



Indigenous  
Textual  
Cultures  
Reading  
and Writing  
in the Age  
of Global  
Empire

TONY  
BALLANTYNE,  
LACHY  
PATERSON &  
ANGELA  
WANHALLA  
*editors*

## Indigenous Textual Cultures

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Duke University Press  
Durham & London 2020

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Aimee C. Harrison

Typeset in Minion Pro and Canela Text by Westchester  
Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ballantyne, Tony, [date] editor. | Paterson, Lachy,  
[date] editor. | Wanhalla, Angela, editor.

Title: Indigenous textual cultures : reading and writing in the  
age of global empire / Tony Ballantyne, Lachy Paterson  
and Angela Wanhalla, editors.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2020. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019054733 (print)

LCCN 2019054734 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478009764 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478010814 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478012344 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Literacy—Social aspects. | Indigenous  
peoples—Education. | Indigenous peoples—

Communication. | Indigenous peoples—Books

and reading. | Indigenous peoples—Colonization. |

Colonization—Social aspects.

Classification: LCC LC3719 .I55 2020 (print) | LCC LC3719  
(ebook) | DDC 371.829/97—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019054733>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019054734>

Cover art: Julie Gough, *Some words for change*, 2008

(detail). Site-specific outdoor installation: tea tree (*Mela-*

*leuca* spp.) and thirty-two book pages from *Black War* (Clive

Turnbull, 1948) dipped in wax. Ephemeral art exhibition,

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume developed out of the symposium Indigenous Textual Cultures, organized by Tony Ballantyne and Lachy Paterson of the Centre for Research on Colonial Culture at the University of Otago on 30 June and 1 July 2014. The editors would like to thank the Hocken Collections and their staff, who provided the venue. We would also like to thank Sue Lang, the former administrator in the Department of History and Art History at Otago, for the invaluable support she provided in putting that event together. Sue has provided the administrative support for the center since its establishment in 2012, and we are deeply appreciative of her hard work and expertise.

The center is one of Otago's "flagship" research groupings and has been very well supported by the university's Research Committee, and the editors would like to acknowledge that funding and also the broader endorsement of the Research Committee.

The editors would also like to thank all the presenters at the symposium as well as the attendees who gave critical feedback. All but one of the presenters wrote chapters for this volume. We would like to acknowledge Alban Bensa and Adrian Muckle, Evelyn Ellerman, and Ivy Schweitzer, who subsequently brought their expertise to broaden the scope of the book. We would like to thank all the contributors to the volume for their engagement with and enthusiasm for a project that brings a diverse range of scholarly traditions into conversation.

A book such as this is a team effort. In particular, Lachy and Tony would like to express our appreciation to Angela Wanhalla, who joined as an editor for the book and spurred the project on to its conclusion.

We are also indebted to expert readers who gave valuable feedback on the manuscript, and to the staff of Duke University Press for bringing the collection to publication.

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## INTRODUCTION

# Indigenous Textual Cultures, the Politics of Difference, and the Dynamism of Practice

TONY BALLANTYNE  
& LACHY PATERSON

INDIGENOUS TEXTUAL CULTURES offer crucial insights into the dynamics of communication, community formation, and political contestation within a modern world shaped by empire, mobility, and capitalism. Modernity was marked by the deepening and accelerating connectedness produced by aggressively expansive imperial orders, the encompassing reach of communication systems, and the integrative power of trade and markets that increasingly drew human communities into new forms of interdependence from 1492 onward. These connections were never total, nor uncontested. Even as the world became more connected through the early modern period, the networks that linked communities together developed irregularly in time and space, their reach was uneven in both geographic and social terms, and typically they were incomplete and in process, constantly being remade. Despite their globe-spanning aspirations, imperial rulers, advocates of evangelization, influential capitalists, and champions of new communications technologies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries never produced the smooth and seamless global overlays that they often promised. Histories of connection were often fraught and violent and produced deeply unequal outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

The study of indigenous textual cultures illuminates the shifting cultural practices and social relations within native or indigenous communities that felt the pull of distant markets or directly faced the onslaught of colonialism. One of the promises of much work within indigenous studies is that it enables the reclamation of intellectual sovereignty and the reassertion of cultural autonomy. Key strands within that scholarly tradition have fundamentally transformed our understanding of indigenous histories and have been powerful forces challenging white domination and Eurocentrism in national and global politics.

At the same time, however, such projects are profoundly shaped by their engagement with and entanglement within these earlier histories of global connectedness, the very processes that disempowered traditional leaders, undermined local ways of knowing and organizing social life, and alienated labor, land, and economically useful resources.<sup>2</sup> Deeply and fundamentally, “native” and “indigenous” are relational social categories.<sup>3</sup> They are historically contingent, being produced out of the development of the often highly unequal outcomes of cross-cultural trade, evangelization, colonialism and colonization, and nation building. These identifications were and are produced as a consequence of cross-cultural debates, incorporation into imperial regimes, the experience of colonial power, and engagements with the developing authority of national sovereignties. Of course, at a fundamental level, they have depended on the ability to reference shared ties to places and territories, a common linguistic and cultural tradition, and an identification with a history and set of genealogical connections that predate the disruptions of cross-cultural meetings and the onrush of colonialism.<sup>4</sup> These are some of the key resources that might be mobilized in order to produce the key differentiations from other social groups and the identification with “indigeneity.”<sup>5</sup>

Since World War II, the authority and reach of these identifications have also been enabled and supported by the interrelated development of global activist networks and the language of universal human rights.<sup>6</sup> As Ronald W. Niezen has demonstrated, the category of “indigenous peoples” gained purchase through the International Labour Organization in the 1950s and since then has been woven into a range of human rights initiatives and the platforms of a large number of international organizations. These global currents were crucial in enabling the development of increasingly expansive and dense connections among groups who identified as being indigenous. These identifications both were facilitated by and reinforced the recognition that their communities shared powerful commonalities, including the

alienation of land, resources, and sovereignty; the undermining of treaties; the denial of full political and social citizenship; and the experience of cultural loss as a result of successive governments pursuing the goal of “assimilation” and the privileging of national identity. So while contemporary indigeneity typically is anchored in genealogical affiliation and territorial belonging, it is also underpinned by a simultaneous differentiation of the “indigenous” from dominant social groups produced out of colonialism and recognition of shared experiences with other indigenous groups who typically share a common commitment to the pursuit of greater autonomy.<sup>7</sup> More broadly still, as Niezen argues, the growing authority of the indigenous as a cultural identity reflects important shifts in the global political economy and public sentiment—including anxieties around the “uncertainties of a runaway world” produced by globalization—which have both helped legitimate indigeneity as a social and political category and invested it with a particular set of moral, political, and spiritual connotations.<sup>8</sup>

Writing and textual cultures were central to the processes of differentiation of “tribal” or “native” groups under colonial rule and the subsequent remaking of communities, in both (emergent) national and international contexts, as imperial regimes were dismantled or attenuated. Under modernity, writing has been a powerful instrument for cultural construction, playing a pivotal role in the “invention of tradition” (or its definition and reworking), in the production of “imagined communities,” and in “writing” the nation into being. It not only has been a vital tool for intellectuals, activists, and anticolonial leaders but also was absolutely central to the operation of modern bureaucratic states and all those groups who interacted with these regimes, which were underpinned by the regularized circulation of paper, information, and opinion. Writing was a powerful tool in the struggles against colonialism and in subsequent efforts to cast off the legacies of empire and dispossession; it has never been the sole political instrument for those committed to overthrowing imperial regimes, but it has often been indispensable and effective.

Community formation and the struggle against colonial rule stand at the center of this volume, which explores the operation of indigenous textual cultures in a modern age of global empire. Bringing together a range of sites and scholarly traditions, it explores the various ways in which the written word was deployed by native or indigenous writers who sought to assert their intellectual power within the uneven cultural terrains created by colonial rule. Here it is important to note that the volume brings together

work focused on Africa, the Pacific, Australasia, and North America. While Australasia, parts of the Pacific (especially Hawai‘i), and the United States and Canada are prominent in recent work in indigenous studies, Africa and African peoples typically largely sit outside the dominant global understandings of the category “indigenous.” For example, in 1992 the United Nations offered the following summation of indigeneity on a global scale: “The world’s estimated 300 million indigenous people are spread across the world in more than 70 countries. Among them are the Indians of the Americas, the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region, the Saami of northern Europe, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and the Māori of New Zealand. More than 60 per cent of Bolivia’s population is indigenous, and indigenous peoples make up roughly half the populations of Guatemala and Peru. China and India together have more than 150 million indigenous and tribal people. About 10 million indigenous people live in Myanmar.”<sup>9</sup>

Some African communities—such as Nubians in Kenya and Basters in South Africa—do make claims to indigenous status, but their understandings of indigeneity have varied greatly and rarely aligned neatly with the developing global conventions. Of course, the particular depth of African history, as well as the complexities of mobility and trade over long distances within and beyond Africa, means that making claims to being the original occupants of a place or region—often a foundational element of indigeneity—is deeply problematic.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, certain understandings of what or who was indigenous played a key role in the operation of colonial power in parts of Africa, and as Mahmood Mamdani has argued, those understandings have played a role in shaping crucial elements of the postcolonial political economy in some African nations.<sup>11</sup> Mamdani has demonstrated that the idea of the native or indigenous was fundamental to the legally inscribed identifications that were central in the operation of colonial rule in much of Africa: the distinction between “natives,” who were believed to possess ethnicities typically defined by tribal affiliations and who were bound by “customary law,” and “nonnatives,” those groups including Europeans, “Coloureds,” Asians, and Arabs, who were seen to be distinct races and who were subject to civil law and, as such, able to exercise a range of rights that were beyond the reach of the “native” populations.<sup>12</sup> In light of this argument, there is real value in returning Africa to the fold of indigenous studies, especially given the centrality of the native as an organizing category in colonial thought in Africa, a powerful commonality with the Pacific, Australasia, and North America.<sup>13</sup> Reconnecting these histories might offer substantial intellectual rewards, as leading Pacific historian Damon I. Salesa has argued.<sup>14</sup>

CHANGE AND CHALLENGING THE RULE  
OF COLONIAL DIFFERENCE

One compelling way into the relationship between colonial rule and cultural difference is provided by the work of the Tasmanian indigenous artist Julie Gough. Gough's work is anchored in a set of conversations that weave together archival holdings, physical landscapes, and objects that carry traces of colonial pasts. Over the past two decades, she has produced a series of sophisticated meditations on indigenous experiences of empire building that rematerialize how language and knowledge were threaded through the dispossession and violence that were integral to the colonization of Van Diemen's Land. Some works primarily draw attention to the relation among knowledge, violence, and domination, while others function as a kind of counterarchive, sites where the experiences and even more fundamentally the names and connections of indigenous peoples and places can be recorded and recalled.<sup>15</sup> Both of these creative strategies foreground the "conflicting and subsumed histories" that are produced out of the entanglements of empire and the subordination of indigenous communities under colonial rule.<sup>16</sup> Language, found and repurposed objects, and media of various kinds are central to the assemblages that Gough constructs, drawing our attention to how regimes of colonial difference were created and to how things and words can carry the legacies of past inequalities into our present.

As scholar of Australian literature and visual culture Marita Bullock has observed, Gough's work not only picks at the silences and occlusions of official understandings of Tasmanian history but also draws critical attention to the divergence between those narratives and the understandings of the descendants of the indigenous populations who were displaced and dispossessed. Across an impressive set of works, Gough assembles a striking visual language that has been an important artistic intervention in the so-called History Wars in Australia, a set of fraught debates over the nature and consequences of colonialism.<sup>17</sup> That Gough's work focused on the experiences of Tasmania's Aboriginal populations and the violence of the colonial order that developed on that island was especially significant given that the evidentiary basis for revisionist academic histories that foregrounded both violence and Aboriginal resistance stood at the center of the History Wars.<sup>18</sup>

Gough's work is a rich departure point for this volume because it explores the entangled nature of colonialism, indigeneity, media, and knowledge production. In producing her work, she repurposes colonial images, fashions an alternative set of visual idioms that foreground questions



FIGURE 1.1 Julie Gough, *Some words for change*, 2008 (detail). Site-specific outdoor installation: tea tree (*Melaleuca* spp.) and thirty-two book pages from *Black War* (Clive Turnbull, 1948) dipped in wax. Ephemeral art exhibition, Friendly Beaches, Tasmania. Photograph by Simon Cuthbert. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

about indigenous experience, and explores the interplay between colonial domination and postcolonial reassertions of identity, rights, and cultural legitimacy. In her *Some words for change* (2008), for example, she presents a striking juxtaposition between the printed word and tea tree spears, markers of indigenous resistance. The leaves impaled by the weapons are from Clive Turnbull's *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines*, an influential 1948 study of the colonization of Tasmania. Turnbull's history emphasized the range and depth of the violence perpetrated by colonists in Van Diemen's Land at a point when many historians scripted Australian history within liberal progressive narratives that tended to occlude violence and dispossession. Simultaneously, however, such accounts denied the continued existence of indigenous communities in Tasmania, failing to recognize the capacity of indigenous peoples to remake themselves within radically different circumstances. Gough's work challenges this narrative in a potent way, mobilizing the spear as a reminder that colonial domination was never uncontested, viscerally questioning the authority of written history.

The questions about colonialism, power, knowledge, and belonging that stand at the heart of Gough's oeuvre are urgent sites of contestation in indigenous politics globally, but they carry a special freight within the context of Tasmanian history. The colonial history of Van Diemen's Land was structured by violence, both in the operation of its convict system and in the forcible dispossession, containment, and displacement of indigenous populations. Those populations were subject to extensive violence and faced the terrible consequences of disease and dispossession. Tasmanian Aboriginal communities have often been imagined as extinct by politicians, journalists, and historians, and recent scholarship has framed the island's history as an exemplary case of colonial genocide.<sup>19</sup> Although much recent work on settler colonialism follows Lorenzo Veracini and Patrick Wolfe to argue that such forms of politico-economic organization were propelled by an eliminationist sensibility, Gough's work simultaneously underscores the centrality of violence in colonialism's will to power and also challenges readings that imagine the complete erasure of Tasmania's indigenous populations, and their cultural presence, experiences, and memories, by colonial power.<sup>20</sup>

At the heart of this volume is a desire to recover the shifting configurations of indigenous communities and knowledge traditions, specifically through a close attention to ways in which important ideas and aspirations were articulated through textual cultures. When *Some words for change* was exhibited on heathland at Friendly Beaches on the Freycinet Peninsula in Tasmania in 2008, another installation of Gough's work with the same title drew attention

to matters of language. A series of laminated pages recorded indigenous terms from nineteenth-century Tasmania for the innovations of the colonial order, listing words like *wetuppenner* (fence), *booooo* (cattle), *bar* (sheep), *linghene* (fire a gun), *lughtoy* (gunpowder), *licummy* (rum), and *nonegimerikeway* (white man). In her artist statement on this work, Gough described how this wordlist recorded the “clues in language and in print of Aboriginal efforts to understand and incorporate what had arrived” under colonial rule.<sup>21</sup> By foregrounding change, Gough stressed the adaptability and resilience of indigenous peoples, a crucial intervention given that many white Australians still frame Aboriginal communities in terms of tradition or unshifting racial difference or view them as essentially belonging to a primeval past.

Gough’s work as an artist can be usefully read alongside Leonie Stevens’s work on indigenous traditions of literacy in colonial Van Diemen’s Land. Stevens’s cultural history from below is anchored in a body of largely neglected sources: the writings of the indigenous exiles at Wybalenna, an “Aboriginal Settlement” established on Flinders Island to forward their “civilization” and “Christianization,” in the 1830s and 1840s. Stevens deftly explores a rich body of primary source material, including letters written by indigenous people at Wybalenna between 1843 and 1847, records of school examinations, and a range of sermons delivered by the young men Walter George Arthur and Thomas Brune and the handwritten *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle* they produced in 1836–37. Drawing on these varied materials—which underscore the archival work that can still enrich our understandings of indigenous histories—Stevens keeps the indigenous actors at the center of the story, exposing the limits of readings that imagine these sources (or colonialism more generally) as the unfurling of an uncontested and complete form of hegemony. Against such readings, Stevens presents Wybalenna as a “vibrant, noisy, and often rebellious community” whose creativity and resourcefulness challenged colonial assumptions and created a body of texts that capture a set of crucially important indigenous aspirations, experiences, and arguments articulated in the face of the (literally) unsettling claims of colonial authority.<sup>22</sup>

#### LITERACY AND THE ELUCIDATION OF DIFFERENCE

Questions of language and literacy were central to the operation of colonial authority. The extension of European commercial systems, territorial authority, and cultural aspirations into the “New World” of the Americas and the Caribbean during the early modern period produced a growing archive of

reflections on language and cultural difference. Samuel Purchas, an influential English cleric and editor who produced important compilations of travel writing in the early seventeenth century, suggested that writing was the key measure of cultural capacity: “amongst Men, some are accounted Civill, and more both Sociable and Religious by the Use of letters and Writing, which others wanting are esteemed Brutish, Savage, Barbarous.” Purchas stressed the particular significance of writing’s power to communicate across time: “By speech we utter our minds once, at the present, to the present, as present occasions move (and perhaps unadvisedly transport) us: but by writing Man seemes immortall.” Via literacy, an individual “consulteth with the Patriarkes, Prophets, Apostles, Fathers, Philosophers” and could communicate their ideas through time: “by his owne writings [he] surviveth himselfe, remaines (*littera scripta manet*) thorow all ages a Teacher and Counsellor to the last of men.”<sup>23</sup> As Stephen Greenblatt has noted, there is a significant shift in the constitution of “barbarian” as a social category in Purchas’s text. Where in the ancient Mediterranean world this term delineated the boundary between Greek speakers and those who spoke other languages, now the barbarian was marked by the absence of literacy.<sup>24</sup>

As modern empires took shape in the second half of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century, language was particularly prominent in the articulation of imperial authority and the justification of colonial domination.<sup>25</sup> In the British case, philology was especially important in shaping understandings of cultural capacity and the path of human development. Language was, of course, both a key archive and an important grounds for the argument of leading Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who developed new “stadial” histories that traced the development of human communities from rudeness to “refinement”: these arguments took shape in Thomas Blackwell’s important treatment of Homer and were elaborated and refined by important later thinkers such as Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, and John Millar.<sup>26</sup> A later generation of Scottish thinkers drew on these arguments, as well as the pathbreaking work of Sir William Jones on Sanskrit and the deep linguistic affinities of what came to be known as the Indo-European language family, to craft linguistically framed histories of the cultural development of Asian societies.<sup>27</sup> For the influential essayist and Sanskritist Alexander Hamilton philology was essential for historians of “Civilisation,” as language was the “most imperishable guide” to the origin and progress of all human communities.<sup>28</sup>

As European imperial regimes extended their reach into the Pacific, language stood at the heart of European assessments of the sophistication of local peoples and was seen as indicative of their capacity to change.<sup>29</sup> During

his first Pacific voyage in 1769, James Cook reflected on questions of language in the wake of a sojourn at the Endeavour River on the Cape York Peninsula, Australia. Cook observed that “the languages of the different tribes differ very much. This results from the continual state of war in which they live, as they have no communication the one with the other.”<sup>30</sup> That Aboriginal peoples relied on the oral transmission of information and cultural knowledge was seen as a marker of a crude and unsophisticated culture. Indigenous communities in Australia were thus framed as “illiterate,” “primitive,” and “barbaric,” reflecting the primacy of writing in European conceptions of civilization.

Indigenous knowledge orders that were anchored in orality were typically defined in negative terms, as *lacking* literacy. Such communities were variously understood as requiring special “protection,” “uplift,” or evangelization, or, in some cases, they were identified as a serious impediment to the project of colonial progress: they were consistently constituted as a “social problem.”<sup>31</sup> In the Australian case, many influential churchmen and colonial politicians were convinced that because indigenous communities had little interest in cross-cultural trade and limited enthusiasm for literacy and books, they would not be able to be converted to Christianity and were incapable of cultural change more generally.<sup>32</sup> Joy Damousi has highlighted the importance of the oppositions between “oral and primitive” and “literate and civilised” in the operation of colonial power in Australia in the middle of the nineteenth century. These were not simply abstract questions as they troubled the actual functioning of the colonial state, most notably in the legal system. Damousi demonstrates the ways in which indigenous peoples were marginalized in colonial courts in the 1830s and 1840s because they were understood as incapable of rendering reliable oaths, a “problem” that occasioned much debate among colonial authorities and humanitarian reformers.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, at the level of both scholarly activity and colonial *realpolitik*, language was central in encoding difference. The presence of writing was especially crucial, not just in shaping European evaluations of the cultural sophistication of indigenous and colonized peoples, but also in structuring how colonial knowledge itself was produced and organized. Nonliterate societies were typically imagined as “traditional,” ordering their life around tribal units, oral tradition, and the weight of custom. Understanding these communities was to be the domain of ethnology and, subsequently, anthropology.<sup>34</sup> Conversely, those communities that were literate were seen not only as more sophisticated but also as belonging to the domain of historical study, as they produced written sources and were capable of change. This opposition, which was forcefully articulated during Europe’s “discovery” and conquest

of the New World in the early modern period, was constantly reiterated and calcified during the aggressive extension of European imperial systems during the long nineteenth century. As Michel de Certeau has noted, this assessment of different forms of communication performed powerful cultural work, effectively “exiling orality outside of the areas which pertain to Western work . . . transforming speech into an exotic object.”<sup>35</sup> Effectively, the native was seen as the embodiment of orality and the past, while the European colonizer was equated with writing and the ever-changing present of modernity.

#### STRUCTURING OPPOSITIONS

Questions relating to orality and literacy have been central to a range of work on the distinctiveness of native or indigenous epistemologies. Some foundational anthropological texts have been particularly influential in elaborating the literacy-orality opposition. In a number of his works, Claude Lévi-Strauss reflected on the impact of the introduction of literacy among the Nambikwara, a Brazilian indigenous community. Stressing the deleterious social effects that followed the Nambikwara’s adoption of writing, Lévi-Strauss argued that writing undermined the authenticity and innocence of tribal communities whose social life was anchored in orality. Literacy centralized power, promoted and calcified social hierarchies, and underwrote the authority of the law: in his commentary on Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Derrida called these shifts the “violence of the letter.”<sup>36</sup>

For Lévi-Strauss, the uptake of these new skills meant a shift away from tradition and a dilution of native status: literacy broke the bonds of community and attenuated long-standing links to the natural world. As an anthropologist he saw these changes as a kind of loss, an undermining of a tribal culture by corrosive external forces. Yet, as Derrida noted, the distinction between “historical societies and societies without history” hinged on Lévi-Strauss’s concept of literacy. In particular, Derrida observed, the Nambikwara were not without a system of inscriptions—incised and engraved calabashes—and they also displayed a strong interest in writing when first provided with paper and pencils, something that Lévi-Strauss omitted from *Tristes Tropiques*.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Lévi-Strauss’s treatment of the Nambikwara’s enthusiasm for the skills and technologies of literacy was dependent on the assertion that they had no word that was a direct equivalent of *write*; this was a narrow rendering of the linguistic possibilities that closed off any conception that preexisting indigenous graphic or representational systems facilitated the Nambikwara’s interest in alphabetic literacy.<sup>38</sup>

Where literacy was a key concern in Lévi-Strauss's treatment of an imperiled "native" way of life, Walter Ong's work on orality and literacy focused on the impact of literacy on thought processes and ways of understanding the world. Ong argued that a substantial cognitive investment was required to master writing as a cultural technology. As a consequence, literacy effected a significant cognitive transformation, effectively restricting human thought as the world of signs and sight was privileged over the world of sound and listening. While Ong was interested in tribal communities and colonized groups, the key ground for his arguments was European culture itself. He suggested that a succession of deep cultural shifts—the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the emergence of modern knowledge systems in the wake of industrialization—had cemented the centrality of writing and print literacy, as the key underpinnings of human consciousness under modernity. As Ong simply argued, "writing *restructures consciousness*."<sup>39</sup> For Ong, these transformations were clearly evident in the European past, in which key medieval intellectual traditions of logic, rhetoric, and dialectics were transformed and subsumed with the growing ascendancy of print in the wake of the Reformation. But he was also aware that the arguments could be refracted beyond Europe's shores and that old oppositions between "Civilization" and the natural world of the "Primitive" had been rearticulated through the orality-literacy divide. In response, Ong highlighted the significance of the interaction between such modes, whether in "native communities" or within the high Western tradition itself (as seen in Tudor poetry, for example).<sup>40</sup> Thus, as Jane Hoogstraat has argued, Ong enabled a rereading of colonialism, making it "possible, and imperative, to imagine and to recognize the voices—absent, other and largely oral—that haunt the official languages that we still speak and write."<sup>41</sup>

Jack Goody's influential treatments of orality and literacy tended to occlude such dynamics, stressing the divergence between the worlds of literacy and nonliteracy. Across an arc of publications, Goody posited that writing renders the relationship between a written word and the thing it refers to as abstract and universal.<sup>42</sup> As a consequence, he suggested that literacy promoted ways of thinking that were abstract, structured, and formalized. For Goody, the emergence of literacy was central in the separation between history and mythology, the development of complex forms of bureaucratic governance, and the development of sophisticated forms of cultural expression. Even as he mobilized a wide range of case studies, Goody frequently dichotomized oral and literate forms of social communication, glossing over or blurring hybrid forms of practice, especially the ways in which orality

might condition literate cultures. Moreover, he tended to identify literacy as both a driver of change and a marker of cultural distinctiveness, when assessments of the impact and meaning of reading and writing need to be embedded in the broader operation of social communication and cultural differentiation.

#### UNRAVELING OPPOSITIONS

Goody's work embodies a tendency of anthropological scholarship to extrapolate from specific ethnographic case studies to generalize about the distinctive qualities of orality and literacy. In making this move from the local to the abstracted universal, these arguments undervalue the placedness of these practices. In emphasizing the thickness and coherence of "culture," these kinds of arguments tend to underplay the historical contingency of cultural formations. They also often flatten out what we might think of as the social texture of these practices: their distribution by age, gender, status, kin-group affiliation, occupation, and place.<sup>43</sup> As William H. Sewell Jr. has observed, Lévi-Strauss was the influential architect of a vision that imagined culture as "a realm of pure signification," emphasizing its "internal coherence and deep logic."<sup>44</sup>

The chapters collected here demonstrate the limits of such an abstracted reading of culture. The arguments of Lévi-Strauss, Ong, and Goody continue to have purchase in a range of fields, and particular readings of their work still enable indigenous communities to frequently function as grounds on which divergences between literacy and orality, civilization and nature, history and culture are articulated. This volume challenges and unsettles a number of these claims. Many of the contributions are deeply attentive to place; they are concerned with multiple and shifting forms of social differentiation that often complicate neat divisions between the indigenous and the colonial; and they highlight the centrality of literacy practices in the dynamic making and remaking of indigenous social life, cultural understanding, and political aspiration. In many ways, they demonstrate the enduring importance of Sylvia Scribner's insight that "literacy has neither a static nor a universal essence."<sup>45</sup> The skills and practices that we bundle into the tidy label "literacy" are contingent on time and place; they carry divergent meanings and variable cultural weight for various social groups; and their importance and influence are, in part, determined by their interrelationship with a whole host of other practices: from oratory to marriage practices, from child raising to economic relations.

Scribner and her collaborator Michael Cole clearly demonstrated this contingency and complexity in their ethnographic study of the literacies of the Vai people, a Manden ethnic group from Liberia. They explored the complex interaction among three distinct literacies within Vai society: a tradition in Arabic, closely associated with Islam and maintenance of correct religious thought and practice; the English literacy sponsored by the government of Liberia; and a vernacular form practiced through the Vai script—a locally invented syllabic script championed by Momolu Duwalu Bukele, probably from the 1820s. Scribner and Cole demonstrated how these quite distinct literacies coexisted and interacted, but they also underlined that none of these traditions had supplanted orality. Indeed, Scribner and Cole found that orality persisted in a multitude of practices and that a range of socially and economically significant activities and institutions functioned in the “traditional oral mode”: for the Vai, there was little or no social cost for not embracing literacy.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the chapters in this volume move away from an abstract treatment of the qualities of writing, to focus on the practices that produced indigenous textual cultures as socially important and dynamic formations. If Scribner’s insistence on the flexibility and multiplicity of literacies helps frame this volume, more broadly the chapters gathered here operate in the wake of a vital recent literature on the social history of African literacies. That scholarship is born out of a robust dialogue between a very strong African tradition of social history and histories of books and print, work that in the African context has been committed to casting off Eurocentric framings of the “nature of the book.”<sup>47</sup> While this scholarship acknowledges the prominence of literacy and textual cultures in shoring up imperial power—what Karin Barber calls a “documentary form of domination”—African readers and writers stand at its center.<sup>48</sup> In exploring the literacy practices of “ordinary people—clerks, teachers, catechists, school pupils, local healers, entrepreneurs”—this work has recovered a striking array of nonelite textual cultures and begun to reconstruct the “explosion of writing of all kinds” that was characteristic of life in twentieth-century Africa.<sup>49</sup>

Recovering these “hidden histories” of literacy not only documents the great utility and flexibility of literacies as social tools for Africans but also challenges us to rethink cultural production in colonial spaces. It directs our attention to the history of hidden, forgotten, neglected, or marginalized cultural innovators who read, wrote, and used texts in endlessly creative ways: a theme that threads through several chapters in this volume.<sup>50</sup> The constructive nature of African reading practices has been vividly rendered by Isabel Hofmeyr’s reconstruction of the transnational circulation of John Bunyan’s

*Pilgrim's Progress*. White and African elite sponsors of missionary work, the expansive cultural networks of the Black Atlantic, and the explosive energy of African messianic traditions helped secure an influential position in the intellectual and cultural landscapes of Africa for that “portable text.” But the reach of *Pilgrim's Progress* also reflected its embrace by a diverse array of local readers and the text’s “lateral” mobility, as it was widely translated and moved between African linguistic communities.<sup>51</sup> Archie Dick’s work has also directed our attention to the “hidden history” of reading in South Africa. He shows how diverse sets of readers—including slaves, Khoisan, “Free Blacks,” Griquas, influential African Christian leaders, labor leaders, political prisoners, and exiled antiapartheid activists—sought out and engaged with texts and in the process imagined and reimagined social belonging and the possibilities of politics.<sup>52</sup> More broadly still, for many African individuals and communities, reading became a key instrument for “improvement” or “betterment,” a trend that is partly explainable through reference to the cultural contests of the colonial order but that was part of a wider cultural shift under modernity in which *improvement* functioned as a global keyword and reading “good books” was widely identified as one of the most efficacious engines of improvement.<sup>53</sup>

Barber has drawn our attention to the particular importance in the African context of what she has termed “tin-trunk texts” or “tin-trunk literacy” and the “tin-trunk literati.” These terms gesture toward individuals who were deeply committed to the value of literacy and textual production. Of course, the figure of the “tin-trunk” identifies the importance of a kind of vernacular archive, as many of these passionate readers and writers were committed to archiving their lives (through journal keeping, the keeping of correspondence, or a broader collecting of documents), recording the changing fortunes of their families, local institutions, and social networks. In some cases, these forms of practice were heavily shaped by preexisting modes of social communication and cultural memorialization that were steeped in orality: whether this was how the inscription of dates in Bibles echoed the memorializing strategies of long-standing oral genres or how letters might be shaped by traditions of oral praise poems or family histories. While these types of practice seem to be a common feature of anglophone colonial Africa, they were also inflected by the particular forms of “documentary domination” that underwrote colonial power in various locales. Tin-trunk literacies certainly were energized by a desire to remake the self and reimagine community, but they were also imprinted by engagements with colonial power, and often writing was particularly important to negotiating these relationships.<sup>54</sup>

In many cases, those relationships with colonial officialdom were also mediated through what Barber has termed “printing culture,” or what we might think of as “printing cultures.” As opposed to the large-scale and authoritative public texts of “print culture,” printing cultures could often be small-scale and localized, serving the needs of particular families or individuals.<sup>55</sup> In some contexts, the small print shops—often financially precarious and reliant on job printing for much of their income—that were integral to these printing cultures might serve diverse and multilingual local communities but also produced textual artifacts that were part of larger-scale transnational circulations.<sup>56</sup> As Antoinette Burton and Hofmeyr have stressed, such outputs often had an improvised and homespun quality.<sup>57</sup> The dense print undergrowth of empire was full of half-formed arguments, partially recycled ideas, and contingent interventions in local debates that also had one eye on distant “world events.” Such forms of production were responsive to the quickening circulations of empire and to the realities of colonial political struggles that were frequently global in nature.

The emphasis on everyday cultural innovation that is central in this African scholarship is mirrored in some important work on Native Americans, such as Philip Deloria’s exploration of indigenous modernities (“Indians in unexpected places”) and Ellen Cushman’s cataloguing of the enduring cultural and political significance of Sequoyah’s creation of the Cherokee syllabary.<sup>58</sup> But, more generally, work on Native Americans and First Nations literacies has focused on the ideological importance of indigenous textual cultures. That kind of work is making a key double move. First, in suggesting that Native American authors fashioned a rich and deep tradition of literary production, scholars such as Robert Warrior are challenging the rigidity of the orality-literacy divide, highlighting the strength of indigenous intellectual traditions.<sup>59</sup> Second, in some cases, these scholars have argued that the weight and significance of these works require a broader rethinking of literary studies and intellectual history in North America. Birgit Brander Rasmussen has, in particular, drawn attention to the complexity of indigenous forms of communication and the ways in which incoming Europeans misread these modes as they instantiated the dichotomies of “literacy” and “illiteracy,” “civilization” and “savagery,” that legitimated colonialism.<sup>60</sup>

The Osage scholar Robert Warrior’s *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* has been perhaps the key intervention in rethinking the importance of Native American writing in modern America. This work recovered a range of intellectual traditions expressed primarily through various forms of nonfiction writing: from the Pequot writer William Apess’s *A*

*Son of the Forest* (1829), through a reading of the Osage Constitution (1881) as a work of literature, to N. Scott Momaday's influential essay "The Man Made of Words" (1970). While he does not discount the literary qualities of nonfiction, Warrior stresses the importance of its ideological motivation and weight, and its ability to mobilize the experience of being colonized and dispossessed for political ends. For Warrior, appreciating these traditions of production is fundamental to a project of recovering "intellectual sovereignty" as it is essential to recover the mediums, practices, and lines of argument through which Native American writers have understood themselves and their communities. His approach places indigenous ways of thinking and arguing at the center of a distinctive form of intellectual history but recognizes the multiplicity of ways in which such visions have been articulated in time and space.<sup>61</sup> A similar emphasis on the political utility of writing informs Jace Weaver's emphasis on the "communitism"—a lacing together of *community* and *activism*—in Native American writing traditions over the past four decades.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, North American work on indigenous textual traditions has been deeply concerned with Native American-produced texts as ideological interventions that have challenged colonialism, American nationalism, and white dominance. Similar approaches have considerable influence in the Pacific. Noenoe K. Silva's study of the politics of indigenous literacy in Hawai'i emphasizes the centrality of reading and writing in Hawaiian attempts to retain cultural and political autonomy. Silva demonstrates the misleading nature of the "persistent and pernicious" myth of indigenous passivity and acceptance of American rule by foregrounding the riches of political discourse in the Hawaiian newspapers.<sup>63</sup> In New Zealand a body of influential work on nineteenth-century Māori-language newspapers has emphasized the embeddedness of those print artifacts in colonial politics, highlighting the importance of government- and missionary-run newspapers in the cultural edifice of colonial rule and the ways in which later Māori-run newspapers challenged the inequalities of the colonial order.<sup>64</sup> Within that work, however, there is rich material that casts light on literacy practices, which can be read alongside more recent interventions that have recovered a broad range of indigenous uses for writing and reading.<sup>65</sup> Examining a range of texts produced by Māori women, Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla's *He Reo Wāhine: Māori Women's Voices from the Nineteenth Century*, for example, not only highlights the links between gender and literacy but also indicates Māori women's diverse writing practices, as well as their deployment of literacy for a range of purposes, from the creative to the political.

Work that reconstructs the diversity of indigenous literacy practices not only is significant in its own right but also stands as a powerful corrective to an earlier body of scholarship on “cultural colonization” that imagined Māori as largely existing either as the *subject* of print culture or *outside* print culture altogether, an approach that valorizes a particularly narrow reading of orality and cultural authority.<sup>66</sup>

Kāi Tahu historian Michael Stevens has challenged framings of the indigenous past that unproblematically privilege orality and the persistence of tribal cultures on the grounds that they underplay the importance of mobility and engagements with various social collectives beyond the kin group.<sup>67</sup> Texts—both as the carriers of ideas across space and as material objects that were embedded in economic and social circulations—were powerful engines that created connections and entanglements of various kinds, including forms of social identification that operated at a variety of different scales. Stephanie Newell’s work on newspaper readership in colonial West Africa underlines the limits of seeing the key cultural outcome of newspaper reading as the creation of national communities, a point that has also been made by Tony Ballantyne with regard to colonial cultures of newspaper reading in southern New Zealand.<sup>68</sup>

Newspapers could not only facilitate social identifications at levels below the nation—the locality or region—but also nurture more expansive affiliations that transected the boundaries of the colony or developing nation. The low cost and portability of newspapers, as well as the prevalence of cut-and-paste editorial practices, meant that they played a key role in enabling critiques of empire and colonialism and were central in the formation of anticolonial coalitions across space and time.<sup>69</sup> Modern communication networks shaped by steamers, the telegraph, news services, and a press system where copyright had variable purchase promoted the rapid and repeated circulation of “information,” “intelligence,” and “opinion.” The routine use of quotations, cuttings, summaries, and abridgements was one key element of the “epic mobility of nineteenth-century imperialism,” and these editorial techniques helped drive the “endless textual intersections” that were a crucial element of expansive imperial systems.<sup>70</sup> Within these dense and shifting patterns of long-distance circulation and the recycling of texts, indigenous editors and journalists used international conflicts and important historical events to articulate their own distinctive political positions within their own colonial situations.<sup>71</sup>

Recovering the mobility of texts and the ways in which they were used in particular local situations remains a key way forward for future work as it

addresses a central problem in cultural history. Peter Mandler has identified this as assessing the “relative throw” of texts, an undertaking that requires the historian to evaluate the “breadth of circulation” of any text, the “imaginative work” it carries out, and the ways in which that text is itself reframed, deployed, and mobilized in various locations and social contexts.<sup>72</sup> Many of the chapters in this volume explore this problem, at least implicitly, as they seek to assess the transformative power of literacy and indigenous textual cultures.

The breadth of this volume is significant, spanning over two centuries, with chapters covering indigenous engagements with textual cultures in Africa, North America, Australasia, and the Pacific. This collection also highlights the range of text genres that indigenous peoples contributed to or produced, from letters, journals, and other manuscripts to newspapers, pamphlets, and books, demonstrating that they were more than merely passive consumers of colonial discourses. Taken as a whole, the collection brings together a strong interest in the interplay between the practices that produced textual cultures and the politics of such cultural formations. The volume’s strong concern with literacy practices is not to discount the ideological significance of indigenous writing or the influence of particular texts. Rather, it reflects a commitment to understanding the contours of precolonial knowledge systems, idioms of communication, and the range of indigenous practices of knowledge production that developed in the face of imperial intrusion and colonization so that the range of political idioms that indigenous writers could mobilize, and the expectations of the publics (or counterpublics) they addressed, can be illuminated.

The first section of the volume examines material from three Pacific archives that house an abundance of indigenous written material but also questions why these repositories sit largely underutilized. Noelani Arista explores why historians investigating the Hawaiian past fail to consult the extensive archives of Hawaiian-language texts, preferring to reconstruct the Hawaiian native through English-language sources, sometimes including a meager selection of translated work, while completely ignoring the Hawaiian voice on offer. Not only was Hawaiian the language of the street, church, and early government in the nineteenth century, but *kānaka maoli* (Native Hawaiians), embracing the technologies of literacy, including *nūpepa* (newspapers), produced a vast textual output. Arista explains how the subsequent marginalization of the Hawaiian language and indigenous texts came about through colonization and demonstrates how its occlusions and priorities have persisted into academic research. Trained scholars, she argues, are needed, capable not just of reading *ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i* (the Hawaiian language)

but also of listening to and hearing texts that often sprang from oral beginnings. Using *kanikau* (chants), she shows how these oral texts can shed light on Hawaiian history.

Similarly, in New Caledonia both academics and local Kanak generally bypass indigenous writings within the archive because they believe that authentic indigenous culture is essentially oral. Alban Bensa and Adrian Muckle seek to dispel this misconception with a case study on a local war in the north of Grande Terre, the main island of New Caledonia. As in many parts of the Pacific, evangelization and literacy grew in tandem, with many Kanak becoming literate in their own languages. Literacy in French was more problematic: on the one hand, it denoted civilization, but, on the other, the *indigénat* (colonial regime) also feared it as a unifying factor for culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, or a source of unsettling information and knowledge. Indeed, indigenous Kanak utilized French to collaborate with, critique, and resist colonialism; in 1917 this included not only letters from Kanak soldiers serving overseas but texts produced by chiefs communicating with the *indigénat* and by the insurgents fighting that colonial regime. Bensa and Muckle also explore another genre of Kanak literacy relating to the 1917 war. *Ténô*, epic poems in indigenous languages, were a feature of textual activity in the decades between the world wars that provides a more nuanced view of Kanak motivations and relationships. This chapter looks at two such poems that relate back to the period of revolt in terms of not just the political content but also the aesthetic qualities deriving from their ancient and oral roots.

As in Hawai'i, New Zealand's archives hold considerable textual material produced both for and by indigenous communities, in the form of letters, government documents, newspapers, and other printed items. With missionaries claiming a rapid spread of literacy across Māori society, academic debate has tended to revolve around literacy levels—how many Māori could read and write, and when they acquired these skills. D. F. McKenzie's *Oral Culture, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand: The Treaty of Waitangi*, which argued against a high or deep uptake of literacy and asserted that Māori society remains inherently oral to this day, has been a particularly influential contribution to those debates. Lachy Paterson's chapter discusses these debates, but contends that the evidence is too fragmentary to definitively assess levels of reading or writing, and argues that more fruitful insights can be gained instead from investigating how texts and practices around literacy impacted Māori life. As colonization became embedded in New Zealand, Māori confronted an increasingly textual world that impacted on their existing oral

culture. Illiteracy did not necessarily mean that individuals were excluded from textual practices, just as the knowledge of reading and writing did not provide immunity from the vicissitudes of the colonial rule. In many cases, new textual practices presented new opportunities for agency.

Using case studies of specific places and communities, the second section explores in depth the relationship between orality and textuality. Employing an ethnohistorical approach, Keith Thor Carlson looks beyond the more obvious connections between colonialism and literacy, offering a nuanced account of the latter's relationship with the Salish peoples of British Columbia. Carlson compares the communication systems and processes employed by both the indigenous and newcomers, arguing for a Salish time-based oral literacy inscribed within their landscapes as opposed to the European proliferation of textual materials across space. This chapter ranges widely, from the peregrinations of the explorer Simon Fraser, to a retrospective indigenous reclaiming of literacy, to Catholic uses of literacy to break down "superstition," to the government's use (and forgoing) of literacy as a means of securing Salish lands. Indigenous literacy proved threatening. Although missionaries considered it as a form of mimicry that indicated a transition to civilization, they nevertheless needed to define it as either appropriate or inappropriate. Similarly, as a means of asserting colonial control, the settler government sought to determine how indigenous peoples could utilize literacy.

Michael P. J. Reilly's chapter explores two versions of an oral tradition from Mangaia, in the Cook Islands. The first formed the basis of a sermon by Mamae, an indigenous minister, recorded by the resident English missionary in 1876 for Western consumption; in Mangaia, as in most of the Pacific, Christianity and literacy were significant features of modernity, but neither displaced the old oral world. In the tradition, a young woman leaves her abusive master to live with Te Maru-o-Rongo, a more exalted nobleman, which Mamae used in his sermon to explain aspects of Christianity. A century later, the Cook Islands government's Cultural Development Division facilitated an opportunity for elders to record the tradition again on tape, although only the transcription is now available. The government initiated the recording of traditions as part of a project to build a Cook Islands cultural identity but also to provide a resource for tourist guides. Reilly argues that Christianity did not supplant precontact knowledge, and neither did literacy replace the oral nature of that knowledge's transmission, with the transcription alluding to spiritual beings prevailed upon to restore harmony and order to both society and the environment. He compares the two renditions, composed

for different reasons: one for religious purposes, the other harkening back to pre-Christian tradition and incorporating features more relevant to modern listeners.

Bruno Saura's chapter also demonstrates how orality informs textual culture in two areas of present-day French Polynesia. Saura explores indigenous manuscript books from Rurutu (Austral Islands) and Huahine, Borabora, and Ra'iātea (Society Islands) that contain genealogies and traditions relevant to political status and land rights, as well as narratives that rationalize the past to fit present-day social, religious, and political realities. Saura examines Goody's thesis that literacy imposes a logical progression on written texts, as well as skeptical thought in the mind of the reader, but demonstrates that these Polynesian texts are not fixed containers of systematic knowledge. The various customary oral traditions, rendered in text, are layered with adjustments and additions over time, not necessarily in dialogue with the existing stories, sometimes even contradicting them, with truth relative to the context of what is being discussed. Rather than being transformed by literacy, these indigenous societies adapted textual practices to fit their own cultural needs.

For missionaries or colonial officials, literacy and print were often seen as the means to govern or transform indigenous subjects, but indigenous peoples also sought to negotiate with these discourses and technologies, whether to moderate, influence, collaborate with, or even reject them. The chapters in the third section investigate three such negotiations. Emma Hunter explores two key Swahili-language newspapers of the interwar period: the Tanganyikan government's *Mambo Leo* and the Lutheran *Ufalme wa Mungu*, and their efforts to create reading publics in the East African region. Swahili was a pragmatic choice for both government and church: it was spoken by many Africans, albeit as a second language by most, and already possessed a literary tradition, albeit in Arabic script. Both newspapers proffered didactic discourses and sought to avoid contentious issues, but to create reading publics, they also needed to engage with readers and provide interesting content. Hunter reveals how Africans, at a time before indigenous-run newspapers had emerged in the region, wrote extensively to these colonial newspapers, providing letters, poetry, and local news, and offered suggestions on content, helping to shape not only the newspapers but the Swahili language itself.

For missionaries who operated in the Groote Eylandt archipelago in the Northern Territory of Australia in 1943, literacy in English was a boon that would enable the Anindilyakwa people to fully engage in the modern civilized world. Laura Rademaker argues that the Anindilyakwa chose alternative textual practices to those the missionaries advocated. Writing love letters

constituted a punishable offense. Nor did missionaries appreciate critical letters and petitions, rejecting what they saw as an inappropriate engagement with modernity. They believed that Bible reading was crucial to Christian fellowship, but their textual practices were so enmeshed in their efforts to control Aboriginal peoples that many Anindilyakwa chose not to learn, rejecting literacy even when offered in their own language. Rademaker reveals a history of orality's adaptation through an excavation of textual archives, but at the center of her chapter are conversations with elders who remembered the mission and who experienced the advent of reading and writing in their community. They recount how they adapted these new skills to their own lifestyle needs, rather than following missionary mandates.

As the sun set on colonial rule in Papua New Guinea, relatively few indigenous people had been exposed to literacy and education, and in an effort to prepare the population for independence, missionaries sought to spread literacy more widely. For a largely undeveloped country with over eight hundred vernacular languages, mass illiteracy, and negative attitudes to reading, the path ahead might appear overwhelming. In the title of her chapter, "Read It, Don't Smoke It!," Evelyn Ellerman alludes to the practical value New Guineans placed on newsprint, as opposed to the content of newspaper texts. Ellerman outlines the strategies and debates both Protestant and Catholic missions employed in an effort to create a functionally literate public, including literacy campaigns, the creation of reading material for the newly literate, writing classes and competitions, and publication of newspapers and journals. New Guineans, like the Anindilyakwa discussed by Rademaker, did not always follow the path laid out for them, embracing literacy for their own purposes in their own ways, causing some missionaries to completely rethink their strategies.

The final section of the volume centers on the projection of indigenous voices through writing. Isabel Hofmeyr argues that imperial copyright was designed to protect metropolitan authors and, far from being an imposition on indigenous writers, largely excluded or ignored their work. Focusing on southern Africa, Hofmeyr first investigates how customs officials applied copyright law at the turn of the twentieth century. She then explores W. B. Rubusana's book *Zemk'inkomo Magwalandini*, which he published in London in 1906. Rubusana, a South African clergyman and politician, was already an established author. But he sought to give the strongest copyright protection possible to his book, a collection of prose and Xhosa praise poems from various sources, much of which had already been printed in newspapers. Although Rubusana positioned himself as an imperial citizen,

Hofmeyr argues that his acquiring copyright was not about his personal property rights but, as with other African writers, about “constituting it as public property” and the creation of a “new repertoire of cultural power” in a world that privileged white men’s textual output.

In the mid-1850s, Tāmihana Te Rauparaha wrote an account of his father, Te Rauparaha, the warrior chief whose Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa tribes migrated to and occupied the Cook Strait region of New Zealand in the 1820s. Unlike his father, Tāmihana Te Rauparaha was a Christian convert, literate and modern, who maintained a good working relationship with the new colonial regime. Arini Loader explains that in writing “kei wareware,” Tāmihana was recording his father’s life and times, “lest it be forgotten.” Although successive authors utilized Tāmihana’s account in biographies of Te Rauparaha, the writer and his text were often heavily edited and largely unacknowledged. Loader gives a genealogy of this borrowing, a “reading down,” followed by a “reading up” in which she analyzes the text from an insider perspective. Tāmihana, Loader argues, wrote so that the memory of his father might not be lost in the future, but also so that his father would not be forgotten in the dominant colonial textual world of his own time.

The final essay explores the earliest texts covered in this volume. Samson Occom, a Mohegan of New England, sought out Eleazar Wheelock, an early missionary educationalist in the mid-eighteenth century, to gain an education. As Ivy Schweitzer explains, Occom became Wheelock’s star pupil, and then a missionary and minister in his own right; he journeyed to Britain to raise funds for Indian education, until falling out with his mentor and establishing his own indigenous settlement of Brothertown. However, as a tribal counselor, Occom was also aware that his education was vital for the well-being of his people at a time when colonists wielded the English language and literacy to seize land from Native Americans. Schweitzer surveys the debates over orality and literacy but argues that when analyzing Occom’s extensive writing, we need to “shift our frame of analysis to consider forms of literacy from a Native perspective”; what constituted literacy in the pre-contact Native American world was different from, and far wider in scope than, mere textual symbolic systems. In particular, she employs Lisa Brooks’s concept of the common pot, in which “everyone and everything in communities is related and interdependent for survival and flourishing,” including newcomers and their writing. Schweitzer has also brought this methodology to bear in establishing The Occom Circle, a digital archive of the writing of Occom and his peers. More than just a virtual shelf, this sort of approach to digital humanities seeks to re-create the common pot, demonstrating

Oecom's rich and complex network of correspondents and the movement of texts over space and time.

What emerges in this volume is the dynamism and flexibility of indigenous textual cultures. In many parts of the world, reading and writing became not only increasingly important in the organization of indigenous life but also integral to the articulation of what it was to be indigenous within the fraught cultural terrains shaped by imperial intrusion and colonialism. In the face of the extended reach of global empires and the disparities of colonialism, reading and writing became effective tools for reorganizing economic and social life, for redefining and remaking communities, for recrafting and refining the self, and for reimagining the future.

## NOTES

1. This reading of the global past draws from Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global*; and Burton and Ballantyne, *World History from Below*.

2. The most influential statement of this perhaps remains Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*.

3. Niezen, *A World beyond Difference*; Klenke, "Whose Adat Is It?," 150–52; Merlan, "Indigeneity," 303–33; and Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State*, 54.

4. Identifying this repertoire of shared reference points is important if we are to recognize that even if "indigeneity" is relational, it does draw on substantive cultural elements and historical experiences.

5. Francesca Merlan notes that certain individuals and influential institutions, such as the United Nations and International Labour Organization, have offered definitions of indigeneity that are "criterial" rather than relational: in other words, they identify a fixed and finite set of attributes that enable such groups to be confidently identified. Such definitions are anchored in an understanding that indigeneity is a "large and self-evident category that has at last been appropriately recognized." Merlan, "Indigeneity," 305.

6. Of course, such networks have a long and deep history, as Jane Carey and Jane Lydon's edited volume *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* makes clear; but what is qualitatively different after World War II is the ways in which these networks were increasingly mobilized around identification.

7. Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*.

8. Niezen, *A World beyond Difference*, 70–72.

9. United Nations, *The International Year for the World's Indigenous People*.

10. Nyamnjoh, "Ever-Diminishing Circles," 305–32. Also see Balaton-Chrimes, *Ethnicity, Democracy and Citizenship in Africa*.

11. Mamdani, "The Invention of the Indigène," 31–33; and Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities," 651–64.

12. Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities," 653–54.
13. Of course, the conceptualization and linguistic framing of the native was complex and shifting, overlapping in some ways like an array of other terms: Aborigines, Indians, or various more specific designations based on the tribal or kin-based identifications of local communities.
14. Salesa, "Opposite-Footers," 285–302.
15. Examples of the former category include her works *Some words for change*, comprising tea tree sticks and book pages from Clive Turnbull's book *Black War* (1948) dipped in wax (2008); *Incident Reports*, comprising a found Tasmanian oak bookshelf, tea tree sticks, and burnt-inscribed Tasmanian oak (2008); *The Missing*, comprising tea tree sticks and warrener shells (2008); and *A Half Hour Hidden History Reader*, comprising an altered book (*The Tasmanian History Readers 4*, Royal School Series, Education Department, Hobart): collage and handwriting on white paint over existing text (2007). Examples of the latter category include *Some words for Country Lowmyner, Marloielare, Tromemanner, Loirle, Melaythenner, Trounter*, comprising black crow (nerite) shells in cuttlefish bones on timber (2007); and *Some words for Tasmanian Aboriginal women ~ Armither, Luane, Laggener, Lowanna, Neeanta, Nowaleah*, comprising black crow (nerite) shells in cuttlefish bones on timber (2007).
16. Julie Gough, "Artist Statement," accessed 2 April 2018, <https://juliegough.net/artist-statement/>.
17. Bullock, *Memory Fragments*, 25.
18. Ryan, "Hard Evidence," 39–50.
19. Framings of colonial violence in Tasmania are explored in Curthoys, "Genocide in Tasmania," 229–52.
20. E.g., Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*; Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 387–409; and Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*. For a passionate rejoinder to this approach, see Rowse, "Indigenous Heterogeneity," 297–310.
21. Gough, artist statement, *Some words for change*, 2008, copy provided by the artist. Also see this work on the artist's website at <https://juliegough.net/artwork-about-unresolved-histories/>.
22. L. Stevens, "Me Write Myself," 240.
23. Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 486.
24. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, 10.
25. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*.
26. Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*; and J. Turner, *Philology*, 71–73, 101–2, 141–43.
27. Rendall, "Scottish Orientalism," 43–69. A group of East India Company scholar-administrators, trained at the University of Edinburgh between 1784 and 1803, drew on their experience working in the "East" for the company in writing histories of Asian societies. Alexander Hamilton, James Mackintosh, and John Leyden all attended Edinburgh during Dugald Stewart's influential tutorship. Stewart suggested that language was the keystone to the history of civilization: it could