

Conclusion: Remembering Nuakata

Dear Shelley,

I shall try to write a small letter to you both so that you might know that you and us are one family. From God we are staying on this earth and from God our strength comes.

Shelley when you both left, I and your mother at Gohiya felt very sad and we cried for you. After your Gohiya mother slept and when she got up the next morning she saw your house and she was crying and she said to me, “Shelley and Roger are like my children, I carried them.” She said, “All the time they were thinking-caring for me.” And she asked me, “Will they come back some time or not?” And I said, “I don’t know. Only God knows.” And I said, “If Roger gets well Shelley will be happy and she will say to Roger, ‘let’s come back to Nuakata Island,’ “and their study . . . they will finish it.”¹ (Excerpt from a letter from Noah Siyae, 30 November 1993)

We received this letter from Wycliffe’s father just before Christmas 1993. Reading it we felt both sorrow and joy. We had reluctantly left Nuakata by mid-October and returned to Melbourne. Our time there was abruptly foreshortened when, in early September, following a particularly perilous boat journey, Roger developed his tenth bout of what we assumed to be malaria. Although the frequency of his attacks was high in terms of the local population, the occurrence of what Western medicine identifies as malaria was not. It was rife on Nuakata. After taking the requisite course of quinine, Roger had felt well for a day or so before the all too familiar fever and headache returned. Seasonal winds, rain, and

heavy seas meant that no one on the island was able to return to the mainland by sailing canoe or boat. Effectively stranded without radio or boat, and unable to seek medical advice from Moses, who was away at the time, I sought assistance from Eric, the local healer. Eric treated Roger on two separate occasions, his efforts bringing relief for several days, before the acute spleen pain and fever reemerged. More than a little anxious and distressed by this turn of events, I sought advice from Noah and Eunice, who urged Roger and me to leave the island and seek medical attention back in Australia. Bad weather prevented us from effecting this plan until four weeks later when, quite fortuitously, a yacht sailed into Duwaduwal Bay and its owners, a retired couple from Australia, kindly offered to transport us back to Alotau.

Overwhelmed by sadness when we left the island, we were struggling with life back in Melbourne. When left to wander, our thoughts invariably returned to Nuakata. We longed to be back there with our friends. We imagined what they were doing. It was summer—the pineapples and mangoes would be ripening. Children would be playing together in the water—jumping, splashing, and laughing. Wycliffe's mother and sisters would be heading off to their gardens at sunrise. They would return by midmorning to escape the full heat of the day. Perhaps his brothers were out fishing and diving on the reefs. Or maybe they were playing cards in our house. We wondered, Who was winning? Which teams had won the soccer and netball competitions? Was everyone well? Did they miss us as we missed them?

It was difficult to reconcile these compelling memories and imaginings with my project to write an ethnography detailing notions of the gendered person and reproductive health on Nuakata. How could I write about people who had become like kin, friends, or acquaintances without objectifying them? How should I represent and honor people's ways of thinking and acting? How would I create a sensible narrative from my disparate memories, field notes, transcripts, and diary accounts? How could I do all this while critically reflecting on ethnographic method, knowledge production, and writing? Noah's letter arrived just as I was contemplating the writing task. His words and the relayed comments of his wife, Eunice, not only brought comfort but also inspired a way that I might remember the people and places of Nuakata. His letter inadvertently touched on themes about knowledge, gender, belonging, difference, and remembering that had emerged as central to my ethnographic

project to understand the significance or relevance of notions of the gendered person on Nuakata.

Knowledge and Knowing

That Noah should write this first letter, rather than Wycliffe, Eunice, or even Geteli, was telling in many ways. On one level, it simply reflected his role in orchestrating our stay on Nuakata and his comparative facility with written English. While it was Eunice's customary right, as a senior woman in her *susu*, to determine whether or not we could live at Gohiya, in practice Noah and Eunice's sister's husband, Antiya, were instrumental in making that decision. These men were conferred with this authority because of their respected status within the Nuakatan community, especially within the United Church, and because of their long-standing work on behalf of Eunice's *susu*. On another level, the fact that the author of this letter was a respected senior man reiterated the central irony of my fieldwork, namely, that despite my prefield assumptions and intentions, men as much as, if not more than, women proved pivotal to my research. While senior men did not presume to speak with me about women's experience of pregnancy, birth, contraception, menstruation, and gardening—deeming it women's knowledge or knowing—they often claimed an authority to speak on behalf of women and younger kin about other, related customary matters. On these occasions women routinely, but not always, deferred to them.

It was tempting to conclude from this that knowledge was gendered on Nuakata and that my research inflected a masculine sensibility. While I would not wish to deny the validity of both assertions, for they are partially true, they are ultimately too simplistic. On Nuakata, as discussed in chapter 3, people could know something without directly experiencing it, however this form of knowledge was less potent than experienced knowledge and understanding. For this reason, in any context where two or more people are present, only those with significant experience could claim authority to speak or perform this knowledge. While possession of knowledge defines someone's individuality, it did not constitute him or her as a person or an autonomous individual as such.

Before speaking about what they know then, people living on Nuakata took account of their relationship with those present and observed the rules governing what could be said or done in the presence

of senior or junior, and male or female affines, *susu* members and other people. In this way it is possible to claim, somewhat clumsily, that age, seniority, status, kinship relations, gender, ethnicity, and religious affiliation influenced both the experience and expression of knowledge on Nuakata. I am highly reluctant to specify how this occurs, for people living on Nuakata would neither think of nor explain the local rules governing the dissemination of knowledge in these terms.

It follows, then, that the understanding of particular aspects of Nuakatan sociality that I gained through conversations and interviews with people was necessarily influenced by my informants and the speaking contexts in which the knowledge was elicited. My understanding was also filtered through Wycliffe who, as a single man of my age and my fictive affine, brought his own long-standing and highly attuned ethnographic sensibility to our research relationship. In recording and reproducing knowledge gained in the field, I felt compelled to report the speaking context—to specify who spoke, to what audience, where, and, if possible, with what intent. Without such details readers cannot begin to understand the potency of the knowledge shared and something of the speaker's intent in disclosing such information or understanding. Nor can they form an opinion about the efficacy of both my informants' and my own claims to know. By providing these contextual details, I provide readers with the opportunity to assess how interrelated factors such as the gender, age, kinship affiliations, status, and ethnicity of my informants are inflected in my representations of various aspects of Nuakatan sociality. This is not to suggest, however, that it is possible to fully grasp a speaker's intent or that my representations of these fieldwork encounters are transparent. Rather this narrative strategy serves to remind and reinforce the idea that anthropological knowledge production in and beyond the field is contingent on the intersubjective process of participant observation. Speakers, listeners, ethnographers, and readers are always positioned in these encounters. This narrative strategy also potentially alerts the reader to the absences and elisions in fieldwork encounters—to all that is unasked, unknown, or misunderstood.

Bearing, Birthing, and Gender

As I contemplated the writing task, Eunice's claim that we were like her children—that it was as if she had carried and born us—refocused my attention on reproductive health matters, while also reminding me of the

evident yet understated significance of women's bearing and carrying practices on Nuakata. Although my research on women's reproductive health was foreshortened by our hasty departure from Nuakata, it was clear to me that women were making very thoughtful, if not pragmatic, decisions about their own and their children's health (see chaps. 2, 3, and 5). Aware of the risks to themselves and their infants associated with village births—namely, postpartum hemorrhage, retained placenta, and infection—many, but by no means all, were electing to birth at the hospital on the mainland. In this setting they could birth with female midwives in attendance. Medication and surgery were also available to them if required. By birthing in the hospital, rather than their villages, women were spared the embarrassment of having a single, male community health worker in attendance if complications arose during or after labor. Some also wished to avoid the intervention of village midwives during labor and birthing. Many women, however, continued to birth in their matrilineal villages, even if they had previously birthed in the hospital. The reasons for this were many and varied. Some could not raise the necessary money for the trip to the mainland and a prolonged stay in hospital. Some husbands refused to allow their wives to go to the hospital. Some felt healthy during their pregnancies and preferred to birth on familiar, matrilineal land with their kin present.

Women living on Nuakata largely relied on the advice and support of their female kin for prenatal and postnatal care. Too embarrassed to seek assistance from the male community health worker during birth, they were similarly reluctant to seek his advice, support, or intervention around contraception, prenatal, and postnatal care. In theory, female midwives from the mainland were meant to conduct prenatal clinics once a month on the island. In practice, however, these rarely occurred. Bad weather and inadequate funding prevented the midwives from regularly attending these clinics. As a result some young women felt unsure and even fearful of birth. Caught between the advice and practices of their older female kin and a conflicting preventive community health agenda encouraged by the community health worker and reinforced during their primary school education, these young women were, at times, unsure about what they should do in relation to their reproductive health. Sometimes familial and economic pressures prevented them from effecting their reproductive health choices.

As discussed in chapter 3, by bearing children and garden produce, women sustained their living *susu*. They ensured the continuity of their

susu and its individual members for past, present, and future generations. Women said that only they bear children, for they alone possess the bodily form and maturity that enables them to perform this activity. While the form of girls' bodies reveals the potential to bear children, their inability to produce menstrual blood means they lack the capacity to sustain pregnancies. It was this capacity, and the capacity to sustain one's *susu*, rather than childbearing itself, that was considered most relevant to the category "woman" on Nuakata. A woman's capacity to bear children, and hence her identification as a woman, was known to be contingent upon the activities of those *susu* members (male and female, past and present) who sustained and nurtured her to maturity. It was contingent on all those who could enable her to realize this potential—principally non-*susu* men with whom she could have vaginal sexual intercourse.

If it was primarily women (rather than girls, boys, or men) who carried and bore, then it was men who made this possible by clearing and preparing the space for children and/or garden produce to grow. In this way, men facilitated and supported women's bearing activities. While they could not give birth, men could and did carry children and garden produce, just as women often assisted with the clearing of gardens. Despite their different activities and responsibilities, men and women could and did perform and engage in the same practices. As discussed in chapter 5, both men and women were involved in nurturing and growing themselves, their children, and, through them, their *susu*. People claimed that it was only when semen and menstrual blood co-mingle that the unborn child's blood develops and the child can then grow within the womb. The child is therefore grown, if not substantively constituted, by the combined labors of its parents. This understanding of the emergence and constitution of the unborn baby and, by implication, the child, the young man or woman, and the adult resonates with M. Strathern's (1988) claims about the Melanesian understanding of the constitution of the person and the unitary individual. As noted in the introduction, Strathern claims that the Melanesian person is understood as a social microcosm—the product of cross-sex, consanguineal, and affinal parts/relations. The person has dual origins, and it is only in specific relational contexts and through specific material exchanges that a person's internal, dualistic differentiation is de-emphasized to produce the unitary individual. It is only on these occasions that being male or being female emerges as a "holistic unitary state" (M. Strathern 1988, 14).

Similarly, people assumed that one is not born a woman (or a man), on Nuakata. One becomes a woman because of and in relation to people (both male and female, *susu*, and non-*susu*) who are not women, that is, young girls, men, etc. The terms *man* and *woman* only became meaningful, or in any sense prescriptive, in relation to others. While the specter of (child) bearing and vaginal sex between a man and woman (rather than heterosexuality) pervaded this category, the performance of these activities confirmed rather than created someone as a woman. Women who did not bear children and/or garden produce were still considered women, for the form of their body and their capacity to menstruate was indicative of their potential to do so. People felt sorry for these women. By having no one to nurture, grow, or sustain and, in turn, no one to care for them when they are old, their living, and that of their *susu*, was necessarily diminished.

As this discussion implies, the categorical and ethnocentric distinctions between the terms *sex*, *gender*, and *sexuality* were of limited value for the analysis of the categories “man” and “woman” and the relations within and between these types of people on Nuakata. Where the context demanded, two genders were differentiated on the basis of bodily form and perceived potential to bear children and thereby sustain and continue a given *susu*. Only those with the potential to bear children could, in time, with age and maturity, become women. Therefore, the difference between sex and gender on Nuakata was subtle. It could be described as the difference between form and action, potential and capacity. In my experience, neither the terms nor the difference between the terms was invoked. In fact, such a difference is best understood as an ethnocentric analytical contrivance. Similarly, people did not speak of sexuality, although they did speak of their wants or desires. People’s desires—for food, sex, or other goods and services—were spoken of as alienable possessions or performative longings. The cause or underlying basis of their desires was neither questioned nor invoked. Desire itself was not understood as a substantive essence. Accordingly, someone’s sexual desires did not define him or her as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, and so forth. They merely characterized the way he or she preferred to act in sexual relationships.

These reflections beyond the field made me reconsider my original ethnographic project to reflect on the significance or relevance of ideas about the gendered person on Nuakata. During my time on Nuakata people rarely spoke of human beings in abstract terms. In fact there was no

equivalent term for the category person in Alina Nu'ata! As discussed in chapters 2 and 6, particular human beings were always identified in terms of their particular activities, their identifying characteristics and relationships, or their relationship to the speaker. Particular human beings were also described as “the one who . . .,” where the ellipses stand for a particular activity or way of doing things. It could be said that doing rather than being, social relationships rather than essential personal characteristics were fundamental to Nuakatan ways of understanding human beings. It was people's belongings to other people, places, and things, rather than their identities or status as persons, that mattered on Nuakata.

In contemplating how to write the ethnography I was faced with several immediate theoretical and political issues. How could I write in a way that addressed my own and other ethnographers' questions about the gendered person while also conveying the ethnocentric nature, if not irrelevance, of those questions for people living on Nuakata? How could the text reflect and respect how these people understand one another rather than anthropological debates about the comparison between Melanesian and Western persons? I also sought to highlight and reflect on the epistemological and methodological significance of a process that occurred during my own fieldwork and commonly occurs during ethnographic research. Put simply, many researchers enter the field with research topics, a set of questions, even research hypotheses, only to find, once in the field, that they must shift their foci because their research agendas are founded on false or irrelevant assumptions. This process is routinely elided in the ethnographic texts that follow.

In confronting these issues I made strategic decisions about the structure and content of the text. First I decided to privilege local people's ways of talking, explaining, and enacting their understandings of one and other. In effect this meant that difficult decisions had to be made about what could be de-emphasized or sacrificed in the text for the book to be of a readable, publishable length. I therefore decided to limit my discussion of regional and cross-regional comparisons and theoretical debates on the gendered person in the main body of the text. In my reflections on Nuakatan ways of understanding people, sociality, sickness, and child-bearing, I was determined to avoid using ethnocentric analytical terms such as person, self, subject, gender, sexuality, and “the body.” For this reason I decided to largely consign my conventional theoretical discussion of these issues to the Introduction. The other chapters engage with

these theoretical debates but they do so through the form and narrative strategies employed in the text.

These textual strategies proved more difficult to implement than it might appear. At a most basic level it is difficult to avoid terms, categories, and syntax that one takes for granted. It is even more difficult to do this while also engaging with works that employ the terms one is determined not to privilege. And always the question remains, Who is the audience for such writing, such anthropological projects?

Accommodating Difference

Eunice's relayed claim that we were like her children also pointed to her understanding of living with difference. In the context of mutual care and tangible support born of living together, similarities and differences between people were accommodated—a shared place made, a common humanity discovered. Only by accommodating the similarities and differences between people (men and women, *susu* and affine, Papuan and *dimdim*) was one's *susu* revitalized, and a shared humanity established and confirmed. As a member of a given *susu* and clan, people had a recognized place on Nuakata. These allegiances determined how people of different ages, sex, and clan affiliation related with one another. They defined one's belonging and structured the interdependent and complementary relationships considered vital for one's living and staying. For these reasons people who came to stay from other places were always integrated into an existing *susu* and clan, whether or not they had known ancestral links to these groups.

Yet, integrating Roger and me proved more problematic than for most, as unlike all others who had come to stay we were white people, *dimdim*. This defined our difference. In a region with a long history of colonialism, where the remaining white missionaries and other expatriates are materially advantaged and continue to occupy positions of power and authority over local people, white skin was a difference that continued to make a difference. As white people we were assumed to eschew reciprocal, mutually dependent relationships, to value the individual, and to practice selfishness and arrogance. Access to money and material possessions was believed to lessen white people's need for others, including Papuans. Accordingly, white people acted as though their living was not contingent upon the past, present, and future activities of

both their *susu* and affines. Although known to lack knowledge and understanding of Papuan ways, white people were generally thought of as intelligent, their ways sophisticated (if not bemusing) and therefore worthy of respect.

Skin color, then, did not constitute or fundamentally determine the difference between white and Papuan peoples on Nuakata, but rather signified historically different ways of living, understanding, and relating. While not essentialist in nature, these differences were nonetheless embodied. They were evident and recognized in postures and gestures, in people's differing occupations and in the organization of spaces, in the distribution of things, and in the ways people worked, spoke, ate, and thought. It therefore follows that Papuans could act like white people and vice versa. Accordingly, Papuans can and do act, to varying degrees, as if they are autonomous individuals rather than relationally constituted, just as white people can act as if they are relationally constituted. Only by redressing the material inequalities and transforming these embodiments will the postures of difference separating Papuan and white people diminish. Perhaps, only then will Noah's claim that all people on earth come from God and share a common humanity be more than a platitude in this context.

Although Roger and I wished to belong, to have a tangible connection with particular *susu* and the broader community on Nuakata, we too sought relations that could strengthen the similarities and accommodate the differences (both material and performative) between ourselves and local people. There were many reasons for taking this stance, among them ethical and methodological considerations as well as self-interest. I believed it disingenuous to position myself as a participant observer, who was, in effect, a *tabula rasa* prior to arrival on the island. I neither hoped nor attempted to act as though my participant observation on Nuakata would lead me to an indigenous understanding of local knowledge and practices. Nor did I pretend to lack opinions or beliefs. Apart from anything else, Roger's presence made it impossible to act otherwise. There as my partner, to offer support, Roger did not seek a research relationship with local people. Rather, he sought friendship founded on mutual respect and interest in one another's past, present, and future ways of living. Unlike mine, his relationships with people were not constrained by a pressing research agenda. Having my partner present also meant that local people could observe me in a relationship that extended beyond the field, one embedded in my own social world. Apart from respectfully

refraining from demonstrations of affection in public, Roger and I maintained a way of relating to one another, including the way we organized our domestic life, that testified not only to cultural difference but to a sense of personal continuity.

As suggested earlier, despite their quiet misgivings about white people and their relations with Papuans, our hosts had good reason to reinforce and accommodate the similarities and differences between us. By housing and supporting us, the Nuakatan community in general and several families in particular could, by association, claim something of the respect and status historically asserted and bestowed upon white people in the region. Our presence and fascination with Nuakatan people's ideas and practices, our desire to learn their language, gave people cause to reflect on their customary ways and provided an opportunity for them to conceive of themselves as distinctive and knowledgeable. Therefore, our stay, and more particularly my research, reinforced, perhaps even created, a collective Nuakatan cultural identity, both on the island and in the region. More practically, our presence brought limited material benefits for our friends, fictive kin, and, to a lesser degree, the wider community.

Belonging and Remembering

That our place, our belonging among the Siyae *susu*, affines, and broader Nuakatan community, should be confirmed after we had gone was no coincidence. As the practices associated with death and burial on Nuakata revealed, it was only by looking backward on what had gone before—on someone's individual ways and living relationships—that his or her staying could be understood and encapsulated. Someone's habits, relationships, and things constituted the territory of his or her individuality and belonging. Indeed, these belongings to people (particularly *susu*), places, and things constitute someone (or "sum-one," the sum of the relational parts that together make one); they constitute what may loosely yet misleadingly be glossed as the person.

After death, the deceased could only enter the realm of the dead when he or she no longer belonged with the living and, conversely, when the living no longer belonged with the deceased. For this to occur, the living must respectfully acknowledge and appropriately remember the nature of their embodied relationship with the deceased. In so doing, they completed or finished this living, embodied relationship.

As other Massim ethnographers attest, the practice of remembering in

order to complete or finish someone's life is a pivotal aspect of mortuary feasts across the region (Battaglia 1992; Damon and Wagner 1989). On Nuakata, as elsewhere, people often referred to this form of remembering as forgetting the deceased. Forgetting, in this context, did not mean erasing memories of the deceased, or denying the personal impact of his or her loss. On the contrary, forgetting was a process of recalling the social relationships integral to the former life of the deceased, and therefore his or her *susu*. By exchanging valued food, such as pigs, yams, and rice, the *susu* and/or affines of the deceased specifically demonstrated the deceased's prior contribution to the life and growth of their kin. These social relations between the deceased's *susu* and affines, and the debts, obligations, and responsibilities associated with them, were completed and forgotten through the process of gift exchange integral to the mortuary feasts. During the period of mourning following a death, people remembered to forget the deceased in other ways, typically through acts of avoidance—avoiding use of his or her name and engaging in activities particularly associated with him or her. How one remembered the deceased depended on one's relation to him or her.

On Nuakata, then, remembering was enacted, embodied, placed. People directed or projected their thinking-feeling to the knowledge, practices, events, or people to be recalled, thereby creating the past in the present. Remembering could also be a kind of imagining. For example, in remembering a story, someone evoked the seen and unseen, known and unknown alike. Only those with the necessary authority and experience were entitled to recall customary matters, be it a story or practice or some other form of knowledge. Knowing, like remembering, was neither emotive nor distant from experience and relationships. Through participation and observation people learned how to perform and thereby remember given activities, things, and places. Knowledge, particularly performed customary knowledge, was possessed by given people. They alone chose whom, if anyone, they would pass it on to, in effect deciding who could remember it. More often than not knowledge of this kind was entrusted to select junior members within one's matrilineage—kin who by their thoughtfulness, diligence, or astuteness had demonstrated their worthiness. But in some instances this knowledge was given to nonkin with whom one had a special relationship, or to trusted and respected people who were prepared to pay for it. Relationships of mutual respect and trust, if not affection, were therefore pivotal to the exchange of customary knowledge. Where qualified trust and respect exist, the information and ideas exchanged were incomplete or misleading. Failure to remember

the details of customary stories or practices was thought to cause disrespect to those implicated in the performance. It was also thought to diminish the potency of the story or practice. Forgetfulness in these contexts demonstrated an inability to place oneself in (an)other's space, an inability to empathize. It was quintessentially a form of carelessness and disrespect—a lack of care and respect for one's kin and for the entrusted knowledge and practices. As such, there was a moral quality to both remembering and forgetting. Committing improprieties of this kind could be dangerous for such acts were thought to incite the ire of both the living and the dead.

For the people living on Nuakata, remembering and forgetting were often linked or related social practices. One might remember as a means of completing and forgetting given relationships, knowledge, or practices, or remember in order to nurture and continue them. Conversely, one might forget as a means of remembering. What was and was not said or done was often equally important. In fact, concealed or elided thoughts, feelings, and acts were often considered more potent forms of knowledge. Different obligations and conditions applied according to the perceived value and purpose of that which was remembered. How people remembered depended on their relationship to the people present and the ones remembered. People always remained mindful of their relative authority to speak or act.

As I reflected on the implications of these issues for the written ethnography, I wondered how I could remember my fieldwork experiences in a way that respected the moral purposes and effects bestowed upon remembering and forgetting on Nuakata. It seemed that my capacity to empathize, to imagine, if you like, was crucial. Among other things, I needed to demonstrate respect for details, remain aware of the extent and limitations of my own and others' knowledge, and, where possible, maintain clarity about the purpose of my own and others' remembering. In detailing the context in which knowledge or understanding was elicited I must also, where possible, remain mindful of my relationship to the people whose knowledge and remembering I represent. Not only must I strategically avoid writing about some things, but I must also make these elisions and their purposes evident, if not explicit.

Remembering Nuakata, Remembering Us

As I read Noah's letter, I interpreted Eunice's question about our possible return to Nuakata as an attempt to discern the future nature of our

relationship with herself, her *susu*, and, more broadly, the people of Nuakata. In effect, it seemed that she was asking Noah, asking us, how should she remember us? Did we feel as she did? How should she think-feel and speak of our stay on Nuakata? Was the relationship continuing or completed? While unsure, Noah thought our relationship would continue. Requests made later in the letter for a Methodist hymnbook and for news of our well-being suggested that he wished to foster indebtedness. Noah also recognized that my research was incomplete and that this would necessitate my return to Nuakata. By doing this he recognized what we shared during our stay and highlighted our continuing interdependence. In writing the letter he engaged in an act of remembering aimed at recognizing and continuing our relationship.

The sentiments expressed in Noah's letter transported my thinking back to Nuakata and, more specifically, Gohiya. Perhaps this was Noah's intent. Thinking and feeling were spoken of as inseparable on Nuakata. Thoughts were felt and feelings were conceived and expressed thoughtfully, if not purposefully. When enacted or expressed, felt-thoughts could effect concealed purposes, causing others to act. As I focused on Nuakata I remembered times spent with friends and adopted kin and imagined what they might be doing now, how they might have changed. The feelings of alienation and difference that I experienced during our first days there mingled without merging with the sense of grief and loss I felt during and after our departure. Among other things, these responses revealed and highlighted both the extent and the limitations of my prefield imaginings—imaginings fundamentally influenced by a sense of prefieldwork nerves and anxiety. Feeling desolate when I first arrived, I only decided to stay because I imagined and hoped for a time when we belonged on Nuakata. This hope was founded on an assumption of a shared humanity and the compelling testimony of many anthropologists to fictive kin relationships with their fieldwork hosts. In remembering these feelings I was reminded of and confronted by the ways my prefield imaginings had positively and negatively influenced my research and relationships on Nuakata. If my prefield imaginings were shaped by memories of Pacific anthropology classes and texts, feminist theory and my father's wartime experiences, then my postfield remembering was shaped by these conjoined with experiences shared on Nuakata. My memories of these experiences and of particular people and places enabled me to reimagine Nuakata. Not only was my experience there limited, my mem-

ory of this experience was necessarily selective. Noah underlines this point in his letter when he notes that my research is not finished. In fact my research was just beginning.

Foreshortened by Roger's illness, our stay on Nuakata had ended at a time when familiarity and trust between us and Eunice's family (both *susu* and affines) was beginning to emerge. The research and the relationships were inextricably bound. Only through experience, by repeatedly doing and/or witnessing given practices, would I come to know and understand their local significance. Only by proving myself trustworthy over time, by repeatedly demonstrating care and respect for people, by establishing mutually indebted relationships, would I be entrusted with knowledge of valued customary ideas and practices. For me to more fully understand Nuakatan sociality and notions of the "I" or "one who . . .," I must enliven these relationships with people, both by returning to and remembering the field imagined and lived.