

Filling in the Blanks: *Mariquita*, a Hybrid Biography from Guam¹

Pacific literature studies have been intimately engaged in debating the nature of islands from their beginnings in colonial writing: R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, for example, or Gavan Daws's critical survey *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of Self-Discovery in the South Seas*. From the Euro-American perspective, the tropical island was an isolated, unspoiled Paradise where a white man could prove himself (and improve himself) through Crusoe-like activity and inventiveness. Where indigenous peoples inconveniently contested white presence and superiority, islands became remote hell-holes of temptation and violence to be tamed or escaped from (as in Herman Melville's *Typee*). In either manifestation, islands were distant, self-contained (insular, in fact) and meaningful only in terms of the outside writer giving them international visibility. Since then, people born to the islands have expressed the way they see them — as places of history and human drama with their own 'take' on the world — and theorists like Epli Hau'ofa have reconfigured them as networks of active interconnections, not isolated dots in vast spaces of emptiness.

Whichever view you hold, it remains true that prior to missionaries and other Western intruders, island cultures were expressed in elaborate conventions of orality. Island communities, especially small ones, do not need writing. Even as an extended network, histories and social exchanges could be preserved through chant and song. As a poem from Hawai'i entitled 'How the Island Works' puts it, insular communication is an intimate circulation of "word of mouth, brah, word of mouth" (Tachiyama). But this intimacy carries with it a high ratio of tact to frankness, so that utterances are frequently stylised into formal rhetoric and indirect metaphor loaded with layers of local significance and topical implication. Where everyone knows everyone else's business, and where there is a given hierarchy of status, social harmony relies on certain things remaining unspoken, but they are able to be unspoken because they can be coded into readily comprehensible public expression as allegory or ritually sanctioned satiric theatre to serve as a release valve for pressurised feelings and sometimes a spur to corrective negotiations.

When people begin to travel off-island and outsiders enter the insular community, the possibilities for tactful silence and the need for public means of information exchange alter. Audiences for gossip, fact, and

story are no longer only 'in-house' and things have to be spelled out to the uninitiated. 'Washing dirty linen in public' becomes a much more shaming thing because the display is more visible and what is on show is no longer couched in tacitly understood figures of speech. Writing fills in gaps that the spoken word can no longer span and sends information into unknown and possibly uncontextualised spaces. So when mission schools introduced literacy to give Pacific Islanders access to scriptures and educate them about the outside world, there were two broad responses: one was the 'in-house' translation of local practices into written form (as with students penning covert love letters to each other); the other was the formal writing 'industry' of mission reports from the field, sermons, recording of customs and languages, and so on (Cheever). In the latter case, writing by 'front-line' evangelists such as Cook Islanders Ta'unga and Maretu served initially as internal mission documents, but began to circulate more widely as part of the global propaganda of Christianity, then later these texts were recovered by scholars to help construct local histories and cultures 'overwritten' by the Western colonial print archive.

Where the gaps are not just between orality and literacy, but also in the information itself, the urge to set the record straight might be strong, but the problems of gathering data from oral sources and historical record are that much more difficult. In the case of Guam, the abrupt transitions from Spanish to American colonial rule and then to Japanese armed occupation resulted in breaks in the oral transmission of material from one generation to the next and the destruction and absence of paper records from one administration to another. So when Chris Perez Howard complains that producing *Mariquita*, the slender biography of his mother, was one of the hardest things he'd ever done, he wasn't necessarily exaggerating. He had to work with the delicate sensibilities of family and with the island balance of exposure versus tactful silence, and he also faced the sheer blank in written records that covered his mother's wartime disappearance and the history of Guam in general.

Micronesia, the earliest Pacific region to encounter European technology, is one of the latest to develop a visible print-literary culture. As Mark Skinner has pointed out in his bibliographic survey, there have been stories and poems in print, mostly from Guam and nearly all from high-school magazines, dating back to the 1920s, but a concentrated literary culture (as in most other areas of the Pacific) seems to have depended on the development of tertiary education, such that literary journals

and consistent production of written work with self-consciously artistic aspirations begin to circulate only from the early 1990s from classes at the reorganised University of Guam.

Micronesian writing has not followed the standard modern literary history of other parts of the Pacific, which highlight the sudden 'boom' in assertions of identity and protests against loss of traditional culture that were part of 1970s anti-colonial movements. It shows how varied the field of Pacific literature really is, and how any study of the field has to take into account different periodisations of literary history and even distinct textual modes of composition as a result of differing regional histories of politics and society. There may be broad patterns of development that characterize the entire field. One common factor has been the need for a self-conscious observing individuality in the writing subject that has run in tandem with the emergence of autobiographical and ethnographic works as forerunners to literary writing. This is clearly seen in the 1948 hybrid text *Miss Ulysses of Puka Puka* by Florence 'Johnny' Frisbie (Sharrad). But the specifics of textual production must be taken into account for each island grouping.

What is evident in the case of Guam is that while historically there were anti-colonialist pressures building in the seventies, seen in the change of education policy to allow the use and instruction of the indigenous Chamorro language in schools (Underwood), the presence of the Para Pada Chamorros political group, the beginnings of the University of Guam and the founding of the Chamorro Lands Trust (Roberts 225), there was not a 'critical mass' of activism sufficient to act as a basis for oppositional writing of 'us-them' binaries such as we find in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, represented most clearly in Kumalau Tawali's "The Bush Kanaka Speaks" or the poems of Albert Leomala. Part of this difference was due to the particular relationship between Guam and America, but part was also owing to the isolation of the island from the institutional and cultural networks operating in the South Pacific.

Perhaps the first work from Micronesia to circulate beyond its local school network is a short text by Chris Perez Howard, entitled *Mariquita: a Tragedy of Guam*. It is typical of Pacific literary history in several ways, in that it is a personal narrative with historical import (as is Albert Maori Kiki's ground-breaking autobiography) and appears through the University of the South Pacific, one of the engines of the Pacific literary machine. The Institute of Pacific Studies there had begun a series of autobiographies from leading Pacific identities to serve as school readers and records of the

decolonization period (Osifelo, Zoloveke). What is particularly interesting about Perez Howard's book is its distinct style. Unlike its fellows, which are often straightforward 'go to woe' first-person narratives transcribed from tape recordings and edited, *Mariquita* is written by the author himself as "one of the most difficult projects I have ever undertaken", its difficulty manifesting itself in varying narrative viewpoints and a curious hybrid of documentary and fictional devices, chatty oral history and written formality, biography and autobiography.

Mariquita is an excellent text to teach with, since the student used to print literature and a reading culture immediately recognizes the popular romance and filmic devices and is drawn into the story, and then asks, "Well what's so difficult about this?" and "How come someone educated in America and trained as a journalist could make such a mixed-up hash of it all?" Students point to the clumsy 'cliffhanger' tags at chapter endings that supposedly crank up suspense but in fact give the game away: "How could they possibly know that fate would so cruelly separate them?" (11) "A love that would be severely tested" (35) (Beaux). They note the strange shifts in generic mode and tone: from lyric dramatization of a fiery temperament against a 'Pacific paradise' backdrop to textbook language of ornithology, as *Mariquita* is described as a "Rufous fronted fantail, a small quick brown bird with a fantail edged in white that is constantly fluttering" (2) (Hamilton), and groan at the filmic clichés of perfect doomed lovers and the perfect pious victim. If the text is not a good instance of literary craft, or a fully developed historical work, it is, however, an exemplary case of postcolonial writing that leads directly into discussion of the general problematics of emergent literatures and the particular factors shaping this hybrid text. It signals itself as precursor to a contemporary Chamorro activism, and as such is an interestingly conflicted piece of writing and self-presentation. One significant part of the conflict is the clash between taken-for-granted island knowledge and the need to spell things out for outside readers. Within this, there is the 'in-house' tension between obligatory formal representation and realistic exposure of historical facts.

One of the most influential makers of modern Pacific literature, Albert Wendt, has consistently figured the field as the repossession of indigeneity, although he has noted that all living cultures are, from their beginnings, changing, and has increasingly acknowledged the mixedness of contemporary globalised Pacific identities (Wendt). In this regard, Perez Howard's book is a 'classic' work of Pacific literature, since it discovers

a Chamorro presence within its hybrid Guamanian world. The US-raised Howard finds the Perez in him by going back to Guam and talking with his mother's people. In doing so, he locates his own identity as both hybrid and indigenous. He relies on and speaks to a family and island audience in order to insert himself into the community, but he does so from an 'off-island' past and via a regional and international publisher.

Tracing his mother's story is not only a personal psychotherapy, it is part of a collective genealogy of Guam that counters colonialist patriarchal records of governors by invoking the matrilineal traditions of Chamorro culture. The first comprehensive history of Guam, Caraño and Sanchez's 1964 work, has all the signs of being produced 'under license'. It opens with defensive statements to the effect that Guam is a melting pot of attractive people who dress like Americans and live in houses not unlike American homes. It is totally dependent on printed, therefore Spanish and American, records, and amounts to a narrative of which governor did what: evil governors cause destruction, good ones promote revival. Spain allowed agriculture to run down and prevented trade from developing by maintaining a cashless peasant economy. America brought a public health system and roads and schools. It does make the point that Naval rule by decree was not much different from Spanish colonial governance (184), and records the unproductive U.S. acquisition of around 40% of land on Guam (335-6) but otherwise tells a triumphalist tale of meliorist paternalism culminating in the Organic Act which ushered in a civil administration and limited self-government. Robert F. Rogers' more recent work is a more nuanced and objective assessment that includes discussion of contemporary "Unfinished Quests", but does not significantly depart from the 'smooth' presentation of historical narrative within the same framework of good and bad male leaders.

There is a limit to how far Chris Perez Howard can himself depart from this model with this narrative archaeology through his mother's lineage. In so far as his book is commissioned by a modern university as a history, his project is framed by notions of official narrative, factual research and objective evaluation of evidence. A personal discovery of a mother lost in tragic circumstances might make for a compelling biography, but it might not be material for a history. A writer rediscovering his lost childhood might also not be the best person to tell this story as a history. The tensions are clear when Chris reaches the point of narrating his own birth. The continuation of a 'cool' third-person voice suddenly seems a forced

restraint on emotional investments or evidence of an alienation that the rest of the book dramatically enacts and perhaps exorcises. "He was born on September 17, 1940, at the Susana Hospital in Agana. They named him Chris..." (38). The text moves around at the end to a more self-possessed first-person voice. In a way, this marks the transition from Chris as exiled Guamanian, to Chris as Chamorro, though as a tale of self-initiation, the end marks only a beginning.

Hallie Donkin notes his subtle hinting at the inequities behind America's benign rule. This is most clearly evident in the one moment of racism that prompts Eddie's defense of Mariquita (22), but is also found in passing mention of different rates of pay for Guamanians (40) and the need to get permission to marry (36). Overall, however, the text expresses a deep attachment to the American view of a Pacific Paradise improving on slack, priest-ridden Spanish rule, and disrupted by brutal 'Japs'. With the start of Japanese invasion, the historical blindness induced by an American outlook allows the narrator to intone portentously "The evils of conquest had begun", the word "again" echoing in its absence (49). The romance of harmonious relations suppresses a complex dynamic of opposition and collusion that finds expression in the symptomatic seams and rips in the narrative fabric of this hybrid text.

A blindness to unpalatable details and things of the past is not altogether Chris's fault. It is endemic in the amnesia of any colony, and in this case, of a colony so long marginalized that it has forgotten its own history, and so violently attacked that traces of its history have been obliterated beyond the memory of that violence still present in personal stories. The violence of World War Two masks the violence of warfare, relocation and epidemic that decimated Guam's population centuries earlier. *Mariquita* is full of signs that show absence by their residual presence: street names whose origins have been forgotten (13), photos of an Agana that no longer exists (3, 84), a Spanish bridge that marks a regime and a river no longer there (88). This is a key element in what makes the writing so difficult for Perez Howard: the speaking silences, present absences of his world. The woman whose story the book is is unknown to the narrator, and her story has no ending because she disappears.² After the dramatic build-up of Mariquita as the saintly emblem of Guam holding out against the rapacity of Japan, her sudden absence has to be filled in (papered over) somewhat clumsily by inconclusive official reports (81-2), and we shift to the narrator's own attempts to gather family information via newspaper clippings of his arrival

in Honolulu en route to twenty-seven years of growing up in California (85-6).

Chris is, like Derek Walcott, genetically "divided to the vein". He has to shrug off the restrictive formation of his father's world without denying it (indeed, there is a hidden tale of reconciliation, perhaps, with a father who has seemingly been traumatized by his wartime internment and the loss of his young wife) (86, 89). He has also to authenticate himself as a 'local' who can speak on behalf of a people he does not know very well. In keeping with some of the ethnological textbook titles, he has to write his story of 'learning to be' Chamorro. This he can best do by subscribing to the myth of harmonious hybridity: a myth that may be lived over time into some kind of reality, but which has its own limitations in being founded upon a base of indigenous identity. Perez Howard figures this in the capital city, a mix of "unlike material cultures" that somehow achieves a charming effect of "exotic chaos" (4). Its series of historical erasures and overlays give it a somewhat artificial quality akin to comic opera, but it rests on originary qualities both ethnic and natural: Agana calls forth mention of the world view of "the ancient Chamorros", and its survival qualities are likened to the tough swordgrass "bendable and enduring" on the surrounding hills (3-4).

Such a mix of indigeneity and hybridity shows its limits in the refusal or inability of the text to gesture to the kind of oppositional anti-colonialism that has won recognition for other literary expression in the Pacific. One of Mariquita's aunts does invoke pre-contact culture in her mention of the *taotaomona* ancestor spirits (21) and she is hostile to her niece's mixing with American boys, so she has to be represented by the narrator as old-fashioned and bitter. As Ed Sinnott also observes, unlike other celebrations of indigeneity elsewhere in Pacific writing, there is no more than passing mention in this book of pre-contact civilization. As a biography, its world begins with Mariquita's 1920s mix of movies, hula dancing, dance bands, fashions from 'the mainland' and hybridized Guamanian culture (18-22). As an autobiography, it begins with Chris's return to Guam in 1979, long after his mother's family and most of their fellows had voted to join the US in Organic Union. There is no reference to betel chewing, the sea-going culture of Micronesia destroyed by the Spanish or the impressive *latte* architecture pre-dating America's interest in the islands (Rogers 31-5). Only right at the end do we find the writer embarking on a critique of colonial history. He begins by agitating for Japanese reparations, becoming

incorporated into the Guam infrastructure of government, but then reflects that "the wanton bombing of the island by Americans... is to me equally unjust", concluding that the local people lost out under both regimes (88).

One of the many silences of the text that compromises a 'pure' oppositionality is that due to the particular colonial history of Guam, tracing his mother's Chamorro past does not offer Perez Howard an escape from hybridity or the text from confusion. Mariquita finds a job working for businessman B.J. Bordallo (1) and is friends with a girl from the Ada family (10). These two names feature in the post-war history of government. Her own family had members at the top of the available jobs for Guamanians in local education (13) and owned farming property. Mariquita's mother, Mrs Josefa Aguon Perez, is recorded in Caraño and Sanchez as a teacher of weaving in 1941, along with Juan Upingco, who taught fishnet making. This seems unimportant until we realise that trade training was the height of education at the time. We can see how traditional crafts under "benevolent assimilation" (184), became part of vocational training defined within Western terms of helping natives recover their former dignity, and weaving turns into Mariquita's skill in dressmaking.² There is a quiet weight of anti-colonial critique in these details that might be picked up by a local readership, but the same details position Mariquita as part of a native elite that retained pre-colonial *chamorro* caste privilege by collaborating with Spanish rule as *principales* and intermixing with outsiders to perpetuate a *manak'kilo* urban gentry (40; Rogers 36, 74). As Perez Howard mentions, his mother's family included a line back to "the last full-blooded Chamorro" but also includes Spanish, Filipino and Chinese settlers (2, 12). This mix allows for a number of interpretations within cultural politics: 'the last of the tribe' and 'the native princess' are stock figures of colonialist romance that allow momentary acknowledgement of indigenous presence before strategic removal by death or inter-marriage; the happy multi-racial society can be both a radical challenge to racist assimilation and an apologia for colonial incursion; the mixed-race elite have been both leaders of resistance to Western domination and supporters of that domination for their own ends.

So Perez Howard can figure his mother as the embodiment of all things good about Chamorro tradition, but shows that tradition as being a blend of clothing, cooking and ritual that is in part Filipino and in the main Spanish Catholic. Tellingly, the item of dress marking Mariquita's mother as 'indigenous' relative to American Guamanian society is called

a 'mestiza' (13). So, by contrast to other Pacific literatures, the arrival at a point of colonialist critique is a slow and complicated process and even at its end what is said is equivocal because the position from which it is voiced is itself a mixed one. This helps to explain why the agitation against large U.S. military landholdings after the war did not express itself as a decolonising politics, as it did in other places in the Pacific: the traditional owners were by then part of the political machine and only wanted the money, or in some cases the land to build tourist resorts on (Ray). The capitalist doctrine of 'progress' had displaced discourses of self-determination. These would emerge later in predominantly cultural terms.

Perez Howard's recourse to the language of American war comics in the second half of the book reveals his own alignment with the colonial regime. It is not just that he is venting his personal anger on "the Japs" for the death of his mother; he is also admitting to the space in which he has stood for more than thirty years of his life. This is the space of his father, of 'mainland' schooling, of the library in Terre Haute, Indiana, of the Navy photos with their white walls and sheets and the news items that cast him as a cute exotic and erase his mother's names, leaving her as only "a Chamorro girl" and "Mrs Howard" (85, 87). In a sense, it is this confession of alienation that gives him the authority (as the textual 'sincerity' of autobiography) to rediscover Mariquita and the Perez in his name, just as it is a mark of inauthenticity. It is also indicative of the similarity and difference between this piece of Pacific literature and many others, where the War is a primary point of coming into troubled modern self-consciousness (as in Vincent Eri's *the Crocodile*, for example), but in this case it does not serve as a politicising reminder of indigenous good times prior to conflict, but of the paternalistic colonial Eden which supplanted violent contact and neglect under Spain and preceded Japan's brutal occupation.

This is reflected in the book's language. It is grounded in family oral history and framed by a dedication that unites Mariquita's tragedy with indigenous tradition: "*Storytelling was an important feature in the Chamorro culture as it was the way to remember things for years to come.*" But memory is also fallible, and in-house island storytelling leaves out some things as assumed knowledge or for reasons of tact. Here, the gaps in the story are made up by verbal renditions of photographs, quotations from encyclopedias (27) and transcriptions of press cuttings (18). Print text

preserves the memory of local identity (as it records Mariquita's insistence on the use of a popular local diminutive of her name despite classroom corrections to the formal 'Maria') (1) but it also writes over orality with its own print text. Its translations from orality to print also carry a freight of memory and forgetting surrounding the Chamorro language. Robert F. Rogers notes that

By the 1890s, the people of the Marianas had lost much of their precontact culture, but the soft and musical Chamorro language was, and remains today, true to its roots....

The Chamorro language was maintained through maternal control of family life.... mothers invariably raised the children to speak Chamorro in the home, regardless of the father's language, and thereby passed on the Chamorro heritage by word of mouth. (Rogers 102-3)

Perez Howard notes the "pompous" practice of punishing the use of Chamorro in schools on Guam (15) but has his young lovers Eddie and Mariquita greeting each other in Chamorro (7). Mariquita's friend Marian Johnson is seen as 'stuck up' for preferring to speak in English (8), but only the older generation speak Chamorro alone, the rest being bilingual. When Eddie is accepted as Mariquita's suitor, the family politely uses English in his presence and he in turn attempts a few phrases of Chamorro, while blind Auntie Da receives the news with "*Hu tungo 'ha*" (I already know) (33-4). The book overall, however, uses very little Chamorro, since it is not yet part of the writer's own heritage.

Mariquita swings between outrage at the unconscious discriminations of US rule (critiquing staffing, naming and language practices in schools 29-30) and active emulation of Western ways. In a telling cross-over moment, her husband responds to a newspaper column advocating assimilation by telling Mariquita "you will always be a Chamorro and you need your culture for your own identity" (40). The reader can see in this a kind of well meaning colonialist desire to hold the pedagogical upper hand and preserve difference that can validate the speaker's own identity as tolerant 'soft' colonizer, that is implicit in the cute nickname 'Tippy' that Eddie gives his wife. Her previous defense of her identity by refusing to be named by others has now given way to a private acquiescence in her own belittlement (Tippy comes from her relative shortness so that she has to stand on tip-toes to kiss Eddie). Now Mariquita declares she wants to be "the best American and the proudest Chamorro." (40). As the book

says earlier, this wish is still possible at the time, since "Not until many years later would the Americanizing of Guam cause cultural conflict." (7). And in the meantime the sudden shock of Japanese invasion deflects any questioning of what the author describes as "the somewhat paternalist" naval colony (23).

It is the mixedness of the text that makes it so interesting as a document of postcolonial writing. As a work of history, its appeal is its honesty in showing all its seams and holes, since firstly, it begins with the large central hole of Mariquita's disappearance and works with the less dramatic but equally important gaps in historical memory. Fact has to be stitched together with invention (how else can we know what went on in his mother's mind in the prison camp?), documents patched in with oral anecdotes. To construct his mother's character, the author is forced to move across the whole family and ends up making her tragedy into a symbol of a collective "tragedy of Guam".

It is a story typical of other postcolonial narratives of assembling materials to compensate for and express the experience of historical loss as existential void. At the same time, it is a subaltern retrieval of the bits and pieces that fall outside of official histories as the preliminary step in constructing a 'national' story. As such, it gestures towards the kind of seamless organic tale of origins and fulfilment of official record, but has simultaneously to embody the ambivalence of Homi Bhabha's colonial mimicry out of which the compromised native intellectual of Franz Fanon's work emerges. From that always already hybridized position the reclamation of indigenous identity and story can begin. Once the ground has been cleared by a work like *Mariquita*, a body such as the Organisation of People for Indigenous Rights (2002) and activist Chamorro journals such as 'Minagahet' can emerge.

I do not know enough of local politics to determine why Vicente Diaz makes no mention of *Mariquita* in his article "Simply Chamorro". Perhaps Perez Howard is seen to claim too much credit for the post-war development of Chamorro activism, since he features his two-person picketing of Japanese ships in 1979 to claim war reparations but doesn't acknowledge the demonstrations cited by Diaz going back to 1945 (39). Maybe he is seen as an opportunist off-islander, but then Diaz points out that much of the cultural survival of the Chamorro is negotiated by younger-generation 'statesiders' who return to discover their ethnic roots (53).

In terms of Pacific literature as a whole, a significant aspect of the text

turns out to be the writer's process of building up his own story to the point where he can begin to enter the wider tale of Pacific anti-colonialism. As a work of history, *Mariquita* is a 'pre-historical' account establishing (via the violent irruption of global modernity into its colonial world) the terms for its entry into history. Its ending marks the beginning of its author as a protester against colonialist abuses, establishes his credentials as a Chamorro, and thereby signals the start of that phase of cultural revival recognized in other parts of the Pacific as the commencement of literary production. In one sense, the text has to be hybrid in order to enact the socio-cultural mix from which it stems, but also to embody this contradictory moment that is both closure and transition. Part of the textual problematics is also the island intimate 'word of mouth' system versus a public, globalizing print system, and as Perez Howard writes his way into an island identity, he joins many other Pacific writers by disappearing from the literary scene back into local politics.

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Notes

- 1 This is based on a paper presented at the "Telling Pacific Lives" conference, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, December 2005.
- 2 The lurch into melodramatic romance tragedy in the second part of the book is an attempt to explain as personality clash via fictive elaborations on family oral accounts what Roberts mentions in passing as "an incomprehensible tragedy" of the Japanese occupation (180).
- 3 Roberts cites a Perez as being part of the local council following America's take-over from the Spanish (116). It is interesting to note that the 'collaboration' contained by military administration was also the beginning of a push by islanders for self-government which continued in the 1920s agitation for a bill of rights (149) and into recent times. Roberts also mentions Agueda Johnston, one of Mariquita's family friends, as agitating for Chamorro access to high school education (153).

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Breath as Metaphor of Sovereignty and Connectedness in Pacific Island Poetry

Recent calls in island studies for a "coherent theory of islandness" (Hay 19) and "islandness as a commanding paradigm" (Baldacchino 279) challenge us to rethink the relationship between islands and theory. If islandness is an undertheorised condition, this is certainly not the result of European and American continental neglect toward islands but rather an effect of the way islands have long been claimed as empirical and conceptual supports for theory-building, based on their apparent lack of spatial extension and hence their availability to the elaboration of systems of thought, commerce, and government. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey has noted, "[i]slands have not only functioned as colonial or socio-political spaces of experiment, but have facilitated tremendous ecological, anthropological, and biological theory" ("The litany of islands" 29). Their strategic role in the spatial expansion of Western power around the globe has also contributed to, and in part been supported by, their strategic usefulness epistemologically, in the production of (Western) knowledge. This strategic value of islands, as DeLoughrey also points out, has depended (and continues to depend) on their being secured, militarily and politically as well as conceptually, as remote and isolated places. This is based on restriction and control of access and movement, variably involving removal and relocation of island populations, limiting islander mobility, and attempts "to erase islanders' migratory histories" ("The litany of islands" 26).

Calls for a renewed theorisation of islandness therefore inevitably have a strategic orientation of their own, in that their insistence on the recognition of islandness as a distinct condition coincides with islanders' postcolonial pursuit of sovereignty and recognition of the distinct cultural and political spaces that have emerged in the course of long histories of island settlement. Pete Hay indicates the strategic shift to be espoused by island studies when he observes that renewed interest in islands calls for theories of place that are capable of contesting visions of "globalization advancing inexorably over the planet" (31). This ties in with Arif Dirlik's argument that the challenge of place-based thinking is to go beyond theoretically granting places the capability to "appropriate for their own meanings the cultural meanings propagated by transnational communication companies" (38). For places to effectively contest the hegemony of space-driven models of economic, political and cultural development, according to Dirlik, requires