



2005

# Bilong Ol Meri (For All Women): The New Guinea Bilum

Susan Cochrane

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>

## Recommended Citation

Cochrane, Susan, Bilong Ol Meri (For All Women): The New Guinea Bilum, *Kunapipi*, 27(2), 2005.  
Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol27/iss2/11>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:  
[research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

---

## Bilong Ol Meri (For All Women): The New Guinea Bilum

### **Abstract**

The bilum (there are, no doubt, seven hundred different words for it in the languages of the country) is part of the persona of New Guinean women.<sup>1</sup> She makes it herself, knotting the mesh with skilful fingers. The handles are long enough to fit across the top of her forehead. When empty, the bilum covers the shoulders like a half-cape; full, the mesh stretched to the limit with firewood or sweet potatoes, it can carry thirty or more kilograms. It is a treasured personal item — an infant's cradle, a shopping basket, and a delivery van propelled by womanpower, head bent, shoulders bowed under its weight.

LINDA CROWL

## Carrying the Bag: Women Writers and Publishers in the Pacific Islands

### OCEANIAN AND FEMALE

Several years ago a Papua New Guinean student asked me, ‘Why aren’t Papua New Guinean women writing?’ I replied that, like her, they were writing, but Papua New Guinea did not have many publishers to prepare materials, outlets to distribute them, and customers who could pay the current price of books and periodicals. It still does not; nor are there many foreign publishers that have the resources and interests to take on the market risks. To borrow from Grace Molisa (1992), often women have picked up the bag and carried it themselves. At the Pacific Science Inter-Congress in 1997, Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop asserted that rather than investing largely in one project as men tend to do, Pacific women sustain their livelihoods by putting their eggs in many baskets. The same holds for writing and publishing: women tend to write and publish in a variety of genres — from language to administration, from poetry to politics — across a mix of church, education, government, and business.

Women have assisted writing and publishing from the beginning, but they have not received the credit that is their due. This article suggests that writers of postcolonial literature often have their literary work published in non-literary venues because the economics of Pacific publishing means that literature alone is not sufficient for a viable business, thus concealing women’s contributions. The first part of this article deals with the economics of publishing. It then reviews the extraordinary diversity of women’s writing and publishing, concentrating on their roles in publishing, their motivations, and the variety of their products.

An essay on South Pacific women is fraught with some difficulty as the South Pacific is both a geographic concept and a cultural concept. The former is under the equator; the latter spans the dependent territories and independent states alike and the peoples who share roots and customs different from the rest of the world (which is not to deny the region’s diversity). The South Pacific Commission became the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) as more northern members joined; its previous secretary-general was Lourdes Pangelinan of Guam, and SPC’s first woman head. The University of the South Pacific (USP) includes the Marshall Islands, which is north of the equator. Historically, Oceanians traversed the sea; many continue to live and travel across borders imposed upon them by colonial powers. Like them, this article traverses the ocean. Second, this essay

includes women who have come to live among Pacific peoples, to learn and teach their languages, to marry their men, to give birth to children who have a stake in their land — women who have helped to sustain writing and publishing in countries with scarce resources and geographic difficulties. I do not separate indigenous from adopted Islanders in this article; Oceanians will know to whom I refer.

#### LITERACY, LANGUAGES, AND COSTS

To achieve economies of scale in production costs, publishers look for large audiences. The cost of producing one copy of one publication is very high but diminishes with every copy thereafter. Approximately 1,200 languages, non-standardised (or in some cases, no) orthographies, and variable literacy rates, make economies of scale difficult to achieve. The paradox is that the market is small because literacy and income levels are low; yet, without publications from which to learn, literacy, knowledge, and income — thus the market — cannot increase. Bookshops have had varied fortunes over the years, declining in number in some countries, increasing in others. The state of bookshops has not changed much in twenty years: as Dunlop wrote of Samoa,

A quick survey of the main bookshops in Apia revealed that their customers were mainly ‘expatriates’, Peace Corps and other volunteers eager to learn more about Samoa, tourists, local professional families, mainly *afakasis* [half-castes], and Samoans from overseas who could not buy these materials in their own countries.

(Dunlop 48)

Publications are often geared toward these paying customers, who tend to use colonial before indigenous languages. Colonial languages, in fact, offer the biggest audiences to writers and publishers alike. English is much the most widespread colonial language: French follows for French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and about half of Vanuatu; Bahasa Indonesian follows for Papua; and Spanish survives only on Rapanui. Having been schooled in colonial languages, text workers find those languages easier to write, type, typeset, and publish (despite differences in American, Australian, British, and New Zealand orthography). Poet Grace Mera Molisa wrote in English because

the Vanua‘aku Pati being in power, the Vanua‘aku Pati people mostly had been educated through the English-medium system. Therefore, *that* is the reading population and *that* is the population to convey messages to in order that the voice that has not found expression can be heard and, hopefully, correct decisions be made in response. (Molisa qtd in Griffen 1993 75–76)

Writing and publishing literary work alone does not sustain anyone in Oceania. Publication subsidies have come from national governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, non-governmental organisations; yet, publishers struggle to find funding. Molisa found it difficult to finance publications: ‘If I had money to publish, there are many volumes I could make public.’ Molisa described the costs of equipment and time for writing, publishing,

and advocating literacy against ‘a background where there is no money’ (Molisa qtd in Butalia and Menon 33, 81). Individuals and small presses are sometimes subject to Customs duties and such knowledge taxes can constitute censorship, as can withholding financial assistance. At far-flung distances, distribution by air, land, and sea is expensive and time consuming. Publishing is a risky business and banks generally do not finance publishing ventures. Equipment depreciates quickly, and blank paper has more value than printed stocks of books that may not sell in 20 years. Most publishers operate without much financial assurance or insurance (Crowl 1999a, 1999b).

#### PUBLISHING HOUSES

Oceania does not have its own large, independent commercial publishing enterprises, but some women have been able to combine a variety of businesses and to seek subsidies from elsewhere to sustain their efforts. From Vanuatu, Grace Molisa attended USP, where the South Pacific Creative Arts Society published *Black Stone* (1983), her first collection of poems, many of which were political. She continued her political writing in a self-published collection of poems in 1987: ‘*Colonised People* ... was a way of preparing the attitudinal and mental groundwork for the possibility of any political party fielding women candidates ... [in] 1987 ... that particular election saw two women into parliament’. Of ‘all the efforts we’d been putting into raising the consciousness and involving women in the current Vanuatu democracy and administration, the first objective has been achieved ... this collection of poetry has been ... part of that continuing effort’. Molisa wrote on behalf of, not to, women, for ‘they already know their situation.... Really I am talking to our decision makers who are mostly men’ (Molisa qtd in Griffen 1993 75–76).

Molisa eventually established Blackstone Publications, from which base she facilitated, edited, and organised books for different organisations, as well as her own. Molisa felt a responsibility:

I am trying to put together publications for women on different subjects that they have identified.... That I see as a duty. Publication will necessarily be in Bislama, and, because of that, I don’t see any possibility of such books going further afield, except a little perhaps into the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea because we can all communicate in Pidgin. (Molisa qtd in Griffen 1993 81)

She published in Bislama and English, for national and international organisations, for example, *Beneath Paradise* (Molisa 1999a), a collection of poetry. In a conversation on 20th May 1999, Molisa said that she found that most people were unaware of the publisher’s investment. So she published other people’s work in a strict co-publishing arrangement wherein she oversaw the production, but the parties divided the number of copies according to their investment of time, money, and expertise. By letting them distribute their own copies, they were in charge of recouping their own costs. Molisa passed away in 2001, a great loss to the women’s rights movement and indigenous publishing.

She displayed courage and determination in publishing about politics, in a very politicised environment, and she did it on a shoestring. She was a trailblazer, and because she showed it could be done, other Ni-Vanuatu may now follow.

Mary Fonua co-founded Vava'u Press with her husband. Their main line of business is a news magazine, *Matangi Tonga*; they offer publishing services for other agencies, and they publish books of language, poetry, songs, and stories. Office staff for Vava'u Press are women. When the Cook Islands Government Printer was privatised, children's writer Julia Rongo and her husband bought the equipment, opened a printery, and called their publishing operation Island Friends. Publishers of the *Samoa Observer* newspaper Savea Sano and Muliagatele Jean Malifa produce books as well, including Noumea Simi's poetry. *Samoa Observer* has faced government opposition, lawsuits, death threats, and even arson, but with contributions from the community, the Malifas have persevered.

In Papua New Guinea, Kate Deutrom, who had worked for fifteen years in Papua New Guinea's Department of Education (DoE), ran a branch office for Oxford University Press in Port Moresby. In an interview on 27th August 1998, she described her work: she assessed local manuscripts, edited the stories, commissioned local artists, then sent the word-processed text and illustrations to OUP in Melbourne. Word Publishing (once the parent company of several PNG newspapers and now only one) published schoolbooks until DoE took over this work. Word Publishing later sold its book publishing arm, Word Educational Books (WEB), to Winnie Abaijah. The publishing aspect rapidly waned, though Abaijah ran bookshops in town and at the University of Papua New Guinea's Waigani Campus (Walcot). These, too, waned in the years that followed. The newspapers, under sometime editor, sometime manager Anna Solomon, did however continue to publish book reviews, which helped writers and publishers by advertising their talents and products.

#### BOOKSHOPS AND CONSULTANCY

Some booksellers have published local authors. Tonga's Friendly Islands Book Shop released Tupou Fanua's stories. In Solomon Islands, Dorothy Prince ran Aruligo Book Centre and published Jully (Sipolo) Makini's poetry. Ann Kengalu ran a book and shell shop in Chinatown and published her own mystery (*Murder on the Mataniko Bridge* 1986) under the imprint Dellaponte. In Kiribati, Moarerei Davis, an author herself, and her husband Peter have run Education Support Services for many years, selling books to schools and the public.

As part of, or in addition to, their consulting and public relations work, women are involved in writing and publishing. In Vanuatu, Shirley Randell, an Australian consultant based in Port Vila, published *Ni-Vanuatu Women Role Models* (Randell 2001), an elections report (Randell 2002) to which Viran Molisa contributed, and other books. In a conversation on 19th October 2002, Randell said that the Molisas had given her permission to use the Blackstone Publications imprint; however, copyright to the imprint rests with the family, in case they

want to use it later. From Samoa, Fairbairn-Dunlop has taught at USP, worked for the United Nations Development Fund, directed the United Nations Development Fund for Women, presided over the Samoan Association of Women Graduates, consulted widely, and written poetry.

#### NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

NGOs are often perceived to offer better service and accountability to the public than commercial firms or individuals. National, regional, and international governmental agencies contract NGOs and work closely with them to foster access to education, civil society, health and sanitation, improved living standards, perpetuation of culture and history, and the like. Substantial funds are channelled through NGOs every year. As part of their public awareness campaigns, many publish books, and women are often involved in their research, writing, production, and distribution. Churches are the largest NGOs and the largest publishers (see Crowl 2002).

Along with history, the (Western) Samoa Historical and Cultural Trust has published Momoe Malietoa von Reiche's modern poetry. In Papua New Guinea, Ngeenge Sasa and Catherine Ngeenge founded Lou Island Community Development and Awareness Team in Rei Village, Lou Island, Manus Province and developed a manual for teaching critical literacy concerning environmental, social justice, and educational issues, emphasising retention of land, language, and culture (Wells). The Solomon Islands Development Trust undertakes projects in environment, health, nutrition, sanitation, and modest finance. Its team members travel throughout the country to engage villagers in developmental activities, to perform educational drama, and to share information. Its publications include comics, educational calendars, and compilations of critique of the government. Women participate in its mobile teams and publishing (Narasia; SIDT). In a conversation on 17th October 2002, Information Officer and Director of the Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association, Carol Aru and John Lui explained VRDTCA. The focal point for UNESCO's Education for All, offers non-formal education, runs a library in Port Vila, and publishes in Bislama on carpentry and joinery, homecare, agriculture, rural enterprise, and mechanics. Carol Aru, also a creative writer, has contributed to its publications (Aru). In an interview on 28th June 2002, playwright Jo Dorras explained that she and her husband created Wan Smolbag Theatre to carry social messages to Ni-Vanuatu through drama. Wan Smolbag trains people on the job, runs workshops, does radio spots, and publishes books, cassettes, and videos.

#### WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Women's organisations publish because 'Information sharing is important in empowering the role of women in any society' (SIDT 11). In a conversation on 21st June 2002, Diane Goodwillie, who has been involved for decades with Pacific publishing through regional academia, a metropolitan donor agency, an

international NGO, and individual consultancy, said that while men were writing histories and policy tracts, women were writing how-to manuals. Women who are creative writers often are involved in women's organisations, for example, Grace Molisa was active in UNIFEM's regional programme for Women in Politics. Mining the publications of these organisations — including their calendars, flyers, and newsletters — brings forth poetry, stories, and drama.

The Fiji Association of Women Graduates (FAWG) was founded to promote higher education and international understanding, and to participate in advocacy, consultancy, and decision-making at all levels (FAWG). The association's activities are the product of many women's work, but especially that of Ruby Va'a and Joan Teaiwa for publications. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre lobbies against gender violence and assists women and children who are victims of violence. It runs four centres in Fiji and has published a bulletin, books, booklets, and flyers (FWCC n.d., Tu'uholoaki and Riles 86). In a conversation on 5th October 2002, FWCC officer Edwina Kotoisuva said that it assists Vanuatu's centre. Ruth Lechte, consultant and former director of the YWCA office in Suva, noted that FWCC had published *Breaking the Silence* 'because people wouldn't believe us;' it was 'a powerful tool' to broadcast the extent of family violence (FWCC 1988). The Fiji Women's Rights Movement fights discrimination against women and has tackled equal pay for equal work, garment-industry pay, portrayal of women in the media, and sexist language in legislation, rape, and law reform. FWRM offers training in legal literacy; educational, media, and client support programmes, and library resources (*Fiji Times*; *Island Business*; Kacimaiwai; *Pacific Islands Monthly*; Tu'uholoaki and Riles). FWRM has also published books on labour, law, and violence (for example, Emberson-Bain and Slatter; Jalal; Naivalurua et al). Under the imprint of Marama Publications, women put together *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?*, a collection of essays, poetry, and illustrations to challenge the regional development agenda, resource use, migration, tourism, political frameworks, and re-thinking sustainability (Emberson-Bain). Atu Emberson-Bain (now a Fiji Senator) and Vanessa Griffen have written and published for many different women's organisations nationally, regionally, and internationally. Vanuatu's National Council of Women has published a number of works, including some by Molisa.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community is the oldest regional organisation and the largest publisher in terms of volume. Over the years, SPC has depended upon editors, such as Bess Flores, Caroline Nalo, Sarah Langi (also a children's writer), and others. For SPC, Camilla Wedgwood surveyed the needs of women concerning education in the 1950s. Generations of Islanders were educated with SPC books written by Gloria Tate and Phyliss Carpenter. By 1956 SPC's Sydney office had a part-time officer to provide information and networking for women. In 1958 SPC initiated the Women's Interest Project; subsequently, it established a Community Education Training Centre in Fiji. CETC runs workshops in report

and project-proposal writing, computer, studies, special English studies, and legal literacy. A Pacific Women's Resource Bureau was established in 1982 at Noumea headquarters and runs publishing skills workshops. It has monthly and quarterly publications as well as books and directories. Lisa Williams, a poet of the Cook Islands, is its current communications officer (Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association; Pacific Women's Resource Bureau; Smith; South Pacific Commission).

#### WRITERS' GROUPS

Writers' groups throughout the Pacific offer alternative support mechanisms but often publish in association with other groups, such as educational institutions. Writers' groups stimulate small presses and vice versa. Moreover, indigenous writers, editors, and publishers are aware of each other precisely because of small press publishing (Hamasaki). In the Cook Islands, the Ta'unga Writers' and Artists' Association was set up by Vereara Maeva, Vaine Rasmussen, and others. Its members published a journal, *Ta'unga*, and organised two special issues of *Mana* (Crocombe; Mason and Rasmussen; Tongia and Crocombe). The country's creative writers, including Johnny Frisbie, Jean Tekura Mason, and Ma'ara Taia Scheel, continue to have their work published. Ligi Sisikefu has long sought to assist research, writing, and publishing on Niue, especially through its writers' group, Tohitohi Nukutuluea. The Solomon Islands Writers' Association has been established for more than 20 years, and co-published *Raetemaot* (Maka'a, Kii and Crowl) after Hilda Kii organised a workshop for creative writing. Previously, Solomon Islander women had contributed to *Mi Mere* (Afu, Lulei and Makini) and *Poru Poru* (Analau) with the assistance of Marjorie Crocombe. Grace Molisa and others formed the Vanuatu Writers' Group; Shirley Randell has lately facilitated their publishing through Blackstone Publications.

Tekarei Tibwere Russell and others formed the Tungavalu Society to conserve the cultures of the Gilbert Islands and Tuvalu and to develop greater awareness of their peoples' pre-history, as Russell mentioned in a conversation on 17th March 2003. Members had read about *Mana's* creative work and had exchanges with Anna Craven in Solomon Islands. The society, later called Te Rikia n Tungaru, has itself published; co-published with other organisations; sold books in bulk to the Curriculum Development Resources Centre; collaborated on a Gilbertese-Gilbertese dictionary with CDRC; sponsored competitions in art, song, handicraft, and story writing; and has a member sitting on the Kiribati Language Board (Bataua; Russell and Hayward; Taoaba). The Kiribati Writers' Association (KWA) formed with the aims of developing writers and improving literacy. With USP, it began publishing its periodical *Te Bukinibenebene* and held a competition for short stories, which it subsequently published. With the assistance of the Kiribati Teachers' College, KWA published several readers (for example, Day, Teingiia a and b) that could be used in and out of school (Crowl 2004). Led by Tereao Teingiia and Teewata Rokete, KWA members produced an issue of *Mana*.

The Fiji Writers' Association has published several books. One of FWA's driving forces has been Seona Smiles, a creative writer herself, former newspaper journalist, and former information officer USP and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. She also assists the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies in its publishing endeavours. Arlene Griffin and others felt so strongly about the country's 1987 coups that they took up donations and published in 1990, under the imprint Christmas Club, *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-coup writing from Fiji* (Te Amokura Na Lawedua 1998). On the 10th anniversary of the coups, Griffin (1997) published an expanded collection of interviews, letters, poems, press releases, recollections, and testimonials. Griffin said that since the 1987 coups, politics had influenced her writing and reading to the extent that she liked to engage with polemical and oppositional material (Griffen qtd in Hereniko 11–12).

#### INDIVIDUALS

Publishing technology has changed dramatically in the last decade. With the advent of desktop publishing, individuals can prepare 'camera-ready' copy. With desktop printers and quick binding and laminating machines, individuals can publish in small quantities without having to invest in the photography, platemaking, and press runs of conventional printing. Although the vast majority of Oceanians do not have personal publishing facilities or even access to them, today more Islanders than ever before do. In the Cook Islands, Taira Rere's daughters have taken over publishing his works on genealogy, history, language, religion, and other aspects of life. In Samoa, Momoe Malietoa von Reiche published her own art and poetry; Lisi Vaai published over thirty children's books, including a dictionary; and Donna Kamu published children's books and her husband's work on Christianity. Educationalist Filifilia Tufuga published her husband's speeches (Tufuga). In Tonga, Patricia Matheson published her own book.

#### CHURCH AND SCHOOL

After the introduction of writing (see Crowl 2003a), some missionaries began formal education, and much of Oceania's publishing continues to be associated with religious and secular education. Just as male missionaries often neglected to put Islanders' names as co-authors on the front of their biblical translations, catechisms, hymnals, and schoolbooks, they also neglected to give due recognition to women who assisted in writing and publication. Women learned and shared vocabulary, proofread text, set type, and sewed books. Assisting Rev. William Ellis, two Tahitian women folded and sewed while other women beat *tapa* (barkcloth) to make boards for binding books (Lingenfelter). In the Cook Islands, Mrs Buzacott and her daughter corrected proof sheets (Buzacott). Mrs Brackenbury of Raithby Hall, Lincolnshire paid for Fiji's first press; Margaret Smith Cargill transcribed material; and Hannah Hunt proofread and corrected the New Testament in England after her husband's death (Calvert). Mary

Kahelemauna, a Hawaiian missionary on Mili Atoll, Marshall Islands sold books (Little). Margaret Whitecross Paton assisted her husband John on Tanna, Vanuatu; her own work published as *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides* (1894). In Kiribati, Minerva Clarissa Brewster Bingham helped to translate the Bible and translated and prepared all schoolbooks (Plato 1997). These women set an early example for others to follow.

More recently in Kiribati, Sr Mary Helena Egan, with Srs M. Livinus McEnaney and Consilio Clohesy, prepared primary-school books, which were printed at the Catholic Mission, and these books were used from the 1930s through the 1960s. Sr Mary Oliva Lynch later translated the French-Gilbertese dictionary into English. As government began to take over primary schools, Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart turned to other work, including the Maria Printing Office (MPO) in 1971. Sr Juliette Baker, then Srs Helena Egan and Veronica Matiera produced reading books in Kiribati language for primary schools. Sr Mary Alice Tuana renovated Tabwiroa and built new facilities in 1981, including a bookshop. In the 1980s MPO published reading books for mass and set and collated *Itoi ni Kiribati* (Talu). For Tuvalu specifically, Jenny Jackson and her husband Geoffrey published dictionaries and language books; for Oceania in general, she typeset and distributed Jehovah's Witnesses publications. In Fiji, Morven Sidal has prepared popular books, conference reports, and school materials for the Methodist Church, the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, and the Institute of Pacific Studies, in addition to writing her own book (Sidal).

Throughout the developing world, schools provide the largest audience for publications. Primary and secondary schools need vast quantities of textbooks, which require periodic revision. In terms of student numbers, tertiary institutions need fewer copies but more titles and frequent up-dating. Women work within curriculum development units. On Niue, Iris Lui has worked on storybooks for the younger grades. In Fiji, Frances Pene, Reijeli Racule, and Helen Tavola, have long experience as teachers, administrators, or consultants; all three are authors in their own right, as well as editors or publishers of others' writing. Kathy Rilang in the Marshall Islands and Gill Vaiimene in the Cook Islands have worked on curriculum materials. In a conversation on 17th March 2003, Senior Editor and Prepress Supervisor at Kiribati's Curriculum Resources and Development Centre, Sue Baereleo explained that women comprised most of the personnel in the Kiribati Education Sector Programme, a project to publish two hundred and fifty titles: storybooks as well as a teacher's guide and a pupil's book for each subject for each primary level. Writers included Tuaina Kirion, Bibiana Bureimoa, and Meronga Raeao Taru. Desktop publishing personnel included Eretia Koteti, Meere Eurobwa, Mwakei Biiti, and Beia Ranoenti. Mary Evans (an American Peace Corps volunteer) edited English language teaching materials. Sue Baereleo, with long experience developing Vanuatu's curriculum, was senior editor and prepress supervisor (Baereleo; Gibbons).

Oceania's tertiary institutions and research institutes have published creative work by women. The Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies published (with the National Broadcasting Commission) Nora Vagi Brash's drama, followed by Owl Books and Oxford University Press. Adeola James of the University of Papua New Guinea compiled *PNG Women Writers* (1996). Sue Tarua was editor for the New Guinea Research Unit and the (renamed) Institute for Applied Social and Economic Research (now the National Research Institute) and edited books for UPNG and USP. At the National University of Samoa, Emma Kruse Va'ai and Silafau Sina Vaai write academically and creatively. At the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, librarian and poet Nancy Kwalea assisted the applied research and publishing initiative. At Vanuatu's Maritime Institute, Caroline Nalo, a former SPC editor, continues to assist various publishing projects.

The most prolific publishing arm of the University of the South Pacific is Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL), which produces and distributes books for the university's ten thousand students. Editors Barbara Hau'ofa (now publications officer for the School of Social and Economic Development), Joan Teaiwa, and Bess Flores (formerly with SPC) worked with faculty to publish course textbooks, workbooks, and readers, some of which include creative writing. With others, Marjorie Crocombe initiated the South Pacific Creative Arts Society (SPCAS); persuaded Stuart Inder to carry creative writing in issues of *Pacific Islands Monthly*; started SPCAS's own book publishing, Mana Publications, and its own journal, *Mana*; and directed Extension Services (DFL's predecessor). Crocombe's work is creative and academic, covering distance education, women in politics, and Cooks Islander missionaries. Writers and publishers from the wider region owe a deep debt to her foresight and generosity. The Institute of Pacific Studies published the work of Satya Colpani, Elizabeth Inia, Eci Kikau (now Nabalarua), Sinavaiana-Gabbard, Marie-Claude Teissier-Landgraf, and many others, with the assistance of Patricia Hereniko, Lilieta Varani, Susana Yabaki, Sara Vui-Talitu, and Linda Crowl (Crowl 2003b). USP has campuses and centres in its twelve member countries, where its centre directors seek to foster writing, and publishing. Of note have been Salote Fukofuka, Anne Keke, Irene Ta'afaki, Beta Tentoa, Ruby Va'a, Makerita Va'ai, and Myriam Dornoy-Vurobaravu. For several years, the Solomon Islands Centre had a publications officer, one of whom was Jully Makini. Arlene Griffin established the Pacific Writing Forum to encourage creative writing; Teresia Teaiwa started Niu Waves Writers' Collective. Vari Bogiri writes about language. Professor and poet Konai Thaman writes on gender and education. Many administrative assistants and secretaries have contributed to USP's voluminous publications. Whether through books, literary periodicals (for example, *Faikava*, *Malifa Voices*, *Sinnet*, *Te Bukinibenebene*), or writing groups, women at USP have written and published novels, poetry, proverbs, short stories, and songs.

#### ADDING THEIR VOICES

Women write and publish for many reasons, including creativity, health and welfare, income, recognition, social justice, to influence political events or processes, or just to tell their side of the story. In Oceania's small societies, often women who become involved in writing and publishing for one organisation, do so for others as well. Through their cultural obligations and professional networks, publishing opportunities have increased over time. Although publishing venues come and go, more women than ever before are literate, educated, and skilled and have access to technology. More women than ever before are writing and publishing, adding their voices to advocating what is of value in their societies. Neither content with picking up the bag nor with carrying it, Pacific women are making their own bags, and we are all richer for their work and the diversity of their experiences.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Pacific women for sharing their experiences with me. I thank Edward Wolfers, Anne Collett, and Charles Hawksley for their comments on this article

#### WORKS CITED

- Afu, Billy, Hazel Lulei & Jully Makini (eds) [1983] 1991, *Mi Mere*, South Pacific Creative Arts Society, Suva.
- Analau, Victoria et al. 1981, *Poru Poru: Solomon Islands Lullabies*, University of the South Pacific Centre, Honiara.
- Aru, Carol 2004, 'Non-formal Education', *Re-Thinking Education in Vanuatu Together*, ed. Kabini Sanga, John Niroa, Kalmele Matai, and Linda Crowl, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva and Department of Education, Port Vila, pp. 172–88.
- Bataua, Batiri et al. 1985, *Kiribati: A Changing Atoll Culture*, ed. Leonard Mason, University of the South Pacific Centre, Atoll Research Development Unit, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Education, Tarawa; Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- Butalia, Urvashi & Ritu Menon 1995, *Making a Difference: Feminist Publishing in the South*, Bellagio Studies in Publishing Number 5, Bellagio Publishing Network Research and Information Centre, and Centre for International Higher Education, Boston College, Boston.
- Buzacott, Aaron 1985, *Mission Life in the Islands of the Pacific*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, first pub. 1866, John Snow, London.
- Calvert, James 1985, *Mission History*, vol.2 of *Fiji and the Fijians*, Fiji Museum, Suva, first pub. 1858, Alexander Heylin, London.
- Crocombe, Ronald Gordon 1990, *Voluntary Service and Development in the Cook Islands*, Cook Islands Extension Centre and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Rarotonga.

- Crowl, Linda 2004, 'Writing and Publishing in Kiribati', *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Art and Culture, Language and Literature*, Kiribati Special Issue 13.2, pp. 101–117.
- 2003a, 'The Introduction of Text Culture in the Pacific Islands', *Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand*, 27.3–4, pp. 22–38.
- 2003b, 'Publisher to Twelve Countries', *Logos*, 14.4, pp. 200–205.
- 2002, 'Literacy, Book Publishing, and Civil Society', Working paper 02/2. State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. [http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/working\\_papers/Crowl02.pdf](http://rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/melanesia/working_papers/Crowl02.pdf)
- (ed.) 1999a, *Book Provision in the Pacific Islands*, UNESCO, Apia; Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- 1999b, 'Books in the Pacific Islands Context', *Book Provision in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Linda Crowl, UNESCO, Apia; Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific Suva, pp. 101–120.
- Day, Helen 1999, *Tiika*, Kiribati Writers Association, Tarawa.
- Dunlop, Peggy 1985, 'Samoan Writing: Searching for the Written', *Fagogo: Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 14.1, pp. 41–69.
- Emberson-Bain, 'Atu (ed.) 1994, *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth? Perspectives of Pacific Island Women*, Marama Publications, Suva.
- and Claire Slatter 1995, *Labouring Under the Law*, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Suva.
- Fiji Association of Women Graduates (FAWG) n.d. Flyer in Linda Crowl's possession.
- Fiji Times* 1998, 'Bid to Change Rape Law', 20th April, p. 3.
- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 1998, *Breaking the Silence*, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Suva.
- n.d. 'Lodging a Complaint — Your Rights and Obligations', flyer in Linda Crowl's possession.
- Gibbons, Peter 2004, 'Books for the Primary Schools of Kiribati', *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Art and Culture, Language and Literature*, Kiribati Special Issue, 13.2, pp. 96–100.
- Griffen, Arlene 1997, *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-coup Writing from Fiji*, 2nd edn, Christmas Club, Suva.
- 1993, 'Three Interviews', *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 10.1, pp. 74–94.
- Hamasaki, Richard 1984, 'Small Press Publishing in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands', *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 13.1, pp. 73–76.
- Hereniko, Vilsoni 1992, 'Interview with Arlene Griffen', *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 9.2, pp. 11–15.
- Islands Business* 1998, 'Do-It-Yourself Law Kit from a Remarkable Lawyer', September, p. 52.

- Jalal, Imrana 1998, *Law and Pacific Women: A Legal Rights Handbook*, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Suva.
- James, Adeola (comp.) 1996, *PNG Women Writers: An Anthology*, Longman, Melbourne.
- Kacimaiwai, Maraiia 1996, 'Labouring Under the Law', *Fiji Times*, 8th February, p. 17.
- Kengalu, Ann M. 1986, *Murder on the Mataniko Bridge*, Dellaponte, Honiara.
- Lingenfelter, Richard E. 1967, *Presses of the Pacific Islands, 1817–1867: A History of the First Half Century of Printing in the Pacific Islands*, Plantin Press, Los Angeles.
- Little, Jeannette 1996, '... And Wife: Mary Kaaiarii Kahelemauna Nawaa, Missionary Wife and Missionary', *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, ed. Doug Munro, and Andrew Thornley, Pacific Theological College; Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, pp. 210–234.
- Maka'a, Julian, Hilda Kii & Linda Crowl 1996, *Raetemaot: Creative Writing from Solomon Islands*, Solomon Islands Writers' Association, Honiara, and South Pacific Creative Arts Society, Suva; Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- Mason, Jean Tekura & Vaine Rasmussen (eds) 2000, *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Art and Culture, Language and Literature*, 12.2, *Cook Islands Special*.
- Molisa, Grace Mera (ed.) 1999a, *Beneath Paradise: A Collection of Poems from the Beneath Paradise Documentation Collective*, 2nd edn, Beneath Paradise Coordinating Committee, Suva. First pub. 1995, Pacific Grassroots Women's Organisations and Grassroots Women's Leaders for the NGO Forum, 4th UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995.
- 1992, *Who Will Carry the Bag?*, National Council of Women, Port Vila.
- 1987, *Colonised People*, Blackstone Publications, Port Vila.
- 1983, *Black Stone*, Mana Publications, Suva.
- Naivalurua, Rosemary et al. 2000, *Herstory: A Profile of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement*, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Suva.
- Narasia, Felix 2002, 'Solomon Islands Development Trust 20th Anniversary' *Tok Blong Pasifik*, 56.2, pp. 16, 19.
- Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association (PIBA) 1999, 'Women in New Caledonia Learning To Get Their Message Out' Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association News Services, E-list news service, 9th November.
- Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM) 1998, 'Law for Pacific Women: A Legal Rights Handbook', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, September, p. 53.
- Pacific Women's Resource Bureau (PWRB) c.2000, 'A Voice for Pacific Women Facing the Challenges of Development', brochure.
- Paton, Margaret Whitcross 1894, *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides*, ed. Jas Paton, Hodder & Stoughton, London.
- Plato, Lisa A. 1997, 'Lydia Vose Buck Snow Collection', Congregational Library and Archives, <http://www.14beacon.org/fguides/snow.htm#appendix>, accessed 6th Jan. 2006.

- Randell, Shirley (ed.) 2002, *Republic of Vanuatu National Elections 2 May 2002. Report of the Elections Observer Group. A Joint Electoral Commission/Transparency International Vanuatu Project*, Blackstone Publications, Port Vila.
- (ed.) 2001, *Ni-Vanuatu Role Models: Women in Their Own Right*, Blackstone Publications, Port Vila.
- Russell, Tekarei and Vivienne Hayward 1976, *Atoll Anthology II, The Use of Trees and Plants by Women of the Gilbert Islands and Tuvalu*, Tungavalu Society, Tarawa.
- Sidal, Morven 1997, *Hannah Dudley, Hamari Maa: Honoured Mother, Educator and Missioner to the Indentured Indians of Fiji 1864–1931*, Pacific Theological College, Suva:
- Smith, Thomas Richard 1972, *South Pacific Commission: An Analysis after Twenty-Five Years*, Price Milburn and Co for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Wellington.
- Solomon Islands Development Trust 1992, ‘Summary Report’, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Honiara.
- South Pacific Commission 1996, *South Pacific Commission: History, Aims and Activities*, 13th edn, South Pacific Commission, Noumea.
- Talu, Alaima, FDNCS 1995, *Go Forth: OLSH Missionary Experience, Kiribati, 1895–1995*, Catholic Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru, Tarawa.
- Taoaba, Taakei 1985, ‘Speaking and Writing’, *Kiribati: A Changing Atoll Culture*, Batiri Bataua, et al. ed. Leonard Mason, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific Suva; Atoll Research and Development Unit and Kiribati Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific, Tarawa; Kiribati Ministry of Home Affairs, and Kiribati Ministry of Education, p. 99–110.
- Te Amokura Na Lawedua 1998, ‘With Heart and Nerve and Sinew’, *Te Amokura Na Lawedua*, 10.1, p. 8 January-June.
- Teingiia, Tereao n.d. a, *Easter Dancing in the Maneaba*, Kiribati Writers Association, Tarawa.
- Teingiia, Tereao n.d. b, *Numbers with Coloured Flowers*, Kiribati Writers Association, Tarawa.
- Teingiia, Tereao, Teewata Rokete & Linda Crowl (eds) 2004, *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Art and Culture, Language and Literature*, Kiribati Special Issue, 13.2.
- Tongia, Makiuti & Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe (eds) 1980, *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 5.1, *Cook Islands Edition*.
- Tufuga, Filifilia 1991, ‘Literacy in Samoa: Women in Publishing’, *Literacy and Pacific Women*, ed. Elizabeth Fong, C. Reade, Jayshree Mamtara & Joan Martin Teaiwa, Fiji Association of Women Graduates, Suva, pp. 97–101.
- Tu‘uholoaki, Ming-Ya T. & Annelise Riles (eds) 1995, *Pacific Handbook: A Challenge to the Christian Communities*, Pacific Women in Christian Communication, World Association for Christian Communication, Suva.

- Walcot, Kevin 1984, 'Perspectives on Publishing, Literacy, and Development', *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 13.1, pp. 11–39.
- Wells, Arlene 1998, 'LICDAT — Critical Literacy in Action', *Tok Blong Pasifik*, 52.1/2, p. 2.