Introduction
'Amicable signs'

> It is to be observed that friendship, from whatever mercenary cause it was entered into is inviolate and is a kind of real relation in Tahiti.
>
> – William Pascoe Crook

> I believe no European in future will ever know what their ancient Customs of receiving Strangers were.
>
> – William Bligh

The naturalist George Forster got his first glimpse of the Tahitian coastline on the morning of 16 August 1773. Looking out from the deck of the *Resolution*, he watched the dawn break over the island and the inhabitants awake, perceive the ship and launch their canoes. His initial encounter with Tahitian people was subsequently described in *A Voyage Round the World*, written in English and published in 1777:

> One of the[canoes] approached within hale. In it were two men almost naked, with a kind o[f] turban on the head, and a sash round their waist. They waved a large green leaf, and accosted us with the repeated exclamation of *tayo*! which even without the help of vocabularies, we could easily translate into the expression of proffered friendship. The canoe now came under our stern, and we let down a present of beads, nails, and medals to the men. In return, they handed up to us a green stem of a plantane [*sic*], which was their symbol of peace, with a desire that it might be fixed in a conspicuous part of the vessel. It was accordingly stuck up in the main shrouds, upon which our new friends immediately returned towards the land. In a short time we saw great crouds of people on the seashore gazing at us, while numbers in consequence of this treaty of peace, which was now firmly established, launched their canoes, and loaded them with various productions of their country. In less than an hour we were surrounded by an hundred canoes, each of which carried one, two, three, and sometimes four persons, who placed a perfect confidence in us, and had no arms whatsoever. The welcome sound of *tayo* resounded on all sides, and we returned it with a degree of heart-felt pleasure, on this favourable change of our situation. (G. Forster 2000:143–4)

What is this word, '*tayo*', that is so integral to Forster's sense of having arrived?[1] He presents the term as at once unfamiliar and transparent. At this stage in Oceanic encounter it is neither. Forster was travelling on James Cook's second voyage to the Pacific. Cook learned to say '*tayo*' during his earlier visit to Tahiti in the *Endeavour*, between 12 April and 12 July 1769. The records of his English predecessors in Tahiti, the captain and crew of the *Dolphin*, who claimed the island for King George III (as 'King George's Island') and remained there from 19 June until 28 July 1767, do not register the word (Robertson 1948; Rensch 2000:330–1). But Louis Antoine de Bougainville, whose ships the *Boudeuse* and *Étoile* spent just twelve days at Tahiti in April 1768, recorded it in both his journal and the published version of his voyage. Bougainville's botanist Commerson included it in his rudimentary vocabulary of Tahiti (Taillemite 1977:499–500). George's father, Johann Reinhold Forster, who was with him on board the *Resolution* when it made landfall at Tahiti, had only the year before, with George's assistance, translated Bougainville's account into English. The scene that greeted father and son off the Tahitian coast had been anticipated in Bougainville's text, which reports (in Forster's translation): 'we had much to do to warp in amidst the croud of boats and the noise. All these people came crying out *tayo*, which means friend, and gave a thousand signs of friendship; they all asked nails and ear-rings of us' (Bougainville 1967:217). The word '*tayo*' then, far from being novel to the voyagers, 'resounds on all sides' in early European narratives. It was already, by the time George Forster wrote, *the* recognizable Tahitian word: the first word to translate across the beach, the first word to appear in European accounts, the signifier of contact itself. Forster's concern at this stage, however, is to attribute the spontaneous and heartfelt response provoked by hearing the word, not to its learned familiarity, but to its universal translatability.

This book begins with this idea of friendship as in some way self-evident. It explores the traditions and desires that lead European voyagers such as Forster to assert instant and instinctive recognition of *taio* and cognate Oceanic friendship terms; consistently to believe that the first word they heard in the Pacific was the word for friendship. My study encompasses forty years of early European–Oceanic encounter, beginning with the arrival of the *Dolphin* in Tahiti in June 1767, and ending with the beachcomber Edward Robarts's departure from the Marquesas

[1] There are a number of variations to the spelling in European accounts. Unless context demands otherwise, I have adopted *taio*, which is favoured in recent anthropological discussion and conforms to the Tahitian alphabet.

in 1806. I look at key moments and accounts of imperial exploration: the three Cook voyages of the *Endeavour* (1769–71), the *Resolution* and *Adventure* (1772–5) and the *Resolution* and *Discovery* (1776–80); the wreck of the East India trader the *Panther* in Palau in 1783; Bligh's *Bounty* and *Providence* voyages of 1788–9 and 1791–2; Vancouver's visits to Tahiti and Hawaii in 1791 and 1792; and the London Missionary Society's inaugural missionary voyage of 1796–9. And although the majority of the accounts under consideration are British, I also look at records of the visit of Bougainville to Tahiti in 1769, the reconnoitres of Spanish ships and the sojourn of Spanish missionaries in Tahiti-iti from 1772 to 1775, and the 1804 visits to the Marquesas and Hawaii of the Russian exploring expedition under Adam von Krusenstern, all of which occurred during what Harry Liebersohn has recognized as a cosmopolitan era of exploration, that took in 'a broad swath of Europe as well as the wider world' (Liebersohn 2006:2). Although I touch on contacts and friendships in Tonga, Hawaii, New Zealand, the Marquesas, Easter Island, Niue, Vanuatu, Palau and Pitcairn, the island of Tahiti, more than any other part of Oceania, is focal to this study, because of its centrality to the European encounter with Pacific cultures: Harriet Guest has written of the 'accretional logic' by which 'Cook and his fellow journalists conceived of the different island cultures they encountered through their similarity or difference to Tahiti' (Guest 2007:21). All of the texts I examine give detailed accounts of friendship-making between crew members and islanders, of a kind that is seen to be improvised on local terms. All but the *Dolphin* journalists name their Tahitian friendships *taio*. The account of the *Missionary Voyage* of 1799 echoes the terms of George Forster's and Bougainville's arrival scenes, focusing also on crowding, the absence of arms and the familiar yet unfamiliar word, with only a slight tincture of English to dilute the impression of classic first encounter:

> Being so numerous, we endeavoured to keep them from crowding on board; but in spite of all our efforts to prevent it, there were soon not less than one hundred of them dansing and capering like frantic persons about our decks, crying, 'Tayo! tayo!' and a few broken sentences of English were often repeated. They had no weapons of any kind among them . . . (J. Wilson 1799:56)

Such a sustained rhetoric over some thirty years of European–Oceanic contact solicits closer attention. Why was it necessary, in these early days of scientific imperialism and then missionary enterprise, to be received in a spirit of friendship?

This question is particularly relevant to the British voyages that bear the main weight of my investigation. The secret Instructions to the

French and Spanish captains Bougainville and Boenechea do not contain explicit injunctions regarding friendship-making. However, those for each of Cook's voyages to the Pacific set forward, alongside plottings of course and guidelines for the collection of specimens, explicit strategies for engaging with Pacific communities. The Instructions to the *Endeavour* voyage of 1768–71, which constitute the prototype, encapsulate many of the themes of this book in their attempt to tread rather than blur a line between friendliness and suspicion, exploitation and interaction, the individual and the crowd:

> You are to endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a friendship with the Natives, presenting them such Trifles as may be acceptable to them, exchanging with them for Provisions (of which there is great Plenty) such of the Merchandize you have been directed to Provide, as they may value, and shewing them every kind of Civility and regard. But as Captn Wallis has represented the Island to be very populous, and the Natives (as well there as at the other Islands which he visited) to be rather treacherous than otherwise you are to be Cautious not to let your self be surprized by them, but to be Constantly on your guard against any accident. (Cook 1955:cclxxx)

In islands whose natural abundance is persistently assumed, where 'Natives' exchange from a position of 'great Plenty', Cook is advised to 'cultivate a friendship' through prestation and trade.[2] How this kitchen garden of intimacy is to be established in the fertile wilderness is not, however, clear. The Instructions propose both the trivial and the useful as models of exchange. Gifts to local people should be 'Trifles': items of little value, implicitly deceptive,[3] whose value is nonetheless acknowledged to be significantly determined by the needs and desires of the recipients. Equally the anticipated natives are figured as potentially treacherous and generous, their islands both bounteous and 'very populous'. Once a vision of the crowd displaces the proposed singularity of 'a friendship', 'guard' replaces 'regard'. As a guide to the formation of friendship, the instructions are notable for the absence of any reference to verbal communication. There are no instructions for the acquisition of local languages, no models of phatic communion, and the presentation of objects serves as substitute for words.

[2] For the relationship between cultivation, culture and civility, see Williams 1983:87, Young 1995:30–1 and Hall 2000:10–12.

[3] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'trifle' as both 'a small article of little intrinsic value' and 'a false or idle tale told to deceive, cheat or befool . . . a lying story, a fable, a fiction'.

Additional Instructions for the *Endeavour* apply the injunction concerning friendship to the projected discovery of a great Southern Continent. In the event of such a discovery, Cook is instructed:

> You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any, and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value, inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprized by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accident.
>
> You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain; or, if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors. (Cook 1955:cclxxxiii)

In new territory, the appearances of friendship are to be established before friendship may proceed: information concerning the character and force of the native population, which in the case of Tahiti had already been supplied by Captain Wallis, must be obtained as a necessary preface to friendly overtures. A space of potential misinterpretation thus opens between the recognition and dissemination of the signs of friendship that is a recurrent site of interpretative tension throughout Cook's voyages. Friendship projected onto the unknown, rather than a context of previously encountered peoples, is doubly contingent. Its terms may be rendered instantly redundant by the absence of any local population, or practically redundant by the perception of local resistance. These alternatives, in turn, mark the boundaries of a European desire for amicable relations that it is both fantastic and territorial, only dreamed of and yet already subject to contract. The reiterated injunction to 'take possession' either with the consent of inhabitants or, in their absence, 'by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions', underscores, once again, the neglect of any direction for verbal exchange, begging the question of how 'consent' might be communicated.[4] This in turn leaves friendship an overladen term: made to carry the burden of European good intentions for the benefit, ultimately, of European conscience rather than putative native subjects.

It is in another supplementary text to the *Endeavour* voyage, Morton's *Hints*, that acts of communication are adumbrated. Proffered by James Douglas, 14th Earl of Morton, who was president of the Royal Society

[4] Greg Dening has unpacked the relationship between an English politics of 'possession' and the setting up of markers in his seminal essay 'Possessing Tahiti' (Dening 1996:128–67).

(1764–8), the *Hints* are a more tentative document than the Instructions. Written in the conditional tense, rather than the future infinitive of the Instructions, they constitute a set of suggestions rather than an official code of conduct, which exemplifies the 'gentle method' they advocate for communicative exchange. I want to draw particular attention to Morton's parenthetical anticipation of a potential scene of miscommunication between Native and European. Morton writes:

> Conquest over such people can give no just title; because they could never be the Aggressors.
>
> They may naturally and justly attempt to repel intruders, whom they may apprehend are come to disturb them in the quiet possession of their country, whether that apprehension be well or ill founded. (Cook 1955:514)

Here Morton recognizes that subject positions at the scene of encounter are unequivocally dictated by the relationship to territory. Entitlement not only positions Europeans and Natives as subjects and objects of any act of violence – as aggressors and defenders: it must equally, in the brief space of contact, allow local interpretation to govern communication, to the extent that even Native *mis*interpretation of European communicative overtures, and even where it produces acts of violence, will always constitute true interpretation.

It is in this context, of a relationship to interpretation already spelled out by a relationship to territory, that Morton introduces his suggested techniques of communication. He writes, 'There are many ways to convince them of the Superiority of Europeans, without slaying any of those poor people', and goes on to describe a series of complex performances that he hopes will play this dual role, creating a substitute for violent interaction, and miming the European into a position of superiority. He advocates:

> By shooting some of the Birds or other Animals that are near them; – Shewing them that a Bird upon wing may be brought down by a Shot. – Such an appearance would strike them with amazement and awe. – Lastly to drive a bullet thro' one of their hutts, or knock down some conspicuous object with great Shot, if any such are near the Shore.
>
> Amicable signs may be made which they could not possibly mistake. – Such as holding up a jug, turning it bottom upwards, to shew them it was empty, then applying it to the lips in the attitude of drinking. – The most stupid from such a token, must immediately comprehend that drink was wanted.
>
> Opening the mouth wide, putting the fingers towards it, and then making the motion of chewing, would sufficiently demonstrate a want of food. (Cook 1955:514–15)

The order of examples here enacts its intended effect, substituting 'amicable signs' for violence. Unlike the 'shock and awe' tactics of recent

warfare, Morton's strategies of 'amazement and awe' are conducted at one remove, on animals and dwellings understood to serve a primarily symbolic function, as effective substitutes for human harm. The 'amicable signs' that follow enact a more ludicrous performance: in the doubly belaboured context of described mime, verbs proliferate to convey the most basic of actions, designed to satisfy the most essential of needs. And in both the indirect ultimatum of marksmanship and the clumsy theatre of mimed communication, Morton's *Hints* betray the strain under which they operate, as they work to deflect conflict, and to keep the hands of those engaged in an expedition of scientific discovery clean of the violence of imperial contact. Yet the *Hints* stand out among the instructive texts of Cook's voyages in advocating performances at which 'the Natives' constitute the projected audience. Morton's emphasis is not simply on sketching the separate scenes of a cross-cultural pantomime: he is also concerned to anticipate local responses, to second-guess native interpretation. If the communicative model he offers is hardly fluent or interlocutory, retaining the disjunction of theatre and audience, this is also partly the product of attempting to imagine and describe relations that have not yet been set in place.

That friendship was a significant part of the imperial project of discovery was manifest not just in the ways voyaging was proposed, but in the ways in which territory was mapped as a consequence. Instructions in hand, Cook charted the Pacific according to codes of friendship, repeatedly getting it wrong. Niue was called Savage Island after an angry encounter on the beach; Tonga with its cultivated landscape and strong trade ethos became the 'Friendly Islands', although this was later exposed as a misnomer in the account of the beachcomber John Mariner, who ascertained, during his longer sojourn in Tonga (1806–10), that friendly appearances had disguised a conspiracy to attack and plunder Cook's ships (Martin 1817:58). Vancouver, whose Instructions, in the wake of Cook's death, propose conciliation rather than a more optimistic cultivation of friendship:

> You are therefore hereby strictly charged to use every possible care to avoid disputes with the natives of any of the parts where you may touch, and to be particularly attentive to endeavour, by a judicious distribution of the presents, (which have been out on board the sloop and tender under your command, by order of Lord Grenville) and by all other means, to conciliate their friendship and confidence (Vancouver 1984:286)

labours to convince the chief Maquinna at 'Friendly Cove' in Nootka Sound that he, too, is a friendly cove. The history of contact at Nukuhiva in the Marquesas can be mapped onto a geographical distinction

between the 'friendly' bay of the Tei'i and the 'unfriendly' valley of the Taipi.[5] Euro-American cartography describes an affective geography that can certainly be read as reflecting the tendency of imperial nomenclature to reify arbitrary attributions. But the authority of such designations must then equally be registered as unstable: the imperatives of naming are not simply classificatory, reflecting a vulnerability to immediate emotional impression.

Morton's 'amicable signs', like Forster's 'exclamation of *tayo*', are presented as unequivocal and transparent: communications 'which they could not possibly mistake'. In both directions across the beach, the project of European voyaging wishes to maintain the easy communication of friendly intention. How do we begin to assess this desire? Within disciplines and interdisciplinarily, the topic of friendship has increasingly engaged academic attention.[6] However, intimacy and affect have tended to be considered in relation to individual societies rather than across cultures. Sociology has methodologically confined itself within cultural borders, examining the relationship between friendship, class and culture, and the variable operations of instrumentality and affect in Euro-American friendship formation.[7] And while the operations of friendship, as I tentatively suggest in conclusion, may be the elided question of anthropological fieldwork, few anthropological texts look at cross-cultural friendship outside of, or indeed within, the local informant relationship. *The Compact*, a collection of essays that constituted the first sustained treatment of friendship in modern anthropology, argued that 'western idealistic notions of friendship' were non-transferable, and that friendships were best considered as

[5] I have discussed this psychogeography of Nukuhiva in V. Smith 2005.

[6] In 1998 two of America's leading literary theoretical journals, *South Atlantic Quarterly* and *Critical Inquiry*, devoted special issues to questions of intimacy and friendship. Peter Murphy's introduction to the *SAQ* collection of essays on 'Friendship' described it as 'a remarkably nodal concept, lying at the intersection of ethics and politics, eroticism and companionship, the personal and the public' (Murphy 1998:1). He acknowledged a resurgence of popular cultural and theoretical interest in friendship (a topic more typically displaced in modernity by a focus on love or desire). However, he expressed disappointment in philosophical interventions such as Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and Allan Bloom's *Love and Friendship*, where friendship has seemed to serve as a cypher for other types of relationship, for citizenship or love. Lauren Berlant's 'Intimacy' issue of *Critical Inquiry* focused on the modes of narrative desire that inform the pursuit of intimacy. Her introductory essay drew attention to the 'tacit fantasies, tacit rules, and tacit obligations' that govern intimate relations, while registering the contradictions that intimacy throws up between desires for domesticity and disruption (Berlant 1998: 287). These symposia were preceded by interdisciplinary collections on friendship from Porter and Tomaselli, Rouner, and Adams and Allan.

[7] In particular seminal pieces by Paine 1969a, 1969b; Wolf 1966; Cohen 1961; Silver 1989, 1990, 1997; Adams and Allan 1998; and Pahl 2000.

'social compacts' conforming with the practices of individual societies (Leyton 1974:ix). Twenty-five years later, Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman's *The Anthropology of Friendship* (1999) broached the question of cross-cultural friendship only tangentially, noting the risk of instating any absolute distinction between western and non-western modes of friendship, and advocating attention to degrees of 'social process and ambiguity' that temper what anthropologists tend to see as the rigidly structured formal patterns of friendship within non-western societies. Robert Brain's engaging study *Friends and Lovers* (1976) offered an early broadly comparative anthropological foray into the topic of friendship, which he argued had been sidelined by the dominant anthropological emphasis on kinship relations, a critique that still widely pertains.

It is where questions of friendship touch the territories of history and Empire that cross-cultural contexts become compelling. Yet studies of intimacy and Empire encounter notable resistance. A single representative case – the response in the *Journal of American History* to Anne Stoler's controversial 'Tense and Tender Ties' essay – is sufficient to gauge the level of contention encountered by scholars seeking to take the affective turn to Empire studies. Stoler sought to draw attention to what she termed, following Albert Hurtado, 'the intimate frontiers of Empire', arguing, in relation to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century colonial contexts, that 'colonial state projects ... attended minutely to the distribution of appropriate affect (what sentiments could be shown toward, and shared with, whom)' (Stoler 2001a:830, 832). While the novelty of her approach lay in its extension of the colonial archive to the domain of intimate rather than its mode of analysis, which reiterated the Foucauldian power/knowledge model of much post-colonial criticism, her respondents seemed anxious to distance themselves from her focus on positive affect. 'What's Love Got to Do with It?' asked Ramón Gutiérrez, drawing attention to what he regarded as the elision of violence towards women in Stoler's analysis (Gutiérrez 2001). The desire to reinstate what was perceived as an inevitably sidelined focus on negative affect among her respondents indicated a suspicion that to attend to private feelings and the modes of relationship they fostered was necessarily to abandon the proper task of exposing the work of Empire.[8] Stoler strenuously resisted this binarization in her response, arguing convincingly that intimacies 'are the grounds of contestations', and that

[8] More convincingly, to my mind, Mary Renda drew attention to Stoler's privileging of sexual over other forms of intimacy, a critical tendency I will explore throughout this book (Renda 2001:882–7). The privileging of kinship over friendship in anthropological discussion, highlighted by Brain (1976), is a parallel phenomenon.

'to study the intimate is *not* to turn away from colonial dominations, but to relocate their conditions of possibility and relations and forces of production' (Stoler 2001b:894).

There is much, both in the history of European interaction in the Pacific, and in recent critical practice, to prompt a straightforward exposition of the relationship between the script of Empire and a theatre of false friendship. It has become a commonplace of critiques of imperialism that sentimentalism, a discourse that informs ideas of friendship brought by Europeans to the Pacific, was complicit in palliating the violence of Empire. Peter Hulme eloquently expresses this thesis, claiming that 'Sentimental sympathy began to flow out along the veins of European commerce in search of its victims' (Hulme 1986:229).[9] Texts such as Morton's *Hints* can be easily exposed in their very self-conscious delicacy as far from provisional manifestos of power, while expressions of 'proffered friendship', 'perfect confidence' and 'heart-felt pleasure' attributed or testified by Forster can be readily translated into their opposites. Scenes of contact become inevitable scenarios of anxious distrust and disingenuous sentiment. If texts such as the Instructions seem to beg a retrospective scepticism, so equally might the ways in which the word *taio* emerges in voyaging accounts as the literal embodiment of phatic communion: 'a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words' (*OED*). But converting friendship instinctively to a signifier of insincerity does little more than invert Forster's idealized preconceptions. It is, furthermore, a gesture anticipated in the rhetoric of voyaging. 'We came to destroy under the specious mask of friendship', Forster wrote of the *Resolution*'s encounters at Tanna in the New Hebrides (Forster 2000:551); 'They are all too susceptible under the smile of dissembled friendship', acknowledged George Keate of the Palauans (Keate 2002:254). This book seeks instead to build a picture of the operation of languages of friendship within the politics of Empire whose sophistication lies not in debunking, but in recognizing the compelling pull of potential friendship ties in those very contexts that would most seem to preclude their possibility.

Scepticism regarding friendship claims is not simply an attitude imposed by recent critics upon scenarios of early contact. Anxious scepticism charges European accounts of Oceanic friendship. The *taio* relationship seems particularly open to reproaches of calculation. At the centre of Forster's description of mutually understood friendly greetings

[9] June Howard has drawn attention to this same statement of Hulme's in a judicious article that appraises late-twentieth-century critical perspectives on sentimentalism (Howard 1999:72).