Introduction

Mimesis in Theory and in Cultural History

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How do people meet and fathom one another in transcultural encounters? What do they reap from such encounters? How do they bridge boundaries, reaching out to a transcultural Other? Alternatively, how do they establish boundaries or fail to do so, falling instead under the spell of a transcultural Other? Our answer in this volume is this: through mimesis. In the West, the concept of mimesis has been around at least since Plato, who sees art as mimesis and the artist as a copyist. For Plato in *The Republic* (1968) life is a dim copy of ideal forms and art a yet dimmer copy. Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1927) also sees art as mimesis, but for him art creates a special contemplative state of mind, a balance point or special zone poised between identification with a flawed hero and the distance inspired by his tragic fate.

In this introduction I take mimesis to be making likenesses and, like Aristotle, a way to negotiate identification and dis-identification. Making likenesses can be manifest in performances (mime or parody, for example) or productions (ritual or art), or can simply proceed within a person's mind. Indeed, Pacific Islanders in the arts of caricature, theater, costume, carving, and more, have long used mimesis to contemplate transcultural encounters as many of the essays to follow show. I begin here by offering a model of mimesis as a mode of thinking, feeling, and contemplation, one that suggests how this mode of processing experience lends itself to intercultural identifications and dis-identifications and can help bring to light Pacific Islanders' and their visitors' mental and emotional reactions to encounters between them.

If mimesis is to make a likeness, in the simplest sense likenesses are images and hence are likely to be rooted in that mental faculty that Lacan calls the Imaginary. Lacan (1977, 1968) contends that the Imaginary is the first form of cognition to emerge in human development. Children (mis)recognize themselves as their likeness in the mirror and imagine their experience is happening to it. According to Lacan, however, this image-based form of conceptualization soon shifts to the background of consciousness, yielding to verbal thinking about the practical and urgent realities of daily life. Imaginative

processing, however, does not go away: it migrates into dreams, but also into the subtle body language of quotidian communication, which runs in tandem with verbal discourse.

With their faces and bodies, people suggest images—images of which they may be unaware or inarticulate, but nonetheless images that register with their interlocutors and to which their interlocutors respond. Indeed, recent neuroscience research identifies "mirror neurons" in our brains that copy and reflect all that we perceive, providing a basis for learning and relating (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004; Dinstein et al. 2008; Gallese and Goldman 1998; Keysers 2009). Mimesis is also fundamental to our species' being: human evolution relied upon imitating others' adaptive cultural variants (Boyd and Richerson 1987).

The particular character of this form of mentation is that likenesses, call them copies, are inevitably mutinous and inexact, saying something a little more than what we meant and escaping our intentions. Copies manifest the sliding of meanings that Derrida (1978) calls *différance,* which he says, "deconstructs all kingdoms": never static, mimesis erodes and betrays all things that are. What we find in mimesis, Taussig (1993: 115) tells us, "is not only matching and duplication but also slippage which, once slipped into, skids wildly."

Copying, then, is forever making new "originals"; it is both a moment in a series and an entry point for innovation. The study of mimesis offers a way of considering cultures that resolves the twentieth-century debate about whether culture is reinvented or authentic. From a mimetic viewpoint, the questions are never: Is it new or old, perduring or mutable, derivative or genuine? Rather the questions are: What is this likeness repeating, altering, saying? As Benjamin (1955: 73) says of translations, which of course are copies, they succeed to the extent that they are transformations and renewals "of something living."

The transformative nature of mimetic processing is perhaps most transparent in dreams. In Freud's terms ([1900] 1964), dreams are "day residues": fragments of daily experience reproduced but altered by our associations to this experience. Indeed, this is why a dream figure resembles, but does not, someone we know; a dreamscape is like, but is not, some place we have been (Stickgold et al. 2001; Stickgold and Walker 2004; Barrett and McNamara 2007). Yet mimesis is present in waking too: our minds inevitably associate an original subject to like material from elsewhere and so, sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously, alter what we intend to reproduce.

Those aspects of a copy that iterate an original, that are "true," I propose, state a subject; the variations or "imperfections" of the copy comment on this subject. This subject/commentary relationship is clear in activities such as caricature and really in all types of acting. Indeed, mimesis is also "acting like" or acting "as if" through which copies of an earlier "original" make visible and embodied an imaginative conception but also commentaries on such con-

ceptions. Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* offers us a commentary on Shakespeare's conceptions of the father-son relationship, on contradictions between morality and duty, and much else. In turn Shakespeare copied/commented on the legend of Amleth chronicled by Saxo Grammaticus and others and possibly, in a way, even Sophocles's Oedipus; the list could go on.

Such commentaries convey thoughts about an "original," but equally they convey feelings. There is no way better than caricature, for example, to express derision and contempt. Operating on a troublesome border between thinking and feeling, mimesis is a way to *know* broadly defined. One sign of approaching a universally useful concept, I believe, is that such concepts lie on a horizon where Western dichotomies like "thinking versus feeling" breakdown. Focusing on mimesis, therefore, can also help to bridge the Cartesian dualism critiqued in recent decades by poststructuralist and feminist scholars.

This volume concerns copying as it occurs between cultural groups—parsing the subject specified by a copy and the thoughts-feelings about the subject indicated by variations thereon in various Pacific locales (see Map 0.1). These variations represent a kind of conversation, "talking back" (and forth) in images to a colonial Other or to a cultural consociate. In this spirit, all the chapters in this volume ask: What are people copying? What is the "original" (meaning an earlier copy from another point in a conversation in images)? What is the implied subject—implied, that is, by this "original"? How do the copies upon which our chapters focus vary from this earlier "original"? In what sense does this variation imply a commentary? Is the copy investigative, eulogizing, deconstructive, additive, augmenting, expansive, subversive, or deceptive? For copies have all these potentials. Does the original speaker or another then copy this copy in turn? Who claims to represent the original and why? How do respondents (mis)represent an original. What is the back-and-forth in this conversation and in what direction(s) does it lead? To what purposes? What are its messages and metamessages? In what sense does the copy, or the conversation it elicits, convey thoughts and feelings about a transcultural Other or about the copyists' own culture and history in face of the challenging novelty transcultural contact often introduces into a cultural world?

We presume that those instances of mimesis on which we focus are about a small subject specified by an original but also about a larger subject. So we ask in these various Pacific contexts, how is the copy at issue commentary in the most particular and in the most general sense of the term? We also ask: How do the thoughts and feelings conveyed by the copies upon which our individual chapters concentrate shed light on the nature of mimesis and of cultural change? How might analyses of cultures and their encounters as a play of likenesses be different from analyses of them as discourse and disquisition? How, furthermore, can mimesis inform and transform our understandings of written or spoken sources?

By answering these questions with our Pacific data we offer insights into the nature of mimetic processing as well as into the cultures we study and their encounters. Our aim is to examine the (re)production of cultural likenesses, along with the cultural forms and forces they configure, as well as to explain how these (re)productions repeat and vary identifiable practices and performances and at the same time are turning points in a cultural history or an intersecting set of histories: points of transcultural encounter.

Mimesis and Cultural Identity

Mimesis is often an embodied, near unconscious process, as when two sympathetic interlocutors mirror one another's posture and gestures. Given that it is so large a part of how people relate, Cantwell (1993) would rather we speak of "ethnomimesis" than culture at all, given that the latter category is often subject to reification and that so much that we share in culture comes from copying. I would not go so far as to substitute the word "mimesis" for culture, any more than I would substitute "discourse" for culture, but acknowledging this subject's vast scope, I want to break it down to more thinkable dimensions.

Probably, in transcultural encounters mimesis is first a way to communicate, as when people share no common language and therefore mime acts and ideas they wish to discuss—charades for real purposes. Indeed, Obeyesekere (2005) believes European colonists' myths about South Pacific cannibalism arose in this way. Later, however, when social and political relations take more stable form, mimesis can also be a way of incorporating the Other, of emblemizing one's own culture to distinguish oneself from this Other, or of displacing the self in deference to a dominant cultural Other.

I call the first "incorporative mimesis," the second "emblemizing mimesis," and the third "abject mimesis." These distinctions are, of course, heuristic and in practical instances porous, each type bleeding into, inflecting, or transforming other ways of copying. This volume will show that people use mimesis to appropriate otherness as often as they use it to amplify difference and that political and economic subordination often tempts them to mimetic self-repudiation. The question is when and why they do so, as I explain below.

Incorporative Mimesis

Under the best circumstances, I venture, when people from different groups meet, each side brings with it a plethora of culturally shared ideas and feelings about many domains of experience (what I as a psychological anthropologist call "schemas") that are new to the other—ranging from the practical and political to the spiritual and psychological to the aesthetic that in their nov-

elty challenge and excite. People's reactions to such novelty, again under the best circumstances, are surprise, interest, covetousness—feeling "No, really?" "Could it be?" "I have to try that!" Incorporative mimesis is a way of seeing how some aspect of the other fits and how it feels. And when we try on other cultures in image forms there may be no going back. We know something new; its registration is ineradicable, no matter if what we learn is flaunted in emulative show or hidden, plagiarized without attribution, or even partially forgotten or fragmentarily remembered in the culture history that comes after.

One thinks and feels through a cultural Other's life ways by copying images that allude to their schemas and combining these with images and corresponding schemas of one's own that are to a degree concordant. Mimesis, then, not only borrows schemas across cultural lines. As in Sahlins' structure of conjuncture (1981, 1985), one's own schemas may provide enduring structures and the other party's new content. Let me give you a linguistic example.

At contact in Papua New Guinea (PNG) there were more than 900 spoken languages. During early colonial times, many Papua New Guineans were transported to work on plantations elsewhere in the Pacific, such as Samoa, Queensland, and Fiji. After 1884, many of them were sent to work on large copra and tobacco plantations in German New Guinea, and when PNG later became a protectorate under the League of Nations, the Australian administration continued this practice (Waiko 1993, 2003). There, workers acquired some English and German words (Mühlhäusler, Dutton, and Romaine 2003: 5–7; Kulick 1992: 4–5).

As interactions with those speaking different Papua New Guinean languages increased thereafter, often people did not have a local language in common but they did have this colonial vocabulary. Gradually this vocabulary, along with words from few dominant PNG vernaculars, supplied the basis for a language that came to be called "Tok Pisin" (also "Neo-Melanesian"), now the PNG lingua franca. The interesting thing about this language is that key aspects of its grammar are Austronesian. Austronesian languages are widespread in coastal PNG (Smith 2002) and represent the largest language family in the Pacific (Bellwood, Fox, and Tryon 1995). One might say Papua New Guineans expanded local language schemas to incorporate new content.

The PNG example is telling in that it is on the verbal/discursive level that hybridity has usually been considered heretofore. Its fullest exploration has been in Creole studies (see, for example, Baptista 2005; Palmié 2006; Hall 2003). Yet Tok Pisin and other creoles seem radical borrowings of the foreign to adapt indigenous ways. The process I call incorporative mimesis, in contrast, can be one-sided but it can also be mutual, a back and forth conversation in images between parties to a transcultural encounter in which not only indigenes but also colonials try on the others' images and forge hybrid images and schemas through this experimentation. Indeed, European companies and

states alike saw "going native" as a major danger for their residential officials, one that threatened to undermine colonial authority. According to Anderson (1991), such hybridity was a stain anyone born in the colonies, no matter how pure their European ancestry, could neither avoid nor remove.

When people copy foreign schemas within the structures of their own long enduring ones, the new "content" may have a corroding effect. Thus Sahlins (1981: 37–66) argues that in Hawai'i, at contact, the indigenous schema, *tapu*, expanded to incorporate foreign trade: King Kamehameha tabooed foreign ships, in effect creating a chiefly monopoly. This new content eroded Hawaiian social structure. Why? Because implicit in this transcultural trade was a British capitalist exchange schema. In action if not always in the abstract, I suggest, Hawaiians sensed that this schema offered an alternative interpretation of events, opening the *tapu* schema to question and challenge. *Tapu*, which had given chiefly edicts force, no longer appeared to be just the way things were. The capitalist exchange "content" made the cultural nature of *tapu* and the power relations it predicated visible and, therefore, vulnerable to those who had interest against it—most particularly women.

Tapu regulated Hawaiian relations between highborn people and commoners but also those between men and women (Sahlins 1985, 1981). Kaahumanu, King Kamehameha's favorite wife, who served as coregent during the reign of his next two successors, made a spectacle of breaking the taboo on women eating with men by dining with her son King Liholiho. Commoner Hawaiian women had done so before her, dining with British seamen when they broke Kamehameha's *tapu* on commoner-foreign trade by swimming to ships to conduct their own forms of exchange.

Another example: missionaries set about their work in Samoa in the 1830s, building village churches along with their congregations and running prayer services. The most important of these were Sunday services, for which everyone dressed up in the latest fashion. The fashion was whatever European clothes Samoans could beg, borrow, or make. Indeed, one of the earliest items in the British Museum's Samoan collection is a tortoiseshell bonnet presented to Queen Victoria before 1841 (Museum catalogue # 0211.12). Victorian bonnets were then all the rage in Samoa (Turner [1861] 1984: 113). Samoans, however, often wore European clothes without regard to their gender ascriptions. The Reverend Drummond (1842) reports that women might wear a frock coat to Sunday services or a man a dress.

The scene Drummond (1842) recounts does not reflect ignorance of missionary gender models: it visually represented a Samoan schema in which status trumped everything else. Novel European garments had become a dramatic way to signify status or pretentions to it. So here Samoans copy European dress, but not quite, as in Bhabha's (1994) famous phrase, in terms of an indigenous status schema. The persistence of this Sunday dressing custom

up through the 1970s (Schoeffel 1979: 110) indicates that this "not quite" is Drummond's view, not one shared by these Samoans. Rather than trying to replicate European gender schemas, their affectations of English dress were simply new content incorporated into a Samoan status schema through mimesis. As in the case with *tapu* in Hawai'i, however, this European-Christian gender content was not without eventual consequences for the Samoan world, as I have shown elsewhere (Mageo 1998).

Couplings of indigenous and foreign schemas can also be the other way around: one can adopt a foreign schema to restructure one's social world, using one's own schemas as a supporting content. Kamehameha, for example, restructured Hawaiian island society by mimicking the British idea of monarchical power, making and calling himself "king" but supported this new schema with a Hawaiian model of chiefly *mana*, the trans-Polynesian idea of sacral power and authority (see Shore 1989). Implicit in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European monarch schema were also those of the nation and of global relations as commerce among nations, which Kamehameha likewise adopted along with European aristocratic dress and the status implicit in it.

As in creolization studies, however, in these Hawaiian and Samoan examples it is unclear how mimetic incorporation was conversational, a back and forth exchange of schemas between two cultures, and indeed in colonialism it often was not. Lack of mimetic reciprocity, several of the chapters will suggest, is one index of colonial attitudes that are themselves likely to erode an indigenous culture.

Emblemizing Mimesis

Under reasonably benign circumstances, then, people at least at first, admittedly sometimes to their cost or those of their fellows, incorporate foreign schemas. But what do people do under obviously oppressive and dangerous circumstances? They may then feel a need for borders and may want to define themselves against others' schemas and modes of being. They do so by copying images from their own culture apparently *absent* in that of colonial interlocutors to represent a unique identity—images that become a banner and a shield, advertising difference, marking a cultural border. It must be further said that indigenes are often not the only authors of such emblems. Emblemizing images too commonly evolve from transcultural conversations and also capture what a foreign Other identifies as salient and significant about an indigenous culture, even though indigenes often seek these emblems in their culture's past.

Harrison (2006) sees people as using mimesis to create and maintain the social boundaries needed to differentiate their identities from other similar social groups. Resemblance among such groups, Harrison believes, instigates

rivalry and inspires attempts to assert difference by denying or disguising similarity. My difference from Harrison (2006) is that I see the oppositional form of mimesis, which I call "emblemizing," as but one form of mimesis among several and also that *in transcultural encounters* I do not view similarity as the fundamental cause of oppositional self-definition in images. Its primary cause, I believe, is the threat of sociopolitical dominance and with it of what I call "mimetic abjection," which I return to shortly.

When people use certain practices and customs to emblemize their way of life, Thomas (1992: 214) calls this form of self-definition "cultural objectification," which he sees as inherently oppositional "reifications of custom, indigenous ways, and tradition." Like Harrison (2006), Thomas views such reification as aimed at asserting difference and, while he does not explicitly say this difference is asserted in the face of actual similarity, his first illustration, the Samoa-Tonga-Fiji trading triangle, suggests it is. Before Western contact Tonga had representation and influence in the governance of many islands in its Pacific locale and has been described as an "empire" (Kirch 1984: 217–42; Gunson 1990b). Based on Samoan genealogical evidence, Henry dates the period of Tongan dominance from circa AD 950 to circa AD 1250 (1979: 18, 87). Gunson (1990a: 19, 1990b) believes it lasted as late as 1820, close to the arrival of Christian missionaries in Tonga and Samoa.

Kaeppler (1978) documents a Tonga-centric exchange system between Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji. Samoans sent high-status girls to become Tongan wives in exchange for the red parrot feathers that hallmarked ceremonial fine mats requisite to rituals of state in both Tonga and Samoa, many of which came back to Tonga as dowry with Samoan wives. In turn, Tongans sent high-status girls to become chiefly Fijian wives and got back feathers for Samoan exchange. Through this wifely traffic among the region's three most powerful societies, Tongan royals rid themselves of highborn sisters, who in Tongan cosmology, most inconveniently, had more *mana* than their ruling brothers.

In Thomas's influential argument, this triangle generated cultural objectification, which he believes was manifest in the practice of tattooing. In my view, tattooing in the triangle did not objectify or reify these cultures but enlisted two distinct forms of mimesis: incorporative and emblemizing. Showing how members of the triangle enlisted these forms will help to demonstrate the usefulness of distinguishing the kinds of mimesis I posit for cultural analysis. My evidence lies in tattooing legends and songs in all three places.

Both Tongans and Samoans trace tattooing to Fiji, where women were tattooed but not men. In the origin story of Tongan tattooing, a man means to report the custom to his compatriots but returning to them violently stubs his foot; his startle causes him to reverse the gender relations practiced in Fiji and he sings, "Tattoo the men, but not the women" (T. Williams 1858: 160). Samo-

ans have a similar myth and song about tattooing. Two famous girls, Taema and Tilafaiga, swim to Fiji and memorize a tattooing song but, diving deep to dine on a giant clam on their return, come to confuse the tattooing gender relations and also begin to sing, "Tattoo the men and not the women." This tale, recorded by the missionary Turner ([1884] 1986: 55–56), is still sung about today in the song *Pese o le Tatau* (The Song of the Tattoo). In these myths and songs Tongans and Samoans mimic a Fijian practice. These origin stories further suggest lineage and kinship, which generated transformational variations around common cultural themes. Indeed, by virtue of triangular wifely traffic, Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian high chiefs were in-laws and traced their genealogies to one another.

In Thomas's (1992: 215) "cultural objectification," each party to a transcultural encounter refers "disparagingly" to the other. Tongan and Samoan tattooing tales, in contrast, portray Fijians as dominant in the sense that they depict them as originators of this common practice. Tongans, the actual regional hegemons, along with Samoans, who were later to infiltrate and in many senses coopt Tongan power (Mageo 2002), appear in these tales as derivative in practice, confused in concept, and as failing to correctly copy Fiji. Rather than defensively asserting identity and difference as in Thomas's and Harrison's models, these Tongan and Samoan songs and tales joke about them by featuring the respective errors of their own messenger mimics, thus disparaging their own cultures rather than that of another member of the triangle. Only in abject mimesis, I shall soon argue, do cultures reify. Then both the dominant and subordinate cultures reify the dominant culture: they regard it as a fixed and unchanging measure of all things.

Relations within the triangle were often fractious (Mageo 2002), but so were relations between families and villages within each of these island groups. Hereditary chiefs (*ali'i*) held extensive suzerainty in distinct geocultural neighborhoods. Present-day nation terms probably only referred to dynastic houses, suggesting borders where none existed (Gunson 1997). The sense of "foreign" domination was probably limited, at least until these tales were retold to and recorded by foreign scribes during times when Europe and America were seeking to or had acquired Pacific colonies (see for example Krämer [1923] 1949). Yet, under threat or fact of *foreign* dominance, I agree that cultural identity tends to be oppositional. When this is the case, however, I propose that people emblemize cultural identity and difference through practices and schemas that, unlike tattooing, which was ubiquitous in the triangle, they perceive as *absent* from the other culture. Thomas's second example, drawn from early Samoan colonial history, illustrates my point.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) minister John Williams took Tahitian teachers to Christianize Samoans. The teachers urged Samoan women

to cover their breasts. The women responded by telling the Tahitians' wives to "faasamoa":

> Gird a shaggy mat round their loins as low down as they can tuck up the corner in order to expose the whole front & side of their left thigh anoint themselves beautifully with scented oil, tinge themselves with turmeric put a string of blue beads round their neck & then faariaria (*fāalialia*) walk about to shew themselves. You will have, say they, all the Manaia (*mānaia*) the handsome young men of the town loving you then. (J. Williams [1830–1832] 1984: 117)

Thomas's argument here is that mission attempts at dominance spurred an oppositional articulation of cultural identity—the *fa'aSāmoa* (Samoan way). I would add that the behaviors these Samoan women recommended their Tahitian teachers mimic (showing oneself so as to attract *mānaia*) enacted a cultural schema: *mānaia* actually refers to chiefs' sons and to Samoans' hypergamous social system (see further Mageo 1998: 119–40).

In this vignette, Samoans tout a practice and a schema they perceive as *absent* from a want-to-be dominating Christian-mission culture and thereby assert identity and difference. Here, Samoans emblemize their culture, yet I find no evidence that these women reify it. Rather, they treat one of their most important schemas, indeed a schema they don *fa'aSāmoa,* as a practice and a performance rather than as an object. This *fa'aSāmoa* schema, however emblematic, emerges in a transcultural conversation and represents an effort to assert Samoan ways in face of an attempt to change them: to make a cultural Other (British missionaries) the model and Samoans the mimics. Even in the early days of Samoan-mission relations, missionaries adamantly objected to showing off the body (*fa'alialia*), a practice that was central to this *fa'aSāmoa* schema (Mageo 1998). In counterpoint to Harrison (2006), these Samoans may assert difference, but they do not repudiate the possibility of similarity; indeed they counsel Tahitian missionaries to copy and be like them.

In emblemizing mimesis, people may represent their culture via a currently practiced schema, as these nineteenth-century Samoans do, or they may represent it by copying and renewing schemas from their past, but in either case people select schemas they perceive or at least characterize as *absent* in a dominating culture. In New Zealand, for example, Māori redeployed the *mana* schema to reconsecrate *marae* (temple grounds) in villages but also to replicate them in universities, where they became spaces for a cultural renaissance, generating other spaces for scholarly reflection and for newfound appreciation of Māori artifacts and arts. These *marae,* along with other emblems drawn from a desecrated but enduring past, became icons of and platforms from which to re-create their New Zealand home as a bicultural society (Gershon 2012).

In this renaissance the *mana* schema was not treated as an unchanging object. Who can forget the transformations of Māori images and schemas in the film *The Whale Rider* (2002), in which a young Māori girl, forbidden chiefly training on the *marae* with her male cohorts, becomes the *mana*-endowed caller of whales. While the *mana* schema came to serve as an emblem of Māori culture, in contemporary New Zealand people represent it through traditional practices and performances that are often copied in a host of new contexts (football games and tourism for example) by Māori and Pakeha alike.

Mixtures

Admittedly, incorporative and emblemizing dimensions of mimesis may coexist or interpenetrate. The question is: What is manifest and what is latent, which kind of mimesis is the subject and which the undertone? Thus, often what people in culture incorporate is an emblem of a desirable difference, as when Samoan chiefs made up their own European-like military uniforms with epilates and stars (Chapter 3) or when Banabans dress a birthday celebrant in outfits signifying the different ways of life, wealth, and capacities of their Pacific neighbors (Chapter 8). Both incorporative and emblemizing mimesis coexist because both enact fundamental cultural processes: incorporation creatively expanding the local repertoire of schemas, emblemization creatively deploying distinguishing schemas to represent cultural identity. Further, as with any dichotomy, there are no pure cases and in the following chapters we find mixtures and intermediate cases more interesting than pure cases could be.

One can think of these two styles of mimesis as nicely summed up in Taussig's landmark study in what he calls a "division of mimetic labor" (1993: 186). Cuna males dressed like Europeans evince what I call incorporative mimesis, trying on and trying out in their persons foreign persona that are also captured in curing figurines, while Cuna women's dress, *molas,* emblemize tradition. Yet even here one finds mimesis doubling back on itself, for while those *molas* women design refer back to and in this sense replicate traditional body painting, on them they often inscribe Western images like the RCA dog gazing into a Victrola (Taussig 1993: 224–29).

Abject Mimesis

It is easy to mistake an imbalance of mimicry in the earliest colonial encounters for abjection: to see indigenous peoples as mimicking colonists because they regard them as superior models. As Taussig (1993) points out, however, in these encounters it was often evident that indigenes had a lively mimetic faculty and, while sometimes the crew of a Western ship answered in kind, officers did not condescend to mimic. This imbalance, however, likely reflected

only a presumption of superiority on Europeans' part. Obeyesekere's (1992) work on Captain James Cook makes clear that the English thought indigenous peoples thought that Cook was a god; indeed, plays were performed on the London stage to this effect. Yet as Cook's death makes equally clear, the greater power was often in local hands.

Dureau (2001) argues that in these earliest encounters, Westerners on small vessels far from home with inadequate supplies were in fact highly dependent on the good will of local people: it was they who had fresh water and food as well as numbers. As the colonial project wore on, however, whites did dominate; in some places an imbalance of power and mimicry became more fact than colonial presumption, although to what degree varied from place to place and from time to time. The result of such an imbalance is often what I call "abject mimesis," in which one party to a transcultural relation is ever the model and the other always the mimic. Here mimesis, a natural play of the mind, is frozen by power relations and becomes self-negating.

Bhabha's brilliant work on "mimic men" and "zones of ambivalence" shows that in the colonial project this imbalance often resulted in an "almost the same but not white" (1994: 89) identity for indigenous peoples that reflected the ambivalence of colonists. Colonists wanted to be the model and wanted indigenes to mimic them but imperfectly, as too close a resemblance would undermine their distinction and with it their right to rule. This one-sided mimicry condemned indigenes to a liminal existence in which they could neither be themselves nor the other. I use the additional term "abject" to characterize this kind of mimicry because I believe Kristeva's (1982) earlier work on abjection can deepen our psychological understanding of it.

Although Bhabha does not use the word "abject" to characterize his "mimic men," there is a strong overlap between his portrait of these colonial subjects and Kristeva's concept. Thus Kristeva (1982: 9) says in abjection, "I am only like someone else," a mere copy in which fidelity is the only measure. We might define abjection, then, as a state of mimetic identification in which the self quests after, but without the possibility of becoming, an idealized Other. Kristeva continues, in abjection, "The ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the other" where it finds "a forfeited existence" and "a composite of condemnation and yearning"—I would say, in abject mimesis condemnation of the self for imperfectly replicating the other and yearning for identity with it. This composite is the experience of being, in Bhabha's terms, "not quite," which plunges the abject "into a pursuit of identifications that would repair narcissism" such that the self becomes "puppet like" (Kristeva 1982: 49)—a copy lacking content, empty, the strings pulled by a dominant Other.

But, while abjection is anchored in an idealized Other who could be said to represent "the law," the abject "neither gives up nor assumes the prohibition,

a rule, or a loss; but turns aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to betray them, the better to deny them" (Kristeva 1982: 15). As Kristeva says, abjection is "what disturbs identity, system, order.… The in-between, the ambiguous … which hence draws attention to the fragility of the law" (ibid.: 4). This is why abject mimesis retains the possibility of collapse into deconstructive play and interrogative irony (Bhabha 1994; Mageo 2008).

Abject mimesis, in effect, is a denial of Otherness rather than an incorporation or reassertion of it. Often it is a denial by both parties to an intercultural encounter if for different motives: colonists finding it convenient to interact with cultural Others who are like them but not so like as to share their entitlements; indigenes having internalized the cultural practices and ideals of a racist Other. Black skin, white masks, as Fanon (1967) has it, is colonialism's most internalized form. Once there is a "not quite/not white" identity (Bhabha 1994: 92), however, whiteness becomes a role, an act, an acting out of assumed privilege—hauteur. As Kristeva (1982: 40) says of abjection, it makes everything seem "made up," and the same could be said of mimic men: they betray the culturally constructed nature of what they copy. By copying their colonial overlords, mimic men suggest that white superiority is an act rather than an original with the primary authority that suggests. When images and schemas with them are internalized—when they become pictures in the mind—a slippage of meanings is often reignited.

The chapters in this volume suggest that, unlike in the South Asian and African cases that Bhabha and Fanon discuss, in most Pacific locales colonial oppression seldom became so personally and culturally negating. Slavish copying was a temptation that Pacific people largely avoided. They did so sometimes by internalizing and transforming the images and schemas of a globalized capitalist culture, sometimes merely by abandoning any real attempt to copy them. Yet abject mimesis too is part of the stories we tell.

A final note before I turn to the chapters: the kind of mentation we trace here, along with its various forms and expressions, may be particularly important in the Pacific because of its relevance to local models of personhood. In Samoa, for example, a copy or likeness is an *ata,* which means a reflected image, a shadow, a spirit, or a representative. If the unique authentic individual is key to understanding personhood and interpersonal interaction in many Western cultures, the representative plays a key role in Samoa. In matters of love one does not forward one's own suit but finds a *soʻa,* a double, to do it. In government, too, chiefs do not speak for themselves but employ a talking chief to represent them, and talking chiefs were the real makers of Samoan political history (Mageo 1998: 102–18; Meleisea and Schoeffel Meleisea 1987).

Like the partible person in Strathern's (1988) terms or the gift in Mauss's ([1925] 1990) terms, the representative as a copy, spirit, and image of another

can travel to stand for its originator. As Kopytoff (1986: 83–87) points out, in the West we make primary distinction between "persons" and "objects." In some sense this distinction turns on another between the original and the copy. Persons are believed to be individual, irreducible, priceless originals and "one of a kind," if they are true to their authentic natures. Objects in a Western capitalist system are always reducible to commodity status and are infinitely reproducible, mere copies, their value equivalent to anything with a similar price tag, and they have nothing to do with personhood. Yet objects so often have the status of "gifts" rather than "commodities" in Pacific societies and hence are also images, shadows, and representatives of their givers and thus have everything to do with Pacific understandings of what and who the person is.

Time, Trade, and Ritual

Again conceding mimesis's vast scope, this volume zooms in on three contexts of transcultural encounter in three sections. First in "Mimesis through Time" we ask how mimesis operated in such encounters in the past. Images tell histories that words cannot, yet the usefulness of a mimetic perspective for writing culture histories is largely unexplored. How does one's perspective change, we ask, when the focus is first on images and mimesis as the language of images, albeit supplemented by written records rather than the other way around—images as merely adding illustration and decoration to a study of texts. Images, of course, call for interpretation just as words do but may add surprising dimensions to written records or contradict them, suggesting counterhistories.

Mimesis is an act and maybe the origins of acting, of theater, as Aristotle suggests in the *Poetics* (1927), but it is also a cultural process through which people communicate, as in instances of first contact when two peoples share no common language. Francesca Merlan in Chapter 1 ("Imitation as Relationality in Early Australian Encounters") revisits "first contact" tales of encounters between Europeans and indigenous Australians as a way of confronting and dismissing Darwin's identification of mimicry as an inferior form of mind characteristic of "natives." Merlan asks what the conversational one-sidedness often evident in the mimesis of early encounters (indigenes mimicking but less of the reverse) says about power relations, racist attitudes, sociality, and cultural self-presentation and indeed the actual experience of these encounters that archived words cannot.

The Darwinian evolutionary interpretation of what Taussig (1993) calls "the mimetic faculty" casts mimesis as inherently abject, even simian. This view, I suggest, has long been evident in Western developmental psychology, for example in Piaget's (1985) conceptualization of "preoperational thought." Preoperational thinking is prelogical; in this phase children mistake visual

symbols for things. Piaget implies that image-based thinking is essentially irrational and literal, rather than a mimetic mode development that parallels the development of words and sequential logic.

Chapter 2, my chapter ("Transitional Images and Imaginaries: Dressing in Schemas in Colonial Samoa"), investigates costume in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Samoa. There, I argue, costume evinces incorporative mimesis and this mimesis results in what I call "transitional images." Transitional images are combinations of local and foreign images that encapsulate and prefigure transitions from one cultural-historical moment to the next, bridging the distance between "status quo culture" and an evolving cultural reality. Thus Samoans often dressed up for photos in Victorian garments combined with culturally iconic artifacts. The resulting images reveal colonial constructions of Samoans but also Samoan reactions to the Anglo-European Romantic movement, which LMS ministers, the dominant foreign presence in the nineteenth century, brought to Samoan shores.

During the period of German rule in the westerly Samoas (from 1900 to World War I), Samoans also produced traditional artifacts but with foreign dyes and individual signatures that alluded to foreign "art" schemas. More generally in the German period there is evidence for a mutuality of mimesis: not merely Samoans representing foreign schemas in their persons and artifacts but also Germans dressing like Samoans and sporting Samoan artifacts. A mutuality of mimesis in a colonial regime, I suggest, attests to a degree of genuine interest on both sides of a colonial encounter, which led during the German period to a brief flowering of a hybrid culture in the westerly isles.

Sarina Pearson's "Reel to Real" (Chapter 3) begins where Chapter 2 leaves off—in 1914 Apia. Pearson zooms in on Samoan youths staging a real shootout that resembles a scene from the silent westerns that screened twice weekly in the town hall. She then journeys with early twentieth-century Hopi and Navajo who tour Australia and New Zealand with a Hollywood western, *The Vanishing Race,* and are ceremonially welcomed as honored guests on a Māori *marae.* One is tempted to call this metamimesis; Pearson's case shows how the simulacra mimesis produces can become vehicles for intra- and intercultural conversations that stray far from the sites of their production but that become the basis of meaningful exchanges nonetheless. The Māori *marae* encounter, she argues, is neither emancipatory nor resistant; it is conversational. Her chapter shows that replicas, even from highly suspect sources, can give participants in a transcultural encounter a visual language through which and with which to play and even to commune.

In the volume's second part, "Selling Mimesis: From Tourist Art to Trade Stores," we ask how cultural travel, tourist art, and even business ventures carry on intra- and intercultural conversations through mimesis. These conversations often remain opaque to the verbal mind but emerge when one considers

how copying-plus-variation evinces a thinking and feeling through culture, both one's own and that of others: sometimes in lucrative ways, as in Joyce Hammond's chapter on Tahitian "destination weddings," sometimes in marginally profitable ways, as in Sergio Jarillo de la Torre's chapter on Trobriand "airport art," or in profitless ways, as in Roger Lohmann's chapter on a failing PNG trade store.

The Tahitian case serves as a stellar example of what Marx called "commodity fetishism," the ability of commodities (understood in a broad sense to include marketed "experiences") to provide images that enchant by appearing as something more, something other, than what they are. The Trobriand case shows how the incorporation of foreign images does not necessarily create "mimic men" but can begin fantasy processes that expand the local repertoire of images and carry on enduring mimetic practices in ways that aim at global appeal. Lohmann's PNG case demonstrates the limits both of capitalism and of copying.

In Hammond's Chapter 4, Tahitians entwine visual elements emblematic of local and colonial imaginings of ancient Tahitian life, islanders' Christian weddings, and practices featured in the annual independence festival to create "Traditional Tahitian Weddings for Tourists." "Entwine" is the appropriate word here because in Polynesian cultures binding others and thus incorporating them in one's group—through *leis*, for example, or gifts or other enticements—is an enduring practice. The result is a copy of "indigenous" forms crafted so as to create "unforgettable moments" of personal biography and to allow visitors to cast themselves as star players in a Western idyll about romantic Polynesia. Tahitian practitioners' long and deep history with Western visitors and their historical awareness of the invented character of "traditional weddings" reveal that here it is the globetrotting Westerners who are condemned to be "not quite" either natural or cultural, all the while that they strive to bridge a transcultural distance between life and imagination.

In Chapter 5 ("Of Dragons and Mermaids"), Jarillo de la Torre shows that Trobriand Islanders, through their carving, attempt something like what Tahitians achieve through their destination weddings. By incorporating Western fantasy images into Trobriand figurines (*tokwalu*), they aim to seize the imaginations of moneyed tourists, much as in precolonial times participants in Malinowski's Kula ring (1922) strove to draw wealthy Trobriand men into gift exchange. The problem is that (the imaginative power evinced in Trobriand cricket matches notwithstanding) *tokwalu* seem better at copying anew an enduring Trobriand fantasy of prosperity through connection with powerful Others than at captivating contemporary Western tourists.

Ever since Malinowski's early work, Trobriand Islanders have captured the anthropological imagination, but they have not animated Western fancy generally, being more off the beaten path of colonial expeditions and trade. At first glance, then, Trobrianders carving seahorses and mermaids might seem

an abject displacement of local images in favor of foreign ones, given that there are no such creatures in Trobriand legend. Jarillo de la Torre demonstrates, however, that rather than abandoning their own culture for the images of cultural Others, these carvings result from artisans' conscious exercises of what Stephen (1989) calls the "autonomous imagination" to expand the visual vocabulary of an ancient practice. Like *ata* in Samoa, *tokwalu* represent their originators' intentions. Like art in Gell's (1998) argument, potentially such copies would then have agency to act upon others in distant times and places. Yet this incorporation of foreign content in Trobriand schemas via copying does not sell well, leaving Trobriand purveyors forlorn.

The PNG trade store Lohmann discusses in Chapter 6 ("Capitalism Meets Its Match") is equally forlorn. Colonial exposure to a money economy whet Asabano villagers' appetites for foreign goods. Lohmann tells of two young men returning to this village from jobs in an urban center where foreigners usually ran commercial enterprises. Attempting to copy the capitalism they learned there, they open a village store, only to find themselves reluctantly incorporating local schemas of exchange and gift obligation into capitalist schemas of credit, which makes any replication of Western economic practices into bankrupting caricatures of their original.

Like the airplanes that became central to "cargo" ceremonies, this Asabano trade store may be a symbol and a site through which and at which to think about foreign ways but in the end seems to best capture insurmountable differences between the local and the foreign. The abandoned trade store, like an unbanishable ghost, attests to the Asabano's inability and unwillingness to forsake the durable bonds that define their culture. For them capitalism comes down to a denial of kinship: its putative rationality cuts too deeply into local ways of thinking and feeling.

Victor Turner (1977) sees ritual as a way to mediate intracultural relations such as those between classes. In the volume's third part, "Ritual Mimesis and Its Reconfigurations" we ask how ritual or ritualized elements of mimesis reveal thoughts and feelings about transcultural relations. Contemporary rituals and ceremonies, these chapters will show, sometimes combine imported images and the schemas they convey with images and schemas from the cultural past to create effective transcultural identities. At other times, mimicking foreign schemas destructively displaces indigenous lifeways and forestalls the development of new identities.

In Chapter 7, "Mimesis, Ethnopsychology, and Transculturation," Elfriede Hermann explores how Banabans use mimesis to incorporate all their significant transcultural relations into their cultural identity. Contemporary Banabans celebrate children's first birthdays. In the event Hermann describes, the family dresses the birthday celebrant in costumes from all those foreign groups that have left tracks in Banaban's history and impressions on Banabans'

imaginations. By doing so the family announces, asserts, and consecrates its status while adding emblems of other cultures to the child's identity. As among Hammond's Tahitians or Jarillo de la Torre's Trobriand Islanders, the mimetic practices that today characterize Banaban first birthdays serve to create a transcultural space where people aspire to capture the schemas and accompanying socioeconomic power of the Other. Taussig (1993: 129) writes, "Mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being Other," and indeed this is precisely Banabans' explanation of the identity work they perform. For Banabans even very little people's ability to represent cultural Others is a way of empowerment.

Larry Carucci in Chapter 8 on Marshallese identity in Hawai'i presents us with a stunning Marshallese copy of the Christmas ritual, which is, of course, a Euro-American copy of the much older "pagan" rite celebrating the winter solstice. Marshallese conjoin the Christian emblem of the decorated tree, originally about light in the darkness of northern winters, with a schema that has long been central to Marshallese ritual: dedicating individual resources to those relationships of gifting and exchange that knit together the larger community. But now individual resources are symbolized by the dollars that decorate the tree and people's effort is at least in part to construct a group identity in a contemporary world where identity is king and culture one of the foremost means to achieve it. Like Tahitians' destination weddings, Marshallese Christmas celebrations layer diverse historical and cultural strands in the images of a contemporary ritual. This Marshallese Christmas tree, however, is exploding and hence also an emblem and a copy in miniature of their abject modern history: their islands as a testing site for nuclear explosions.

If Marshallese and Banaban ritual performances help to organize fragmentary transcultural experience holistically in images, mimesis can also be fragmenting, producing, Dalton argues in Chapter 9 ("Anthropology, Christianity, and the Colonial Impasse"), copies of divisive foreign distinctions. Christian missionaries to the Rawa of PNG were sympathetic to native custom and incorporated images from the men's spirit house into Christian practice. This mimetic mutuality led to the spread and deep rooting of Christianity. Rawa Christians, however, also unintentionally mimicked the Euro-American religious-secular divide, which has led to increasing village disunity and the decay of traditional communitarian values.

These three sections focusing on history, exchange, and rite, respectively, while useful for highlighting contexts for the study of mimesis, point to dimensions of its subject that always tend to be present. Thus making sense of mimesis seems necessarily to involve historical perspective. Tahitian destination weddings are pastiches of history and index long episodes of interaction between locals and visitors. One cannot understand Trobriand airport carving

except as a historical practice, its feet planted deeply in enduring patterns of gift exchange. The Asabano trade store is a failed attempt, not only at capitalism but also at a historical break. The Banabans' first birthday celebration that Hermann recounts is a veritable history of intercultural relations. The Marshallese Christmas tree condenses a painful colonial history in visual form. Dalton can only make sense of mimetic practices among the Rawa by situating these in a history of Christianity there.

Trade may be for necessities, as when European explorers bartered with Pacific Islanders for fresh water and food on interminable voyages, but often trade is about capturing imaginations, and imaginations tend to be captured through images—the basic unit of mimetic processing. All these chapters are also about how indigenes or locals or both "capture" the images of cultural Others, sometimes in the sense of grasping or understanding, sometimes in the sense of appropriating, and sometimes in the sense of enchanting.

In German era Samoa, for example, an open imaginative exchange between locals and visitors seems to have led to a brief intercultural renaissance. In Pearson's chapter, imaginative exchange goes on the road to become part of a larger commercial enterprise and a global system of image exchange, which is capped by Māori and American Indians trading Hollywood images on a New Zealand *marae*—a feathered Indian headdresses for Māori kilts and cloaks. Hammond sees Tahitians and Jarillo de la Torre Trobrianders as aiming at imaginatively capturing cultural Others as a basis for trade. In capitalist societies commodity fetishism is a way to infect imaginations, a fate the Asabano resist.

Rituals can be considered transactions in images; there words are often present more for their incantatory and magical power than for their communicative properties. It is not insignificant that many of the objects I discuss in my chapter on Samoa were objects of ritual exchange and ceremonial gift giving. Giving the gifts that were once given in ritual on occasions of state to German governors and other officials seems an instance of ritual magic and a way to assimilate new rites to older ones. In Pearson's chapter, where all is cinematic simulacra, we get a Māori ritual of exchange staged anew for the camera. This exchange on a *marae* in some ways mimics Māori ritual, just as Tahitian destination weddings borrow elements from ancient Tahitian rites to ritualize "romantic moments" for their customers. Trobriand airport art is modeled on the production of ritual objects. Banabans' first birthday celebrations and Marshallese exploding Christmas trees forge new rituals.

From diverse and shared perspectives, each of these chapter shows how Pacific cultures feed on intercultural relations and, at the same time, how these relations unsettle social life in ways that compromise and challenge shared senses of personhood and polity. Examining mimesis in Pacific transcultural

encounters thus allows us to apprehend the possible benefits and perils that accompany a play of copies within and between cultures and increases our understanding of why people experience intercultural exchanges as exhilarating and liberating and/or as antithetical to their well-being. In all this, we hope to expand awareness of how mimesis affects people everywhere, from those living in multicultural urban environments to those in remote times and locales.

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