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 ***Fast Talking PI, and: I Can See Fiji: Poetry and Sounds***
(review)

Ku'ualoha Ho'omanawanui

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Fast Talking PI, by Selina Tusitala Marsh. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-86940-432-1, 72 pages. Includes CD. Paper, US\$16.95.

I Can See Fiji: Poetry and Sounds, by Teresia Teaiwa. Sound recording. Featuring vocals and poetry by Teresia Teaiwa and Des Mallon on percussion. Sound design by Hinemoana Baker. Wellington: Fiery Canoe, 2008. In English, Fijian, and Māori. CD, poetry texts on insert. NZ\$24.99. Available online at <https://kstore.net.nz/hinemoana/store.html>

Fast Talking PI is the first collection of poetry by Pacific Islander writer and scholar Selina Tusitala Marsh. The collection, represented by the title poem, succinctly captures the complex, contrary, and sometimes fractured identities of contemporary Pacific Islanders.

Marketed as a mixed-media product, the collection includes an audio CD with selected poems performed by Marsh. While many poetry collections and a few audio CDs of poetry have previously appeared in the Pacific, Tusitala Marsh is the first to combine the two. This mixed-media format enhances the possibilities of understanding and appreciating the complexities of Pacific Islands poetry, bridging both contemporary literary traditions, and evoking traditional oral tradition, storytelling, and musical performance.

Marsh's collection is a loving, poetic tribute that interweaves genealogies of Pacific culture, cultural icons, and cultural tradition. This is not just someone who has a keen ear for sound **[End Page 213]** and the capacity for a lovely turn of phrase. Throughout the collection, Marsh demonstrates her knowledge of Pacific history and culture, woven together through a combined tapping of traditional and contemporary poetic rhythms. As genealogy is a key aspect of Pacific Islands cultures, it is firmly incorporated throughout the content of the poems in a new kind of mele inoa (songs honoring esteemed people).

The best example is the title poem, "Fast Talkin' PI," which contains a dizzying mélange of snapshot images of contemporary Pacific Islander identities; the opening stanzas of the 131-line poem include the sometimes juxtaposed images of the "power walkin' / published in a peer reviewed journal / lot to queen / vegan / criminal / fale living / diabetic / fa'alavelave lovin' givin' livin' / propertied / go-for-God / gay PI" (58–61).

There are nods to other Pacific writers, with sometimes humorous tones, as in the stanza, "*I'm a pair of jimmy choos / I'm a size 12 in fuchsia please / I'm a no shoe fits the foot of an earth mama*" (62), which alludes to Sia Figiel's poem "Songs of the Fat Brown Woman" (1998). The second half of the poem equates Pacific Islander/the author's identity with a genealogy of Pacific literary texts and videos, beginning with Albert Wendt's groundbreaking edited anthology of Pacific writing in English, *Lali* (1980): "*I'm a lali / I'm where we once belonged / I'm a dream fish floating / I'm wild dogs under my skirt / I'm searching for nei nim'anoa / I'm a native daughter*" (64).

The collection is divided into three parts: "Tusitala" (storyteller), "Talkback," and "Fast Talking PI." These section titles suggest different historical periods of orature and literature, precolonial independence and colonization: Tusitala, the storyteller of the precolonial independence period, when music and orature were freely interwoven; Talkback, a period of early postcolonial resistance; Fast Talking PI, illustrating the complex identity of the contemporary postcolonial Native, which evokes the image first described by Wendt in his landmark essay, "Tattooing the Post-Colonial Body" (1996): a "well-built Samoan [male] striding up the street in blue sports shorts, blue t-shirt, short, cropped hair, Reeboks, eating a hamburger and parading his tatau . . . letting his pe'a fly!" Marsh's collection extends that singular image of the postcolonial Pacific Islander body into a multifaceted tapestry of complex interweavings and contradictions.

Not all the poems in the print collection are included on the audio CD, and vice versa. This is the only slight disappointment; Marsh's vocal interpretation of her work is so enjoyable it is easy to imagine listening to her recount the cultural and literary history of our Pacific Islander ancestors and artists in a surprisingly fresh twist on an old and respected cultural...

investments to the range of museums is necessary and deserved when these museums and cultural centers engage with their communities, thrive, and continually evolve in spite of obstacles such as politics and internal institutional strife.

The Future of Indigenous Museums presents not so much a critique of museums and cultural centers in the southwest Pacific as their histories and accolades for what has been achieved. What comes through is advocacy for indigenous participation and agency in museums, which are validated by the experiences and histories of the examples included. This is appropriate as the museums, cultural centers, and programs described are important to the cultural invigoration, preservation of material culture, and the indigenization of museums occurring throughout the Pacific. The examples of museums—the statuesque architecture of Tjibaou Cultural Centre, the remote Gogodala Cultural Centre's longhouse (in Western Province, Papua New Guinea) and Teptep, Papua New Guinea's Bebek Bema Yoma (ancestors' ceremonial compound or homestead), or villages that have become museums themselves—provide an "alternative perspective, presenting us with new ways of thinking about what constitutes a museum, curatorial behaviour and heritage preservation" (223).

KATHERINE HIGGINS
University of Auckland

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2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



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