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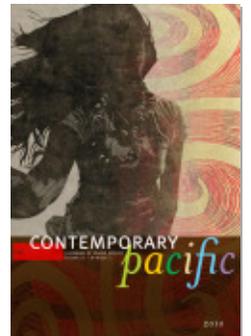
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Sista Tongue

Spahr, Juliana.

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 16, Number 1, Spring 2004,
pp. 211-212 (Review)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: 10.1353/cp.2004.0031



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and at times heart-wrenching novel that should appeal to a wide range of readers interested in the region today. It is always a delight to discover a new talent, and we can only hope to see more of Barclay's work in the future.

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Sista Tongue, by Lisa Linn Kanae. Designed by Kristin Kaleinani Gonzales. Honolulu: Tinfish, 2002. ISBN 0-9712198-2-6; 64 pages, unnumbered; photographs, bibliography. US\$10.00.

Writing in Hawai'i Creole English or Pidgin has at least thirty years of tradition behind it. What is generally considered to be the first book in Pidgin, *Chalookyu Eensai* by "Bradajo" (aka Jozuf Hadley), was published in 1972. In the years that have followed, there has been a sort of renaissance of literature written in Pidgin in Hawai'i.

Lisa Linn Kanae's *Sista Tongue* is one of the more recent books to both participate in and analyze this scene (another interesting book is Lee Tonouchi's *Living Pidgin: Contemplations on Pidgin Culture*, also published by Tinfish in 2002). Kanae is a Hawai'i writer with firsthand knowledge of this renaissance and also one of the editorial assistants of *Ōiwi*, a groundbreaking journal of Native Hawaiian literature and art.

Sista Tongue is a "chapbook" of about sixty pages. Kanae begins with a story about childhood, a story about her brother Harold-Boy, who was, she explains, a late talker "who couldn't

articulate certain words or speak in complete sentences until long after the 'normal' expected age." Because Harold-Boy is a late talker, people make fun of him; he has to go to a special school; and he grows up to be kind, but shy. This story of Harold-Boy is mainly, but not exclusively, written in Pidgin. Next to it, Kanae tells her own language story, mainly in standard English but with occasional interjections in Pidgin, such as "Badda you?" She writes, "My genealogy can be traced back to Japanese pig farmers in Happy Valley, Maui; Chinese and Filipino immigrant plantation workers; and Native Hawaiians from the island of Hawai'i; however, I am not fluent in any of my ancestors' native tongues. Instead I speak both Standard English and Hawai'i Creole English, or 'Pidgin.'" As Kanae tells her own story, she also tells a brief, scholarly history of Pidgin, a language created out of the intersection between the various immigrant languages that plantation workers brought to Hawai'i and the already present Hawaiian language. Mixed in with this, in what I cannot help but read as homage to Korean-American writer Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, are a series of quotes from various linguists describing things like how the tongue works.

Kanae's take on Pidgin is unapologetically supportive and counters years of linguistic belittlement by what Kanae calls "cultural elites." Near the end of her essay Kanae states, "Resistance is an intrinsic element of Pidgin." And after listing a number of Hawai'i writers such as Darrell H Y Lum, Tonouchi, Joe Balaz, and Lois-Ann Yamanaka (her

list is much longer and more inclusive) who “perpetuate the language and its message of resistance through literature,” she then notes that their literature “both criticizes and heals the inferiority complexes and self-loathing that was created by cultural elites.” One way to read *Sista Tongue* is as a reply to the recent critiques of the Pidgin literary scene by writers such as Candace Fujikane, Rodney Morales, Dennis Kawaharada, and others. These critics have complained that some of the major works of the Pidgin literary scene, especially those associated with the mainly Asian-American Bamboo Ridge Press, have been more complicit than resistant. They have pointed out that much of this literature is nostalgic and not attentive to more important issues, such as the continuing occupation of Hawai‘i by the United States. I do not think this critique could be applied in any way to *Sista Tongue*. (Kanae’s work with ‘*Oiwi* also demonstrates an attentiveness on her part to how literature is an important arena for political education and resisting colonialism.) But if there is one limitation to this otherwise excellent book, it is her insistent celebration of the resistance of Pidgin without mentioning the complications, such as the debates about race in Yamanaka’s work, which factionalized Hawai‘i’s writing communities in the 1990s. For readers who are already aware of the history of Pidgin in Hawai‘i up until the 1980s, this might feel like a missed opportunity to hear Kanae’s take on a more recent chapter of the story of Pidgin in Hawai‘i.

But overall, the multigenre and multilinguistic form lets Kanae’s book do a lot of interesting work that it

couldn’t do in a more traditional format. *Sista Tongue* is personal and political. It is colloquial and critical. With its multiple layers of analysis, it is one of the most interesting and self-aware books to come out of Hawai‘i’s literary scene in recent years. Even the design of the book by Kristin Kaleinani Gonzales is exceptional and deserves a review from someone who knows more about graphic design than I do. Locally, the book has been so important that the new student orientation program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa ordered a thousand copies of it for entering freshmen to introduce them to local issues. *Sista Tongue* provides an unusually interesting overview of Hawai‘i’s language politics and will be an ideal primer for undergraduate classrooms, both in Hawai‘i and on the continent, for many years to come.

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Diaspora and the Difficult Art of Dying, by Sudesh Mishra. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002. ISBN 1-877276-18-9, 78 pages. US\$29.95.

The close-up photograph on the cover of a drop of oil spreading out into rainbow layers on a tarmac road like spilled blood—at once a sublime, beautiful, but grounded image—indicates the timeliness (and what might once have been described as the timelessness) of this skillfully constructed collection. In the preface, Sudesh Mishra describes his intention to produce a collection of diasporic poetry