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## BOOK REVIEW FORUM

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Cathy A. Small, *Voyages: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997. Pp. xi, 252, tables, figures, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US\$48.50 cloth; \$16.95 paper.

*Review:* ERNEST G. OLSON  
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THE TITLE of Cathy Small's book, *Voyages: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs*, calls to mind heroic images of Pacific Islander seafaring traditions and explorations that stretch back to the first arrival of Lapita peoples in Tonga, Samoa, and elsewhere in Oceania. For those familiar with Tongan culture, Small's reference to the general theme of the triumphant Polynesian voyage evokes well-known narratives of Queen Salote's celebrated trip to England in 1953 to witness the coronation of Elizabeth II and the current Tongan king's journeys around the globe, to name just a couple of examples. Of course, within the last few decades, the epic voyage of the Tongan elite is now a commonplace experience for Tongans of every social position, and this has created a flood of personal stories about migration to New Zealand, Australia, and the United States.

Small's book, on "international migration through the eyes and lives of Tongan migrants" (p. 4), chronicles recent substantial migrations of Tongans from every corner and social category and fits nicely into the record, oral and written, of previous voyages. Small's account is a valuable critical addition to the general anthropological literature on diaspora, migration, and cultural change. The book is among the recent wealth of good reading on Tongan culture (Morton 1996; Evans 2002). Her unique and primary contribution is found

in the personal narratives about the migration experience and its transformation of family, household, and community. Small's personal experience, over many years, as an ethnographer and friend of one family in particular, provides the narrative text for the reader's understanding of the personal gains and costs of migration from the Tongan village to places like Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The reader is quickly alerted to what the book is not: a "traditional" ethnography with standard chapters on subsistence, kinship, religion, and social life. There is minimal reference to core aspects of Tongan life such as feasting, church activities, sporting events, kava drinking, and work parties; similarly, there isn't much discussion of the speech making that occurs within the village meeting or *fono*, or of the lively banter around the kava-drinking circle, or of the hilarious joking that occurs in work groups. Nor is it a demographic, quantitative study of migration patterns, though there is a smattering of facts and figures on migration rates, population growth, and remittance percentages throughout the chapters. Likewise, beyond some mention of a couple of personal letters, the book does not include much consideration of historical material, government documents, newspaper accounts, or other similar sources that anthropologists are finding increasingly useful. Instead, the bulk of the book focuses on personal contexts of interaction that reveal the back-and-forth flow of Tongan people and Tongan culture from a local village, 'Olunga (a fictitious name), to California and elsewhere in the United States.

The book, for orderly convenience and in keeping with the theme of the migrant's voyage, is neatly divided into four sections. The first three sections include narratives about the personal connections between the Tongan village and family left behind and the United States, and the fourth section sums up the author's perspective on the future of Tongans, Tongan migration, and the anthropological journey. The first three sections are the heart of the book and allow the reader to gain a sympathetic understanding of the personal challenges of migration for this particular extended family. The first section, "Departures," sticks closest to the more traditional ethnographic format with some reference to brother-sister avoidance, subsistence patterns, and household activities. The second, "Arrivals," focuses on migrant and life-history stories as told by members of one extended family. The third section, "Returns," reveals a rather poignant, sometimes nostalgic return, for both the Tongan migrant and the anthropologist, to the Tongan village of 'Olunga and describes some of the changes that have occurred from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. In all three sections, we have a view of community life in Tonga and overseas, of the various communicative ties from the local to the global, and of the particular movements of one extended family back and forth across the ocean. Small provides a number of key cultural contexts—such as the airport, the bus

stop, the backyard, and the family kitchen—that reveal the complex web of ties and movements of Tongans.

One of these contexts that facilitates the flow of communication, the Tongan post office, is suggested by the cover of the book. Tonga, as is well known to stamp collectors, has long provided some of the world's most colorful postage stamps, and the cover merges a postal stamp image of a tropical "exotic" fish with cookie-cutter identical modern houses found in any U.S. suburb. The image implies that Tongans are putting their cultural "stamp" on American suburbia. Indeed, the story comes to mind of the Tongan immigrant in Los Angeles using free fish heads, tossed aside because of the food preferences of "mainstream" American culture, as a major source of subsistence (pp. 61–62); perhaps the idea is that Tongans are bringing cultural distinctiveness to American suburbs. More pessimistically, the message is perhaps that Tongans are trading a distinctive cultural heritage for American middle-class conformity. On a more literal level, the image suggests letters posted in Tonga being delivered to Tongans living quite different lives in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Anyone who has visited Tonga can probably remember a trip to the post office in the capital town of Nuku'alofa. Even the casual tourist can see that the post office is a lively context for Tongans to go about the business of connecting to family and relatives dispersed around the Western hemisphere. Letters to and from family in New Zealand, Australia, or the United States—containing money, photos, and news—can, indeed, become the nexus for conversations rich in personal understandings and feelings about the migration process as it affects local Tongan families and communities. In any case, Small gives some acknowledgment to the way in which letters sent from Tonga with requests and news of the home community are an ethnographer's portal to the flow of written conversations among Tongans.

For example, at the beginning of the book, in the "Departures" section, the inclusion of discourse about a letter containing a marriage proposal reveals the crucial importance of letters before telephones were rather common in Tonga (p. 60). Small, particularly in the first two sections of the book that refer back to the early 1980s, could easily have included more attention to household contexts for the writing and reading of letters and thus expose the various strategies and conflicts of migrating families. At the same time, a strength of the book is Small's focus on specific oral conversations that happen among family members within the context of the private home and within telephone conversations that connect family members across the thousands of miles of ocean. By the end of the time frame covered by the book, phone lines and computer connections have speeded up the communicative process and compete with the post office scene.

The book allows the reader to understand that just as communication has changed, so has transportation. Upon seeing the book's title the reader, if imagining a rather different cover, might have expected an image of a seafaring outrigger canoe or perhaps a more modern boat sailing in or out of the wharf at Nuku'alofa. Any such misconceptions about the means for migrant travel are dispelled when Small reveals the way in which the airport has replaced the sea harbor as a departure and arrival point and has become the central place for the beginning and ending of voyages.

At the conclusion of the "Departures" section, Small cleverly presents the fact that rarely does the Tongan, the anthropologist, or anyone else who has spent some time in Tonga quietly slip in or out of the country. Her description of a chance meeting of an old Tongan friend in the Suva, Fiji, airport is a wonderful moment that accurately depicts the nature of the momentous way in which Tongans bid welcome and farewell to family and friends. At more than one point in the book, Small has captured a sense of the personal drama that unfolds at the airport every time an airplane arrives or departs. Huge suitcases bulging with everything from clothes to food are icons for the flow of people and resources; the Tongan International Airport is the modern gateway for travel to distant parts of the globe.

At a more local level within Tonga, much of the daily movement of people and resources occurs on buses, and here Small is particularly insightful. The joy of the anthropologist sharing a return airline flight with an old Tongan friend, just mentioned above, finds its parallel in the daily intervillage bus travel that considers personal connection and village cohesion to be a primary goal, despite much change. Small's insight that "'Olunga people waited for the 'Olunga bus" (p. 37), despite the fact that other buses were going in the same direction at an earlier time, is a testament to her anthropological savvy as a member of a village and to the strength of the local community. Later in the book Small strategically inserts a third travel experience that reveals the way in which the vitality of such personal ties in the local Tongan village starkly contrasts with the loss of community experienced by many Tongans, especially of the younger generation, who are living overseas. An encounter by Small on a bus in Hawai'i with an American Tongan with little knowledge of Tongan language, culture, and community succinctly illustrates the ultimate fate of some migrant families (p. 178). This is good fieldwork and good anthropology.

One of the great strengths of *Voyages* is its revelations about Tongan family life, in Tonga and overseas. A major point is that home is a central place for the Tongan extended family. Small very carefully provides the full text of key conversations that take place within the family, often between adult women; these discussions that occur in the household context reveal much about Tongan experiences and perspectives. The reader is quickly impressed by the

women of this family and easily drawn into the personal story of their migration. A sense emerges of the color, the vitality, and the flow of the household and of the home, filled with people, material possessions, and, most important, talk. Certainly Small is at her best when she is writing about women and their spheres of activity and influence. Small's fieldwork focus on women's labor, subsistence, and redistribution, among other things, is put to good use as a reserve of ethnographic detail that supports the central theme of the migrant's journey. We learn a great deal about Tongan women as mothers, daughters, and spouses; we learn much about what is happening and being said in the kitchen and sitting room.

However, at the same time, we learn comparatively less about Tongan men in their roles as fathers, sons, and spouses; we know little about talk among men doing horticultural work in the bush. Furthermore, we know little about what either women or men are doing and saying in the context of the political meeting, the church event, or the flow of public talk along the village street. To reiterate a point made earlier, I would like to have seen much more consideration of community life throughout. Certainly the section with the subheading "A Day in the Lives" provides a brief glimpse into daily life (pp. 21–27). Yet there is little description of commonplace activities like the social drinking of kava by the men, the weekly choir practices, political *fono* meetings, afternoon sporting events, school activities, men working in the bush, and so on.

There is some discussion of the changing traditions of the funeral (pp. 175–178), the importance of the feast (pp. 141–143, 148–150), the effects of cash cropping (pp. 145–146), and the power of the churches (p. 148). However, for example, it would have been useful to hear more about the way in which the churches, as the community's most powerful institutions, are the conduits for much of the migration. It would have been helpful to hear more about the role of the kava party in providing a social center, both in overseas communities and Tongan villages. Of course, there is merit to adhering to the main themes of the book but inclusion of discourse from choir practices, *fono* meetings, and sporting events would have added a rich dimension to the migration story.

Additionally, if we knew more about Tongan forms of Christianity, we could better understand Tongan negative attitudes towards Small's religious heritage. The scene of Small, the confessing anthropologist, disclosing her Jewish heritage (pp. 70, 108), is certainly a valuable insight into the way in which Christian values have permeated Tongan culture and can even come in the way of the personal bonds between an anthropologist and her host family. It is a sad thought that some of the prejudice Small has faced in her own culture has transplanted itself into this particular Polynesian culture, which experi-

enced mass conversion to Christianity in the early part of the nineteenth century. However, it seems that we know more about Small's religious identity, and her personal journey toward ethnographic openness about this, than about current Tongan religious values and beliefs.

If we knew more about Tongan courtship, sexual behavior, and contexts for social interaction between unmarried men and women (such as the kava party), the reader could better assess, for example, the scene where Small triumphantly puts the drunken young man who has made rude sexual overtures in his place. The reader is given a view of the ethnographer's personal, "insider" perspective as she states, "He disappears over the fence. I feel a great sense of accomplishment" (p. 118). We are left to infer that her sense of accomplishment comes from learning the "insider" rules of proper decorum and necessary respect, as demanded by the kinship among village women, well enough to send the young man on his way.

Small has clearly mastered how to handle young men who must, even in a drunken state, treat her as a respect-worthy woman keeping company with the mature women of the community. At the same time we know comparatively little about the journey of such young men left to disappear over the fence and off the ethnographic page. The sobering note on the fate of Vili, the young man of the family who hung himself, and other young men who "know that their future prospects were bleak" is just one small piece of evidence of the often tragic experiences of young Tongan males in the local village or overseas (p. 113). To be fair, there is certainly something to be said for ethnographic brevity, and Small is very effective in her skillful presentation of key moments in the ethnographer's encounter in a way that allows room for individual interpretation.

The relevance of the book for both the serious student of the Pacific and the novice traveler is found in the way that *Voyages* brings home the point that there are serious costs to both voyagers and their cultures. For example, Small's discussion of an American vacationer's sexual activity in 'Olunga is a particularly apt illustration of such costs. The unreflective tourist's casual attitude, ending in disaster, is starkly contrasted with the care taken by Small, and her protective host family (p. 105), to avoid such pitfalls. The ease with which Small, the seasoned, knowledgeable anthropologist, slips back into Tongan culture in the Fijian airport, even before stepping back on Tongan soil, and her savvy strategy for sending the drunken young man over the fence is in sharp contrast to the culturally insensitive tourist who has no concern for the integrity of the local culture.

Small has skillfully crafted a gripping narrative about individual Tongan voyages, while being rather generous in describing her own anthropological journey. The strength of *Voyages* is not in any systematic analysis of the many

political and economic forces influencing the flow of Tongans back and forth from Tonga to New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Rather, the book's value is found in the way it provides pivotal moments that speak volumes about the human side to the ties connecting Tonga with the rest of the world. It is Small's inclusion of the intimate, sometimes momentous details about the Tongans themselves that makes the book a good read for the seasoned ethnographer of the Pacific as well as for the beginning student in an introductory anthropology class. The journey is also much about the experience of the anthropologist, and Small, upon her return to 'Olunga, confesses, "However much I tried, I could not help but cringe at the sight of the house as it mingled with my memories of it" (p. 129). The statement is a reminder to all ethnographers and migrants that one can rarely return to the same "place" on the return voyage, and that despite Small's statement in the second paragraph of her book that Tongan migrants and American anthropologists such as herself are "all on the same voyage," the differences are as real as the similarities. The reader can indeed be thankful that the book is less about the concerns of the anthropologist and more about the Tongan voyage.

## REFERENCES

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*Review:* HEATHER YOUNG LESLIE  
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*Voyages* is the most enduring and readable ethnographic account of contemporary Tongans' lives available to date. It is a must read for anyone studying Tonga and will be of interest to anyone working in the contemporary Pacific or on the subject of transnationalism. In *Voyages*, Cathy Small focuses on what is probably the most significant catalyst for change in contemporary Tonga over the past thirty years, the issue of migration. Small examines the experience of migrants through a comparative lens, capturing the experiences of Tongans who left with those who stayed. She focuses on a single village and, mostly, a particular kin group, thereby retaining the fine-grained detail expected of good ethnography.

The interesting thing about *Voyages* is that the long, recursive view means the analysis includes migrants to the United States and then follows a younger generation on their visits back to the “home” village. She is thus well placed to document the transnational aspect of contemporary Tongans’ experience and to compare the ways in which migration has affected everyday life. The book is structured into four sections; within this framework she is able to describe the various rationales for migration and the effects of migration on social mobility, kinship relations, gender roles, traditional practices, and notions of identity both in Tonga and for Tongans in America.

Small documents how migration began, motivated at the village level by desires to “help” the family as part of a broader movement towards monetization of the economy. Such help came in the form of better education and wage opportunities, and returns of remittances and other goods gained from overseas labor. She makes the good point that migration was (and is) a way to fulfill Tongan ideals for self-elevation—to become “big” or “high”—and has contributed to even more monetization and efflorescence of prestige markers (ceremonial and material) both overseas and in Tonga. Small also shows that like many other migrants in America, however, there is a tendency for Tongans to experience relative downward social status, discrimination, baffling bureaucracy, and limited labor opportunities. Migrants must return to Tonga to become elevated in social status. Of Tongans in America, she notes, most send remittances to family back home, but a high percentage live close to the poverty line, at least in the initial wave of migrants. These factors change the longer families live in the United States, as do family relationships and the sense of responsibility to relatives in Tonga, traditional practices, and notions of identity. Small is clearly not convinced that migration has necessarily been good for Tonga, despite new forms of material prosperity, higher education, and international experience. Tongans have changed a lot in the last thirty years but even still, she concludes, Tongans are still Tongans. The key factor that initiated the flow of migrants—love for the family—remains central to Tongan culture.

I like this book very much, for three reasons: First, the representation of contemporary Tongans’ lives matches what I have been seeing since first coming to Tonga in 1991. Indeed, as I write this review, sitting in a house in the Nuku’alofa suburb of Ma’ufanga, I am surrounded by potential characters in Small’s book: my neighbor worked in New Zealand and American Samoa to finance his house and his children’s education. His wife’s mother lives in a house built by two daughters currently living in Australia. My house is available because the couple’s son and his family are away, studying in Fiji. When I take a taxi or bus, the driver has invariably worked or studied for some time overseas. These are indeed voyaging people, as Small has so neatly categorized them.

I also like the book because the voices of Tongans are strong. Small is careful to let them speak for themselves, providing, for example, their own migration narratives and comparisons of life in Tonga with life in America. It's a technique that works well. I'm also impressed by Small's own reflexivity. Her voice is included in the text—justifiably so, since she is part of the relationships about which she is writing. She writes clearly and simply, and is just as clear about her reader's active involvement with the text as she is her own positioning. Thus the tangle of counterdependencies that characterize what I think of as good anthropology—long-term engagement with the people and place, reflexivity, reciprocity, cautious and accurate representation and clarity of voice, recognition of the tangible nature of whatever we say as anthropologists, and recognition that we need to make contributions to our own societies—are all evident in this book.

For these reasons I find *Voyages* very useful for teaching. It allows students to really see what anthropology is about, what constitutes good, ethical ethnographic representation, what it is anthropologists do, how we get our data, and how we frame the questions that eventually evolve into anthropological literature.

As with any book, there are some problems. *Voyages* has some rather embarrassing typos—as examples, the first Tu'i Tonga was Aho'eitu, not "Ahoiteihu" (p. 13); and the root sent by the village water board was undoubtedly kava, not "kafa" (p. 71). I also found the text to be underreferenced, particularly with regard to general anthropological theory, a drawback in its applications for teaching.

Another drawback to *Voyages*' classroom applicability relates to Small's choice of audience. She justifies her focus and case study on migrants on the basis of the "global phenomenon" of migration, which is pervading the "industrial world" (p. 8). Her case study focuses on Tonga and the United States. Although I have no problem with her use of the United States as a field site, I would have preferred she apply her skillful use of voice and reflexivity to avoid erasing the wider variety of locales to which Tongans migrate and the larger audience to whom the subject would appeal. The book is written entirely for an American audience, although Small does not actually say so until the second-to-last page of the final chapter. This kind of myopia should not exist in anthropology, especially in ethnography of such a clearly transnational society as Tonga. The "American with a college education" (p. 215) that Small addresses as the book's reader could just as easily be Canadian, Australian, Norwegian, or Japanese, just as interested in the global phenomenon of migration, perhaps especially, of Tongans.

These are minor irritations. Of a more serious nature is the fact that some of Small's information is already outdated. For example, she states that Poly-

nesians settled the Tonga islands around 1500 B.C. This is not substantiated by recent archaeological work, which dates the oldest Lapita site in Tonga to 900 B.C.E. or approximately 785 B.C., give or take 50 years (Burley and Dickenson 2001). Also, she uses quite outdated data when referring to island residents who tend migrated relatives' property (p. 65). In support of this point she references data from 1984 that indicated that 10 percent of Tongan landholders live overseas (p. 225). This is a gross underestimation that was clearly out of date when the book was published in 1997. Since the hurricane of 1982, for instance, the level of out-migration from Ha'apai has made it increasingly difficult for remaining villagers to *fua kavenga* or "carry the burden" of social life. The situation varies according to island and proximity to the capital of Nuku'alofa, but I know of villages with closer to 60 percent of town sites lying abandoned. A decade ago, relatives were able to keep the weeds at bay on such sites. Today, alternative arrangements are being made, either because there are not enough relatives left or they may be too old to care for the property. The situation is severe enough in some areas that women are taking up men's work—hoeing—under the auspices of women's development or church groups with the (domestic) goal of making the town look "clean." Some town officers are dealing with the problem by seeking aid money for mowers because there simply are not enough people to keep all the town land clear of bush and weeds.

In the same section, Small notes that relatives also care for children sent home from America. I doubt she could have predicted the current problem developing—at least in and around Nuku'alofa—with "unclaimed" children: juveniles with one or both parents working overseas are making their own places with neighbors or distant relatives, sometimes on fairly contingent bases. A recent scandal being discussed in newspapers and in public areas as I write may relate to a similar scenario. A hotel in the center of town has been exposed as a brothel, out of which girls as young as twelve are working. That their families are unwilling or perhaps unavailable to care for daughters, who in traditional practice are meant to be highly protected, is shocking to people living in Tonga. Locals see it as no surprise that the hotel is run by a Tongan entrepreneur recently returned from America. There are also "problem" children who have been sent back to learn "Tongan ways," including older teens who have been deported, under the assumption that aging grandparents and village relatives can handle them. Many households today are overstressed for resources and clearly not coping well with the situation, however.

I do not want these criticisms to hide the fact that *Voyages* makes an important contribution to literature about contemporary Pacific life, as well as to perspectives on migration within the United States. The book has such strengths and is so topical that I would like to see a revised edition, one that incorporates a more transnational focus and updates the data from within

Tonga. There are fascinating things happening in Tonga, and Small is well placed to contribute even further. I look forward to her next publication.

## REFERENCES

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2001 Origin and Significance of a Founding Settlement in Polynesia. *PNAS* 98 (20): 11829–11831.

*Review:* STEVE FRANCIS  
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This study of the “voyages” undertaken by Tongan villagers to America is a first in a number of ways. It is the first monograph to focus on the phenomenon of Tongan migration. It is the first monograph to examine the place of the fieldworker within the context of Tongan ethnography. It is also the first to examine the migration experiences of one Tongan family over an extended period of time. While there have been a range of theses (Lafitani 1992), journal articles (Gailey 1992; James 1991; Marcus 1993), collected papers (Fonua 1975), and conference papers written on and about Tongan population movement, *Voyages: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs* is an important and substantial contribution to the field.

Incorporating twelve chapters and one appendix, Small divides her study into four sections. “Departures” details the Tongan village setting from which her informants begin their journeys to America. Based on the author’s initial doctoral fieldwork, this section reads like a classic village ethnography. “Arrivals” moves the focus to a single family and their experiences of permanent migration to America. The author uses structured and semistructured interviews with family members to provide an intimate and insightful depiction of life prior to the overseas move, throughout the migration process, and during the settlement period in the United States. One chapter, “An Anthropologist Over Time,” incorporates the author’s reflections on the changing nature of her relationship with the “informants” central to her work. Small details her own journey from fieldworker to friend, as she continues to participate in the lives of her Tongan informants/friends following their migration to America. Based on observations recorded during a field visit to Tonga in 1994–1995, “Returns” examines the transformations that have taken place in the fieldwork village since the early 1980s. Small details and contrasts a range of perceived social and economic changes, including relationships of remittance dependency, resulting from the migration of Tongan villagers to Pacific

Rim countries. A chapter within this section incorporates interviews with one family member who remained in Tonga. This allows Small to highlight the differences between the lives of those informants who remained in Tonga and those who moved to the West. Finally, in "Travels Ahead," the author draws the various strands of her discussion together in an analysis of the meanings of migration, tradition, and identity for Tongans living in a postmodern, transnational world.

As indicated by the title, Small's work is primarily concerned with the permanent international migration of Tongan villagers to America. For Small, this migration represents a population movement from a dependent labor-giving nation (Tonga) to an independent labor-receiving nation (America). In keeping with other literature focusing on international migration movements, the author addresses key themes such as the settlement experience, the role of remittances, and shifting notions of identity and tradition.

Although the author's theoretical framework is not stated, her work borrows elements from both dependency theory and world-systems theory. Echoing observations made by Hayes in relation to the work of geographer John Connell (1987, 1990), Small's treatment of international Tongan migration is predicated upon an assumption about "the penetration of a Polynesian microstate's domestic economy and society by the global economy" (Hayes 1992:293). As Small notes,

Our glimpse at a village in Tonga showed that the effects of the global migration system are far-reaching, leaving no untouched, "pristine" corner where everything stays the same. Migration out of Tonga has transformed the internal life of the village, and, in the Tongan case, we can see the complexities of this transformation. If the Tongan case is characteristic, then the pattern of migration and remittances is making the non-industrial world more prosperous and yet more dependent at the same time. (Pp. 194–195)

An important component of Small's analysis is a focus on the relations of remittance dependency generated between migrants sending surplus goods and cash back home and those who receive them in Tonga. For the author, remittances "represent the flow of wealth to labor-giving countries from labor-receiving countries" (p. 196). Remittances are regarded here as one of the principal catalysts for the transformations that have occurred at the local village level in Tonga. For Small remittances, created through the process of international migration, have therefore introduced changes that have altered relational power structures between those kin who have migrated and those who have remained.

The primary unit that facilitates the “flow of wealth” represented by remittances is the “transnational family.” The author suggests that transnational Tongan families, whose members send goods and capital back to Tonga, are agents of Western dependency, providing impetus for the social and economic changes that have occurred within the Tongan village setting. First utilized in the Tongan context by Marcus, the transnational family is therefore the conduit for a new form of “remittance economy” (1993:193). As the agents for wealth transfers back to Tonga, the transnational family is seen to drive the new remittance economy. As a result, “Tonga, like the United States, has been transformed. It has become a transnational place . . . and that is why even in returning to a small Tongan island village, one encounters individuals and families, lifestyles and customs, that now belong to a much wider world system” (p. 125).

Small’s theoretical framework posits a world system, which, with its demand for labor, transforms “traditional” places such as Tonga. This worldview recalls Ingold’s discussion of globes and spheres: “The image of the world as a globe is, I contend, a colonial one. It presents us with the idea of a preformed surface waiting to be occupied, to be colonised first by living things and later by human [i.e., Western] civilisation” (1993:38). Small’s utilization of assumptions associated with dependency theory has led her to a view in which the migration process is perceived from a global perspective. As a result, although her account details the lives of Tongan informants/friends, her analysis is predicated on theories that leave little room for Tongan agency. Within this system, while Tongans make individual migration decisions, the outside world—the Western capitalist world—is regarded as the primary driver of population movement.

In her theoretical focus on the global Small has neglected some elements of the local. As Hayes notes, “Polynesian population movement defies simple classification as either internal or international, and in fact reflects features of both” (1992:283). While the role of the world system is not denied, there are important aspects of the migration process in Tonga that are not accounted for in Small’s analysis. For example, there have been ongoing population movements within Tonga and with other Pacific islands that have occurred for millennia. These movements, often motivated by factors such as war, marriage, and trade, have had significant impacts on Tongan identity and tradition (see Kaepler 1978). Myth and oral history provide useful pointers and guides to these impacts. Although Small’s stated aim is a focus on international migration, discussion of these other forms of population movement may have enriched her analysis.

In many ways this is an ambitious monograph, with the author attempting to manage a number of contrasting themes and approaches. Her narrative style varies accordingly throughout the book and includes first-person,

journal-style accounts, multiauthored reflections, statistical analysis, and even theoretical meditations on fieldwork and the future of anthropology. As the author notes,

this book about migration is about Tongan islanders and Tongan-Americans; it is a little about me, a little about America, and a little about anthropology. These disparate subjects belong together in the same book because they are all part of the same phenomenon, the metamorphosis of social relationships in our world: relationships between migrants and nonmigrants, between Tongans and Americans, and between anthropologists and informants. (P. 11)

In aiming to address these “disparate” elements, the author acknowledges the size of the task undertaken. While successful in the stated goal of introducing an element of experimentation into the work (p. 11), the resulting organization of material within chapters is relatively disjointed in areas. This becomes confusing in some sections as contrasting styles and subjects, incorporating differing time periods, geographical settings, and author’s voices, are placed in sometimes incongruous order. As a result, the reader loses a sense of momentum and direction within the book on occasions. Though partly the consequence of the diverse subject matter, this problem may have been ameliorated by a more conservative approach to structure.

This criticism does not diminish my regard for many of the methods employed, however. For example, the device of addressing the issue of the international population movement of Tongans to America through the experiences of one family is extremely useful. It allows Small to successfully explore and illustrate the diversity of the migration experience for Tongans. As I found during my own fieldwork in Tonga, population movement is a complex process, a fluid, ever-changing series of events that affects family members in different ways. Variables such as age, marital situation, social rank, and status within the family are particularly relevant. Small’s study enables her to capture this complexity in an immediate and personal way.

In line with the objective in postmodern anthropology of giving voice to the ethnographic subjects of anthropological study, Small utilizes the technique of providing space within the text for the words and thoughts of her informants-friends-family. Large sections of the text therefore include reprinted interviews between the author and members of the featured family. In one case, an interview conducted during an earlier period of fieldwork is later dissected by the informant and “corrected” within the text. This provides an excellent means through which the author may comment on and tease out the decision-making processes associated with the informant’s corrections, a procedure no doubt influenced by the migration and settlement experiences

of the subject. This also allows Small to discuss themes of identity and tradition in new ways.

Another theme pursued within the book centers on a prolonged meditation on the roles of fieldworker and informant in the process of undertaking anthropological research. A theme that owes a debt to the work of Clifford (1988) and Clifford and Marcus (1986), the author intersperses examination of the topic throughout the book in the form of an intimate, first-person style. The subtext of this discussion is the author's attempt to reconcile the aims of anthropology as a research science and the fieldwork method, which often results in the lines between professional and personal relationships being blurred. While these are important questions, the intimate nature of these discussions sometimes sits uneasily next to the more traditional ethnographic material.

In conclusion *Voyages*, written in accessible and intriguing style, is an impressive attempt to trace the complexities of permanent Tongan population movement through the travels of a family and an anthropologist over time. The author of this ambitious book has provided great service to both scholars of the Pacific and of migration in general.

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*Voyages* has been in print for six years. This forum seems a wonderful opportunity to speak beyond the book itself, to themes that promise to be of interest to the field more generally. I will take this opportunity to point out and speak to the themes raised by the critiques, and to open a larger dialogue. Once in a while, where I can't help myself, I may defend my book or decisions against criticism but for the most part I hope to avoid so defensive a posture. It is actually quite a gift to be able to talk with other scholars about my work, and I appreciate the time and thought that went into the reviewers' work. I will speak to three main themes in my response: (1) intimacy in ethnography and ethnographic writing, (2) reflexivity, and (3) the place of theory in ethnography. Along the way, I hope to address many of the reviewers' comments.

### **On Intimacy**

Let's begin with issues related to "intimacy" in ethnography, by which I mean the textual representations of highly personal conversations and encounters, often involving people the reader has come to know, that serve as examples

of more-abstract themes. All the reviewers note this characteristic of *Voyages*; probably the reason this book was chosen for this forum has to do with the style and narratives that make it accessible for readers and emotionally engaging (and thus widely used in classes). I have greater intent, though, in my use of intimacy than a good read.

I consciously made the decision to center the book around pivotal personal encounters and, as Ernie Olson points out, key cultural contexts—the airport, the backyard, the bus stop, the kitchen, the post office—where poignant and repeated cultural interactions occur. It was important to reinforce intimacy by rendering the narratives in forms that were close to my lived experience of them. In other words, if I overheard dialogue, then I wrote in an “observer anthropologist” voice, preserving what dialogue I could remember in my text, while if a Tongan woman related her autobiographical migration experiences, I tried to keep those narratives in her exact words.

There are certain sacrifices in the approach. Steve Francis found the book disjointed in places and sometimes confusing, because I used contrasting styles and voices consistent with the context but not with one another. Some critics, often outside anthropology, believe that, because the experiences related are so personal, you are truly and only describing the experiences of one person or one family. Technically, they’re right—but they fail to understand that these personal narratives and key encounters have been selected by the author based on several years of fieldwork experience. They are not “weak” samples with low *n*’s; they are instances of repeated cultural encounters, and why Heather Young Leslie can say that she feels, sitting in Nuku‘alofa, that she is “surrounded by potential characters” in my book. It is why Francis sees in *Voyages* his own diverse and complex data about migration, and why so many Tongans, who write to me, recognize themselves and their families in my book—despite that it is not their family members described.

Focusing on intimacy also allows one to investigate the dynamics of experience, dynamics that instantiate larger cultural and global processes. I do a great deal of computer modeling, and even teach a graduate course in how to model social phenomena on a computer and play out their dynamics over time. One of the things I realize about this seemingly mathematical and positivist endeavor is that models often hinge on fine-grained and intimate details about human beings.

Let me offer an example. I once modeled Roy Rappaport’s *Pigs for the Ancestors* (New Haven, 1984), an ethnography about the dynamic connections among pigs, yams, humans, warfare, and ceremonies that reflects on the theoretical relationship of ecology and ritual. A basic cycle Rappaport describes is that the pig population, while needed for food and social reciprocity, eventually grows out of control, overrunning yam gardens. When this happens, a cer-

emonial feast occurs where all adult pigs are slaughtered and allies are fed, returning the ecology to equilibrium until the pig population again grows out of control, reanimating the process.

I tried to see if I could model the ethnography and reproduce the same eight- to twenty-year cycle of feasting and ceremonies observed in the culture, based on information about the numbers of yams, pigs, and people and the dynamics that went on among them. I found I could do this, but only with very detailed and accurate information about the threshold anger levels of women. It turns out that pigs overran yam gardens planted by *women*, and this resulted in the women's having to do more and more planting for family consumption. As the pig population grew the women got more and more upset, eventually pressuring their husbands into calling for the start of the ceremonial pig feast. The whole model hinged on knowing when women got upset—how much more work they had to do before they said “enough is enough.” This is where the backyard or the kitchen stories of women really matter to the big theories (in this case, models) we wish to formulate.

The same lesson applies to most social phenomena we investigate. Consider remittances, a concern in *Voyages* and an issue for many scholars of the contemporary Pacific. Will remittances continue and is the MIRAB economy sustainable? Economists count remittance dollars and survey remitters or recipients about the size and frequency of their gifts. We learn from such studies that Tongans do not send fewer remittances the longer they are overseas, as one might suspect. But why not? And on what conditions do continuing remittances depend?

To me, the answers to these questions, and indeed the future of MIRAB economies, seem located in the content of Tongans' personal experiences, private choices, and interpersonal relationships. Some of the best economic science, then, can be accomplished by listening carefully to the conversations and considerations that people have about visiting home, sending money to relatives, selling or giving tapa cloth to overseas relatives, and so forth. The hostile joke, the rationalization, the characteristic family dispute, the new change in wealth items at the wedding—all are clues about the unfolding of the future. It is hard for observers without intimate contacts to see these harbingers, and that is why anthropologists doing long-term fieldwork are in a special position—if, that is, we properly appreciate our privileged access to the intimate moments of life. Intimacy, I believe, is good science.

### **Reflexivity**

It was not natural for me, being a fairly private person, to introduce an entire chapter (6, “An Anthropologist Over Time”) about my own experience or to pepper the text with clearly marked self-reflections. My reflexive inclusions pre-

sented difficulty for two reviewers, examples perhaps of the uneasiness in our field with many so-called postmodern conventions. About my reflexive material and style, Francis writes: "While these are important questions, the intimate nature of these discussions sometimes sits uneasily next to the more traditional ethnographic material." He recommends a "more conservative approach to structure" in response to the contrasting styles, topics, and voices in the book.

Olson comments about my self-reflection: "The reader can indeed be thankful that the book is less about the concerns of the anthropologist and more about the Tongan voyage." I read these comments with an unstated subtext (that I will overstate slightly for dramatic emphasis): Outright support for reflexivity implicates one as card-carrying postmodernist and/or reflexive writing is a personal indulgence, a sort of narcissistic exercise through which some authors drag their colleagues.

Is it possible to consider reflexivity as something other than a personal indulgence or a theoretical badge?

I live in a global system where anthropologists occupy particular nodes, typically in the middle class of industrial nations. I am an individual but also a role and a symbol, of sorts, and my interactions are an example of the types of interactions that symbols like me have. Certainly there are individual differences, among anthropologists and among informants, but, as cultural anthropologists know well, many of our personal interactions become stylized and familiar precisely because they are endemic to the social structures in which we are immersed.

It matters what happens between Tongans and myself, precisely because those interactions are part of the social and economic complexities that I am trying to figure out. It matters, because as Young Leslie notes, "her voice is included in the text, justifiably so, because she is part of the relationships about which she is writing." (Note, too, the gendered nature of the reviewer response to reflexivity.) As such, my reactions and relationships become a new set of data that I can learn from and analyze. This to me is a major purpose of reflexive thinking.

With this reflexivity, I can better see the limitations of my own work. When Olson complains that the reader learns comparatively little about Tongan men (compared to women), I consider my own persona and positioning in the village. I realize his assessment is accurate because I simply did not have the same access to men's activities and men's thoughts that I did with women's. As a woman (and a single woman when I first went to Tonga), my interactions with village men were necessarily constrained and circumscribed by propriety. Fraternalizing with men in the bush was not an option and, even though I attended many kava circles, I did so as the woman who made the kava. As such I heard much more sexual banter than talk of migration. I take to heart, though, Olson's call for more on community life, an arena I might have done more with.

Reflexivity is useful, not only in understanding the ground from which we see others, but also in exploring the nature of our own practice: fieldwork. I was surprised that, except for a brief mention by Francis, there was no comment offered about any of the material in chapters 11 and 12, where I attempted to use my fieldwork experience, in a reflexive way again, to comment on issues in contemporary anthropology, such as cultural relativism.

In this light, it was very interesting to me how Olson dealt with my treatment of my own Jewishness among Tongans: “it seems,” he writes, “that we know more about Small’s religious identity, and her personal journey toward ethnographic openness about this, than about current Tongan religious values and beliefs.” Olson would have preferred that I speak more about Tongan Christianity, its history and place in village life, rather than shifting my gaze away from the “subject” of study (Tongan culture).

The question really is: What is the subject? For me, the issue of being Jewish in Tonga, and then of attempting to deal with Tongan prejudices in the United States, had little to do with religion *per se*. It was about cultural relativism and the way that my direct experiences with being Jewish in my fieldwork had caused me, like others recently, to question this hallowed anthropological precept. I realized it was no accident that the issue of cultural relativism would begin shifting within the field of anthropology at the very same historical point as transnational processes, like migration, are in full force. The two, I realized, were connected, and I used myself and my experience as an “informant” to explore the connection.

My discovery was, as I wrote, that “we are all on the same journey.” I did not mean that we all experience the same events because we inhabit very different places in the global system. Rather, the shifting sands beneath us, that for a Tongan resulted in leaving Tonga and for an anthropologist resulted in confusion about cultural relativism, are all part of the same global dynamics. Reflexive attention to our fieldwork is one way that we can explore the globalization process and its effect on the profession of anthropology.

### **Theory**

It is very fair to say of my book, as Young Leslie did, that it is underreferenced in regard to general anthropological theory. Part of the reason for this is my own discomfort with anthropological theory. The theoretical material that guided my initial fieldwork proposals and grants ultimately had little to do with what I wrote about; my experiences in Tonga, in fact, confirmed the irrelevance of many of the questions I was asking. The data and insights that I did glean and eventually wrote about do not unequivocally support or refute a theoretical position.

It is not yet clear to me that I should spend my time in print showing how my work articulates, and how it does not, with the grand theory of the day. In *Voyages*, I think I illuminated some important dynamics about the transnational process, trying to state and illustrate them both clearly and richly. What do my data mean for world-systems theory, or economic convergence theory, or questions of individual agency versus structure? Frankly, I'm not sure yet, and I'm reluctant to jump to theory at this point. Young Leslie's invitation to look at some of the recent dynamics—unclaimed children in Nuku'alofa and largely abandoned villages in Ha'apai—intrigues me at the same time as it reminds me to withhold any theoretical conclusions. Things keep moving.

I am, in truth, tired of reading the products of our field's various theoretical bandwagons, where I typically find a proliferation of jargon and a monumental conformity of themes. It is too easy to be drawn into the fray. I think this is why the only criticism that irked me was Francis's long and pointed discussion of my supposed commitments to dependency and world-systems theories (he fairly adds that I never actually stated my commitment to these theories). Repeating arguments in the literature that critique world-systems approaches, Francis goes on to suggest that, like other world systems–based analyses, “her analysis is predicated on theories that leave little room for Tongan agency” and that, predictably, I ignore many aspects of the local because of my theoretical focus on the global. Given my lack of theoretical referencing, the highly local approach I took to transnationalism, and my consistent focus on representing the personal forces behind migration, these claims seem far afield. I can only think that this is another example of how theoretical camps can draw us into canned debates.

I was talking recently with a talented Tongan-American graduate student, 'Anapesi Ka'ili, about *Voyages* and we talked at some length about the lack of direct theoretical focus in the book, a critique raised in an Asian–Pacific Islander conference she attended. She shared with me how she responded to attendees. *Voyages* is the only scholarly work, she told me, that she's ever seen a nonscholar, who is Tongan, read. “When I go home to Utah, and the women are all in the kitchen cooking for some family event, we talk about that book. We see ourselves in it.” I may well change my tune about theoretical engagement, because I do wrestle with my reluctance, but in the meantime, her comments help.

### Some Additional Notes

Sometimes, a reviewer will make you consider your own work in a different light. This was the case twice as I read the reviews of *Voyages*, and these are worth mentioning. Olson's almost literary analysis pointed out to me the

intersection of the many vignettes in *Voyages* concerning travel and communication. Although I consciously employed the theme of voyaging in the title, chapter titles, and book cover, I did not wittingly weave a web of related incidents.

I had not seen how, for instance, the two bus stories I related (one in Tonga, one in the United States) stood in juxtaposition to one another, showing difference in island versus migrant communities, or how many scenes I included that involved bus stops, airports, telephones, letters, and other travel and long-distance communication venues. It gave me a view of a network of related images and events that I had not (consciously) inserted.

As I was writing *Voyages*, the U.S. ideology surrounding immigration—as refuge for the oppressed, as a beacon of equality, etc.—loomed large. It seemed a peculiarly American ideology and I believed the experiences of Tongans spoke directly to many of its faulty precepts. So I directed the book to Americans (including Tongan-Americans).

Young Leslie's critique alerted me to how that came across to non-American readers, and I marked my own parochialism with her words: "This kind of myopia should not exist in anthropology, . . . the book's reader could just as easily be Canadian, Australian, Norwegian, or Japanese, just as interested in the global phenomenon of migration, perhaps especially, of Tongans." Young Leslie is right, especially when the very topic I am discussing is transnationalism, and so my apologies to any alienated readers.

Many thanks to Steve Francis, Ernest Olson, and Heather Young Leslie for their considered comments.