finding a sense of place, given their collective history of displacement and alienation. Mishra writes that "The imaginative world of Satendra Nandan grows out of the special predicament of this Indian fragment in Fiji:" ("Satendra" 80).

### **"from *The Wounded Sea*"**

The "special predicament" of Fijian Indians is explored through the recollections of the narrator, who is flying out of Nadi airport after having returned to Fiji to bury his father. The narrator's identity emerges as a product of both his father's and grandfather's histories, which reach back to the time of the indenturement of Indians during colonial rule in Fiji. Out of these individual identities emerges the psychology of a community, a fragment, which faces the predicament of being labelled a migrant race.

The narrator's relationship with his grandfather, Baba, is captured by minor details such as eating bread with herrings in tomato sauce late at night: "Happiness depends on such little things. The dead live on in their acts--insignificant in life, immeasurable in death" (88). It is also through the small details that Baba is revealed as the last link to India, a "transplanted tree among the native shrubs," his moods "controlled by distant memories as the tides are by the moon" (91). His religious beliefs and traditions, his sense of that which is India, filters into this alien landscape, a symbolic representation of all that he is:

he had carried in his holdall from his obscure village in India his heritage and multicoloured obscenities. This island was the last

place to change his subterranean thinking: an archipelago,  
surrounded by more than a cannibal ocean. (94)

The suggestion here is that his grandfather's identification with India is too strong to be significantly altered by the place of his exile--his thinking remains unchanged.

In contrast, the narrator's father, Pratap, represents a mixture of India and Fiji. When Baba dies, Pratap pounds the kava to make grog and pays tribute to the *taukei*, Fijian spirits, before taking a bowl for himself. The combining of Indian and Fijian ritual symbolises the changing position of the family's identity, a position created by the tension of being placed between two homelands and belonging to neither, which creates a sense of rootlessness. Pratap's identity is presented as part of the transformational process which began when Baba was first transplanted. When Baba dies, Pratap's main connection with India also dies. The Air India flight then becomes "the idea of India itself." Home no longer exists except in the smile of the Indian air hostess on a poster. And Pratap's job as caretaker of the airport rubbish dump is the only way he can get close to this "idea" of India.

The narrator also recounts memories which reflect the tensions between the Fijian Indian community and the indigenous Fijians. In particular, the brutal spearing of his father's holy cow, Lali, by the Fijian villagers reveals the animosity the narrator and his family faced from outside their community. Then elsewhere the narrator's recollection of the coup of 1987 highlights the precariousness of Fijian Indians in Fiji: how they are viewed by others underscores the complex relationship this fragmented community has with its country of exile. According to Mishra, the political rebellion of 1987 brought an end to the possibility of Fijian Indians' sense of dislocation being "cured . . . by a political act which would legitimate his/her existence in a land to which he/she had been banished" ("Satendra" 82).

The 1987 coup also frames the narrator's search for an alternative life overseas, a theme which provides a link to stories such as Vilsoni's "A Fond Farewell," Hereniko's "The Unfinished Fence," and Banfal's trilogy of stories. Here, the narrator's migration and consequent change in identity provide the next stage in the process of transformation that began with his grandfather's journey. The connection between each of the characters is made when the narrator recounts his father's reaction to his son's departure from Fiji:

Why did he weep? Was it because his own father, at almost my age, had made an earlier journey from India to Fiji--and never returned? Something, as a father, he was now beginning to understand.

Or was it because he himself could never make the journey to his father's village? The CSR company owed Baba a passage back to India, and as the *girmitya* didn't go, it was his son's. But who would Father have seen in Sultanpur? Baba, being illiterate, had never written to his family. Maybe Baba was escaping from the subcontinent? Just as I was escaping from an island? (90)

Through the theme of migrancy, the narrator's identity is positioned with that of Baba's, while Pratap stands in a pivotal position in-between. The narrator's migration away from Fiji, as a point of exile, symbolises not only a forward movement away from Fiji, but also a circular link back to the original *girmitya* experience which underscores his family's collective identity.

Nandan's particular focus in his story on the experience of Fijian Indians links his text to that of Subramani's "Tell Me Where the Train Goes," discussed below, and Janette Sinclair's "Outlines of Gondwanaland," discussed in the next chapter.

### Subramani

A Fijian Indian, born in Labasa, Fiji, Subramani was educated in Fiji, New Zealand and Canada. He holds a PhD from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji and now holds a Chair in the Department of Literature at the same university. He has published non-fiction and fiction and his book *South Pacific Literature*, published in 1992, was the first major study of Pacific literature. (Stead, Notes 284; Wendt, Contributors *Nuama* 401). The three stories below depict a diverse range of contexts out of which characters must negotiate identity ranging from a Fijian Indian child's experiences during indenturement; to a young European woman's experience in contemporary Fiji; to a Fijian Indian woman's experience of marriage, also in contemporary Fiji.

#### **"Tell Me Where the Train Goes"**

In this story, the main characters, Manu and his mother, Kunti, are positioned in the nightmarish world of ghetto-style barracks during the time when indentured labourers worked the sugar cane fields in Fiji. The tensions Manu experiences stem from his relationship not only with his mother, but also with the barrack community, and ultimately, with the forces outside the community. These forces that have exiled Manu, his mother and the others, enslaving them to a life of drudgery and hardship, are represented by Mr Pepper, the "Sahib."

Manu's experience in the barracks, particularly after discovering his father has been killed, is characterised by constant dread: "Manu clutched the old army blanket and curled himself inside . . . he feared the villainy of men from the barracks" (113). After her husband's death, Kunti slides into herself and Manu is left orphaned by her inability to connect with him. He feels "sadly unsupported and unclaimed" (114). This intensifies the already nightmarish world of the community. To escape this world, Manu retreats to a cave in the jungle where he "surrendered himself to images and echoes, hoping they would

fall into a pattern" (115). Here, dreaming becomes a way to escape the barracks, albeit momentarily.

But he cannot escape the growing alienation between Kunti and, by association, himself, and the rest of the community. The reason for his mother's poor standing in the barrack community, Kunti's association with Mr Pepper, is revealed in the text indirectly: Manu mentions the existence of his half-brother, Yama; and he witnesses his mother leaving the Sahib's residence. The alienation Kunti experiences reaches a climax when the women of the community abuse Kunti as Manu watches: "Sukhdaiyya grabbed Kunti's hair and threatened to put the chamarin's tail on fire by thrusting red chillies up her rectum" (116). After he witnesses this scene Manu feels as though he has somehow been attacked and degraded; confirmation that his identity is closely aligned to Kunti's.

The tension Manu feels building up climaxes when the some of the men and women from the barracks perform a brutal and strangely ritualistic attack on Mr Pepper. The Sahib's vulnerability in this scene sits in opposition to the way he usually scares the labourers: "Manu recalled with awe how the labourers cringed and stood in disarray, like frightened myna birds, when Mr Pepper visited the barracks" (117). After the attack on Mr Pepper, Manu's own personal crisis reaches a climax and he is hit by a train.

When he recovers, Manu perceives that Kunti has "snapped free" of the "old anguish" (119) and their relationship is re-established: "It seemed to him, for a moment that once again her life was entirely for his preservation. He felt strangely exhilarated and safe" (119). His desire to have his mother just for himself is indicative of the extent to which his identity is defined by hers. She is his world--understandable given the lack of options available to him in the world outside his mother's orbit. But the safety he experiences is momentary, and the two remain "shipwrecked" in the barracks, their plans to escape merely

a dream, their identities hopelessly defined and confined by colonialism and community.

Subramani's story is positioned near the beginning of the Fijian Indian experience in Fiji while Nandan's text looks back over the generations, represented by his father and grandfather. Seen together, these two narratives provide a wide angle view of the nightmarish beginnings and the far reaching effects of indenturement.

### **"Dear Primitive"**

Elaine, the central character in Subramani's "Dear Primitive," is torn between on one hand belonging to the land of her birth, Fiji, and on the other, remaining an outsider because of her colonial heritage (her parents were employed by the colonial administration in Fiji). This theme is also explored in Janette Sinclair's "Outlines of Gondwanaland" which is discussed in chapter two. However, in Subramani's story, the fracturing of identity is expressed in a drifting of Elaine's psyche towards madness and being swallowed up, whereas in Sinclair's narrative, the main character's identification with migrancy gives her a sense of oneness with the peoples of the Pacific.

Elaine's childhood recollections of her parents construct their relationship in terms of the conflict within her own psyche. She remembers her mother Amy always complaining about their life in Fiji and distancing herself from the local people. Conversely Charles, Elaine's father, is described as doing the opposite: "After breakfast, he disappeared in the bush with his Fijian friends" (115), and when Elaine recalls the time she told Charles about her "sister," Senibulu, she remembers him saying, "Seni was an elf" (117). Her father's descriptions of Senibulu as "sister" and "elf" open up new possibilities for Elaine's imagination to explore. The fact that she does open herself up to such possibilities, whether they are factual or not, reveals that Elaine's identity is aligned more with her father's acceptance, rather than with her mother's

abhorrence, of the other. Elaine's mystical link with Senibulu as an adult further establishes this connection.

Through her relationship with Senibulu, Elaine is introduced to the world of indigenous Fiji. Senibulu teaches Elaine to change "every situation into a legend" (117). In addition, she is linked to Elaine's stillborn sister who was buried at sea and there is even a suggestion, in Elaine's mind at least, that Senibulu could be her half-sister, since "She had heard Amy accuse Charles of liaisons with native women" (117). Whether Elaine's connection with Senibulu is sisterly or just spiritual, after her disappearance into the sea she continues to dominate the irrational, spiritual side of Elaine's fragmented identity--indicated by Elaine's admission that her relationship with Seni "had altered her whole existence" (117).

The conflict within Elaine is also signified by her relationship with Ronnie, the tourist, who looks for his real, rational life elsewhere, and for whom a "brief romance with a good-looking island girl completed the pleasure of a package tour" (114). He defines Elaine as a native in relation to his identity as a tourist, perceiving her as alien to himself, and therefore thwarting any attempts Elaine makes to find a connection with the world outside:

She asked Ronnie that night if he believed there were things about the islands which no outsider could ever understand. Her father used to say that about the sea and the hiss at Vandrakula.

"But you aren't a foreigner, my dear primitive," Ronnie replied in a jocular manner. (114)

Neither can Elaine find a place in Senibulu's world. Her struggle to find acceptance in the native Fijian community is illustrated when she takes Ronnie to a local gathering of some of her Fijian friends and she is treated as an outsider. Elaine's identity, therefore, is caught between both worlds and belongs to neither. Simon Gikandi has written, of another post-colonial female character, that she is "constructed by her shifting speech or language

communities . . . . The important point, though, is that she belongs to all of them, and to none; in reality, she is consumed and confused by all of them" (18). Gikandi's analysis provides a useful approach to Elaine. Her movements between the worlds defined by the foreigner, Ronnie, and that of Senibulu and the local Fijian people similarly reveals Elaine's shifting self.

Finally, Elaine's wait for the world around her to "open up and claim her" (114) ends: "the reef cracked and the dark waters flowed into her head. She knew she was drowned" (121). Subramani leaves this ending open to interpretation. It could be that Elaine finally lapses into a sort of madness where barriers are broken down and she experiences a oneness with her world. The breaking down of barriers could also be interpreted as a movement towards finding a resolution beyond the confinements of how others see her. However the ending is interpreted, the dissolution of Elaine's identity does draw together issues of origin, birthright and belonging in relation to the positioning of self.

### **"Kala"**

Subramani's "Kala" is the story of a Fijian Indian woman's search for a more independent identity, one not wholly dependent on her husband, Sukhen, for love, security, self esteem, and economic security. Thus, a tension is set up between her legitimate self which conforms to the expectations of traditional Hindu society, and her non-conforming self.

Kala is a mother, but her relationship with her child is distant, almost non-existent. The child, who remains unnamed and therefore whose identity remains obscure, is part of the life Kala's fantasies and trips into town are designed to try to escape. For Kala, home is a place in which identity is fractured by unresolved desires and dreams and by the expectations of those around her. She is described by the narrator as,

a woman who had been let down by marriage, crushed by a patriarchal system. Sukhen listened to her without saying anything. She hated him for staring at her like that, appraising her, thinking, she imagined, that it was all part of her stubbornness, her four independent years in India, and a degree in English literature . . . . She had regarded her marriage as a trap. It undermined her true self. (205)

The independence she has gained from being educated has taken second place to the role of marriage and motherhood she is meant to fulfil as a Hindu woman. Her marriage to Sukhen was encouraged by her mother just as marriage is encouraged by Meena's mother in Pillai's, "To Market, To Market," discussed next. Despite Kala's intellectual emancipation and the freedom of choice she enjoys that Meena does not, marriage is still a trap perpetuated by patriarchal power structures and women are the main channels for its transference to other women.

Kala's trips to town occupy an hidden space in her life, much like the activities of Meena and also the main protagonist in Banfal's "I Remember, I Remember," discussed in chapter four, both of whom create secret lives away from the constrictions of their identities as Hindu women. But the effect of Kala's secret trips to town is that she feels somehow deceitful and soiled. One reading of her actions is that she is torn between attempting to express the "emptiness of her life" (206) while still needing her relationship with her husband: "She didn't want a life in which their love wasn't the centre" (207). Her identity oscillates, therefore, between her hidden self and the self which is part of her husband's world. As Kala negotiates between her two selves, those moments of "special closeness" (207) with Sukhen are matched by moments when madness threatens to overwhelm her and she experiences a desire to be intimate with a stranger who lives in her secret world and who towards the end

of the story becomes "the derelict god" (217). This image links the stranger with her childhood mythical imaginings and her dreams.

Meanwhile Kala's trips into town become bolder, in particular while Sukhen is away: "Now as she broke free of her sheltered life, the city suddenly took on a romantic aspect" (212). She opens her own bank account, rings a complete stranger and has a conversation with him or her, watches a ship full of tourists, and reads something "outrageous" (212). Collectively these acts reveal her attempts to expose the more hidden regions of her identity: "the dark underside of her existence, where she was taken beyond daily responses into another mode of feeling" (213). When Sukhen returns from his trip away, Kala returns back to his orbit and he becomes "the natural anchorage, the only refuge from other illusions" (216). This realisation is followed by the death of the stranger. Kala's secret life is therefore relegated to the world of illusion and she turns back to her real life with her husband. However, Kala's choice represents a denial of her real self, the more imaginative, adventurous self of her childhood.

There does not seem to be any real relief for Kala from the tensions that underscore her identity. The story merely ends with Sukhen displaying a partial realisation of Kala's internal struggle and the significance of the stranger. Compared to Shobha's experience in Banfal's "The Magistrate," Kala's search for other options is more limited and she remains static. Kala's desires at the end reflect the social and cultural codes which enclose her.

### Raymond Pillai

Pillai is a Fijian Indian, born in Ba, a graduate of the University of the South Pacific and of the University of Southern Illinois, and has published one collection of short stories as well as poetry and plays (Stead, Notes 283). The two stories below both depict Fijian-Indian women who are oppressed by patriarchal Hindu culture. I included them to explore further the problems

raised by Griffen and Shameem relating to how female characters in stories written by Fijian Indian writers such as Subramani and Pillai are represented.

### **"To Market, To Market"**

In "To Market, To Market," the attempt to find a husband who will accept Meena, a young Hindu woman, to make way for her two younger, more attractive sisters to get married dominates the efforts of Meena's family. But Meena's place as a valuable member of her community is compromised when she fails her family's expectations that she will remain virginal for her prospective match. As in Subramani's "Kala," Meena's non-conforming self, the self that seeks alternatives to the life which has been mapped out for her by culture and tradition, occupies an illegal space. This alternative self remains largely hidden until her secret pregnancy is discovered after she has been married off and she is returned home to her parents.

Meena's illegal sexual liaison with the Moslem boy, Salim, represents her desire to have a relationship based on love, not tradition; thus, she steps outside the confines not only of marriage but also of religious and ethnic boundaries. Meena's attitude towards her relationship with Salim is one of reckless abandon: "it did not matter if they were found out because the opinion of others was irrelevant" (31). This in turn represents a desire on her part for Salim to offer her love and marriage of a different kind to that which she faces as the oldest girl in a rural Hindu family that practices arranging the marriages of their children.

However, there is a gap between her desire for love and Salim's perception of Meena as "a big stupid girl," a "willing wench" (29) and "ripe for the picking" (30). She is eventually abandoned by Salim, pregnant and unsupported; her belief in his ability to save her is devoid of any evidence that he ever would, let alone could, have. The gap between Meena's perception of the relationship's possible outcome and Salim's callousness towards her signifies

that despite Meena's liberating attitude towards their religious and ethnic differences, an attitude which represents an attempt to break away from the entrapping customs of her own religion, she still becomes a victim of patriarchal attitudes towards women. She is used by Salim for her sexuality, just as later she is traded by her parents: her virginity for a dowry.

Meena is later put on display and is viewed by the prospective groom and his family as if she were,

a commodity on display, to be purchased if found satisfactory. It was too much like inspecting agricultural produce in the market. But it was the only way, the method hallowed by centuries of tradition. (36)

In Meena's society, the penalty of being female is to be owned. And in Meena's case, once her pregnancy is discovered the penalty she suffers is rejection.

Lydia Liu describes pregnancy as an event that "occupies a rather ambiguous domain of signification where meaning must be decided according to the social codes that govern a woman's behaviour through regulating her body" (54). In the case of *The Field of Death* by Xiao Hong, Liu describes the restrictions imposed upon the character Golden Bough's sexuality:

the patriarchy desires her body, demands her chastity and punishes her for her transgressive acts. Like a scarecrow, her body is emptied of its contents and reduced to a signifier of predetermined functions. This gendered knowledge is transmitted to the daughter through the mother, who forbids Golden Bough to go near the edge of the river where men seduce women . . . . (54)

Though the contexts of these two works are different, Meena too is controlled and produced by patriarchy. Her body is considered a shared commodity, a representation of her family's status within Hindu society and when she fails to meet her parents' expectations, she is devalued.

Ironically, Meena's attempt to subvert the hold patriarchy has on her is met by her mother's rather than her father's displeasure. This can be read in terms of Liu's comments above and also Rich's comment that "it is the mother through whom patriarchy early teaches the small female her proper expectations" (243). Meena's mother believes a "decent marriage"(37) is the only option for Meena and her sisters. This story provides a commentary, therefore, on the limited options women in traditional Hindu societies face. Meena's identity becomes that of one who is underclass and her gender becomes a burden that she must carry.

Shameem describes Pillai's use of language to describe Meena as contradictory, and invoking both sides of the whore-virgin dichotomy long applied to women (8). While I agree Meena is presented in the way described by Shameem, this view which is focused on misogyny leaves out the possibility of other interpretations. Meena's story could also be read as a struggle to maintain independence but in the end having to succumb to the opinions and rules of others. Also, the fact that in the end no one gains from the traditional system of marriage, neither Meena nor her parents, can be read as a criticism of patriarchal Hindu culture.

### **"Laxmi"**

The title of this story refers not only to the wife of the main character, Raju, but also to the goddess of fortune at the Indian New Year, Deepawali, Laxmi, who is appealed to to alight upon the households of those who are beckoning her. However, the opening scene, with its colourful description of fireworks, and its portrayal of hopefulness that this time fortune may come, contrasts with the misfortunes of Raju, whom "Laxmi always passes by" (38). Therefore, Pillai contrasts the promise of fortune which is embodied in Laxmi, the goddess, with the bitter regret of a man who feels futile, hopeless and "trapped inextricably" (38).

Raju blames the "powerful forces of society" (38) for his failure to gain much advantage from life. Here these powerful forces are embodied, at least in part, in the colonial administration<sup>5</sup> and Raju's resentment about his situation spills over towards his employer, Mr Barlow. The presence of a colonial employee links Raju's story to that of Manu and his community who are under the authority of Mr Pepper. As well as blaming Mr Barlow, Raju also attributes his misfortune to the result of karma: "In another place, another time, he might have prospered" (38). In contrast to the good fortune promised by the title, this is a story about poverty brought on by a system that demands workers labour hard for very little pay.

Raju's wife, Laxmi, however, offers some relief to his misery. Their relationship, or at least how he imagines their relationship as he walks home from work, at first seems like the ideal Meena yearned for in "To Market, To Market:" Raju and Laxmi have defied caste and custom and married for love. Initially, a happy domestic scene is portrayed: "they were still the bubbling newly-weds after nearly a year of marriage" (39). In addition, Laxmi is pregnant--bringing fortune in another way other than through a monetary blessing. Raju constructs his wife as a goddess framed on one side by Nellie, the prostitute, and on the other by Dhanraj and Bhola, the childless couple.

This idealised vision of Laxmi is temporarily shattered, however, when Raju arrives home and finds no dinner prepared and his wife "limp and unresponding" (40). There is no food, since she has given their money to her ailing mother. Suddenly Raju's adoration for Laxmi turns to bitterness and violence and Laxmi's response to his violence is to forgive. Thus, their marriage positions Laxmi as even more restricted than Raju since not only is she controlled by powerful social forces such as British rule in Fiji but her existence is also overlaid by her husband's desire that she will obey his

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<sup>5</sup> This story is set in 1960, before Fiji gained independence.

demands, and deliver the fortune of children and a happy marriage in all the squalor and misery of their surroundings.

While Raju and Laxmi's life together seems relatively happy compared to the lives of their neighbours, their situation is still marred by poverty, violence, a lack of alternatives; their identities are constructed from the restrictions they face due to these factors. Raju's construction of his wife as his own version of Laxmi offers temporary relief but she emerges in the end as a male fantasy: not only fertile, but forgiving, comforting and loving, lying in a "crushed bundle" (41) one moment and then suddenly playfully enticing him to their bed the next. However, beyond the idealised visions of good fortune and marriage, once the goddess leaves, a sense of futility and entrapment still remains.

Raju's wife Laxmi may well be read as merely a male construction designed to perpetuate the oppression Fijian Indian women face since she serves no real purpose other than to fulfil Raju's desires for good fortune. On the other hand this text also highlights the plight of the Fijian Indian community living in urban squalor under colonial rule. Identity in this situation is difficult to negotiate when powerful external forces such as a colonial government are present. Thus, Laxmi must negotiate powerful forces not only external to her world but also within it.

The characters discussed in this chapter are positioned in relation to their external worlds in a number of ways. But despite this variety of positions, some patterns have emerged which link the texts together in relation to the ways identities develop. These patterns also provide a useful framework with which to compare the writing by male and female authors, and this comparison will be developed in chapter four.

Firstly, that children tend to experience increased tension as they develop into adults underpins the three stories which depict children: "Onesimo," "A Day in the Life of a Vagabond," "A Fond Farewell," and "Tell Me Where the

Train Goes." While the characters who are featured in these narratives experience different types and degrees of anxiety, they all face increasingly difficult situations as they move away from childhood. Onisimo longs to regain his youth which he remembers as a time of promise. Marieta's journey from the safety of childhood to the dangers of going overseas away from her loving family is characterised by her increasing awareness of the opinions of others; opinions that sometimes cause pain. This same pattern emerges even when the children's lives are not idealised as safe and innocent. In Subramani's story, Manu experiences danger, abandonment, and even personal injury, but through his observations of the adult world around him it becomes clear that their world is even more intimidating and precarious. Also, Samu, like Manu, faces a life already grim and limited, but Veramu's descriptions of Kanaci, the older vagabond, reveal the dangers Samu is still to face.

The effects of education, urbanisation and development on individual people in relation to community are also explored. Onisimo is cut off from any form of community, and is instead framed by people he cannot relate to. The urban setting that forms Samu's "home" is also devoid of any sense of community, other than that of the other displaced homeless boys. In addition, Marieta's journey away from her closely knit community represents a collective shift away from traditional values which privilege family ties towards individualism, materialism, and economic elitism. Similarly, Jimi, in "The Unfinished Fence," is positioned far away from his community, and the need for employment and money is the primary motive for his separation. Lastly, in "from *The Wounded Sea*," the main character shifts away from his community to obtain an education overseas and the education he gains serves to displace him even further from his family, and his roots.

Another pattern that emerges is the way women are often illustrated as being subject to not only the colonising powers of the British but also having to negotiate the limitations placed upon them by culture and tradition. While this

theme is explored more fully in the stories which portray Fijian Indian women, such as "Kala," "To Market, To Market," and "Laxmi," Vilsoni's depiction of Marieta reveals how her development towards adulthood involves learning how to behave as a Rotuman woman. Adrien Rich's theory that the patriarchal culture is passed on to women by other women is born out in Vilsoni's story as it is in Subramani's and Pillai's narratives.

Identity is also defined in some of the texts by the gap which exists between being an insider and being an outsider. This definition is not only explored in relation to the Fijian Indian experience in relation to indenturement, as it is in Nandan's text, "from *The Wounded Sea*," and Subramani's "Tell Me Where the Train Goes," but it is also explored by Subramani in relation to Elaine, a Fijian-born European. Subramani's representation of Elaine's split identity provides insight into the effects colonisation has had not only on the indigenous and indentured communities, but also on Europeans living in Fiji.

## Chapter four

### Fijian Short Stories by Female Writers

Six female authors are featured in this chapter: Akanisi Sobusobu, Marqareta Waqavonovono, Vanessa Griffen, Prem Banfal, Janette Sinclair and Virginia Were. Again, as in chapter three, I read the texts discussed below not only with a focus on those threads which link them together as texts written by women, but also on the ways they link back to the stories written by the male authors in chapter three.

Sobusobu's "The Taboo" and Waqavonovono's "One Friday Night" both portray close traditional native Fijian village settings: the former without any evidence of colonial influences and the latter in a contemporary context. Both these stories explore the pressure placed upon individuals to conform to community views. Sobusobu's story can also be compared to Griffen's "Afternoon in Town" in that both portray children, but in very different circumstances. In Griffen's "The Concert," a colonial view of native Fijian culture is explored, and in "A Double Life," she takes a closer look at how the views of outsiders affect the way a native Fijian university student sees himself. Next, Banfal's three stories explore primarily the development of a young Fijian Indian girl through into her adult life. The main theme that brings these three stories together is that identity becomes more difficult to negotiate as a person gets older and moves away from family, community and, in the case of Banfal's protagonist, country. Also explored in these texts is the conflict associated with not conforming to traditional Hindu values. Meanwhile, Sinclair explores the theme of belonging as a European in Fiji, and Were's story "Levuka" provides a commentary on foreign travellers in Fiji, thus providing a link back to Grimshaw's text.

### Akanisi Sobusobu

According to Wendt, Akanisi Sobusobu wrote this story while still at high school (Contributors *Lali* 298). Hers is the only text selected which explores life in an indigenous Fijian village before the colonists had made significant changes to traditional Fijian village life. I chose this story to give my selection some historical as well as cultural depth.

### **"The Taboo"**

Sobusobu's narrative illustrates the powerful influence of culture and community in the lives of individual people. The narrative focuses on the life of Manasa, an orphaned boy who lives in the village of Sici,<sup>6</sup> a tightly knit community which is controlled by a fear of breaking taboos.

Manasa's identity emerges as a struggle between standing out as an individual person and following community rules and decisions. As the story opens, Manasa is set apart from the rest of the village which sleeps on collectively. Instead he is awake, finding the silence "unbearable" (23). Sobusobu's repetition of the word "unbearable" later, when describing the death of Manasa's mother, links this past event with his present mood. This link is further strengthened when the false accusation, made by Manasa's superstitious uncle, that Manasa has broken a fishing taboo designed to honour the death of the chief, results in Manasa being beaten by the same *bati*, warrior, Setareki, who had strangled his mother. These events are also linked, therefore, by a sense of injustice. Manasa falls victim, just as his mother did, to Setareki's unfair punishment. His mother was guilty, according to the village witch doctor, of doing something to agitate the ancestors which resulted in her inability to bear more children. Now Manasa is unfairly accused of breaking a taboo.

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<sup>6</sup> the "c" in Sici is pronounced as "th" (Churchward, 9).

His mother's death is central to the way Manasa's identity is caught between the tension of trying to submit to the larger community who have unfairly attributed guilt to his family, first his mother and now him, and wanting to rebel against misunderstanding (he didn't illegally fish), and subsequent injustice. Manasa's memories of his mother's death also reveal her own tragic story. In such a closely woven society, where fear and superstition rule, to be different is deemed a sin: his mother's inability to bear any more children challenged her identity as a productive member of Sici. The horror of her demise emerges from Manasa's recollections of the "cruel and meaningless ritual" (26);<sup>7</sup> in particular, his memory of being powerless to save her while a rope is placed around her neck and she is strangled as the villagers look on, bidding her farewell.

Manasa can either submit to village protocols, to community life, to fear of punishment, and thereby gain acceptance from the villagers, or he can be independent and suffer ostracism and reprisals, and lose his place in the community. Loss of place becomes something to fear when place is all-important to sustaining identity. However, Manasa rebels when the villagers decide to break another fishing related taboo and catch and eat a turtle someone has seen. As a result of Manasa's rebellion, he is punished once again. His punishment this time consists of being beaten and then banished from attending the feast. However, his independence and stubbornness are his salvation since his banishment from the feast means he is spared from sharing in the fate of the rest of the community, who die after eating the turtle meat.

Yet, the tension between superstition (did breaking the taboo kill them?) and realism (was the turtle meat just poisonous?), and between community (Manasa runs to the next village, suddenly sorry for what has happened) and individualism (Manasa lives) begs the question: was Manasa's rebellion the

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<sup>7</sup> The practice of strangling women was a formal part of Fijian traditional society (Capell 105).

cause of this catastrophe and is he being punished by being left alone or was this a punishment for the hypocrisy and cruelty of the rest of the village and was Manasa spared their fate because of his courage to rebel against tyranny? Or were both Manasa and the village punished for breaking the taboo? The reader is left without a clear explanation. What is certain is that Manasa, despite surviving the deadly feast, is limited in terms of what he can do and has to rely on the neighbouring village for help. In the end, Manasa is still defined by his relationship to a close community.

For Manasa, who is only a boy, life is oppressive and dangerous and outsiders have significant power to speak into and act over his life. Manasa's story has similarities to that of Manu in "Tell Me Where the Train Goes." Manasa is also defined by the community he lives amongst as is his mother after the death of her husband, his father. While the colonial administration is not featured in Sobusobu's story, these two narratives share the common feature of a closed and dangerous community which exerts pressure on the individual in an extreme way. The extreme limitations Manu and Kunti face are also faced by Manasa and his mother in Akanisi Sobusobu's "The Taboo."

#### Makereta Waqavonovono

Born in Fiji, Makereta Waqavonovono is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific. The following story is her only published work to date (Notes 176). I chose her text because it portrays a rural indigenous Fijian village in a contemporary setting, whereby the main characters have to negotiate the pressures of community living on individual people, and development on communities.

#### **"One Friday Night"**

Waqavonovono provides a commentary on the problems associated with poverty and how men encourage each other to join ineffective groups, leaving

no way for families, in this case Seru and his wife, Bale, to address mutual concerns. But central to this focus is the same tension found in "The Taboo" between acting individually or submitting to a wider community.

Waqavonovono's text focuses on Seru's decision, one Friday night, to drink away his meagre pay with his friends rather than taking it home to his wife and children. The fact that they are his wife's relatives that encourage Seru to go drinking complicates any easy suggestion that he should merely have said no, given the strong familial ties which compel him to join in. Thus, the reader is drawn away from judging the husband as the villain and the wife as the long suffering victim. Both husband and wife can be read as victims of their situation, a situation characterised not only by communal ties but also economic hardship.

The desire to be accepted by his relatives and fellow drinkers, to not appear different, is a powerful motive that underpins Seru's actions. This desire is exemplified when Seru is teased for having once been part of the church. Joining the church community is an alternative life Seru can chose within the village, but it is a life still dominated by the opinions of others. Therefore both, church-going and drinking present Bale with difficulties: "nowadays it was not his brother's church that was the root of his problems" (167), reflecting the power of community over the individual.

Seru's identity is therefore defined in three ways: by his marriage to Bale, who waits at home with their children; by his relationship with the church community--he is labelled a "backslider" (167); and by the community of drinkers, represented by the Union, the co-op shop where beer is purchased. That the co-op shop is called the Union suggests that the marriage union is displaced by the bond Seru has with the other drinkers.

Drinking beer is also a status symbol in the village, a defining feature which signifies whether someone is working or not. There are three types of beer mentioned by Seru and the other men: firstly, the beer sold at Vaka's

kitchen, which is "home-brew . . . for the gang who are not working" (168); secondly the beer they buy in bottles from the Union which is mainly purchased by the "workers dominating the scene, since they were doing the most buying" (168); and thirdly, the beer they dream about that is served in Suva--beer that is cold and therefore preferable to what they buy from the co-op. Thus, status is conferred by the type of beer that can be afforded by each person. This situation reveals the way the community is changing with the ingress of foreign economic, social and governmental structures such as the education system (signified by the village school teachers), the Public Works Department (represented by Seru and his friends), and the Forestry Department (portrayed by the "forestry man" (168)). The beer, therefore, becomes a symbol of foreign influences and change.

However, despite the status Seru enjoys as a worker, his life and the life of his family are characterised by hardship, meagre earnings, and limited options, particularly for Bale who has few resources to utilise for her family's well being. In the end, Seru's choice to continue as part of the drinking community in order to save face in front of his wife's brothers in turn robs his wife of resources that she needs for her comfort and survival and for the survival of her family. Yet if Seru had asserted his independence and had taken his earnings to his wife, tension would have occurred between him and the others. Seru is in a no-win situation as is Bale.

The pressure on people living in close communities to establish status in terms of foreign concepts of success is an issue also explored in "A Fond Farewell." While Hereniko's portrayal of family life is less dysfunctional than Waqavonovono's, the pressure to succeed financially, to gain status in the eyes of the community, is keenly felt by the Rotuman boat worker. In both these stories, Western influences, while not directly referred to, are implicated in the changes that are taking place in rural Fijian and Rotuman communities which threaten family ties.

In addition, this text can be linked back to Pillai's "Laxmi" since in both situations spousal abuse occurs not only because of patriarchal social structures which limit women in certain predetermined roles such as the wife who stays at home and raises children, but also because of the frustrations of poverty which characterise both stories.

### Vanessa Griffen

A Fijian of Samoan-European ancestry, Vanessa Griffen is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, has a PhD from Sydney, and has published a number of stories (Stead, Notes 287). Griffen is one of the most prolific female writers from Fiji and I have chosen three below which explore issues relating to moving away from home, the colonial education system, and the difficulties faced by Fijian students when they attend university.

### **"Afternoon in Town"**

In this story, eight year old Johnny runs away from home to the forbidden world of Tevita, a homeless street boy who makes his living from selling *leis* to the tourists. Johnny's identity, therefore, is positioned between the comforting world of his mother and the unfriendly streets of Tevita's hawking ground. Finally, Johnny chooses the comfort and safety of home and returns to a birthday treat of a cake with candles.

Johnny's existence at home is characterised by the noises and smells that emanate from the kitchen and dominate his senses on the morning of his birthday. His mother is depicted making sandwiches "for his father's lunch, and grumbling about the flies and the butter melting in the heat" (44). However, what should be a familiar and therefore inconsequential scene is on this particular morning the cause of Johnny's chagrin since the ordinariness of his mother's actions suggests to him that she has forgotten his birthday. This is what motivates him to leave home and venture out past the boundaries he is

usually allowed to play within. The act of crossing the boundaries previously set for him is his assertion of independence and is an inevitable part of growing up.

In contrast to Johnny's home, the world of Tevita, the Fijian boy, is one where mother and home are not central. Tevita's existence is similar to that of Samu's in Hereniko story. Both are homeless and have to generate a living on Suva's streets by using their wits. Tevita's world is a place where tension between tourists and hawkers is commonplace--Tevita is jostled by a tourist in the street. In this world, Johnny's identity becomes confused. His confusion is signified when he talks to a tourist woman and hears, when he tries to sell the woman a *lei*, not his own voice speaking but that of "a cheeky high-pitched monkey's" (46). One interpretation of Johnny's inability to recognise his own voice is that he has pushed past boundaries within himself as well as those imaginary limits set by his mother around his home.

When Johnny decides to return to his mother, he leaves Tevita standing alone in the empty, dark streets, while he returns to the warmth of home filled with the smell of chop suey and eight candles burning orange on top of his birthday cake. The scene at home, filled with cooking smells and warmth (the orange candles), contrasts sharply with Tevita's world. In the end, despite Johnny's display of rebellion and independence, the relationship he has with his mother and all she represents is central to his identity. In contrast, Tevita's hawking ground exists for Johnny only on the periphery. Therefore issues such as ethnic tension, urbanisation, and homelessness, issues that are explored more fully in Veramu's story, are only touched upon here. The reader, like Johnny, only catches a glimpse of Tevita's world.

What is highlighted by Johnny's story is the theme that children experience more tension as they develop and leave the safety of home where a mother is usually the central figure. Like in Vilsoni's story, the candles on the cake provide a sub-text that growing up and gradually leaving home is painful.

Griffen and Vilsoni both explore this process in relation to families where the mother-child bond is strong. However, in some of the other stories that depict children, when the mother-child relationship breaks down, as it does in "Tell Me Where the Train Goes," "The Taboo," and Banfal's "I Remember, I Remember," or is non-existent, as it is in "A Day in the Life of a Vagabond," external pressures are intensified.

### **"The Concert"**

The tension between Europeans and the native Fijians that is merely hinted at in "Afternoon in Town" is explored more fully in this story about a teacher, Miss Renner, who is of European origin and is employed by the colonial administration to teach native Fijian girls. Miss Renner's character is positioned in opposition to the girls' rich cultural identity and her attempt to impose her own culture upon that of the girls exposes the cultural elitism which was at the basis of the education system established by the British colonial government in Fiji.

Miss Renner's struggle to maintain that which is English and therefore, in her view, "civilised" over that which is native is first represented by the garden full of foreign plants she attempts to grow in place of the tropical plants which naturally exist there. However, her attempt to transplant her choice of plants into the garden fails just as she fails to graft her students onto her culture. Instead, what does thrive in the school garden is "The scrub with their colourful leaves, the clumps of bush fern, and the festival red and orange of the hibiscus" (14). When Miss Renner looks at the garden she can only see "the tangled undergrowth," while the girls see "the natural luxuriance of the bush and garden" (14-15). Their incongruent visions undermine Miss Renner's presumption that her cultural view is superior. In turn, the undermining of Miss Renner's view also destabilises the illusion of objectivity that characterises colonial accounts of Fijian native culture, accounts such as Beatrice

Grimshaw's travel writing which privileges the colonial culture over that of the indigenous people, as discussed in chapter two. Thus, the two incongruous visions of the garden which emerge from the text create room not only for Miss Renner's perspective but also for the colonial view of the other to be criticised.

The trip to the concert in Suva is presented humorously by the narrator and the effect of this humour is to undermine the pretensions of European elitism which Miss Renner's students encounter. The girls' lack of appreciation of the music: "They subsided into a pleasant sort of boredom" (14), and their social blunders: Mereoni, one of the students, claps when she is not meant to much to the shock and annoyance of the other concert goers (14), serve to highlight the pomposity which characterises the event. Also, the staleness of convention is contrasted with the spontaneity and the laughter of the girls. And in contrast to the music on stage which grows "slow and thin" (18) the girls' singing on the way home provides a rich alternative: "Unselfconsciously, naturally, they broke into song and their strong young voices rose, and were then lost, to the rushing darkness and the bush outside" (19). However, their rich cultural expression has no audience and is dismissed by Miss Renner as "only Fijian songs" (19). Katherine Trees explains that "the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised . . . is such that the language of the coloniser dominates while the languages of colonised people are undervalued" (10). Here, Fijian songs are undervalued. Thus, the language and culture of Miss Renner's world are privileged while the language and culture of the indigenous Fijian world are marginalised.

Miss Renner's arrogant reaction could be interpreted in the light of Suleri's description of the abrasive and contemptuous attitudes of British women in India:

When a conviction of superiority goes with the fear then the arrogance is heightened and sharpened. The memsahibs (roughly translated "the masters' women")--even those who know nothing of

the British Raj have heard of them . . . . Over the years, their ringing voices have pronounced Indian painting garish, Indian music cacophonous, Indian ways barbaric. (78)

Similarly, one interpretation of Miss Renner's efforts to suppress the native world around her is that she is afraid. And she in turn is rendered unable by this fear to see the value and richness of the Fijian world around her, just as Grimshaw fails to see Fiji's interior other than in terms of the common colonial paradigm.

### **"A Double Life"**

In this story, Griffen explores the world of a middle-aged, indigenous Fijian student who is studying at university to gain a higher paying teaching position. The narrator's first-person, internal monologue depicts his struggle to reconcile the two worlds he finds himself caught between: that of the University system where each student is treated as an individual unit, and that of his family where he is expected to fulfil traditional roles. This story, therefore, presents the dilemma many Fijian students face in their quest for a better life through gaining educational qualifications--living, on the one hand, in a traditional society and, on the other hand, having to perform in a Western educational system designed to foster independent thought and performance among students.

The narrator attempts to define himself by working through the definitions outsiders apply to him and others like him. Thus, his identity emerges from an interplay between opposing perceptions. His analysis of how tourists usually see Fijians exemplifies this process:

We are . . . thought to be strong--happy go lucky and strong. It is a hard combination to live up to. That is why, if you have any worries, don't show them too much. If you are sick or sad, or you

are in a weak position, don't show it very much or for too long.

(52)

The narrator also makes a distinction between men and women, saying that it is harder for men to live up to the perceptions of outsiders, represented by tourists, "for we permit our women to be more voluble in their emotions" (49). This admission presents a more complex picture of his life compared to the over-generalisations of the outside view. Also, the sub-text here is that indigenous Fijian women are not only defined by stereotypes touted by outsiders, but are also trapped within their own gender-based traditional system. Griffen's text, therefore is linked to the other stories which present women in traditional roles.

As well as living a double life, the narrator is also double-minded about how he sees himself. This double-mindedness is revealed in the way he defines himself in relation to the other students. At first he tells the reader he admits at times he "felt like an old man" (52) while at university since the others are young--he feels as if he is separated from the other students because of his age. Conversely, he also identifies himself as a mature student and asserts the advantage he has over the younger students: "because we have had experience" (53). Therefore, the narrator's opinion that he is separated from the community of students is matched by an equally strong sense that he is also part of the group of adult students that attend the university. This kind of oscillation between two extremes characterises much of the narrator's struggle to define himself in the light of the two worlds he must negotiate.

However, despite the narrator's sense of community with the other adult students, ultimately he is pressured by the university system to perform individually: "It was every man for himself. I became alone then with no one to share my fears and worries" (53). Stripped of all external support, the narrator finds himself alone in a socially free environment, as opposed to the rigid roles that his more traditional life requires him to play. Also, despite this freedom to

become something other than the person he is at home--"We had no identity there except the identity we made" (54)--the narrator admits he did not change much due to his shyness.

The narrator's struggle to negotiate the confusing world of the university in relation to his more familiar life at home is extended to the other members of his university community. He suggests that the individualism that is encouraged creates a conflict not only in himself but also in his fellow students:

I can only write it here because we have been taught not to fear to express ourselves to the others, to bring these things out. In tutorials they are always asking for our own ideas and opinions.

Most of us prefer not to have them. (56)

And just as it is difficult for the narrator to become what he is encouraged to be at university, the experiences in this other world away from home are foreign to his family and friends. There is no sign of integration between these two selves. According to Ron Blaber the narrator's dilemma is compounded by

his inability to tell his friends about the work he does at university. He can only talk about his courses within the university environment. He is caught between two voices; his true self sits voiceless somewhere at the back of his mind and can only "speak" through writing. (177)

However, by voicing his predicament, the narrator provides a positive alternative to remaining silent and trapped between the two lives he leads.

Blaber argues that despite the weight of externally imposed cultural norms that are placed upon the narrator, Griffen's story is optimistic, "insofar as it is possible for the narrator to maintain the distinction between what he is told and what he has experienced" (175).

"A Double Life" has similarities with other narratives which depict the conflict of interests within people when urbanisation, economic pressures, and educational needs compete with community and family roles. Kala finds that

gaining an education confuses her ability to slip into the role of traditional Hindu wife. Also Banfal's narrator in the second of her three stories discussed below finds university life creates a conflict between traditional and social expectations.

### Prem Banfal

According to Wendt, Banfal was born in Suva, Fiji, and educated in Fiji and New Zealand. She is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, and has published stories and autobiographical pieces in *Mana* and elsewhere (Contributors *Nuama* 397). Banfal's three stories are treated here as a series; linked together as if they are descriptions of different stages in the main protagonist's life. When looked at in this way they can be read as representing a gradual movement away from the safety of home and towards a growing sense of alienation and displacement.

### **"I Remember, I Remember"**

In this story, the narrator explores significant childhood memories, memories which trace the journey of a Fijian Indian girl as she grows towards adulthood. The narrator defines herself in relation to members of her family and to others outside her family's orbit and reveals a movement towards independence. This movement is underpinned by an increasing sense of being different from others, at times misunderstood, and ultimately alienated. Thus, Banfal illustrates that as a child leaves the orbit first of mother and then family and finally community, life becomes more problematic and pressures from outside the safety of home intensify.

The development of an independent self emerges out of a series of painful events starting with the death of the narrator's mother. The narrator describes her earliest recollection of her mother as "sacred:" "I remember how I

struggled and gasped for breath, frantic with fear--then the feel of her warm body and the fear was gone. I clung to her" (64). Shameem comments,

It is difficult not to be moved by the power of this young Indo-Fijian woman's recollections. From the very first line she establishes a close relationship with her audience and plunges us all in the middle of that most significant and most primary affiliation of all--the bond between mother and daughter. (12)

The memories that reflect life after her mother's death reveal a sense of hardship: lying down to sleep "on the old mattress placed on the floor . . . covered with a worn-out sheet," and washing "the never-ending line of plates and pyaalaa and pots black with soot" (64). That the narrator's thoughts "dwelt on her often"(64) during these times establishes the importance of this early mother-daughter relationship which once offered safety and intimacy, and also defines the beginning of the narrator's painful transformation.

The narrator also remembers her grandmother in a fond way and as a significant part of her childhood. The closeness she feels for her grandmother is illustrated by the narrator's recollection of her first day at school. However, this early memory is also characterised by pain caused by separation: "That first day I clung to my grandmother's skirt and refused to let go" (65). The relationship between the narrator and her grandmother is an example of women having warm, loving, learning relationships.

In contrast, the relationship between the narrator and her stepmother is adversarial and contributes towards the narrator's growing alienation from her father:

I had been very close to my father as a child, but after my father married again my stepmother made sure that he devoted all his time to my half-sisters and half-brothers. My half-sisters and half-brothers did not have any feelings of resentment towards my

sister and me, but my stepmother made a point of fostering feelings of jealousy and resentment. (64-65)

Banfai reveals here the way women often form negative relationships when they are appropriated into a man's orbit. Because of the antagonism she feels, the narrator's relationship with her father grows increasingly distant, and as the closeness of her home life gradually dissipates, her independence grows and her identity becomes more complex.

The narrator's recollections of her school days are also fraught with tension. Her memories map out her growing sense of difference from others. During her primary years she remembers having the wrong sort of bag, then when she's older she wears shoes that are different from everyone else's, and later still she is wrongfully accused of chewing gum in class. One of her most painful memories is when she is misunderstood by the New Zealand education officer who denigrates her in front of a number of other students. These memories signpost the narrator's growing sense of alienation.

Her sense of difference is also underpinned by ethnic divisions. When she leaves Dudley High School, a school for Fijian Indian girls, to attend a multi-racial sixth form at Suva Grammar, a school set aside primarily for European or part-European children, she must negotiate her identity in relationship to other ethnic groups instead of just those in her own community. The gradual widening out of her sphere of existence through education leads to "a new awareness of myself, a further estrangement from my father and a growing alienation from my own community. . . and the desire to assert myself as an individual in my own right" (69). The story ends with the narrator boarding a plane as part of a group of students from Fiji who are to study in New Zealand. Thus her circle of influence widens even further, separating her not only from her family and community, but also from her country of birth.

"I Remember, I Remember" can be compared with Vilsoni's story in the way Marieta, like Banfai, experiences increased tension as she develops, and

both move away from home to obtain an education. The experience of living in a foreign country is explored more fully in the following text.

### **"A Moment of Passion"**

In this story, Banfal explores what happens to the narrator at university overseas. Completely separated from home, community, and country, she has the opportunity to express herself as independent. However, this independence comes at a price and the narrator recalls how she descended into self-hatred which in turn lead to madness and then a state of psychological and physical exile back in Fiji. Central to this process of alienation is the fracturing of her identity as a Hindu woman, an identity which is underpinned by moral ideals which she fails to meet.

The narrator recalls her grandmother passing on to her traditional views of Hindu womanhood, saying that Hindu women "are the pillars of society and carry the burden of childbirth, child-rearing and of preserving the cultures and traditions of society" (34). This view links Banfal's text to some of the stories that present older women as the guardians of patriarchy: texts such as "A Fond Farewell," "Tell Me Where the Train Goes," and "Kala" do this. Here the narrator recalls how her identity as a Hindu woman was undermined thrown into confusion when she becomes romantically involved with a fellow student has sex with him and then realises that she can no longer have a traditional Hindu wedding.

The narrator also remembers her father's desires for her life. He too is presented as having played a role in passing on Hindu cultural expectations to her. She describes him as "traditional in his ways," and also reveals that he "did not want education, which he valued so much, to take away those values regarding marriage and family life which he cherished and wanted his children to possess" (35). The narrator therefore is caught in a dilemma: on one hand living with the freedom to do as she pleases as an individual while pursuing

educational goals which are valued by her father, while on the other hand also facing the limitations within her own identity as a Hindu woman who must live by certain moral restrictions.

The other student's attitude towards the narrator also undermines her sense of self. She remembers how he treated their sexual liaison as a one-night-stand, whereas the narrator had expected their relationship to continue. This is similar to Meena's expression of Salim in "To Market, To Market." Both women are used by the men they sleep with, and with devastating results. Here the narrator remembers experiencing a "feeling of antipathy towards herself" (39), indicating the deepening crisis within herself which was caused by her failure to reconcile what had happened with the expectations of others outside herself. Eventually she descends into madness, no longer able to negotiate the split between who she is meant to be and who she has become.

After undergoing psychiatric treatment, she returns to Fiji where she gains back a sense of belonging. Yet she avoids facing her father and her stepmother by accepting a job as a teacher on another island. Her actions upon her return signify a type of self-imposed exile which echoes the exile faced by Meena. However, the main difference between Meena and the narrator here is that the latter has more options--she can teach, support herself, move away, while Meena is still positioned firmly within her father's orbit.

### **"The Magistrate"**

In this third text, Banfal takes the feelings of disillusionment and sexual compromise experienced by the narrator in the previous story a stage further. Back from overseas, having failed to achieve the goals she had before she left Fiji, the main protagonist, Shobha, now uses her sexuality for her own gain. The title of Banfal's story suggests that the magistrate is the main focus, but throughout there is a tension between the title and Banfal's focus on Shobha

and her desires and decisions. The narrative, while short, falls into two parts: the first depicts Shobha's relationship at a party with the magistrate, and the second reveals how far Shobha can explore her independence and escape the life she has been leading.

Shobha's main objective at the party is to effect a meeting with the magistrate in order to meet, dance and then later sleep with him. The text reveals, however, that she is far from impressed. The melancholic Shobha remembers the "ideals of love" she once had; a sharp distinction to the sordidness of the party scene: "At first it seemed glamorous, but now she could not help feeling that it was all rather sordid" (12). Thus, she is initially identified as a sad, disillusioned woman.

However, Shobha is certainly not a sexual victim. Instead she emerges as both strong (she picks her moment to approach the magistrate) and yet vulnerable (she is left "stranded" on the dance floor) as Banfal dramatises the social game that underpins the party. Unlike the narrator in "A Moment of Passion," Shobha does not invest her emotions in the sexual encounter she experiences. Resistance to getting emotionally caught up in what she does with the magistrate reflects not only her strength but also the cheapness of the relationship, and a movement away from ideals towards disillusionment.

Also, Shobha finds comfort in her life away from the party scene, in the self sufficiency of her "well lit" flat where she is greeted by Ranger, her dog. When held up against other representations of women in this selection of Fijian stories, Banfal is the only writer who presents a woman as strong and independent, living outside her family and community. She reveals that although in Shobha's world the magistrate has greater social standing, even so women can have lives of their own. However, there are limitations to living alone: details of the flat's lighting and the dog on one hand represent warmth and comfort, but they also represent the need for security.

How far Shobha can take her independence is critiqued further in the second part of the story, which is signified by her decision to go away. Again, Shobha decides, she takes action, just as she does at the party, but the picturesque holiday location which signposts the second stage of the story is undermined by the arrival of the magistrate. His presence is a reminder that it is not easy for Shobha to escape the sordid party scene. Also the uneasy feeling she experiences at having to coexist with the magistrate in the same hotel carries with it a hint of fear: Shobha checks the windows before going to bed, and, after the sergeant comes to her room and offers her sweets, an implied request for sex, Shobha pushes the dressing table against the door. Thus, while Shobha is depicted as a strong woman who has made a positive decision to begin a new life, she faces restrictions associated with being a woman on her own.

In the end, her resolve that she will finally be "without any reminder of the past" (13) seems unrealistic. It is more a hope rather than a truth. However, Banfal does create an alternative to some of the no-win situations female characters face in the texts discussed so far. In comparison to Kala in Subramani's story, for example, Shobha changes her circumstances and tests the possibilities of her options in a more radical way, despite the limitations and dangers that exist. Also Shobha does not remain locked into a relationship with a man. Instead, her identity is based more on individuality rather than on the desire to remain or be married.

### Janette Sinclair

Janette Sinclair was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, but spent part of her childhood in Fiji, and now lives in Wellington. Her text discussed below won the John Cowie Reid Award for 1988 (Stead, Notes 283). Sinclair's story reveals the effects of colonial involvement in Fiji not only from the perspective

of the two major ethnic groups in Fiji, Fijian Indians and indigenous Fijians, but also from a European perspective.

### **"Outlines of Gondwanaland"**

Approximately ninety years after Grimshaw wrote her travel articles, Sinclair has written a narrative detailing the identity of a woman whose ancestors are colonists. Unlike Grimshaw, however, Sinclair does not privilege British elitism, but instead attempts to bring together the three main ethnic groups associated with Fijian history in her story. The three are represented by three friends: Glenda, a descendent of colonists in Fiji; Veena, a Fijian Indian woman; and Semesa, a native Fijian, who spent part of their childhood and teenage years together in Fiji. The narrator, Glenda, depicts herself and her two friends as travellers and through this depiction she binds each of them together, despite their obvious cultural differences.

The story begins with Glenda travelling across the Cook Strait and she muses that people have drifted around the Pacific before. She then places herself in this context, saying, "Yesterday I left my hilltop home on Hataitai" (174) to visit another drifter--as it happens, her friend Veena who was forced to leave Fiji with her husband because of the coup. Glenda further explains that the coup affected not only Veena and her family but also Glenda's aunt and uncle, described as "old colonial survivors" (175). Her memories of the coup link the narrative back to her recollection of meeting Semesa, who had become a soldier, on the Cook Strait ferry. Thus, Sinclair positions the three main characters as travelling away from Fiji, living lives which have been shaped by the political events of the past.

However the idea that they are all travellers also means a movement away from the sense of togetherness Glenda remembers them having as children and teenagers. The loss of that togetherness creates a conflict within Glenda. This conflict is revealed in her attempt to identify herself with the

people of the Pacific. She alludes now and then to the Maori legends that shape the historical consciousness of the native peoples of New Zealand, almost making their history her own, identifying herself as yet another Pacific Islander migrating here and there. However, when she meets Semesa and the other Fijian soldiers, Glenda's relationship with the Pacific, in particular Fiji, is problematic: "Fijian phrases, those familiar sounds, tumbled around my ears. But also recalled was that feeling of being an outsider" (177). The sense of belonging she tries to sustain with her images of travel is undermined by her identification as the daughter of colonial migrants.

Glenda's recollections of her honeymoon in Fiji further explores the difficulties she has finding a place for herself in the gap between belonging and being outside. The sense of alienation she feels as an adult is not only towards the local people, represented here by Veena. Glenda feels awkward at first: "When I saw her I felt embarrassment at my "touristy" appearance" (178). But she has a similar reaction towards her new husband, Martin: "he was one of the newer waves of immigrant to the South Pacific, only ten months out of Edinburgh with his rosy cheeks and white body. So I quickened my steps and worried about the white man's burden" (179). Glenda's marriage to a foreigner highlights the confusing relationship she has with Fiji, just as Elaine's relationship with a tourist, in Subramani's narrative, signifies her struggle to negotiate her sense of self in between two worlds. For Glenda the adult, therefore, life is more complicated than it is in her memories of childhood in Fiji before her father was repatriated to New Zealand after independence.

Glenda's recollections of independence day captures the unity between the three companions. At one in their desire to remain friends, they plan to one day make a pilgrimage to London to see Prince Charles "because he was one of us" (181). Their naive thoughts of togetherness and idealisation of their collective future is blended with ancient Indian rituals and memories of a performance Glenda and Semesa watched of Queen Victoria School's

production of *Macbeth*. Glenda's rich collection of memories weaves their lives together just as they stand on the brink of significant political change in Fiji, change which inevitably separates the three friends.

However, rather than end with a sense of separation, Sinclair closes her story by focusing on Glenda's significant childhood recollection of the three friends weaving themselves together into a mat they had made into a spiral. The mat represents Gondwanaland,<sup>8</sup> and as each reveals how he or she came to Fiji: Semesa's ancestors first, then Veena's, and lastly Glenda's, the three are again connected by their common identities as travellers, but this time in relation to how they came together rather than in relation to the paths their adult lives have taken.

While Sinclair provides a positive resolution to Glenda's struggle to find a sense of belonging, the disillusionment and sense of dislocation Glenda experiences as an adult cannot ultimately be erased by memories. The happiness she remembers as a child or teenager can only be remembered, but never recovered. In the end, Glenda's identification of herself as a traveller, not as a resident, is the only way she can recreate the sense of belonging she remembers experiencing more fully when she lived in Fiji. Consciousness of sameness was easier to establish, therefore, before the three made their individual journeys away from Fiji, driven by political and historical forces such as the withdrawal of the British from Fiji after independence, and the rebellion of 1987. Thus, as adults, Glenda's identification of herself as a fellow traveller becomes a more tenuous claim to unity.

### Virginia Were

New Zealand-born Virginia Were studied photography and painting at Elam School, University of Auckland, and she has published one collection of poems

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<sup>8</sup> "A supercontinent thought to have existed in the southern hemisphere in Palaeozoic times" ("Gondwanaland").

and short stories (Stead, Notes 284). By including Were who writes from a position outside Fiji I have pushed at the limits of what can be labelled as Fijian literature. Also, her story provides a useful link back to colonial discourse about Fiji such as Grimshaw's text.

### **"Levuka"**

In "Levuka" the two main protagonists, Anne and Ed, are tourists from America who, like Ronnie in "Dear Primitive," live their real, rational lives elsewhere. I have included this short story because it explores themes, such as ethnic tension between Fijian Indians and indigenous Fijians, gender roles, and the colonial or Western view of the other, that link it with the other texts in this selection. Were's story also has links to Grimshaw's travel article in that it presents a view of Fiji seen from a Western perspective, except here, Western, specifically American, elitist views are deliberately destabilised.

The narrator begins by describing Levuka in the manner of a tourist brochure:

The pioneering atmosphere is still strong in this somnolent town of 1400, a perfect base for excursions into the mountains, along the winding coast, or out to the barrier reef 1km offshore. Levuka is one of the most peaceful, pleasant and picturesque places in Fiji.  
(278)

The narrator's use of facts, tourist information, and descriptive gloss, coupled with the initial reference to Levuka's "pioneering atmosphere" echoes the way Grimshaw exploits those features of Fiji she deems might be interesting to her readers back home, presenting them as "facts" or generalities. However, Were's narrative belies the gloss of this description, revealing instead tensions between the local people who are living out the consequences of historical events that reach back to when Levuka was once the hub of the British Empire's operations in Fiji.

Were depicts Ed as, in keeping with the narrator's tourist gloss, unable to see Levuka other than from a position of Western superiority. A useful way of looking at Ed's identity as a tourist can be gleaned from Ash's comments about another fictional tourist, Elizabeth, who invokes several Western mythologies about travel:

Travel for Elizabeth seems more a matter of constructing than observing India: her experience filtered through the lens of her camera. In other words, the text sets up Elizabeth to represent a particular kind of tourist. Non-invasive perhaps, but nevertheless invoking certain privileges of the West: money, notions of safety, cleanliness. And detachment. (350-351)

These same mythologies are embodied by Ed. Like Elizabeth, he also invokes ideas of Western privilege and an inability or unwillingness to observe Fiji truthfully. Anne is also limited in her ability to understand her surroundings, but she provides a foil for Ed's lack of insight by her ability to be more sensitive; for instance in an interchange about whether or not Ed should wear a Hawaiian shirt in Fiji, Ed reveals his desire to look like a tourist while Anne points out that they are not in fact in Hawaii. Ed's failure to see the point Anne is making provides a commentary on the way foreign views of the Pacific often fail to see the enormous diversity and rich cultures that exist there, instead treating a specific location such as Fiji as just another South Sea island.

Were's text, therefore, provides a link back to devices regularly employed in colonial discourse, such as stereotypes, to reduce the world of the other into a manageable concept. Ed's patronising attitude towards the Fijian Indian woman serving in a local tea shop (he speaks "very slowly as if to a child" (280)) echoes the way Grimshaw employs the concept that the native people are like children to maintain her superior stance. Also, Jimi in "The Unfinished Fence" is treated like a child when he is stopped by the police. In this text

Anne, who converses normally with the woman, provides an alternative to Ed's approach.

Suleri's theory that fear is at the heart of the colonising experience is humorously played out in this story. Ed's dismissive attitude towards Levuka reveals much about his fear of the other, just as Grimshaw's account of Fiji's interior uncovers her need to overlay the world of the native Fijian in order to preserve her identification with the civilising power of the Empire. The title of Were's text, therefore, is ironic insofar as the story is not as focused on Levuka but is instead centred on exposing the deficiencies of Ed's vision.

This selection of texts written by female authors represents a diverse range of writing localities and subject matter, but out of this diversity similar patterns to those discussed in chapter three emerge from the texts.

The idea that children suffer more as they become adults emerges from a number of stories; namely "Afternoon in Town," Banfal's stories, and "Outlines of Gondwanaland." I will also include Sobusobu's "The Taboo" here since even though Manasa's life is already dangerous: he recollects his mother's murder, experiences physical punishment, and witnesses the demise of his entire village, like Manu in Subramani's story, Manasa's problems begin with the destabilisation of home. In contrast, Griffen's portrayal of childhood in "Afternoon in Town" presents a much safer home life. Johnny's mother is central to his world despite the tensions he experiences when he runs away. Banfal also presents a less dangerous childhood and despite the pain of growing up, the main protagonist has some freedom to move forward. It seems the degree of danger faced by the children portrayed in these stories correlates to the degree of power the immediate community has over an individual as well as whether or not the primary relationships with parents are intact. In Sinclair's text the issue is not so much danger, but the increasing

difficulty experienced in finding a stable sense of self as the main protagonist moves away from childhood.

The influence of outside forces such as education, employment, and urbanisation on communities and individuals is also explored by the female writers, as it is by the male writers. Waqavonovono's depiction of life in a rural indigenous Fijian village reveals the way people working outside the village, such as Seru, are awarded more status than those who are not, and in turn, the workers are obligated to share their already meagre earnings with others in the community, thus creating a cycle of poverty for villagers like Seru. His story is similar to the situation depicted by Vilsoni in "A Fond Farewell" insofar as the narrator in Vilsoni's text is also attributed value in the village according to his ability to earn money from an occupation generated by outside forces. Also, in Hereniko's story, Jimi's relationship with his community in Fiji is disrupted by his dislocation overseas to earn money for his family. The pressure to obtain an education also disrupts the relationship between individual people and their communities, as it does in "A Double Life."

In addition, the position of women is explored from a number of angles. In "The Taboo," Manasa's mother is murdered due to cultural directives, while Bale in "One Friday Night" is restricted by poverty and peer pressure to just accept her husband's actions. Johnny's mother is depicted as a homemaker, while in "A Double Life" women are portrayed as having the double bind of traditional limitations as well as colonial stereotypes to negotiate. In each of these stories, women face similar limitations to those depicted in chapter three. The pattern that emerges for representations of women is that when community or outside opinion is strongest, women are the most oppressed and have the fewest options. I agree with Shameem that Banfal creates an alternative to the more common representations of Fijian Indian women and yet her protagonist in the end faces limitations as a woman on her own--her options are still limited

by her relationship with the powerful social and cultural forces which colour her world.

Also, the gap between being an insider and outsider is explored in two of the texts explored in this chapter. Firstly, the narrator in "A Double Life" finds his voice somewhere in between the worlds of his home life and that of the university. Secondly, in Sinclair's story Glenda struggles to position herself in the Pacific and more specifically in relation to her life in Fiji as a child. Her story is similar to Elaine's in "Dear Primitive" whereby both characters have colonial connections with Fiji, both are identified by their relationships with specific people in Fiji and also foreigners from outside, and both face confusion in terms of where they belong. However, instead of dissolution, Sinclair attempts to reconcile Glenda's dual position through the idea of travel and common origins.

Lastly, in "Levuka," Ed and Anne are positioned as being totally outside the world of the local people. Their positions are characterised by the same sort of vision which characterises Grimshaw's accounts of Fiji, only here the position of outsider is deliberately critiqued by Were.

## Chapter five

### Conclusions

The main focus of this reading of post-colonial texts from and about Fiji has been on the difficulties faced by characters in these short stories and on how these difficulties in turn affect identity. Through my focus on identity, I have sought to discover some of the issues that distinguish the writing since 1960 as part of a definable body: Fijian literature, which has emerged against the backdrop of colonial writings that previously took centre stage.

I use the label "Fijian literature" here not to marginalise Fijian post-colonial writing in English, but to give it some independence from the more reductive labels that are sometimes used, such as third world literature, Commonwealth literature, even Pacific literature, which can merge the distinctions between the different communities of peoples who live in Oceania. Having said that, in order to not create a rigid identification which confines writers inside national boundaries which also in turn keep other writers out, I have included a broad range of post-colonial authors including two, Sinclair and Were, who write from positions outside Fiji. I have identified some of the spaces that have been cleared by various voices such as indigenous Fijian, Fijian Indian, Rotuman, and other. The label Fijian literature is used here to affirm the voices that speak about life in Fiji. The individual positions within these communities are each different, as are, of course, each writer's. But what I want to show is that despite the differences between writers' positions, the issues which underpin the ways identities emerge pull the selected stories together.

Colonial writing often reduced the marginalised, colonised communities into non-threatening and therefore controllable entities. The stereotypes used in colonial discourse about Fiji often glossed over the rich cultures of indigenous

Fijians and imported communities. Such stereotyping (such as the dualism between noble savage and evil savage) helped create a version of the colonised communities' worlds which was really a misrecognition of these worlds. This version was not only imposed on the marginalised communities, but was also used to support the West's domination of the other. Colonial discourse became, therefore, a way to emphasise the need of colonised communities to have the "benefits" of Western education, Western rule, and Western style economy and morality.

Beatrice Grimshaw's text reveals something of the context which Fijian post-colonial voices have had to write out of. I wanted to present an example of the colonial persona, the colonial identity, as it was in Fiji. In her travel article, Beatrice Grimshaw writes out of the position of colonial traveller, with all the relative freedoms and status that this title awards. Grimshaw employs a superior stance in her text and this serves to separate her world from that of the indigenous Fijians. She draws upon imaginary, childlike fantasies which domesticate the imagined terrors of the Fijian jungle, and support her thesis that the native people are childlike and therefore in need of Western control.

However, Grimshaw also writes herself into this world, revealing much about the precariousness of her own position as a woman in a patriarchal culture, a position which must negotiate not only ethnic, but also social and gender issues. That Grimshaw must look for a stable sense of self in the realm of the imaginary undermines any attempt she makes to project her voice as an ideal "I". Instead, her vision is, to borrow Bahari's words, a "profound irremediable misrecognition" (23) of the world around her and her text becomes a flight from reality rather than a realistic documentation of rural indigenous Fijian community life.

Caren Kaplan writes that "those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of vision" (150). It is

against the backdrop of the colonial paradigm represented here by Grimshaw's text, that post-colonial authors writing from and about Fiji have had to resist reductive roles and have created, and are still creating, new identities. A type of literary meta-text is emerging which rewrites the identity of the marginalised other in Fiji and also that of the colonists and their descendants, and other Western visitors to the islands.

My approach to reading the selected post-colonial texts here has been as a reader who allows the narratives to tell their own stories. Thus, I have tried to explore a richer vision of Fijian writing than that which is offered by Griffen and Shameem who focus, using feminist theory, on gender-based distinctions. In answer to their complaints regarding the ways women are often stereotyped in Fijian literature I found that not only the male but also the female-authored texts present women in terms of reductive roles which are sometimes negative. Perhaps now that this first wave of post-colonial voices has cleared a space, alternative representations of women may emerge against the history of oppressive representations which has seen female characters relegated to certain well-worn roles within the home or community.

I discovered in this reading of the selected texts that identity is more difficult to negotiate, for both male and female characters, when outside opinions or forces are powerful. I applied this statement to each of the stories and found that the characters struggled with some similar issues, despite the variety of writing positions represented in the texts. I formed four ways of expressing this collective struggle.

Firstly, life becomes more difficult to negotiate as people mature. When primary relationships are destabilised, the world becomes a more alienating place. While the characters in the texts that are positioned either as children or in relation to their childhood experience different degrees of alienation, the progression towards adulthood is accompanied by increased alienation, even danger in some cases.

Secondly, external forces relating to development in the form of educational or employment demands, affect individuals and also communities. The struggle to continue traditional and communal structures in the face of social change is faced by a number of characters.

Thirdly, women often face not only external pressures, but also judgement from within their families or communities. They are often defined by the dominant traditional culture. However, I don't judge the male writers as misogynistic and the female writers as liberating because both genders represented various types of oppression.

Lastly, the issue of belonging or not is explored by a number of writers. This relates primarily to the issue of Indian migrancy to Fiji, but in addition the identities of Europeans in Fiji and of Fijians in other countries are also represented. The key word here is "belonging." At times characters struggle to find belonging, feeling neither at home in their adopted country, nor comfortable in their imagined homeland or at one with their own communities.

These four patterns which emerged out of my reading of the selected texts provides a way for readers of Fijian literature to perhaps organise texts. For instance, instead of using the categories of male-female authors to separate the texts, other ways of grouping them could be in terms of a movement away from home, or in terms of the experiences of the various ethnic groups who are connected to Fiji. I hope my reading of the texts opens up new possibilities for interpretation.

Overall, I have tried to allow the texts to inform me of some of the main issues that characterise Fijian life. The issues that are identified are not necessarily exclusive to life in Fiji, and indeed the texts have obvious connections with writing from other post-colonial countries or regions. In addition, the texts resonate with something Fijian--whether it is the uniqueness of the village situations, the mixture of cultures that has ensued with the importation of

migrant races, the particular combinations of economic and social issues that emerge, the specific images and places that make up Fijian life. Against and out of this backdrop of issues, the identities of the main characters emerge: Onesimo the despairing teacher; the Rotuman boatman and his wife saying goodbye to their daughter, Marieta; Samu the homeless vagabond and his friend Kanaci; the indentured labourer Baba, his son Pratap, and his grandson; Jimi the illegal worker in an unfriendly overseas environment, and his employer Mrs Davidson; Manu the frightened barrack boy and his mother Kunti; Elaine the confused European woman; Kala the disillusioned Indian bride; Meena the Hindu girl who is pregnant to a Moslem boy, Salim; Banfal's protagonist who struggles as a Hindu woman to find her own way in modern Fijian society; Manasa who survives losing his mother and then his community; Seru and Bale who must eke out a living in a village affected by social change; Johnny the eight-year-old who strays from his mother's orbit into town; Miss Renner and her class of Fijian girls who express their cultures in different ways; the university student who must negotiate two worlds; Glenda the European who has ties with Fiji that link back to her childhood there; and Anne and Ed, the tourists who misunderstand the local community in Levuka.

This list of characters represents, in part, the rich diversity of life that is Fiji. They must negotiate identity in the face of issues such as migration, indenturement, colonialism, belonging, birth rites, traditional roles, childhood dreams and adult realities, familial relationships, movement away from home, the march of progress and the effect of this upon Fijian communities and individuals, education, travel away from and to the islands, racial tension between European and local communities and between the local communities themselves, the legacy of the past, the strengths and weaknesses of communal living, and so on. I hope that by giving voice to this selection of stories I have presented a diverse vision of Fiji and its people.

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