

IMAGINING THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

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As anthropologists have developed a more critical eye, earlier assumptions about the privileged position of anthropological texts have been dismissed as elitist, self-serving, and paternalistic. Perhaps James Clifford was the first to recognize the limitations of such possessiveness toward these imagined others, but his call for a broader view has been taken up by many in the field. Here, I consider the images of three interlopers, none of them anthropologists, as they each, in separate historical contexts and different positional circumstances, come to imagine Marshall Islanders as certain types of others. A consideration of these accounts reveals a good deal about historical positioning, but perhaps even more about the ways that representations always remain contextual, pointing in multiple directions and to far more than their ostensible objects. At the same time they lend contours to those intersubjective objects through depictions that are perduring if not always consistently credible or persuasive.

IF ANTHROPOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE COALESCED with Tylor and Boas who occupied the first formally named academic positions in the discipline, its emergence as a feasible field of study certainly includes the Victorian Anthropologists who came before them: Maine, McLennan, Morgan, and Spencer the most notable of the group (Stocking 1987: 285–302). Although earlier ethnological inquiries certainly preceded and fed into the formulation of the discipline of anthropology, it is during the second half of the nineteenth century that the ethnographic voice came into its own, becoming a central feature of the toolkit wherein representations of others were formulated into comprehensive theories to classify, discipline, and manage those depicted others in a systematic way. The imagined other remains as critical

to the discipline today as it was in 1860, even as contemporary meta-analysis of the nineteenth-century accounts serves to distance today's anthropological othering, in both method and form, from its nineteenth-century roots. In the pages that follow, I consider three depictions by nonanthropologists of Marshall Islanders. The accounts are spread relatively equally across the expanse of time that spans the history of anthropology itself and the history of Euro-American and Japanese colonization with the part of the world now known as the Marshall Islands. Each of the selected works imagines Marshall Islanders in certain ways. Each depiction gains potency from the way in which the author adopts a particular ethnographic mode that was typical of its respective era. And, certainly, the analysis of each text lends special value to a critical understanding of the symbolic garb with which each author clothes the ethnographic others he creates. If the depictions through time gain a more nuanced way of representing Marshallese others, all share in their reliance on critical features of ethnographic distinction that separate the "us" from the "them."

1862

Descendants of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) missionaries who first journeyed from New England to Hawai'i set out for the islands and atolls of the west central Pacific in 1853. By 1857, they established a mission station on Ebon and, soon after, a contingent of Hawaiian mission teachers joined the American missionaries as they attempted to convert Marshall Islands' "natives."

Because Marshallese and Hawaiian are not mutually intelligible languages, the policy was clearly grounded in the idea that Hawaiians and Marshallese shared a sort of racially grounded identity that would allow for increased empathy if not also a shared understanding that oozed from shared blood. Hezekiah Ae'a was one of these Hawaiian missionaries, and in February 1863, he sent a brief report back to the mission society. It is clear that Ae'a was responding to a set of queries about the Marshall Islands, perhaps even a set of standard questions sent to residents assigned to the various mission stations. In 1862, Ae'a wrote the account, "The History of Ebon," in Hawaiian and it was published in the *Ku'oko'a*, a Hawaiian missionary publication, then eventually translated by Mary Pukui of the Bishop Museum and published in English in 1948 as part of the *Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society* (1948: 9–19).

Had Ae'a's account been written slightly later it may have been classified as ethnographic or folkloric, but it is clear that Ae'a was experimenting with the notion of what constituted a written history as he begins the piece:

Histories are the means of recording the events that have taken place in a land or lands in olden times that the past may be known and heard of. Such are the histories of civilized countries, which tell us of important and famous deeds performed by their ancestors; so in the history of our own (Hawaiian) native land, written by J. F. Pogue. . . . If the word “history” means that, then let us turn to look at the history of Ebon, and there you will learn the deeds done in these islands in olden times (Ae’a 1948, 9).

Ae’a then begins his text with an ironic and judgmental comment much in line with his missionary mentors:

FALSEHOOD IS COMMON

You will see clearly that this thing, falsehood, is common when we consider the history of these islands, the Marshalls.

Having posited the possibility of multiple histories, Ae’a immediately leaves any trace of ethnohistoric understanding aside and adopts a stance outside of Marshallese history, a position from which the correctness of Marshall Islanders may be assessed.

A short section follows in the tradition of the *Moolelo Hawaii*, Pogue’s text that Ae’a references as a possible prototype for what “history” might mean. Here Ae’a asks Ebon natives what the origin of the island is and they respond that it was fashioned by the cultural trickster, Etao, a being responsible for the physical shape of many features of Marshall Islands topography. Yet, again, after being told that “Etao took rocks and sand and heaped them together and they became dry land” (1948, 9), Ae’a questions the legitimacy of the story, separating the ethnohistorical account from a reality that must lie elsewhere:

This, think the people of this island group, was the way that land appeared here. They do not believe that the pillars of heaven and earth were made by a woman and her husband, and still believe that it was made by Etao’s hands. Thus resulted only one account of the way Ebon became land, and that is in the genealogy [*sic*] of Etao (1948, 9).

In noting what people do not believe, Ae’a again questions the legitimacy of the account, suggesting an alternate possibility that resonates with Hawaiian cosmology. Ironically (although not surprisingly), more recent accounts do describe the heavens as anchored on four pillars that separate it from the

land and sea, but Ae'a suggests he asked local people about the formation of the atoll of Ebon, not about the founding of the universe. And throughout the Marshalls, island contours are fashioned and recontoured by Etao.

Ae'a ends his story of the formative socio-geographic moments of Ebon in the safety of a displaced, all-knowing, stance. With the assurance of an ABCFM missionary convinced of the textual authority of Jewish/Christian mytho-histories, he, the missionary-in-training, notes: "Such is their (the island residents') very mistaken idea."

In all likelihood, Ae'a had little more than a point-and-guess understanding of spoken Marshallese at this juncture; inasmuch as his folkloric records not only conflate stories in unlikely ways, they mix fragmentary illumination with highly blurred understanding. Speaking of Etao, he says:

He was their very important god in ancient times, and they worshipped him. Etao had some brothers, Irojirik was the name of the older one. The other brother was a star named Jebro. They were gods to these people.

Jebro's celestial status certainly positions him along with a plethora of high-ranked deity-like beings in the Marshall Islands, but Etao and Irojirik, literally "the small chief/god" exist as intermediary beings that interacted with past humans in day-to-day pursuits. Although they were "infused with super-human force," they were not deities in the sense of Jebro. But these distinctions were of little relevance to Ae'a. The worship of idols as well as the idea that there might be multiple objects and beings invested with spiritual force as opposed to a unitary, distant, male god were blasphemous threats to ABCFM missionaries in Hawai'i and in Pacific locales later missionized by the Hawaiian Mission Society. No matter how true an element of Marshallese cosmology, all such ideas were falsehoods. The falsity that typified the ABCFM stance toward all local practices with a religious edge caused the missionaries and their disciples (like Ae'a) to dismiss rather than inquire further into the parameters of such practices. Important "coincidences," such as the fact that both younger siblings, Jebro and Etao, become culture heroes, whereas their older siblings, Tumur and Irojirik, are at best ethnohistorical footnotes, are unexplored and uninteresting to Ae'a. Inscribed with the contradictions of his own positionality, Ae'a is overwhelmed by the missionary desire threaded through his identity.

Indeed, Ae'a's need to demonstrate his commitment to the role that his Hawaiian Mission Society mentors had imagined for him can be seen in his claims of affinity with the residents of Ebon— "these people are related to us because they are brown-skinned and so are we" (11). Here, Ae'a identifies

the other Hawaiian mission teachers as his audience, and recertifies the racialized imaginary that caused the American missionary members of the Hawaiian Mission Society to bring Hawaiian mission teachers to Micronesia in the first place.

In describing the “Nature of the Land” Ae’a speaks to his missionary-in-training brethren in a style reminiscent of the *Missionary Herald*:

Perhaps you have heard of the nature of these islands lying in the great ocean, but it is well to hear of it again. . . . The islands lie in a curved line, . . . not very wide but long; not high and perhaps about the level of the sea, or a little higher (1948, 10).

The subsequent section, “The Settling of the People,” returns momentarily to a folkloric mode of representation, replicating the contours of the introductory section. He presents the ethnographic material only to judge it:

The natives have three opinions as to the reason their ancestors settled and multiplied:

1. The first people were made by Etao. He made a man and a woman and the two had many children.
2. The first people were born to Limakara and Etao and they had sons and daughters and thus people multiplied on these islands.
3. The people just grew on these islands like the growing of trees. These are the ideas of the natives here in the Marshall Islands, and none know exactly which is right and so their opinions are confused (1948, 10).

Ae’a is, in this instance, at his ethnographic best, actually demonstrating the polyphony of voices that constitute the 1860s Ebon social space. But, seeking a unitary, divinely inspired, vision, he dismisses the multi-perspectival account as evidence of confusion rather than of the internal complexity of social and cultural space. Interestingly, the first rendering of Etao he notes reimagines Etao much as the biblical God. The second leaves a contradiction open to be explained, because Etao, as a “god” could only birth another god or, minimally, a *bwidak* “half god/chief” offspring. In either case, Ae’a’s consultants must still explain the ontological source of ordinary people (*kajur*: commoners). The third view, if a close translation, suggests an affinity between common people and land that some Marshallese have taken to be a primary cultural feature, presumably of great historical depth. In certain ways, the third account complements the second view in that, in more recent stories, common people have a close relationship to land,

whereas chiefs are born to early deity-figures with characteristics not unlike Etao.

Ae'a returns to contemporary description and critique for the remainder of his short article with comments on body art and grooming: a short paragraph on tattoo, on hair, on uniquely pierced and distended earlobes. Although this section jumps from one brief observation to the next, its style, undoubtedly a standard Hawaiian form, is unintentionally consonant with a Marshallese communicative style. Three times sequentially, he begins each paragraph similarly "Here is another thing," or "here is something else," in Marshallese, *Inem, bar juon* "And then, another one (or another thing)." Ae'a's final "something else" is a critique of Marshallese trade, and here he judges Marshallese to be shameless in asking, yet not (properly) reciprocating in their demeanor. It is likely no accident that Ae'a here reads Marshallese to replicate the way Hawaiians themselves judged the first ABCFM missionaries. Failing to consider the conditions under which the mission was established—by asking local people to accept them as permanent visitors and give them land—Ae'a presumes that Marshallese should also support them when times were tough. Although there is some evidence that unquestioned acceptance did occur initially (Doane Letters, 1855–1865), Marshallese soon learned that missionaries asked to be treated as chiefs but did not provide returns in the manner of chiefs. Here, I have in mind the idea that chiefs, being landless, were supported by commoners but, in return, had to care for commoners whenever they were in need and, particularly, after typhoons or other unforeseen disasters. Missionaries saw their own trade goods as being the gift of God's word. Not surprisingly, then, by the time of Ae'a's analysis, some five years after the founding of the Ebon mission station, Marshall Islanders had become shrewd in their interactions with these noncontributing guests. As Ae'a notes: "When we had nothing to bargain with in the past year, we were in dire trouble for the needs of the body, because they would not bring breadfruit, coconut, pandanus, taro, wood and so forth. Our depository had nothing they wanted with which we could trade" (1948, 11). In other words, local people actually expected a balanced exchange with goods in return for goods provided. Missionaries thought they deserved goods in exchange for the distribution of God's Word.

Ae'a complains bitterly about not being able to control the conditions of trade forgetting that the mission was built on borrowed lands. Upset with Ebon residents' "wheedling," he finds them miserly, no doubt a near mirror image of the way Marshallese considered the missionaries themselves: "It is an actual fact with these people that when one begins giving whatever they ask, they come constantly without a feeling of embarrassment" (1948, 12).

Ae‘a moves on to critique Ebon residents as “A LAZY PEOPLE” and complains that the chiefs, who permitted the missionaries to reside on Ebon, seem to only value them as a source of goods. This demeanor Ae‘a finds despicable. Adopting a mode he labels as “teaching,” he lays out the grounds of exchange as understood by the missionaries themselves:

The idea that you chiefs have is not right (i.e., seeing the missionaries as a source of goods [in exchange for welcoming them and giving them land]). You must not feel that we came to give possessions freely to you, such as money, clothing, knives, axes, and other articles. No, we have but one wealth to give you first of all, the Word of God Almighty. If you keep it in your hearts, then all the trashy wealth of the world will come to you as it did to the chiefs of Hawaii and to the other chiefs in this vast ocean(1948, 13).

Continuing in his mode of practical critique he considers Marshallese to be “a suspicious people” and (at least some of) their chiefs, in their very natures, to be plunderers. The latter feature Ae‘a generalizes to chiefs “of all the pagan lands” and “perhaps true also of the chiefs of civilized countries” (1948, 14). He considers the “*kapus*” on eating, and outlines a few gendered differences in these rules. These rules he considers “similar to those of Hawaii in olden times” (14) and the practice of such tabus pertaining to Marshallese gods and chiefs he sees as receding as a result of the appearance of the missionaries.

There are still many *kapus* here in Ebon . . . but it looks as though they will be gone entirely. It is up to God’s will to put an end to all evil practices [referring to the *kapus*] and He can make good things grow in a place formerly covered with darkness. . . . (1948, 16)

Of deities, he notes, “Many objects (were) regarded as gods by them, such as wood, stone, fish, sun, moon, lizard, ocean current and many more. They worshipped them much, because they believed that they actually existed” (1948, 15). In spite of this, Ae‘a judges the way that Marshallese worshipped to be analogous to the way of Hawaiian ancestors in olden times (1948, 15). Doubly distancing these practices, as part of ancestral Hawai‘i rather than contemporary times, and as the practices of people of Ebon (related to us but clearly not us), he adopts the stance of a student of the mission but in a rather ironic way: “Such kinds of evil worship are now decreasing among some of them [Ebon people]. How is it in Hawaii now? Is it decreasing?” Then rhetorically, and from a distance of over 2,000 miles: “No! It has not decreased

in the least.” And, finally, with shaming at the forefront of his mind: “Say, aren’t you ashamed at hearing me say personally to you that such things are lessening among the people here in Ebon? O! How disgraceful!” (1948, 15). In comparison, Ae’a believes the *kapus* in Ebon of both chiefs and gods, although still numerous, “will be gone entirely. It is up to God’s will to put an end to all evil practices and He can make good things grow in a place formerly covered with darkness. . .” (1948, 16).

After discussing canoes, navigation, and related activities, Ae’a describes amusements, beginning, of course, with dancing, another activity that was particularly abhorrent for the missionaries. Ae’a concludes with a personal note to his fellow Hawaiian missionary readers: “I am your fellow worker in our Lord, Jesus Christ, H. Ae’a; Ebon, September 1862” (1948, 17).

A compilation of errors, a note on his own fallibility, with earlier reference to the errors of the entire Marshallese way of life, marks the conflicted space of Hezekiah Ae’a as much as the first corrective to push Marshall Islanders toward a newly contoured cultural space that could be deemed acceptable to those residing in the modern world. At certain moments, Ae’a plays with the construction of an ethno-historical mode, recreating fragments of myths and stories, or commenting on daily practices, but in large part, the account points to the uneasy space that Ae’a occupies in the Ebon world that he fashions. Without the sophisticated linguistic abilities of a well-situated ethnographer, he finds difficulty in outlining the contours of social life on Ebon, but in his position as a Hawaiian field missionary, he encounters no difficulty at all in disciplining the residents of Ebon for the shortcomings of their social practices.

If Ae’a had personal relationships with anyone on Ebon, there is no evidence that he obtained his insights from any particular person. No individuals are depicted in his account and whatever collective moral agency¹ he might attribute to the community as a whole is discredited by Ae’a’s depiction of local beliefs as a set of falsehoods and local actions as infused with evil. There is a slight reflexive component to the account, as Ae’a compares fragmental elements of his own Hawaiian heritage to Ebon, but in this regard, Ae’a has as much reason to distance himself from his own past as to inscribe his difference with the people of Ebon. Trapped between the new-found burdens of an outside historian and his own lack of knowledge, he overdetermines his rendition of Marshallese practices by placing them in a textual form to be judged by others after already having been judged by Ae’a and by Ae’a’s God.

1946

A second account of Marshall Islanders written in an autobiographical ethnographic mode is provided in a short hand-typed manuscript filed in a former

Enewetak military library entitled “The Road to Eniwetok” with a Preface headed simply “Eniwetok Atoll.”. This document is not signed but seems to have been penned in at least two stages. The author reflects back on the road that took/brought him to Eniwetok, seemingly relying on notes that he took during the Civil Affairs era that followed World War II, whereas the more recent preface, from which he reflects back on the earlier years, was likely written in December 1952, the “Christmas season” just after the first US thermonuclear explosion known as the “Mike” test. I believe that this work was authored by W. S. Jenkins (1946) who wrote a piece on wartime canoe building in the *American Neptune*, a piece he references as his own on the first page of this document.² Like Ae’a, Jenkins positions himself as another type of missionary representing America’s post-World War II values among a group needing to be saved from their own cultural depravity. Although the author positions himself as the preservationist savior of that culture doomed to “pass into oblivion,” the certainty of their oblivion remains unquestioned. Indeed, this is a much earlier historical moment than the “liberal multiculturalist” moment documented for Australia by Povinelli (2002), although small precursors of that moment may be seen in Jenkins’s account as he foists the reality of Enewetak people’s contemporary lives into alignment with the distant narrated past. The earlier moments Jenkins recalls in “The Road to Enewetak,” must have been in 1944 or 1945 when Enewetak people were relocated to Aomon and Bijili to allow the US military to transform Enewetak islet into a full-scale military base. This is when the author claims that the idea of preserving the culture of the Marshall Islands, and of Enewetak in particular, first occurred to him. Thus, the author imagines, in advance, that Enewetak culture will be doomed by the proposed nuclear testing program, although he does not engage in his attempts at cultural preservation until some six years later, as the Mike test reminds him of his time as the Civil Affairs Administrator on Eniwetok. Of course, it is a new Eniwetok in 1952, an atoll coated with radionuclides but absent of its indigenous residents. It is unclear whether Jenkins is present on Eniwetok in 1952 or whether the Mike test simply reminds him of his earlier encounters with the atoll chiefs and community members during the final months of World War II and prior to the beginning of Operation Crossroads. The *raison d’être* for his writing is captured in a short statement embedded in the 1¼-page preface to the main document:

I thought then [in 1944–45] that the story of Eniwetok should be preserved for the record of history. And I believe now [1952] that it would be unfortunate for the future of civilization should the culture of this atoll pass into oblivion and its contribution to humanity lost

forever like that of idyllic Atlantis, which, in the imagery of poets, had sunk and disappeared beneath the ocean waters. For certain elements of equable society were present in the organization of the primitive culture of Eniwetok which are timeless and universal in constructive import and, therefore, merit preservation for this troubled world.

Jenkins continues:

Thus I am stirred to write the ensuing pages in order to recount the experiences of my administration of Civil Affairs [Military Government] on Eniwetok Atoll, and thereby fulfill a trust to the natives to declare the truth in their way of life as I found it and to tell their story and the lesson it holds for mankind in the Epic of Civilization [compare with Flinn, this volume].

In anthropological terms, Jenkins continues to hold a very nineteenth-century view of the cross-cultural project with the Epic of Civilization determining the extinction of the natives of Eniwetok and, of course, he sees it as his duty, perhaps even in fulfillment of a promise he made to the chiefs or other community members with whom he interacts, to tell the story of the natives to the Civilized World. To accomplish this, Jenkins goes back to a series of letters, to an encounter with these chiefs, and to a letter reporting his accomplishments as Civil Affairs Officer, to give the world an image of these “others” for whom he served as mediator (apparently between July and December 1944) at the time they were still residing on Aomon and Bijili in the northern half of Enewetak atoll.

If the nineteenth-century evolutionists used the doctrine of survivals to project contemporary “primitives” into the ancient past, as if they were replicas of our own civilized existence at some earlier moment, Jenkins engages in a similar form of wizardry. He recasts his recollections of a past moment when Enewetak people were placed on marginal lands of their own atoll and forced into conditions of dependency on the US military. In this unsettled landscape, littered with massive imbalances of power, Jenkins inscribes a romanticized image of Enewetak society (represented by his encounter with its chiefs and leaders) as an independent entity that should be unaffected by this forced dependency. The society he imagines is transported into the current moment out of a timeless past, with Jenkins the guide and documentary hero, there to provide direction for the primitive and capture the moment of clash, when the ancient is brought into direct confrontation with the civilized.

Jenkins begins his journey in “The Road to Eniwetok” jumping back and forth between the Mike test (November 1952)³ and June 1944 when “I was . . . reporting to Captain Crews for duty in a dual assignment as Legal and Civil Affairs Officer. And then fancy carried me swiftly back over ‘The Road to Eniwetok.’” He then takes another step back along his own road to Eniwetok on December 7, 1941, “when Bill Kimmel, Dynamite, Pigskin and I were bringing the equipment of the State Records Microfilm Project out of the Archive[s] . . . in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the voice of Upton Close was announcing over the radio the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.” Thus, allowing one apocalyptic event to foreground another, he begins at a symbolic beginning when a “new heaven, new earth” was created, the moment when his life and Enewetak lives would be intertwined.

Jenkins continues to trace his own winding path from 1941 through 1944, when he again finds himself at “The Crossroads of the Pacific,” this time headed to Eniwetok. Once on the atoll, he jumps directly to an encounter on Aoman, depicting a face-to-face encounter with Hernej (“Earnest”), a highly ranked respected elder and the long-standing pastor of Enewetak. This section he titles “Crossroad of the Pacific”:

As the fire bell sounded, I was again on Aomon Islet, among the natives, standing before devout old Earnest, the Moses and the prophet of the tribes of Eniwetok and Enjebi. He was standing outside his little Church house, hands clasped gently together, and was telling me the legendary story, the Genesis of Eniwetok, and he was explaining to me their religious faith and their social customs.

Throughout this section, Jenkins depicts himself as the all-knowing ethnographer. His use of “again” suggests that this encounter was one of many with Earnest as with other members of the community, yet this paragraph fails to mention any of the critical content of Earnest’s “legendary story.” The next paragraph appears in brackets, as if he added it as a later reflection. In it he tells a bit about Earnest’s brief mission training on Kosrae and then, again, raises his reader’s hopes that he will tell the legendary story: “On October 13, 1944, Earnest was brought down to headquarters by my interpreter and he engaged in conversations in which he related to me the history of Eniwetok.” This history, however, is hardly the Genesis story, but rather Hernej’s story of the end of World War II:

The natives got off their home islands with only the clothes they had on their backs and some without anything, as the early pictures in the Album indicate. All of their records, both in printed form

or in manuscript, which connected them with the past, or which might have explained their recent social structure under Japanese rule, were destroyed in the occupation, except three bibles and two Mission songbooks, translated into the Marshallese. I took full notes on Earnest's legendary account, therefore in order to reconstruct at a later time as full and accurate an account of their history and society as would be possible.

Jenkins stored this in a "Jap factor's cash box." The cash box is, apparently, the library repository containing the notes on which he relies for the writing of this account but, unfortunately, Jenkins never elaborates on the history or social organizational record of the community. Rather, overemphasizing the importance of written records within the Enewetak community, the Battle of Eniwetok becomes, in the rendering recounted above, a point at which all history of the community is destroyed. The detailed notes of Hernej' legendary account may remain within Jenkins's grasp, stored in the "Jap cash box," but Jenkins's version of the history of the Enewetak community remains untold.

The subsequent paragraphs follow the same format as the above, introducing Brown Smith, who served as translator for Civil Affairs, followed by a comment that, *ex post facto*, provides legitimacy for Jenkins's encounter:

And in my mind, I could clearly see the Civil Affairs [Military Government] inspection party lined up in front of the Church House. To my right stood Chief Petty Officer Brown Smith, Royal Fijian Volunteer Naval Reserve interpreter, and Chief Abraham of the tribe of Engebi.⁴ To my left, stood Chief Johannes of the Tribe of Eniwetok.

As in Malinowski's "You are there . . . because I was there" depictions that position him on Kirwinia, these statements are fundamental to Jenkins's attempts to establish his ethnographic authority (Clifford 1983, 118). Equally legitimizing are pictures in Jenkins's photographic album. Although these could provide a plethora of clues about life on Aoman, the photographs remain in Jenkins's storage box and do not become part of his Story of Eniwetok.

Jenkins's account of a trip that allowed the chiefs to visit "Eniwetok" (islet) brings him closest to the story of the Enewetak community. On this journey, Jenkins is accompanied by Johannes, Abraham, and a Pohnpeian living with the community, Toppie (perhaps a Navy personnel nickname for Adin) to Jeptan and then to Enewetak: "The return of the native, Chief Johannes,

to his home island was one of the most interesting observations that I have ever lived through. It was like old George returning to life and riding down Constitution Ave.”

However amazing Johannes and Abraham may have found the trip, clearly they were not thinking of their own actions in the same metaphoric terms as was Jenkins. After a lengthy discussion of Toppie, Jenkins says that Toppie,

was as keenly interested in Johannes’ reactions as I was. Johannes sat on one side of the boat, just staring and letting out great guffaws of amazement, being unable to comprehend the miracles that were passing before his eyes. Every once in a while a broad smile would pass over Toppie’s face as he watched Johannes. Just as we pulled out from Japtan, he could contain himself no longer; it was all funny to him: “Huh! Johannes, he own Japtan!” Johannes remained animated; Abraham subdued but intense.

Jenkins constructs his Enewetak natives, even their most respected leaders, as amazed children, standing in awe in a playground fashioned by adults. In the above quote, the technological devices, representing the civilized superiority of the Americans, are “miraculous” whereas, in the paragraph that follows, Jenkins says: “We passed by Parry [Meden islet], completely barren of all former vegetation, now built up with horrible steel structures that made no sense to the native mind whatsoever; then by the Club, with thousands coming and going from the landing boats. . . .” Here Jenkins sees the transformations on Meden in far more equivocal terms, nearly allowing himself to imagine how Enewetak natives must have viewed the radical alteration of their atoll; nevertheless, the scale of these transformations and of the Navy personnel flooding out of the Club are presented as mind-boggling to the naïve natives. A similar sense of amazement is conveyed in Jenkins’s depiction of the chiefs’ “first jeep ride”:

Their first ride in a jeep—I wish I could have gotten a picture of the expression on Johannes’ face, holding on for dear life, confident that he would never live through it. They wanted to go down by the air strip [*sic*], where their former village had been located, but had to rely on Toppie as to which direction to go in.

Jenkins here reads deeply into Johannes’ emotive state, in all likelihood constructing thoughts and feelings far beyond what he knew to be the case. Clearly, Jenkins relied on Brown Smith to translate since he did not himself speak Marshallese, and it is likely that he simply projects onto Johannes the

certainty that he would not survive the jeep ride. Having witnessed many others riding in jeeps, navigating ships and aircraft, Johannes must have surmised that his chances of survival were quite high. Indeed, this well may not have been his first experience in a jeep. It was certainly not Johannes' first trip on board a ship. Rather, in constructing his primitives in a primordial shape, Jenkins's text maximizes the contrast between the American military personnel all around him and the native civilians whom he visited for a few hours one time each week. His contrast increases the distance between the Americans and the natives providing rationale for his own attempts to whip them into shape as depicted in the final segment of this document.

A sequence follows in which Jenkins, assisted by Brown Smith, accompanies the chiefs as they view their "first" movie that evening (overlooking a long history of propaganda film viewing sessions during the Japanese era). Awe here shifts to bewilderment: "I have a picture of them there with the lights shining in their faces, their bewilderment betraying a touching story." The touching story seems not to have anything to do with the film's content but rather with the quaint image of primitive innocence brought face-to-face with American technological "advancement." Later in the same paragraph, Jenkins follows with an overview of a new type of primordial event in the history of American imperialism, the powwow between the Europeans and the natives.

The next morning Brown Smith brought them up to Headquarters; and they were received in the office of the Military Government for their first official interview on "the state of public affairs within the jurisdiction of Aomon."

They were informed that the Atoll commander was waiting to officially receive them on the veranda of his quarters. They presented the customary presents and the Captain reciprocated, serving coca cola (in consideration of me, a Southerner) [this, of course, Jenkins assumed]. They invited the Captain to pay them a visit, expressed thanks for what had been done for them, made a few remarks about Eniwetok before the attack, when abruptly the reception had to be terminated. We ducked around the corner of the house as a group of high-ranking Naval officers came in the front way.

The ruse of the entire event as the meeting of commanders-in-chief, with the "guests" being "received" for an "official interview" is shattered when another set of empowered persona put in an appearance. However grand the ceremonial significance this official meeting of the chiefs was supposed to be, the actual power relations that were in effect on Eniwetok meant that not only the high chiefs of Enewetak Atoll but also the Civil Affairs Officer

and his translator had to sneak out the back so as not to be detected by the ranking Naval officers who came in the front. The deictics of this encounter are all too obvious in the way they invert the relationship between visitors and local owners, between legitimate chiefs and those who assert chief-like authority, and even in the directionality of the thankfulness being expressed by the participants (or, at least, the thankfulness worthy of recounting in Jenkins's rendering of the event).

Following the chiefly powwow, the chiefs are then given a tour of their own island, wherein Jenkins again describes them as disoriented and amazed children: the tour "ended with them as two children in a state of daze after a merry-go-round ride. They had completely failed to gain any sense of orientation with the island they had left six months before." Continuing in a similar vein, Jenkins describes the chiefs' final night on Eniwetok where they were "subjected . . . to the strange ways of the Americans." He then outlines the gifts they received and purchases they made, filling two jeeps, Abraham ending up with his first pair of shoes, and Johannes with a sun helmet.⁵ Abraham must then be rescued from a last minute purchase:

I found him surrounded by curious admirers, making frantic gestures. He had bought a box of Hershey's chocolate for the children and wanted vaseline "hair oil" for his wife. It was necessary for me to rescue him, as they were about to sell him some sweet smelling shampoo. Their expression about everything they saw was "good," "good," and Johannes' parting remark to me was "Thank you very much Eniwetok good island. Americans good, all the same very fine, but after Americans finish, Johannes like to have Eniwetok back."

Although the total purchases were minimal in dollar amounts (\$13 for Ioanej and \$12 for Ebrean), somehow Jenkins feels he must rescue Abraham from another minimal shampoo purchase. Most important however, Jenkins reinforces his depiction of the chiefs as childlike, describing Ioanej as speaking an only-partially-socialized, mock-pidgin, English and contending that he and Ebrean naively approved of everything they saw.

Jenkins then turns his attention to community members themselves, judging them to have been transformed by the visit of the chiefs to Enewetak. In short, they had become civilized, in line with the dictates of his office:

The next week I dropped by Japtan and took the laborers and the Chiefs back to Aomon. They were all dressed up in dungarees and white sailor caps. It was amazing what a change had come over them

in so short a time. As I looked at them they could easily have passed for a group of service men going on a recreation party.

Although not up to the level of a full dress Navy review, the chiefs and workers have at least elevated themselves externally, if not internally. As in his entire description, there is a surface patina that Jenkins judges with marked superficiality. In this case, superficial improvement, marked by the change in dress, is deemed admirable, confirming for those who might read Jenkins's treatise, his own success in civilizing his primitive charges.

A long section follows where Jenkins negotiates, through Brown Smith, with the community and its chiefs about labor on the burial chapel on Jeptan. Enewetak workers were paid for this, but the chiefs insisted they should not be paid since this was a House of God and it would be "contrary to native custom" to accept pay. By this moment in Enewetak history, the Christianity Ae'a had helped introduce to Ebon residents had become a mark of modernity and was so thoroughly transformed and woven into daily practice as to become traditionalized. At the same time, the chiefs had become astute negotiators regarding other forms of labor:

Abraham, complacent as usual, had remained the silent junior protestor, while explosive Johannes had expressed his irate feelings, as though I had tricked them by not explaining the nature of the structure. But he then came up and tickled me in the ribs, showed his gold tooth, which had been installed for him by the Japs, and said: "Natives can't accept money for what natives do for God; contrary to native custom; but natives want to work for Navy, build house for Red Cross, be mess boys for Captain." But Abraham thinks natives should get 50 cents, not 40 cents.

Ultimately, a boatload of presents was sent in equal amount to the cost of their labor to fulfill both the agreement of Jenkins with the Navy and the chiefs' desire not to be paid for work on a church. Jenkins says: "If the natives could do so much for God, then the Great White Father in Washington must show his appreciation with a magnanimous spirit. It all worked out well and made the Captain's inspection trip a great success." The multilayered transpositions of Jenkins's reported encounter are quite telling. Quite probably, Johannes did frame local people's labor as a compact with God inasmuch as Church-related labor was still described in analogous ways by Enewetak people from the 1970s through the current day. However, to imagine the community as benefiting from the "magnanimous spirit of the Great White Father" is, undoubtedly, Jenkins's own interpretation that requires overlooking

the fact that the American occupation of Enewetak required an appropriation far greater than anything returned to the community by the Great White Father.

Jenkins next describes an inspection trip to Aoman by the Captain of the US military base—a display event where the community must pass muster, however superficial. In preparation, Brown Smith stayed on the islet (Aoman/Bijili) for an entire week. Jenkins was to come up early on the day of the visit, but he was late in arriving, only forty minutes prior to the Captain's scheduled arrival:

Imagine my great consternation in finding the two villages in great disorder, not clean and ship-shape (as I had ordered Brown Smith to supervise). Many of the children were without any clothes, and the grownups in their badly worn and patched clothes. All of the men had recently acquired new outfits, and they had bought hundreds of yards of calico for new dresses for the women and children. And we had also taken them a crate of vaseline and combs for their hair. But their present condition completely defeated me, and my high hopes had been suddenly dashed aside.

All attempts by Brown Smith and Jenkins to whip the community into shape seemed doomed to failure. At the last possible minute, they called for the Chiefs and the scribes to form a reception party as the Captain's skiff approached the beach:

And out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of an old woman throwing a bright yellow calico garment over the head of a naked pickaninny body.

As we returned only seconds later, it seemed, a remarkable transformation appeared before my eyes. They were all assembled there, perfectly lined up, with the children in front, all saluting, smartly dressed in their new clothes and varied flowered calico dresses; and, what impressed the Captain most, each and everyone had his hair slicked down and combed beautifully. They truly were a sight of sartorial splendor, an amazing sight for my sore eyes to behold. And so ends the story of the return of my native to his home land.

Of course, one component of Jenkins's analysis is quite astute inasmuch as the ability of Marshall Islanders to transform themselves from their workaday selves into beings bedecked in Sunday finery at a moment's notice is

certainly remarkable. Yet, the larger and more unsettling issue fails to reach the level of consciousness for Jenkins, the Civil Affairs Officer, the person most critically positioned to mediate between the military and local people. That is, sequestered on their “Native Island” to allow the US military access to the main residence islets on the atoll the daily lives of Enewetak people had been radically transformed. The ragtag effects of this transformation were precisely what Jenkins witnessed on his arrival. Instead of recognizing that the decrepit condition of the community was the direct result of military occupation, Jenkins seemed to take it as his job to cover these realities with a prearranged, inspection-ready presentation of the community that might pass muster in the eyes of the Captain precisely to the degree it obscured the realities of day-to-day life. Covering up that reality is certainly the central aim of Jenkins’s labor as he prepares for the Captain’s inspection trip. Having destroyed people’s ability to be self-sufficient on sea and land, they now need only appear orderly and superficially civilized to pass inspection.

Throughout his story of Enewetak, Jenkins purports to give us an ethnography-like “insider’s understanding” of Enewetak people living on Aoman. But Jenkins’s access is limited, his interactions always mediated or circumscribed by his own minimal ability to communicate with members of the community in their own language. Nevertheless, Jenkins demonstrates some literary skill in the depiction of his interactions with community members, and he relies on those skills to paint portraits of five islanders, granting some greater agency to them than to others. In addition to the intermediaries, Toppie and Brown Smith, Johannes, Abraham, and Earnest are all given some attention in Jenkins’s text. These three men were the Enewetak elites of that era who, in the eyes of Jenkins, had adequate legitimate authority to represent all other members of the community. The remaining two, Toppie and Brown Smith, were absolutely imperative if Jenkins was to understand anything that was happening on Aoman. Jenkins’s relationship with Earnest and the chiefs remains undefined, but he does provide slight indications of the social relationship that linked him to Brown Smith and Toppie. Therefore, unlike Ae’a, Jenkins provides some modest clues about the lives of these men even if he is unable to give an in-depth account of any one of them or how they fit within the everyday routines of life on Aoman.

If his depictions seem less folkloric than those of Ae’a, it is certainly because he writes of the specific times he interacted with the leaders and intermediaries in the community. Nevertheless, his attempt to exploit the potentialities of the ethnographic voice shows him mainly as an outsider who remains marginal to the daily activities of the Enewetak people living on Aoman and even more tangential to the long-term quest of members of this community to be returned to their homeland. By inserting personal letters into his account,

a certain reflexivity is added to the manuscript, but that reflexivity does little to outline the contours of Jenkins's interpersonal relationships with the people of Aoman. Indeed, the residence of Enewetak people on Aoman, their much longer period of exile on Ujelang, their long-awaited return to Enewetak in 1980, and their subsequent dispersal across the globe point to the tenacity of the community, their ability to endure in spite of all odds. Certainly, the culture of this atoll has not "passed into oblivion" as Jenkins, so certain of American superiority, had predicted. If the community's contributions to humanity are far different than imagined by Jenkins, they have certainly not been "lost forever like that of idyllic Atlantis."

2002

The final piece to be explored is a work published in 2002 by Robert Barclay, a novel entitled *Melal*. Although thematically the work is an antiromance, a Rousseau-like tableau that highlights cultural contortion and degeneracy in the face of colonialism, this is by far the most imaginative and imaginary work of the three texts dealt with in this paper. Barclay subtitles *Melal* as a *Novel of the Pacific*, and in it he gives some sense of the contours of life on Ebeye, Kwajalein Atoll, and the encounters of two young boys in particular.

Barclay spent some of his life on the Kwajalein military base, and, grounded in his memories of those experiences and a broader interest in Marshallese cosmology, he focuses his attentions on the life lived by Marshall Islanders on Ebeye (Epja), that is, the location where most Marshallese actually reside on Kwajalein. In the author's note, Barclay simply claims to be a "former resident of Kwajalein Atoll." Yet, for those familiar with Kwajalein, the contrasts of life in the military center on Kwajalein, Kwajalein, could not have been greater than life on Epja (Ebeye), just a few miles across the lagoon. On the military base, most of the comforts of life in Honolulu or San Diego, California, have been re-created, whereas the conditions of life on Ebeye are certainly degrading and despicable. Undoubtedly, from the perspective of an outsider living on Kwajalein, life on Ebeye must appear exciting and exotic. Nevertheless, in spite of the cohesiveness of living within a family on Ebeye, life on that islet requires its residents to continually confront overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and everyday medical concerns that have proven to be virtually intractable.

Barclay brings this world of sharply hewn contrasts together for his readers, tracking the lives of Jebero and Nuke, two brothers born to Rujen and Iia, through an everyday fishing expedition that would be routine on any other atoll in the Marshall Islands. Under Kwajalein's military regimen, however, a simple visit to another islet, at least one within the mid-atoll corridor,

becomes a criminal act. On their journey, Jebero and Nuke are shadowed by Etao and Noniep, two figures that astutely blend images of Marshall Islanders' ancient historical past with upgraded features of contemporary life. Equally, a second pair of shadow siblings in the form of two adolescent male fishermen from Kwajalein, Kwajalein, reminds readers of the multilayered social scene on the atoll, a socially constructed scene with ever-present layers of hierarchy, seldom very far from the reach of military authorities. Barclay's novelistic characters, however, are juxtaposed with other very real actors well known during the era when the novel is said to transpire (1981). These characters, like Handel Dribo, help Barclay bridge the boundary between romance and reality at the level of written text. Others, such as Lapedpeden, Alfred Capelle, Takaji Abo, and Tony DeBrum (mentioned along with others in the acknowledgements), help to "authenticate" the novel, giving it a sense of ethnographic authority.⁶

The primordial Etao, trickster figure of the Marshall Islands, is reformulated by Barclay in contemporary form, wearing his Los Angeles Lakers jersey and denying to Noniep, his novelistic companion, that he had anything to do with transmitting the knowledge of nuclear power to the Americans. (On this score, Marshall Islands oral history suggests otherwise.) In the novel, Noniep, named for an entire clade of primordial dwarf-like beings that preceded contemporary humans in their residential claims on the Marshall Islands, and among the most long-lived of beings that might be actually seen by living humans (quite unlike Etao, who "lives" only as a shadow figure behind the trickster-like actions of today's earth-bound humans), is transformed into a being at risk of living only until the end of the day. Certainly, this imagined sense of primordial Marshallese culture at risk of impending death relies on an ossified, unalterable sense of culture. Even though that scenario is challenged by an Etao imagined in L.A. Lakers gear, it reemerges as a method to allow Barclay to convince readers that the loss of Marshallese cultural vitality is an object of concern.

Jebro, here the oldest sibling of Rujen and Iia, bears the praenomen of the youngest sibling in the family of Loktanur, primordial chieftainess of the Marshall Islands, who selects Jebro as the ruling chief because of his love and caring in spite of the fact that he is born to an expansive set of brothers, all of whom (by the standard "rule of primogeniture") are more likely than Jebro to actually become the chief.⁷ Alongside of Jebro is Nuke, bearing a praenomen that points directly to the unsettled history of Marshall Islanders' relationships with the United States, and the nuclear testing program that they foisted onto local islanders following World War II. Nuke's six fingers serve to mark his connection with nuclear testing, along with a gaggle of dead sibling fetuses—one older than Jebro, three between Jebro and Nuke, and

one younger than Nuke—each of whom links the family as a whole to ongoing residues of the nuclear testing program. Iia, Jebro's and Nuke's mother who died in childbirth, is a woman from Rongelap, the community most highly contaminated by fallout from the 1954 Bravo test, conducted on Bikini Atoll. Her husband, Rujen, suspects that she actually died as a result of complications that arose from nuclear testing, complications that were hidden from the family but were felt by Iia during the years her health was tracked by the US Department of Energy.

Ultimately, in Barclay's imaginative work, "this Melal, this playground of demons" (2002, 283) an array of noncorporeal spirit beings of Marshallese vintage, each characterized as more ghoulish than standard Marshallese depictions, come to represent the "host of blackened souls on Ebeye" (283). In absolute numbers, these souls come to "exceed all others . . ." to increase the balance on their evil side and revel in the sudden mayhem it will bring. Soon neighbor will hate neighbor, the containment and the crowding and the mindless boredom will suddenly become too much, and then the people of Melal, no more the gentle people they once were, will as one, like rats trapped too long inside a box, become vicious, cruel, and violently insane (2002, 283).

This shadow world of discord on Ebeye, so strident in its contours among noncorporeal beings seems to foreshadow, or serve as a sign of, the potentialities for Ebeye's human residents. In the penultimate chapter, a discussion between Rujen and Jebro, continues to draw linkages between the world of Etao and Noniep (a world conflated and radically recontoured in Barclay's imagination) and life on Ebeye. In rather formulaic style, for Barclay, the major risk for younger generations of Marshall Islanders is their disconnection with the past, evidenced by Rujen suggesting that the sons of Loktanur provide key guides for the conduct of daily life (2002, 289). But when he asks, "Do you know which one is Loktanur?" Jebro (whose name links him with Loktanur's youngest son) replies that he does not: "I thought I knew where to look, but I forgot. Maybe she is not around this time of year" (2002: 289–90).

This discussion between father and son focused on the critical nature of traditional knowledge, its transmission across generations abruptly interrupted when power is restored at the end of a power outage.

Suddenly, radios played, static blared from televisions, washing machines started spinning . . . startled animals ran . . . an entire carnival of electric sound that caused several people in the nearby houses to cheer. Farther away a woman screamed, a terrible scream almost as if she were being stabbed.

"Hey!" Rujen said, looking around. "Good thing!"

But as Jebro looks back to the sky that maps how Marshall Islanders ought to live their daily lives “he could not see the stars, only three flaming streaks of light, warheads, leaving trails, headed for the heart of the lagoon. That woman kept on screaming” (2002, 290).

Thus, Barclay works with the discordant juxtapositioning of the mundane and the noncorporeal realms as well as with analogies and contrasts between these domains to convey his message of cultural disjunction and social discord. Clearly, the message will resonate with western readers, yet it remains a message at odds with the sensibilities of the residents of Epjā. From them, I have heard talk of the suffering on Ebeye, but it is a discourse that draws sharp contrasts with the privileges of life on Kwajalein. At the same moment, residents are drawn back to Ebeye as a place of love and caring, not a location where either residents, or the supernatural beings who represent them risk becoming “like rats . . . inside a box . . . vicious, cruel, and violently insane” (2002, 283). And as a site of social disruption, the solutions to most of Ebeye’s problems have far more to do with conditions of economic inequality than with reconnecting with the ethno-history of ancestral generations.

Indeed, to construct his romantic view of a Marshallese society placed at risk, Barclay creates an overelaborated contrast between a tradition-rich society and its antithesis, a society at risk of social disintegration as a result of the effects of nuclear testing and the military war games that take place on Kwajalein. Barclay’s readers are outsiders, largely Americans, who are extremely familiar with the trope of cultural demise and presume that local practices will simply be replaced with Euro-American cultural forms. But, as Rosaldo notes, forms of nostalgia arise as a way to fulfill the desire for that which has been lost (Rosaldo 1989). Writing to this audience, Barclay can all too easily place part of the blame for Marshall Islanders’ current problems squarely on their own shoulders and find a solution in their own ability to reconnect with a sense of history at risk of disappearing. But such a view requires the reader to adopt a reified view of culture as a gem at risk of being lost, not as an emergent sense of local identities constantly in the process of production. And such a view largely replicates an earlier American vision of what was best for Marshall Islanders. Indeed, at the close of World War II, during the formative stage of American control of the region, the decision to move islanders back to their home atolls and encourage them to engage in fishing, gathering, and the production of copra and local handicraft reversed the economic development plans of the Japanese by forcing local people to return to the modes of subsistence that had been present as the nineteenth century drew to a close. A reenvisioning of Marshallese as idyllic primitives,

figures nearly as prominently in Barclay's vision, a view that shares the same 1940s American idea that the route to the future can be found by following the trail to the past.

Without further research among the readers of *Melal*, it is difficult to assess the effect of Barclay's reimagining of the contours of life on Ebeye on his readers. What are the effects of Barclay's new-age Noniep and Etao, or of his compression of the activities of *eaek* (ugly snout-nosed goblins), *kijonran* (rat-like demons that encourage excess), Kwojenmeto and Monalapen (depicted as soul-robbing demons), or other beings conjured from an imagined Marshall Islands' past (282)? At best, these are uni-dimensional portrayals of noncorporeal spirits that, in the stories of local Marshallese, are much more multifaceted beings. Clearly, by far the majority of Barclay's readers will simply assume his reductionist depictions are legitimate and universal renderings of these spirits. But, of course, Barclay's ghouls appear on the scene to depict the negative, ever-present, underbelly, of Ebeye, an underbelly that, at a moment's notice can transform the "peaceful" and "gentle" people of Ebeye who "have managed to find happiness at times despite their plague of demons" into the "vicious, cruel, and violently insane" rats mentioned above (2002, 283). The polarized representations, in many ways, enable risk language to be used to dramatize the nature of what may be lost. But, in an ironic way, Barclay's depictions also create the possibility of a romantic solution to a hugely complicated sociopolitical dilemma. If only real life were so clear cut.

Comparison and Conclusion

I have tried to give glimpses of three distinctive, and often contrary, imaginings of Marshall Islands life spread fairly evenly over 140 years. From history to novel to civil service account, each text must be understood in its own productive context since that context, every bit as much as the scene depicted, provides a critical framework for lending meaning to and assessing the significance of the particular account.

In spite of their substantial differences, each of these accounts fills its rendering of the savage slot (Trouillot 1991) with "others" fashioned in relation to an opposed "us." Both Ae'a and Jenkins constitute their primitives as lesser beings in the process of being replaced. Jenkins, with the certainty of a distant "other," maximizes his own symbolic differentiation by imagining himself as the savior of a way of life that is certainly doomed—an Enewetak people simply consumed by the overwhelmingly more advanced state of Euro-American technological superiority. Whether physically or culturally eradicated, Jenkins imagines that the only remaining visages of Enewetak people will exist in his own inscriptions. Only he and other members of the superior culture he ima-

gines that he shares with his readers reap the benefits of a soon-to-be eradicated way of life that should by now be preserved only in his written words. Ironically, there is a hint of nostalgia in Jenkins's depiction of this loss, a nostalgia that, some years later, is framed very differently by Barclay.

Presaging Jenkins by several decades, Ae'a is also steadfast in his depiction of Ebon, Marshallese as lesser others, but of course, in his imagination, these beings will be replaced by saved souls of a higher moral order. Nevertheless, as a Hawaiian mission teacher, Ae'a's depiction of this transformed primitive is the most interesting and also the most unstable. At one level, his own text is directed to other Hawaiian mission teachers. They are the imagined others that their Marshallese converts should be using to envision their own future selves. At the same time, the very instabilities of this "saved savage" stance are apparent in Ae'a's text. First, in his life as a Hawaiian mission teacher, Ae'a himself adopts the voice of a degenerate and more lowly ranked simulacra of the ABCFM missionaries who headed the Micronesian Mission. His differential stance is marked not only by the audience he addresses (and the white missionary audience he does NOT address) but also by several stylistic features of the text. On the other hand, Ae'a depicts his own Hawaiian past with even greater ambivalence, simultaneously claiming and distancing himself from threads of his own Hawaiian identity that might have been used to make sense out of the "History of Ebon." Although he recognizes a few commonalities between Hawai'i and the Marshall Islands, he seldom draws on those commonalities other than to point to the inevitable demise of local cultural practices when confronted with the truth of the word of God. Measured in terms of ultimate demise, he sees Hawaiians as leading the way and Marshallese inexorably following the same path. Ultimately, Ae'a's experiments in ethno-history are highly adumbrated. Indeed, why spend too much time exposing a history only to damn it as a collection of falsehoods and evil practices certain to be replaced by God's true word.

With a novelist's sensibilities, Barclay fully exploits the nostalgia he expects his readers will feel for imagined idyllic primitives under daily threat given the vagaries of life on Ebeye. If Jenkins's primitives sink from his own view like Atlantis, taking with them important messages that will be lost to future civilization, Barclay's civilization brings negative threats face-to-face with an idealized traditional way of life. Although quite realistically depicting some of the lived contradictions of daily life on Ebeye, Barclay conflates historical realities to create overdetermined depictions of antithetical forces, good and evil, traditional and contemporary, that pull at people's lives. In Rousseau-esque style, idealized depictions of a local lifestyle are now associated with the good, and as noted above, the ghouls and demons of an oddly shaped military modernity complicate people's ability to embody the idealized and

modernized savage of Barclay's imagination. Barclay readily engages his audience with the confrontation of radically distinct forces that impose themselves on Ebeye residents' lives. Such simplifications make for good theater. Indeed, with an array of local consultants of some sophistication, his depictions also reflect something of an indigenous sensibility that sees an idealized past existence now being replaced by something more frightening, uncertain, and at least ostensibly undesirable. Nevertheless, this contrast of contemporary instability with an imagined fixed-feature golden era of the past is, itself, a recurrent trope in Marshallese culture that radically oversimplifies the complexities of life at any particular moment in time. The actualities of everyday lives and choices are always far less clear cut, far more uncertain and conflictual. In recent years, mature Ebeye residents often say that the source of contemporary problems are directly traceable to *men maroro eo* (the green thing, i.e., money), but at the same time, Kwajalein people negotiate with steadfast determination to make sure that military payments for the use of Kwajalein are both increased and continued well into the future. Although this certainly does not place blame on local people for the complex predicament in which Kwajalein residents find themselves, their complicity does point to a far more multifaceted set of forces that help determine Ebeye identities than those depicted by Barclay.

Comparing these texts in terms of social positionality is equally valuable, if disconcerting. Ae'a presents us with a fully totalizing God's eye view of Ebon society and history, a view that, other than in its imagined demise at the time of Ae'a's recording, is unchanging and amorphous from edge to edge (Sartre, 1963, on totalization). There are no women's voices here to be differentiated from men's, no chiefly incantations, no young or old. Rather, Ae'a's readers are left to bathe in the perduring similitude of Ebon culture. Jenkins shares Ae'a's concept of a history-less past, and, of course, this depiction of an ossified former way of life is precisely what renders salvational his own "history-making" interventions at the current moment (1952) when the disappearance of Enewetak seems assured. In contrast to Ae'a, Jenkins does allow his readers to hear (if in highly questionable translation) a handful of high-ranked male voices, but he also allows these voices to represent the whole, as if differentiation had never crossed his mind. His central depiction is of the child-like, and simple-minded savage, gazing, awe-inspired at the radical transformations of his home space by the Americans. In naming the two chiefs, Jenkins does recognize differences in their demeanor, but these differences are inadequate to cause him to question the stereotypic nature of his depictions of Enewetak people as a whole. Although Jenkins spends a good deal of time differentiating the civilized white male social persona in his narrative, there is no recognition that the same might be required of him to

adequately highlight the distinctive characters of those who inhabit his savage slot. Even the idea that women or men, young people or aged ones might hold different views is beyond Jenkins's imaginary capabilities on Enewetak. To ask him to distinguish the social persona of Dainah from Eliji, two sisters with important, yet distinct, adult voices in the late 1940s, is to ask to enter a world that existed outside the range of Jenkins's understanding, if still within his gaze.

With the sensibilities of a novelist, Barclay gives us a range of imagined Ebeye residents differentiated by age and gender. These are among the features that give the novel a realistic feel. Nevertheless, although not obliterating female voices, his depiction of the contradictions of life on Kwajalein highly over-elaborates male lives, whereas Iia (the mother of Jebro and Nuke and the most highly articulated of female characters) seems like a stereotype-laden marionette in relation to the much more central character-elaboration given to Rujen, Jebro, and Nuke. Perhaps this is not surprising given the ethnographic sources that Barclay credits—all well-known and respected authorities in the Marshall Islands but also all men. At certain junctures, Barclay nicely juxtaposes L. A. Lakers' tee shirts with local features to present a nicely layered view of the heteroglossic flavor of contemporary urban life on Ebeye. Yet, in other passages, a sort of ethno-historical violence is committed when he places a highly elaborated knowledge about Kwojenmeto and the remaining panoply of noncorporeal beings within the conceptual range of everyday contemporary residents of Ebeye. In point of fact, such knowledge exists only as part of the worldviews of aged indigenous savants like Lapedpeden or cultural preservationists like Alfred Capelle. Highly specialized knowledge of this sort is far from universally available or understood. In Barclay's hands, generalizing the knowledge of Lapedpeden conflates the past and the present, allowing him to bring the ancient and modern face to face on Ebeye. Yet, in spite of his tendency to infuse the contemporary Ebeye imaginary with figures unknown to most local residents, the novelist Barclay, rather than the realist proto-historians, Ae'a and Jenkins, comes closest to the depiction of an everyday life that resonates with the lived contours of existence in the Marshall Islands at a certain point in time.

If far from universally romantic, each of the depictions of Marshall Islanders outlined above forces us to recognize the way in which all accounts must be interpreted as arising in specific contexts within particular cultural and historical frames. Although the authors of all of these accounts engage in practices of inscription that move their readers a good distance from lived reality, we should not think that anthropological accounts can entirely escape this dilemma. Indeed, as Bourdieu (1991) reminds us, overdetermination is inherent in all forms of representation. On the other hand, if anthropological

accounts, in their conceptual formulation, seem to risk being reduced to ventriloquy, even a perfunctory reading of the above accounts should remind us of the degree to which such an obliteration of the authorial voice remains little more than a final bow to the myth of the objective observer. Recognizable Marshall Islander's occasionally peer through the cracks of each of the above texts however much their contours are, all too frequently, stereotypic, obscure, and convoluted. Perhaps with greatest irony, in this selective set of historical materials, the contours of local lives are, without doubt, best captured in the novelistic mode and rendered most roughly in more realist genres. In all likelihood, this is because Barclay, the novelist, is least constrained by occupation in his approach to the Marshall Islands. Having lived for a longer period of time in the Marshall Islands, having developed a sincere interest in the culture as manifest in his work with Lapedpeden, Capelle, DeBrum, and the others, and having reflected seriously on the contradictions of life on Kwajalein, he is best able to capture the texture of everyday life in a place that is woven into his own existence. This, of course, should provide some comfort to each of us, as ethnographers, who share long-standing commitments to local communities and often have close interpersonal relationships with residents of those same locales. At the same time, these examples should alert each of us to the challenges of our representational responsibilities and the advantages of increasing our representational range.

NOTES

1. See David Lipset's contribution to this volume (XX) for further discussion of this important issue.

2. The Jenkins's piece is entitled "Wartime Canoe Building in the Marshall Islands" (*American Neptune* 6 (1): 71), and these are the precise words he uses to refer to the publication, though they are not capitalized. The Jenkins identification seems to be almost certainly confirmed by a brief note from A. H. (Hal) Colyer sent to "Dear Jenkins" and another note to "Dear Bill" along with a reference by the author of the second letter, Jesse, to "Willie the Jenk" within the body of that letter. These letters are also deposited in the "Jap factor's cash box" and included in the current manuscript.

3. This, too, is an educated guess, based on Jenkins own assessment that he has just witnessed the first US thermonuclear explosion. This tells something significant about the veil of secrecy surrounding the test since, as the Civil Affairs Officer on Eniwetok, the author was not certain this was the test of the first hydrogen device. However, if he is correct, and this was the Mike test, it dates this document to the "advent of my mid-century Christmas" (I am guessing in very late November or early December of 1952). Perhaps significantly, by greatly increasing the yield of a nuclear explosion, this thermonuclear test may have served as an apocalyptic reminder to Jenkins of his promise (to himself? to Enewetak people?) to actually write this account of the community. The manuscript is just that, a typescript,

probably never completed, and thus, never reaching the wider audience that did have an opportunity to read his piece on Marshall Islands canoes.

4. Enjebi, the chieftainship controlling the northern half of Enewetak Atoll, the southern half, or Enewetak half, being controlled by Johannes. Although in no sense “tribal” groups, these groups were different chiefly sections of the atoll, each headed by a chief from a different clan.

5. The presumption of these “first” experiences position Jenkins and the Americans in a more empowered position, closer to first contact, than would otherwise be the case. Of course, it also highlights the “primitive state of existence” of Eniwetok natives. Given the long history of contact between Enewetak and the outside world, a history dating back in all likelihood to 1529, Jenkins actually has no idea about these firsts. In Ebream’s case, he well may have had access to shoes during the Japanese civilian era prior to the war.

6. Each of these well-known Marshallese persona provides Barclay with the trail of credibility required to produce a novel like *Melal*. Lapedpeden is one of the recent knowledgeable old men in the Marshalls on whom the Alele Museum based their own attempts to transform an oral history of the Marshall Islands into an overdetermined inscribed history. Alfred Capelle, Takaji Abo, and Tony DeBrum, all authors of Byron Bender’s Marshallese-English dictionary (Bender is also on the “to be acknowledged” list) each have close links to the Oral History Project in the Marshalls, and each has his own history as an intermediary in the documented history of these atolls. Even August Erdland, German folklorist from the turn of the century makes Barclay’s list of assistants, although only posthumously.

7. Although the number of siblings varies in the telling of this story, Tumur is the oldest sibling and Jebero the youngest. None are now living but, rather, are commemorated as highly ranked primordial beings by their appearance in the night sky as Marshallese constellations (for one version of this story, see Carucci 1980, 1997).

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