INTRODUCTION

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As coeditors of this special issue of *Pacific Studies*, we have been most fortunate in the opportunity to survey a wide array of path-breaking work by Pacific Islander women. From the outset, our objective has been to assemble a collection of work that reflects the wide range of expressive forms—creative and scholarly writing, personal essays, and visual art—being produced by indigenous Oceanic women in the twenty-first century, our shared historical moment.

Through the project title, "Women Writing Oceania: Weaving the Sails of *Vaka*," we mean to mark a historical continuum of women's cultural labor, both intrinsic and emergent, across vast reaches of space and time. As a central instrument of oceanic life, the *vaka* (ocean-going canoe) is a key metaphor for our ongoing journeys, both literal and figurative. While traditional voyaging is often presumed to be a male domain in many parts of the Pacific, we here invoke a female lineage of sailors exemplified by Pele, Nafanua, and Ne'i ni Manoa, for example, as voyagers in command of their own vessels. We call upon those genealogies of mobility and weave the sails for our own voyages. A second more subtle, but profound, aspect of mobility informs the actual production of the sails, generally overseen and performed by women, in an involved process of harvesting, treating, and plaiting pandanus. As the weavers of sails, that is, wind-powered "engines," women's social power is materially associated with the actual generation of mobility itself. The divine

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associations are there as well, as women can be understood to partner with the heavens in the negotiation of kinetic power through various types of winds. It is in symbolic frameworks such as these that we locate contemporary writing and art-making in Oceania. Work such as that included here is a sail, woven with words and images, that is, moving our societies and regions into the future.

In October 2000, we first sent out a "call for papers and artwork" for "Women Writing Oceania." In that solicitation, we specifically note that the special issue's working theme would be "gender, sexuality, and identity," where we described the overall concept as:

> the exploration of emerging identities for us as women, as these are being constructed, challenged, claimed and/or re-inscribed in our own thinking, writing and lives. We are using the category of Gender in the sense of socially constructed roles for females, males and/or other genders but apply the concept in the broadest possible terms, referring to ways in which that western category gets challenged, redefined or "bent" by Oceanic traditions of relationship not only between women and men, but also between same-gender, bi-sexual and/or androgynous partners.

We also suggested that possible areas of focus might include topics such as female archetypes in traditional legend and mythology; the cultural politics of gender identity in relation to ethnicity, rank and class, and/or sexuality; the "neo-" or "post-"colonial female body being scarred or otherwise marked by dynamics of internalized oppression; the tensions between traditional and modern roles for women and girls between village and town, homeland and metropole; the politics of representation, as Native women and girls are portrayed in film, literature, and popular culture in any number of problematical ways; women's leadership in different community and political contexts; gender, nationalism, and decolonization; self-determination and sexual desire; Pacific feminisms; gendered migrations and diasporas; and so on.

Interestingly, we received fewer contributions that specifically explore sexuality, even though our call explicitly marked our interest in this topic. That outcome suggests that indigenous women of Oceania are not yet ready to take these discussions public. Yet, women across multiple boundaries of difference are certainly engaged in dialogues about sex, sexuality, and sexual desire. Among us are women identified as women-loving women, men-loving women, and women attracted to or intimately involved with either men or women. While we do not think the long history of colonial exoticization of Pacific women has overdetermined the refusals to explore sexuality as a topic ready for publication, they have to some degree contributed to our silence.

That is, the legacy of colonial representations, vis-à-vis tourism and/or militarism, that would come to racialize Pacific women as carefree in our sexuality, has perhaps made us think twice about what we are willing to commit to print. Still, we also need to acknowledge the cultural restrictions and protocols that also work to limit such discussions in public spaces. The works herein that do "go there" have challenged these boundaries in refreshing and empowering ways.

The working definition of "Oceania" in this collection reflects Epeli Hauʻofa's reinscriptions of the "Pacific" region in his formative article, "Our Sea of Islands," which (re)collects New Zealand/Aotearoa, aboriginal Australia, and Hawaiʻi into an Oceanic family of indigenous cultures along with the other island peoples of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. We believe that, as indigenous women and artists of our region, we can continue to lead the way in restoring balance to our respective societies by joining forces with each other in such collaborations as the one presented here. To achieve the goal of solidarity across our vast ocean spaces and histories, we believe this collection marks an important step in helping to dismantle arbitrary colonial categories like "Mela/Poly/Micro–nesia," which have worked to divide us against each other for far too long. That said, we are well aware that our representation of women from different regions across Oceania is limited geographically and is "Poly-heavy." Surely, part of this is due to our own social positions as Polynesian women and reflects our own geographical and professional networks which are tied primarily to and through Hawaiʻi, Samoa, and Aoteaora/New Zealand. Also, we have become keenly aware of the circuits of distribution of print media and cultural production that reflect routes with colonial origins. For example, the British Commonwealth nations tend to publish, receive, and sell books and materials produced by writers who also reside in British Commonwealth countries; New Zealand bookstores are more likely to have works by indigenous Canadians than those in the United States. And rarely does Hawaiʻi see the creative works published by those in Fiji. Nonetheless, our objective for this project is a collection of expressive and academic work highlighting the many voices with which we speak and sing as indigenous women of Oceania.

We also wish to acknowledge scholarly writing and research that have come before this project and serve as genealogies for the contributions herein. This is by no means an exhaustive list but instead should serve as a point of departure for taking stock of scholarly works that feature the study of women in Oceania: *Toi Wahine: The Worlds of Maori Women*, Kathie Irwin and Irihapeti Ramsden (eds.); *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*, Laura Torres Souder; *Nā Wāhine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women*, Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa; *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Margaret

Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds.); *From a Native Daughter*, Haunani-Kay Trask; *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (eds.); *Sustainable Development of Malignant Growth? Perspectives of Pacific Island Women*, Atu Emberson-Bain (ed.); *Women's Studies International Forum*, special issue on "Migrating Feminisms: The Asia/Pacific Region," Kalpana Ram and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (eds.); *Bittersweet: Indigenous Women in the Pacific*, Alison Jones, et al. (eds.); *Te Pua: The Journal of Puawaitanga*; *Mana Wahine Maori: Collected Writings on Maori Women's Art*, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku; and *Women's Voices on the Pacific: The International Pacific Policy Congress*, Lenora Foerstel (ed.).

Creative writing by Oceanic women that has helped to play a formative role in our thinking and writing includes: *Miss Ulysses of Pukapuka*, Johnnie Frisbie; *Baby No Eyes* and *Cousins*, Patricia Grace; *You, the Choice of My Parents*, Konai Helu Thaman; *Black Stone*, Grace Mera Molisa; *The Bone People*, Keri Hulme; *Where We Once Belonged*, Sia Figiel; *Searching for Ne'i Ni Manoa*, Teresia Teaiwa; *The Conversion*, Victoria Nālani Knuebuhl; *Civilized Girl*, Jully Makini; and *Tahuri* and *Ruahine: Mythic Women*, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. Other key creative writers include Nora Vagi Brash, Momoe Von Reiche, and Haunani-Kay Trask. Again, this is not meant as an exhaustive listing but, rather, as one threshold on an emerging literary tradition in Oceania. We also wish to acknowledge here the crucial contribution of Marjorie Crocombe to Oceanic Letters. Her decades of sponsorship and patronage of writing workshops at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, from the 1970s onward, led to the emergence of countless new writers from the South Pacific.

In "Women Writing Oceania," certain themes recur, resonate, and flow across boundaries of genre and geography. Questions of cultural identity and lineage, location and dislocation, loss, struggle, and transformation recur and echo in these pages. As contemporary writers and artists, we take our places among a global sisterhood of thinkers engaged in the practice of reinscribing our own identities and histories. We join a global community of thinkers actively engaged in the critical work of reinfusing a battered world with the ancient wisdom traditions of indigenous peoples.

The work is organized along thematic lines: Lineage, Location & Dislocation, Identity, Negotiation, and Reinscription. Being all too aware of the problematic nature of imposing categories on expressive works, let us hasten to say that these particular frameworks are meant to suggest clusters of possible meaning and relevance. While such categories are clearly overlapping in nature, they might be usefully employed in pointing to key issues at work today among Oceanic societies in general.

Lineage

In her essay "*Tumuge' Påpa'* (Writing it Down): Chamorro Midwives and the Delivery of Native History," Christine Taitano DeLisle explores questions of lineage between women and elders and their daughters. She focuses on the multiple responsibilities and applications of the push to document family stories and memories. Empowered as a young girl to write and document in the service of family, community, and their people's history, DeLisle describes how she was charged to write by the women in her family. In doing so, she explores the politics of proficiency given the value of English in U.S. assimilationist strategies in Guam, female genealogies of literacy and labor, questions of authority and authorship, and community understandings of legitimacy, respectability, and authenticity. Her essay discusses the commitments embedded in liberatory scholarly work dedicated to narrativizing the history of Chamorro women through a look at the process of writing on Chamorro nurse-midwives who underwent medical training and certification by the U.S. Naval Administration of Guam in the first half of the twentieth century. DeLisle explores the theme of women's laboring hands and regulation of women's labor in attending to women in childbirth via U.S. colonial rule and its modernizing projects. In reflecting upon the professionalization of Chamorro midwives, DeLisle traces her personal ambivalence regarding her own professionalization as a writer.

In *Piharamata Tumahai Smoking Her Taho*, Tahitian photographer Marie-Hélène Villierme expands the notion of lineage to include that of reinscription. As visual antidote to the simplistic distortions of dusky maiden stereotypes, this image gives us a Polynesian woman whose eloquent countenance suggests any number of complex narratives more in keeping with the multivalent histories of Oceania.

"My Pigeon/La'u Lupe 'Ua Lele" by Caroline Sinavaiana works with the idea of lineage in polyphonous ways as well. A kind of "personal translation" of a traditional Samoan folksong, the poem moves from original Samoan, to literal translation, and finally to idiosyncratic version which aspires to join in a long line of cultural transmission. Here is writing that works from traditional lyric with the project of making it "new," not only in form but in content, in this instance, by engaging sentiments of loss and longing to the service of a daughter's elegy for her mother.

Location & Dislocation

One of the key issues raised in contemporary discussions of lineage is that of location and dislocation. With the steady movement of Oceanic peoples over the last fifty years, from traditional village settings to those of town and city,

often in countries far away from the motherland, have also come the innumerable challenges of diaspora. Traditional belief systems, religion, and educational practices are turned on their heads, and the resulting experience of inexplicable loss can often become debilitating. In Kim Meredith's short story, "Living Small," we meet Luisa, a bright young woman living in a New Zealand city with her husband and five children. We ride on the #746 bus with Luisa as she makes her weary way home after working two jobs—one of them, as a telephone sex worker—and attending a university lecture. After a day which has begun with her feeling like a "ghost mother" (Meredith, this volume, 38) as she sets out the toothpaste for her still-sleeping children, Luisa watches the passing sights on the bus route, landmarks that call up various milestones from her life in the busy city. In Meredith's evocative images, we can experience the longing for an earlier, more expansive time and place, the nurturing "sounds of the old house and the feeling of being enveloped by people" (this volume, 36).

In addition to such enervating kinds of multitasking required of Pacific Islanders in the diaspora, other critical challenges lie embedded in the assimilationist narratives of Western educational systems. In their collaborative piece, "Dialoguing Across the Pacific: *Kūkākūkā* and the Cultivation of *Wahine Maoli* Identity," a mother and daughter team of activist/scholars exchange letters between Hawai'i and California, where the daughter Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua is attending graduate school at a large, prestigious university. Conducting their *kūkākūkā* (talk-story session) through email, daughter and mother—a professor, social worker, and health researcher in Honolulu—Lana Ka'ōpua, explore certain challenges and implications of Western education for Hawaiians. Their choice of format itself, the kūkākūkā, reflects a growing concern among indigenous intellectuals to engage forms of communication that are more culturally appropriate (and accessible) to their Native communities. Ka'ōpua expands upon this point in her introduction, "As thoughts can be miswoven when there is no discussion, so it is with our identities as *Wahine Maoli*, Native Hawaiian women, and the ensuing choices we make about how to live in this world" (this volume, 48). As the two women reflect together on their respective processes of self-discovery as Hawaiian women and cultural activists, Goodyear-Ka'ōpua articulates her aspiration to facilitate "change and create the space for new growth. Making way for a change in the established order, changes that are much needed in our *one hānau*. Decolonizing our *'aina*, our minds, our spirits . . . directing our energies toward such changes" (this volume, 50).

More symbolic sites of dislocation lie within the complex relationships between religion and education, tradition and modernity, Samoa and the West, parent and child. In her short story "Silauni'i," Jacinta Galea'i gives us a tale of two village girls, both daughters of Christian ministers, with uneasy

relationships to the social expectations imposed upon preachers' kids: "We live in village people's eyes/setting examples for village kids' lives" (this issue, 64, 65). The narrator spins a tale of her friendship with the singular Silauni'i who was "free," unlike her: "free of straight lines and even pigtails" (Galea'i, this issue, 65). When Silauni'i is beaten by her minister/father for failing to get a 100% on her Samoan grammar exam, the narrator grieves for her friend in bewildered solidarity. Galea'i's lyrical narrative touches lightly on the wounds of abusive authority and childhood confusion at the arbitrary nature of cruelty lurking in the adult world.

In another incarnation of this village tale, the two young girls might be sisters, as Tusiata Avia evokes them in her poem, "Village princess." Only here, the "princess" sister abdicates her ceremonial position in favor of running off to Colorado with "a white guy called Randell…[getting] a scholarship / and a job as a body-piercer" (Avia, this issue, 68). Here is a contemporary voice reclaiming and declaring itself, a female voice reinscribing its place in both the village and in worlds beyond the malae.

One of the most important contributions of indigenous writing and art-making is that of (re)locating ourselves in our respective worlds, whether in- or outside of Oceania proper, in ways that are congruent with traditional cultural frameworks of value and ethics. In Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's piece, "Maori Women Researching Ourselves," we can find exploration of the sensitive territory of indigenous researchers, in this case Maori women, working on their own. She examines the legacy of self-determination within research fields and questions of access to knowledge within Maori worlds such as tribal trust board meetings, *marae* gatherings, or at the kitchen table with elders. The essay focuses on the tension between the universal appeal of humanity vis-à-vis the search for knowledge versus tribal specificities such as customary laws restricting access to knowledge that demand protective measures to prevent exploitation, commodification, and transgression of cultural boundaries. Te Awekotuku highlights conflicting expectations when one attempts to abide by indigenous research protocols and expectations as well as those presented by the academy vis-à-vis professionalization and authority. Indeed as she shows, such competing imperatives can often leave Maori women—and by extension other Pacific women researchers—in precarious positions.

Identity

At the thematic heart of much Oceanic writing and visual art lie troubled questions of personal and cultural identity. Given the monumental impacts of colonial projects on Oceania for the last two centuries, writers and artists

continue to work through the myriad implications of cultural alienation on a coherent sense of self and other. As we intermarry or partner with those of other races and religions, as youth lose touch with the wisdom of elders, as significant numbers of women assume public roles of leadership, who is it that we are becoming? And what relationship do our altered identities bear to a traditional sense of self and other? Such questions are engaged by almost every contributor in this volume from a wide range of perspectives and possibilities.

One cluster of poems and short fiction explores the complex landscapes of love and intimacy in a time of neo/colonial uncertainties. For example, in her short story, "Manowai," Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl gives us a tale in which emotional loss opens a pathway to cultural reawakening. In the narrative, we meet Kanoe, a self-identified *hapa*-Hawaiian woman in flight from her husband, a philandering English professor afflicted with insecurities about his wife's emerging success as a writer. Fleeing the emotional abuse of her marriage to the elitist American, Kanoe takes refuge in a family homeplace on the island of Hawai'i. There, her mysterious encounter with a young Hawaiian man becomes a catalyst for a cultural deepening and newfound sense of empowerment. Part of "the truth that lay just under the skin of being Hawaiian" (Kneubuhl, this issue, 86) that the story points to is the complex dynamics of mixed-race partnerships in the charged political climate of neo/colonial milieu.

Several poems in the collection explore similar themes as they delve more explicitly into the intimacies of romantic love and power relationships. For example, in "niudity I-IV," Teresia Teaiwa deftly overturns the ethnic slur against Pacific islanders, "coconuts," with verbal play and satire. Here romantic intimacy and politics are as necessarily intertwined as lovers. In a similar vein, Ku'ualoha Ho'omanawanui's "Ka Lawai'a" touches on the exquisite betrayal of intimacy when "traditional culture" becomes a weapon of manipulation. These poems weave their own kind of sail to take us across emotional seas of great tenderness, as well the fearless exploration of difference. In Konai Thaman's "It Began with A Question," the speaker admits that while "it wasn't my place / to decide which new notes / the earth must sing" (this volume, 106) she is willing nonetheless to venture into unknown worlds of culture, geography, and the heart. In "Not Exotic" by Lisa Kahaleole Hall, we have the clear pleasure of sexuality, like the bright taste of green mangoes, of eros between women in a "season of late ripening" (this volume, 107).

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui's piece, "Blood and Reproduction of (the) Race in the Name of *Ho'oulu Lahui*—A Hawaiian Feminist Critique," discusses the politics of blood identification versus genealogy and identity as they implicate Hawaiian nationalism, in particular, Hawaiian women. Her discussion begins with an autobiographical narrative that offers a scenario emblematic of

the stakes involved in the everyday lives of many Hawaiians. Kauanui traces the legacy of the 50% blood rule used to define "native Hawaiian" imposed by the U.S. government and ways in which that racial criterion affects contemporary issues of reproduction and nationalist culture. She is particularly concerned with the effects of this blood(y) policy, and its attendant discourse, on Hawaiian women with regard to their partner choice as it implicates their child-bearing potential. As an alternative, she urges for a decolonizing renewal of indigenous concepts of belonging grounded in genealogy and place.

Negotiation

Given the myriad ways in which a coherent sense of cultural identity continues to be compromised in our allegedly postcolonial moment, a constant challenge faced by Oceanic peoples is that of negotiating the often bewildering distances between traditional certainties and postmodern ambiguities. The toll of such metaphysical negotiation on a daily basis is a heavy one and remains a major theme in expressive work throughout Oceanic networks. For example, one key element in the experience and writing of contemporary Oceanic women is that of illness and healing, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. In her poem "Waimanalo Litany," Caroline Sinavaiana invokes the spirits of a particular location on O'ahu in order to propose a kind of dialogue of healing between human and elemental worlds. "The scarred body moves in green water . . ." (this volume, 3). But such a process is not a simple one. Layers of history, imbued for example by the alienation and/or destruction of native lands and traditions, envelop the mundane, and ordinary experience mutates into complex transactions in everyday life. The "sleeping swimmer,/ sharp awakening" (this volume, 3) at the sight of a local family littering McDonald's wrappers in their wake points to the necessary interplay of loss and grief, forgiveness and healing. "Spirits of *Waimanalo* / grant us peace" (this volume, 4). In Sinavaiana's "diagnosis," the speaker considers the "white mass loom[ing]" from "that sea of shadows / ocean of ultra-sound," and immediately turns to "dust[ing] off ancient arrows & tighten[ing] the bowstring" by way of response (this volume, 118).

Such themes of struggle and transformation echo in another cluster of poems as well. For example, in Sia Figiel's poem "The Night Woman," we find a similar portrait of personal pain being transformed into larger significance. As the outcast "night woman" sheds the indignities of daily life, "She abandons her Day / Skin to feel the Night's touch / Birthing sons whose gene / ologies hang / From the faces / Of constellations" (this volume, 117).

The next poem, "Shadows dance in my head," by Cresantia Frances Koya, offers a more impressionistic take on the complex tensions between love and

pain, loss and possibility. The experimental form of the piece—parallel columns of short verse which can be read horizontally as well as vertically—helps to open up the field of intense and otherwise bewildering emotion. ". . . the scent of/ *mokosoi* hangs in/ the air/ . . .And I open my eyes to the wind/ the sky is blue /" but ". . . dogs are howling in my head" (this volume, 119). Here, motifs of Indo-Fijian and Polynesian life are laced together—not a basket, but the most delicate of netting—and hold out images of mourning and love in a time of postcolonial disarray. "The *puja* you never / make / For me / . . .The sitar is loud / and / unaccommodating" (this volume, 119). The poem's fragmented structure is an apt vehicle for its fractured content: disparate images strewn across the page as though left behind after an explosion. "Was that a gun shot / or a fire cracker . . . / Is that real blood?" (this volume, 119).

Reinscription

Perhaps the greatest cultural work performed by Oceanic writing and art-making is the reinscription of an indigenous world by its descendants. Thus, we might say that the single overarching theme of reinscription bridges all of the pieces in this collection. Important visual artists, for example, whose work serves to reinscribe the disparate worlds of contemporary Oceania, include Jewel Castro, Rosanna Raymond, and Marie-Hélène Villierme. While Castro and Raymond are based outside of Oceania proper, Villierme lives and works in Tahiti. Like all of the contributors in this issue, these artists work explicitly to synthesize the cultural worlds of past and present.

In her personal essay, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," the San Diego-based Jewel Castro describes her creative process. After training as a painter in the Western tradition, she expanded her generic boundaries by moving into three-dimensional space in the form of installation that she sees as intending "to communicate an idea by transforming a space" (this volume, 123). Describing her large-scale installations as "story-telling environments," she considers tradition to be her muse (Castro, this volume, 124). Seeing tradition as "holographic" (this volume, 123). Castro's intention is to connect with viewers through their own particular (and idiosyncratic) experiences of "tradition." In this collection, we have featured five of her earlier paintings that display a complex range of emotion and position in regard to the idea of tradition. In the gentle, stolid figures of the elder women in *Walking with My Grandmothers (#1, #2,* and *#3*), Castro creates a sense of emotional peace grounded in self-knowledge of one's traditional culture. At the same time, a subtle note of longing informs the images with the elusive beauty of impermanence. In the complex

and more challenging perspectives of *Sleep* and *Tradition*, the longing has blossomed into more shadowy regions of melancholy and acute vulnerability.

While *Sleep* might be read as self-portrait, at least in part, the complexities of *Tradition* rather blow the lid off of sentimental notions of culture and tradition. Here we have a distinct ambivalence, verging on irony, about the darker sides of tradition, perhaps, as inscribed on the internal body of the female form. The almost sinister effect of the image can direct our gaze both inward and outward at the same time, surely one of the hallmarks of enduring art. It could, for example, point our attention to the contested terrain of cultural politics in Oceania, in which ideas of traditional and cultural authenticity are used as discursive currency or as rhetorical weapons against others and/or oneself, thus becoming insidious vehicles of cultural self-destruction. The work of Frida Kahlo may come to mind here vis-à-vis ways that pain can be inscribed on the female body as both metaphor and marker—a kind of private scarification as signifier of public conflict. The disturbing power of Castro's *Tradition* is emblematic of an aesthetic style which laces sinewy power with tenderness and gritty reality with grace.

By contrast, in the art of London-based Rosanna Raymond, we find more active qualities of warriorhood informing her portrayals of contemporary Oceanic women. For example, in *Butterfly Thighs Flutter By the Bye*, she gives us a modern-day version of the Polynesian warrior woman. Adorned with tattooed limbs, shell tiara, assorted fibers, and necklace of boar's tusk, she confronts the viewer with a level, unflinching gaze. The open posture—warrior stance—both engages and warns us at the same time. The accompanying super-imposed poem, "Thick Lick," adds a subversive counterpoint to the rich starkness of the visual image. Here is no one-dimensional warrior. Instead the written text gives us the more whimsical, sensual side of this formidable adversary. Raymond's second piece, a photo-collage of the poem "Meet you in Hawaiki"'s second stanza, "Samoa," presents another iconic female figure. Only here, the posture combines openness with longing, the strength that underlies vulnerability. In the embedded stanza, the speaker addresses her motherland from afar: "I was a child lost to you, / but I found you, / Did you have trouble recognizing me?" (Raymond, this volume, 182). In such fine work, Raymond offers complex, emotionally-layered glimpses of diaspora, loss and return, fierce resilience and playfulness.

Konai Thaman's poem "Woven Worlds" honors the crucial work of women, past and present, traditional and contemporaneous, in the weaving of relationship(s) across time and space: "the songs / of our mothers and grandmothers / long continuous lines connecting / east and west / north and south [to] re-create / the world" (this volume, 121).

In addition to creative writing and art-making, scholarly writing is another important vehicle for the cultural work of reimagining contemporary Oceanic worlds. Three essays from different parts of Oceania share the project of reinscribing women's places in society, culture, and oral narrative. In "Speaking Reflections: *Whaikoorero* (Speech Making) and *Karanga* (Welcoming Cry) in Recent Theater by Maoori Women," Mei Lin Hansen explores the work of four Maori women playwrights. She brings to light the ways that Maori women's theater has become an alternative site to perform whaikoorero (traditional speechmaking), a central feature of Maori protocol usually reserved for Maori, in order for Maori women to articulate their concerns in public space. Hansen theorizes how these playwrights renegotiate gendered locations—marked by geographical displacement, and troubled notions of belonging, along with social distance from tribal homelands. She notes that these writers are concerned with issues of *whakapapa* (genealogy) and its import for their characters' identity and social position. Altering Maori custom, their cultural production opens spaces for new forms of ritualized articulations with an emphasis on restoring the place of importance for *waiata* (songs) and karanga. Given a history where whaikorero has been privileged over and above Maori women's contributions, the alternative public spaces engendered through these plays (and their staged production) has allowed room for Maori women to articulate their own grievances in a context fraught with the legacies of colonialism. As Hansen discusses, their creative interventions contribute to the Maori feminist developments that question the devaluation of Maori women's role. Indeed, Hansen's theoretical framework of the "vocal kaleidoscope" enables a fine reading of the exploration and negotiation in these plays through metaphors of the spectacle, refraction, and vivid alternative cultural patterns.

Noenoe Silva's essay, "Pele, Hi'iaka, and Haumea: Women and Power in Two Hawaiian *Mo'olelo*," explores representations of Hawaiian women in legends published by Joseph M. Poepoe in Hawaiian language newspapers between 1861 and 1906. As part of a cohort of Hawaiian scholars committed to indigenous language revitalization, Silva takes us to the archive where she rescues models for Hawaiian women's agency through a feminist reading of these narratives. Indeed, the legendary women she finds are archetypes for Hawaiian gender norms, emphasizing women's power in choosing their partners (including their gender), initiating relationships, and expressing their sexual desires in bold ways. These narratives brought to light by Silva serve as rich epistemological resources, as well as unrecognized Hawaiian literature. Her work recuperates the oral narratives that have suffered symbolic and epistemic violence at the hand of Western containment. Silva offers a

rereading of these two traditional legends by refining previous translations at the service of reclamation and reexamination.

In a similar vein, our interview with Theresa Koroivulaono explores her work on Fijian women as orators, which poses the central question: whether or not they are exceptions to "tradition." Koroivulaono's research reexamines the position of Fijian women through the structures of formulaic, ceremonial oral narratives that provide the framework for Fijian rituals and customs. She focuses on recent developments in the practice of a traditional ceremony of paramount importance in Fijiian culture, the "Kau Ni Matani Gone," which marks a person's first visit to her/his mother's or father's village. Koroivulaono argues that the emergence of women as orators in the attendant kinship rituals, albeit in informal settings, calls into question customary definitions of "tradition." Shedding light on such dynamics of changing gender constructs in Fiji, Koroivulaono's work challenges our understanding of contemporary gender roles in one area of Oceania. Thus, her research is critical to decolonization projects that dispute the current devaluation of women's roles in the domestic sphere as insignificant. Koroivulaono also notes that she has been unable to locate any specific authority supporting a tabu against women delivering formal oratory but that the male role as orator has been naturalized and reiterated as fact since "time immemorial" and used to justify and/or explain male domination in Fijian culture. She urges scholars and community members to take into account the colonial transformation of Fijian society and the role Christianity has played in redefining gender roles. She argues that the gradual emergence of women orators in Fiji signifies a departure from typical conventions of ritual practice. In closing, she calls for a more comprehensive study of cultural adaptations in order to unearth other important insights into the nature and dynamics of oratory in contemporary society.

And finally, by way of closing, Caroline Sinavaiana offers "Sarong / Ie Lavalava," another "translation" poem based on a traditional Samoan folk song. Written after the death of her parents to commemorate their wedding anniversary on Valentine's Day, the poem negotiates complex forms of distance with echoing motifs from the traditional lyric: journey and return, longing and reunion. Honoring key Oceanic themes of voyage across great distance, the poem makes explicit a communal worldview by expanding its genealogical reach from the personal to the collective, by acknowledging relationship with the natural world—with ocean, heavens, and mulberry trees whose bark provided the first type of cloth (tapa) for human use, "its palimpsest of trees remembering / their lexicon of stars" (Sinavaiana, this volume, 195).

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