

Editorial

Over the last 10 or so years throughout the Women's Studies Journal (WSJ) the voices of Pacific/indigenous women have been heard. In this special edition: *Pacific Knowledges* we pay tribute to some of these voices. While there have been many articles published, this edition is primarily a coalescing of those articles scattered throughout WSJ that were not published in the *Indigenous women in the Pacific* 13(2) (1997) issue, or in the *Matauranga Maori* 21(20) (2007) issue. This special edition acknowledges these voices by not only bringing together the various articles to make one collection, but by asking the authors to reflect over the pieces they had written and the debate(s) they had commented on in light of today. This up-to-date commentary highlights that, while the arguments put forth in the four articles remain of utmost importance and continue to be at the fore of Pacific/indigenous women's scholarship, much progress has also occurred. For example, this is revealed by Karen Stevenson's commentary; earlier calls about the need to re-position and value Pacific women's art have in a sense been heeded, as Pacific women have negotiated tradition and challenged boundaries, creating for themselves a vibrant way forward.

While the articles talk to specific and sometimes unrelated ideas, such as *misinterpretations and misuse of Pacific literature and art by outsiders* and *gender-based family violence*, all of the articles are underpinned by calls for gender equity and the desire for a better future for coming generations. Examples of Pacific and indigenous women's struggle for recognition of who they are, contesting boundaries, position and space, and stories of talent, influence and success are also common.

The first article in this special edition is *Pacific women: Challenging the boundaries of tradition* written by Karen Stevenson. In her original article Karen noted that Pacific women's art was "linked to place – identity – tradition" (p. 22), with Pacific women utilising their art forms and engagement with art to affirm this. Intersecting art with tradition was a means whereby Pacific women were able to remain connected to the Islands, reinforcing cultural values in the new environment, maintaining the knowledge. However, static understandings of tradition, and ethnocentric and gendered understanding of Pacific women's art, understood as craft, positioned these works to be of lesser value than the *taonga* they were. The label '*taonga*' is, however, "the essential indicator of their cultural value" (p. 11). Pacific women artists contested the trivialising of their works by asserting cultural identity, taking part in "negotiation between the traditional/contemporary, art/craft, urban/island" (p. 11) and emergence of Pacific art in New Zealand or *Pasifika* which was wholly unique. Thus what was seen in contemporary art practice was negotiation and challenging the boundaries of tradition. New traditions, histories and new value in the art practices of Pacific women were created, asserting their position.

Reprinting this article allows Stevenson the space to reiterate the journey taken by Pacific women artists, acknowledging their contribution as a powerful and vibrant movement in the New Zealand art scene. Stevenson also points out there has been a shift, with a new generation of artists documenting their Pacific identity as opposed to asserting it. While art remains linked to identity and place, the place is now urban New Zealand. Tradition and innovation are explicitly linked.

The second article in this issue is Briar Wood's piece on the poetry of well known Tongan poet Konai Helu Thaman, titled *Heka he va'a mei popo: Sitting on a rotten branch of the breadfruit tree: Reading the poetry of Konai Helu Thaman*. In the original publication Briar sought to situate Thaman's poetry within the wider context of the reading of Pacific literature in English. In discussing how Pacific literature has been read by outsiders, Wood explores the evolution of Pacific ways of reading Pacific literature and applies a sense of indigeneity to outside literary theories.

Wood's recent commentary highlights the ongoing impact of Thaman's work long after it is read, how the poems continue to cultivate in not only one's mind but in a new generation of exceptional Pacific women poets. This cultivation of future generations who draw on the works of Thaman is understood as important because Thaman's poetry often speaks out about political wrongs, and argues for the redressing of these wrongs, hence improving conditions for women and Pacific people in general.

The third article is authored by Lynne Star and is a review of *Double vision: Art histories and colonial histories in the Pacific*, edited by Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche. In undertaking this review, Star illustrates what can occur when "art and disciplinarity are valorised in an environment that favours non-feminists and elite white men" (Star, 2000, p. 1). As Star sees it, there is an under-representation of indigenous identified writers (p. 73), and the book shows an imbalance "between Australian authors and those from Pacific countries" (p. 71). The latter are the people with the 'onshore perspective' on the intruders as they arrived and since, which is a major limitation. Star argues that while the text contains some "impressive scholarship" (p. 67), there were other obvious limitations starting with the title of the book, *Double vision*. She asks "how can there be a 'double vision' – two fields only...?" (p. 65). There appears to be a lack of dialogue and intellectual engagement between the authors, usually seen through cross referencing or editorial comment, resulting in unevenness with the papers and limited attention paid to contradictions. These seemingly slight limitations may indeed perpetuate colonialism.

In her update Star reflects over her position in Australia as an academic working in the forum of film where she teaches a module on Māori film and film theory. She writes her comments in relation to New Zealand's contribution to indigenous film and film studies, which is becoming more recognized internationally in the same way Māori and New Zealand art is. In reflecting upon Māori and New Zealand film, Star highlights how we can contribute to and perpetuate colonialism, or challenge it through our unique and on-going experiences as pro/feminist anti-colonial activists, artists and scholars. Star also shows the general growth of anti-colonial awareness in the New Zealand context as we seek to address many of the issues noted in her review.

The fourth article is titled *Community responsibility for freedom from abuse*; in this paper Betsan Martin and Jennifer Hand argued that the responsibility for freeing women, men and society from abuse lay not with individual women and men but with communities, supported by institutional and state resources and policies. This argument was based on findings from a four-year study, which included Māori and Pacific women. They concluded that violence against women was about gender inequity, which was embedded deeply in the cultures of family and communities.

Six years on from this publication Hand and Martin argue in their commentary that, while violence persists against women and children, there have been some positive changes. For example, community responsibility for addressing gender-based violence is more evident, prompted perhaps by the fact that more resources have been afforded to the issue. There has also been a shift in responsibility from the victim to the perpetrator, and the voices of men are more prominent. We have also seen the issue placed within a wider context, where attention is

now paid to neglect and abuse within families, with special consideration being paid to children. This focus on children brings to the fore the issue of family and child poverty. Hand and Martin's update talks to the positive changes, the areas of ongoing development and this broadening of the scope of attention.

On behalf of the New Zealand Women's Studies Association and the Women's Studies Journal and as guest editor, it is a privilege to bring together these important viewpoints into one valuable collection, the Pacific Knowledges Issue. We are sure you will find the feminist debate and critique as challenging and as stimulating as they were when first published.

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