

Tahiti: Regards intérieurs, edited by Elise Huffer and Bruno Saura. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2006. ISBN 978-982-02-0381-5, ix + 235 pages, notes, bibliography. US\$30.00.

Images et pouvoirs dans le Pacifique, edited by Viviane Fayaud and Jean-Marc Regnault. Paris: Publications de la Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 2011. ISBN 978-2-859700-48-5, 188 pages, resumes, biographies. €18.

Tahiti Beloved and Forbidden: Tahiti Herehia, Tahiti Rahuia, by Marie Claude Teissier-Landgraf. Translated by Neil Carruthers. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2004. ISBN 978-982-02-0369-3, 372 pages, illustrations, glossary. US\$20.00.

It is almost two decades since Epeli Hau'ofa inspired an astonished community of insular voices with his luminous vision of Oceania as a tissue of immemorial and emergent pathways linking distant lands in unbroken bonds. Despite the connective spirit of many Pacific conversations in subsequent years, some voices still travel across the broader sea as echoes over water, dimly heard. French Polynesia, storied Tahiti, the verdant Societies, the bejeweled Tuamotus, the oft-overlooked Australs and Gambiers, and the romanticized Marquesas remain—for metropolitan France and for non-French-speaking persons across the region—truly a pays d'outre mer, a country over the sea. That this is the case is all the more lamentable considering the recent efflorescence of

literary and academic works in French Polynesia, from exquisitely intimate memoirs to penetrating analyses of the structural transformations of cultural systems both scintillatingly minute and foundationally vast; from heart-wrenching novels to playful, improvisational poetry to subtle recherché debates about the role of the academy, especially linguistics, in national politics. If all of the authors reviewed here resonate with Hau'ofa's vision of Oceania as a fabric of connections, liaisons, and rapprochements, they also remind us that anglophone Pacific scholars and writers need to work to meet their francophone colleagues halfway.

Two exemplary edited volumes and a new English translation of Marie Claude Teissier-Landgraf's celebrated novel offer a glimpse of the vitality of recent scholarship and literary craft in the French Pacific and of some themes and trends in regional conversations. For those who have a fair reading comprehension of French, Elise Huffer and Bruno Saura's very fine volume is an excellent place to start. Showcasing current writing about French Polynesia by Mā'ohi writers from within the region's cultural milieu, this work is notable for the manner in which it brings academic as well as high-caliber public scholarship into conversation with evocative literary and critical reflections. After a clear-sighted editors' note discussing this burgeoning, productive period for Tahitian and other Mā'ohi writers and the problem of address with respect to a broad Oceanic audience, the volume opens with a robust study of childhood cultures and game play on the Tuamotu atoll of Nāpuka,

one of several contributions drawing attention to modest cultural endurance. In this piece, Jean Kape shows how spatial strategies, normative conventional rule-bound interaction frames, and such ephemeral moments as cheers and taunts can mediate some of the cultural disturbances of historical change. Together with Corinne McKittrick's very fine essay on Tahitian dance and Frédéric Reva's Tahitian-language discussion of the surprising depths of contemporary songwriting by popular artists, these ruminations on the role of intergenerational transmission of microcultural beliefs and values suggest that the profoundly significant cohesion of community rests to some degree in modest moments in the everyday cultures of childhood and adult performances.

This concern with the micro is well complemented in the volume by Danielle Helme and Tamatoa Bambridge, who contribute pieces investigating sweeping structural transformations in Tahitian political, legal, and social institutions. Presenting a long view of pluralism as a structurally entrenched jurisprudential tenet in Eastern Polynesia, Bambridge's contribution to the volume is particularly notable. His articulation of the interplay between interdependent yet more or less autonomous social orders in precontact Tahitian society, with a broad and deep comparative Polynesian context, is among the foremost discussions of the contemporary legacies of traditional social structures and governance. Bambridge notes that such putatively stable terms as "control," at the heart of long-running conversations about land tenure, are problematically ambiguous when

considered in light of close scrutiny of the overlapping nonexclusive rights to lands and their use, shared by individuals embedded within various overlapping and sometimes hierarchically arrayed collectivities. According to Bambridge, when policymakers and legislators have supported these individuals' attempts to exert "control" over Polynesian lands through Western title (ownership) with claims that they have not been able to identify explicit semantic frameworks for traditional legal pluralism, from the early colonial period to the present, they have overlooked and misconstrued foundational facts of pre-Western systems of governance. The resulting disjunctions between culturally entrenched, socially embedded collectivist ordering systems and colonial and postcolonial Western legal impositions go a long way toward explaining many of the ruptures, ambiguities, and other sorts of structural tensions in land laws and policies.

In what he may have intended as a passing thought, this situation leads Bambridge to posit "indecision" as something like an institutional crisis in Tahiti, as actors on the ground are caught between disarticulated orders of governance. Late in the volume, however, Antonino Lucas's intimate discussion of the sometimes contradictory but always complex theological development of Tahitian poet and leading independentist Henri Hiro further picks up on and resonates with this theme. As Lucas observes, the problem of indecision has been experienced not just in complex legal quagmires but also in the give and take of daily life for men and women seeking to pursue their various call-

ings. Hiro, whose exquisite, precise poems are clarion calls of cultural renewal and pride, long struggled with a private crisis of Christian faith and existential doubt. This intimate ambivalence has a semantic expression in the Tahitian concept of *fēàapiti* or *àaurua*—a person caught or divided between two things or persons without being able to make a choice between them (201). In an apt concluding contribution to the volume, “Je suis tahitienne, pas seulement tahitienne” (I Am Tahitian, Not Solely Tahitian), Danah Drollet observes that something like this crisis of a double self can be ameliorated by the act of writing. Hiro would have agreed.

The turn to words and pens as a response to the binds of the micro and macro politics of contemporary Tahitian life is very much a concern of the remaining pieces in the volume, which share a strong focus on language and literature. Louise Peltzer, a former minister of culture in the Gaston Flosse administration, and Edgar Tetahiotupa, who has served in the administration of Oscar Temaru, offer intriguing reflections on the problem of linguistic diversity and difference in national life. Long-simmering conflicts between groups within the region become visible, they argue, in the contestation of the character of the region’s different languages and their place in national life. Whether linguistic diversity in the region is a curse or a blessing, orthographic debates or questions of who or (speaking of language) what counts as “Tahitian” or “Mā’ohi” will not be readily resolved. Practically speaking, such ontological debates may matter less than what Mā’ohi-speaking art-

ists do as they put pen to paper. Vahi Tuheiava-Richaud and Flora Devatine draw attention to the flowering of local writing, including the emergence of many potent women’s voices, at the end of the 1990s and in the first years of the new millennium. In an astonishing display of creative fire, Tuheiava-Richaud turns the category of “Tahitian woman” inside out, exposing numerous conceptual contradictions, all the while demonstrating with her genre-bending prose why it is so easy to be excited about local writing. Probably no one is better positioned to describe the emergence of such fireworks in Tahitian letters than Devatine, an accomplished poet and one of the founders of the pathbreaking journal *Littérama’ohi*. Her essay could be continued and would be even more astonishing if her accounting of publications current in the early 2000s were compared to the offerings at the bookstores in Tahiti in 2011. Devatine’s reflections on oralité as an opening up of a space for the production and reproduction of the intimate speech of real peoples—the sounds and images of everyday life, the source of creativity and fecundity—are also a highlight of the volume and could certainly be brought into an intriguing conversation with recent work on “image” in Pacific scholarship.

As a product of what must have been an exhilarating conference organized by le Réseau Imasie (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique-Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme) in conjunction with the Festival du cinéma des pays du Pacifique Sud in 2009, Viviane Fayaud and Jean-Marc Regnault’s volume comes at the region not from within

but from without. While quite a bit of ink has been spilled on the role of broadly circulating representations of the Pacific, this volume is noteworthy in its conception of Pacific representations, images, and imaginaries as useful for what they can reveal about the mediations of power broadly conceived, and especially the production and maintenance of structures of governance. The pieces assembled here are not primarily in service of close readings or interpretive analyses of identity, sexuality, gender, bodies, translation, naturalisms, or race as interpretive frames. Rather, this work is pragmatically centered on a series of concerns with issues of government, bureaucracy, authority, prestige, and political jockeying among other issues of “power.” Though this review will only comment on the pieces that directly address French Polynesia, all of the essays in this collection illuminate issues of power in visual regimes across Oceanic places, including New Zealand, New Caledonia, Hawai‘i, and Fiji. With sharpened interpretive knives, Sonia Faessel points to a fundamental tension between the distorted representations of the colonial era, which often have the quality of caricatures, and many Islanders’ recent inversions, contestations, and repurposings of representational legacies for their own empowering ends. Of course colonial powers have hardly retreated from the scene, and, she observes, Islanders’ representations remain entangled—in opposition or in more or less conscious reproduction—with the colonial. Attempts to step outside or away from this context often fall into the seductions of nostalgia for either “a disappeared past or present

in the process of extinction” (88). This explains, she notes, a major trend in Tahitian literature to favor something like an island pastoral as a representational framework. Such narrative images cast the corruptions and corrosions of contemporary life in French Polynesia into stark contrast with an imagined more desirable alternative. They also suggest that for some writers the present state of these islands is a sort of “perdition” (89). Certainly, this lost-soul quality is evident in several of the later essays in this volume that reflect the contest between legitimately and authentically locally rooted representations and those drawing on representational tropes of elsewhere and, often, “elsewhen.” The strategic deployment of the voyaging canoe on national postal stamps as a novel image of power is well dissected by Yves Leloup, and can be usefully counterposed to successive French Polynesian governments’ embrace of the architectural styles of the French ancien regime as discussed by Fayaud. Similarly, in Regnault’s delightful unraveling of presidential fashions—the transition from the Flosse administration’s regular and insistent presentation of a bureaucracy in business suits to the Temaru administration’s distinctly Oceanic fabrics sans ties and blazers—may well suggest “alternate styles of governance” (171). But, like Leloup’s postal stamps, it may also reflect a politicization of cultural renewal that carries unknown risks. As Regnault notes in closing, such signs of change in representational regimes raise the question of whether Pacific states, or the local orders of politics on which states ultimately rest, will atavistically reproduce the rep-

representational infelicities and binds of the colonial period. For how long will Pacific places remain haunted by the specters of colonial representational regimes, either as “detestable” images that should be opposed or, in a bitter irony of postcolonial sovereignty, as ready-made visual tools available to emergent local powers seeking to foster the potent appearances of political legitimacy and authority?

Marie Claude Teissier-Landgraf’s *Tahiti Beloved and Forbidden* is a thoroughly enthralling and ultimately wrenching coming-of-age novel. A close translation of her celebrated *Hutu Painu, Tahiti, racines et déchirements*, the novel follows the emotional and cultural adventures of Sophie, a young girl of mixed parentage who arrives in Tahiti in the aftermath of the Second World War. Fresh-eyed, independent, and kindhearted, Sophie witnesses and chronicles the postwar years before the installation of the French nuclear test establishments and the subsequent massive development, transformation, and reevaluation of many of Tahiti’s enduring institutions. Proceeding through charming, occasionally gripping encounters, Sophie’s struggle with the challenges of navigating social mores, class, and status, institutional and informal educations, and parental expectations draws the Tahiti of that period into an uncomfortable present—bringing to mind Faessel’s observations about the seductions of nostalgia. At the same time, Sophie’s fraught romance with Tahiti is not blind. Teissier-Landgraf’s achievement here is a marvel of anecdotes, vignettes, and rare sentiments that capture the wonder of youth as well as its perspicacity and

frankness. Like the recent translation of Chantal Spitz’s *Island of Shattered Dreams* (2007), Teissier-Landgraf’s artful narrative offers a point of entry into the ongoing conversations within the region discussed above. The novel does not intend for the reader to be comfortable. At its heart beats the uncertain and ambiguous rhythms of many of the insights of the Huffer/Saura and Fayayd/Regnault volumes. Indecision, *fêapiti*, and the terror of purgatory—the fear that one might never have the paradise of an island past undamaged by nor a future free from the specter of double belonging—are familiar to Teissier-Landgraf’s heroine. Anglophone readers interested in the region will find it well worth having on their shelves and in their thoughts.

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This IS Hawai‘i. The National Museum of the American Indian, 19 May–4 July 2011; and *Transformer*, 21 May–25 June 2011, Washington, DC.

For the past five years, Kanaka Maoli (aboriginal Hawaiian) and non-Kanaka Maoli audiences have converged in Washington DC to attend the Hawai‘i Festival, an event held every May over a period of two days at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). This year’s gathering was noteworthy in that it included for the first time a collaborative exhibition of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art at the museum and at the smaller nonprofit gallery,