

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 30, Number 2, 549-570
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displayed by O'Brien, and he did set a course for Sāmoa's future. Unfortunately, Ta'isi's commitment to the Mau resulted in exile, jail time, and strain on his personal family life.

Tautai is a wonderful contribution to Pacific Islands resistance and decolonization studies, and more generally to world, Pacific, and Samoan political history. The book is well written and provides a list of key historical figures to follow the chronology of events, as well as a glossary of Samoan terms to guide the reader. A detailed notes section for each chapter is a treasure trove of resources for individuals interested in Samoan history or the Mau movement. Rare photos of Ta'isi's family and of him in action as a political advocate offer a special visual context of the events as they unfolded. Graduate students in Pacific and world history will benefit immensely from this book, as *Tautai* deals with Pacific resistance, politics and government, the League of Nations, and colonialism. The students at the National University of Samoa and the American Samoa Community College especially will find this an invaluable book as an excellent point of reference to Sāmoa–New Zealand colonial history. I particularly like the way O'Brien details the Mau as not merely a Samoan movement but as a collaboration of different ideas and peoples that centered on how to achieve the goal of self-determination. The theme of nonviolence and Ta'isi's alliances and associations with other people resonate throughout the book. *Tautai* exhibits Ta'isi's ability to lead Sāmoa at the national level, but as he was also a respected chief of a powerful family, I wanted to know more

about his kin and village bloodline connections and the politics behind him navigating those alliances. What was the role of his village, Safune, in this movement? Were his Samoan chiefly kin more active in promoting the Mau using traditional oratory?

Overall, this book captures the essence of Sāmoa's struggle in the context of a tectonic movement in world history in which passionate local agents and activists promoting change emerged to contest the injustice, instability, and odiousness of colonial forms of government across the globe. O'Brien deftly shows how Sāmoa held onto its cultural practices but at the same time refined their traditional systems to fit within the changes of the time. To set a country on the course of self-determination, it takes a gifted leader, or in Sāmoa's case, a tautai, to achieve that goal.

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Mele Murals. Documentary film, 106 minutes, color, 2016. Directed by Tadashi Nakamura; produced by Keoni Lee. A coproduction of Oiwī TV, Pacific Islanders in Communication, and Downtown Community Media Center, in association with the Center for Asian American Media.

The Hawaiian renaissance, which expresses the larger decolonization movement taking place in settler states elsewhere in the Pacific, gives voice to a notion of indigeneity that is nested in a concept of cultural autonomy. However, as suggested by the revival of the Hale Mua men's

group so beautifully described by Ty Tengan in *Native Men Remade* (2008), as well as in Brendan Hokowhitu's fascinating work on Māori rugby (*Tackling Māori Masculinity* [2004]). The movement's answers to modernity in all of its many guises are not straightforward. They cannot be reduced to a single field of vision or a single ideology. Decolonized culture does not simply seek to revitalize an idealized or purified past but rather is informed by a more contradictory disposition, in which voices of a collectivist past contest but also co-opt contemporary genres and values—not to mention contemporary technologies—to create Indigenous voices. Although sometimes contrasting or even contradictory, these voices nevertheless combine one with the other and create new forms of discourse, new institutions, and a new sense of the future—without a predictable shape or outcome. While the historical losses that motivate what might be called the dialogics of decolonization hurt men and women alike, Tadashi Nakamura's documentary suggests that perhaps the pain has at times been more debilitating for men.

Mele Murals tells an absorbing story about the productive agonies of two such men, the well-known, Honolulu-based graffiti artists, Estria Miyashiro and John "Prime" Hina. In voiceovers, photographs, and attractive scenes of the graffiti project from which the film takes its name, the artists' lives and art are recounted. We learn about their childhoods without fathers, their leadership in the burgeoning hip-hop scene in the 1980s—when their art largely consisted of defiant legibility, that is, of writing

their names across public spaces—and their eventual mutual recognition that portraying Hawaiian identity through their cans of spray paint was more significant than mere representations of an eponymous self.

Prime recalls the shift: "Hip-hop was a replacement for not knowing about Hawaiian culture. . . . I grew up speaking English. Hawaiian culture was hearsay." Estria, for his part, recalls a similar kind of estrangement. Growing up in a Japanese family, his father was Hawaiian but had left when he was a baby. Later, when Estria went to college in the San Francisco Bay Area, he was criticized back in Honolulu for how little his Hawaiian background turned up in his art.

The centerpiece of the film's narrative is the process by which three murals are created under the direction of the two men. Inspired by songs composed by students at a Hawaiian-language charter school in Waimea on the Big Island, we see the students, their teachers, and the artists undertake field trips to pertinent sites. As one mural is meant to depict the snow goddess of Mauna Kea, Poli'ahu, they all go to the mountain and put their toes into her lake and experience the goddess in her place. For the second mural, Prime and Estria accompany students to a beach where a freshwater stream flows into the ocean. Prime listens to two girls talking about the beach. While he is standing in the shallows, a whale suddenly breaches the water a few hundred yards offshore and he is left with a strong feeling of confirmation that he is on the right track. The third mural concerns the rain goddess, Mana'ua, who is

associated with a rock in the town to which the group goes to honor her with a lei and a hula.

The students paint day and night, as do the two artists. Watching the young people brings Prime to tears. “I wish somebody had sat with me,” Prime tells the camera, thinking of his youth. “It wouldn’t have taken me so frickin’ long to figure things out.” Chastened by the critical scrutiny of “Auntie Pua,” Estria struggles to depict the face of the snow goddess Poli‘ahu in the mural. Working up to the last hour before the unveiling of the three murals, he is relieved when he sees her satisfaction with the result. It begins to rain, which Auntie Pua interprets to express Mana‘ua’s pleasure. Children sing happily while other boys and girls dance. The students who composed the songs that the murals illustrate open a discussion about their meaning and value. Auntie Pua comments on the extent to which cultural change is now taking place and affirms how important “being Kanaka” is in this moment and generation.

On their return to Honolulu, Prime and Estria go back to a mural depicting some of the imagery that then appeared in their Waimea murals: of the snow and rain goddesses and of Mauna Kea. They paint over the whole wall to honor their new commitment. “I am learning more about my Hawaiian side,” Estria tells the camera, “and can be more face-to-face with my shortcomings that I am trying to change. There’s a difference between Estria and me. I am trying to make Estria more me.”

The story of these two graffiti artists is beautifully visualized and

told at an accessible pace. But *Mele Murals* does not just portray the artists’ lives; its stakes are larger than biography. *Mele Murals* illustrates an expressive dimension of the ongoing dialogics of decolonization in the Pacific including how some of its advocates appropriate a kind of urban individualism for the purposes of their indigeneity. At the same time, we also get an absorbing glimpse and suggestive hints of the struggles that the two artists have faced and are trying to overcome, not just as Hawaiians but as Hawaiian men.

The director, Tadashi Nakamura, and the producer, Keoni Lee, should be applauded for their achievement. *Mele Murals* would make a useful contribution to courses on the Pacific, youth culture, masculinity, and of course, on contemporary Hawai‘i.

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Sinuous Objects: Revaluating Women’s Wealth in the Contemporary Pacific, edited by Anna-Karina Hermkens and Katherine Lepani. Acton, ACT: Australian National University Press, 2017. ISBN paper, 978-176046-133-1, e-book 978-1-76046-134-8; xxix + 292 pages, images, references, abbreviations, glossary. Paper, A\$58.00; e-book free download.

Sinuous Objects: Revaluating Women’s Wealth in the Contemporary Pacific debates ideas about women’s wealth, value, and exchange of textiles in the Pacific. Edited by Anna-Karina Hermkens and Katherine Lepani, the constituent chapters draw on ethno-

Reviews of Mele Murals 2016. Watched. Liked. There are some great shots in this film including the whales greeting the Mele Murals group, the visit to Mauna Kea, as well as several emotional scenes as the mural is unveiled. The ending is fitting and I think is a good example of community accountability. We physically see Prime and Estria grow in their awareness of their roots and their responsibility to their people. View. Watched by Jbearchum 23 Sep, 2018. One of the best documentaries I've seen on indigenous peoples. Especially with regard to understanding cultural boundaries/barriers/restrictions on what is sacred. Not just for our Top 100 Documentary Movies. Best of Rotten Tomatoes. Movies with 40 or more critic reviews vie for their place in history at Rotten Tomatoes. Eligible movies are ranked based on their Adjusted Scores. Genre: Documentary. Join the newsletter. Get the freshest reviews, news, and more delivered right to your inbox! Join the Newsletter! Follow Us. Virunga Documentary Review The film Virunga documents a group of people desperately trying to protect the world's last remaining mountain gorillas. Virunga is a national park located in Nigeria BataBox Documentary Series with Odunayo Oti | Review Even though I am rarely filming any longer, I am still on a lookout for thoughts and ideas about documentary filmmaking. I was looking into woodworking The Staircase Documentary Review The staircase is a compelling Netflix original which has had me hooked since the first five minutes, as the opening episodes unfold I personally found Undeclared | Documentary "Mele Murals" is a documentary about the transformative power of art through the unlikely union of graffiti and ancient Hawaiian culture. Through their stories Mele Murals shows how public art and Native Hawaiian traditions transforms the artists, students and community. Read more. Support Provided By. Full Episodes. Episode. 57:01. Pacific Heartbeat.