

Introduction

ISLAND FEMINISMS IN/ON ISLAND STUDIES

Place, Justice, Movement

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The possibility of this themed section arrives with a growing interest in a feminist and social justice approach to Island Studies. The articles contained within, by Māheha Ahia and Kahala Johnson, Aurelien Davennes, and Alma Ouaneisouk Trinidad, represent a considerable expansion of the project of island feminisms. Addressing matters of island diaspora in relation to queerness, indigeneity, and feminist mentorship, this collection provides much needed sustenance both for fine-tuning what is meant by island feminisms and also broadening its landscape.

Unfortunately, the term ‘feminism’ continues to be dismissed as a mostly white, cisgender women’s empowerment movement, especially by those not engaged in feminist activism and scholarship. Even with the increased popularisation of ‘intersectionality’ by social movements such as #MeToo (Leung & Williams, 2019) and #SayHerName (Brown et al., 2017), an understanding of feminism lags. For us, contemporary applications of intersectionality arrive from the scholarship of Black feminists who first highlighted that gender is experienced racially (or ethnically) and race can also be gendered and classed (Collins & Bilge, 2020). They and others also advanced a multidimensional understanding of the organisation of power – including interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural domains – in shaping opportunities (or the lack of them) and experiences. Only uninformed views of feminism perceive it through the narrow lens of gender.

This understanding of feminism, as a women’s movement rather than a diverse intellectual project, permeates what we think of as the mainstream of Island Studies. It engenders an avoidance, a lack of engagement, for example, of many of the men who have dominated the academic narrative of Island Studies, with island feminisms. This absence and erasure are evidenced by a small number of publications in this journal (*Shima*) and in *Island Studies Journal* that address gender, sexuality, race, and racism. As two of the most well-known journals in Island Studies, expanding the representation of topics, regions, and authors is essential for birthing Island Studies forward.

We encourage more works that address not only gender but race, ethnicity, and racism as they impact the daily life of islanders and inform negative island stereotypes. Island Studies scholarship could draw more attention to contemporary issues around ethnicity, race, and racism and the well-known tension of ethnic and racial strife on islands (Ginoza, 2015; Kabutaulaka, 2015; Ricourt, 2016; Rivera, 2006). Documenting and analysing the relationship of racism and the “island effect” (Brinklow, 2022) is essential for an elaboration of Island Studies and what it can offer to a broader audience. Topics around contemporary feminisms and queer studies could also benefit from more attention across our two journals. We recognise that some recent works in these journals do take a critical look at race or gender (e.g. Davis, 2021; Speedy, 2020; Jilkén, 2021; Guerin, 2021) and focus on protest and social movement (e.g. López, 2021; Cavallo & Visentin, 2021). More attention is needed in terms of diversifying authorship and representation. Whereas Nimhür and Meloni (2021, p. 3) promisingly seek “to contribute to the decolonial project within island studies”, the entire body of authors in the themed section in *Island Studies Journal* that this claim refers to are centred in Europe. More voices of island scholars from the Global South need to be amplified in our journals. While there seems to be an interest in island feminisms and social justice approaches, there is curiously an uneven manifestation of their representation in the Island Studies mainstream.

From our vantage point, what emerges is something of a bifurcation in Island Studies that was not immediately evident to either of us. The academic literature of and about islands that critically examines island coloniality as a racial and gendered project is foundational to our imaginings of island feminisms (Patterson, 2018; Vaidik, 2017; King, 2016; Briggs, 2002; Trask, 1993). Like other scholars who arrive at Island Studies by virtue of recognising islandness through their research, our island scholarship is located at the nexus of coloniality and capitalism, patriarchy and nation, and the systemic operation of bias, discrimination, and violence towards Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). These critical, feminist, decolonial, black geographies (McKittrick, 2006) and scholar-activist angles are marginal in the mainstream canon of Island Studies, and they are what island feminisms aspires to centre. Engaging queer scholarship on islands would also enhance what we think of as an Island Studies approach (Newton, 2014; Bousiou, 2011; Boellstorff, 2005).

Provincialising the story told of Island Studies, with its basis in a largely English and European standpoint, is essential for shifting the trajectory of the Island Studies project (Chakrabarty, 2000). One instance that captures the Eurocentrism of Island Studies is the headline for the November 2022 *Island Studies Journal* call for papers entitled “Why is there no non-Western island studies theory?” Island feminisms stands in contrast to this orientation, asserting that Island Studies is and has been readily theorised across Oceania and in the Caribbean, in the Indian Ocean and Black Mediterranean, introducing broad concepts of islands and islanders. Even a so-called “western island studies” as seems to be implicated in the call, is bound to the expropriation of knowledge from indigenous and autochthonous islanders far from the shores of the United Kingdom and Europe (see Teaiwa, 2006).

Island feminisms may therefore be best understood as an intellectual project that places pressure on mainstream Island Studies to plunge beneath, to the underbelly of islands to study and address the geopolitical circumstances and the local formations that condition the gendered and racial inequities, homophobia, and injustices that persist on them and the particular forms they take on islands. In this way, island feminisms is also an activist

project, vocal in its call for critical and diverse perspectives across Island Studies outlets. In addition, through a loose set of events, the Island Feminisms Project is fostering a transnational island feminist network that is pushing past the shortcomings of a Euro-centered Island Studies. The theoretical contribution of a mainstream Island Studies has been to explore the meaning and distinction of island geographies. This notion is attractive to researchers and students of and from islands, yet it has become frustratingly limiting, without sufficient critical inquiry into the operations and intersections of race, ethnicity, indigenous status, gender, and class among other hierarchies on islands and their diaspora.

Our tripartite, qualitatively rich, themed section, “Island Feminism: Place, Justice, and Movement”, was originally conceived as a conference in Hilo, Hawai‘i for June 2020, but was upended, along with everything else, by the pandemic. The few pieces collated from it are original and attractive in what they offer for addressing island spaces and the movements island geographies engender, and insert a social justice approach to islands and diaspora, gender, sexuality, indigeneity, and ethnicity. While themes of “archipelagic movement and island diaspora” (Joseph 2021, p. 3) have been considered widely by Island Studies researchers, they have rarely taken an intersectional analytical approach to the quotidian experiences of islanders and their diaspora. Intersectional analysis complicates things, one must always peer from all sides of the prisms simultaneously when observing social processes, including ‘islanderness’ (Rodríguez-Coss, 2020; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001). With the application of feminist, critical race, queer, and intersectional analytical tools, island politics, cultural resistance, and their socio-economic dimensions can be more fully understood, and the intellectual projects around islands can move beyond racially uncritical heteropatriarchal perspectives (Neely & Samura, 2011).

Guadeloupe, Hawai‘i, and the Philippines are the island grounds for the future expansions and even erosions of our original manifestation of island feminisms. In his ethnographically detailed address of the relational histories between Guadeloupe, Paris, and queer islands within the French metropole, Davennes (2022) addresses the metronormative matrix with which island diaspora must contend, many times leading them to return to the island due to a desire for the queer doings/belonging available on the island. Through the stories and voices of queer islanders, he richly elaborates the complex processes of decision making of their departures and return. Ahia and Johnson (2022) drawing upon *He Kumulipo*, take a textual and self-reflective approach to Kanaka ‘Ōiwi movements. Overturning dualistic understandings of departure and return of life forms, they utilise the *He Kumulipo* to unpack the paradox of indigenous “grounded permanence” and anti-diasporic sentiment without dismissing or denying the voice of on-islanders. Ahia and Johnson (2022) call for “indigeneity and diasporaneity to be determined by Hawaiian submergent strategies of transmotion”. And finally Trinidad (2022) enters into a Marxist and feminist analysis of life in the diaspora. Applying autoethnography, Trinidad (2022) documents her movements as part of the Pinay diaspora and the marginalisation experienced by women, indigenous, and ethnic Filipina/o/x in academic institutions. Uniquely offering a fresh and island-based approach towards mentorship, she introduces Pinay Myntoring to the academic setting, showing how island cultures offer creative frameworks for supporting colleagues and student bodies.

In closing, through an articulation of the tension and concerns of islanders, on them, off them – permanent, short-term, and returning – and in-between, in oceans, seas, and on coasts, the trio of articles offered in this themed section of *Shima* shores up island

feminisms as a revolutionary lunge in/on Island Studies. The organic conjuncture of diaspora across these articles reflects the cadence of islands, yet these authors' study of how gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and indigeneity are experienced by islanders, brings island feminisms to the forefront for providing a much needed 'zing' to Island Studies (Price, 2011).

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