

What further weakens the analysis is a reliance on generalizations. The six Australian colonies are treated as a single entity, Fiji and Hawaii are assumed to have had a government in the sense that a nation might declare a national policy, and for reasons not made clear, Hawaii was more 'sophisticated than its Pacific counterparts' and the 'envy of its Pacific neighbours'. This would be suspect journalism, and in an academic text it is damning. I hope my undergraduate students stay well clear of this disappointing attempt to causally link American activity to the nature of nineteenth-century colonialism, and at worst to events at the end of the twentieth century. This book is so riddled with inconsistencies and errors that readers will wonder why the University of Hawaii Press published it, especially considering the two excellent, scholarly books on much the same topic they published at the same time — Tracy Banivanua-Mar's *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian–Pacific Indentured Labour Trade* and Jeffrey Geiger's *Facing the Pacific: Polynesia and the US Imperial Imagination*. In Horne's approach to what constitutes history, a now lengthening era of post-colonial research, historiographical reflection and the highlighting of islander agency are ignored and Pacific Islanders rarely mentioned.

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The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific. By Patty O'Brien. University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2006. 347pp. NZ price: \$99.99. ISBN 0-295-98609-3.

BECAUSE SOMETIMES YOU FINISH READING A BOOK REVIEW and realize it has talked more about what a book does not do rather than what it does, I will begin by outlining what this book *is not*. This is not a book about Pacific women, and it is not a book about indigenous Pacific views of the region. It also, despite a short extended bibliography of texts by Pacific women near the end of the second-to-last chapter, is not about how Pacific women write or think about themselves. Instead, this is a book about a *stereotype*, about a mode of representation. It seeks to elaborate and contextualize the range of European reactions to the Pacific through the mobilization of discourses that explicitly pertain to the dual primitivization and sexualization of women's bodies. It can be tricky to produce an historical treatment of a stereotype without merely pointing to 'real' archival work as the proof of the stereotype's opposite, in which case 'real' natives get paraded through a text in order to counter 'fake' natives, and although the book veers a little towards this mode of stereotype-busting, for the most part it manages very well.

Patty O'Brien argues for a thing called 'exotic femininity', which is a conglomerate of many European ideas about women. She points to the development of this exotic femininity in spaces that are temporally (Classical Greece) or geographically (Africa and the Americas) distinct from the Pacific colonial context, and then carefully traces how these ideas were brought into the region. Ideas that white men developed about women in each of these spaces have a cumulative effect until the major European journeys through the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which these ideas were centred, mobilized, extended and hardened. This idea of 'exotic femininity' enables O'Brien not only to bring together an impressive range of sources and examples from each of those spaces, but also to write in new ways about the stereotype of indigenous women in the Pacific. Identifying the stereotype allows a particular configuration of racialized and gendered relationships to be newly visible in a rather diverse range of situations.

The book is distinguished more by its careful specificities than by its general conceptualization. The overall topic is probably not, in itself, news to most readers:

indeed, many of the broader-level underpinning claims are fairly conventional. It is not surprising, for example, that Europeans drew heavily on existing notions about gender, sexuality, race and imperialism as they sailed into and around the Pacific; it is also not unexpected to read that sex and desire shaped the relationships between indigenous Pacific communities and newcomers to the region. This, however, is not to undermine the function and contribution of O'Brien's work but to turn attention to its real value.

One of the more important contributions of *The Pacific Muse* is the sheer amount of detail that O'Brien brings together. Each chapter is thickly spread with tantalizing examples from a range of archival and secondary sources. For example, two detailed stories that stand out are those of Atahoe (Mary Bruce) and Alice Henriette Handy, both of whom experienced mobility around and outside of the Pacific at a level that challenges and extends dominant notions of Maori women at the time. At times, it must be cautioned, the book's encyclopaedic, wide-ranging vision risks generalization and under-emphasis of complexity and detail. On the one hand, O'Brien does more work of 'drawing the dots' than connecting them. While I am intrigued by Atahoe and Alice, their brief biographical details are provided and then left to stand on their own; I would have enjoyed hearing more of O'Brien's ideas about the critical relationship such examples have to the notion of the exotic feminine. Many of the examples cry out for further nuanced and critical treatment, and given the range of postcolonial and indigenous theoretical work in circulation, and the book's own claims about functions at a representational level, this seems something of a limitation. At the same time, O'Brien's desire to talk across a range of areas and communities occasionally tends towards generalization: for example, in the opening chapter one reads that 'Pacific cultures, like other cultures outside the Judeo-Christian or Islamic traditions, did not problematise sexuality but rather celebrated it and viewed it as a positive life force' (p.12). It is difficult to distinguish between this kind of sweeping claim and those modes of stereotyping against which the book is (rightly) pitted.

The project is, refreshingly, genuinely transnational in scope: many works that claim to be about the Pacific as a region actually reinforce existing parameters around nation state, colonial power and/or language. Except for a somewhat thin discussion of Micronesia — especially considering the singularly lengthy contact between Chamorros and Europeans — a good range of spaces in Polynesia, Melanesia and Australia enjoy inclusion and treatment. Similarly, O'Brien's discussion of the geographic breadth of the roots of the ideas about exotic femininity in the Pacific benefits greatly from familiarity with the range of contexts in the Americas and Africa across time.

Three aspects of the project have enjoyed further elaboration. Indeed, given the energetic activity of these three fields of critical inquiry at present perhaps they *should* have done. First, although there is some treatment of masculinity (both European and indigenous) throughout the text, this could have been more prominent in the discussion. Secondly, much fuller consideration of sexuality would have provided O'Brien with the opportunity to move beyond the rather limiting focus on heterosexual encounters, and would also provide another matrix of ways in which race and gender have been understood to relate to each other. Finally, it seems that a great unspoken claim of *The Pacific Muse* is about whiteness. In the introductory pages of the book O'Brien foregrounds two images of white females engaged in racial cross-dressing. Foregrounding this aspect of the project would have made the treatment of the 'stereotype' in relation to 'real historical moments' clearer. Critical whiteness studies provide a number of excellent exemplars for this kind of work, and articulating the book as a project about whiteness could have served the purpose of focusing the discussion more closely on the specific purposes to which this 'stereotype' of exotic femininity has been put.

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