

## Book and Media Reviews

---

*The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 29, Number 1, 191-222*  
© 2017 by University of Hawai'i Press

stated on its Facebook page—is to engage with “Guam’s geology, biota, pre-history, history and contemporary culture using as an interpretive narrative ‘I Hinanao-ta’ (the journey of the Chamorro people). . . . It shall also provide a venue for the appreciation of Guam’s unique relationship with its sister islands in Micronesia through the understanding of regional cultures, traditions, practices and lore.” It is important that the Guam Museum represent Chamorro experiences and island-wide stories in meaningful and accessible ways for visitors and local audiences. The museum’s interpretative work on Guam must come across as dynamic, adaptable, and constantly evolving rather than as promoting a fixed, stagnant history. This will enable the institution to be better positioned to uphold its mission to include Chamorro voices and diverse perspectives.

Much of this review of the museum is based on its temporary opening for the Festival of the Pacific Arts; time will tell whether future visitors will find the Guam Museum reflective of what they might hope it will represent for Guam.

JESI LUJAN BENNETT  
*University of Hawai‘i–Mānoa*

\* \* \*

*Ever the Land: A People, A Place, Their Building.* Documentary, 93 minutes, DCP or Blu-ray, color, 2015. Written and directed by Sarah Grohnert; produced by Alexander Behse. Distributed by Monsoon Pictures International and the New Zealand Film Commission. See <http://evertheland.com/> for prices and availability.

*Ever the Land: A People, A Place, Their Building* celebrates the Tūhoe tribe, the Māori people who live in a heavily forested corner of the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Tūhoe filed compensation claims with the Waitangi Commission in 2007 and subsequently decided to allocate NZ\$15 million for the construction of a large tribal center at the valley entrance of their contested, tragic land. Designed by Ivan Mercep, the center was meant to adhere with the Living Building Challenge, whose stringent standards of sustainability require careful attention to material sourcing and a great deal of compliance documentation. Called Te Uru Tamatua, it was to be the first such building in Aotearoa. In a visually compelling way, *Ever the Land* tracks the building process by embedding it in the context of the dialogue surrounding it. That dialogue, on which the filmmaker unobtrusively dotes, tells a thought-provoking story.

Through voices and actions, we learn of the contested relationship between Tūhoe green ideology and tribal solidarity. This view is asserted in lovely scenes in which children are put to bed by mothers with stories about ancestor-spirits who hate trash,

bricks are handmade for the new building, and, in shots interspersed throughout the narrative, fog rises over thick forests that cover their mountainsides. But some Tūhoe voices complain. It is to the great credit of the young director, Sarah Grohnert, that scenes are included in which men rather forcibly object to money being allocated for a tribal purpose rather than to help buy individuals houses to live in. The Tūhoe are poor, the movie makes clear, and live day to day in subsistence pursuits, sending children to school as best they can. The implication would be that, for dissenters, the tribal center is nothing but a vain extravagance.

Use is also made of voiceovers from the radio announcing the project, the death of the building's architect, and the pending settlement from the New Zealand government. The latter agreement is indeed signed in 2013 in Parliament. The tribe is compensated and receives more control over the Urewera National Park on its land. The state apologizes for a past of violence, indignities, and land theft.

Brick by brick, board by board, solar panel by solar panel, Tūhoe and Pākehā laborers and managers erect the building. Images of the fog, the forest, trucks dumping cement, rooms stuffed with scaffolding, and so forth appear like a kind of call-and-response chorus throughout the movie. Meanwhile, impromptu meetings of orange-vested men and women in hard hats take place on the job site. Building products imported from Europe are banned, as are red-list chemicals. In more formal settings, Tūhoe discuss the pending settlement with the Crown and are kept in the loop about the

project. Will it be earthquake proof? How will it contribute to a sustainable future for the tribe?

The movie more or less culminates with the opening ceremony for the building. An intense haka (ritual dance) is performed, after which a large throng of onlookers make their way across a parking lot. A couple of children cut a braided ribbon made of leaves and enter the edifice for a first look at its cavernous rooms, display cases for artifacts of tribal history, and recycling bins.

The narrative begins and ends with a scene of the same rural setting, as if to suggest that the new building has not had any demonstrative impact on the relatively remote and basic quality of life of the Tūhoe. At first, we see through a window, perhaps of a car in which the filmmakers arrive, a somewhat distant image of a modest home at the foot of a forested mountainside. A grassy field that is fenced in several ways, perhaps as a paddock, appears in the foreground of the shot. A telephone line runs through the middle of the image and an anonymous passenger, who is possibly on her way to school, waits for a bus in the rain. At the conclusion of the movie, we return to the same bus stop and peer through the same window, now perhaps in a vehicle that is departing. The passenger hops off the bus, which drives away, and walks on one side of the camera frame. As the screen goes dark, a coda appears across it in the form of a Tūhoe adage affirming the embodied identity of the people with the land: "The land is the blood of the people / The people are the face of the land."

For all of its beautiful nuance and

uncompromising ambiguity, the pace of the movie, at least for me, is slow. At 93 minutes, it is too long by one-third for the classroom, where it might be put to good use in courses on the environment, Māori studies, and, of course, Pacific ethnology. I would urge the director to release a re-edited version, one hour long, which would be much more manageable for teaching purposes.

DAVID LIPSET  
*University of Minnesota*

\* \* \*

*Hope at Sea: Possible Ecologies in Oceanic Literature*, by Teresa Shewry. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. ISBN cloth 978-0-8166-9157-9; paper, 978-0-8166-9158-6; 247 pages, index, bibliography, notes. Cloth, US\$87.50; paper, US\$25.00.

The attention that environmental historians and critics have directed toward the effects of ecological imperialism on the land is now being turned toward the sea. Viewing the ocean as a vibrant, connective being, teeming with threatened life forms and ecosystems, Teresa Shewry in *Hope at Sea* engages Oceanic literary texts as both sensitive registers of ecological devastation and regenerative sites of thought and advocacy.

*Hope at Sea* approaches Oceania as a region where “sweeping environmental changes have reshaped life possibilities” (2) and where writers are correspondingly attuned to the relations among human lives and water cycles, watersheds, the ocean, and its inhabitants. Through countering the destructive logics that lead to

pollution, climate change, overfishing, water diversion, and water shortages, the authors that Shewry selects model hopeful possibilities for thinking about ecological futures. In approaching Oceanic literatures, she limits herself primarily to writers living in anglophone settler colonies—Hawai‘i (Michael McPherson, Māhealani Dudoit, Gary Pak, Cathy Song, Robert Barclay); Aotearoa/New Zealand (Hone Tuwhare, Kerry Hulme, Cilla McQueen, Ralph Hotere, Albert Wendt, Ian Wedde); and Australia (Richard Flanagan). While Shewry marks the positionalities of these authors and notes their connections to social movements, settler colonialism itself is largely bracketed as the contentious sociopolitical setting out of which most of the texts she discusses have emerged. To the degree that native-settler relations are discussed, it is in terms of their alliances and the shared senses found in environmental writing of “threatened, appreciated reality” (57).

Shewry reads her “archive” in ways meant to evoke hope as a critical analytic and mode of engagement, sparked by “damage *and* struggle” (6). The environmental hope expressed in and through literary texts realizes itself actively both against its opposites (fatalistic or escapist ecological views) and against vulnerable aspects of its own conceptual structure (false, imperialistic, vague, flawed, unrealistic, individualistic, and outright destructive forms of hope). Formed “in the Shadow of Sorrow” (as the introduction is titled), such hope is uncertain about prevailing and uncertain about what prevailing might look like, given a commitment to open futures. Along