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Learning to Be a Writer in Papua New Guinea[1]

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Abstract

For students and instructors at English-speaking, post-war, colonial universities, the literature curriculum had special significance: graduates of these institutions were expected not only to fill key positions in a new nation, but to write that nation into existence. Theirs would be the first histories, biographies, and literary texts of a new nation. This essay examines the role of those universities in the development of print culture by focussing on the teaching of literature and the training of writers in the colonies of Papua and New Guinea (PNG), where the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) served as a hothouse for late colonial cultural production. Established in 1965, UPNG was literally at the end of the decolonizing trail. Some of its academics had previously worked in Africa and other colonies, and had thus arrived at UPNG with ideas about the role that university-trained writers could play in nation-building. In an effort to re-build cultural self-confidence in their students, they purposely restricted the curriculum to works chosen largely from the traditions of European alienation, as well as African folklore and anti-colonialism. Student-generated creative writing was added to the curriculum immediately and then published or performed abroad through the efforts of their professors. Contextual analysis of the interplay between such pedagogical practices and the actions of UPNG's first writers constitutes an essential step in understanding the early literary history of Papua New Guinea.

Introduction

Among their other social functions, Western-style universities serve as nurseries for the literary arts. Individual courses, programs, and entire departments are devoted to teaching literary theory, history, and criticism. Universities not only study what is already written, they nurture young writers and critics, publish journals and books, host literary conferences, and house libraries and archives. Their curricula supply a market for literary works and help to define the canon of a national literature. In fact, universities serve all the roles that Siegfried Schmidt outlines for literary systems: production, distribution, consumption, and post-processing.[2]

As centrally important as universities have been in the literary tradition of Western metropolitan societies, they assumed an enhanced role in European colonies, where other opportunities for literary study, creative expression, and publishing were severely limited. During post-war decolonization, this traditional role of the university was, to varying degrees, consciously appropriated to that of nation-

[1] Portions of this paper were presented previously at the "Canadian Association for the Study of Book Culture" Conference, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 29-30 May 2007.

[2] Siegfried Schmidt, *Foundation for the Empirical Study of Literature: The Components of a Basic Theory*, trans. Robert de Beaugrande (Hamburg: Buske, 1982), provides a full description of these actant roles, which correspond to writing, publishing, reading, and criticism.

building.[3] Yet few studies examine how decolonization affected the university Literature Department, especially in the South Pacific.[4] One of the most interesting of these departments is at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), where the decolonizing curriculum of the late 1960s became so entrenched that it lasted for decades after political independence from Australia.

The Context for Creative Writing in Papua New Guinea

Australia has had a complex relationship with its former colonies of Papua and New Guinea (PNG). In 1898, before Australia had gained its own independence, negotiations had begun for the transfer of administrative control of British New Guinea. In 1906, only five years after Australia had gained the first stage of its own independence, British New Guinea was re-named the Territory of Papua and placed under Australian control. From that year until 1940, Papua was governed by a civilian administration led by one man, Lt.-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray. Yet, despite nearly seven decades of Australian colonial rule, Papua technically remained a British possession until PNG's Independence in 1975.

The German colony of New Guinea was occupied by Australian troops during the First World War and remained under military rule until, in 1920, the British government accepted the colony as a Mandated Territory on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia. Unlike its neighbour, Papua, the colony of New Guinea continued to be governed by military men — a series of three Brigadiers-General — until the Second World War. After the War the colonies of Papua and New Guinea came under the rule of a single civilian government.[5]

Many features of the PNG colonial experience are similar to that of other colonies — but many more make it unique. Geographic and linguistic diversity have controlled both the length and penetration of colonial contact. The colonies of PNG occupied roughly 600 islands, the largest of which is today divided between the countries of West Papua and Papua New Guinea. The island is volcanic and extremely rugged; peaks range up to 4500 metres and are separated by narrow, difficult-to-traverse, valleys. In these valleys and along the coastline now live six million people speaking between 800 and 900 languages, nearly one-fifth of all the world's languages.

Under the Australian administration official communication was in English, but various pidgins[6] were used for everyday communication, as is the case today. Since most people lived in the remote highlands, colonial control was of relatively short duration: less than 40 years for most people inland, double that time for those living on the coast. The Highlanders did not encounter white men until the 1930s. Coastal traders had over a century of regular contact with Europeans, but just 80 years of colonial

[3] For an early study of the purpose and function of the colonial university, consult John D. Hargreaves, "The Idea of a Colonial University," *African Affairs* 72 (1973): 26-36; for a recent assessment of how well one colonial university functioned in nation-building, see A.J. Stockwell, "'The Crucible of the Malayan Nation': The University and the Making of a New Malaysia, 1938-62," *Modern Asian Studies* 43.5 (2009): 1149-87; for an early policy paper on the role of the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in nation-building, see Working Party on the Future of the University, "Report to the Vice-Chancellor," October 1973.

[4] For an informative look at the history of a colonial Literature Department from the inside, see a publication of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan by Dapo Adelugba, "*The Horn*, *Black Orpheus* and Mbari: Interviews with Abiola Irele, Omolara Ogundipe, and Leslie and Michael Echeruo," *Lace Occasional Publications for Literature, the Arts, Culture and Education* 1.7 (20 July 1984).

[5] L.P. Mair, *Australia in New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970), 10-24.

[6] Of the several pidgins extant throughout the colonial period, most people spoke a version of what is now called Tok Pisin, or Melanesian Pidgin, which first served as a lingua franca in New Guinea. It was standardized over several years, largely through the efforts of Fr. Frank Mihalic, who was responsible for a dictionary and a grammar of Tok Pisin.

administration. Within one or two generations in any given family, and without English ever having gained much social capital, colonialism evaporated into Independence.

Given this history, it is perhaps not surprising that, until the 1960s, the Australian government was unsure of what to do with the colonies of PNG.[7] Their close physical proximity to the northeast coast of Australia rendered them strategically important for Australian defence, which suggested to Canberra that PNG might be incorporated as Australian territories. On the other hand, adding several million Melanesians to the Australian population would be racially problematic for a country that had not yet come to terms with its own internal colonization of aboriginal peoples. In the end, Australia opted for decolonization, preparing the colony in haste for self-government in 1973, and Independence in 1975. An important part of this preparation was encouraging the people of the colony to read and write.

No pre-colonial literary tradition existed in any language in either colony. Even after the establishment of a colonial administration in the early years of the twentieth century, schooling remained under the control of the missions. In effect, this meant a scattering of primary schools, the quality of which was variable. Schooling at this level could be in indigenous languages or in English, depending on geographic location, available staff, and the policies of the mission itself. The colonial administration preferred that education take place in English but did not attempt to standardize education until after the Second World War. Lucy Mair writes that the first secondary school was established in the 1950s.[8] Donald Denoon reminds us that by 1963 only three Melanesians from PNG had graduated from Australian universities.[9]

Australia was roundly castigated by the UN's Foot Commission in 1962 for its chronic under-development of PNG. As a result of Foot's damaging report, the colonial administration scrambled to develop those institutions and programs that would help to create a nation. On the agenda was the establishment of a university. In 1963, the administration formed the Currie Commission; its task was to study whether a university would be viable. The affirmative report was filed in 1964. The UPNG was created the following year and in 1966 opened its doors to students. During the next heady decade, the administration established a long list of cultural institutions and programs: secondary and tertiary institutions, a national Literature Bureau, writing programs, national literature competitions, libraries, archives, adult literacy programs, literary journals, writers' unions, bookstores, publishing houses, and the like.[10]

Establishing the UPNG Literature Department

Since so few Melanesians could read and write, the first admission to UPNG was relatively small: in 1966 only 55 students registered.[11] Many of these students were required to take a bridging year in order to improve their grasp of English. A handful registered for the literature classes and began to write. This

[7] Paul Hasluck was Minister for Territories during much of this period. For an analysis of Hasluck's policies and practice, see Robert Porter, "Papua and New Guinea, 1951-56: 'Neither a Colony nor a Territory,'" and "Papua and New Guinea, 1956-63," Chapters 5 and 6 in *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1993), 89-123 and 124-165.

[8] Mair, *Australia in New Guinea,* 227.

[9] Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, 2005), 44.

[10] In PNG during this period of decolonization, three literary systems emerged, each with its own ideological bias, and each offering almost identical programs and institutions to new writers. These systems were affiliated with the colonial administration, the Christian missions, and the UPNG, respectively. Many of the colony's writers chose to work in all three systems. See Evelyn Ellerman, "Literary Institution in Papua New Guinea," (PhD thesis, University of Alberta, 1994).

[11] Mair, *Australia in New Guinea,* 229.

was quite literally the beginning of what is now considered to be the PNG national literature. The Literature Department into which these students came was comprised mostly of Australians and New Zealanders, some of whom, like the department's first Chair, Frank Johnson, had already been in the colony for a few years. Like many of his colleagues, Johnson was young and enthusiastic about the opportunity to create something new. The Currie Commission had recommended that the university recognize and encourage oral culture;[12] accordingly, Johnson[13] adopted the following learning objectives for his students:

> 1) Read literature and secure as complete as possible a response to it, at the same time developing a critical literary appetite and taste which would generate a desire for further reading of literature;
> 2) Study literature as a creative art form and thus develop an appreciation of, and a response to, creativity in all communication arts leading ultimately to self-creativity;
> 3) Discover, maintain, propagate and develop the traditions of oral literature of Papua New Guinea.[14]

He had begun by calling the department "Language and Literature," rather than "English," offering courses focussed on the oral traditions, linguistics, and modern literatures either written in, or translated into, English. Johnson designed the bridging year that would address the gap between English language proficiency levels among the colony's high school graduates and the language proficiency required by the university. In addition, he offered courses in Melanesian languages and made Linguistics a required course so that students could study language as a phenomenon. According to one of his staff members, Mike Greicus, Johnson thought that a traditional literature curriculum was bound to produce what V.S. Naipaul had called "mimic men": unsuccessful imitators of all things European. By 1972, Greicus observed that the open curriculum initiated by Johnson was already addressing questions of cultural identity and seemed to be encouraging the formation of a new literature.[15]

Teaching Staff in the Literature Department

Frank Johnson cast a wide net when searching for his staff. Prithvindra Chakravarti, one of Johnson's first hires, recalls that he was conducting fieldwork in Australia in 1966 when he saw an advertisement for someone with an interest in linguistics, literature and, in particular, oral traditions. Chakravarti wrote a simple one-page letter outlining his background and was promptly hired. He recalls that he was attracted by Johnson's decision to avoid the standard English curriculum of British and American literature.[16]

Chakravarti's actual teaching would not begin until 1967, since the first cohort of indigenous students was taking the bridging courses in order to develop their English skills. When he did begin to teach, he

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[12] Sir George Currie, "Report of the Commission on Higher Education in Papua New Guinea" (Canberra, 1964).

[13] Frank Johnson first came to PNG as a teacher; after serving as the principal of the teachers' training college in Port Moresby in the early 1960s, he was hired as a professor of literature at the UPNG. Johnson worked with Jacaranda Press to produce the Minenda Series of literacy texts.

[14] Mike Greicus, "Literature in the University of Papua New Guinea," in *Teaching Literature in Papua New Guinea*, eds. Elton Brash and Mike Greicus (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1972): 32.

[15] Elton Brash, "Creative Writing, Literature and Self Expression in Papua New Guinea," in *Teaching Literature in Papua New Guinea*, eds. Elton Brash and Mike Greicus (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1972): 36-37.

[16] The information contained in this section has been extracted from an interview conducted with Prithvindra Chakravarti at the University of Sydney, 10 July 2002.

found that the students were all mature adults between the ages of 25 and 40; most were successful schoolteachers with many years experience, but with only some primary schooling or perhaps the first two years of high school themselves. The course Chakravarti was asked to teach was "Introductory Linguistics and Oral Traditions"; this two-part course was meant to address the concerns of the Currie Commission and became, in effect, the first course in the Literature program. Before Chakravarti arrived in PNG, he and Frank Johnson had discussed what should be in the course. Even so, on his arrival, Chakravarti was still required to explain to the Faculty Board why the Literature Department was not following the established "Beowulf to Virginia Woolf" curriculum then offered by metropolitan universities.

Chakravarti remembers that very few expatriate students registered for the language and literature program. As a consequence, when he walked into his first "Oral Traditions" classroom, he discovered that his 27 students used a total of 26 languages, only one of which was spoken by two students. As an Indian with a degree from an American university, and with experience teaching aboriginal students in Australia, Chakravarti was sensitive to issues of culture and language. He decided that he would first assess what the students were capable of and what interested them. He asked them to collect stories for analysis by going home in semester breaks and recording stories from their villages; he also asked them to write stories. This first course in the oral traditions offered UPNG students the opportunity to experiment with creative writing:

> In the first and second weeks I asked them to write whatever they knew about: let us say, a verse. I read them a poem in very simple English. I did not ask them to write in English. I said. 'You may have this sort of thing in your own language, so try to write something like it.' Most of them actually wrote in their own language and some in English: a poem or a small two-liner, or a three-line verse. Some had difficulty, of course, because poetry is difficult to write and very difficult to translate. And verse taken from the oral tradition is especially difficult, even if you have a good command of English, which was not the case with these students.[17]

Chakravarti organized the writing component of the oral traditions class so that students had their first lecture on Monday or Wednesday and brought him their full story of four pages on Thursday or Friday. Then he would discuss the story with each of them. He notes that this method produced a great deal of marking compressed into a short span of time, since he was marking stories from 27 students. As few courses of this type were being taught anywhere in the world, finding a textbook was a challenge. Chakravarti used an American introduction to folklore, but only to the extent that it assisted students in understanding what defined a story, a legend, or a myth. He felt that using the entire textbook would have been pedantic and culturally inappropriate, since its content focussed on the European tradition of folklore studies and used predominantly American examples.

Chakravarti recalls that, in the first year of its operation, the Literature Department had nine or ten teachers with one or two lecturers. Frank Johnson was also looking for someone to teach a course called "New English Literature from Developing Countries." Fortunately for him and for other department heads at the new university, there existed in the mid 1960s a small cadre of people with teaching experience in former African colonies. His advertisement was answered in London by Ulli Beier, who had been promoting African literatures in Nigerian universities since 1950. When Johnson hired Beier, he

[17] Chakravarti, interview with the author, 10 July 2002.

gave him the same freedom to develop the literature course as he had to Chakravarti a few months earlier.

Before Beier's arrival, Johnson put his two newest hires in contact; between them, they decided to add a course in "African Literatures," that would complement the course in "Oral Traditions." The title of the new course was quickly changed to "Emergent Literatures," so that Chakravarti and Beier could add examples from Indian, West Indian, and Afro-American literatures in subsequent years. This was the beginning of a partnership that would last until 1971, when Beier left the colony.[18] As agents of literary change, Beier and Chakravarti would develop a literature curriculum over the next five years that would serve as a model at the UPNG for the next four decades; and they would mentor most of the writers now recognized as the first novelists and playwrights in PNG.

At the outset, Beier and Chakravarti found it as difficult to locate appropriate texts for "Emergent Literatures" as it had been for "Oral Traditions." In the mid 1960s, finding affordable textbooks that would be meaningful to Melanesian students, with negligible exposure to literature, was a daunting task. The two lecturers fell back on what they knew:

> For the 1967 course, we chose Chinua Achebe's new book and one book of Indian fiction. I chose some short stories, not a full novel: short stories in English translation and some in Indian English. There was a cheap American paperback called something like "Modern Asian Short Stories." And I remember a very good short story by Khushwant Singh and one or two Tagore short stories in English.[19]

Like Chakravarti, Beier was excited about the opportunity to forge a new curriculum. Drawing upon nearly 15 years of pioneering work in Nigeria, he had some notion of what he wanted to accomplish in PNG. He had already encountered what he considered to be culturally irrelevant literature classes in Nigeria. Beier describes meeting an instructor who had brought daffodils from England in order to help her classes understand a poem by Wordsworth. In the early 1950s, Beier began to alter the content in his own classes to reflect what he saw to be the cultural reality of his Nigerian students, eventually claiming to have taught one of the world's first classes in the emerging literatures.[20]

In Nigeria, Beier had not limited his decolonizing activities to teaching. He assisted his students in forming writers groups and finding a means of publication. He formed the Mbari Writers Club, which he used to promote artistic and literary experimentation, and cultural regeneration. Enthused by the success of the francophone journal, *Présence Africaine* (established in 1947), he established the journal *Black Orpheus* in 1957, training his student writers to edit and critique the work of their colleagues. He encouraged his Nigerian students to base their texts on their own cultural traditions, publishing several collections of folklore himself in order to provide models. His wife Georgina, a graphic artist, illustrated the publications with Nigerian themes and motifs, and they both worked with African artists to promote a Nigerian look for the publications. At the outset, the audience for these writerly texts was largely

[18] Like Glen Bays, who was at the centre of the mission-based literary system during this era, Ulli Beier worked in the colony on more than one occasion, on different but related projects. Beier left PNG in 1971 in order to return to Nigeria, a country in which he had a substantial personal and professional investment. Three years later, in 1974, he came back to PNG in order to establish the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies; he remained in the country until 1978.

[19] Chakravarti, interview with the author, 10 July 2002.

[20] Ulli Beier, letter to the author, May 1992.

academic and predominantly foreign, but the hope was that this work would provide the foundation for an indigenous literary canon that would be read in Africa.[21]

All of this university-based activity was a conscious attempt to help create a new literature. As his students were producing texts, Beier was editing and publishing them, and then turning them into curriculum. He has written several times about this process, but he is less transparent about other aspects of his role in creating the new literatures. As a teacher-mentor, Beier engaged in a wide range of mediation practices. Not only did he encourage, teach, and enable the new writers, he modelled the roles they might assume. In order to better demonstrate the literary functions of author, editor, and critic, for example, he adopted a series of Nigerian-sounding pseudonyms for himself as he wrote, edited, and then criticized his own "Nigerian" texts.[22] This was a practice he carried to PNG, where he not only taught writers and established the English-language literary journal *Kovave* (1969), but he also masked his own identity to write, under the pseudonym "Lovori", the kind of folklore-based plays he hoped his students would eventually produce.[23] *Modelling* is a common teaching practice, but *masking* is less common, for the obvious reason that it borders on appropriation and inauthenticity. Nevertheless, the practice sometimes occurs during decolonization, when European mentors try to transfer the institutions and values of western literature to colonized peoples who have no previous literary tradition. Beier was not alone in adopting a "native" mask in order to persuade student writers and others that the "native" *could* write.[24]

Curriculum at UPNG

The oral traditions courses offered at UPNG were variously called "Introductory Linguistics and Traditions of Oral Literature" and "Oral Traditions."[25] Among the standard disciplinary textbooks for this course were M. Eliade's *Cosmos and History* and B. Malinowski's *Magic, Science and Religion*. These texts were complemented by collections of folkloric material from around the world, but with a heavy early emphasis on Africa and India. Ulli Beier's *Origins of Life and Death,* and Chakravarti and Beier's *The Oral Poetry of Bengal,* were frequently used collections in the oral traditions course. Two African novels that had been widely received by critics as informed by folkloric traditions were consistently included in this course grouping as well: both Ijimere's *The Imprisonment of Obatala* and Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* served as examples to student writers of imaginative texts created from a foundation in the oral tradition.[26]

Clearly these texts reflected the interests of Beier and Chakravarti; however, as soon as local materials were available their own texts were also placed on the syllabus, often in stencil format, before they were actually published. Beier and Chakravarti's *Sun and Moon in New Guinea Folklore* was one of many stencils used for the class. The pace of the process was staggering. Beier has stated that his idea was to put before the students their own imagery, metaphor and allusion. He wanted to force them to work from their own

[21] Peter Benson, "'Border Operators': *Black Orpheus* and the Genesis of Modern African Art and Literature," *Research in African Literatures* 14, no. 4 (1983): 435.

[22] Ibid., 437.

[23] Ulli Beier, *Decolonising the Mind: The Impact of the University on Culture and Identity in Papua New Guinea, 1971-74* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 66.

[24] Earlier examples of this practice can be found in the colonial administration's newspaper, *Papuan Villager*, which was published from 1929-41.

[25] All of the course and curriculum information for UPNG has been taken from the university *Course Handbook*s from 1968-76, and finally 2009.

[26] UPNG, *Course Handbook* (1969).

art outward, something he considered to be a reversal of the process of colonization. In short, Beier was simultaneously training, editing, mentoring, and publishing PNG literature.[27]

The second grouping of courses in the Literature Department focussed on new literatures. Courses in this group might be called "New Writing in English from Emergent Nations," or "Literature of New Nations," or "Literature of Developing Countries in English." The "New Literatures" courses were frequently offered with a companion course, "The Teaching of Literature in Developing Countries," and relied on the fiction, drama, and verse of several West African writers: Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Obotunde Ijimere, and Gabriel Okara. From East Africa, works by Ngugi, and Okot p'Bitek predominated; and, from South Africa, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Peter Abrahams, Lewis Nkosi, Alex La Guma, and Athol Fugard. Francophone African authors who consistently appeared on course syllabi were Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, and Camara Laye. West Indian writers were primarily represented by Samuel Selvon and V.S. Naipaul.[28]

The third group of courses concentrated on the general study of literature. Whether the courses were called "Modern Literature," or "The Study of Literature," their model texts shaped a uniform syllabus for the next decade. European works were represented by a select list of Modernist authors: Joseph Conrad, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertolt Brecht, William Golding, George Orwell, Fyodor Dostoevsky, D.H. Lawrence, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Giraudoux, and T.S. Eliot, among others. Most other models were chosen from new literatures in English.[29]

A frequently used course description within this third grouping tries to balance writing from new nations against the canon:

> The Course will be a basic introduction to value, form and content in the major genres of literature, including oral traditions and the film. The course will be international in scope but will include specifically New Guinean writing as well as that from other emerging nations, and from developed countries, in translation where necessary …. The course should give the non-major in literature a brief and pleasant introduction to the elaborations of literature and should thus be a most useful foundation course for degree students in the arts.[30]

Of the nearly 200 titles represented in these three categories during the period under discussion, there is considerable overlap. The "Oral Traditions" courses share 23% of their titles with the other two groups: 19% with "New Literatures" and 4% with "Study of Literature." The "Study of Literature" courses share only 15% of their titles: 10% with the "New Literatures" and 5% with the "Oral Traditions." The "New Literatures" courses share 39% of their total titles with the other two groups: 29% with the "Oral Traditions" and 10% with "Study of Literature," indicating a strong bias in the overall syllabus for new literatures.

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[27] This whirlwind activity tended to foreground work that might otherwise not have been published. Writers were often surprised to find themselves in print. Kirsty Powell (who wrote a landmark M.A. thesis on the first generation of PNG playwrights just before her untimely death in an auto accident) says that Russell Soaba, one of PNG's best known "first generation" writers, has questioned whether Beier's emphasis on quantity, not quality, arrested the real growth of PNG literature. Writers were caught in the revolving door of production and publication with no time to think about what PNG writing really was. Kirsty Powell, "The First Papua New Guinea Playwrights and Their Plays," (Masters thesis University of Papua New Guinea, 1979 [PhD awarded posthumously]), 47n1.

[28] UPNG, *Course Handbook* (1968-76).

[29] The UPNG *Course Handbook*s from 1968-89 have all been reviewed, and the findings demonstrate that the pattern remains more or less consistent over that twenty year period.

[30] UPNG, *Course Handbook* (1975), 159.

From 1968 to Independence in 1975, fully 50% of these shared texts were "African," of which 20% were authored or edited by Ulli Beier. However, there is a definite falling away from the Beier-inspired or -generated texts over the period. In the 1968-69 course of "New Literatures," the syllabus had 19 titles: four authored or edited by Beier, including one title co-authored with Chakravarti. All told, nine of the titles contained Indian or African content. Two books addressed folklore of the Pacific region. Significantly, one of the "titles" is a collection of stencilled work by the student-writers of the UPNG. In 1968-69, then, 26% of the titles were African and 21% Indian, while 5% were Papua New Guinean.[31]

In 1975, the *Course Handbook* lists 14 titles for the "New Literatures" courses. Of these, four were authored or edited by Beier, and two by Chakravarti. By that time, only three of the texts were African and two Indian. On the other hand, three of the texts used that year were by UPNG students and two more dealt with folklore from the Pacific region. In other words, Africa and India accounted for only 14% each of the total number of titles, while 21% were now PNG.

This survey of the UPNG literature curriculum during its first years further reveals that the texts by "Black" authors were more often African than "Afro-American." This choice reflects a general tendency at the university during this time to both recognize and construct cultural and political similarities between PNG and Africa. In other words, the works were chosen more for their colonial than their racial connection. Such attempts to frame the PNG experience as similar to that of other colonies, and to valorize indigenous cultures against the colonial, is evident in many *Course Handbook* descriptions. For instance, a course called "Australian Literature" was occasionally offered. Its description from the 1971 *Handbook* says, in part: A course designed to show Australian attitudes to other people — especially Australian Aboriginals and New Guineans — as reflected in their literature, and the response such attitudes have provoked among Aboriginals and New Guineans in their own emergent writing.[32] On the next page of the same *Handbook*, the description of "Modern World Literature II" reads: In this part [as opposed to "Modern World Literature I"] moral choice will be considered in more philosophical detail. From the expression of the 'primitive' in man, the rottenness of Western society as a whole will be considered leading to ideas of alienation, existentialism, and absurdism on behalf of individuals.[33]

Student Writers at UPNG

Most of the first literature students at UPNG were males in their twenties who came from mission families living in coastal regions.[34] They were, therefore, relatively fluent in the colonial language and culture. However, literature was not at that time, nor would it be for some decades, standardized as part of the PNG public school curriculum. Courses in "English" and in "Expressive Arts" were offered, emphasizing language and oral tradition, but only those students attending elite schools would encounter literature on the curriculum and, even then, its inclusion depended on the resources to buy books and the interests of individual teachers.[35] These student-writers would have encountered few

[31] UPNG, *Course Handbook* (1968-89).

[32] UPNG, *Course Handbook* (1971), 268.

[33] Ibid., 269.

[34] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 13.

[35] Complaints about the lack of literature in the curriculum resonate throughout the pre-independence and independence eras. For a good summary, see William McGaw, "PNG: The Role of Literature in a Newly Independent Country," *Bikmaus* 4.4 (1983): 9-17. For an excellent early collection about teaching literature, see Elton Brash and Mike Greicus, eds., *Teaching Literature in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: UPNG, 1972). Information about the current curriculum and the contemporary teaching of literature in PNG's schools was obtained at UPNG in an interview with Steven Winduo, May 2009. Dr. Winduo is a well-known creative writer and former Chair of the Literature Strand at UPNG, as well as founding Director of the Institute for Melanesian and Pacific Studies.

literary texts before attending UPNG, where they formed the first cohort of PNG students ever to attend a university. Previous university hopefuls had gone individually to attend Australian institutions.

In 1966, 25% of the student population at the UPNG was "White."[36] Since the colony was racially segregated, attending university would have been, for most of the indigenous students, their first institutional exposure to integration. At university, they experienced a racially liberal atmosphere that would have been in stark contrast to their lives off campus. They also attended university classes during a world-wide era of radicalized student politics. "Anti-establishment" sentiments were in the air, and anti-colonialism was in vogue. The degree to which this politically-charged atmosphere supported, or even generated, anti-colonial sentiment in these male writers is a key consideration when examining the history of PNG literary production.[37]

Oddly enough, creative writing classes at UPNG were begun by Ulli Beier as an expedient to keep students registered in the literature courses. On his arrival, Beier discovered that literature students were required to complete the bridging year, even though they had strong language skills. According to Beier, his best students hated the language courses, and so he convinced the university administration to offer a third route to literature through creative writing courses.[38]

Beier accepted only six to eight students per class in order to work with his writers individually. The classes were conducted with the same pattern used earlier by Chakravarti: on Monday, students submitted manuscripts, and on Wednesday Beier would discuss them with each person in turn. Students were free to choose subject, theme and genre. They also had the choice of submitting either an improved draft of the manuscript the following week, or a new work altogether. However, students could only attend Beier's creative writing courses by invitation in their second year of studies; the invitation was based on talent and on the writer's personality. Students were to submit samples of their work in their first year, and they received no credit for these submissions. If Beier deemed the writing promising, he would decide if he could get along with the individual, and sometimes even rejected gifted people with whom he did not think he could work.[39] In effect, by instituting privileged access to creative writing classes, Beier acted from the outset as a gatekeeper to the development of literature at UPNG.

Most of Beier's students were interested in drama. The UPNG playwrights from this era were Leo Hannet, John Waiko, Kumalau Tawali, Rabbie Namaliu, Arthur Jawodimbari, John Kasaipwalova, and Russell Soaba.[40] Their first public success was with Hannet's *Rod Bilong Kago*, written in Pidgin. The largely Melanesian audience was thrilled to hear a play performed in a language they could actually understand.

Beier's students reflected the demographic trends of the larger student body, except for one thing: the complete absence of women.[41] In 1968, only six of the 58 UPNG students were women; by 1973, men still

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[36] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 25n5.

[37] In fact, the UPNG and its Administrative College were the only institutions in the colonies to produce anti-colonial writing. Students from Goroka Teachers College, the Christian Training Centre, and those writers who used Kristen Pres and the administration's Literature Bureau, addressed the topic of "culture clash," but not that of anti-colonialism. As several of the university's writers (e.g., Kumalau Tawali, Apisai Enos, Bernard Narokobi, John Waiko, Siuras Kavani) published using these other venuesit can be argued that, at the very least, writers understood what and where to publish. For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Ellerman, "Literary Institution," 155-57.

[38] Ulla Schild, *Literaturen in Papua-Neuguinea* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1981), 71; and Beier, letter to the author, May 1992.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 48n2.

[41] In contrast, the pages of the administration- and mission-sponsored literary journals regularly featured writing by women. *Papua New Guinea Writing*, published by the colonial administration under two different titles between 1970 and 1978, not only accepted work by female authors, but trained Sally Ann Pipi as an Assistant Editor. Under

outnumbered women by a margin of nine to one. According to Kirsty Powell, PNG women were not politically involved until 1974: "Socially and sexually, Papua New Guinean women students were often the victims of male aggression and male possessiveness, their own immaturity, and a lip-service Puritanism."[42] The one notable exception at the university was Nora Vagi Brash, who was not one of Beier's students, but was married to one of his Australian colleagues. Since Beier was the only literary change agent to consistently seek external publication for his writers, the early literary PNG canon was dominated by his male students.

Beier is probably best remembered in PNG for his mentoring, especially of political activist and trade unionist, Albert Maori Kiki, in the writing of his autobiography *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime* (1968). This was the first book ever to be written by a Papua New Guinean. The book was well received in Australia and abroad, but within the colony expatriates were wary: "Some people considered it a kind of impudence, others doubted that he had done it himself. Some bookshops refused to sell it and only a few schools acquired it for their libraries."[43] Beier reports that his students were encouraged by Kiki's success; his autobiography had demonstrated how writing could be used as a political tool. According to Beier, the students were tired of being "anthropologized to death, missionized to death, and administered to death. They felt — rightly — misunderstood and misrepresented."[44]

Beier's success in finding, developing and publishing creative talent was further augmented the next year by the publication of Vincent Eri's, *The Crocodile* (1969). Eri had begun the work before Beier arrived in PNG, but developed the novel in Beier's creative writing course. Beier convinced Jacaranda Press of Brisbane that they had a ready readership for the first PNG novel. He felt that, since Australians had been using PNG as an exotic backdrop for fiction for decades, they would jump at the chance to read a novel by a "native." He was right. Australian reviewers praised the novel, and so the "Pacific Writers Series," with Beier as its general editor, became part of Jacaranda's programme.

In a university-based, colonial literary system dominated by one individual who is not indigenous, understanding the relationship between student and professor is important. In a June 1973 *Pacific Islands Monthly* review of PNG literature, Peter Livingston likened UPNG writing to a small industry producing "chips on the shoulder" of Ulli Beier. In Livingston's opinion, author Paulias Matane was truly representative of PNG writing; Matane, who had not attended UPNG, was simple, descriptive, and natural. Kirsty Powell lashed out at Livingston in the August issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly*; in her view, Livingston represented the colonial idea that islanders were incapable of intellectual activity and therefore unable to produce good literature without assistance.[45] Realizing that she was in an ideal situation to document Beier's influence, Powell administered a series of questionnaires to writers as part of her 1979 Master's thesis on PNG's first playwrights. In response to questions about Beier's teaching methods and editorial practices, Rabbie Namaliu reported: [He] was a pioneer, for he shattered the old Shibboleth that Niuginians can only be evoked as subjects, but that they can't write . . . he saw our potential, he encouraged our talents, and over a period of four years, Niugini had its own literature written by its own artists.[46]

Glen Bays' editorship in the mid 1970s, the mission-based journals, *Nobonob Nius* and *Precept*, were dominated by female authors. After Bays left the colony, the editorship of *Precept* was taken up by Philippina, Josie Runes (Bays, interview with the author, 6 March 1993).

[42] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 27.

[43] Ulli Beier, "Literature in New Guinea," *Hudson Review* (Spring 1971): 123.

[44] Beier, letter to the author, May 1992.

[45] Peter Livingston, "From the Emotions of Ulli to a Simple Descriptive Paulias," *Pacific Islands Monthly* 44, no. 6 (June 1973): 78-79; Kirsty Powell, "Ulli Beier's Role," *Pacific Islands Monthly* (August 1973): 213.

[46] Quoted in Kirsty Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 42.

According to Powell, these comments were representative. The hand-picked writers surrounding Beier were the most politicized of all the students at UPNG, and also the most vocal.[47] For them, writing was an anti-colonial tool and Beier made no objections to their using it in that way. Only one writer was ambivalent: Russell Soaba told Powell that he had always dreamed of becoming an independent artist. For Soaba, true art was "neither didactic nor explanatory," but rather "always the outward expression of the inner necessity of [a] particular artist." Because of this stance, Soaba "found it hard to conform to Ulli Beier's methods of having to have Niuginian writers express their discontent of being under colonial rule."[48]

Beier disclaims any attempt to produce writers with an anti-colonial bias. He told Powell that he had difficulty getting writers to write about anything else. In fact, the "Lovori" plays were meant to demonstrate "native" writing that was *not* anti-colonial. *Alive* and *They Never Return* were written as dramatic renditions of Melanesian legends. They were also intended to indicate the possibility of adding the "imagery and idiom of plestok" to English.[49] Beier wanted to show students how they could re-shape English to suit their own circumstances.[50] Both plays were performed in PNG, and Beier even placed *Alive* in his first published anthology, *Five New Guinea Plays* (1971).[51]

Alive and *They Never Return* were performed by Prompt Theatre in Canberra in 1969, along with John Waiko's *The Unexpected Hawk*. Al Butavicius, Director of Prompt Theatre, who had met Beier the previous year, was interested in indigenous drama that highlighted similarities between Western and Austronesian myth: in particular, Greek myth and Aboriginal taboo.[52] Beier suggested he consider the plays written by Lovori and Waiko. Butavicius was struck by their mythological, folksy quality; he thought that *They Never Return,* in particular, resembled the Orpheus-Eurydice myth.[53]

The next year Butavicius produced four plays by Beier's students at the New Theatre in Sydney: *Alive*, *The Old Man's Reward*, *The Unexpected Hawk*, and *The Ungrateful Daughter*. Reviewer Katherine Brisbane was struck by the "authenticity" of Lovori's play, *Alive*. On the other hand, she thought *Unexpected Hawk* and *Ungrateful Daughter* were awkward and moralizing,[54] not realizing that these were the two *genuine* PNG plays. Although PNG writers generally refused to follow Beier's push in the direction of oral tradition, the Australian audience was clearly willing to accept such writing as "ethnic," "authentic," and even "universal." In this way, Lovori's work, and not that of PNG's student writers, opened the door in Australia (and later in Africa) to PNG drama. As an agent of change, Beier had offered a cultural view to the foreign market that was remarkably similar to that expressed in Amos Tutuola's first work, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. And it achieved the same result: it piqued the orientalist curiosity of the Western audience with non-threatening folkloric themes and motifs.

It can be argued that Beier's folkloric focus did not appeal to his students because they were too much divorced from their own oral traditions. Indeed, Kirsty Powell concludes: [The playwrights] learned to

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[47] Chris Tiffin, "An Interview with Russell Soaba," *SPAN* (8 April 1979): 15.

[48] Quoted in Kirsty Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 44.

[49] "Plestok" is the Pidgin word for a mother tongue. It generally indicates one of the more than 800 indigenous languages of the region.

[50] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 544.

[51] The five anthologies of PNG writing that Beier edited in the 1970s and 80s are: *Five New Guinea Plays* (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1971); *The Night Warrior and Other Stories from Papua New Guinea* (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1972); *Black Writing From New Guinea* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973); *Nuigini Lives* (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974); and *Voices of Independence* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 1980).

[52] It must be remembered that Beier had formed a literary journal earlier in Nigeria called *Black Orpheus.* He has admitted on several occasions to having been inspired by Janheinz Jans' 1954 collection of African verse, *Schwarzer Orpheus*.

[53] Lois Barns agreed with Butavicius in her article, "The Papuan View Hits the Stage," *Age* 3 (September 1969):16.

[54] Katherine Brisbane, "In Search of the Drama Beneath the Body Paint," *Australian* (22 September 1971): n.p.

over-value written literature, and although they responded eagerly to the idea of collecting their own myths and legends, in the field of drama they failed to appreciate fully the possibility of a living interaction between oral and written forms.[55]

When some of Beier's students finally turned to traditional forms, they had to research the details by reading Margaret Mead and talking to village elders.[56] In PNG, this very small, elite group of writers was unable, or unwilling, to deal with oral tradition. However, in Africa, Beier's play *Alive* was performed and well received. Beier commented on this phenomenon:

> As I came to Papua New Guinea from Nigeria, I . . . tried to encourage this kind of writing [i.e. based on folklore]. When teaching at the University of PNG I introduced such Nigerian writers as Amos Tutuola, D.O. Fagunwa and Duro Ladipo; I even wrote a couple of plays myself, based on folklore themes. Curiously these ultimately proved more attractive to Nigerian theatre companies than to New Guinean ones. Most writers in the late sixties and early seventies were more concerned with the themes of independence and colonialism, with cultural identity and with the conflict of generations.[57]

Beier thought this difference between reception of folklore in Nigeria and PNG arose from the fact that literature was "not taught at all in Papua New Guinea schools." Since the Department of Education treated literature as a "superfluous luxury," Beier considered it predictable that writers would not take folklore seriously.[58] Powell added another dimension to this tendency among PNG writers, claiming that PNG's wholesale adoption of Christianity had meant an almost total loss of native religion. Since oral traditions were so intimately connected to rite and ceremony, Powell could understand why the playwrights did not use folkloric materials. She comments that, of the 13 earliest playwrights, eight were sons of, or closely related to, churchmen.[59] In the 1966 census, only 4.2 percent of islanders claimed to follow native religion.[60] Therefore, it is unsurprising that these sons and nephews of pastors and deacons should have so little acquaintance with their own culture. Powell contrasts this situation with that of the Yoruba, whose religious belief was still intact despite colonialism.

Publishing the Student Writers

Three principal publishing vehicles were associated with the UPNG Literature Department: *Kovave,* an in-house literary journal; *Papua Pocket Poets,* an in-house poetry series; and a number of externally published collections whose content was gleaned from the journal and the series.

In 1969, Ulli Beier started the literary journal *Kovave* for his student writers, which he edited until 1971 when he passed editorial control over to John Kasaipwalova, who edited one issue and in 1972 turned the journal over to Apisai Enos. The editorship remained with Enos until the journal's demise in 1975. Not only did Beier install his writers as editors of *Kovave*, he added them to the Editorial Committee from the beginning. For the pilot issue, Beier chose three writers for the Committee — Vincent Eri, Rabbie Namaliu, and Leo Hannet — along with staff members, Elton Brash and Jo Gray. By 1971, all five

[55] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 79.

[56] Ibid., 60.

[57] Ulli Beier, "Papua New Guinea Folklore and the Growth of Literature," Discussion Paper #34 (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1978), 17.

[58] Beier, "Papua New Guinea Folklore," 17.

[59] Powell, "Papua New Guinea Playwrights," 13.

[60] Ibid., 65.

Committee members were writers: Russell Soaba, Arthur Jawodimbari, Dus Mapun, John Saunana, and Apisai Enos. With the sole exception of Nigel Krauth, an Australian who joined the Committee in 1975, the journal was indigenized from within two years of its inception.

Kovave was an ambitious journal. Each issue of approximately 60 pages included ten to twelve examples of poetry, four to five items of prose, two to three items of folklore, and a play. In most issues there is one entry under the heading of "Art," one or two reviews, and perhaps a piece of criticism. Kovave published UPNG student writers almost exclusively, with the occasional exception of staff and students from Goroka Teachers College, which was affiliated with the university. The journal's modest audience included the staff and students of PNG's tertiary institutions and those expatriates and foreign-academics interested in new literatures. The genres of choice in *Kovave* were the autobiographical sketch and drama; Beier felt students used the first to affirm village values and the second to assert their militancy.[61] What is increasingly obvious over time is a lack of interest in the prose forms of folklore: while traditional verse does appear once for every three or four modern poems, Enos began to replace prose forms with critical essays as soon as Issue 4.1 (1972), and by Issue 5.1 (1975) *Kovave* offered only two pages of folklore.

Chief among the Literature Department's publishing accomplishments during Beier and Chakravarti's tenure was the "Papua Pocket Poets" (PPP) series, which Beier began in order to have oral materials for his literature classes. Each volume was small, cheaply produced, and inexpensive. With the exception of the first volume, Beier published the series in Port Moresby. Papua Pocket Poets supplied a publishing outlet for the creative writing classes and for the poets from *Kovave*: Apisai Enos, Kumalau Tawali, John Kasaipwalova, Arthur Jawodimbari, Gapi Iamo, Dus Mapun, Jerry Kavop, Peter Kama Kerpi, and their professor, Prithvindra Chakravarti. The 46 volumes of PPP reflect the interests of its editors, Ulli Beier (vols. 1-25) and Prithvindra Chakravarti (vols. 26-46). Both men worked together from the beginning in the department to encourage PNG poets and to broaden their knowledge of other oral traditions. The first three volumes, for example, concentrate on Maori, Malay, and Yoruba oral traditions, respectively. Beier followed these with Indonesian, Ibo, Bengali, and Biafran collections. From the fifth volume to the twenty-fifth, the PPP series focuses almost exclusively on PNG poetry, whether modern or traditional.

The main difference between the editorships is that Chakravarti published mostly modern poetry (14 of the 17 PNG volumes), while Beier published mostly traditional poetry (9 of the 12 PNG volumes). This disparity is likely due to the passage of time. By 1973, Chakravarti could concentrate on modern poetry because enough of it had been written by that time. However, given the waning traditional content of *Kovave* by 1973, writers may simply have had other interests. Under Beier, the only modern poets represented are Enos, and Tawali. Two of the volumes under Beier are collections of original Pidgin poems; only one under Chakravarti is in Pidgin. Chakravarti's editorship featured two collections of modern poetry and one collection of traditional. Of these two, *Modern Poetry from Papua New Guinea* 39 (1972), edited by Brash and Krauth, consists of reprints from *Kovave*. The rest of the volumes are specific to individual ethnic groups. None of the collections of modern poetry is by a woman. As a whole the PPP series remains the single-most comprehensive source of printed verse from PNG.

Although Beier had originally used "Papua Pocket Poets" as a teaching resource, the anthologies that began in 1971 with *Five New Guinea Plays* were meant to create a certain style for PNG writing and to develop an immediate foreign readership for PNG writing. The student-generated plays have as their subject either culture clash, anti-colonialism, or generational disputes. In this, they fairly reflect the generally polemical nature of the early plays from UPNG. The following year, Jacaranda published the

[61] Ulli Beier, ed., Introduction to *Niugini Lives* (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974), 3.

first collection of short stories from Beier's writers. Of the thirteen short stories in *The Night Warrior and other Stories*, eight were taken from *Kovave*, and one was reprinted from the Australian journal *Overland*.

In 1973 Beier published another PNG collection, *Black Writing from New Guinea*, this time with the "Asian and Pacific Writing" series of the University of Queensland Press. Of the 29 selections by 18 authors, only one autobiographical sketch, two poems, one story, and one play had not previously appeared in *Kovave* or in *Night Warrior*. During his second stay in PNG (1974-1978) as Director of the newly-formed Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS), Beier published *Niugini Lives* with the "Pacific Writers" series. By now a pattern to these anthologies was clearly visible. Of the 15 submissions by 14 authors, six had been previously published in *Kovave*. Two had originally appeared in the *Journal of Papua New Guinea Studies* and one in *New Guinea*. One was an extract from Kiki's autobiography. Two were older pieces collected by missionaries.

The last Beier anthology, *Voices of Independence* (University of Queensland Press, 1980), followed the same pattern as the others in that it chose work from mostly the same group of writers, each of whom had up to four pieces included. *Voices of Independence* also introduces newer writers and enlarges the scope of the previous collections. In addition, the collection is prefaced by a well-balanced Beier essay on the previous ten years of PNG literature, which is the first attempt at outlining a literary history for PNG.

Conclusion

The first ten years of PNG literary production were clearly dominated by the programs and practices of the UPNG. While the university was not the only site of literary activity, it was the institution most connected with creative writing and best linked to global cultural networks.[62] During its first decade, the Literature Department invited writers and teachers from other colonies to give talks and to teach in the department. It hosted conferences and festivals. Some of its students visited African universities and took the opportunity to study abroad before returning to teach at UPNG.[63]

As an indicator of rapid change during decolonization, the literature curriculum devised by colonial universities like UPNG can be considered an important factor in the intellectual, social, and cultural formation of the first generations of independence era leadership. Graduates of literature programmes were highly literate and therefore frequently drafted into public service. As a consequence, their university-based intellectual and cultural formation is historically relevant.

The literature curriculum can be used to study leadership, yet is also central to understanding the formation of cultural systems during the transition from colony to nation, especially when considered in the context of the colonial literature department itself. In attempting to model and encourage the four roles of a western-style literary system, academic staff members of these colonial universities were engaged in the unique process of training other people to take their jobs once the system had been indigenized.

Clearly, analysis of the colonial university literature curriculum can inform the study of literary influence within, and amongst, colonies and the metropolis, connections between intellectual and cultural movements, and the evolution of individual writers during the colonial era. It can also provide a historical foundation for the study of independence era literary systems. Forty years after the inception of

[62] For a detailed study of the contributions of Goroka Teachers College, the Literature Bureau, and the Christian Training Centre to literary development during the ten years preceding Independence, see Ellerman, "Literary Institution."

[63] Notable among these visitors from Africa were Wole Soyinka, Okot p'Bitek, Kole Omotoso, Segun Olusola, and Taban Lo Liyong, who chaired the department in the mid 1970s. Arthur Jawodimbari and Joseph Sukwianomb studied in Africa. Several of the UPNG student writers took PhDs abroad, including John Waiko, Regis Stella, and Steven Winduo. See Ellerman, "Literary Institution," 275-80.

the Literature Department at UPNG, the original curriculum strengths, though packaged somewhat differently, still exist. In 2009, the department offered two paired strands in "Linguistics and Modern Languages," and "Literature and English Communication." Students who choose the Literature strand receive the following explanation in the university *Course Handbook* for its teaching focus:

> Most courses in Literature are designed with three broad interests in mind . . . The first emphasis is on postcolonial literary studies, theory, and criticism. Here also the emphasis is on literature of PNG and the Pacific. Second, the program emphasizes creative writing, literary techniques and methods and studies in various genres of literature. The third focus is on cultural studies, literature and society, traditional knowledge systems, folklore and oral traditions. Various issues and studies in culture, literature, folklore and society are given significance. A major in literature will cover all the three areas. Students can take up literary studies on its own or as an elective with other courses. In essence, literary studies allow flexibility and an interdisciplinary focus.[64]

In 2009, the three areas in which the literature curriculum placed emphasis were outgrowths of its decolonizing curriculum of the 1960s and 70s, and the creative writing classes first offered by Ulli Beier. The "New Literatures" category now incorporates theory, criticism and all the literature courses. The emphasis is still heavily on the new literatures and world literature since Modernism, constituting about 35% of the curriculum. The second group of courses, which accounts for 24% of the curriculum, now focuses on writing, editing and publishing. "Oral Traditions" has been subsumed under a broader category of "Cultural Studies" and makes up 41% of the curriculum.

Of the first generation student-writers from UPNG, only Russell Soaba remains on staff at the Literature Department today. Many of his colleagues are members of the second generation of PNG writers, who attended UPNG in the 1980s when Prithvindra Chakravarti[65] was still in the department. After more than forty years, the resonance between the late colonial and the contemporary department is significant in its implications for curriculum and teaching. The effect of this tradition on the history of PNG literature remains to be seen.

[64] UPNG *Course Handbook* (2009), 365.

[65] Chakravarti remained at the UPNG Literature Department for twenty years, leaving finally in 1986(interview with the author, Sydney, Australia, 2001).