



# anglistica<sup>aion</sup>

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL



UniorPress

*Sustaining Hawaiian Sovereignty*

Vol. 14 n. 2 (2010)

Edited by Cristina Bacchilega, Donatella Izzo and Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada

<i>Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, Cristina Bacchilega, Donatella Izzo</i>	1
Introduction. He mau hua: Notes from the Editors	
<i>Haunani-Kay Trask</i>	9
Haunani-Kay Trask Interviewed by Eiko Kosasa for <i>Journey for Justice</i>	
<i>Kapulani Landgraf</i>	11
Kū‘ē i ka hewa	
<i>Haunani-Kay Trask</i>	13
We Have No Fida’iyn	
<i>Noelani Arista</i>	15
I ka mo‘olelo nō ke ola: In History There Is Life	25
<i>ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui</i>	27
Saving the Nation	
<i>ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui</i>	
Mana Wahine: Feminism and Nationalism in Hawaiian Literature	
<i>ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui</i>	45
Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au	
<i>No‘u Revilla</i>	47
Say Throne	
<i>Haunani-Kay Trask</i>	49
Hunger	
<i>Brandy Nālani McDougall</i>	51
From Uē to Kū‘ē : Loss and Resistance in Haunani-Kay Trask’s <i>Night Is a Shark Skin Drum</i> and Matthew Kaopio’s <i>Written in the Sky</i>	

---

<i>Haunani-Kay Trask</i> The Wounds of Our Nation	63
<i>Kaulana Nā Pua</i> Performed by Jon, Jamaica, and Kamakana Osorio, with Tim Sproles on the mandolin (August 2009) for one of three “Native Hawaiian Writers” episodes on <i>Aloha Shorts</i>	65
<i>Vincenzo Bavaro</i> Satisfied with the Stones: Notes on Masculinity, Land, and Family in Alani Apio’s <i>Kāmau</i>	67
<i>Paul Lyons</i> Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, Richard Hamasaki, and the Afterlives of (Native/non-native) Collaboration against Empire in Hawai‘i	79
<i>Kapulani Landgraf</i> Ho‘iho‘i	91
<i>Incoronata Inserra</i> Toward a Truly Sustainable Hawai‘i: Sustaining the Native Hawaiian Sense of Place	93
<i>Aiko Yamashiro</i> A thesis on the Ko‘olau Mountains	105
<i>Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada</i> Find Mana in the Mundane: Telling Hawaiian Mo‘olelo in Comics	107
<i>ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui</i> Hua ‘ōlelo	119
<i>Noelani Goodyear-Ka ‘ōpua</i> He mele inoa no ku‘u kumu aloha, ‘o Haunaniokawēkiuohaleakalā	121
<i>Books Received</i>	123

Introduction

He mau hua: Notes from the Editors

<sup>1</sup> The poet No‘ukahau‘oli Revilla’s evocative and impassioned explanation of this phrase inspired this understanding of “i wai no‘u” as a powerful exhortation that far exceeds an everyday and mundane request.

<sup>2</sup> In 1887, an armed force made up of white residents compelled Kalākaua to sign a constitution that limited the monarchy’s power and disenfranchised Asians and a large number of Hawaiians.

See also Jon Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Anne Keala Kelly’s recent documentary *Noho Hewa The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai‘i* (Best Documentary at the 2008 Hawaii International Film Festival) makes this point visually and dialogically.

See <<http://www.nohohewa.com/>>. Historically foundational is another documentary, *Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (1993), co-produced and scripted by Haunani-Kay Trask.

<sup>4</sup> The United States Public Law 103-150, signed by then U.S. President Clinton in 1993, apologizes for “the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i” and “acknowledges the historical significance of this event which resulted in the suppression of the inherent sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian people” (<<http://www.hawaii-nation.org/publawall.html>>). No action followed.

E ka lahui, pehea la e hiki ai ia kakou ke ninau i ka aoao maikai, ke paa ole ia kakou ka moolelo kahiko o ko kakou Aina Aloha? [“O Nation, how are we to ask where the good path is if the ancient mo‘olelo of our beloved land are not known to us?”] Joseph Poepoe (17 January 1906)

Stand firm, my friends. Love for the land is more important to you and me than anything else. Be brave, be strong, be fearless and steadfast. Kuaihelani Campbell, *San Francisco Call* (24 September 1897)

Mohala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua  
*Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers*  
‘Ōlelo No‘eau

When I first began learning the Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai‘i, my teachers taught me that the phrase “i wai no‘u” meant that I wanted water to drink. But after studying Hawaiian culture, language, and history for several years, I learned that the simple request for water could have many other meanings.<sup>1</sup> When people wish to fight, they might challenge their opponents by calling out “i wai no‘u!” with the belief that their opponents will quench their thirst for a battle. Lovers might say this to each other in the throes of passion, wanting their desires to be slaked. The subjects of the Hawaiian kingdom might have said something similar to this to Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last reigning monarch, when they were asking for a new constitution to replace the oppressive Bayonet Constitution.<sup>2</sup> These examples reflect different facets of urgent desire, constant seeking, and yearning, all crying out to be quenched. This same deep thirst defines and motivates the contemporary cultural and political movement to recover Hawaiian sovereignty, language, traditions, and stories. [BKK]

Water was systematically diverted from Hawaiian subsistence farming and ecosystems to a plantation economy in the 19th and 20th centuries, and we continue in Hawai‘i today to see that drain supporting corporate tourism. For me the impetus to assemble this special issue of *Anglistica* lies in the awareness that Hawaiian sovereignty is an issue that concerns everyone, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, in Hawai‘i nei.<sup>3</sup> Current discussions indicate that, over the last forty years, both in the islands and in the continental United States, there has been a strong growth in public awareness of Hawai‘i’s colonial situation – the history of injustice suffered by the Hawaiian nation at the hands of U.S. government and economic imperialism with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893<sup>4</sup> and the annexation of



---

Hawai‘i as a territory of the United States in 1898, in the face of peaceful but strong Native resistance to this takeover. As Craig Howes and Jon Osorio<sup>5</sup> put it succinctly, “Hawai‘i will remain economically, socially, and ethically troubled as long as we refuse to come fully to terms with Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty”.<sup>6</sup> The same discussions make it clear that “to come fully to terms” with these political and economic claims goes hand in hand with changes in everyday practices, structures of feeling, ethics, civic responsibility. The creative and scholarly contributions in our issue of *Anglistica* reach into what can be learned, done, and imagined in the present to foster a culture in and for Hawai‘i, one that sustains Hawaiian sovereignty and does not naturalize injustice and greed. [CB]

Injustice and greed, however local they may be in their effects, can never be restricted to the local dimension: “Sustaining Hawaiian Sovereignty” in an Italian journal published in English and circulating on the world web is a way of reminding ourselves of that interconnectedness. It is a way of acknowledging, celebrating, sharing, and fostering both the more particular and the more far-reaching implications of the Hawaiian struggle: the wider waves that it is capable of stirring in the still waters of acquiescence to the ‘inevitability’ of limitless exploitation, growing inequality, and environmental devastation – in Hawai‘i as well as in Italy and worldwide. And it is also a way of reminding ourselves of the lasting importance of culture and of its power to engender and nourish affirmative political and social movements. [DI]

Writers, artists, scholars, dancers, poets, musicians, farmers, and fishers have all expressed a deep and unquenched thirst that has driven them to action. We are searching not just for literal water, by lobbying for water rights, restoring streams and fishponds, and reopening lo‘i, but also water that sustains us as a people through the reawakening and reinvigorating of our culture, language, and sovereignty. In many ways, the seeking is also the drinking because these efforts to find sustenance have provided it as well. For instance, the poet and writer Haunani-Kay Trask was inspired by the example of Lili‘uokalani’s tireless exertions to restore the Hawaiian nation. Subsequently, Trask herself brought Hawaiian issues to the forefront of Hawai‘i’s public consciousness and completely changed the way in which activists, scholars, and community members alike understood Hawaiian struggles. Through her passionate and relentless work, she has provided water for her peers and for those who have come after her, inspiring us to do the same for those who come after us. [BKK]

In this issue of *Anglistica*, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Eiko Kosasa, Kapulani Landgraf, and Brandy Nālani McDougall most explicitly engage with Haunani-Kay Trask’s own activist scholarship and poetry of fiery beauty. But Trask and her narrative of political consciousness start off the issue because all of the contributors are in active conversation with her steadfast determination to undo the material, institutional, and symbolic doings of colonialism and coloniality.

“Publishing for the indigenous writer . . . is not only an ambitious dream, as it is for most writers. It is a necessary struggle against extinction”,<sup>7</sup> wrote Trask in

<sup>5</sup> Craig Howes and Jon Osorio, eds., *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 5. For more information about the book, “Water” by D. Kapua‘ala Sproat, and the many events following its publication, including speaker series and art/music/dialog events, see <<http://thevalueofhawaii.com>>.

<sup>6</sup> Published around the time that we put out our call for papers, *The Value of Hawai‘i* has made some small waves by enabling and nurturing civic debate around the question “what do you value about Hawai‘i and what can we do to protect it?”

<sup>7</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Indigenous Writers and the Colonial Situation”, *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 13.1 (1984), 81.

<sup>8</sup> Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004) is a groundbreaking study of how Hawaiians protested annexation in these newspapers.

<sup>9</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, 2nd edition), 128, 37. See the website *Mo'olelo Aloha 'Aina, Stories of Love and Struggle for the Land* <<http://moolelo.manainfo.com>>.

<sup>10</sup> The first known publication of the song was in *Ka Leo o ka Labui* (24 February, 1893), 3.

See *Buke mele labui. Book of national songs* facsimile reprint of the 1895 text edited by F. J. Testa (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Leilani Basham, "Mele Lāhui: The Importance Of Pono In Hawaiian Poetry", *Te Kaharoa*, 1 (2008), <<http://tekaharoa.com/index.php/tekaharoa/article/viewFile/54/26>>.

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada for noting that in "He Ohu no ka Poe Aloha Aina" the last line of the song is "No ka poe i aloha i ka aina" [for the people who love the land].

For a more commonly performed version, see <[http://www.huapala.org/Kau/Kaulana\\_Na\\_Pua.html](http://www.huapala.org/Kau/Kaulana_Na_Pua.html)>

<sup>13</sup> See <<http://www.hawaii.edu/oiw/>> for information about this landmark journal, "the first publication dedicated to the

1984. Starting in 1861, the publication of so many independent (as in not run by the government or the missionaries) Hawaiian-language newspapers over an eighty-year span showed that Hawaiians indeed recognized the power of print literature as an expression of survival and resistance.<sup>8</sup> Successfully adapting the technology of colonial conversion proved crucial to the transmission of Hawaiian history and stories, knowledge and values. From the nineteenth century into the present, including the Hawaiian Renaissance's artistic and activist revival in the 1970s and Trask's own scholarly and poetic publications, Hawaiian literature has persistently asserted aloha 'āina, "the Hawaiian responsibility to care for the land, to make it flourish", as a cultural and political force that, in a colonial situation, becomes a struggle for land, in opposition to the development of tourist resorts and military use, and in pursuit of the restoration of ceded lands and sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> This love for the land was and is also an expression of patriotism; it is love for the lāhui, the Hawaiian people and nation. The song "Kaulana Nā Pua" [Famous Are the Flowers], of which Jon and Jamaica Osorio present a contemporary rendition, was first published as "He Ohu no ka Poe Aloha Aina"<sup>10</sup> [An Adornment for the People Who Love the Land] and "Mele Aloha Aina"<sup>11</sup> [Song of Love for the Land], and it ends with a dedication to or affirmation of "ka po'e i aloha i ka 'āina" [the people who love the land].<sup>12</sup> For Māhealani Dudoit, the founding editor of *Ōiwi*,<sup>13</sup> Hawaiian people's "link to the land as part of its 'living tissue' is ... the driving force of the Hawaiian movement".<sup>14</sup> This relationship to land also resonates with Thomas King's assertion that "The magic of Native literature – as with other literatures – is not in the themes of the stories – identity, isolation, loss, ceremony, community, maturation, home – it is in the way meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms".<sup>15</sup> That Hawaiian "cultural paradigms" and cosmology are not the norm in Hawai'i (just as Native American ones are not the norm in North America) politicizes this statement and makes Hawaiian literature, art, and scholarship<sup>16</sup> into expressions not only of survival and resistance, but into acts of decolonizing change, or, as Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada more precisely articulates it in his essay, of *'onipa'a*. [CB]

I feel very fortunate to be among the steadily growing number of scholars who can access the Hawaiian-language sources that have for so long been ignored in favor of histories of Hawai'i written in English, usually by people who were not supportive of Hawaiian aims, and based solely on English-language documents, themselves reflecting and promoting the views of the colonial regime. This is an exciting and heady time to write about Hawai'i, because Hawaiian history is literally being rewritten on a regular basis by scholars venturing into the massive Hawaiian-language archives of newspapers, manuscripts, songbooks, legal documents, recorded interviews, etc. The wider availability and accessibility of the Hawaiian-language newspapers alone have already enabled researchers to find new insights into Hawaiian history and culture nearly every time they turn a page. Those who focus on these sources ensure that a steadily increasing number of long-unheard Hawaiian voices once again narrate complex histories of struggle, collaboration,

resistance, insistence, heartbreak, and triumph that stand in stark contrast to the simplistic and monovocal story of a tragic but inferior people falling before the unstoppable juggernaut of colonialism.

This return to Hawaiian-language archival sources has not only invigorated scholarship about Hawai‘i, it has changed what we consider responsible and ethical approaches to research. There is an increasing expectation that if people are going to write about Hawaiian history and culture, creatively or academically, they must have some access to Hawaiian-language sources. Some academics and writers whose works were once deemed exhaustive and well researched are now considered myopic for not considering these sources. This is not to say that this earlier research or the English-language archives are not valuable, only that they are no longer sufficient for our needs. Though the demand for researchers with linguistic access may be seen by some as limiting and exclusionary, it can also provide opportunities for dialogue and reflection among scholars/authors who may now have to learn from or work with others to access this archive. This kind of collaboration gives all of us a chance to reevaluate our individual kuleana [‘responsibility, right, privilege’] in relation to both the topic and the archival material. People, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike, may find that their kuleana does not extend as far as it once did. [BKK]

Raised in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s as a bilingual child, I am aware of how my mother’s language would have been lost to me had it been Hindi or Tamil rather than English, which was at the time replacing French as the international language of power.<sup>17</sup> Newcomers to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in the nineteenth century would be expected to learn the Hawaiian language, but no institutional or social incentive for learning Hawaiian was in place when I came in 1983, though the state of Hawai‘i’s official languages are English and Hawaiian. It’s never too late to start learning a language, but I wish I’d started sooner. Whether I want to write about Hawai‘i or not, learning the indigenous language of this place is one of the ways to engage in more informed and self-reflective conversations to support Hawaiian sovereignty.

Several essays in this issue of *Anglistica* emphasize the significance of the Hawaiian-language revival that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s thanks to the struggles to institute language-immersion schools, and more recently charter schools as well as graduate programs in Hawaiian Language and Hawaiian Studies at the university. Before that, as Hawaiian political power declined, the suppression of Hawaiian-language use in the public sphere not only painfully dispossessed a people, but also resulted in the neglect of the Hawaiian-language materials published in the newspapers from 1834 to 1948. Over a hundred thousand pages in close to 100 newspapers provide a rich historical, cultural, and literary archive.<sup>18</sup> Noelani Arista writes in her essay, “The future of Hawaiian historical scholarship lies in the careful interpretation of a vast untapped reservoir of Hawaiian-language source material”. Today’s Hawaiian scholarship and art, as seen in this issue of *Anglistica*, are already meeting this challenge by deploying – and performing in the case of

mana‘o (thoughts) and hana no‘eau (artistic works) of Nā ‘Ōiwi (Kānaka Maoli, Native Hawaiians)”. The first three volumes are available at *UluKau, the Electronic Hawaiian Library*, <<http://ulukau.org/>>.

<sup>14</sup> D. Māhealani Dudoit, “Against Extinction: A Legacy of Native Hawaiian Resistance Literature”, 2, in Ibrahim G. Aoudé, ed., *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 39 (1999), <<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~aoude/pdf/17Dudoit.pdf>>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 2003), 112.

<sup>16</sup> In “Land, Leadership, and Nation: Haunani-Kay Trask on the Testimonial Uses of Life Writing in Hawai‘i,” Trask discusses contemporary Hawaiian music, traditional cultural practices, and photography as “forms of testimony” with interviewers Cynthia Franklin and Laura E. Lyons, *Biography*, 27.1 (Winter 2004), 222-249.

<sup>17</sup> That, as a well-educated Anglo-Indian growing up in the 1920s and 1930s in India, my mother knew English only speaks of course to one of the legacies of colonialism. In Hawai‘i, public education was limited to English-only schools in 1896.

<sup>18</sup> See M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i Ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010). The transformative force of the *Ho‘olau‘a‘i* project digitizing these newspapers

cannot be overestimated; see  
<<http://nupepa.org/>>. See  
also researcher Saho  
Fukushima's resource <<http://www.facebook.com/Hoolaupai>>.

<sup>19</sup> Trask's *From a Native Daughter*, Ty Kāwika Tengan's *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahale's *Holo Mai Pele* (Honolulu: Pacific Islanders in Communications, 2001), and others highlight familial and gendered relations to the 'āina countering touristic uses of land.

<sup>20</sup> "Creare una nuova cultura non significa solo fare individualmente delle scoperte 'originali', significa anche e specialmente diffondere criticamente delle verità già scoperte; 'socializzarle' per così dire e pertanto farle diventare base di azioni vitali; elemento di coordinamento e di ordine intellettuale e morale", *Quaderni del carcere: Il materialismo storico* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1971), 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas P. Spencer, *Kana Kūloko 1895: Ka Ho'ā'o 'ana e Ho'okabuli i ke Aupuni i Lōkahi 'ole 'ia ka Repubalika o Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 132-136.

No'u Revilla and Jamaica Osorio – cultural and linguistic self-determination, competence, interpretation, and creativity. But it is frustrating to realize, Arista also notes, that having “cultural and linguistic fluency in Hawaiian” is as of yet not considered “necessary in order to write Hawaiian history.” This of course matters not only to the writing of history, but to scholarship in other disciplines, including literature, where the protocols of indigenous genres and poetics are crucial. Aiko Yamashiro's poem, Kapulani Landgraf's artwork, and ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui's, Vincenzo Bavaro's, and Incoronata Inserra's essays, each also speaks differently to how caring about and for the land, historically and in the everyday, are part and parcel of this charge.<sup>19</sup> For myself, I think of Antonio Gramsci's words: “Creating a new culture is not just a matter of individuals making ‘original’ discoveries but also, and above all, of disseminating already discovered truths – of socializing them so to speak, and making them therefore the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral effort” (my translation).<sup>20</sup> The pressure and the promise are on. [CB]

For myself, one of the biggest revelations that came from the Hawaiian-language archive is the sheer diversity of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Hawaiians were not alone in their loyalty to the monarchy; they were not the only ones who were said to have aloha 'āina ['aloha for the land'] and aloha lāhui ['aloha for the nation/people']. One example among many came in the wake of the failed counter-revolt of 1895 that pitted the supporters of the Hawaiian kingdom against the newly-formed Republic of Hawai'i. A book published the year of the counter-revolt entitled *Kana Kūloko 1895: Ka Ho'ā'o 'ana e Ho'okabuli i ke Aupuni i Lōkahi 'ole 'ia ka Repubalika o Hawai'i* ['Civil War 1895: The Attempt to Overthrow the Discordant Government, the Republic of Hawai'i'] lists the names of those the authors call nā koa aloha 'āina ['the warriors who have aloha for the land'], the over three hundred people who were arrested after their armed attempt to restore the kingdom.<sup>21</sup> The list includes obviously Hawaiian names such as Poepoe, Aea, Kanakaole, Kukalahiwa, Kaohimaunu, and more, but it also includes names such as Rosa, Townsend, Silva, Walker, Chong, Matsumoto, Lycurgus, and a host of others.<sup>22</sup> Though it is likely that some of these people are part-Hawaiian, it is undeniable that a number of them are not Hawaiian by genealogy; they are, however, Hawaiian by nationality, and by allegiance. To honor the many loyal subjects of the Hawaiian kingdom of all ethnicities, such as these koa aloha 'āina, and to make the movement more inclusive, a number of contemporary leaders of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement have taken up the idea that to identify as a 'Hawaiian' is different than identifying as a 'Hawaiian national', and that activism must take place as indigenous peoples but also as a nation. The struggle for sovereignty based on the idea of the Hawaiian kingdom as a progressive, multiethnic nation remains a bit controversial, but it is gaining purchase, particularly among those who feel that this land and the culture that originated here are worth fighting for. The idea that we all have to pitch in to regain Hawaiian sovereignty might be difficult for some to swallow, but I think that it is one that still holds water. [BKK]



Rather than recognizing that the sovereignty movement is, in Haunani-Kay Trask's words, a "struggle for land, government, and international status as a recognized nation",<sup>23</sup> "the American government's responses to the sovereignty movement have been to insist that *race* is at the core of the political solution between Hawaiians and the United States".<sup>24</sup> Historian Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio proceeds to discuss not only issues of justice and self-determination in a global economy, but how the sovereignty movement in Hawai'i is gaining "more and more support over the past decade because it acknowledges the rights of nations under international law, and because it does not lead to the destruction of relationships among friends and families because of race".<sup>25</sup> The ongoing discussion within the Hawaiian movement of how ancestry works in relation to nationhood need not be confused with the bad faith of racializing indigeneity pursued by the US government.<sup>26</sup> Rather what it means for those of us who are not Hawaiians to support Hawaiian sovereignty continues to be complicated, and it demands grappling with and acting on the awareness of one's structural position *and* agency within a longer and persistent history of settler colonialism, capitalism, and occupation. Paul Lyons's essay is a powerful reminder and performance of how "Native/non-native collaboration against Empire within the arts" and the friendships that it sustains "have a history in Hawai'i, become a usable inheritance, and have an uncanny power to continue generating effects". While not seeking to homogenize distinct positionalities and projects, this special issue of *Anglistica* as well as our Introduction seeks in small ways to extend such anti-colonial practices and alliances in colonized and occupied Hawai'i. [CB]

The American government, on the federal and state level, has benefitted from portraying and viewing the Hawaiian sovereignty movement as an internal, mainly racial matter.<sup>27</sup> Keeping discussions of a nominal Hawaiian sovereignty within the existing political structure of the state or federal government, such as the recent attempts to give Hawaiians 'federal recognition', serves only to maintain the status quo and sidestep discussions of independence and de-occupation. That is why seeing the sovereignty movement as nationalist, anti-colonial, and de-occupationist has become so important in the last decade or two; it takes the movement back to the international level, where it has belonged since the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom. [BKK]

The wish to contribute to the international visibility of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and to foreground the complicated issues of ancestry, culture, language, land, and nationality that it raises, was among the reasons that originally induced us to propose to the editorial board of *Anglistica* a special issue devoted to "Sustaining Hawaiian Sovereignty". Other considerations, especially relevant for me as an Americanist who has for some time interrogated the field's presuppositions from a somewhat decentered perspective, pertain to the position of Hawai'i with respect not only to the United States as a political entity, but also to the disciplinary field of American Studies. Mainly occluded within the field – in spite of the powerful anti-imperialist thrust that has characterized the work of the New Americanists over

<sup>23</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: Locals in Hawai'i", in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 50.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, "Hawaiian Issues", *The Value of Hawai'i*, 18. See also Osorio's "'What Kine Hawaiian Are You?' A Mo'olelo about Nationhood, Race, History, and the Contemporary Sovereignty Movement in Hawai'i", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13.2 (Fall 2001), 359-379.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed analysis, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui's *Hawaiian Blood: Colonization and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> For example, Public Law 103-150, the so-called "Apology Bill" signed by Bill Clinton, admits the United States' role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian nation, but only apologizes to Native Hawaiians, neatly occluding the fact that many other people lost their country on that day as well.

<sup>28</sup> The landmark text is Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), a 672-page volume where, however, the annexation of Hawai‘i is only mentioned in passing.

<sup>29</sup> Respectively, the series “American Encounters/Global Interactions”, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Emily S. Rosenberg, and the series “Narrating Native Histories”, edited by K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Florencia E. Malon, Alcida Rita Ramos, and Joanne Rappaport, both with Duke University Press.

<sup>30</sup> “Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures” (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> See the recent issue of the journal of the American Studies Association, *American Quarterly*, 62: 3 (September 2010), edited by Paul Lai and Lindsay Claire Smith, devoted to *Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies*, which features a section on “Spaces of the Pacific” with several essays on Hawai‘i.

<sup>32</sup> I addressed some of these implications in “Reading across Fields: An Italian Americanist Looks at Hawai‘i”, *Tin Fish Net*, 3 (August 2007), <<http://tinfishpress.com/tinfishnet/izzo.html>>.

<sup>33</sup> Among the few exceptions are two issues I co-edited of the American Studies journal *Ácoma*, “Margini degli Stati Uniti” (2002, with Erminio Corti) and “Hawai‘i al di là del mito” (2004-2005, with

the last two decades<sup>28</sup> – and frequently forgotten in the discourse of even the most critically aware and politically committed Americanist scholars, the Hawaiian archipelago was for a long time, and to a large extent still is, virtually invisible on the map of American studies: an academic niche, or the mere regional setting and origin of a number of multicultural literary works, whose analysis justifies passing consideration for aims of contextualization. Of course, there have been exceptions: Rob Wilson’s *Reimagining the American Pacific* (2000) came out in the “New Americanists” series of Duke University Press edited by Donald E. Pease, where, since its inception in 1993, many of the most innovative books in American Studies have appeared. Other transformative works such as Noenoe K. Silva’s *Aloha Betrayed. Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (2004) or J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s *Hawaiian Blood. Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (2008), however, came out in more ‘specialized’ series;<sup>29</sup> and Paul Lyons’s fundamental *American Pacificism. Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (2006) was published under the rubric of Postcolonial Studies.<sup>30</sup> Book publication, to be sure, is influenced by a wide range of circumstances and considerations; what this pattern suggests to me, however, in its retrospective coherence, is that a concern with Hawai‘i was not perceived as necessarily belonging within the disciplinary endeavors of mainstream American Studies.

Only recently has Hawai‘i started to command sustained attention, within the American Studies field, as a generative space at the intersection of several current areas of scholarly inquiry and political intervention – imperialism studies, Pacific studies, ethnic and Asian American studies, Indigeneity studies, transnational and hemispheric American Studies.<sup>31</sup> A site of contradiction as well as confluence, Hawai‘i as the producer of its own critical discourse simultaneously uses, questions, and unsettles existing scholarly definitions, challenging many of the established conceptualizations and compartmentalizations of American Studies, and confronting it with the limits of its own epistemologies. While the origins of my interest in Hawai‘i have been frankly biographical, rooted as they are in long-standing personal ties that have spanned across decades and multiplied over the years, Hawai‘i has been an exceptionally rewarding object of literary and cultural attention not just because of the amazing richness of its artistic production, but exactly by virtue of its power to destabilize the assumptions – political no less than intellectual – of my scholarly field.<sup>32</sup>

To this day, the Italian representation of Hawai‘i in the commercial press is still tuned to the stereotypes of the exotic tourist paradise, and Italian scholars haven’t done much to redress that image.<sup>33</sup> Napoli-based Americanists, however, have for some time cultivated a strong interest in Hawai‘i, as witness the presence of two former students of “Orientale” among the contributors to this issue. The reasons for this, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> may lie in a sense of shared positionality vis-à-vis the operation of cultural hegemony and of political and economic power at both the national and the global level: a large metropolitan city tracing its history back to classical antiquity and the former capital of a kingdom, culturally rich and

---

blessed with a unique natural landscape, Napoli has a recent history of domestic colonialism, economic exploitation, political corruption, urban decay, and widespread criminality that make it a living paradox – simultaneously a part of the Global South and of the rich West, an emblem of the coexistence of the unachieved project of modernity and rampant neoliberal globalization. With this special issue of *Anglistica* we hope to nourish this sense of connection further, moving the Italian perception of Hawaiian issues to a new level of complexity, while offering the Hawaiian sovereignty movement new interlocutors – literally half a world away, but simultaneously also worldwide – for its creative and critical interventions. [DI]

E ō!<sup>35</sup> [BKK, CB, DI]

Mahalo to all contributors to this special issue and to those who helped in other ways to make it into what it is, especially Craig Howes, Katherine E. Russo, and Aiko Yamashiro.

Note: The individual authors and artists have chosen whether or not to italicize Hawaiian words and phrases in their pieces according to their own relationships and interactions with the language. The use of diacritical marks in Hawaiian-language writing was introduced in the twentieth century, and, following customary procedure, we have not added the glottal stop [ʻ] or the macron when quoting older texts.

Incoronata Inserra), and a special issue of *Anglistica*, “American Poets and Politics”, co-edited with Gordon Poole (1998).

<sup>34</sup> See note 29.

<sup>35</sup> This is a call to respond and to endure and persist.

---

## Haunani-Kay Trask

*Interviewed by **Eiko Kosasa** for *Journey for Justice**

Haunani-Kay Trask Interviewed by Eiko Kosasa for *Journey for Justice*, 2010

**<http://hegemonystudies.org/>**

*Journey for Justice*, a half-hour program hosted by Dr. Eiko Kosasa, explores the lives of people dedicated to overturn structures of unfairness, oppression, and state-sanctioned violence in order to inspire others to create an egalitarian world. (from the website)



---

## Kapulani Landgraf

### Kū'ē i ka hewa

*Kū'ē i ka hewa* (resist the wrong) is in response to the Hawaiian people's inherent rights as a native people. The woven red images are from a Kūi ka pono march with over 10,000 people marching in Waikīkī in support of upholding these rights. The line of people in a row with iron nails are the people trying to take the native rights away. The words are from a traditional Hawaiian chant, which was a prophecy of the Hawaiian people to hold firm to their birthright/homeland.

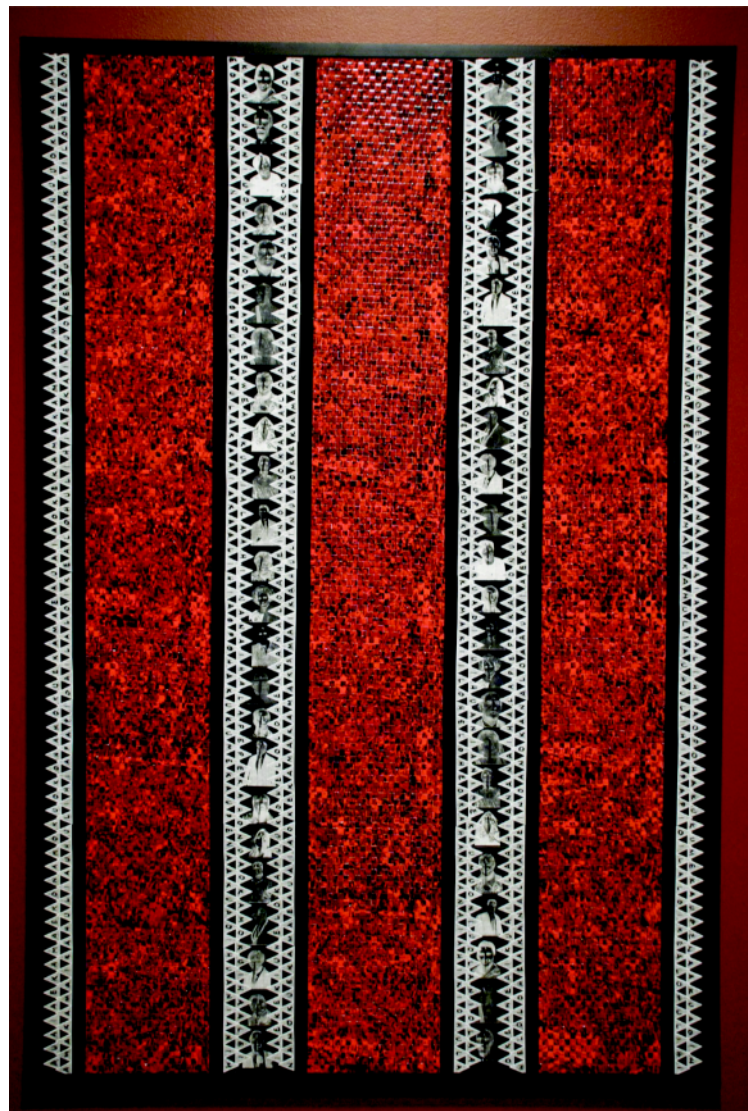


Fig. 1 - Kapulani Landgraf, *Kū'ē i ka hewa*, 'Ikuwā 2008, hand-woven silver gelatin collage with square head iron nails, exhibited in the group show 'Ili Iho, J.M. Long Gallery, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 2008, 96 x 48 x 3 inch, courtesy of the artist.

**We Have No Fida'iyn**

We have no fida'iyn.

Dancers and  
voyagers, speakers  
in all the tongues  
of compliance. But  
No fida'iyn.

We are drying, chanting,  
praying, begging. But  
no fida'iyn.

In the cities and suburbs, in the  
dying countryside, we travel  
with passports  
of anger.

Yet no fida'iyn.

But wait!  
from the farthest shore

A chant is born  
in the shadow of resorts.

And we are there, bowing  
to the lords  
of creation.

fida'iyn: In Arabic, the plural of fida'i, "one ready to sacrifice his life for his country".

## I ka mo'olelo nō ke ola: In History There Is Life

Na wai ho'i ka 'ole o ke akamai, he alahele i ma'a i ka hele 'ia e o'u mau mākua.

Why shouldn't I know when it is a road often traveled by my parents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, *Ōlelo No'ea: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1983), 251.

Liholiho's retort to yet another foreigner who praised his wisdom may have been uttered in exasperation while he was visiting London in 1824. We will never know if these flatterers were simply ingratiating themselves to royalty in the hopes of receiving a lavish tip, or if the praise was offered in earnest. Those who met Liholiho may have been genuinely astounded that a heathen king could be so intelligent, well-spoken, and well-fitted to appear in society. Liholiho, however, found fault with these intrusive statements of approval and replied in a tone that revealed his irritation. "*Na wai? Who?* is bereft of wisdom, for it is a path frequently traversed by my parents".

Liholiho's statement is a clear expression of sovereignty spoken from a place of confidence and mastery, assertive of his intelligence and chiefly status. The often traveled road that Liholiho described was more than a metaphoric reference to many generations of ancestors whose knowledge was tested through practiced application, refined through ingenuity and skill, and proven through political supremacy. Liholiho's statement was also a rebuke intended to remind the ignorant speaker of his lowly position in relation to Liholiho's high chiefly eminence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> My translation, "who is bereft of wisdom", provides a first tier of meaning, whereas Pukui's translation applies the basic phrase to the Chief's person – that becomes the basis for the rebuke: "Why shouldn't I know!"

In this brief essay I appropriate Liholiho's statement, offering a more expansive translation, one that might apply to my generation and those who follow. Na wai ho'i ka 'ole o ke akamai, he alahele i ma'a i ka hele 'ia e o'u mau kūpuna. Who of us is bereft of wisdom, for it is a road frequently traversed by my ancestors. My interpretation of this statement broadens Liholiho's claim of knowledge to include all Hawaiians – for as a people collectively we are the inheritors of rich wisdom traditions. These historical traditions have been passed down to us and to the world in oral, auditory, written, and published forms. Recognition of the scale of this inheritance has yet to permeate our communities, and has just begun to make an impression in scholarly discourse. Although it will be difficult to supplant the commonly recognized signifiers associated with Hawai'i that have made it a popular global tourist destination, this new scholarship will supply new and important understandings of Hawai'i's history. This work is currently being engaged across disciplines and in communities both at home and around the world. It is work that needs to be done in order to get at the deeper currents of Hawaiian knowledge, which I believe has much to offer the world.

Here I suggest that the future of Hawaiian historical scholarship lies in the careful interpretation of a vast untapped reservoir of Hawaiian-language source

material. I will also share a few of my own techniques for interpreting sources premised on Hawaiian ways of thinking and speaking, which I have been calling a kaona-conscious historical method.<sup>3</sup>

Due to innovations in American print culture in the early nineteenth century – and due in large part to the printing presses brought by the missionaries to the islands, the educational imperatives of the chiefs, and the overwhelming response of the people – Hawaiians began to write and publish Hawaiian histories, genealogies, chants, stories, prayers, and traditions less than a decade after the death of Kamehameha I and the arrival of the missionaries in 1820. Because of these developments, continuity in the passing on of Hawaiian oral historical and cultural traditions into writing and print may be unparalleled in the history of native peoples in the Pacific and United States. Add to this cultural treasure trove the daily reportage, news, opinions, advertisements, manuscripts, journals, business records, legal documents, and all the papers necessary to govern a kingdom, and a complex and important ‘record’ of native peoples’ lives produced in a native language begins to emerge.<sup>4</sup> Hawai‘i arguably has the largest literature base of any native language in the Pacific, perhaps all of native North America, exceeding 1,000,000 pages of printed text, 125,000 of which were Hawaiian-language newspapers published between 1834 and 1948.<sup>5</sup>

While a handful of historians and anthropologists have drawn on Hawaiian-language sources in their work, many scholars have relied upon a small pool of previously translated Hawaiian-language materials that are available, leading to what Anthropologist and Hawaiian Language Professor M. Puakea Nogelmeier termed “a discourse of sufficiency”.<sup>6</sup> The translation of works that have become known as the ‘canon’ consists of manuscripts as well as serialized entries from the Hawaiian-language newspapers on history and traditional religious practice by Hawaiian intellectuals living in the nineteenth century. These translations of newspaper articles make up a large collection, known as the Hawaiian Ethnological Notes (HEN). Ethnographers and folklorists, who worked at or were in some way attached to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, commissioned or undertook these translations from the 1890s through the 1950s as sources to fuel their writings on Hawaiian history and culture. Most of these scholars worked with Hawaiian experts who helped them translate and interpret the cultural and religious content of the texts. The canon includes the work of the ‘big four’ Hawaiian intellectuals: Davida Malo, Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, John Papa Ii, and K. Z. Kepelino Keauokalani.<sup>7</sup>

For all of the technical and theoretically sophisticated work of historians, anthropologists, legal historians, political scientists, and religious scholars writing about Hawai‘i, many have remarkably underutilized the most important tool available to the scholar: language. While many historians writing native history have had to create innovative methods to deal with a dearth of native language source materials,<sup>8</sup> historians writing about Hawai‘i and its global and oceanic connections during the nineteenth and early twentieth century do not face this difficulty because sources written and published in Hawaiian are not lacking. And yet, despite the huge amount

<sup>3</sup> I develop kaona consciousness to some extent in my essay, “Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning: *Kaona* as Interpretive and Historical Method”, *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 663–669.

<sup>4</sup> It will take some effort to move Hawaiian historical scholarship out of strip-mining for ethnographic momi, meaning the preference for digging for cultural pearls (momi) in the source material. Reading sources as examples of authentic tradition and culture is the norm rather than analyzing them in order to construct history.

<sup>5</sup> For a more in-depth description of the size, format and number of papers published per year over this span of time see M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Two of these authors, Malo and Ii were advisors to the ali‘i, and were trained in priestly traditions as keepers of different aspects of Hawaiian culture and oral tradition. Both men served in the court (aloali‘i) of Kamehameha I. See M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the*



*Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History from Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> The number of scholars across disciplines currently working with Hawaiian-language sources is increasing. See for example the work of Carlos Andrade, Noelani Arista, Cristina Bacchilega, Leilani Basham, Kamanamaikalani Beamer, John Charlot, Malcolm Chun, Kihei de Silva, Kahikina de Silva, Keola Donaghy, Kauanoe Kamana, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, Craig Howes, Lilikalā Kame'eiehiwa, Kekuhi Kanahēle, Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, Larry Kimura, Lalepa Koga, Kale Langlas, Kapali Lyon, M. Puakea Nogelmeier, Kapā Oliveira, Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, Hiapo Perreira, Kalena Silva, Noenoe Silva, Amy Ku'uleialoha Stillman, Ty Tengan, No'eau Warner, Pila Wilson, Laiana Wong, and Kanalu Young..

<sup>10</sup> These scholars are indebted to the fine work of our kūpuna (elders), Mary Kawena Pukui, Edith McKinzie, and Rubellite Kawena Johnson. I am unable to provide the names of all of the native speakers (mānaleo), kūpuna, whose knowledge guided us, because the list would be too long to include here.

<sup>11</sup> Anishinaabe, Wampanoag, Ojibwe, Māori, and Hawaiian scholars and linguists in the coming years will re-cast histories of encounter through the skillful interpolation and interpretation of native languages sources. See the

of written and published Hawaiian-language material, the majority of histories produced about Hawai'i have been written as if these sources do not exist. If the last two centuries of Hawaiian historiography has been characterized by 'sufficiency', the future of Hawaiian history will be shaped by the scholarship of those who are adept at researching, reading, and interpreting Hawaiian-language source material.

The careful use of Hawaiian-language sources<sup>9</sup> in the writing of history, as well as innovative ways of interpreting these and other sources thus mark an important shift in the writing of Hawaiian history.<sup>10</sup> The work produced on Hawai'i will also make a significant contribution to writing on the history of encounter between foreign and native peoples since linguistic and cultural analysis of materials written by Hawaiians and others can add much to how historians approach histories of encounter.<sup>11</sup> Hawaiian history may also ironically provide one of the broadest testing grounds to begin to answer the oft-asked question "how *did* natives think?"<sup>12</sup>

Cultural literacy and linguistic fluency are necessary skills for all historians to cultivate. This statement would not be considered revolutionary if I were writing about historical scholarship in fields where the source language has some political power and contemporary cultural cache, or of languages that are thriving as the language of government or the *lingua franca* of capitalism. Simply put, Hawaiian is an indigenous language, one of innumerable languages almost eradicated towards the end of the nineteenth century through complex processes of global imperialism. Yet I find that I still have to continually make the argument (for what should be an obvious statement!) that cultural and linguistic fluency in Hawaiian is necessary in order to write Hawaiian history.

Linguistic facility, however, is not sufficient for the task of writing history. Training oneself to read, interpret, and translate sources is a constant endeavor. When first approaching a source, I pay attention to the genre of writing that I am focused upon: is the piece a mo'olelo (history, story), is it a mele (song), or any different number of chant or prayer forms – ko'ihonua (creation, genealogy), kanikau (lament), mele inoa (name song), etc.? Very often I need to familiarize myself with a particular genre by locating other productions or compositions similar to the one I am studying. Through a process of comparison, I am able to apprehend the conventions of any given genre. Once I feel comfortable identifying some of these conventions, I go back to the source I was looking at to see if the composer or writer has followed any of these conventions, if the piece is highly innovative, and to what extent it plays with or seems to violate these conventions. These are standard literary techniques employed by scholars who interpret texts.

After paying attention to genre, I isolate words and rhetorical or idiomatic phrases that seem specific to the literary form. Here is where my practice considers the Hawaiian cultural particulars governing a text. If the piece is a kanikau (lament), I expect to see certain kinds of imagery, somewhat standard allusions: the enumeration of wind, rain, and place names, or embodiments of grief – in the bowed limbs of a tree sodden after a heavy rain, for example. Chants and prayers to certain deities, like Pele the akua wahine (goddess) of the volcano, employ particular sets of words

descriptive of her connection to home places, the ‘geography’ of the volcano and her volatile temper and loves.<sup>13</sup> Some pieces of writing relevant to my work participate in the ever expanding nineteenth-century public sphere, authors’ contributions to political and genealogical debates, diplomacy, law, economic discussions, and trade. Writers of these subjects employed particular sets of words, phrases, and modes of idiomatic expression that are fixed, but that repeated with variation over time. They also experimented with and engaged British and American literary conventions of the time. Linguistic facility is simply the baseline necessary to begin my work: cultural literacy or rather cultural frames of vision and interpretation need to be constantly honed if the end result is to be a rich contribution to our knowledge of worlds past.

In order to increase my facility to interpret sources, I isolate phrases and words that stand out in the piece I am studying. I train my ear to listen for these words and phrases, as a means to understanding the weight, gravity and import of words people used to describe or communicate any given situation. Instead of using these sources to understand how Hawaiians thought in the moment, I seek literacy in Hawaiian modes of thought and action in order to better engage my sources. To facilitate this process, I search the online Hawaiian-language newspaper database to locate the word or phrase as it has been deployed in other written texts, as a way to gauge the range of meanings words and phrases carry and how they resonate in relation to others. Importantly, these include oral traditions that have subsequently been published or written down. In addition to understanding speech acts or writing in the context out of which they were produced, I try to locate the important word or phrases in other ‘texts’, manuscript or published sources that precede or are subsequent in time to the source with which I am working. After amassing a number of examples, I try to figure out when a word, phrase or concept has been introduced into Hawaiian discourse. Note that this information does not simply refer to publication date, since many times writers are recording spoken transactions that occurred years if not generations before. These spoken transactions differ from summaries or reconstructed descriptions and are often preceded by aural/oral mnemonic cues that point to a history or story being passed down *mai loko mai o ka waha* (from mouth to mouth).<sup>14</sup> Common cues I have identified are ‘wahi a’ (according to), and ‘ua ‘ōlelo ‘ia’ (it was said). Paying close attention to seemingly innocuous phrases like these can also help us avoid the mistake of conflating multiple oral ‘texts’ or traditions into a single source.

This process enables me to perceive a larger conversation, in a way that Hawaiian intellectuals participating in an oral tradition would have *heard* it. For these intellectuals were responsible for maintaining oral traditions from the deep past and their own presents drawing upon their historically trained memories as a repository from which they could provide important information on demand, advice to *ali‘i* for example, based on past utterance and present sense. At times they were called upon to craft ‘new’ traditions in the form of *mele* (songs), *oli* (chant, prayer), and *mo‘olelo* (history, story.)

work of Anton Treuer, Heidi Bohaker, and Jessie Little Doe Baird.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> See ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Huliha in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ Literature (1860–1928)”, PhD Thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> More discussion needs to occur in order to better understand the pedagogical discipline that went into training the Hawaiian aural/oral intellect. See Mary Kawena Pukui, “How Legends Were Taught” (Honolulu: HEN Ethnographic Notes 1602-1606. Nd. Bishop Museum Archives).

---

<sup>15</sup> See also Arista, “Histories of Unequal Measure: Euro-American Encounters With Hawaiian Governance and Law, 1796–1827”, PhD thesis (Waltham, Brandeis University, 2010) and “Navigating Uncharted Oceans”.

The ‘proofs’ or models for this method of reading and hearing that I am developing come from multiple sources.<sup>15</sup> As an active chanter for Nā Wa‘a Lālani Kahuna o Pu‘ukohola from 1998 to 2004, I had been tasked with the responsibility of introducing groups presenting ho‘okupu (offerings and gifts) before the ali‘i at yearly Ho‘oku‘ikahi ceremonies. The process required me to accept a group’s descriptive kāhea (call) to enter and come before the assembled kāhuna (priests) and ali‘i (chiefs). Their chant included information about where a group came from in poetic terms that often included genealogical information, and wind, rain, and place names – all important terms of connection between a particular place and group of people. In my chanted response, only if I paid close attention to what was being said to me in the kāhea would I be able to produce an artful and intelligent reply drawing upon important key names, words, and poetic allusions that stood out in the original chant. From that information, I was expected to haku (compose) an equally eloquent chant introducing the group, along with their gift to the ali‘i. This chant would link places, people, families, and gods, drawing upon the information presented to me, but was expected to be interspersed with poetic flourishes featuring linked phrases of related significance. This activity cultivates an ability to isolate words, immediately identify their significance in a web of relation to places, important ritual allusions, and genealogy. This practice presupposed a lot of previous knowledge in literature, religion, genealogy, and place, and in the year between ceremonies, chanters would practice and study in order to be ready for next year’s event. Historically, stacking the incidents of usage of a key word or word phrase sheds light upon the broadest and narrowest ways in which a word was employed. By stacking usage in this way, I not only come to an understanding of the different meanings and valences which adhere to a given word, but I am now empowered to start mapping out a web of associated meanings in which the word or phrase is embedded and lives. A simple example of this can be expressed if we consider the word wai and a portion of its web of meaning. The word wai means fresh water, and not surprisingly is also symbolic of health and life. The Hawaiian word for wealth is a reduplication of the word, waiwai, and so if I were to consider the ways in which the word was deployed in discussions regulating access to water, or kānāwai, as opposed to its application in terms of monetary or property rights, we would have some idea of the way in which usage in various discourses can tell us something about the particular meanings of a term or concept and its deeper significances in political and economic discussions.

The meanings of any words and word phrases are constructed by their relation to one another and to other words that orbit this web. Words in Hawaiian share resonance with other words. It is this associative way of constructing thought through the power of words that has inspired my methodology on writing Hawaiian history, and the history of encounter in particular. This approach to understanding language helps me to interpret the verbal and written Hawaiian exchanges between Hawaiians, and between Hawaiians and foreigners, in a very new way. Words can no longer be taken at face value. This process allows me to keep building cultural

---

history over time, by tracking the changes in fields of meaning over time. A new project undertaken by Harvard University and Google allows scholars to track the appearance of a word in works digitized on Google Books in English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese. With this program researchers can see the passages in books in which a word appears demarcated by time period; the program also tracks changes in usage over time providing a visual representation of how often any given word appears in print. Historians using this information can hypothesize about the different causes of a word's popularity. For example, it is no surprise that the word 'Hawai'i' skyrockets in popularity in English publications during WWII and shortly thereafter. Hawaiian scholars like me are left to catalog these incidents using their own range of reading and cataloging as a baseline.

I undertake this training because if a researcher is not able to confidently evaluate the words and actions of the Hawaiian actors in any history, then she cannot write an accurate history. If I am missing an apparatus to interpret, for example, what constitutes authority and power (mana), or how Hawaiians consulted mo'olelo of historical events or evoked past utterances as a means to gain insight into resolving difficulties in their present, then how indeed can I know how to tell the story? What will I use for the basis of what constitutes logical action for the historical actors I am seeking to understand?<sup>16</sup> These questions should spur thought-provoking discussions about how scholars proceed to write histories of encounter, colonization and imperialism.

My method of understanding sources is premised on an important idea, that Hawaiians had their own history and constructions of the Hawaiian past. It seems impossible to write about Hawaiian history without acknowledging this simple idea: that the Hawaiian actors in any history compared themselves and their own actions in relation to and in accordance with their own sense of history and their place in it. This is a simple idea that I think many historians overlook when writing native history, often imposing an a-historic logic upon a past alien to them. How can the actions and words of Hawaiians be understood if these are separated from Hawaiian formulations of the past? Hawaiians acted and spoke in ways that were consonant with their own sense(s) of history, which completely diverged from Euro-American visions of history or the world at the time.

I have lately applied this thinking and my approach to words and tracking usage to historical contexts.<sup>17</sup> Meaning is also constructed to some extent from the (historical) contexts in which a word phrase or utterance appears or is often evoked. But what I want to draw attention to here is the way that I go about understanding a phrase or word by excavating the historical context in which it is spoken or deployed.

A quick example of this can be found if we consider the famous 'olelo no'eau (proverb),

I ka 'olelo nō ke ola, i ka 'olelo nō ka make  
In speech there is life, in speech there is death.

<sup>16</sup> Logic is inclusive of not just a thinking process, but also worldview, religious practice, ritual and belief, and a number of other discrete ontological Western categories that are not commensurable in Hawaiian whose parameters are just beginning to be rediscovered.

<sup>17</sup> In "Histories of Unequal Measure", I reconsider an 1825 kapu (ban) on women going to ships for prostitution by locating historical moments when kapu were applied to a woman's or women's bodies. Most historiography dismisses the kapu as missionary imposition, rather than legitimate Hawaiian religio-legal construct.



---

Although I have not conducted a full search of historical incidents where this proverb has been evoked, of the examples that turned up, one was an important trace of the Hawaiian phrase in English as used by American Board missionary Rev. William Richards before an ‘Aha‘ōlelo (chiefly council). In my essay, “Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning: *Kaona* as Interpretive and Historical Method”, I provide a fuller analysis of this episode and its context. Here, however, I am interested in describing how this find made me further investigate the multiple and diverse applications of what has become stabilized as ‘proverb’ in Hawaiian language discourse. Richards’ proper evocation of the phrase before this council, undoubtedly in Hawaiian, was deployed as an ingenious means of defense. In 1827, Richards met with the chiefs to answer questions about a charge of libel brought against him by the English Consul in the islands. The chiefs were split as to whether or not Rev. Richards should be turned over to the Consul who demanded that Richards be tried by the English. One chiefly faction believed strongly that this was an affair that should be settled between foreigners, and that the council should take no part in it.

Gauging that these chiefs might gain the upper hand, Rev. Richards sought to place himself under the protection of the chiefs sympathetic to him by claiming that he was not a foreigner, but instead their subject.

It is for you to deliver us over to such hands as you see proper, for you are our chiefs. We have left our own country and can not now receive the protection of its laws .... If I am a bad man or have broken the laws of your country, it is for you to try, and acquit or condemn me – you alone are my judges – it is for you to send me from your shores, or protect me here. *With you is my life, and with you my death.* The whole is with you.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> William Richards to Jeremiah Evarts, 6 December 1827, (ABCFM–Hawai‘i Papers), emphasis is my own.

Here Richards clearly refers to what has become one of the best known Hawaiian proverbs, both at home and internationally. Today, this proverb is interpreted in many different ways and is generally applied to individuals, suggesting that one’s good words will produce good results, whereas words of negative connotation can cause the speaker or others, or some activity connected to that speech, to come to bad ends. The phrase has also been used to valorize the efforts of teachers and students teaching, learning and speaking Hawaiian, and to respect the mana (power, authority) of Hawaiian language by fostering its longevity.

But Rev. Richards’ application of this phrase to his own person, “with you is my life, and with you is my death”, suggests a deeper meaning, one that has historical traction and gives us insight into *whose* words when spoken meant life or death. Richards’ use of the proverb in this context before the ‘aha‘ōlelo illuminates the companion phrase that is implicit and need not be spoken. (Aia) I kā ‘oukou ‘ōlelo nō ku‘u ola, (Aia) I kā ‘oukou ‘ōlelo nō ku‘u make: Everything, my life, depends upon your words, the words of the ali‘i. Richards’ ingenious use of one part of the proverb, undoubtedly triggered his chiefly judges to complete the phrase.

I use these literary and exegetical techniques to interpret documentary sources that are reporting what people said and thought. These techniques also raise to the

---

fore the cultural power of language, since the way to know that a statement or utterance has historical gravitas depends in large part not only upon whose mouth it comes out of, but also if the person is able to speak in a way that is received as culturally and politically authoritative speech. It is no wonder then that Richards, who had been in the islands for a mere five years when he spoke these important words before the ‘Aha, eventually resigned from the mission and contributed in important ways to the formation of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Stumbling upon this phrase *in English* in a mission report was a find I did not expect.<sup>19</sup> It assisted me in confirming a theory of mine, that the phrase has primarily a religio-legal basis, and that it could be applied directly to the speech acts and judgment of ali‘i in an official capacity in the institution of the ‘aha‘ōlelo. In early western historiography the idea that a chief could have the power of life or death over the people has often been deployed to denounce Hawaiian forms of political power and governance. American missionaries, as the first such historians, employed this argument regularly to belittle chiefly power, condemning it as tyrannical. But as Rev. Richards’ situation illustrates chiefly power could be mediated by the voices and council of *other chiefs* in the ‘aha‘ōlelo. The proverb we have freighted with cultural meaning in the twentyfirst century had a previous life as warning and bore vital information for our ancestors, information that many people today have no knowledge of. The ali‘i had the power of life or death over the people through their words, but words also included prayer, chant, commands, decisions, findings, and judgments. These pronouncements occurred in specific contexts and rarely stemmed from mere whim or impulse. Richards’ situation gives us a rare glimpse of what transpired in the meetings of an early nineteenth century ‘aha‘ōlelo, and this knowledge leads me to seek out other official and officious places where chiefs were likely to make pronouncements of such gravity: religious ceremonies in the heiau (temple), diplomatic meetings of different Hawaiian chiefly groups, and between foreigners and chiefs. What information this seeking will yield derives directly from my method of stacking usage, building webs of meaning and resonance that extend to the comparison of historical contexts in which words and word phrases were evoked.

The topic of sovereignty and its relationship to history is important, and I would argue that a sovereign sense of history would be one that pursues inquiry in all manner of sources in Hawaiian *and* English. For too many years, Hawaiian-language sources have been ignored by historians, while in Hawai‘i a backlash against the use of English-language sources and the writings of American missionaries in particular is currently in vogue. Hawaiians did not live their lives isolated or cut off from the outside world; beginning in the late eighteenth century, the worlds people lived in, they built together: native and foreigners of different class, ethnicity, and nationality.

I hope that I have illustrated the necessity for historians and students of history to cultivate their skill in the reading and interpretation of Hawaiian-language sources. The question of sovereignty is one of confidence, mastery, intelligence and power,

<sup>19</sup> I work comfortably with both English and Hawaiian-language sources, and in writing my dissertation, I used this technique to listen for important ideas and phrases that resonated with the histories of the American missionaries. Thus, I search not only for eye- but ‘ear’-witnesses to historical events.

---

and I believe that developing our own methods premised upon past and present practice is one step in that direction. I have not sought after a historical method that runs along this pathway well-trodden by our ancestors out of a need to make a superior claim to cultural authenticity, but for its obvious suitability to the modes of thought and inquiry that shaped the very sources that I must use as the basis for writing any Hawaiian history, or histories of encounter and imperialism. In writing good history we will discover the lives of our kūpuna: *I ka mo'olelo nō ke ola. In history there is life.*

Saving the Nation

There is so much work left –

A century after the Overthrow, Annexation

Five decades since statehood

A quarter century since OHA was established

20 years since Waihe‘e led the State

15 years since the Apology Bill

and Kaho‘olawe’s return –

And we’re still waiting to see what Akaka can do for us.

I sit at my desk in Kuykendall, the cloud-draped shoulders of ‘Aka‘aka ma uka

hidden by foreign foliage and concrete

Another set of papers graded

Another class of haumāna Hawai‘i struggling

To pay bills, pass classes, honor mo‘okū‘auhau, understand the words, the deeds  
of our mythic ancestors,

practices of our ancient culture

decipher the kaona’ed nuances of mo‘olelo, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i

survive in a globalized economy

So much work left to save the nation –

300 years since Kamehameha

150 since Lili‘uokalani

Kūhiō, Wilcox, Nāwahī

50 since John Dominis Holt began writing

40 since Hōkūle‘a was dreamed to sail

30 since Eddie was lost

25 since George and Kimo were taken

15 since Haunani-Kay awoke the nation, proclaiming,

“We are NOT American, we will DIE as Hawaiians, we will NEVER be American!”

And we are still waiting – can Akaka do anything to help us?

Where are the leaders of our next generation?

Will we be defeated by American colonialism?

Justin Bieber? Jamba Juice? Quiksilver? Apple?

Who will remember the stories of Pele, Lono, Ka‘ahupāhau

Who will remember the chants of Hi‘iaka, Kumulipo, Kalapana

Who will remember the heroes Māui, ‘Umiāloa, Kaluaiko‘olau

Who will mālama the lo‘i

Who will practice our arts

Who will speak our ‘ōlelo

Who will heal the sick

Who will fight for justice?

---

They blog it, tweet it, text it, march it through the streets of Waikīkī,  
chant it, sing it, strum it, dance it, whispers clicking and humming, swirling through  
cyberspace, carried on the Kaiāulu  
winds –

*We will, kumu*

*We will, māka*

*‘Ae, no kākou e nā kūpuna*

*No kākou e nā ‘aumākua*

*No kākou, no kākou, no kākou*

## Mana Wahine: Feminism and Nationalism in Hawaiian Literature

### ‘Ōlelo Mua (Introduction)

#### Mana Wahine

She is your Grandmother  
My mother’s Aunt  
Your neighbor’s Tūtū lady  
Our Kūpuna

#### Mana Wahine

Her eyes mirror  
A lifetime of struggle  
A language fading  
A culture diminishing

#### Mana Wahine

She loves and shelters  
Placing her hopes in her children  
They will perpetuate a culture by learning  
They will perpetuate a race by surviving.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Moana Kaho‘ohanohano, “Mana Wahine”, *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 1 (Honolulu: Kuleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 1998), 110.

<sup>2</sup> The terms Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, Kanaka, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi and Kanaka Maoli are all synonymous and will be used interchangeably throughout this essay. Collectively they refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i.

<sup>3</sup> Mo‘okū‘auhau can include a genealogical connection to the land as well as to other people.

<sup>4</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Women’s *Mana* and Hawaiian Sovereignty”, in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 121–122.

<sup>5</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Hulihiia in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ Literature (1860–1928)”, PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i, 2007), 392.

From the ancient past to the present, Native Hawaiian<sup>2</sup> literature has highlighted particular themes important to Hawaiian culture, such as aloha ‘āina (nationalism) and mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy).<sup>3</sup> This is not an arbitrary pairing in Hawaiian tradition, as land is female and all living things are born from her. Hawaiian nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask points out that, “Our mother is our land, *Papa-bānau-moku* – she who births the islands. This means that Hawaiian women leaders are genealogically empowered to lead the nation”.<sup>4</sup> Such an intrinsic relationship with the ‘āina was a goal of Hawaiian nationhood in the past that continues into the present. The integral role of mana wahine (female empowerment) is equally evident, demonstrated within contemporary Hawaiian struggles in multiple ways, including the fight for sovereignty and maintaining control of ancestral lands. Mana wahine is also a key focus of cultural practices, a vital aspect of indigenous drives for sustainability and environmental initiatives. Moreover, it is evident in our production of Hawaiian literature, some of which I explore in this essay.

Mana wahine is a concept that is found throughout Oceania;<sup>5</sup> it is fundamental to indigenous female identity, although it is difficult to translate into English. *Mana* is “power”, usually referring to the spirit or essence of something living; *wahine* is “female”. Thus, the concept of ‘mana wahine’ implies a female-based power, strength, and resilience. It embodies feminist ideas, although this term is problematic,

because mana wahine “predates western concepts of feminism”.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, as Trask has argued, “western ideas of feminism react against, resist or seek equality with patriarchy. Mana wahine does neither”, as native women’s issues differ from haole (white) women’s: our struggle is against colonialism as we fight for self-determination as a people, not a gender.<sup>7</sup>

Within Oceania, mana wahine describes an indigenous, culturally-based understanding of female em/power/ment that is rooted in traditional concepts such as mo‘okū‘auhau, aloha ‘āina and kuleana (responsibility). It is the physical, intellectual and spiritual (or intuitive) power of women.<sup>8</sup> It is individually embodied, but often employs collaborative strategies with other women for the benefit of the ‘ohana (family) or lāhui (nation) where women are the source of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Trask explains that while Hawaiian women seek “collective self-determination ... through and with our own people ... including our men”,<sup>10</sup> mana wahine “asserts that women have our own power that is unique to us [and] can’t be shared with (or appropriated by) men”.<sup>11</sup>

For over a century, the intersection of ‘feminism’ and nationalism as negotiated through mana wahine have been important themes in Kanaka ‘Ōiwi political activism and the literary production that includes the foundational cultural concept of aloha ‘āina. Aloha ‘āina is “an old Kanaka concept based on the family relationship of the people to the land, and on the idea that people actually were born of the material of the land”.<sup>12</sup> Early-twentieth-century scholar Mary Kawena Pukui wrote that there were “many sayings (perhaps thousands) illustrating [such] deep love of the land”.<sup>13</sup> In the onslaught of colonialism, during the second half of the nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, aloha ‘āina developed “as a discourse of resistance ... a particularly Kanaka style of defensive nationalism” as Kānaka ‘Ōiwi struggled against Hawai‘i’s annexation to the United States.<sup>14</sup>

From that time to this, a substantial number of ‘Ōiwi Wahine (Hawaiian women) remain in the vanguard of Hawaiian politics and literature. Powerful voices for Hawaiian nationalism, from Queen Lili‘uokalani in the nineteenth century to Haunani-Kay Trask in this one, have kept issues of Hawaiian feminism and nationalism at the forefront of the Hawaiian quest to regain our political and cultural sovereignty, suggesting that it is not merely coincidental that these (as well as other) staunchly political and ‘mana-full’ Hawaiian women are also accomplished writers.

## Mana Wahine in a Literary Context

In the modern struggle for Hawaiian self determination, the proliferation of Hawaiian literature by Wahine ‘Ōiwi within the movement itself, writing about and as mana wahine, is just one manifestation of it, as these themes in our literature and the strength of our women go back mai ka pō mai, from the ancient past, to the present. Mana wahine is highly visible in traditional Hawaiian orature; mo‘olelo (history, stories) of the strength, wisdom, and resilience of Hawaiian goddesses and chiefesses abound – Papahānaumoku, the Earth Mother who birthed land; Haumea, the red earth woman who reincarnated herself over and over, with gods and goddesses born from different

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 392–393.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>10</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Pacific Island Women and White Feminism”, in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 263, 264.

<sup>11</sup> Cit. in ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal”, 392–393.

<sup>12</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel H. Elbert and Mary Kawena Pukui, *Hawaiian Dictionary, revised edition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1986), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 18.



parts of her body; Ka‘ahupāhau, the shark goddess of Pu‘uloa who saved the kama‘āina (natives) of ‘Ewa, O‘ahu from the man-eating sharks of the other islands; Hina‘aimalama, the goddess of the moon, who survived domestic abuse to become a powerful goddess of healing and patroness of women’s art forms, such as kapa (cloth) production; and perhaps the epitome of mana wahine in our traditional literature, the fierce volcano goddess Pele and her beloved younger sister Hi‘iakaikapoliopole, goddess of hula (dance), who was also a powerful healer and representative of the regenerative forest. These are just a few of the myriad of revered mythic women of the past kept alive through the legendary mo‘olelo, hula, oli (chant), and mele (song) composed, remembered, and retold in their honor.

Aside from centering on such powerful female figures who commanded the respect of even the highest male ali‘i (chiefs), a number of women (both chiefly and godly) throughout the mo‘olelo were exceptionally skilled composers, chanters, singers, and hula practitioners.

### The Early Literary Period – Mo‘olelo in the Nineteenth Century

Ka Palapala (reading and writing) was formally introduced to Hawai‘i by American missionaries who arrived in the islands in 1819. By many accounts, Hawaiians eagerly adopted this new technology, resulting in an almost completely literate population by mid-century. Hawaiians were not just eager pupils and readers, they became prolific writers as well. Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writing blossomed in the period from the 1860s–1920s when independent Hawaiian newspapers—over 75 in total—flourished.<sup>15</sup> While the missionary-run papers preferred to publish news and stories from the ‘civilized’ western European-American world beyond Hawai‘i’s shores, the independent newspapers, run and staffed by Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, made generous inclusions of traditional literary genres. Printing the mo‘olelo also fostered intellectual discussions (and sometimes vigorous debates) amongst the native population about their literary heritage and practices, often between the pages of the same newspapers (or of their competitors).

Because Hawaiian names are not gender specific, is it unfortunate that a more accurate count of Wahine ‘Ōiwi writers publishing at this time is not possible. Women, however, did write and publish, and a few were quite well known and respected for their work.

One known writer is Emma Nakuina (1847–1929), a prominent Hawaiian woman of ali‘i status who published several mo‘olelo in English-language newspapers, as well as a collection of stories, *Hawai‘i, Its people, Their Legends* (1904). In 1883, using part of her Hawaiian middle name, Kaili, she published the first English-language version of a Pele and Hi‘iaka mo‘olelo, “Hi‘iaka: A Hawaiian Story by a Hawaiian Native”.<sup>16</sup>

Because kaona (metaphor) is a crucial part of Hawaiian poetic composition, I argue in my own work that publishing the Pele and Hi‘iaka mo‘olelo over and over again was a political act throughout the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth

<sup>15</sup> See Esther T. Mookini, *Hawaiian Newspapers* (Honolulu: Topgallant Press, 1974) and M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> *Pacific Commercial Daily Advertiser*, August 25–October 13, 1883.



---

centuries to sustain Hawaiian nationalism. Through Pele's role as a destroyer and re-creator of 'āina, the extensive literature devoted to her developed a canonized vocabulary, including the huluhia chants. Huluhia means 'overturned'. Within the context of Hawaiian understanding, the volcanic eruptions and lava flows would huli or overturn the established order upon the land: Kāne, Lono, Kū and Kanaloa, male gods of the land and sea, were overcome by the untamable, unstoppable force of nature Hawaiians called Pele, whose name also translates to 'lava'. In the mo'olelo, the huluhia chants are performed in a series near the end, as Pele, consumed by a jealous rage, orders the destruction of her chiefly and mortal lover Lohi'au, and his body is consumed by lava from head to toe until only a pillar of stone remains.

Nakuina's mo'olelo was published a few months after King David La'amea Kalākaua's coronation on 12 February 1883. The king was very unpopular with Americans and other haole, in part because he revived traditional Hawaiian arts, such as hula (which had been banned in the 1830s under missionary influence, although it secretly continued underground); Kalākaua commissioned many hula performances at his coronation, including hula kahiko (ancient hula) dedicated to Pele and Hi'iaka, much to the chagrin and outrage of the haole. Nakuina held appointed positions in Kalākaua's government as the curator of the National Museum and as the national librarian. As a highly educated, respected member of the Hawaiian government with deep knowledge of Hawaiian traditions, Nakuina possessed the cultural expertise to understand how the nationalist intent of publishing "Pele and Hi'iaka" would speak to a Hawaiian audience.

Another notable composition demonstrating strong Hawaiian resistance to the 1893 U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy is Ellen Kekoahewaikalani Wright Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku" (Rock-Eating Song). This composition was alternately referred to as "Mele Aloha 'Āina" (Patriotism Song), although it is more commonly recognized by its first line, "Kaulana nā Pua" (Famous are the Children). This well-known and beloved mele was composed in 1893 as a mele aloha 'āina (patriotic song) demonstrating Kanaka 'Ōiwi sentiment strongly opposed to annexation of Hawai'i by the United States.<sup>17</sup>

The song was first published in 1893 in the Hawaiian newspaper *Ka Leo o ka Labui* under the name "He ohu no ka poe aloha aina" and is signed by "Kekoahewaikalani", Ellen Wright Prendergast's Hawaiian name; it was a popular song of its time, published under several names eight times, including the *Buke Mele Labui* (Hawaiian National Songbook).<sup>18</sup> Over a century since its composition, the mele is still sung, new renditions by Hawaiian artists are still recorded, and it is regularly incorporated into contemporary Hawaiian literature. Suffice it to say, it is an important touchstone for Kānaka 'Ōiwi, an anthem expressing aloha 'āina and mana wahine, which are pointedly intertwined in the image of the overthrown sovereign, Queen Lili'uokalani as demonstrated in the second line, "Kūpa'a mākou ma hope o ka 'āina" (we stand steadfast behind the land), which is reconfigured in the final stanza to "Ma hope mākou o Lili'u[oka]lani" (We are behind Lili'u, the

<sup>17</sup> For additional analysis of this mele, see ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, "He Lei Ho'oheno no nā Kau a Kau: Language, Performance and Form in Hawaiian Poetry", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17 (2005), 29–82; Amy Stillman "'Aloha 'Āina': New Perspectives on 'Kaulana nā Pua'", *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 33 (1999), 83–99.

<sup>18</sup> Leilani Basham, "He Puke Mele Lāhui: Nā Mele Kūpa'a, Nā Mele Kū'e, a me Nā Mele Aloha o Nā Kānaka Maoli", PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 2002), 4–5.

royal one). A hallmark of Hawaiian poetry, the kaona expressed in the mele is aloha ‘āina. Hawaiian ethnomusicologist Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman explains,

Two points are worth underscoring. *Kūpa‘a* expresses a firm, steadfast (*kū-*) bonding (*pa‘a*); *‘āina* is the generic term for land and can be extended to embrace the society residing thereupon. The phrase “*Kūpa‘a ma hope o ka ‘āina*” and its frequent reiteration (and other like sentiments) is an appropriate epitome to explain the expression of defeat in terms of fame, pride, and victory. Such a summation is rooted in the value of *aloha ‘āina*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, “History Reinterpreted in Song: The Case of the Hawaiian Counterrevolution”, *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 23 (1989), 1–30, 17.

The *Buke Mele Lābui* contains other mele aloha ‘āina composed by women. Although none are as well-known today as Prendergast’s “Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku”, they all exhibit the same high level of poetic composition, deep feeling of nationalism and pride, and unwavering support of Lili‘uokalani and Hawaiian sovereignty. “Ka Wohi Kū i ka Moku” (The Ruling Chief of the Island) and “He Inoa no Lili‘ulani” (A name chant for Lili‘uokalani) were composed by Benecia Satana. “Ku‘u Ipo Pua Lalana” (My Sweetheart Flower) was signed only as “Katie”, while “Ku‘u Pua Poni Mō‘ī” (My Crown Flower) was signed only as “Ellen” (perhaps Prendergast?). Annie K. Kaanoioikalani composed “Ho‘oheno no Wilikoki” (Esteemed is Wilcox), a song praising Hawaiian patriot Robert Wilcox, a Hawaiian nationalist who led an armed attempt to restore Hawaiian sovereignty after Lili‘uokalani was overthrown in 1893. The mele begins –

<sup>20</sup> Annie K. Kaanoioikalani, “He Mele no Wilikoki”, in F. J. Testa, ed., *Buke Mele Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2003), 92–93; mahalo to Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada for assistance with the translation and understanding key points of this mele.

Kaulana mai nei a o Wilikoki  
O ke koa wiwoole o ke ao nei  
Ua kohu anela ke ike aku  
I ke ku kilakila i Halealii  
Aohe poka e ku ai  
Aohe akamai e loa aku  
Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu  
I ka waha o ka pu e kani nei  
Noho mai Waipa i ka uahoa  
Opu loko ino he aloha ole  
No Hawaii oe, no Hawaii au  
Hookahi ke kupuna o Kakuhihewa

Wilcox is famous  
The fearless warrior of the world  
Who resembles an angel  
In the majesty of the royal palace  
No bullets can penetrate  
No one is smart enough to capture  
The Hawaiian child who dodges the spray of bullets  
Of the mouth of the gun sounding  
Waipā dwells in indifference  
An evil heart with no compassion  
You [Wilcox] belong to Hawai‘i, as do I  
Kakuhihewa [O‘ahu’s chief] is an ancestor.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>21</sup> In 1893 Kaluaiko‘olau, diagnosed with leprosy, was ordered to Kalawao on the island of Moloka‘i. He refused to go, deciding instead to take his wife and child and live in the remote and rugged Nā Pali region on Kaua‘i. His wife Pi‘ilani eventually published her account of their life in exile.

Wilcox is described as a hero deserving of high praise: he is a fearless warrior (ke koa wiwoole), resembling an angel (kohu anela) who can evade even the dust of the bullets shot at him (alo ehuehu) and is too smart (akamai) for capture by the evil-hearted ones without compassion (Opu loko ino he aloha ole), possibly a reference to the Annexationists or even to Robert Waipa, who did not allow Wilcox into the Palace in 1889 during his first armed insurrection against Kalakaua’s government. The phrase “Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu” is found in other mele ho‘ohanohano (songs of praise) of the time; it is also a reference to hardship in general, a line also found, for example, in mele for Kaluaiko‘olau.<sup>21</sup> The reference to the evil-hearted ones (opu loko ino) is also in Prendergast’s “Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku”. The composer solidifies Wilcox’s right to defend Hawai‘i and places him in a genealogy that binds them to the ‘āina

when she writes, “No Hawai‘i ‘oe, no Hawai‘i au/Ho‘okahi ke kūpuna o Kakuhihewa” (You belong to Hawai‘i as I do, the place of the ancestors of Kakuhihewa, O‘ahu’s famous chief). The chant concludes with this line, “He aloha lāhui ko Wilikoki” (Wilcox has love/respect/compassion for the nation).<sup>22</sup> The aloha expressed by Wilcox for the nation in the concluding line is not taken lightly, as aloha is a core philosophy of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi culture and identity.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 93.

Queen Lili‘uokalani herself is a writer most recognized for her autobiography, *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*, which provides a straightforward account of her fight to reestablish her authority and the Hawaiian government after the illegal overthrow and subsequent annexation of Hawai‘i to the United States. Lili‘uokalani, however, was also an accomplished composer of mele, with over 400 songs, many unpublished, attributed to her.<sup>23</sup> In 1867, she composed a new National Anthem for the Hawaiian kingdom, “Mele Lāhui Hawai‘i” (Hawaiian National Anthem).

<sup>23</sup> A selection of these has been compiled, edited, and translated with notes as *The Queen’s Songbook* (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1999).

Lili‘uokalani also translated the Kumulipo, an important Hawaiian chant detailing the creation of the Hawaiian universe. More than just an exercise in poetic translation, the Kumulipo had a great degree of political importance for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. Composed in the 1700s for the birth of the chief Kalaninui‘iamamao (The great supreme chief from afar), the chant is a ko‘ihonua, a genealogical connection of the chief’s birth back to the beginning of time. Politically, the chant assured his genealogical right to rule over the entire Hawaiian universe. The political significance of the chant was invoked again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lili‘uokalani’s brother, Kalākaua, who commissioned its first written text in 1891. Kalākaua revised the chant to connect his lineage back to Kalaninui‘iamamao, and thus back to the creation of the Hawaiian universe beginning with Pō, night, chaos, darkness, the primordial female element necessary for all creation. Regarding Pō, Hawaiian poet and scholar Brandy Nālani McDougall argues that mana wahine represents “a force that men must never ignore, for in a world where genealogical ranking [means] everything, the first ancestor [Pō, the female night who gives birth to herself] is the most powerful”.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal”, 392.

Lili‘uokalani’s translation of Kumulipo into eloquent, elegant English is perhaps, like Emma Nakuina’s work before her, an attempt to educate haole on the exquisite nature of Hawaiian literature, while evoking highly political and nationalistic texts focused on themes of pono (justice). Such powerful, evocative literary expressions were woven by powerful women who were also powerful leaders.

## Mana Wahine Today: Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Women’s Writing from the Hawaiian Movement Forward, 1960s–2010

Over the past few decades, a number of ‘Ōiwi Wahine writers have continued this genealogy of strong, eloquent female voices of our literary past, as we weave new songs, chants and stories of female empowerment and Hawaiian nationalism, strengthening the literary and political mana of the present by interweaving it with the similar expressions from the past.

---

These voices are particularly poignant, given the theft of Hawaiian sovereignty, the banning of Hawaiian language medium schools and courts of law at the end of the nineteenth century, and the folding of the Hawaiian language newspapers by 1948. A period of literary and artistic silence prevailed in the middle decades of the twentieth century, although our political commitment was never completely eradicated. Hawaiians had suffered a series of debilitating political, cultural, economic, social, and psychological blows, and recovery has been long and incomplete. A robust literary community active in the Hawaiian language for centuries had been effectively trampled upon. But like the hula, which had been banned earlier, Hawaiian literary production never ceased completely.

When Hawaiian writing re-emerged in the 1960s, it was in an altered, but still powerful form. The Hawaiian Movement of the 1960s–1970s dovetailed with the fight for civil and equal rights for women on the national level of U.S. politics. Consequently, the struggle to re-establish and re-invigorate Hawaiian culture and fight for political justice (especially in light of the 1959 vote for Hawai‘i statehood and the bombing of Kaho‘olawe since the 1940s) almost automatically assumed a position of support for women’s rights. Inside the Hawaiian community, however, this aspect of the Hawaiian movement was not inspired by white women’s feminism or their agendas, but by indigenous models of strong female roles and leadership in Hawaiian society from the goddesses of the ancient past to the political and community leadership of the modern era.

Since the 1970s, ‘Ōiwi Wahine writers have established themselves with force, as with elsewhere in Oceania, overtaking the literary production of ‘Ōiwi men by a substantial margin. With the majority of at least two generations of our lāhui cut off from our ancestral language, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writers now compose primarily in English that is sometimes mixed with Hawai‘i Creole English (more commonly known as “Pidgin”) and Hawaiian. Since the re-establishment of Hawaiian-language immersion education in the mid-1980s, more Hawaiians compose exclusively in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language). In all genres and languages used, themes of aloha ‘āina, nationalism, and justice continue, now combined with memory – an evocation of the past. Hawaiian sovereignty may have been overthrown in 1893, but Kānaka ‘Ōiwi of subsequent generations have made it clear that we still stand kūpa‘a ma hope o ka ‘āina – determined and steadfast behind the land; aloha ‘āina and aloha lāhui, love for the land and the Hawaiian nation, is still ever present and at the forefront of our minds and actions, and still expressed in our literature.

An important ‘Ōiwi Wahine writer is internationally recognized nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask, who has published both academic essays (*From a Native Daughter*, 1993) and two collections of poetry (*Light in a Crevice Never Seen*, 1994, and *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, 2002); both her scholarship and poetry have been included in a myriad of other publications in Hawai‘i and internationally. Trask’s work is forceful and unapologetically staunch in its message of mana wahine and aloha ‘āina. There are far too many of Trask’s poems that demonstrate these themes, and

---

her work is worthy of a separate study. However, I'd like to draw attention to a few selected poems that exemplify these themes.

Many of Trask's poems incorporate respected Hawaiian goddesses from whom Kanaka 'Ōiwi women draw inspiration. One example is "Nā Wāhine Noa" (Women Free from Kapu), which refers to "those released from the restrictive Hawaiian system of kapu".<sup>25</sup> The poem names Hina, a goddess of the moon associated with healing, and the primordial female element, Pō, while Pele, the volcano goddess is suggested through the images of "magma bodies" and "flowing volcanoes" –

<sup>25</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, "Notes", *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1994), 53.

Rise up, women gods.  
Have Hina as your goddess  
virgin, volcanic  
unto herself.

Without masters, marriages  
lying parasite men.  
Unto her self:  
a wise eroticism

moon drawn by the tides  
culling love  
from great gestating Pō  
massive night

birthing women's dreams:  
magma bodies  
flowing volcanoes  
toward moonred skies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., "Nā Wāhine Noa", 52.

The poem evokes mana wahine, encouraging modern Kanaka women to be empowered by our female godly ancestors and not be physically or emotionally enslaved by men. In traditional Hawaiian culture, these and other akua wahine were as powerful as the male gods or chiefs, and sometimes even more so. As goddess of the moon and creative arts, Hina breaks free from domestic abuse by her earthly husband to find eternal life and strength as an akua wahine.<sup>27</sup>

Part IV of the poem "Hawai'i" begins with a reference to Pele, "E Pele ē, fire-eater / from Kahiki". It mimics the traditional invocation to the fire goddess found in chants, "E Pele ē", asking for her attention and expressing reverence for the goddess. The poem shifts to referring to Papahānaumoku, the earth mother, and then Hi'iaka, goddess of the forest,

<sup>27</sup> Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1970), 220–221.

Breath of Papa's life  
miraculously becomes  
Energy, stink with

sulfurous sores. Hi'iaka  
wilting in her wild home:  
black *lehua*, shriveled  
*pūkiawe*, unborn 'a'alī'i.

---

Far down her eastern flank  
the gourd of Lono dries  
broken on the temple wall.

Cracked lava stones  
fresh with tears, sprout  
thorny vines, thick  
and foreign.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Trask, “Hawai‘i”, 35–36.

These stanzas describe the response of the ‘āina to the desecration of geothermal development; what was once a flourishing native environment is now in decay due to the vulgar drilling and its effects on the ‘āina, who embodies the gods. Pōhaku, or lava rocks, a kinolau (body form) of the goddess Pele, weep; the pain of the ‘āina literally causes invasive vegetation, a metaphor for colonization, to prosper. That the pōhaku are a central metaphor of Hawaiian identity and connection to ‘āina, so eloquently expressed by Prendergast and other ‘Ōiwi writers of the past, makes the image of the broken lava that much more poignant a symbol of the destructive forces of colonialism and its effects on the ‘āina and lāhui.

The second section of the poem is equally cloaked in kaona, this time referencing the haole invaders as kōlea (golden plover), an image for the Provisional Government (P.G.) also applicable to other foreigners who enriched themselves from Hawaiian resources, and then left, used by Prendergast and other Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writers of her day. Trask writes,

The *kōlea* tilts its way  
through drooping ironwoods  
thickened by the fat  
of our land. It will eat

ravenous, depart rich,  
return magnificent  
in blacks and golds.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 33.

Kōlea are migratory birds that feast on the abundance of the ‘āina in Hawai‘i; their feathers are a mix of black and gold. Here, the allusion is metaphoric to the riches gained by haole kōlea who prosper off Hawaiian ‘āina and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. To be “in the black” is a term used for financial success and health, and gold is also a symbol of wealth and political power.

The poem “Kaulana Nā Pua” directly recalls Prendergast’s nationalist anthem, albeit in a modern, violent context. “Three dark children”, presumably Hawaiian, are at the beach in a scene described in eloquent beauty,

Morning rains  
wash  
the damp sand cool  
and grainy. Over  
the cream of foam, young  
surfers hover, tense  
for the rising glory.



---

Beyond Ka'ena, a horned moon  
drifts, green chatter-chatter  
of coconut leaves  
expectant in the mist.

Into this idyll wanders “A passing tourist / florid in his prints” who “stoops for directions”. One of the children stabs the man in the eye in a rage. The scene is unexpectedly violent and shocking, and the conclusion of the poem confusing to those who don't understand its metaphoric references or Hawai'i's violent, colonial history. The poem ends,

Running over old  
rippled dunes, the children  
sing-song a tune  
out of time, time past

when their tribe  
was a nation  
and their nation, the great  
lava mother, Hawai'i.

Not yet do they know, not yet  
the bitter pity  
of the past, even as they sing it:

*Kaulana nā pua*  
“Famous are the children”,

taking the far curve  
of the beach  
in the bright glare  
of day.

Trask further celebrates the power of Kanaka 'Ōiwi female voices in literature and activism in the poem “Sons”. In response to a grandmother's pride in producing three sons, Trask writes,

I have no sons  
to give, no line of  
immortality.

I am slyly  
reproductive: ideas  
books, history  
politics, reproducing

the rope of resistance  
for unborn generations

But sons are not  
so earthbound. They soar  
beyond, somewhere

---

with a woman's trust  
in their fists.

And I,  
I stay behind  
weaving fine baskets  
of resilience

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., "Sons", 56–57.

to carry our daughters in.<sup>30</sup>

The basket metaphor alludes to community activism, which often carries familial ties and *kuleana* as well. This familial tie is demonstrated in the poem "Sisters", which Trask dedicates to her sister Mililani, a well-known sovereignty advocate and Hawaiian nationalist. The poem criticizes *haole* development and destruction of Hawaiian 'āina and people, while uplifting the women who fight against it,

III.  
destruction as a way  
of life cleaver  
*haole* culture  
killing as it goes

"no stone  
left unturned"  
no people  
left untouched

IV.  
in every native  
place a pair  
of sisters  
driven by the sound  
of doves  
the color of morning  
defending life

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., "Sisters", 59.

with the spear of memory.<sup>31</sup>

These stanzas juxtapose the devastating, machine-like effects of colonialism with the *nearly* defenseless indigenous presence. The "pair of sisters" linked to the image of the doves evoke a sense of community and peace, while the vivid "color of morning" elicits hope in the image of the sun rising at dawn. While the "native places" may not have the same kind of destructive weaponry as the "*haole* culture" that separates the people from the land, simultaneously destroying both, there is a spirit of resistance in the power of memory and the words and stories of the ancestors.

Other 'Ōiwi Wahine writers of this period use their poetry to "defend life with the spear of memory", including Dana Naone Hall, Ho'oiipo DeCambra, Tamara Wong Morrison, Cecelia Kapua Lindo, Coochie Cayan, Mahealani Kamau'u (now Perez Wendt) and Puanani Burgess. Most of these women began publishing in the 1970s and 1980s, and many are still vibrant community leaders today.



Burgess's poem "Choosing My Name" is another good example of 'Ōiwi Wahine poetry that uses the image of spear and memory to uphold and defend Hawaiian identity and connection to land. In this poem, Burgess juxtaposes her three names – Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani, each embodying a part of her ethnic identity that carries real world consequences. In the poem, she tells us that Christabelle is her "real" name provided on identifying documents, Yoshie is her "home name" used by her Japanese family to remind them she did, indeed, belong to that side of the family, while Puanani, her Hawaiian name, is the name she chooses to identify herself, because it is her "piko [centering] name" that connects her "to the 'āina / and the kai [sea] and the po'e kahiko [ancient Hawaiians] – / my blessing; my burden / my amulet; my spear".<sup>32</sup>

The balance of contrasting images (land and sea, present and past) of nature and time are a hallmark of Hawaiian identity and poetic expression. Moreover, the contrast between her chosen name being both a blessing and a burden, an amulet and a spear, speaks to the problematic split of contemporary 'Ōiwi identity: the poet is caught between the positive cultural identification of her choice (blessing, amulet), and the negative effects of colonialism, by which Hawaiian language and identity – expressed through the political act of choosing to identify as Hawaiian – are turned into a burden many Hawaiians are made to feel.<sup>33</sup> Yet despite the weight of colonialism, Burgess is resilient and encouraged by her choice to also connect to the 'āina and the kūpuna, and she uses her name as a spear to defend her choice of identifying with her ethnic heritage. Symbolically, by exercising her right to choose, Burgess refuses to succumb to the pressures of colonialism that seek to homogenize Kānaka 'Ōiwi and transform them into multicultural Americans, effectively separating us from the lāhui and our ancestral lands. It is through remembering, reclaiming, and defending her cultural rights to self-identify as Hawaiian that Burgess asserts both mana wahine and aloha 'āina.

As the founder of *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, award-winning poet and essayist D. Māhealani Dudoit holds a special distinction amongst our contemporary 'Ōiwi Wahine writers. The first and only journal dedicated to the publication of Native Hawaiian writers and artists and fully staffed by a Kanaka 'Ōiwi editorial and production team since its inception in 1998, *'Ōiwi* has provided an important venue of literary and artistic expression for Kanaka 'Ōiwi writers and artists. Working in publishing, Māhealani was frustrated by the lack of access Hawaiian writers had to established literary publications; she knew that non-Hawaiian editors and publishers did not necessarily understand or value Kanaka 'Ōiwi cultural expression or literary aesthetics, resulting in Hawaiian writers being consistently shut out of publishing opportunities. Now in its tenth year and fourth issue, *'Ōiwi* has showcased some established writers like Trask and Perez Wendt, but more often than not has enabled many new voices – a considerable number of them, female – to be heard. At this time, *'Ōiwi* has published over 200 writers, 112 of whom are women; of these, only 30 had previously been published, significantly adding to the depth and breadth of Hawaiian women's literary and artistic voices being heard.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Puanani Burgess, "Choosing My Name", in Joe Balaz, ed., *Ho'omānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kūpa'a Press, 1989), 40.

<sup>33</sup> Larry Kauanoe Kimura's landmark essay on Hawaiian language and culture, "Native Hawaiian Culture", in *Native Hawaiian Study Commission Report* (Government Printing Office, 1985), provides an excellent analysis of this problem.

<sup>34</sup> For more information on the journal, visit their website: <<http://www.hawaii.edu/oiiwi>>.

---

Since its founding, *‘Ōiwi* has featured poetry, prose, essays, artwork, and testimonies by *‘Ōiwi* Wahine writers from the nineteenth century to the present, many of whom strongly express mana wahine and aloha ‘āina in their work, including the youngest emerging writers, such as Sherri Keahi Lee and Jamaica Heolimele Osorio.

Lee’s poem “Kū‘ē/‘Īlio‘ulaokalani” (Resist/Red Dog of the Heavens) refers to a contemporary event, a 2009 protest march through the streets of Waikīkī – Hawai‘i’s premier tourist destination, symbol of U.S. oppression and capitalism, and former lands and home of many Hawaiian ali‘i – to protest Governor Linda Lingle’s proposed sale of Ceded Lands. ‘Īlio‘ulaokalani is a culturally-based political organization dedicated to raising the cultural and political consciousness of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and others.<sup>35</sup> It is named for a chant from Pele and Hi‘iaka, in which Hi‘iaka, facing dangerous opposition in her travels, chants to the guardian ‘dog’ clouds of the heavens, who are her ancestors. ‘Īlio‘ulaokalani is the red guardian dog cloud; thus, the color red, a symbol of blood and Hawaiian royalty, is evoked in multiple ways throughout the poem.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on ‘Īlio‘ulaokalani, visit their website: <<http://www.ilioulaokalani.org>>.

The poem references many important Hawaiian cultural traditions, stories, and historic figures and events. From an American point of view, the taking of Hawai‘i was complete in 1898, but Lee begins, “Even now the kama‘āina are assembling / Turning the streets blood red”, indicating that Kānaka ‘Ōiwi have never ceased our protest of this illegal action. While native unrest is clear, “The haoles / Sleep in their beach-front hotels, / the lo‘i having been / Covered, with a blanket of little white lies”. Waikīkī, once noted for its bubbling, fresh water streams and acres of lush lo‘i (taro gardens) have been metaphorically covered by the lies perpetuated after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian government, while physically being drained and covered over by multinational hotels.

Yet despite such visible, purposeful destruction, “Hāloa, our kaikua‘ana / the kalo, remembers”. Like Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writers before her, Lee evokes the spear of memory to protest American colonization and reengage with the ‘āina by evoking our mythical ancestor, Hāloa (“Long Breath”), the first kalo (taro) plant. Moreover, the kalo, “like our spirits / ...are bruised, / but not broken”. Rather,

We stand strong together,  
In the face  
of legislation that intends to criminalize and “regulate” the practicing of our culture  
in the face  
of this foreign ideal of capitalism  
In the face  
of what the haole people are calling “progress”  
And in the face  
of U.S.  
Occupation  
militarization  
and colonization

---

We stand STRONG and TOGETHER!

The collective self-determination expressed in this section of Lee's poem then calls upon the image of Hawaiian akua wahine through the symbol of the full Māhealani moon, and Hawaiian ali'i through the reference to the Queen (Lili'uokalani),

for a Māhealani moon  
is rising:  
This is the mana  
Of a people oppressed  
Of a Queen betrayed  
Of a prophecy  
soon to be fulfilled  
And nā pua  
Bold, many, chanting  
I kū mau mau  
I kū wā  
A time of change is upon us:  
The 'āweoweo have returned.<sup>36</sup>

The poem is accompanied by a collage of images from Hawaiian history and the protest rally, set on the background image of a red fish, or 'āweoweo. Dreams of 'āweoweo or the sight of large schools of them are viewed by Kānaka 'Ōiwi as hō'ailona (signs/symbols) portending an important event. Marchers at this event were encouraged to wear red, to symbolize the color of blood; it is also a color that represents Hawaiian royalty, who were typically adorned in capes and other accessories made from scarce and thus precious red or yellow feathers of selected native forest birds.

A nationally-acclaimed spoken word poet, Osorio's poem "Kaulana nā Pua a'o Hawai'i" directly references Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku". In 2008, she presented the poem as part of a national slam-poetry event, performing this piece at the White House before an audience including President Barack Obama. In her introduction to the poem, Osorio eloquently discusses her thought process in composing it:

Even though I have only been writing ... for [a few] years, in my heart I have known these words for much longer – this protest, this 'eha [pain]. This pain is something we Hawaiians carry in our koko [blood]. My writing is a process of remembering that mana that we all carry. Those of us who write and sing are in many ways unconsciously re-membering what of our culture that has once been dismembered. These are the stories we carry in our iwi [bones]. As long as we keep singing, fighting, marching, chanting, Lili'uokalani will live with every word she carried in her mana. I write to keep my queen alive, I write to keep my father alive. I write, because I have been told so many times that I cannot, that my writing will not change the past because we must look forward; but in honoring our past we are looking forward, we are changing the world, one poem at a time .... There is much I still

<sup>36</sup> Sherri Keahi Lee, "Kū'ē/ 'Īlio'ulaokalani", *Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 4 (2009), 159, 162–163.

---

do not know, so much more I can learn from my father, and the people who have taught him, I look forward to that journey but in the meantime I will continue the journey that has already begun within me, hoping that somehow it leads me to justice. We are generations past nā po'e 'ai pōhaku, and yet, here I stand with stones in my mouth, tears upon my cheeks, and a fight in my heart that will not and cannot die until I do.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, "Kaulana nā Pua a'o Hawai'i", *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 4 (2009), 301.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

The poem describes the events of the overthrow and Prendergast's composition as "a song to liberate a community".<sup>38</sup> Subsequent stanzas link this traumatizing event to those of annexation in 1898, describing the impact of the event on a "newly slaughtered country", and then to statehood in 1959, bluntly stating that at this time, "no one is singing". She reflects back on the overthrow of January 17, 1893, from January 17, 2008, commenting on the violent effects of American colonialism on Kānaka 'Ōiwi, beginning with the loss of historical memory, as "Hawaiians forgot to fight". As it points to generations of Hawaiians enduring suppression and abuse, the poem is dark in its realistic, unromanticized portrayal of the loss of Hawaiian sovereignty for Kānaka 'Ōiwi. Yet, like generations of Hawaiian writers before her, Osorio forcefully states that, "Mana cannot be created or destroyed by man / So that must mean we still stand a chance / But we need to honor what's been left ...to fight back". The concluding stanzas of the poem express Osorio's resolute determination to honor the past and fight back, presenting a rousing, encouraging call to action for the lāhui today:

So I may have lost sight in the tears my ancestors once cried  
But I'll show you my pride  
Tattoo my mo'okū'auhau to my tongue to never forget where my voice came from  
Who my loyalty is tied to  
And what nation my heart sings to  
I'll sing to you  
I'll chant continuously to show you that I am Hawaiian  
I have the scars and tattoos to show my alliance

Because the second I start worshiping the red white and blue  
Pledging allegiance to a nation that turn our eyes red  
People white  
And hearts blue  
Is the second I know the fight is through

And in 1893 we stood and promised to back Lili'ulani  
Daring to call ourselves the famous flowers of the land we weren't even willing to protect  
We promised to stand hand in hand fighting  
And here I stand  
At the palace  
'Iolani  
Screaming this song  
And no one is listening  
Here I stand holding the hands of ancestors trying to find voices  
But what's a voice when no one is listening  
What's a song worth  
That it can overthrow opinions  
When no one is singing?

---

You should be ashamed of yourself  
Because We should be singing  
And when you finally feel like joining me  
I will be here  
Waiting  
But not idly  
I will be singing

*Ma hope mākou o Lili'ulani*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 301–302.

Osorio's poem is a fiery proclamation of aloha 'āina and mana wahine, a demonstration of the loyalty to 'āina, identity, and nationhood still felt by Kānaka 'Ōiwi today. The poem ends with a line from Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku", showing Hawaiian determination to continue our fight for our nation, and our loyal dedication to our beloved Queen, symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty. Like human mo'okū'auhau that genealogically tie kānaka today with our ancestors of the past, Kānaka 'Ōiwi writing demonstrates its own literary mo'okū'auhau, intentionally referencing, remembering, and evoking both the sentiments expressed in past writing, and the collective desire for self-determination spanning political and literary expressions of the lāhui.

### Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana (Conclusion)

*Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana* is a common ending of Hawaiian mele that means, 'and thus the story is told'. Hawaiian literary expression has continued orally and in print for thousands of years, and it has always included female voices, singing songs of female empowerment and of love for our 'āina, our land, and our nation. In *Chanting the Universe*, Religion professor John Charlot writes that,

The fact that poetry has been used frequently for important occasions and purposes suggests that it has a utility thus far overlooked by historians ... Indeed ... poetry was felt ... to be the most congenial form for the expression of feelings and philosophy. Only by achieving some appreciation of that poetry ... will we be able to understand the concerns and coherence of certain Hawaiian policies and tendencies.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> John Charlot, *The Hawaiian Poetry of Religion and Politics: Some Religio-Political Concepts in Postcontact Literature* (Lā'ie: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1985), 29.

It is not surprising that the majority of 'Ōiwi Wahine writers today are also highly active political and cultural activists who are typically involved in a number and variety of groups, organizations and activities. While African American writer Toni Morrison tells us that "all art is political", it seems the extension of this thought is that all artists are politically active in the causes we passionately support. For 'Ōiwi Wahine, this typically revolves not around women's rights and issues, but around community activism, sovereignty, and our 'āina, utilizing mana wahine as a culturally and politically appropriate way of engaging these issues.

Furthermore, many themes in our traditional literature carry over into our contemporary writing. All reach back and connect us as Kānaka Hawai'i with Papahānaumoku, our Earth Mother and 'āina, solidifying our relationship with

---

her. Hawaiian literature is filled with images of powerful, mana-filled females who have the ability to destroy men, trample, traverse, or destroy their territories (and take their lives) without fear of retribution, and who command their respect. As literature reflects cultural values and social practice, the strong female characters and themes of mana wahine in our traditional and contemporary literature demonstrate a value of women and women's mana that the highly sexist white male-dominated colonizers of the nineteenth century found dangerous, difficult to control, and ultimately, worked hard to destroy. Today, 'Ōiwi Wahine lead the fight for sovereignty, to regain political control over our land base and self-determination for our people; lead the fight against crime, poverty, and drug abuse, for better housing and education; and lead us in our artistic and literary production. It is our kuleana, our responsibility as the carriers and bearers of our nation, our future generations, as the descendants of our ancestral earth mother to cherish and protect our rich cultural legacy – our ancestral home, our traditions, our heritage. In this way, we mālama (care for) our men – our grandfathers, fathers, uncles, cousins, sons, nephews, and grandsons, as well as our own mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, so that they may nurture us too, as 'ohana and lāhui.



---

ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui

Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au

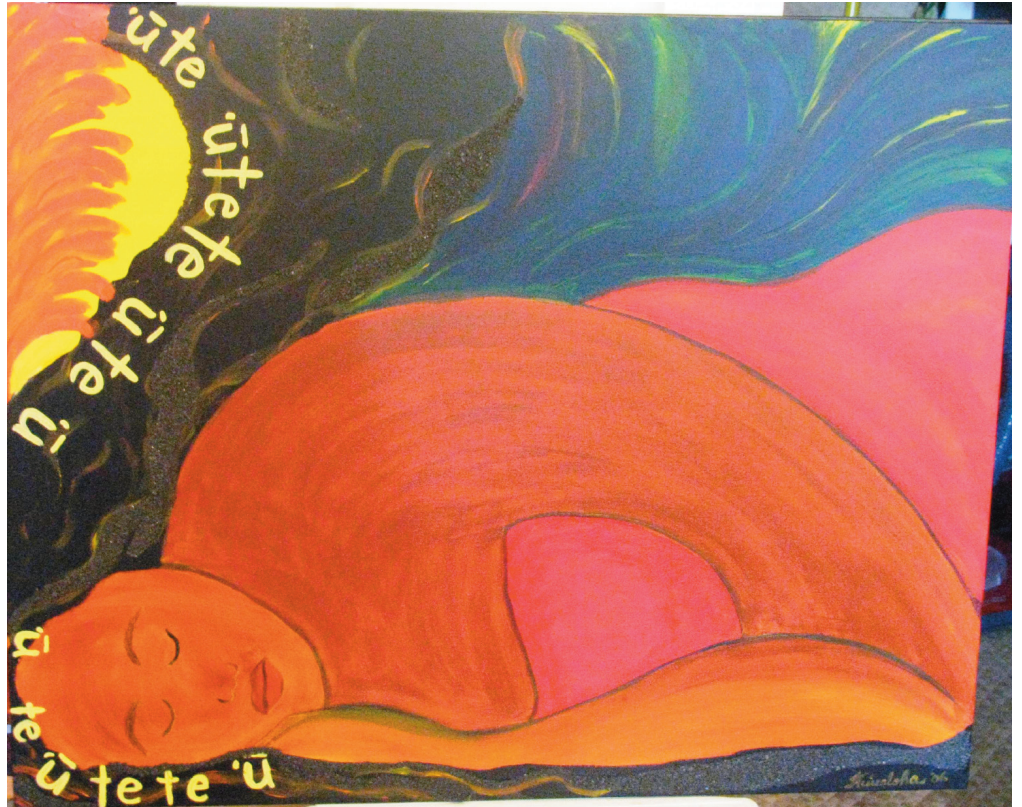


Fig. 1 : ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, *Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au*, 2007, Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18 inch., courtesy of the artist.

Pele sleeping is called “Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au”. In the epic of Pele and Hi‘iaka, Pele wraps herself in a cloak (‘ahu) of kapa cloth at Kapa‘ahu, Hawai‘i. Her spirit hears drums sounding, ‘ū tē, ‘ū tē tē, and follows the sound across the archipelago to the island of Kaua‘i, where she meets Lohi‘au, the handsome chief of Hā‘ena, who is hosting a hula festival.



[ENTER]

Pull out chair. Sit the lady. Push in  
chair and lady. Then  
sit, man. [EXIT]

You came, and lady was brown, hard, articulate.  
You pulled out, telling the others The Lettuce is Bad.

They replied: kalo.  
They replied: to feed.  
They replied: queen.

But salads brought you destiny. You ordered new appetites, pulling pushing Fancy  
chair – luxurious furniture with a capital “F” like fuck, like feed, like fiction. To  
your table the appetites arrived but Fancy chair fuck kept you occupied.

*[occupied was occupation but not occupation that kept lady occupied]*

Your fuck was favor,  
your feed for labor  
your fiction official as cane.

[ENTER]

Pull out of the lady. Push in  
her chair. Then sit back. [MAN EXIT]

How did she get on all fours?  
all legs four legs  
done the in-between thing  
twice certainly  
capital “F.”

How did she get on all fours?  
From sit sit to squat squatting  
*venereal disease is impossible to translate*  
*fiction broke out*

On all fours: lady and  
Fancy chair conceded you something previous.

On all fours: savage and purchase –  
but mouths for that “Fancy” weren’t born yet,

like flags. dangling from the ceiling

[ENTER...something new]

Out of the chair, lady is pushing

pushing out something. You

stay inside instead of [EXIT]

They weren't flags.

They were flowers. Nā pua.

Un-pluckable above that chair, there  
to teach you what in and out, out in  
really mean.

“Bring the chair, bring it. He needs the push and pull to believe in himself again.”

There, there, now, Mr. Sit Man.

The labor is being carried  
out away from Fancy Chair, so you can dangle and dangle  
until you remember you never did use your legs. Sitter.  
Occupant.

Pulling out was never the best method,  
and now the push belongs to her.

[ENTER Sit Man with his chair]

Pulled out, pushed out. [EXITING] And now, the lady.

Now the lady.

Hunger

To plot for revenge  
is not revenge;  
that moment, rising,  
when you strike  
  
the American dead,  
shot through  
the lie of liberty  
into his white  
  
and vicious mind. That  
moment, imagined,  
when our Queen  
might have killed  
  
the invader, but didn't  
for fear of reprisal.  
But no one cares  
about vengeance now.  
  
Except you, seething  
young Hawaiian.  
  
Except you, spear  
of our nation.

From Uē to Kū'ē: Loss and Resistance in Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night Is a Shark Skin Drum* and Matthew Kaopio's *Written in the Sky*

<sup>1</sup> I define 'contemporary' Kanaka Maoli literature as our written *and* oral literature from the 1960s, particularly after John Dominis Holt's *On Being Hawaiian* (1964), often credited as spurring the 'Hawaiian Renaissance' to the present.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, in offering the 1960s as a periodic division, I also recognize that our contemporary literature is a mo'opuna, or descendant, of our earlier oral and written literature and must be situated within the larger, older framework of Kanaka Maoli literature, which is largely orature.

<sup>3</sup> John Dominis Holt, Introduction, in *On Being Hawaiian* (Honolulu: Kū Pa'a Press, 1976), 9.

Uē and kū'ē, or grief and resistance, are themes that pervade much of contemporary<sup>1</sup> Kanaka Maoli literature<sup>2</sup> because uē and kū'ē also punctuate our most recent history as a nation occupied by the United States for over a hundred years. Our occupation has entrenched American colonial ideology into nearly every aspect of our everyday lives. From the time we are born, to the time we die, and even beyond that, to the time our bones are held within our āina, our land, we are regulated by American law and cultural standards. We are a people who know loss profoundly and deeply, and in many ways we have come to be defined by this loss – loss of country, of governance, of land, of traditions, of language, of history, of genealogies, of ancestors, of family, of our self-respect. Certainly, these losses are a consequence of our colonial situation, and we number among the many casualties of American Empire. Still, this knowledge of our loss is precisely what compels us, as Hawaiians, to continue the struggle of recovering what was and maintaining those cultural traditions that have continued despite our colonization. It is in this grief that we find our will to resist.

In his Introduction to *On Being Hawaiian*, John Dominis Holt describes the inheritance of grief through Hawaiian cultural memory as sensing "a greatness, something intangible yet powerful and enduring once belonged to our people". However, Holt frames this loss as reparable through our continuance as native people: "[Hawaiians] know that some of this lives on in us. We are links to the ancients: connected by inheritance to their mana, their wisdom, their superb appreciation of what it is to be human".<sup>3</sup> Thus, our continuance as a people means the continuance of our ancestors. Recognizing this is resistant in and of itself, as a critical part of the colonial project is to sever our connection to our kūpuna, our ancestors, and consequently, our history and identity as sovereign people.

This paper examines two prime examples of Kanaka Maoli literature that frame the present moment of uē and kū'ē, Kanaka Maoli loss and resistance, by emphasizing cultural and ancestral continuance: Matthew Kaopio's novel *Written in the Sky* (2005) and Haunani-Kay Trask's poetry collection *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* (2002). I begin by contextualizing the politicization of the Kanaka Maoli text to then examine both texts in terms of their representations of loss and resistance. I conclude by situating these texts within the contemporary Kanaka Maoli Literary Movement, which I assert is reflective of our ongoing sovereignty as a people.

---

## The Politicized/Political Kanaka Maoli Voice: Speaking and Writing our Sovereignty

Because Kānaka Maoli are colonized people, nearly every example of our literary production, every rhetorical action – arguably, every effort to speak or write – disrupts the colonial ideological narrative and defies the severity of our colonial silencing. Edward Said asserts that the “enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of having an empire* ... and all kinds of preparations are made for it within a culture; then in turn imperialism acquires a kind of coherence, a set of experiences, and a presence of ruler and ruled alike within the culture”.<sup>4</sup> In this way, narrative functions as the vehicle for colonial ideology. Thus, the United States, following suit with its fellow European colonial counterparts, uses narrative largely in the service of colonial efforts. As identified by Said, these themes are often “premised upon the subordination and victimization of the native” and may include:

an ideological rationale for reducing, then reconstituting the native as someone to be ruled and managed[;] ... the idea of Western salvation and redemption through its ‘civilizing mission’[;] ... the security of a situation that permits the conqueror not to look into the truth of the violence he does[; and] ... the process by which, after the natives have been displaced from their historical location on their land, their history is rewritten as a function of the imperial one.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with this, the colonial narrative is culturally hegemonic<sup>6</sup> and made to appear normative. Newspapers and other forms of media become weaponry used by the state to maintain the ideological hegemony created by the dominant power. Through the media, the state is able to continue colonization and oppression while also obtaining a measure of consent from the colonized/oppressed, who are then led to believe (often through repetition of state ideology) that their oppression is normative.

The degree to which this colonial narrative (and its variations) affects the colonized is tremendous. In *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*, Haunani-Kay Trask asserts that Hawai‘i, as an occupied nation, has become so entrenched in American colonial ideology that “we cannot understand our own cultural degradation because we are living it .... we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression”.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the role of the Kanaka Maoli writer to disrupt and overturn the colonial narrative is key to sustaining Hawaiian sovereignty and decolonization because “just as culture may predispose and actively prepare one society for the overseas domination of another, it may also prepare that society to relinquish or modify the idea of overseas domination”<sup>8</sup> as well as to “clearly define the people, the subject of [the colonized writer’s] creation”<sup>9</sup> despite colonial silencing of these counter-hegemonic efforts.

Our writing has arguably always struggled against some semblance of colonial silencing, starting with missionary censorship (shortly after the introduction of writing by missionaries in Hawai‘i) in nineteenth century Hawaiian language

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 11, emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 131–132.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Gramsci refers to “cultural hegemony” as the process whereby a dominant class contrives to retain political power by manipulating public opinion, creating what he calls the “popular consensus”. For more, see his *Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1992), 233–238.

<sup>7</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1993), 145.

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Culture*, 200.

<sup>9</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York City: Grove Press, 1963), 163.



<sup>10</sup> For a detailed examination of missionary censorship of Kanaka Maoli writing during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Trask, "Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization", in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, eds., *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (New York: Bowman & Littlefield, 1999), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Frantz Fanon uses "national culture" to describe the "collective thought process of a people to describe, justify and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong". *Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Kaopio, *Written in the Sky* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2005). Hereafter referenced in the text as *W/S*.

<sup>14</sup> In the poem, "I Not Homeless, I Jus' No Mo' One House", performed at the 2005 Hawai'i Book and Music Festival, 'Īmaikalani Kalāhele highlights how for Hawaiians, there is no "homelessness", just "houselessness", because Hawai'i is our home and the 'āina is where we will always belong.

newspapers<sup>10</sup> to the ignoring/erasure of Kanaka Maoli literature by the media and publishers, as well as within Hawai'i's school system, that continues today. This silencing makes evident the threat posed to the colonial narrative by Kanaka Maoli writers. However, as Haunani-Kay Trask rightly claims, the writing of all Hawaiians –

whether we write *mele* (songs) or *oli* (chants) or essays or speeches or poetry or scholarship – is a continuing refusal to be silent, to join those groups of indigenous peoples who have been disappeared .... Hawaiians are still here, we are still creating, we are still resisting.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the political role of contemporary Native Hawaiian writers in relation to Hawaiian people and culture is largely to counter the colonial narrative and its ideological hegemony, but also to serve decolonization and Hawaiian nationalistic efforts.<sup>12</sup>

For this reason, much of contemporary Kanaka Maoli literature focuses on our cultural losses and expresses how American colonization affects us as indigenous people. As such, it reflects our concern with overturning racist stereotypes and colonially-imposed narratives of our history, which have been used to justify our ongoing occupation. But perhaps most significantly, our contemporary literature emphasizes how we have survived, how our connections to our kūpuna have remained strong, as well as how we may recover what we have lost. Thus, our writing represents a powerful site of resistance, or kū'ē, by expressing both our profound sense of loss, our uē, and our processes of healing and recovery, as can be seen in both Matthew Kaopio's *Written in the Sky* and Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*.

### Matthew Kaopio's *Written in the Sky*

*Written in the Sky* relates the story of 'Īkauikalani, a fourteen-year-old Kanaka Maoli boy who is homeless and must live in Ala Moana Park after his grandmother dies.<sup>13</sup> Under the guidance of his grandmother, who visits him in dreams, 'Īkau struggles to survive as well as to search for his own identity and culture – all of which is made difficult by the often violent urban landscape of Honolulu. Homelessness is a key issue for Kānaka Maoli, as the majority of the homeless population is of Kanaka Maoli descent, a fact that highlights the colonial dispossession of our 'āina. Without houses, many homeless families must live on beaches, where they have access to a source of food, showers, and spirituality through our familial connection to the ocean and the land. Invariably, evictions from beaches become important sites demonstrating this colonial dispossession. However, they also exemplify Kanaka Maoli resistance to further displacement and our defiant survival by returning to the land for our sustenance.<sup>14</sup> Thus, 'Īkau, who used to live with his grandmother on a farm in Kahalu'u, becomes homeless as:

[b]ills for dialysis and cancer treatments had run so high that the bank foreclosed on their homestead. Without any income, they couldn't afford the rent in Honolulu. When she was hospitalized, most of their things were taken to the dump by the angry landlord

---

.... Eventually, he'd found a place to sleep under a bridge near the fishpond at Ala Moana Beach Park. (*WS*, 2)

That 'Īkau and his grandmother are evicted from their Homestead land (a Congressionally-mandated entitlement that is supposed to ensure Hawaiians have land on which they may live) highlights the irony that "space was appropriated from indigenous cultures and then 'gifted back' as reservations, reserved pockets of land for indigenous people who once possessed all of it"<sup>15</sup> and that this fails to adequately serve Hawaiians, who have no choice but to be homeless.

The use of the land after their eviction is later movingly questioned when he returns to Kāhala'u and sees "his grandmother's once-thriving home in shambles. No one had bought it after the bank had foreclosed on it. The yard was overgrown and the house was boarded up.... The yard had become a dump where careless people threw their garbage" (*WS*, 147–148). This underscores the injustice of Hawaiian displacement and the colonial use of land as a "source of money. Land is now called 'real estate,' rather than 'our mother', Papa. The American relationship of people to land is that of exploiter to exploited".<sup>16</sup>

Despite his extreme poverty, 'Īkau takes spiritual sustenance from the 'āina, regularly practicing hi'uwai, which "gave one the chance to spiritually, as well as physically, wash away the debris of the previous day to begin the new day fresh" (*WS*, 4). He also views sharing food with his dove friends, Pegleg and Two-Toe, as spiritual: "Although he would have preferred to eat the entire [sandwich], he enjoyed sharing his blessings. Not only was his stomach full, but so was his spirit" (*WS*, 105).

Also, because of his own cultural beliefs and respect for the 'āina, 'Īkau regularly picks up trash as part of his daily routine, a practice embodying aloha 'āina or mālama 'āina, the reciprocal aloha between kanaka, or person, and 'āina. He is rewarded by finding what he calls the "Secret Garden", containing watercress, strawberry guava trees "weighted down with fruit", cherry tomatoes, and mangoes (*WS*, 98–100). Exemplifying how the 'āina offers both spiritual and physical healing, 'Īkau also finds kauna'oa to treat a fellow homeless man's gangrene, employing his grandmother's teachings of lā'au lapa'au, or Hawaiian herbal medicine: "From his grandmother he knew that it usually took five days to heal such a severe case of gangrene. Five was a powerful number in Hawaiian medicine. If the man was too far gone, the kauna'oa might at least provide him some relief" (*WS*, 99). Despite 'Īkau's 'houselessness', he finds he can be sustained by the 'āina, as well as by the human relationships he maintains with the other homeless people and friends – "Hawaiian", who is killed by gang members, but imparts his wisdom through a journal he leaves behind; the Samoan manager at McDonald's who gives him leftover food; and "Gladness", for whom he does yard work. Interestingly enough, when given the chance to live with Gladness or with family members on Kaua'i, 'Īkau chooses to remain at Ala Moana Park, a decision influenced by his special gifts that allow him an intimate connection with the 'āina and reinforce his special kuleana, or duty, to heal others.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 143.

---

Among the other prominent themes of loss within the novel are 'Īkau's loss of identity, culture and family. His loss of identity is most prevalent in his early ignorance of the meaning and genealogy of his name, "which he was ashamed of and never used" (*WS*, 2), as "most people could not pronounce [it] properly" (*WS*, 27). As if to demonstrate the importance of a name to identity in the Hawaiian context, Kaopio frames the novel in the third-person, regularly referring to 'Īkau as "the boy", until 'Īkau learns the significance of his name from his estranged grand-aunt, Mariah Wong. Through her, he learns he is named for his great-great-grandfather who was a kahuna and a descendant of priests who used *lā'au lapa'au* to heal others and could read omens in the sky. She also gives 'Īkau the gift of knowing his *mo'okū'auhau*, or genealogy (*WS*, 125–126).

From then on in the novel, 'Īkau shares his name proudly, which is also reinforced by Kaopio's use of his name. Empowered by the knowledge of his *mo'okū'auhau*, "the meaning of his name: 'Īkauikalani. The answer is placed in the heavens" (*WS*, 127) and the understanding that he continues his family's gift of healing and reading the clouds for *hō'ailona* (signs), 'Īkau further sees himself as the continuation of his *kūpuna*, which gives him a sense of purpose:

He was 'Īkauikalani, a direct descendant of ancient Hawaiian chiefs and powerful priests. And nothing anybody said or did would change that fact. As long as he lived, his ancestors lived. As a descendant of chiefs, he had a responsibility to care for those around him who were in need, and he accepted this calling and vowed to honor the legacy. (*WS*, 134)

While this knowledge of his name, and thus his identity, is empowering for 'Īkau, the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of names in the Hawaiian context is also shown to be tragic in the case of the character, Hawaiian. Though Hawaiian's real name is "Clarence Keali'i Holomaika'i III", he uses the name Hawaiian – perhaps illustrating an every-Hawaiian character, but also maybe negating his given name, which means "The Chief who Travels in Righteousness", as penance for "killing three people while driving drunk in a stolen vehicle" (*WS*, 28). However, as a homeless man, Hawaiian's name and identity are subsumed when he is killed: "With no hope of identifying the killers, the Honolulu Police Department officers wrapped up their investigation of the homicide of the homeless John Doe" (*WS*, 34). Thus, he dies, renamed with an Americanism that signifies namelessness.

Loss is also expressed through the passing of 'Īkau's grandmother and Hawaiian, and his Aunt Mariah Wong; however, throughout the novel, this loss is negated as his grandmother's, Hawaiian's, and his aunt's spiritual presences remain with him. His grandmother visits him in his dreams, protecting him and guiding him toward Mariah Wong. These dreams are "always so vivid. They seemed real, and his real life the dream" (*WS*, 92). Before she dies, she gives him a lock of her hair telling him that the "strands hold [her] thoughts ... [her] memories of what [she] know[s]. Of happy times ... with [him]" (*WS*, 129). Similarly, Mariah Wong visits 'Īkau in the form of a *pueo* after she dies.

Though not a family member, Hawaiian also appears to 'Īkau in a dream and remains to guide 'Īkau largely through his journal, which regularly "[feeds 'Īkau's] equally hungry soul with words of nourishment" (*WS*, 58). Kaopio's use of the word "feed" is significant, as not only is there a figurative use of the word "feed", framing "words" as food for the soul, but there is also the reference to hānai, feeding or adoption, which in the Hawaiian context establishes a sense of 'ohana between people. It is a reference to Hawaiian's hānai-ing of 'Īkau before his death, but also his continuous hānai-ing of 'Īkau by showing him where to get food and how to survive being homeless.

Significantly, Kaopio frames cultural loss, not in terms of total loss or irreparable disconnection, but in terms of lack of practice or ignorance of the ways in which we continue to practice traditional culture. For example, 'Īkau, though unaware that he is descended from a line of seers, is nevertheless innately aware of his ability to read signs in the clouds: "The sky turned orange, and the sun's final rays flashed green along the ocean's horizon ... The boy knew this was a good omen. But as the sky darkened, so did his visions ... the dying sun's final rays made the boy think of splattered blood" (*WS*, 23). This sign foretells the meeting and subsequent murder of Hawaiian by the gang members. Similarly, when 'Īkau sees the following hō'ailona of a double night rainbow, he knows his grand-aunt has passed away: "Clouds parted above him, revealing a bright, full moon that cast a pale-blue glow. The moonlight formed a rainbow, and he stared at it with wonder" (*WS*, 144).

This continued practice of his culture can also be seen in his attention to his dreams wherein he recognizes his 'aumakua, "a Hawaiian owl, a pueo, the guardian spirit of his grandmother's family ... [and in reverence] quietly, the boy chanted several lines of greeting and thanks he had learned from his grandmother" (*WS*, 51). That he believes in the dreams demonstrates that this traditional cultural belief continues to be taught and practiced from one generation to the next. However, that there is "a fresh pile of bird droppings with what looked like fur and bones in it ... [and] several large owl feathers" (*WS*, 54) by him when he wakes up, also demonstrates how 'Īkau's dream (and thus, dreaming for Hawaiians) is real. Kaopio privileges the Hawaiian perspective of dreams as hō'ike na ka pō and the spiritual belief that our 'aumakua give us knowledge in the night and also inspire us in our dreams.<sup>17</sup> George Kanahale describes dreams, in the Hawaiian context, as:

visions of another reality, parallel to those seen in the waking world. That is, the mind in dream produces symbols which have causal or purposive meanings, with some definite relationship to reality ... dreams were caused usually by the movements of one's 'uhane, or spirit, or by the 'aumakua. Hō'ike na ka pō (exhibits by the night) – wisdom given through dream.<sup>18</sup>

Rather than an instance of 'magical realism', as perhaps it would be framed within a western literary critical context, "the world of dreams and nature's responsiveness to human beckoning, and vice versa, are often integrated without self-consciousness

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of this belief, see Mary Kawena Pukui, "Moe'uhane, Hihī'o, a me Hō'ailona: Dreams and Symbols", in *Nānā i ke Kumu*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> George Kanahale, *Kā Kanaka: A Search for Hawaiian Values* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 46.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Hamasaki, "Mountains in the Sea", in Paul Sharrad, ed., *Readings in Pacific Literature* (Wollongong: University of Wollongong, 1993), 196.

into the waking world of Hawaiian belief and action".<sup>19</sup> Thus, the affirmation of his Hawaiian cultural practices and beliefs are powerful sites of identity for 'Īkau, exemplifying how the practicing of Hawaiian culture and beliefs can be empowering for Kānaka Maoli.

Kaopio's novel represents an important counter-hegemonic effort to overturn this damaging negation of Hawaiian-ness, by privileging distinctly Hawaiian ways of knowing and doing, thereby resisting colonial ideology seeking to discount Hawaiian epistemology. Thus, 'Īkau is alone, yet he is never alone, as the 'āina raises him alongside his kūpuna to learn what is pono, i ka wā pono (at the right time). Essentially, it is his knowledge of Kanaka Maoli cultural traditions, beliefs and spirituality and his knowledge of his place and purpose or kuleana within that cultural framework which empower 'Īkau. His separation from his Hawaiian culture is not irreparable, but a matter of remembering the teachings of our kūpuna: "He could hear his grandmother's voice so clearly. With her death, he'd lost everything: his name, his history. But he was recalling it now" (*WS*, 131).

### Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*

<sup>20</sup> Trask, *Night is a Shark Skin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). Hereafter referenced in the text as *NSD*.

Another significant site of counter-hegemony, Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* is a collection of poetry sectioned into three parts.<sup>20</sup> The first section, "Born in Fire", depicts five poems emphasizing her influences from our ancient orature, especially the mo'olelo telling of Pele and her sisters, Nāmakaokaha'i and Hi'iaka. The second section, "A Fragrance of Devouring", is comprised of several poems depicting Kanaka Maoli resistance to colonial exploitation and devastation. The collection concludes with the final section, "Chants of Dawn", whose poems largely emphasize cultural renewal and reawakening, especially through the erotic or sexual.

Like all the poems in the first section, the poem for which the collection is named, "Night is a Sharkskin Drum", references the powerful mo'olelo of akua wahine, especially that of Pele and her sisters. The first stanza represents a kāhea to return to the "night", or pō, the ancient time of the gods (as depicted by the *Kumulipo*), ka wā kahiko, with the "sharkskin drum" calling, "sounding our bodies black / and gold".

The next two stanzas frame the entrance of Pele, as "All is aflame / the uplands a *shush* / of wind. // From Halema'uma'u / our fiery Akua comes". Then the following oli is offered to announce her coming:

E, Pele e,  
E, Pele e,  
E, Pele e. (*NSD*, 5)

The repetition of these lines in the oli, which are used in traditional mele performed in honor of Pele, in effect, builds the mana of the words, while also welcoming her presence. The use of the 'ē' (shown in the original without the diacriticals) following



---

Pele's name, also denotes tremendous respect and affection for her, as it serves to emphasize her name. In naming her collection for this poem, then, Trask emphasizes myth as a powerful site of decolonization.

This can also be seen in the poem “Nāmakaokaha’i”, which is written for Pele’s older sister and enemy. As a “mo’o woman of kuapā”, or the dashing waves, Nāmakaokaha’i is represented in traditional mo’olelo as being in continual conflict with Pele, the goddess of the volcano. However, here, Trask emphasizes their mana wahine, or feminine power, as sister akua who share the same powerful mo’okū’auhau instead:

Born from the chest  
of Haumea, ...  
lizard-tongued goddess ...  
sister of thunder  
and shark –  
Kānehekili,  
Kūhaimoana –  
elder of Pele,  
Pelehonuamea. (NSD, 7)

Like Pele, Nāmakaokaha’i has “eyes flecked with fire” as she “summon[s] her family / from across the seas”, creating “sharks in the shallows, / upheaval in the heavens”. As a result of her “summoning”, the “Woman of the Pit” arrives:

Pele, Pele’aihonua,  
traveling the uplands,  
devouring the foreigner. (NSD, 8)

Trask’s reference to Pele’aihonua, or Pele-the-land-eater, as opposed to Pelehonuamea, or Pele-of-the-red-earth, emphasizes Pele’s power, often in anger, to destroy by “devouring”. That the foreigner is being “devour[ed]” is, of course, of primary significance here – the foreigner is both the object of anger and, thus, rejected by the land, which Pele embodies. This highlights how the use and depiction of traditional mo’olelo can be used politically in contemporary literature. As a strong display of literary mana, therefore, “legends and myths do not simply belong to the past. This is not to deny that myths and legends come from the past, but to attend to what these stories do in the present”.<sup>21</sup> Trask’s depiction of Pele’aihonua’s angry consuming of the foreigner represents her own outrage at the foreigner’s presence, which, after the earlier poems depicting the mo’olelo of the akua, seems particularly invasive.

In the second section, “A Fragrance of Devouring”, Trask largely depicts the “foreigner” as the devourer of both Hawaiian culture and land. Highlighting this, she states in “Writing in Captivity”:

In the midst of this ferocious suffering, I feel both rage and an insistent desire to tell the cruel truths about Hawai’i. These are bitter tales of falsity, of travesty: tourism and the

<sup>21</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai’i and the Politics of Place* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 25.



<sup>22</sup> Trask, “Writing in Captivity”, 19.

<sup>23</sup> George Hu‘eu Kanahēle writes of kaona in *Kā Kanaka* that a Hawaiian “had to be bilingual: ... speak[ing] his native tongue ... but also ‘speak’[ing] the language of symbols”. The gourd “in dreams symbolized man: the filled gourd is the living man, and the broken gourd is the dead” (46-47).

prostitution of a people and culture; Christianity and the racism of its ideologies and clergies; American greed and arrogance and the embrace of violence; the constant erosion of a people’s self-respect through a colonization of the mind and the elegant spirit that once sustained it.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in the first poem in this section, “The Broken Gourd”, which is kaona, a literary device employing symbolic cultural meaning, for the ‘dead’,<sup>23</sup> Trask contrasts the wā kahiko, or the time of our kūpuna before western contact, with the current onslaught of colonial destruction and devastation:

Long ago, wise kanaka...  
hauled hand-twined  
nets, whole villages shouting  
the black flash of fish.

Wāhine u‘i ...  
nā keiki sprouted by the sun  
of a blazing sky ...

Each of us slain  
by the white claw  
of history: lost  
genealogies, propertied  
missionaries, diseased  
haole. (NSD, 11–12)

This devastation manifests itself in the land through “pockmarked maile vines, / rotting ‘ulu groves” caused by the “damp stench of money / burning at the edges” from the east and the “din of divine / violence, triumphal / destruction” from the west, leaving only “the bladed / reverberations of empire” (NSD, 11–13). Though American colonialism is deemed the hand of violence here, Trask also asserts that the east, through tourism, is also a part of the colonial enterprise that exploits and degrades the land.

Essentially, all tourists to Hawai‘i, in supporting the tourist industry, also contribute to Hawai‘i’s “environmental degradation, low wages, land dispossession and the highest cost of living in the United States”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the poem “Kona Kai‘ōpua” references “long- / forgotten ali‘i, entombed / beneath grandiose hotels / mocked / by crass amusements / Japanese machines / and the common greed / / of vulgar Americans” (NSD, 16–17), while the poem “Tourist” describes the “glittering knives of money, / murdering the trees” (NSD, 20).

Furthermore, in “Dispossessions of Empire”, Trask compares the tourist industry’s exploitation of Kānaka Maoli to prostitution: “Even prostitutes know / their professions, but natives? // The empire degrades / through monetary exchange, / leaving quaint Hawaiians / dressing as ‘natives,’ / in drag for the 10 o’clock // floor show ... // hoping for tips / after the French kisses” (NSD, 35). However, she also contrasts the falsity of tourism’s colonial narrative of the happy and sexually alluring native with the extreme poverty in which many Kānaka Maoli live:

<sup>24</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 144.

---

An orphaned smell  
of ghettos in this tourist  
archipelago: shanties  
on the beach, slums...  
and trash everywhere. (NSD, 35–36)

Her poem ends with what is “gained” by both Hawaiians and foreigners through tourism:

For the foreigner, romances  
of “Aloha,”  
For Hawaiians,  
dispossessions of empire. (NSD, 36)

Her description provides a rich example of counter-hegemony to the “racist ideology that claims we are better off as American citizens than we ever were as citizens of our own independent nation of Hawai‘i”.<sup>25</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the third section of *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, “Chants of Dawn”, is erotically charged, but also represents a return to the lushness and mana of the ‘āina. Trask writes of the traditional usage of erotic metaphor in “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”:

Because Hawaiian is a profoundly metaphorical language, and Hawaiians an openly erotic people, descriptions are always rendered with fertile imagery: the land is a fecundity of beauty; our traditional deities are gods of abundance, of plenitude .... It is commonplace in the Hawaiian worldview to see relationships as both political and erotic.<sup>26</sup>

Politically, Trask’s depiction of the sexual relationship with regard to ‘āina also resists earlier Christian missionary censorship of the Hawaiian voice, while simultaneously “repatriat[ing] ... what had been suppressed in the natives’ past by the processes of imperialism”.<sup>27</sup>

In “Upon the Dark of Passion”, the erotic is portrayed through lush images of the ‘āina: “Let our shadows / swell into longing // between breadfruit / and palm, throbbing” (NSD, 48), alluding to male genitalia represented by the ‘ulu, or breadfruit, and the niu, or palm. Similarly, in the final poem of the collection, “Into Our Light I Will Go Forever”, the land reflects erotic, regenerative mana:

Into the passion  
of our parted Ko‘olau,  
luminous vulva.  
  
Into Kāne’s pendulous  
breadfruit, resinous  
with semen. (NSD, 60)

Using a traditional trope of Hawaiian orature by then noting the lands along the ocean from He‘eia to Hale‘iwa, she notes the natural lushness of every place:

<sup>25</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, in Hereniko and Wilson, *Inside Out*, 167–182, 174.

<sup>27</sup> Said, *Culture*, 210.

---

Into our wetlands  
of He'eia,  
bubbling black mud ...

Into the hum of  
reef-ringed Ka'a'awa,  
pungent with limu ... (NSD, 61)

These images also serve to emphasize the life within the land, its actions and its smells. She then ends the poem with the lines: "Into our sovereign suns, / drunk on the mana / of Hawai'i" (NSD, 62) highlighting at once how the mana of Hawai'i could never be anything but sovereign, but also that the land reflects how Kānaka Maoli, who are of the land, must also look toward "our sovereign suns", taking our strength from the tremendous life force and power that still exists within the 'āina.

## Conclusion

Both Kaopio and Trask represent the strong and vibrant force with which Kānaka Maoli directly subvert and combat American colonialism with our counter-narratives, which place Hawaiians "at the center of the creative endeavor .... The focus is not on that which is *Haole*, or foreign, but on that which Hawaiians value: the land, the sea, the people, and their intimate relationships".<sup>28</sup> As such, both also frame the politics surrounding Hawaiian loss and resistance, the movement from uē to kū'ē, as one of cultural continuance and resistance through cultural practice. For Kaopio, our Hawaiian culture is an innate part of who we are as Hawaiians; thus, we must commit ourselves to seeking knowledge of who we are through our ancestors. For Trask, we need only to seek cultural and spiritual guidance from the 'āina, which embodies and houses our kūpuna; we can learn from the 'āina in this way.

Yet, they are not alone in their effort to affirm our Hawaiian sovereignty through literature – nearly all of our literature carries themes of loss and resistance, whether through the call for a return to traditions or spirituality or the outright demand for Hawaiian independence. Kanaka Maoli literature is complex and thriving, reflective of us as a lāhui, a people and a nation. That our literature is flourishing is largely rooted in the inner drive for Kānaka Maoli to articulate our history, our colonialism, and its injustices, as well as the strength within our traditions and the rich fluidity of our culture. This includes Alani Apio's moving plays *Kāmau* (1994)<sup>29</sup> and *Kāmau A'e* (1997)<sup>30</sup> about an 'ohana torn between fighting American colonialism and having to earn a living by participating in the tourist industry; Īmaikalani Kalāhele's collection of resistance poetry and art *Kalāhele* (2002),<sup>31</sup> featuring several kū'ē poems; Māhealani Perez-Wendt's *Ulubaimalama* (2008),<sup>32</sup> a moving poetry collection focused on grieving our loss of country; Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's plays, "Ka Wai Ola" and "Ola nā Iwi", both of which focus on colonial dispossession of land and of the bones of our kūpuna;<sup>33</sup> Wayne Westlake's posthumous collection, *Westlake* (2009)<sup>34</sup> Sage U'ilani Takehiro's *Honua* (2006)<sup>35</sup> and my own poetry collection, *The Salt-*

<sup>28</sup> Trask, "Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature", 173.

<sup>29</sup> Alani Apio, *Kāmau* (Honolulu: Palila Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Apio, *Kāmau A'e* (Honolulu: Palila Press, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Īmaikalani Kalāhele, *Kalāhele* (Honolulu: Kalamakū Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Māhealani Perez-Wendt, *Ulubaimalama* (Honolulu: Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, *Hawai'i Nei: Island Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, *Westlake*, ed. by Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Sage U'ilani Takehiro, *Honua: A Collection of Poetry* (Honolulu: Kahuaomānoa Press, 2007).

*Wind, Ka Makani Pa‘akai* (2008)<sup>36</sup>; as well as the many Kanaka Maoli writers published in the anthologies *Mālama: Land and Water* (1985),<sup>37</sup> edited by Dana Naone Hall, and *Ho‘omānoa* (1989),<sup>38</sup> edited by Joseph Puna Balaz; the four volumes of *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* edited by Māhealani Dudoit and ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui;<sup>39</sup> and the anthologies of Polynesian poetry *Whetu Moana* (2003)<sup>40</sup> and *Mauri Ola* (2010),<sup>41</sup> underscoring how Kānaka Maoli belong to the Pacific alongside our closest Pacific cousins.

Literature and art represent powerful sites of self-representation and indigenous articulation that serve to overturn the ideological hegemony of the colonial enterprise. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasizes how creating art or literature or ideas is about “transcending the basic survival mode” and contributing to “the spirit of creating which indigenous communities have exercised over thousands of years. Imagination enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones”.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, while “a substantial part of our writing draws upon the experience of living in a damaged world where the Native people have suffered unspeakable horror”,<sup>43</sup> the uē, or grief, we carry arms and strengthens us as we move forward, so that we may also recognize the potential for our writing to kū‘ē, or resist our colonization, to embrace life and hope.

<sup>36</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, *The Salt-Wind, Ka Makani Pa‘akai* (Honolulu: Kuleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Dana Naone Hall, ed., *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Balaz, ed., *Ho‘omānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kū Pa‘a Inc., 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Māhealani Dudoit and ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, eds., *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* (Honolulu: Kūleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 1998–).

<sup>40</sup> Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri, and Robert Sullivan, eds., *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poetry in English* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri, and Robert Sullivan, eds., *Mauri Ola* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2010; Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, 177.

**The Wounds of Our Nation**

The wounds of our nation  
are the children

with burned eyes  
and scarred bodies,  
floating out at sea,  
face down in salt.

The children of poisoned fields,  
black skies, drowned islands.

The children without history  
or memory.

At the far shore  
the children watching from the beach  
as the first ships came in.

---

## Kaulana Nā Pua

Performed by Jon, Jamaica, and Kamakana Osorio, with Tim Sproles on the mandolin (August 2009) for one of three “Native Hawaiian Writers” episodes on *Aloha Shorts*.



Fig. 1: Jamaica, Jon, and Kamakana Osorio, courtesy of Sammie Choy.

*Aloha Shorts* is a week radio program featuring Hawai‘i writers, actors and musicians, co-produced by Bamboo Ridge Press and Hawaii Public Radio. Taping and broadcasts are supported in part by the Hawai‘i Council for the Humanities. *Aloha Shorts* is co-produced by Sammie Choy, Craig Howes, and Phyllis Look, with Cedric Yamanaka as host, and Jason Taglianetti as engineer.

This excerpt is used with the permission of Hawaii Public Radio <<http://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/>>, *Aloha Shorts* <<http://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/alohashorts>>, and *Bamboo Ridge* <<http://www.bambooridge.com/main.aspx>>



Satisfied with the Stones:  
Notes on Masculinity, Land, and Family in Alani Apio's *Kāmau*

We do not value  
the government's sums of money.  
We are satisfied with the stones,  
astonishing food of the land.  
(Prendergast, "Kaulana Nā Pua")

MOM: (*pause*) You see these pebbles...  
ALIKA: Mom, I don't need you to tell me about rocks. I need  
you here.  
MOM: You don't know what you need, Alika. That's the  
problem. All I have is my stories. You will listen to them.  
(Apio, *Kāmau*)

"Kaulana Nā Pua" is one of the most popular *mele* (song or poem) in Hawai'i; written at the end of the nineteenth century, its title means 'Famous are the Flowers', but it is also known as "Mele Aloha 'Āina" (song for the people who love the land) or "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku" (stone-eating song). In 1893, during the provisional government in Hawai'i – after the overthrow of the kingdom and before the establishment of the republic – the Royal Hawaiian Band was required to sign an oath of loyalty, to renounce any allegiance to the Queen and the Kingdom. Otherwise they would have been fired and, as the historian Noenoe Silva reports, "they would soon be eating rocks". The members of the band refused to sign and "they walked away from their jobs and their paychecks".<sup>1</sup> The song was written by Ellen Kekoaohiwaikalani Prendergast when the band members told her their story, and it captures the heroic quality of the anti-annexationist struggle at the end of the nineteenth century. It bespeaks a heroism born out of sacrifice, political conviction, and moral integrity, which for too long has been erased from the historical accounts, and deleted from the memories of a people, but which continues to inspire later generations of Hawaiian activists.

At the center of this essay is a play that tells a very different contemporary story: there are no heroes, sacrifice has the bitter taste of compromise, and a sense of loss and defeat seems to cloud any possibility of redemption. In other words, the stones and the stories they tell seem to have lost their aura. *Pōhaku* is the Hawaiian word for stones and rocks, and as with most Hawaiian words it has multiple layers of signification and several symbolic connotations: it points to the phenomenon of being petrified or hardened, or else of being stubborn, and it may finally mean "weighted with rocks, hence stationary, not moving".<sup>2</sup> The idea of belonging and of home is thus already *heavily* embedded in the definition of 'stones', and from the outset it shows the weight of the contradictions that this play intends to explore. But most of all, the stones, as both the symbol of the

<sup>1</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 135.

<sup>2</sup> See the online Hawaiian electronic library <<http://ulukau.org/>> and the definition in its dictionary <<http://www.wehewehe.org/>>.

---

land and of generations of Hawaiians who invested them with sacred and secular meanings, are still at odds with the logic of the market, and in this play they seem to be losing the fight.

In 1994, Alani Apio's play *Kāmau*<sup>3</sup> premiered at Kumu Kahua Theater in Honolulu, about a year after the 'Onipa'a march to commemorate the centennial of the overthrow, "the single largest and most influential gathering of Hawaiian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" in which over 15,000 people marched.<sup>4</sup> At the center of this play, as in much of Native Hawaiian cultural production and history, lies a story of land expropriation. What is dramatized and explored is precisely the relation between the members of a family and the land they live on. The play, together with its sequel *Kāmau A'e* (1998),<sup>5</sup> the second part of an intended trilogy, stages the life of a contemporary 'obana, a Hawaiian extended family, focusing specifically on the lives of three men: Alika, the protagonist of the first play, and his cousins George and Michael, the latter of whom takes center-stage in the second play. The three men encounter three diverging destinies, which seem to reflect some of the most controversial social and political options available to young Hawaiian men. Alika works as a tour guide, Michael survives by fishing, and his brother George committed suicide a few years earlier, leaving behind his *haole* (white) partner Lisa and a young daughter, Stevie.<sup>6</sup>

From the second scene of *Kāmau* forward, the characters (and the audience) are confronted with a central question and the ensuing drama that will powerfully lead to the rapid unfolding of the play. The tourist company Alika works for, Aloha Tours, is expanding and Alika has been offered a promotion. Central to the company's expansion is the fact that it has purchased a vast coastal area and plans to build a new tourist resort there; said area, however, includes the beach on which Alika's family has been living for generations. The family will have to move and be relocated to a downtown condo.

Apio's play provides an interesting point of entry into an exploration of the issues of land and community I evoked above. More specifically, I intend to follow the lead of two crucial concepts in Hawaiian culture, as reflected in *Kāmau*: the notion of 'āina (land, earth) and the notion of 'obana (family, kin group). To some extent, the protagonist's inner struggle, and the engine of the dramatic action, emerges primarily from a tragic conflict between a responsibility, a *kuleana* (which can be translated as both 'responsibility' and 'right') towards the land and a *kuleana* towards the family. This conflict, I will argue, has to do with the impact of capitalism and colonialism on traditional Native Hawaiian culture – in which the notions of 'āina and 'obana seem to be intricately connected to each other and overlapping. In my exploration of this cultural tension I will pay particular attention to the dynamics of gender and masculinity, primarily because this is a play that explicitly focuses on male subjectivity in the contemporary social context of Hawai'i, but also because tracing the intricacies and contradictions of male identity formation in a Native Hawaiian context means to highlight the impact of capitalism and western individualism on the significance of land and family.

<sup>3</sup> Alani Apio, *Kāmau* (Honolulu: Palila Books, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Apio, *Kāmau A'e* (Honolulu: Palila Books, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> All references to the first play will henceforth be included parenthetically as *K*. The first play was also published in the collection *He Leo Hou. A New Voice. Hawaiian Playwrights* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 2003). The two versions differ slightly: the Palila edition is divided into 12 scenes; the Bamboo Ridge into 10.

<sup>7</sup> Cit. in Meredith Desha, “Kāmaur: Sacrifice and Collaboration”, in *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> See Dennis Carroll, “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local’ Theatre”, *The Drama Review*, 44.2 (Summer 2000), 138.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Chock and Darrell Lum, eds., *The Best of Honolulu Fiction. Stories from the Honolulu Magazine Fiction Contest* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1999), 21–31.

<sup>10</sup> Apio, “A thousand little cuts to genocide”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (25 February 2001); “Kanaka lament: Once a proud nation, Hawaiians today are defined as just a race”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (25 March 2001); “New Hopes Arise for Ancestral Culture”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (19 January 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> This information is partly taken from a private correspondence with the author. See also <www.kanuhawaii.org>

<sup>13</sup> ‘Kumu’ also means foundation, model, or teacher, as in ‘Kumu Hula’, a master and teacher of hula dance.

<sup>14</sup> See the editor’s introduction in Dennis Carroll, ed., *Kumu Kabua Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, xi.

<sup>16</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, eds., *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific* (Honolulu: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 167–182, 170.

## Kumu Kahua, the Community, and its Languages

Before I proceed to an analysis of the play, let me introduce the author and the specific conditions that made the writing and the staging of the play possible. Alani Apio grew up in ‘Ewa Beach on O‘ahu, in a family of modest circumstances. As the author puts it: “we were poor in a Western sense”.<sup>7</sup> He studied at the Kamehameha Schools (a school for Native Hawaiians founded by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop) and graduated in Drama and Theater at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He worked as a TV and theater actor, and in 1988 wrote a play for young adults, *Nā Keiki ‘O [sic] ka ‘āina* (*The Child [sic] of the Land*), produced by the Maui Youth Theatre.<sup>8</sup> He published poems in the *Hawai‘i Review*; a short story, “Ka Ho‘i ‘Ana: The Returning”, in *The Best of Honolulu Fiction*;<sup>9</sup> and a series of articles on Hawaiian sovereignty published in *The Honolulu Advertiser*.<sup>10</sup> However, “writing is not the major focus of Apio’s professional career”<sup>11</sup>: while his hobbies include wood carving in the Hawaiian tradition, he is one of the founders and the current board president of Kanu Hawaii, an association “committed to protect and promote island living” with projects of sustainability and community building.<sup>12</sup>

Both *Kāmau* and *Kāmau A‘e* were directed by Harry L. Wong III and produced by the Kumu Kahua Theater. Kumu Kahua, ‘Original Stage’,<sup>13</sup> is a small theater of 130 seats in downtown Honolulu, located in a former Post Office built in 1872 – two decades before the overthrow – and which underwent major restoration right before *Kāmau*’s premiere (1992–94). The theater was founded in 1971 by Dennis Carroll and eight graduates of the Theater Department of UHM (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa), with the explicit objective of promoting local playwrights and building a place in which the local audience could recognize itself, its problems, aspirations, and fantasies.<sup>14</sup> Founded explicitly as a community theater, in 1981 Kumu Kahua became independent from the Theater and Dance Department of the University and began its most prolific activity.

The play reflects the linguistic diversity of the archipelago, since it is written and performed partly in standard American English (which Alika speaks at work and with “mainlanders”), partly in Hawaiian, and partly in Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), colloquially known as Pidgin. Pidgin developed in the plantations as a lingua franca among settlers of disparate linguistic and national origins, and also as a coded language that protected the information exchange of the plantation workers from being understood by the landowners. With its influences mostly from Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, and Tagalog, it is still the most common vernacular spoken on the islands, especially among ‘locals’. In his *Native Men Remade*, Hawaiian scholar Ty Kāwika Tengan writes that “Pidgin has become a marker of ‘local’ (typically nonwhite, working-class) identity for people who were raised in Hawai‘i, and for men a similarly ethnic and ‘tough’ vision of masculinity”.<sup>15</sup> In 1999, Pidgin was criticized by the influential Hawaiian activist Haunani-Kay Trask for being “a gloss for the absence of authentic sounds and authentic voices”,<sup>16</sup> a falsification that pretends to be Hawaiian. Trask’s attack on a prominent cultural production in

---

Pidgin is in part a response to a tense historical relation between Locals and Hawaiians – two communities with different claims of ‘belonging’ and rights to the archipelago – and to the fact that the dominance of Pidgin among the Native Hawaiian population was not yet counterbalanced at the time by a collective effort to preserve and revive the Hawaiian language.<sup>17</sup>

The Hawaiian language, *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, has been central to the revival of Hawaiian culture and to the current sovereignty movement begun in the early Seventies. Alani Apio’s decision to make his characters speak in Pidgin aims at reproducing a social reality, while at the same time dramatizing a sense of cultural displacement and stressing the cultural significance of language in the definition of identity on the islands. In Scene 7 of the play, to focus on a specific passage, Michael and Alika are on their beach teaching their niece Stevie how to throw a fishing-net. Alika has not yet informed Michael of the company’s purchase of the land, and when a security guard tells them to leave that area, Michael is puzzled and reacts aggressively, calling him a “fagget haole” – a slur that significantly conflates a racial denomination with a homophobic one. The guard replies that he is in fact a Hawaiian, too.

MICHAEL: ... Dis guy, he says he’s one Hawaiian. So I like know, Bully, what makes you Hawaiian?

SECURITY GUARD: ‘O ko‘u Na‘au, ko‘u ‘ohana a me ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. ‘Ae, ‘ōlelo au i ka ‘ōlelo makuahine. A ‘o ‘oe?

(Michael cannot answer. He turns away and starts to go. The others follow.)

MICHAEL: Fuck! (K, 40)

“My guts, my family and the Hawaiian language”; this is what the guard replies in Hawaiian, confronting Michael on the terrain of language proficiency as a signifier of Hawaiian identity. “Yes, I speak the Mother tongue. What about you?” Michael cannot reply, and curses in English.

Using a strategy that is common throughout the play, Apio complicates any easy dichotomy. While acknowledging the significance of *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, he is dissociating it from a politically engaged position: fluency in Hawaiian does not necessarily mean an alignment with the nationalist movement, or a default feeling of unity among Hawaiians. More broadly, Apio forces the audience to consider the complexity and ambivalence of each of the staged conflicts, without any easy route of identification. The director defines the play as an “unsafe play”, and a reviewer wrote that Apio successfully prevents the play from being a “feel-good experience” for the supporters of any cause.<sup>18</sup> Along the same lines, the expropriation of the land is made possible because Alika’s family was renting it from the Chong family – a paradoxical legacy and sign of unequal power relations between Natives and Asian American settlers – and Alika had stopped paying rent some two years before. Therefore even the Chongs’ gesture of selling the land is not presented as a purposefully wicked action but instead, within a capitalist frame, it is a reasonable and even relatively generous behavior: “dey said as long as I keep da place clean an’ quiet dey not goin’ bodda. But dey said dey was goin’ fo’try an’sell da place” (K, 42). A similar dynamic is articulated when we learn that Alika’s boss is apparently

<sup>17</sup> On the complex political and cultural relation between Locals (mainly Asian Americans) and Hawaiians, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> John Berger, “Shades of Gray: Playwright refuses to treat Hawaiian issues as matters of black and white”, *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (November 7, 1997), D 1–3. Berger is discussing *Kāmau A‘e*, but his analysis can be applied to both plays.

---

negotiating strenuously with the agency in order to guarantee a decent solution for Alika and his cousin. This happens again when a white male tourist, Mr. Clemens, verbally attacks Alika for spoiling his and his wife's dream holiday, and we learn that the man has much more in common with the young Hawaiian than the two of them would be willing to admit (a story of land expropriation in the South, labor in the coal mines to support his family, a life on the verge of poverty).

It is very hard to tell the bad guys from the good ones in *Kāmau*, and indeed we are faced with the possibility that there may be none on either side. This is where the devastating process that will drive Alika to his choice begins. This ambivalence is both the strongest quality of the play and its weakest feature. On the one hand, we appreciate its ability to emotionally impact the audience and position it in a field in which there is no easy, nor right, choice. On the other hand, all the characters are granted both complexity and a certain degree of innocence. They are all relatively fair players in a predetermined game, and no possibility of transformation, no possibility of imagining new rules and new trajectories of behavior – in short, no available political change – is ever evoked as within reach.

The choice of the title is aligned with the very idea that the characters are players entrapped in a game whose rules exceed their control. *Kāmau* is a polysemic Hawaiian word and means primarily to keep on, to persevere, or to bear the burden. It also means to drink alcohol, and to cheer when drinking, an invitation to 'add a little more'. Throughout the play Alika is often heavily drunk, and the meaning of resistance and perseverance (to be faithful to one's own goals) is, so to speak, polluted by the imagery related to alcohol and by Alika's continuous drinking. Finally, the idea of a burden and of carrying it is more explicitly connected to the notion of responsibility that I mentioned before and to definitions of masculinity and gender identification.

### Tourism, Resistance, and the Gendering of Hawaiian Nationalism

Apio has stated that behind his first impulse of writing the play were some personal experiences concerning the suicides of a "number of [his] friends"<sup>19</sup> and his reflections on the conditions of life of many Hawaiian men: "Young Kanaka males have had the highest rate of suicide in Hawai'i since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation. Likewise, Kanaka have had the largest percentage of population imprisoned".<sup>20</sup> While these data and the emphasis on unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and incarceration mirror similar data concerning both the indigenous population of North America and ethnic minorities in the United States and their legacies of colonialism and homicidal cultural and economic policies, the gendering that is behind the Hawaiian data requires some analysis. In order to understand the peculiar situation of Hawaiian men we might first need to highlight a few crucial points related to the gendering of the land in Hawai'i, both in a traditional (and later activist) and in a colonial/touristic perspective.

Haunani-Kay Trask's foundational work *From a Native Daughter* highlights that the relation between Hawaiians and the archipelago is a familial one, as the title

<sup>19</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Apio, "Kanaka Lament".



suggests. The land, *‘āina*, is seen as the mother, and the natives are her children. In the Hawaiian language, Trask continues, the word *‘āina* grammatically takes up a possessive structure akin to that of the body or of parents, showing that the land is inherent to the people, which in turn cannot exist without her, as the *‘āina* cannot exist without the people.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, and this complicates an established capitalist norm, land cannot be ‘owned’, private property being a foreign concept in traditional Hawaiian culture, as in many other indigenous cultures. As Apio writes in one of his articles, “Who ‘owns’ this ‘āina? What a ridiculous notion. No one ‘owns’ this land: not America, not Na Kanaka. Our ali‘i never pretended to own this land. We didn’t even have the concept of ownership until foreigners imported it”.<sup>22</sup> Talking about the ever evolving situation of expropriation, Trask writes, “in familial terms, our mother (and thus our heritage and our inheritance) was taken from us. We were orphaned in our own land”.<sup>23</sup> This image of Hawaiians as “orphans” can be useful in conceptualizing Alikā as representative of the sense of ‘loss’ of the Hawaiian people – and again, not as in loss of a property, but as in loss of one’s family, since the young man is orphaned of both parents. However, the spirit/ghost (*‘ūbanē*) of his mother, as we often see on the Hawaiian stage and in Hawaiian culture,<sup>24</sup> continues to be both a constant presence in Alikā’s mind and an actual walking and talking presence in his life.

Whereas the genealogical understanding of the land produces a gendering of it, a far more devastating discourse produced by tourism is actively engaged in a parallel, though antithetical, production of a feminized archipelago. In the touristic iconography of Hawai‘i and in the western imagery related to the archipelago, the key figure at the center of the scene is almost always a woman; as Trask puts it, “above all, Hawai‘i is ‘she,’ the Western image of the Native ‘female’”.<sup>25</sup> Jane Desmond notices that Hawaiian men, when they rarely appear on postcards and photographs associated to the touristic circuit, are never with women. They are rather alone, or in the company of other men in fishing scenes. The absence of men is constitutive of the visual iconography, Desmond suggests, and has the intended effect of producing a feminized image of the islands, displaying Hawaiian women as available to the visual consumption of white males.<sup>26</sup>

The notion of the maternal figure of the *‘āina* in Hawaiian culture shares with the touristic fantasy the centrality of the feminine figure; the thesis of cultural prostitution articulated by sovereignty activists is the product of the overlapping and clash of both visual constructs. In the complex political context of contemporary Hawai‘i, tourism is promoted by the State, which is the target of much of the criticism of Native organizations. The idea of cultural prostitution embodied in the tourist industry evokes a scenario in which the masculinized State is the pimp, and the feminized archipelago is the prostitute.

The Hawaiian cultural renaissance has been characterized by a “strong leadership of women, in the fields of politics, scholarship, literature”.<sup>27</sup> The role of Hawaiian men in politics has been famously criticized by Trask, who wrote that while men “sought power in the Americanized political system ... they internalized the value

<sup>21</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 116.

<sup>22</sup> Apio, “New Hopes”. *Ali‘i* is the word to indicate the Hawaiian ‘chiefs’. However, as even this brief passage shows, they were far from analogous to feudal European Lords, to which they have been historically compared by Euro-American historiography.

<sup>23</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> For a brief exploration of Hawaiian ‘ghost’ stories and their relation to multiculturalism see Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 154–167.

<sup>25</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism. Bodies on Display from Waikiki to the Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 45–46, 122.

<sup>27</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 10.



<sup>28</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 93-94.

of that system”, and that overall, “male leaders in our movement ... are not the most visible, the most articulate, nor the most creative”.<sup>28</sup> Trask emphasized what she saw as an overwhelming tendency of men to collaborate with the State – the names of Governor John Waihe‘e (from 1986 to 1994) and of controversial Senator Daniel Akaka come to mind – evoking the much too popular spectre of the ‘sell-out’.

<sup>29</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 10-13.

The past few decades have seen the rise of several *kāne* groups (Hawaiian men’s collectives). Hawaiian scholar Kāwika Tengan contextualizes Hale Mua, one of these groups, within the deeply gendered political context of Hawaiian nationalist movements.<sup>29</sup> These men are reacting to historical emasculation by both colonialism and tourism; as Tengan reports, this emasculation has been perpetuated within the sovereignty movement itself. The members of Hale Mua articulate a problematic rhetoric of crisis, dominant in many all-male groups throughout the United States and western Europe, that is rooted in a nostalgia for a sort of idealized ‘golden age of masculinity’ – in their case, a warrior ideal profoundly inspired by the Māori of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

<sup>30</sup> Trask, “Lovely Hula Hands”, in *Native Daughter*, 136-147.

The choice of placing a tour bus guide as an anti-hero at the center of this drama is thus extremely productive and enables the audience to think through the interconnections between the tourist industry and the specter of the emasculation of the Hawaiian man. Besides being responsible for increasing environmental damages, the tourist industry is the primary cause of the stellar speculations on the real estate market. Furthermore, while tourism perpetuates a paradisiacal image of the islands, it promotes a service economy that selectively limits job opportunities and perpetuates homelessness and poverty.<sup>30</sup> Tourism thus consolidates into the only game in town, promoting the cultural prostitution of Hawai‘i and creating what Trask defined as a “hostage economy” at the mercy of foreign (non-Hawaiian) investments, while the people held hostage are forced to attend – and many, like Alika, to participate – in their collective spectacularization as a touristic artifact for the First World.

<sup>31</sup> Desmond, “Picturing Hawai‘i: The ‘Ideal’ Native and the Origins of Tourism, 1880–1915”, *Positions: east asia cultures critique*, 7.2 (1999), 459–501, 493.

*Kāmaui*’s protagonist, in his role as tour guide, is performing to some extent what Desmond defines as “the ideal native”, “native enough to remain primitively alluring and exotic, yet intelligent, warmly welcoming and gracious, that is, feminized and most often female”.<sup>31</sup> Alika is, in fact, praised by his clients for being “gracious” and “helpful” and is encouraged by his boss to teach that attitude to the other workers (*K*, 9). Apio is not only showing that the hospitality and graciousness displayed for the tourist industry may well be a *mise-en-scène*, but in a somewhat Brechtian fashion he is, at least for the ‘tour guide moments’ of the play, employing a defamiliarization effect, a didactic distancing of the viewer from the performed action that is aimed at enhancing the audience’s critical evaluation of its own condition. Alika’s tour guide moments present the local audience of Kumu Kahua with the spectacle of their own touristic commodification, and underline in an implicit way what Noenoe Silva defines as “the process of writing Kanaka out of their own history”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 121.

---

In fact, the role for which Alika is being paid by Aloha Tours is to reinforce and justify the hegemonic narration of the paradise scenario, to produce a non-threatening and pleasant version of Hawaiian history and identity for the mainland tourists' consumption. In this version pre-annexation Hawai'i was a feudal country, Queen Lili'uokalani "gave up her throne" and the archipelago was eager to be "admitted" as a State (24–25).

ALIKA: I can't do dis fo' da res' of my life. I hate it. I hate da lies I havta tell. I hate da smell of coconut oil and da burned skin. I hate da cheap plastic leis, and da stupid assholes calling me one Indian and wanting fo' take my pitcha. (46)

As the play unfolds, Alika's disgust for his job and for the speeches he has to memorize and perform increases to the breaking point, when he refuses to recite his script and decides to tell a modified version, closer to the historical facts (K, 52). Central to his job is the performance of the spirit of *aloha*, which has been vastly co-opted and commodified by the tourist industry. In the compulsive industrial ethos it has become a controlling image, a repressive myth able to "disparage Native resistance to the tourist industry".<sup>33</sup> This oppressive, monetary connotation of *aloha* is well known to Alika: "My boss tells me fo work hard, spread da aloha, it's gonna pay off" (K, 49). It is also known to his mother, who is both pointing to the commercialization of the concept and to the necessity for Hawaiians to cherish it and embrace it: "You have to carry the burden, and to do that you have to keep your aloha for life. I know it sounds stupid, our aloha's been sold and used, but for us Hawaiians it's all we got" (K, 47–48).

<sup>33</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 42.

## Familial Geographies and Territorial Genealogies, or the Interdependence of Land and Family

The play is rich in monetary metaphors and to some extent the central struggle of the protagonist originates explicitly from issues of employment, money, and economic evaluation. Many western theorists of masculinity studies have highlighted that dominant performances of masculinity, "hegemonic masculinities" to borrow from Robert Connell,<sup>34</sup> are connected with the management of privilege and power, where economic status is one of the central concerns. Michael Kimmel in his *Manhood in America* locates a primary arena for the performance of masculinity in the public sphere, in the realm of marketplace competition.<sup>35</sup> According to Kimmel, the defining feature of the dominant version of contemporary masculinity is that it is not verified or certified once and for all, as was the case for the earlier tradition of the "Genteel Patriarch" whose masculinity was validated by his possession of the land, and of the "Heroic Artisan" whose gender identity was securely tied to his artisan republican virtues.<sup>36</sup> The new masculine identity that emerged in the nineteenth century and became dominant in the twentieth century is for Kimmel the self-made man. The self-made man is defined by his "successful participation in marketplace competition";<sup>37</sup> deprived of an essential status, he is the product of

<sup>34</sup> Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia", in Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2007), 80–92.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 83.

---

his continuous and compulsive economic performance and he is crucially bound to notions of competition and success.

Since in a capitalist system the objective is profit and upward mobility, and since Alika's promotion to a managerial position could be simply a success story from a capitalist standpoint, most of what happens in *Kāmau* and the violent contradictions the young man faces take place outside the ideological frame evoked by the notion of the self-made man. In other words, Alika's story explodes definitions of male identity fashioned exclusively along the lines of economic success; in fact, uncritically accepting the promotion will question Alika's identity as a Hawaiian man, even as it will enable him to maintain and strengthen his role as economic supporter of his extended family.

There are many points in the play in which we see the dominance and pervasiveness of the capitalist system of investment, accumulation, and profit, but there are also other examples in which the market logic is defied, especially in the evocation of traditional Hawaiian fishing practice. Here the first fish is spared and thrown back into the ocean (K, 20), or fish are given away as a gift (K, 42), or again the very abundance of tuna is spiritualized, cherished, and preserved, untouched (K, 50). It is in relation to the *‘āina* that the market logic is utterly challenged.

Near the end of the play, Michael tells Alika a story that powerfully illustrates this point. Years earlier, their grandfather Tūtū Man had brought a young Michael to an area of the bay in which a multitude of tuna were mating. The grandfather invested the young nephew with the responsibility of taking care of that bay and the shrine (*ko‘a*) it hosted and to protect the fish, like his ancestors had been doing for generations. After Tūtū Man's death, however, tourist boats found the bay and Michael was powerless in the face of the hysterical slaughter the *haole* enacted on the mass of tuna. The scene highlights the structures of feeling that are inherent in Hawaiian nationalism and illustrates how, as Tengan also notices, “the remaking of the self ... proceeds through the reconnection with and retelling of mo‘olelo”,<sup>38</sup> legends, personal stories, and histories.

The words Tūtū Man told the young Michael in this memory capture a fundamental tension that pervades the entire play: “Nāu e mālama i kēia kai a me kēia ‘āina, i ola ku‘u ‘ohana” (K, 50), or as Apio translates at the end of his published play, “Yours is the responsibility to care for this ocean and this land, (and if you do) your family will thrive”. In other words, taking care (*mālama*) of the land (*‘āina*) is inseparable from taking care of one's family (*‘ohana*). Significantly, however, in Alika's dilemma we can trace these two terms as the opposite poles of a dichotomy: if the young Kanaka accepts the job and its consequences, he will be able to take care of his family as he will have secured the economic means for doing so. On the other hand, only by refusing the job will he be faithful to his responsibility to the land. The conflict is structured around these two ideals which – and this is the main point of rupture with Hawaiian traditions – seem to be antithetical.

The care for the land, *mālama ‘āina*, is the most traditional focus of nationalist claims. In its more popular formulation as “love for the land”, *aloha ‘āina*, it was

<sup>38</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 14.

also central to the anti-annexation struggle. The two words function approximately as “nationalism” or even “patriotism”, with the radical differences that I discussed above regarding the gendering of the archipelago and the fact that this ‘nation’ evokes not a people or a race, as Noenoe Silva’s *Aloha Betrayed* powerfully documents, but primarily the *land*. Besides being part of the name of an activist group and the name of a late nineteenth century newspaper, the term indicated the nationalist movement: “throughout the struggle Kanaka Maoli who worked to retain the sovereignty of their own nation called themselves ‘*ka po‘e aloha ‘āina*’”, the people who love the land.<sup>39</sup> The character of Michael is, especially in the sequel *Kāmau A‘e*, an explicit embodiment of this nationalist ethos, with his connection to the masculine genealogy of Tūtū Man, which occupies in that play an analogous position to Mom’s character in *Kāmau*.

Alika, instead, seems to prioritize his responsibility to his family: “All I like do is keep my ‘ohana togedda – four peopo’. I tell everybody dis is paradise – how frickin’ hard could it be fo’ keep four peopo’ togedda in paradise?” (K, 49). The character of Mom, in her often confusing lines, endorses the need for Alika to accept the job as necessary for the survival of his family. However, the inextricability of the two concepts of ‘ohana and ‘āina that is so clearly exemplified in their grandfather’s words can be traced throughout the play from the words of a young Michael who exclaims that “when you in da ocean, you wit’ youa ‘ohana” (K, 31) to Alika’s overall realization that moving away from the beach will mean to “sell out my cousin, my brudda, my ‘ohana” (K, 47). The overlapping of these two Hawaiian concepts is the result of particular ways of defining the relationship between people and land. It is also primarily connected with the pivotal importance of genealogy for Hawaiian culture and its conflation of time and space. In fact, as the Hawaiian scholar Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa writes, “genealogies *are* the Hawaiian concept of time, and they order the space around us .... genealogies anchor Hawaiians to our place in the universe”.<sup>40</sup>

The final scene of the play was born from the improvisations of the actors and constitutes an anxiety-inducing crescendo in which the offstage voices of the characters interpellate the protagonist with a wide range of expectations, evoked responsibilities, and things that he should be doing or not be doing. At the apex of this crescendo, Alika grabs his Aloha shirt and wears it, and in the same way the play began, he addresses the audience introducing it to another Aloha Tour. The conclusion of the play provoked strong reactions from the members of the audience “who were actually calling out to him ... not to go back to his job”.<sup>41</sup> It was also criticized for being the product of a defeatist attitude by many activists who were instead hoping for a more positive ending.<sup>42</sup>

The play articulates a unique perspective on the life of Hawaiian men in the contemporary political and social context of the archipelago. It refuses the clear-cut dichotomies commonly associated with nationalist militancy and cannot fully embrace the heroism of Hawaiian resistance invoked by many activists. Apio is staging a complex struggle that keeps unfolding in the present: the dark tones of

<sup>39</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Carroll, “Local Theater”, 138.

---

<sup>43</sup> Private correspondence with the author, 25 Aug 2010.

*Kāmanu*'s conclusion are a consequence of this logic. In a private correspondence about the 2007 restaging of the play and about its past and future staging in other Pacific Islands (New Caledonia and Solomon Islands), Apio noticed how critical it was that in 2007 and to this day, "with respect to our ability to govern ourselves and more independently chart our own future, not much had changed since '94. At least in '94 ... we had the sense that change was indeed possible".<sup>43</sup> However, *Kāmanu* is not meant to be a feel-good experience, a testament to Hawaiian courage and determination, but rather an invitation to debate; its foremost interest lies in exploring the feeling of loss and the everyday struggle of Hawaiian men while evoking the wider sociopolitical connotations of their situation.

## Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, Richard Hamasaki, and the Afterlives of (Native/non-native) Collaboration against Empire in Hawai'i

And because they are with us *in spirit*, they are whom  
we turn to for *inspiration*, and in that sense they are  
*always* returning.

(Rodney Morales, *Ho'ibo'i Hou*)

I tell you his spirit for me is always here; sometimes I can  
just feel him, his presence and I feel as if he's constantly  
inspiring me.

(Richard Hamasaki, "Interview")

When Wayne Kaumualii Westlake passed away in 1984 at the age of thirty-six in Hawai'i, many of his poems and writings remained unpublished. They sat in boxes in the Hawai'i-Island shed of Westlake's former partner, Mei-Li M. Siy, for seventeen years, until Siy organized and sent them along to Richard Hamasaki, who had been Westlake's friend, fellow-poet, and collaborator. Hamasaki and Westlake had worked together on a range of literary-pedagogic projects, increasingly committed to the exigencies of Hawai'i as a space of creativity and struggle, from editing the journal *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1976-1984) to founding a course on the Ethnic Writings of Hawai'i at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. Their aim, at a time when there was hardly any institutional support for polemical art by local and indigenous artists, was to "publish works which depicted a 'consciousness' of Hawai'i's contemporary social, economic, and political situation",<sup>1</sup> and to encourage Hawai'i writers to explore their own situatedness within Oceania. For Hamasaki, who had long sustained a literary dialogue with Westlake within his own work, Westlake's spirit was in the poems: "his / poems", as he wrote in the poem "Westlake", were in a sense "his / bones".<sup>2</sup> To re-present them required loving attentiveness. There were numerous editorial decisions to be made: which poems to include and which versions to prefer; what contextual and biographical materials to provide. The best guidance he received, Hamasaki writes in the afterword to *Westlake: Poems*, which finally appeared in 2009, was to "be true to Westlake".<sup>3</sup>

The question of how to "be true" to one's friend is an old one in the European philosophical tradition, which has come back in the work of Jacques Derrida and others, for whom friendship can be seen as modeling the political. Relations among citizens in the realized democratic state are to resemble those between friends. To be friends in opposition to the state, as in the case with friendships between Natives and Settlers in an occupied or colonized place, is to point to flaws in governance. For Leela Gandhi, in *Affective Communities*, collaborative friendships thus offer a powerful critique of both the colonial state and its pure negation in forms of anti-

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hamasaki, "Singing in Their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English", MA Thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 1989), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Hamasaki, *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (Honolulu: Noio Press, 2000), 11; hereafter referenced in the text as *SBD*.

<sup>3</sup> Hamasaki, Introduction, *Westlake: Poems by Wayne Kaumualii Westlake (1947-1984)*, ed. by Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 243; hereafter referenced in the text as *W*.



---

colonial nationalist thought. Personal collaborations are regarded here in the fully-loaded political sense, as re-significations of the image of collaboration with the State, whether as direct collusion or insufficient resistance (passivity). In developing radical, improvisational, inventive projects, the friendships that Gandhi discusses refuse “alignment along the secure axes of filiation”, thus imagining the postcolonial future as differently organized.<sup>4</sup>

Given the centrality of mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) in kanaka maoli (Hawaiian) thought, and the ways in which U.S. State attempts to diminish the significance of mo‘okū‘auhau are legally deployed against Hawaiian ‘entitlements’, alliances in Hawai‘i that elide identity-recognition run a different set of risks than those Gandhi describes in *fin-de-siècle* India. For one thing, the current call of the U.S. State is to see Native/non-native differences as matters of ‘race’ or ‘ethnic heritage’ in ways that would abrogate all kanaka maoli land and resource claims. One might then distinguish between the senses in which the State denies that the situation in Hawai‘i is (any longer) colonial, and the suggestion on the part of a line of legal scholars/Independence-activists that, since Hawai‘i was a progressive multi-ethnic state at the time of the overthrow, citizenship in a reconstituted Kingdom would not exclude Settlers/non-natives.<sup>5</sup> The first position (classic ‘settler colonialism’) displaces the Native through assimilation; the second, more focused on citizenship, would neither foreclose indigenous claims or the possibility of non-native belonging in an Independent Hawai‘i. In this sense, Gandhi’s suggestion that dissident collaborative circles, based on affective connections and outlooks that exceed issue-specific tactical alliances, can reinfect the tone and terms of political discussion, is apposite. Within such a project the friendship and dissident artistic projects of Hamasaki (who always foregrounds his own position as Japanese-American) and Westlake (who writes as an Hawaiian) figure one example of a mode and space of what might be called Native/non-native<sup>6</sup> collaboration against Empire within the arts. Such collaborative friendships have a history in Hawai‘i, become a usable inheritance, and have an uncanny power to continue generating effects.

Much of friendship theory emphasizes death as the time from which the meaning of the friendship, and the principles upon which it was founded, are to be reassessed or reaffirmed. What is honored in the friend is recuperated and faced outward toward the reader as the commitment to shared ideals. To accept oneself as heir to the editorial problem of being true to one’s friend’s literary remains stimulates such a process, in which the being-possessed of mourning becomes a form of continuing the collaborative relation and activity. To ask the question of how the friend would want his writings to appear, were he present, is in a sense to feel the friend as a presence in the now-context in which the poems are consolidated into a collection bearing his name. If one were not to impose one’s own vision and shape on the legacy of the friend, it would seem necessary to keep on collaborating with his spirit, which would in a sense keep coming back. Hauntology, as Jacques Derrida calls such returns, is when a particular mourned spirit shows the uncanny power to make injunctions upon the living. There are always, in such returns,

<sup>4</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of the ways in which Asian settler claims to belonging categorically obstruct kanaka maoli drives for self-determination, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> My preference for the term “non-native” over “settler” in this essay is not meant to question either that subjects are prepositioned or that a structural critique of colonial/occupation remains necessary, so much as to emphasize the force of collaborative relationships against the state.

several spirits in the archive that is attributed to a proper name. But the spirit or “specter” that is most compelling, Derrida writes, is the one who speaks to a crisis that remains urgent, offering direction at a time of an “out-of-joint-ness” that can only be imaged as “set right” or made more “just” in a “future-to-come”. (Place the Hawaiian word pono where Derrida uses “justice” and the theory here becomes more grounded in the poetics and priorities of Hawai‘i). The specter wants to cross the temporal gap, and can even seem to speak from the future, having gone in poetic flashes and revolutionary language conjunctions past the consciousnesses of those who read it in the present.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1994), 42. See Rob Wilson’s “Tracking Jack Spicer” on Spicer’s “lowghost” poetics that keep returning from the future (*Jacket*, 7 (1999), <<http://jacketmagazine.com/07/spicer-wilson.html>>, 1 August 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Craig Howes, Introduction, *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future*, ed. by Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 5.

In Hamasaki’s writings, ‘Westlake’ is, among other things, just such a visionary, haunting ‘specter’, who speaks through his poems and activist writings to an ongoing crisis, the loss of sovereignty, which can be seen as the root of many of the spiritual and physical ailments in Hawai‘i. One of the themes emerging from a recent collection of essays on ‘value’ in Hawai‘i, Craig Howes writes, is that “Hawai‘i will remain economically, socially, and ethically troubled as long as we refuse to come fully to terms with Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty”.<sup>8</sup> One could say, echoing Marx, that a specter is haunting Hawai‘i – the specter of sovereignty. This is to recall a line of thought in Hawai‘i, from the time of the overthrow forward, which prizes home rule, which was supported at the time of the illegal overthrow of the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hawai‘i (in 1893) by most kānaka maoli and many non-natives. This line of thought was vigorously reanimated in the late 1970s, with the Hawaiian Renaissance and activist land struggles, in relation to which what might be considered the beginning of an oppositional literary arts culture began to emerge, taking a variety of lines.

The fault lines within such ‘localism’, in its literary form, became evident in the mid-1980s, and were debated through the 1990s, breaking around the question of whether Hawai‘i was to be thought of as affectively part of ‘America’ – as region, ‘local’ movement, or sub-nation within it, for which ‘Bamboo Ridge’ (the focal point of much of the debate about the politics of ‘local’ literature, despite, or because, its editors take a generally apolitical stance toward literature) might figure as sign – or taken to be an occupied/colonized place, whose subjects might form alliances internally, articulating their politics with indigenous claims, in support of the principle of sovereignty, and externally, in relation to decolonizing movements in the Pacific and elsewhere. To dissident creative writer/artists in Hawai‘i, the call of the U.S. state to a participatory citizenship built on Hawaiian displacement or legal assimilation inspires no affective loyalty. In this light, while there is a maverick, irreverent spirit of Westlake that Hamasaki invokes in his framings of his friend’s work, the name ‘Westlake’ evokes and sparks a mode of critique, tethered to an unequivocal belief “in a separatist relation” with the U.S. (*W*, xx), while internationalist in its poetic formation and sensibilities. This ‘Westlake’ names the spirit of a trajectory seen from its activist endpoint; the title of the book containing his poetic legacy would simply be his name, *Westlake: Poems*.

In the most immediate senses, Westlake, Hamasaki, and what began as what might be called the *Seaweeds and Constructions* hui (group) worked toward creating a

---

space for a dissident Hawai'i poetics that situated itself within decolonizing Pacific frames. Their tactics were symbolically significant – confrontations (in letters to the editorial page, interventions at meetings, readings, and performances) of a set of institutions, such as the publishing culture and arts-funding organizations that did not at the time support local or indigenous work. It meant attempting to trouble at the curricular and pedagogical levels an educational system which undervalued kanaka maoli and Pacific literary traditions and productions. It meant being at odds with an 'English Department poetry culture' that had virtually no local or indigenous representation, and that was seen as promoting the ideas that fine literary models and teachers had to be imported from elsewhere, and that 'Hawai'i literature' was a colorful form of U.S. regionalism, best expressed through polished formal techniques that studiously avoided political engagement.<sup>9</sup>

From a radical viewpoint, all of these biases could be seen as elaborations – whether consciously maintained or not – of the workings of 'Empire', in the multiple and shifting senses of the term. One could refer here to an Imperial Anglo-Americanism, a set of anglo-centric attitudes about the meaning and function of literary arts culture, against which 'local' and indigenous peoples in Hawai'i began to make imaginative counter-claims; military-backed U.S. colonialism and the multi-sited project of interpellating subjects to collaborate with the U.S. State, which could be opposed by struggles for sovereignty and/or a commitment to leftist internationalism; and the exploitative and environmentally-destructive Empire of transnational corporatism, something that Hardt and Negri would come to describe in *Empire*, against which a pan-Pacific and global oppositional culture was forming across the Pacific.<sup>10</sup> Toward this end, *Seaweeds and Constructions* was ground-breaking in attempting to affirm cross-Pacific linkages as an imaginative correlative to political principle. Westlake and Hamasaki wrote in an introduction to an 'Hawai'i Edition' of *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* of beginning "artistic and literary exchanges between Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands",<sup>11</sup> not just to trade stories or engage in comparativism, but to empower collective expression and critique. The final issue that Hamasaki and Westlake co-edited, A Pacific Islands Collection issue of *Seaweeds and Constructions* (a collection of Pacific writing illustrated by Hawai'i-based artists), was presented as an expression of "cultural freedom and responsibility, a sensibility for human justice and a deep respect for the Earth" that were aimed to "stir thoughts and discussion in our .... exploited and endangered world".<sup>12</sup>

To advocate for and perform an understanding of the arts as an attempt to move the heart and consciousness politically against the structures of Empire in Hawai'i required for Westlake and Hamasaki both a highly place-centered, painterly aesthetic, informed by kanaka maoli expressive traditions, and an internationalist understanding of poetry. It eventuated in an ongoing commitment to an aesthetic that was multi-sourced and risk-taking, drawing openly upon the modes of anti-materialist, anti-exploitative thought to mourn and challenge what had and was being done to the 'āina (that which feeds, environment), indigenous and local cultures, and the

<sup>9</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask wrote in 1984 that there were only two small outlets for indigenous writing in Hawai'i at the time, *Seaweeds and Constructions* and *Ramrod*. "Indigenous Writers and the Colonial Situation", *Pacific Islanders in Communication*, 13.1 (1984), 77–81.

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hamasaki and Wayne Westlake, Forward, *Hawaii Edition. Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 6.1 (1981), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hamasaki, Preface, in *A Pacific Islands Collection. Seaweeds and Constructions*, 7 (1983), viii.

consciousness of Hawai‘i’s people, particularly k  naka maoli. Both Westlake and Hamasaki draw upon the wisdom and humor of Chinese sage-poets, dharma bums, Poundian modernism, and Japanese short satiric forms in developing a poetics that is openly about consciousness-raising. In Westlake’s oft-cited concrete poems, for instance, there is a subtle layering of what look like modernist-inflected Asian forms (haiku, Chinese ideograms) with a complex critique, as a poem which begins:

HAWAIIANS  
EAT  
FISH  
EAT  
HAWAIIANS. (*W*, 52, 225)

As ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui notes, the line contains both an injunction (Hawaiians should eat fish, or a traditional diet, avoiding unwholesome imports) and an historical echo of the 19th century apprehension that Hawai‘i would be consumed by colonial powers (David Malo’s warning that “they will eat us up”).<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the poem might be situated within the conventions of joyous recognition that all human things both consume and are consumed, and that this is as much a principle of artistic creativity as it is of physical survival.<sup>14</sup>

In Westlake’s more explicitly activist mode the emphasis is on how these natural cycles have been perverted, and with what effect. The concrete poem “HULI” (*W*, 130), which consists simply of the block-lettered word ‘huli’ turned upside-down, says it compactly. The word, one of whose primary meanings is ‘to turn’, evokes the overthrow of the Hawaiian government (ho‘ohuli aupuni), marked to this day by the flying upside-down of the Hawaiian Flag. Language in Hawai‘i has itself been ‘turned over’ to English: “Language the missionaries taught us was broken glass”, Westlake writes, echoing postcolonial invocations of Shakespeare’s Caliban (“you taught me language”): “Our tongues are still bleeding” (*W*, 225). The stress in a number of hard-hitting poems falls upon the crazy-making effects that flow from the loss of sovereignty. In literary terms, this might mean the sense of being held within restrictive institutional or imaginative structures, which, in Hamasaki’s remembrance, created in Westlake a “raging anger over his own brains being washed and hung out to dry upon line after line of dead literature”.<sup>15</sup> In material terms, it meant confronting a system, what Westlake spelled out as “Amerika”, in which “THE NAME OF THE GAME / IS PROFIT” (*W*, 143). In the face of the ugliness this produced, Westlake wrote poems of the mind in the act of recording impressions as it is acted upon. In this mode of embodied critique, Westlake documents the polluting effects of colonialism from interior perspectives, speaking through personae in a poetic diary mode (*W*, xi). The process makes his mind feel like a trash receptacle: “Wish I / could empty / my Mind / like an ashtray ...” (*W*, 171). Redemption feels possible only within a commercialized logic: “Tomorrow I / plan to cash / in my mind / like an empty / for the deposit!”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “He Lei Ho‘oheno no n   Kau a Kau: Language, Performance, and Form in Hawaiian Poetry”, *Contemporary Pacific* 17.1 (2005), 55–58. See also *W*, 252.

<sup>14</sup> Before theorizing creative writing as a gift akin to sharing food, Lewis Hyde invokes the Upanishads: “O wonderful! / I am food! ... / I eat food! ... / I, who am food, eat the eater of food”. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Hamasaki, “The Full Moon Claimed Westlake”, in *M  lama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, ed. by Dana Naone Hall (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 97.

<sup>16</sup> Westlake, *It’s OK If You Eat Lots of Rice* (Lafayette, IN: High/Coo Press, 1979), unpaginated pamphlet.

The critique of the effects of colonialism on subjectivity, as in much of first-wave Pacific and postcolonial literature, is most pointed in relation to tourism, of which Waikīkī appears as the inverted Mecca. In the poetic sequence, “Down on the Sidewalks in Waikiki”, written between 1972-3 under the pen-name Kamalii Kahewai, and unpublished at Westlake’s death, Waikīkī appears as a brutal physical manifestation of the spiritual desecration of Hawai‘i. The vantage point of the janitor who narrates the poems, “down” on the sidewalk, provides a bardic underview for the poet, who writes, “down on the sidewalk / in waikiki / I / SEE / EVERYTHING”, but who cannot simply observe without fearing for his own mind. When a starving, doped-up man breaks through a plate-glass window looking for BREAD, the janitor has to clean his blood from the bathroom (*W*, 143) and, subsequently, “wring his mind / like a blood-stained sponge” (*W*, 150); after days spent “cleaning piss / off the floor / of the japanese / tourist store” (*W*, 146), the tourists, whose self-crippling ignorance of the political economy behind their own presence in Waikīkī makes them no less complicit in the poet’s eyes, become one “gigantic PIG / PARADE / staggering by ...”. The streets, as a metaphor for mental life in Hawai‘i, come to feel inhabitable: “A SAVAGE / CAN’T LIVE / IN AMERIKA / and Amerika / i tell you / is EVERYWHERE” (*W*, 147); “i watch them / the Pigs – / the Pigs, /they watch me – / it’s enough to drive / any man / CRAZY” (*W*, 152). The kānaka maoli not displaced or made crazy undergo an assault on identity: as the persona of “Native-Hawaiian” puts it:

how we spouse  
 feel Hawaiian anymoa  
 barefeet buying smokes  
 in da seven  
 elevan stoa ... ? (*W*, 189)

The bitter final twist to this sequence is that the poet has chosen to immerse himself in the ugliness of Waikīkī in order to give his poems “bite” (“to give my poems / BITE / i sit all day / down on the / sidewalk / in waikiki” [*W*, 152]).

The sense that “injustice provokes poetry” (*SBD*, 68), and that a kind of ‘guerilla’ stance toward poetry is necessary to provide a biting critique from the margins, is frequently referred to in Hamasaki’s poems, as in a series of serio-comic, itchy poems spoken from the persona “red flea”, which appeared as the spoken-word CD and chapbook *Virtual Fleality* (co-produced with Doug Matsuoka) (see “Guerilla Writers”, in *SBD*, 57). This chastising mode is presented as enervating, and in the poem, “Land of the Dead”, “red flea” visits “the poet Wayne Westlake”, serves him sake, and receives poetic reassurance. The cover of *Virtual Fleality* visually references Westlake’s cover to *Anthology Hawai‘i*, put out by *Seaweeds and Constructions*, with its small red (flea) fingerprint, an echo of Westlake’s signature use of a red Chinese seal. Likewise, the cover of *Westlake: Poems* was designed in fighting red (by Mark Hamasaki) as a companion cover to Hamasaki’s *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (2000), a selection of poems written over a twenty-five year



<sup>17</sup> Mark Hamasaki likewise has had a long, productive collaboration with Kapu Landgraf. See the portfolio co-signed as “Piliāmo‘o”, *Mānoa*, 9.1 (1997), 119–136, and the forthcoming collection of photographs documenting the destructive process of building the H3 highway across O‘ahu.

<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson, *The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 209), 35–37.

period. To read in such moments the ways in which Hamasaki keeps returning to ‘Westlake’ is to feel his alliances to principles of how to be an artist (poet, teacher, editor, music producer) ethically in Hawai‘i.<sup>17</sup>

*Spider Bone Diaries* opens with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of an immense sea of stars, and a luminous moon seemingly stippled with islands as in a map of the Pacific. In the Oceanian context, these skies might recall celestial navigation, and the epic voyages that raised and linked the islands, affirming connections. If the visual image suggests that the collection both honors those voyages and sees its own poetic voyaging as a form of wayfaring, under the wonder and immensity of the world that surrounds human actions, then the chant-like dirge that follows the serigraph introduces Westlake as one of its navigating spirits. “For He Who Wears the Sea Like a Malo” is inscribed “for Wayne Westlake (1947-1984)”. On the facing page is a translation of the poem into Rarotongan by Kauraka Kauraka, which honors Westlake in the sounds of a Pacific language at the outset. As Hamasaki notes, the title and refrain refer to the line “O ka malo kai, malo o ke alii”, used in the eulogy “He Mele Inoa no Naihe” (name song for Naihe), reprinted in Nathaniel Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawai‘i*,<sup>18</sup> in which the malo kai (the ocean as a malo) hides the nakedness of the swimmer. The honored speaker returns, wrapped in the sea, to speak a series of injunctions that pass through Hamasaki to direct the vision of the collection:

listen to our ancestors speaking  
and to those who know ways to heal

Finish what has been started  
placing one stone then another  
to never again be defeated  
and begin rebuilding shelter (*SBD*, 2)

Mourning for Westlake includes a general sense of loss, as well as a resolve to rebuild. Part of what needs finishing but is never quite finished, for Hamasaki, is the process of honoring his friend, tending to his legacy. Placing one stone and then another is in one sense a poetic process of building more habitable, hospitable, protective structures, which is here implicitly compared to building a heiau (shrine) or fortress. By asserting that ‘Westlake’ is with him in spirit from the outset of his collection, Hamasaki performs what is for him one afterlife of collaboration. A certain spirit of ‘Westlake’ enjoins the reader to attend to an as-yet-unfinished process of healing and cultural reorientation. What is spoken *for Westlake* is in a sense spoken *by* or alongside of him or in alliance with his spirit. To open by foregrounding this relation between poet, mourned friend, and a broader sense of mourning suggests that the poems and songs in *Spider Bone Diaries* will never get too far from what ‘Westlake’ represents. That much of the imagery is drawn from Hawaiian culture, Hamasaki writes in a note to the poem, is both a way of honoring Westlake and a performance of the ways in which, as he writes in a note to the poem, the traditions and literatures of Native Hawaiians have “indelibly shaped [his] own poetic voice” (*SBD*, 98).



---

The poem “Westlake”, a few pages later, presents Westlake as a haunting, recurrently spectral presence for the poet, and inscribes his legacy both within a broad activist movement and a collaborative arts circle:

Sometimes

I

see

him

in

a

crowd

still

suffering. (*SBD*, 8)

First brushing against Pound’s impressionistic haiku-like lines, “The apparition of these faces in the crowd”, Hamasaki goes on in the poem to picture a Westlake Agonistes engaged to the point of trembling, suspended in a state of engaged agitation: “His voice / would quiver / hands shake”.<sup>19</sup> The attempt to word his responses to events affects Westlake somatically, and it is the moment of passionate oppositional energy that Hamasaki marks.

His

hands

trembling –

Kaho‘olawe. (*SBD*, 8)

The word ‘Kaho‘olawe’ sounds, for a generation of readers, the cries of protest against the U.S. naval bombing of the island of Kaho‘olawe, and the grief Hawaiian activists felt at the disappearance of George Helm and Kimo Mitchell.<sup>20</sup> Kaho‘olawe hovers over Hamasaki’s collection and keeps coming back as an image of struggle, protest, loss, commitment. *Spider Bone Diaries* closes with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of ocean swells rising like mountains, scattered with ink-stars, over which the phrase, “DEATH AT SEA IS SWEET IF YOU LOVE THE SEA ALL YOUR LIFE” (an allusion to Helm and Mitchell as lost at sea) is repeated as a concrete poem in stacked sentences. On the facing page is a poem titled “‘Alalākeiki”, the name of the channel between Maui and Kaho‘olawe (meaning “child’s wail”), which recalls the “kinship / between islands”, and the ways that the “shoulders” of Haleakalā refuse to let Kaho‘olawe drift (*SBD*, 93). As a teacher in Poets in the Schools on Maui, Westlake had compiled chants, legends, poems, stories by elementary school students about Kaho‘olawe, which were dedicated to Helm and Mitchell, and featured in *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1978) and later “flung like jewels” in Rodney Morales’s *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou*.<sup>21</sup>

The penultimate stanza of “Westlake” positions Westlake explicitly as, for the poet, part of a collaborative circle. (*Seaweeds and Constructions* stopped publication with Westlake’s passing, and was succeeded by *Ramrod* and *O‘ahu Review*, edited by

<sup>19</sup> Hamasaki credits Pound’s work with inspiring a desire to “work collaboratively with other writers, musicians, artists, and printers” (*SB*, 104).

<sup>20</sup> Like nuclear testing in Oceania, the bombardment disregarded the land as living. Helm and Mitchell disappeared while trying to rescue Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer during an occupation of Kaho‘olawe. See Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

---

the poet Joe Balaz, with whom Hamasaki and Doug Matsuoka would collaborate on the amplified-poetry CD *Electric Laulau*). What Hamasaki foregrounds about the group is its conviviality and oppositional thinking:

Westlake, Oliveira, Takahashi, Matsuoka, Hamasaki  
heh, heh, heh ...  
a  
toast  
to

“wrong thinking”. (*SBD*, 10)

Including artists, musicians, and writers, the group produced and distributed their work largely outside of funding structures, designing (through ‘Elepioa press) and printing their work themselves (in collaboration with presses, including Dennis Kawaharada’s Kalamakū and Susan Schultz’s *Tinfish*). Such creative circles, as Michael Farrell describes them, are marked by numerous, untraceable borrowings, conversations, critiques, that come to inform each member’s work. The circles might form through a common set of objections, in an anti-authoritarian mode, something in the spirit of “delinquent gangs”,<sup>22</sup> but they evolve into supportive, creative, durable networks, held through affective connections. Most of what has been done in terms of advancing the literary arts in Hawai‘i, it could be argued, has come out of such small collectives of friends, working to critique, support, and even staple together each other’s art.

Perhaps because the signs of such alliances are often removed or confined to acknowledgement pages, Hamasaki in *Spider Bone Diaries* includes extensive notes, contexts, and literary sources for the poems, and a substantial Introduction and Afterword to Westlake’s poems. There is an emphasis in this on documenting work that was shared, that emerged out of movements and in relation to events, on recognizing personal identity as formed within a web of traditions and relationships, so that the poems exist at some level as both personal history and an annotated record of a poetic response to a history upon which future generations of artists in Hawai‘i might build. The history of the poems comes to include their publishing histories, which includes a sense of the restricted options for oppositional art (on one’s own terms) in Hawai‘i. For Hamasaki, then, it couldn’t help but seem that the difficulty in publishing Westlake’s work emblemized publishing culture in Hawai‘i. The same year that he received the box of Westlake’s poems, Hamasaki answered Lee Tonouchi’s question about “whether or not anybody will evah get around to publishing one Wayne Westlake collection” with the suggestion that:

some people didn’t understand what he [Westlake] was doing, what he wrote about, how he wrote about it. Everything takes time, I don’t think it’s lost at all. I think his spirit will live, y’know. Whether anybody does anything about it from now on, his work has already been documented, and I think people can search it out and discover it.<sup>23</sup>

It thus seemed significant that, when *Westlake: Poems* was finally accepted by the University of Hawai‘i Press (as part of its Talanoa: Contemporary Pacific Literature

<sup>22</sup> Michael P. Ferrell, *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16.

<sup>23</sup> Lee A. Tonouchi, “Da State of Unlearning: One Profile on Richard Hamasaki”, *Hybolic*, 2 (2001), 84.

---

series) and fully edited and designed, Hamasaki was required to provide a subvention of several thousand dollars for publication. Hamasaki's response was to turn the process of raising funds for the subvention into both a pedagogic protest moment, a rally for the dissident arts themselves, and a celebration of the meaning and performance qualities of Westlake's legacy. The publication process of *Westlake: Poems*, at least for a moment, seemed an allegory of the situation that Westlake and Hamasaki had critiqued. Seeing the book into print highlighted both the historic lack of support and venue for dissident kanaka maoli artists (although now, within the changing structure of Empire, this was perhaps less an issue of ideological blockage than of the University of Hawai'i Press's acting like a bottom-line-driven corporation) and its undoing through the involvement of the arts community. The existence of the volume *Westlake: Poems* in its edited form would be a testament to the power of the spirit of a friendship and collaboration to keep sprouting new life; the hui that Hamasaki assembled to organize the fund-raiser for the subvention, which received the name "Ho'ūlu Hou Wayne Westlake" from Kapu Landgraf, came together in the name of and as an extension of a larger collaborative project. 'Ho'ūlu' might be translated as 'excite', 'taunt', 'stir up' and 'hou' as 'again', 'anew', or 'freshly': Westlake's words and example were to return as inspiration and provocation. The kaona (veiled meaning) of 'Ho'ūlu' included a reference to the word "ulu", not just as growth, but as breadfruit, one of Westlake's 'aumākua (family deities, ancestors) (see *SBD*, 251).

The fund-raiser illustrated a degree of responsiveness that marked a shift in consciousness about the value of dissident art, and its place in the community. Around one-hundred local artists, writers, and performers contributed to the event, held in 2006, which included a silent auction of donated literature and art. The funds raised far exceeded what was required for the subvention, and the surplus was donated to Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, which publishes *Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, to establish the Wayne Kaumualii Westlake monograph series, under the editorship of ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, that would publish works by kanaka maoli artists. To support a journal that maintains a distinct space of articulation for kōnaka maoli was illustrative of the honoring and valuing of kanaka maoli culture that Hamasaki saw as fundamental to his own art, and fundamentally behind his collaborative work in the arts with Westlake. Poetry collections by Māhealani Wendt-Perez (*Ulubaimalama*, 2007)<sup>24</sup> and by Brandy Nālani McDougall (*The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai*, 2008)<sup>25</sup> appeared in this series ahead of *Westlake: Poems*, which was finally launched in 2009, by another gathering of artists, who were asked to choose poems of Westlake's to perform. This was another occasion for the community to celebrate Westlake's legacy, hear ways in which his poetry spoke to and through people, and publically celebrate the ways in which the spirit of an old collaboration can have rich afterlives and keep coming back.

Among those poets who read Westlake's poems at the launching, it was the irreverent artist and activist 'Westlake' who seemed uppermost to consciousness. It is this 'Westlake', under whose accessible but layered line runs a bass-note of

<sup>24</sup> Māhealani Perez-Wendt, *Ulubaimalama* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, *The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

---

<sup>26</sup> Kimo Armitage et al., eds.,  
*The Statehood Project: A  
Spontaneous Collaboration* (Fat  
Ulu Productions, 2009).

mourning, who resurfaces strikingly in contemporary Hawai‘i writing. For instance, a dramatic response to the 50th Anniversary of Hawai‘i’s admission as a U.S. State (*The Statehood Project*),<sup>26</sup> performed at Kumu Kahua Theater by the group Fat ‘Ulu in the same year of the Westlake launching, included Westlake’s poem “Statehood” as a refrain:

15 years today  
    since STATEHOOD  
it’s raining  
i feel like  
    crying .... (*W*, 125)

Ho‘iho‘i (return/restore) speaks to the diaspora of Native Hawaiians from Hawai‘i and the inundation of non-Hawaiian ideas and values on Hawaiian land and the need to *holehole* (strip away) them.

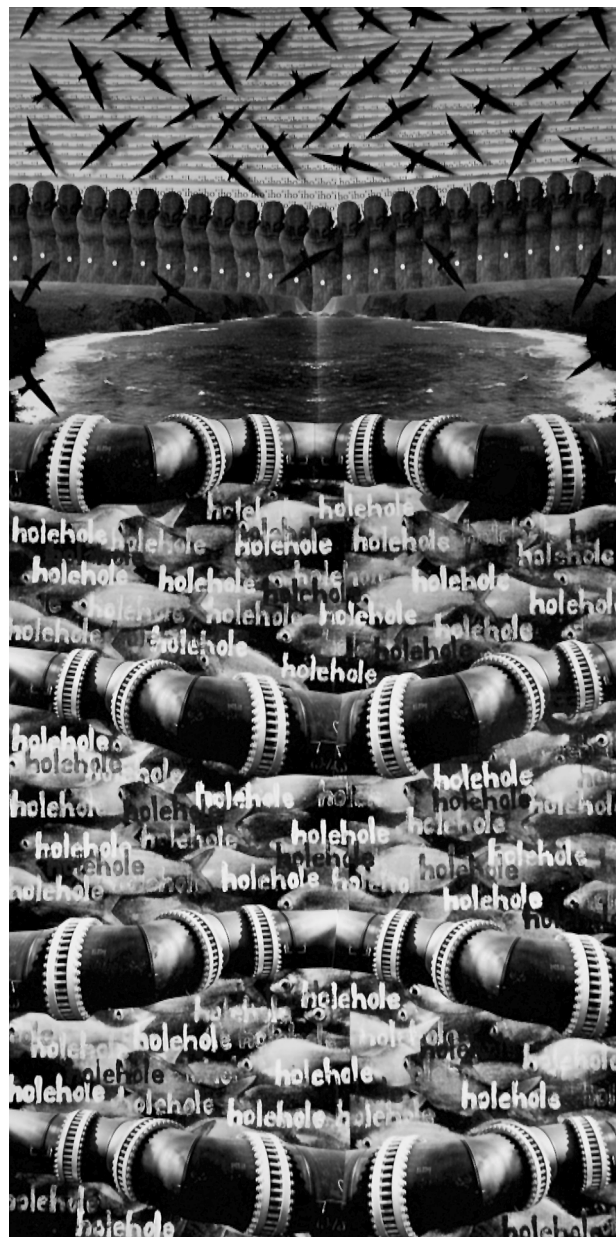


Fig.1 - Kapulani Landgraf, *Ho‘iho‘i*, Hilina ‘Ehu 2010, hand-stamped silver gelatin collage, 48x24x1 inch., courtesy of the author.



## Toward a Truly Sustainable Hawai'i: Sustaining the Native Hawaiian Sense of Place

<sup>1</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). See also Noel Kent, *Hawaii: Islands under the Influence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, "Hawaiian Sustainability", in Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, eds., *The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Kalo*, or taro, is the staple of the Native Hawaiian diet and, according to Hawaiian cosmogony, it is also an ancestor of the Hawaiian people.

<sup>4</sup> Lilikalā Kame'eleiwi, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Aī?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>5</sup> See Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1998); Gregory Cajete, "A Sense of Place", in *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996).

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'āina i ka Pono  
(The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness)  
(Hawai'i State motto)

A hot topic worldwide, sustainability represents one of the biggest issues at stake for Hawai'i today, given its continued state as an occupied nation and a highly militarized zone, as well as its island configuration and fragile ecosystem. The accelerated urban development spurred by corporate tourism in the past forty years has further raised the cost of housing and living, while also strongly impacting the local environment and destroying numerous Native cultural sites, including *heiau*, or religious temples, and ancient burial grounds.<sup>1</sup> Discussing sustainability in the Hawai'i context, therefore, means not only discussing the ecological future of the archipelago and its self-sustaining potential, but also acknowledging and evaluating the past and present exploitation of the indigenous natural and cultural resources through colonization, militarization, and globalization. More importantly, as scholar Davianna McGregor points out, it means promoting a notion of sustainability that is built on, and respectful of the "indigenous spiritual knowledge of the land, and for the Kānaka 'Ōiwi [Native Hawaiian] ancestors who provided stewardship for the land".<sup>2</sup> The Hawaiian expressions *mālama 'āina* (To care for the land) and *aloha 'āina* (Love of the land) illustrate the Native Hawaiian perspective on the relation between human and natural spheres, as it is based upon a relation of mutual understanding and caring. As scholar Lilikalā Kame'eleiwi explains:

In traditional Hawaiian society ... it is the duty of younger siblings and junior lineages to love, honor, and serve their elders. This is the pattern that defines the Hawaiian relationship to the *'āina* [land] and to the *kalo*<sup>3</sup> that together feed *Ka Lāhui Hawai'i* [Hawaiian Nation] .... The Hawaiian does not desire to conquer his elder female sibling, the *'āina*, but to take care of her, to cultivate her properly, and to make her beautiful with neat gardens and careful husbandry.<sup>4</sup>

Kame'eleiwi's statement shows how intimate the relation to the land is within Native Hawaiian culture as well as within other indigenous cultures around the world. It also illustrates a striking difference with the Western and capitalist ideas of landscape and land, which assume an external subject in the act of observing, controlling, buying, and selling.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the cultural, spiritual, and familial qualities of this relation set the indigenous perspective apart and beyond the international environmental movement and ecological thinking. Rather, Native Hawaiian culture offers a distinct, indigenous "sense of place".<sup>6</sup> Hawaiian scholar George Kanahale defines the Hawaiian sense of place as the Hawaiian people's



---

ability to relate to, and to know their space environment through language, astronomy, oral narratives, dance, and place names.<sup>7</sup> Given the Hawaiians' relation to, and knowledge of Hawaiian land, respecting and learning from their indigenous sense of place is essential for Hawai'i's community at large to build an ethically sustainable future for Hawai'i. Supporting sustainability in Hawai'i therefore means sustaining Native Hawaiian access rights to their ancestral land and cultural values.

In the following pages, I will explore issues of sustainability, as they are being discussed within Hawai'i's political, cultural, and academic circles, and as they have been represented by its contemporary literary communities since the 1960s. Through a comparison of these two spheres, I hope to show how the different and conflicting senses of place at stake within Hawai'i's contemporary scenario – as they are “known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested and struggled over”<sup>8</sup> – have over time not only contributed to the silencing of Native Hawaiian rights, but also represented a major obstacle to creating a truly sustainable way of living in Hawai'i. Fortunately, this situation has slowly started to change in the last few years, especially thanks to a growing support for the Native Hawaiian culture and rights on the part of the local community. For Hawai'i to become truly sustainable, however, it is necessary that the local community continue on this route, and toward a stronger and more consistent affirmation of Native Hawaiians' culture and their relation to land. Once the Native Hawaiian idea of sustainability becomes a socio-political and cultural reality, it can serve as an example for other ‘small places’ in the world struggling in the current globalized economy.<sup>9</sup> The Hawai'i example shows the importance of indigenous and non-indigenous groups working together to preserve the land and a close connection to it. What follows is the result of my seven-year-long living experience in Honolulu and my research experience at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. While my insights into Hawai'i's culture remain those of an outsider, I have personally witnessed the everyday struggles of the local population to survive in a costly and unsustainable tourist island-society.

## Sustainability in Hawai'i: A Brief Overview

The drastic changes to Hawai'i's sustainability in the last forty years have certainly not gone without notice in the local community. In particular, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a strong response to the extremely negative effects of overdevelopment on Hawai'i's natural and cultural environment. The protest organized by the inhabitants of Kalama Valley, as well as Waiāhole and Waikāne Valleys, against corporate development of the areas and the threat of their eviction helped the local community fully understand the dangers behind the local politics of development and encouraged them to take action against these politics.<sup>10</sup> The tenacious activity of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) to stop the exploitation of the island of Kaho'olawe as a site for military bombing practice, as well as Hawaiian activists George Helm and Kimo Mitchell's deaths during one of the

<sup>7</sup> George S. Kanahele, *Kū Kanaka: Stand Tall, A Search for Hawaiian Values* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 175.

<sup>8</sup> Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Firth, “Globalization and the Pacific Agenda”, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12.1 (2000), 178–192.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Nakamoto, “Land and Environment”, in Robert H. and Anne B. Mast, eds., *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 91–101.

<sup>11</sup> Kyle Kajihiro, "The Militarizing of Hawai'i: Occupation, Accommodation and Resistance", in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 170–194.

<sup>12</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 66.

<sup>13</sup> George S. Kanahale, *Restoring Hawaiianess to Waikiki* (Honolulu: G. S. Kanahale, 1993), 175.

<sup>14</sup> Serge A. Marek, "Waikiki Virtual Reality: Space, Place, and Representation in the Waikiki Master Plan", MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma, *Historic Waikiki* (Honolulu: DownWind Productions, 2001), <<http://www.downwindproductions.com>>, 10 August 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai'i* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 92.

<sup>17</sup> Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism", in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 31–38.

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see the UH Office of Sustainability website: *SustainableUH* (2009), <<http://sustainable.hawaii.edu>>, 13 March 2011.

PKO's landings on the island, contributed to enhancing local awareness of the ongoing military abuses of Hawaiian land.<sup>11</sup> This feeling of protest ultimately turned into a Native rights movement – the Hawaiian Renaissance – that asserted "Native forms of sovereignty based on indigenous birthrights to land and sea".<sup>12</sup>

The many accomplishments of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty and cultural movements in the last twenty years – the establishment of Hawaiian language immersion schools, the culturally-based Native Hawaiian charter school movement, and numerous other cultural education programs – have been accompanied by a growing interest in a sustainable future for Hawai'i on the part of the larger population of the islands. An attempt to "recover the Hawaiian sense of place",<sup>13</sup> that is, their way of knowing and caring for Hawai'i's natural environment, seems to characterize political and socio-cultural movements in recent years. The numerous appeals to 'Keep the Country, Country' appearing on bumper stickers and during protest marches clearly endorse this general concern over the current politics of development and its effects on the local environment. Such a concern has also led to the fostering of an ecotourist perspective that respects the Native cultural heritage. However, in practice, this call for redesigning Hawai'i according to a Native sense of place – from both a strictly urban planning perspective and a socio-cultural one – has often worked merely as a politically correct slogan employed at public talks and for election campaigns. As demonstrated in the Waikiki Master Plan (1992), the return to a 'Hawaiian sense of place' has often been applied to urban development projects that in fact contributed to perpetuate a colonial perception of the Native culture.<sup>14</sup> Even the use of Hawaiian names in renaming streets and buildings appeals to a sense of nostalgia for something that is disappearing,<sup>15</sup> thus turning ecotourism into a "tourism that fetishizes echoes of a supposed authenticity now available mostly to those with the ability to pay".<sup>16</sup> In other words, the appeal to sustainability, now widely circulating within global tourism discourse, seems to concentrate its focus on preserving the landscape and environment of Hawai'i, but not necessarily on the well-being of its people, and especially of the Native population.

While corporate-tourism discourse remains ambiguous when it comes to preserving and respecting the Native Hawaiian cultural heritage, both the negative post-9/11 impact on the tourist industry and the recent global economic crisis have shown, once again, the fragility of Hawai'i's socio-economic structure. Hawai'i continues to pour huge amounts of capital into the corporate tourist industry, which guarantees only low-paid, unstable jobs to the local population, while greatly benefiting global corporations.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, an increasing number of academic, cultural, and community projects are built on the notion of sustainability – a key word in a state with limited resources and a strong dependence on global ways of production and consumption. To name only a few, the University of Hawai'i Office of Sustainability now offers a wide range of cultural programs and community initiatives, while also fostering education on these matters among local residents.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the compelling promotional campaign to 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local', co-

---

designed by the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and UH College of Tropical Agriculture, has shown a “statewide effort to help increase demand for, consumption of, and familiarity with locally grown commodities”.<sup>19</sup> However, in my experience as a conscious consumer living in Honolulu, the primary target audience of this growing sustainable food movement largely remains the politically-aware higher-educated who can afford to buy at these ‘sustainable prices’ and the organic movement hipsters (mostly foreigners), while the larger local population continues to support the giants of corporate food industry such as Wal-Mart and McDonald’s primarily. That said, things are slowly moving, as can be noted in the growing number of sustainable farms owned by local farmers and featuring several staples of Native Hawaiian diet such as the *kalo*. Moving beyond the fancy organic food market toward locally-grown products is a first important step toward sustainability.

On the legislative front, the Hawai‘i Sustainability Task Force, founded in 2005, represents not only the biggest step made by the government so far, but also one of the most controversial aspects of Hawai‘i’s sustainability movement today. The work of the office has been compiled into the Hawai‘i 2050 Sustainability Plan, which sets five main goals for Hawai‘i’s sustainable future, ranging from economic self-sufficiency and environmental conservation to community and social well-being. It is particularly worth reporting here on one of the five steps towards Hawai‘i’s sustainability as described in the plan:

To preserve our island values, we need to recognize the primacy of the Kanaka Maoli while cultivating the active participation of people of all ethnicities in their practices. Community and ethnic organizations must be supported to ensure that our traditions continue to live and thrive through dance, festivals, education and art.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly enough, while explicitly promoting Native Hawaiian cultural heritage as crucial to a sustainable future for Hawai‘i, the statement fails to mention the need to ensure more sustainable land development politics and support Native Hawaiian rights to their land. Maintaining this support is crucial, since control over the land is the base for sovereignty – “the ability of a people who share a common culture, religion, language, value system and land base, to exercise control over their land and lives, independent of other nations”.<sup>21</sup> As I write, Native Hawaiian access rights to their land continue to be threatened by land politics favoring the interest of the larger land owners and international corporations.<sup>22</sup> While this confirms the still divergent senses of place emerging from the different groups that make up Hawai‘i’s society today – the Native community, and the tourist, military, settler, and environmentalist groups – it also raises a number of questions concerning the sustainability project as a whole. How can sustainability become a constructive project that improves the living conditions of the local community without excluding some of its groups, and, more importantly, without contributing to the silencing of Native Hawaiian voices?

<sup>19</sup> UH College of Tropical Agriculture website: *Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program* (17 September 2009), <<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/>>, 13 March 2011.

<sup>20</sup> *Hawai‘i 2050 Sustainability Task Force* (2007), <<http://hawaii2050.org>>, 13 March 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 71.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Keala Kelly, dir., *Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai‘i* (2008); see also Gordon Y. K. Pang, “Groups Protest Ceded-Land Stance”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (28 December 2008), B1.

---

## Native Hawaiian lessons in literary ecology

Having emerged in the late 1960s along with the Hawaiian Renaissance and the Native Hawaiian Sovereignty movement, Hawai'i's contemporary literatures have constantly explored the relation between the natural and the cultural and, in particular, the local politics of place. This strongly ecological perspective on the part of Hawai'i-based writers and scholars is mainly informed by the still rich and thriving Native cultural tradition.

The literary anthology *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, edited by Native Hawaiian writer and activist Dana Naone Hall and published in 1985, explicitly addresses the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land. As a first conscious effort to publish Native Hawaiian literature in English, *Mālama* also employs this ecological perspective to illustrate a Native Hawaiian aesthetics that is strictly connected to the place. In the poem “Ka Mo‘olelo o ke Alanui. The story of the road”, for example, Hall narrates the history of an old road on the island of Maui, now in the process of being destroyed. “[T]hose who propose [this project]” Hall reminds readers, “don’t know that the road is alive”,<sup>23</sup> since it bears the imprint of the gods that have walked upon it and contains the stories linked to their passage. Here, Hall is referring to a specific, well-known episode: the disturbance of a large Native Hawaiian burial site in the late 1980s, during the building of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Kapalua, Maui. This episode is also particularly famous because Native Hawaiians created a unified front to protest this development and the displacement of Hawaiian burial sites authorized by Hawai'i's state laws.<sup>24</sup> Their successful effort did not only help recognize Honokahua as a sacred site, but it also spurred the amendment of Hawai'i's law on historic preservation, Chapter 6E, to include “the care and treatment of prehistoric and historic burials”.<sup>25</sup>

According to local writer and scholar Richard Hamasaki, the anthology expresses a specific “sense of place”, a distinct “rootedness”, thanks to the constant references to places and situations distinctly local, as well as to the author's use of both Hawai'i Creole English and the Hawaiian language.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, this place-specific and direct knowledge of the natural world permeates Native Hawaiian literature, both oral and written, in English and Hawaiian; on the other hand, the poem, as well as the anthology as a whole, serves as a direct political message, especially since it was published at the same time that the road was being closed. The continued relevance of a publication like *Mālama* today confirms how much is yet to be done to ensure a sustainable future for Hawai'i. But beside its strong response to the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land, *Mālama* also offers an alternative perspective to non-native literary works through its focus on the land and the sea; this perspective, in turn, illustrates Native Hawaiian aesthetics, which is strictly connected to their intimate knowledge of places. As Hall declares in the preface to the volume, “it is this sense of belonging to the place, since the landing of the first canoes that we honor in this issue”.<sup>27</sup> In this

<sup>23</sup> Dana Naone Hall, ed., *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 148.

<sup>24</sup> See Franco Salmoiraghi, “Honokahua”, *Mānoa*, 19.2 (2007), 24–35.

<sup>25</sup> Sara L. Collins, “Historic Preservation”, in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Hamasaki, “Singing in their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English”, MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1989), 70.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, *Mālama*, 7.

---

sense, I believe that *Mālama* represents a crucial reference point for any literary work focusing on sustainability in Hawai‘i.

Published only four years later, *Ho‘omānoa. An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* enters the debate over land issues by focusing on further Native Hawaiian responses to the local politics of land. Here, the natural world is pictured as a threat to Hawai‘i’s population; such a transformation is reflected in the sense of loss felt by Native Hawaiians now that they no longer have access to their land, as suggested by the opening lines: “Nature has taken everything out of our hands / and we do not know whether to swim or fly”.<sup>28</sup> A particularly interesting piece is represented by Hall’s poem, “HAWAI‘I ‘89”:

The way it is now  
few streams still flow  
through lo‘i kalo [taro fields]  
to the sea.  
Most of the water  
where we live  
runs in ditches alongside  
the graves of Chinese bones  
to the green central valley  
where the same crop  
has burned in the fields  
for the last one hundred years .... (4)

<sup>28</sup> Joseph P. Balaz, ed.,  
*Ho‘omānoa: An Anthology of  
Contemporary Hawaiian Literature*  
(Honolulu: Kū Pa‘a Inc.,  
1989), 1.

Since the *taro* (kalo) is the staple of the Hawaiian diet and, more importantly, it is genealogically connected to the Native population, destroying *taro* means contributing to the death, both physical and spiritual, of Native Hawaiians. The semantic opposition between “streams” and “ditches” well indicates this passage from a dignified past to a degraded present.

Joe Balaz’s poetry featured in the same anthology, on the other hand, seeks to move beyond this past/present opposition by focusing on the present of the poet and by showing his continuity with the past. This strategy is clearly at work in the poem “MOE‘UHANĒ” (Dream):

I dream of the ways of the past –  
I cannot go back.  
I hike the hills  
and valleys of Waiawa ....  
I play in the waves of Waimea, and spear fish  
from the reefs of Kawailoa.  
I grow bananas, ‘ulu [breadfruit],  
and papayas, in the way of the ‘āina ....  
I cannot go back –  
I never left. (7)

The final line, “I cannot go back – I never left”, is particularly significant since it links, both culturally and linguistically, past and present in the name of one, living culture. Retrieving Native traditions, as suggested in the first line of the poem, “I



dream of / the ways of the past”, is therefore essential to reclaim one’s identity as a Native Hawaiian in the present. In the poem “SPEAR FISHER”, Balaz seems to give in, instead, to the past/present opposition, but only to oppose foreigners and locals, consumerism and sustainability, ‘us’ and ‘them’. “In Kona / A Midwest businessman / caught a marlin, / and hung it upside down / on a wharf – / At Hale‘iwa / I caught a kūmū, / and I ate it” (37). Interestingly enough, the Native way, as described in these lines, is also different from the ecologist perspective on the preservation of marine wildlife.

In a similar way, poet, scholar, and nationalist leader Haunani-Kay Trask’s poetry does not only denounce today’s condition of Hawai‘i’s land, but also presents a specific political message in response to the politics of development in Hawai‘i, of which she brings in concrete examples and then counteracts them from an indigenous perspective on place. Trask’s poetry, therefore, goes hand in hand with her work as a scholar and activist. In “Agony of Place”, a poem that appeared in the *Ho‘omānoa* anthology, Trask employs the notion of place both literally and metaphorically to describe the drastic shift for Hawaiians from order to chaos, and from life to death, due to colonization, militarization, and globalization: “in a land of tears / where our people go blindly / servants of another / race, a culture of machines / grinding vision / from the eye, thought / from the hand / until a tight silence / descends / wildly in place” (9). And yet, it is not real death that Trask envisions, but a torturing agony; in fact, the land is still there, still alive and beautiful. Ironically, its beauty represents a threat: “and yet / our love suffers / with a heritage / of beauty” (9). The mission of Hawaiian poets, scholars, and activists today consists in giving back voice to the land, and, in turn, in regaining their own voice.

Trask’s poem “BLOOD ON THE LAND”, in the collection *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (1999), is shaped as a chant of lamentation for the sad condition of the ‘āina:

Mourning floods the ‘āina  
 quiet oil of green  
 yellowing  
 lā‘ī leaves  
 ‘awapuhi  
 crumbling at the root  
 lizard skeletons wildly  
 strewn ...  
 below pesticidal  
 waterlands lazily  
 killing  
 sinister glare  
 off a smoking sea  
 and black  
 illuminations  
 as trees.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1999), 9. ‘Awapuhi is a type of ginger.

This image of degradation and death is reiterated throughout the book, until the Hawaiian soil has transformed into a huge cemetery, a “missionary graveyard”,



characterized by the “smell of death / smeared across the land / killing in the heart” (13). Even in this case, the poet’s expression of grief toward the current condition of the *‘āina* gives voice to an explicit critique of the specific aspects of this condition: “heiau stones lie crushed / beneath purple resort / toilets” and “two thousand bodies / [are] exhumed for Japanese / money, developers’ dreams, / and the archaeology / of *haole* knowledge” (9). These lines recall the controversy surrounding the building of the H-3 that led to the destruction of Hawaiian burial sites, and the one concerning the traffic in Hawaiian remains for the benefit of museum exhibitions. At the same time, the resilience of the indigenous culture is played out through the use of images and themes that are part of the Native tradition.

The poem “The Broken Gourd” in Trask’s latest collection (2002), reiterates the idea that the pre-colonial harmony between the people and the land is lost, since the land, a source of life, has transformed into an “aching earth”.<sup>30</sup> Blood covers a cracked ipu, now incapable of producing clear sounds, perhaps a reference to the forced silence of the Native voices: “a cracked ipu / whispers, bloody water / on its broken lip” (11). Past and present are strongly contrasted here: the tranquil and peaceful life of traditional times gives way to “smelly shores / under spidery moons, / pockmarked maile vines, / rotting *‘ulu* groves, the brittle clack / of broken lava stones”, so much so that Hawai‘i becomes “a poisoned *pae ‘āina* / swarming with foreigners / and dying Hawaiians” (12–13). In Trask’s view, corporate mass-tourism is responsible for completing a century-old process of destruction. In the poem “Lāhaina, 1995”, for example, Trask describes the effects of tourist pollution on the small city of Lāhaina, on the island of Maui: “drifting trash / clogs the shores, coating / the lost minds / of burnt-red tourists / staining the sand / with acrid oils” (18).

The second part of the book, “Chants of Dawn”, offers, however, a more hopeful vision of the future, represented by the image of the Hawaiian people that “arise and go, / sacred, into dawn” (39). Death and destruction here make space for a regenerated life, where Hawaiians can finally live a reciprocal and righteous life in their land: “out of the elegies / of love, let us enter / summer’s last sun” (58). Through love, both in its sense of aloha and in its sexual aspect, the land and the people are ultimately regenerated. This point takes us back to the first poem of the collection, “Born in Fire”, which introduces the reader to a Hawaiian sense of place through an invocation of the goddess Pele. By representing both the power of volcanic destruction, the “trembling breast of Pele” (3), and the power of regeneration that follows the eruption, Pele remains a crucial source of life and energy, also sexual energy, from which the poet-activist draws constant inspiration and courage. At the same time, Pele’s “craterous womb” (3) seems to suggest her protective role. The continuous references to Pele throughout the book therefore function as a powerful source of *mana*<sup>31</sup> and hope both for the poet and for the Hawaiian people.

<sup>30</sup> Trask, *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Mana* stands for divine power that comes from the gods or *akua*. See ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Hulihiia in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ literature (1860–1928)”, PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2007).

---

## Echoes of a Native Sense of Place in Hawai'i's 'Local Literature'

While the indigenous sense of place represents a major component of contemporary Hawaiian literature in English, it is also often reflected in the work of non-indigenous writers living in Hawai'i. Rodney Morales, who has written about Native Hawaiian cultural values and about the continued abuse of indigenous land, immediately comes to mind. An example of this type of work is the anthology *Ho'ihō'i Hou*, edited by Morales in 1984 and entirely devoted to the history of Kaho'olawe and the abuses of its land and resources.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho'ihō'i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

For the aim of this paper, however, it is important to look at Morales' novel *When the Shark Bites* (2002), in which the writer explores Hawai'i's land issues through the format of a family saga, since within the local literary scene it is the first notable example of a fictional work devoted to Hawaiian land issues. The novel focuses on two generations, that of Henry Rivera and his wife Kanani, who have directly participated in the Hawaiian Renaissance and the protests against the military exploitation of Kaho'olawe; and that of their older son, Mākena, still unaware of his own position in the world and of his genealogy. By the end of the novel, not only does Mākena fully understand his role within his family and community, but he also ends up continuing the cultural inheritance left to him by his parents and by his biological father, Keoni (a clear reference to George Helm). The acquisition of this spiritual inheritance therefore signals Mākena's coming of age.

The complex intersections between different characters and historical moments in the novel also link Mākena's individual moment of *Bildung* and a collective one on the part of the local community, including Henry and Kanani, who finally realize that they have given up Keoni's dream in exchange for the middle-class dream of a comfortable and safe family living. This reader is tempted to interpret this element as the author's direct criticism of the local community's general disinterest in Hawai'i's land issues, and as his effort to help foster the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture. While Part I of the novel is set in 1976, the time of the PKO's landing on Kaho'olawe, Part II brings the reader to 1991, and to UH student Alika's 'visitations' in search of oral-history information regarding Keoni's life. As the Riveras start bringing back memories of their past as activists during their interviews with Alika, a Japanese company buys the whole area of Waikīkī where they live, forcing them to move to the Wai'anae Coast. While their reaction is one of defeat, their neighbor Beth refuses to give up and is arrested. The episode gives Kanani the opportunity to express her hatred of the local developers,

people who ... refused to give in to the beauty of the surf at sunrise, unless it was a painting they had bought, or unless they could charge others for a look; people who refused to see the effect their decisions and methods had on others, refused to know how the lives of so many were diminished by their insatiable wish for more more more.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Rodney Morales, *When the Shark Bites* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 55.

As the past vicissitudes of the Riveras intersect with the current political events, Mākena becomes involved with the repatriation of Native Hawaiian remains. In a

---

crucial scene, Mākena steals the remains of Keoni and returns them to the land, thus contributing to change the course of his life as a Hawaiian, and that of the Riveras' family life toward a more righteous destiny.

The importance of recuperating the Native Hawaiian way is also underlined throughout the novel by the use of Hawaiian mo'olelo, and in particular the story of the shark-man Kawelo. While Mākena's grandma facilitates his and his younger brother's encounters with the sharks through her stories – “Dis is da time of da manō. She wen' look at my brother 'Analu and said, 'Da time of da sharks'” (114) – the Riveras ultimately learn to deal with the many “land sharks” in their life, such as the Japanese investors that had bought their house in Waikīkī. The importance of sharks in the Native culture, as well as that of learning how to deal with them – reiterated by the continuous references to Louis Armstrong's song “Mack the Knife”<sup>34</sup> – ultimately become a way for the characters to learn to read the signs of life.

While Morales's novel has been criticized by several community members, concerned that his impersonation of Native Hawaiian voices ends up perpetuating the century-old colonial silencing of indigenous voices, if anything, this publication has hopefully inaugurated a more sincere concern over Hawaiian land issues on the part of non-native writers. However, for this to happen, it is necessary for non-indigenous writers and community members to recognize our own position within Hawai'i's socio-political scenario and help Hawaiians reach self-determination.

The publication of *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* (1986) – a selection of Hawai'i's writers (mostly of Asian descent) previously published by the local Bamboo Ridge Press – had much earlier posed questions regarding the role of non-indigenous writers within Hawai'i's literary scene. In particular, local writer Darrell Lum's definition of “local literature” in the preface to the volume had generated several debates, since it included “a distinct sensitivity to ... the environment (in particular that valuable commodity the land)”.<sup>35</sup> This explicit, but ambiguous, reference to land as one of the defining elements of the ‘localness’ testifies to the circulation of the land-issues debate within Hawai'i's cultural scenario at the time; yet, it does not clarify the role, and responsibilities, of the non-native groups in this debate. In this sense, it has been read as a figurative example of “Asian settler colonialism”.<sup>36</sup> According to Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, the settler is characterized by his/her “laying a claim, both through the literal possession of land and the physical occupation of disputed space”<sup>37</sup>; Trask contextualizes this definition by declaring Hawai'i a “settler society”, in which “the indigenous culture and people have been murdered, suppressed, or marginalized for the benefit of settlers who now dominate our islands”.<sup>38</sup> While the ongoing investment of settlers into Hawaiian land is testified by their connection with the dominant middle-class group that emerged after WWII and took power during the Democratic years,<sup>39</sup> the problematic position of Bamboo Ridge comes from its publishing few Native writers over the years and, at the same time, its ambiguous appeal to the land and environment of Hawai'i which fails to mention both the importance of land for the native population and their ongoing struggle for sovereignty.

<sup>34</sup> The song also contains the line “when the shark bites”, which appears in the book's title.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Chock and Darrell H. Y. Lum, eds., *The Best of Bamboo Ridge: the Hawaii Writers' Quarterly* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Candace Lei Fujikane, “Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawai'i”, in Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 1-42.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, “Settler Colonies”, in Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Boston: Blackwell, 2000), 361.

<sup>38</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii: The Democratic Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985).

<sup>40</sup> Fujikane, “Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s *Saturday Night at the Pabala Theatre*”, in Joyce N. Chinen, Kathleen O. Kane, and Ida M. Yoshinaga, eds., *Women in Hawai‘i: Sites, Identities, Voices*, Special Issue, *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 38, (1997), 40–61.

<sup>41</sup> Lois-Ann Yamanaka, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “‘This Land is Your Land, This Land Was My Land’: Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of ‘Āina in Contemporary Literature of Hawai‘i”, in Fujikane and Okamura eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Lyons, *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7–15.

A particularly controversial example of a non-native writer writing about Hawaiian land is the work of the local Japanese writer Lois-Ann Yamanaka, who has in fact attracted much attention both locally and nationally not only because of her artistic merits but also because of her problematic representation of Hawai‘i’s racial scenario.<sup>40</sup> The novels *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*, *Blu’s Hanging*, and *Heads by Harry*, published from 1997 through 1999, work together as a trilogy centered around the *Bildung* of the main characters, all locals of Japanese ancestry. The final step of this growing process also coincides with a conscious, and yet problematic, rediscovery of Hawai‘i’s natural world.

The representation of Native land emerging from *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* is especially important to understand Yamanaka’s ecological perspective as well as her larger project as a local Japanese writer.<sup>41</sup> While in *Blu’s Hanging* the land “becomes a backdrop to human-centered drama, a place to escape the torments of one’s life”,<sup>42</sup> as is typical of much Euro-American literature and art, *Wild Meat* seems to show a deeper connection to Hawai‘i’s natural world by refusing to describe it solely as a landscape, that is, as a natural backdrop for the character’s actions and feelings. Rather, the writer constructs a *land motif* that serves as a narrative strategy to help Lovey complete her *Bildung* process and forge a specifically ‘local’ identity for herself and her family. As the girl’s father, Hubert, brings up his childhood memories connected to Kīpū plantation village, these images become alive in his daughter’s eyes. So, while for Lovey’s grandfather Japan represented both his place of origin and his final return after death, for Lovey and Hubert Hawai‘i becomes the main reference point for their life, her home-land. At the same time, as ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui illustrates in her analysis of *Blu’s Hanging*, the natural scenario described in this book is equally devoid of the spiritual and familial quality that characterizes a Native Hawaiian sense of place. Yamanaka’s use of this *land motif* to claim a ‘local’ identity for her characters further contributes to constructing “colonial view[s] of ‘āina”.<sup>43</sup> What is more, by piecing together her family history, the protagonist-narrator reconstructs the larger history of Japanese migration to Hawai‘i and through her vivid imagination recreates, on Hawaiian land, both Japan’s and Hawai‘i’s plantation world, a world where Native voices have disappeared. Even as they build strong connections to Hawai‘i’s natural world, the characters in *Wild Meat* ultimately make clear political claims to Hawaiian land, thus testifying to their position as settlers within the local socio-political scenario. Since local Japanese occupy a privileged position within Hawai‘i’s society, these political claims end up perpetuating Native Hawaiian displacement through Yamanaka’s erasure of Hawaiians from their ancestral land, as well as the silencing of Native Hawaiian access rights.

As these examples illustrate, both the local political discourse on sustainability and the ecological sentiment expressed by ‘local literature’ present numerous contradictions, while also echoing each other in terms of their ongoing exclusion of Native voices and their active ignorance<sup>44</sup> of the Native relation to land. Even when attention has been given to Native voices, it has often been done by

---

appropriating indigenous values and in order to carry out personal or group politics and interests. I can see how, in the last few years, extensive work has been conducted to reach sustainability on a socio-political level, and the growing role of Native Hawaiian literary and scholarly voices within the local cultural scene is equally promising. But in both cases, the only way to be really sustainable is to respect, and learn from, the Native Hawaiian sense of place and relationship to the land, as it is brilliantly represented through its literature and as it is asserted by Hawaiians' struggle for sovereignty.

A thesis on the Ko'olau Mountains

1. Preface.

In all my life  
I have never seen  
such  
huge,  
proud,  
green  
before.

An optical optimism:  
“This land belongs to you  
and your children,  
as far as their eyes can see”

2. Data collected.

Autonomous entity of the eye –  
Love  
at first sight patterns:  
a repetition of folds,  
ridge upon ridge upon ridge,  
a series of spines.

Home,  
an architecture of choice.  
Home  
clutched to bone.

The curtain sways sideways like light rain,  
like wet mist around a giant wrinkled fruit,  
like growing from a diet of rippling stone,  
like a burgeoning geometry,  
like distended consonants  
on the edge of falling.  
The mountain attests to all this (and more).

What if all I can see is a mountain?

My word against a mountain's.



---

### 3. The limits of this study.

run a way to run down earth my way down or run earth my root my run down to  
my bone my this or home grabs a muscled heart run out and this green a pouring  
ruin a pouring ruin not mine

### 4. Conclusion.

An optical optimism:  
“This land belongs to you  
and your children,  
as far as their eyes can see.”

(Until you lose your vision  
and all you have left  
is your staggered  
love.)



Fig. 1: Aiko Yamashiro, *Ko'olau Mts*, 2010, photograph, courtesy of Aiko Yamashiro.

Find Mana in the Mundane:  
Telling Hawaiian Mo'olelo in Comics

<sup>1</sup> Some historians consider the cultural revival that took place under the reign of David Kalākaua to be the First Hawaiian Renaissance, with the revival of the 1960s and 1970s as the Second Hawaiian Renaissance.

The Hawaiian people have made great strides in the areas of linguistic and cultural revival ever since the Hawaiian Renaissance<sup>1</sup> that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Various institutions and grass-roots groups, such as Hawaiian-language programs (community or academically based), hālau hula, and Hawai'i-based publishers with a greater cultural awareness have ensured that our 'ōlelo and our mo'olelo, our language and our stories, are once again seen and heard in an increasing number of everyday contexts: restaurants, grocery stores, books, television and the internet. As with any mass movement, however, this revitalization of culture and language has not encompassed all levels of the Hawaiian population.

Large gaps in cultural and linguistic knowledge have formed in the Hawaiian community, neatly following generational lines. In my family, for example, my maternal grandmother was a native speaker of Hawaiian and I am privileged enough both culturally and financially to have achieved a certain level of language ability from the university, but my mother speaks no Hawaiian and even ruefully tells the story of how, as a girl, she used to ignore her tūtū whenever he spoke Hawaiian to her. The denigration of the Hawaiian culture had become so ingrained in our society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries<sup>2</sup> that many parents decided not to teach their children certain types of knowledge, such as language, cultural practice, or even mo'olelo, as this knowledge seemingly had no place in the modern world. Again, my own family is exemplary, as my tūtū is said to have decided not to pass on a certain type of traditional healing in which he was an expert.

<sup>2</sup> Hawaiian authors decried this decline since at least the 1860s, but it is more visible during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; English became the medium of instruction for all government-subsidized schools, students were punished for speaking Hawaiian, and parents were advised not to teach it to their children.

A great number of Hawaiians born and raised during the first three quarters of the twentieth century were not taught their language and culture by their parents, and later, many of them were too old to take advantage of the opportunities to learn these things that they had helped to provide for their own children. My family is by no means unique in that our language use or cultural practice has skipped a generation or ceased completely, as many families also have 'lost generations' that have been culturally left behind. Many of these Hawaiians thirst for the knowledge that they missed out on and the stories that they have never heard, but also feel that they do not have the means to access them or that it is too late for them to successfully learn Hawaiian or join a hālau hula or work in a taro patch.

The efforts to reinvigorate and recirculate our 'ōlelo and mo'olelo have mainly and justifiably been aimed at young children, though attempts have been made to address the needs of the older generations as well. Yet this two-pronged approach dedicating our efforts towards our children and our parents actually threatens to create another lost generation. Our mo'olelo are presented in colorful picture books for children such as *No Ka 'Elepaio Kolobe: The Naughty 'Elepaio*<sup>3</sup> and *The Legend of*

<sup>3</sup> Malia Kruger, *No Ka 'Elepaio Kolobe: The Naughty 'Elepaio* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 2008).

*Kuamo'o Mo'okini and Hamumu, the Great Whale*<sup>4</sup> and in novel-length literary translations or re-presentations of traditional stories for a more 'sophisticated' audience such as *The Epic Tale of Hi'ikaikapoliopole*<sup>5</sup> and *Ka Mo'olelo Hiwahiwa o Kawelo*.<sup>6</sup> Yet, there are no versions of our mo'olelo explicitly aimed at those in these in-between generations, especially if they are not already avid readers.<sup>7</sup>

For many of us, if we want to read Hawaiian publications, we often have to produce them ourselves or help others facilitate their production, striving to do what Hawaiian scholar Noenoe Silva has described as "free[ing] our ancestral stories from the captured state, such that they become healthy frameworks for our own communal self-understanding, antidotes to the poisonous stereotypes of the colonizer".<sup>8</sup> The building of these "healthy frameworks" entails a move towards presenting mo'olelo in mundane rather than 'high' art forms, and this paper will explore how this move towards seemingly less threatening or valorized art forms can help prevent these in-between generations from being culturally left behind and contribute to what Scott Richard Lyons (Ojibwe/Dakota) has termed "rhetorical sovereignty".<sup>9</sup> The paper will then examine how comics in particular can serve as an important new vessel for our mo'olelo and describe a graphic novel project that I am a part of in which we are trying to harness what Rocco Versaci has called comics' "powerful marginality".<sup>10</sup>

## E iho ana o luna, e pii ana o lalo: The high shall be made low, and the low shall be raised up

Because we have been told who we are by other people for so long, Hawaiian identity and self-definition often start at a disadvantage and many facets of our culture have been dismissed as nothing more than outdated artifacts. Powerful stories and traditions have been co-opted and uprooted from their cultural contexts to be rendered as nothing more than innocuous reminders of a bygone era. Without culturally-relevant and carefully-constructed Hawaiian texts (in the broad sense of the term, including written, chanted, sung, and spoken texts) staking out a place for Hawaiian cultural practice in this current era and embracing these in-between generations, the damaging and oppressive images and stereotypes that often come from the classroom and the media constantly abrade and erode the foundations of cultural identity that we work so hard to build. Our mo'olelo contain our history, our worldview, even our genealogy, and in order to do them justice, we must strive for the "rhetorical sovereignty" that Scott Richard Lyons describes.

Lyons defines the overall pursuit of sovereignty very elegantly as "an attempt to revive not our past, but our possibilities" (449). This idea of sovereignty applies very directly to Hawaiian attempts to regain their self-determination, but also the desire to tell/read/hear our own stories. Lyons terms "rhetorical sovereignty" as "the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (449–450). If Hawaiians focus on struggling for rhetorical sovereignty

<sup>4</sup> Leimomi Mo'okini Lum, *The Legend of Kuamo'o Mo'okini and Hamumu, the Great Whale* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Ho'oulumāhie, *The Epic Tale of Hi'ikaikapoliopole*, trans. by Puakea Nogelmeier, Saho Fukushima, and Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada (Honolulu: Awaiaulu Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Ho'oulumāhie, *Ka Mo'olelo Hiwahiwa o Kawelo*, ed. by Hiapokeikikāne Kichie Perreira (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Hawaiian artist Solomon Enos had a serial comic strip entitled *Polyfantastica*, but it was more a reimagining of a broader Hawaiian and Polynesian history than a retelling of any specific mo'olelo. See *Polyfantastica* <<http://www.polyfantastica.org>>.

<sup>8</sup> Noenoe Silva, "Pele, Hi'ika, and Haumea: Women and Power in Two Hawaiian Mo'olelo", *Pacific Studies*, 30.1–2 (2007), 160.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?", *College Composition and Communication*, 51.3 (2000), 447–468.

<sup>10</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature* (New York: Continuum Books, 2007).



---

within the larger movement for self-determination, we can pay more attention to “the goals, modes, styles, and languages” of the texts that we produce and direct them at the segments of our community that need them most.

Breaking mo‘olelo into its constituent parts ‘mo‘o’ and “ōlelo”<sup>11</sup> helps illustrate why these stories are so important to the community. ‘Mo‘o’ gets translated as ‘succession’ and “ōlelo” as language, talk, or speaking, so a common understanding of ‘mo‘olelo’ is as a succession of talk, which often gets read as a reference to the way stories and knowledge were passed down through the Hawaiian oral tradition. This succession matches what Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*:

For many indigenous writers stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ‘Mo‘olelo’ is actually a contraction of ‘mo‘o‘ōlelo’. Though both are used, ‘mo‘olelo’ is more common.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed, 2004), 144.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 2.

Thomas King (Cherokee) neatly sums this idea up by stating: “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are”.<sup>13</sup> In the Hawaiian understanding of mo‘olelo, the lineal and generational quality of stories along with their capacity to carry culture really helps to explain how mana, the spiritual power and reverence that can be accumulated in all things, accrues to these stories as they are passed from person to person. Storytellers imbue their stories with breath and mana through the act of telling and their listeners inhale this mana and then have the chance to retell the story and add their breath to it as well. A further indication of the way mana accrues to stories is that each variation and variant of a story is itself called a mana. This recognizes that the diversity and variation among our stories is the very thing that gives them their mana, or power. This means that in order to re-empower our mo‘olelo, we have to insure that they exist in various versions, styles, and forms, both elite and mundane.

Many of the strides that Hawaiians have made over the last handful of decades in the pursuit of rhetorical sovereignty have been about ‘modernizing’ and moving Hawaiian cultural practices into the fields of high art or working towards recognition of Hawaiian arts as ‘serious’ art. For example, singer and kumu hula Keali‘i Reichel and others have taken hula and Hawaiian music to prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Hawaiian operas and hula dramas are regularly performed at the Hawai‘i Theatre, and Hawaiian art and artists are regularly featured in galleries and museums throughout the state. The last major translation project I was involved in,<sup>14</sup> the translation of *Ka Mo‘olelo o Hi‘iakaikāpoliōpele*, was also meant to carve out a space for Hawaiian mo‘olelo in the realm of high art. We had two limited-run “Centennial” versions: a slip-cased edition which sold for \$300, and a clamshell edition which was hand bound by Gregor Campbell in goatskin leather and green moiré fabric that sold for \$1500. There is currently an initiative afoot to fund the donation of 200 copies of the clamshell edition “to major institutions of learning in the United States, Europe, and Pacific nations”.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The translation project was headed by long-time Hawaiian-language translator Puakea Nogelmeier, while Saho Fukushima and I served as apprentice translators and editors.

<sup>15</sup> “Wehena – The Hi‘iaka Landmark Initiative”, *Awaiāulu: Hawaiian Literature Project*, <<http://www.awaiulu.org/landmark.html>>, 5 December 2010.

---

Though these attempts to justify the inclusion of Hawaiian art forms among these other high art forms have done a lot of very important work in terms of increasing the visibility of these Hawaiian arts and artists, this ‘respectability’ comes in large part from Hawaiian artists participating and performing in modes and styles that are recognizable to and appreciated by Western audiences and critics. Two consequences of this approach are that a very clear ‘Hawaiian’ identity has developed around these art forms and a lot of energy has gone into ensuring that Hawaiian arts and mo‘olelo are considered worthy of inclusion among the other high arts. While those two consequences actually seem pretty positive, two further issues arise out of them: 1) elite, fine arts are almost by definition not for a popular audience and 2) some of these art forms have become so elevated and so charged with ‘Hawaiian-ness’ that other Hawaiians who are less well-versed culturally become intimidated and turned away by the very thing that they desire.

Many Hawaiians have come through a heavily Westernized school system in which their culture and history were absent. This system reinforced the notion that the fine arts were things that ‘high-class’ white elites did: painting, literature, ballet, opera, modern dance, etc. The high-level of ‘respect’ for and dogged protection of similarly elite Hawaiian art forms has also succeeded at times in dissuading our young people from taking part in them because they are too ‘serious’, too elite, both in the Hawaiian and Western contexts. Having Hawaiian culture taken seriously is clearly something that we need to continue to strive for, but some of these connections to high art, instead of raising the esteem of many of these arts, have served to alienate large swathes of the young Hawaiian population, who see these arts as ‘not for them’. Framing Hawaiian arts as elite art forms, predominantly conforming to Western systems of values, can also allow outsiders to consume Hawaiian arts in ways that are palatable and understandable to them, oftentimes reducing cultural practices such as oli (chanting) and hula to nothing more than innocuous ‘song and dance’.

Yet, this innocuousness that has for so long stripped these practices of their cultural context and value can be deployed to our advantage. Anishinaabe poet and author Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance” is an important concept here in moving towards showing these ‘in-between’ generations that Hawaiian art and mo‘olelo really are ‘for them’ and exposing an often unsympathetic general public to our mo‘olelo in a way that can allow them to see why we fight and where we come from. Vizenor has defined “survivance” in many ways, but his explanation from *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* is particularly fitting here: “Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction”.<sup>16</sup> Rather than a passive survival, Vizenor’s notion of survivance encompasses and calls for all the sorts of things that native peoples have done and continue to do to ensure their survival as a culturally distinct people.

Hawaiian-language scholar and translator Puakea Nogelmeier’s idea of a “movement of insistence” is also useful here. He coined the phrase to “describe the vitality and confidence of the newly-expanded Hawaiian presence in the

<sup>16</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1994), vii.

---

<sup>17</sup> M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa'a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010), 86.

newspapers after the start of the native press”.<sup>17</sup> This vitality and confidence drove Hawaiians in the nineteenth century to take up literacy on a national level and use the relatively new technology of the newspapers in culturally appropriate ways that benefitted Hawaiian aims. Nogelmeier uses this idea of “insistence” to make it clear that Hawaiians were not just taking action in response or resistance to foreigners; they actively asserted themselves and their culture through whatever means were available to them.

Both survivance and insistence resonate with the Hawaiian concept of “onipa’a”, which was the motto of both Kamehameha V and Queen Lili‘uokalani. ‘Onipa’a commonly gets translated as “steadfast”; yet, as with most translation, this does not really encompass the entirety of the word. More of the word’s meaning can be seen when one breaks ‘onipa’a down into its component parts: “oni” and ‘pa’a’. “Oni” refers to movement, motion, and shifting, while ‘pa’a’ means to be fixed, solid, rooted, and/or complete. The range of meaning here is much greater than the lack of forward motion and fixity implied by ‘steadfast’. When Hawaiians are ‘onipa’a, then, it implies that they are moving and taking action while still being firmly rooted in their culture and beliefs.

Seen as survivance and insistence, ‘onipa’a highlights all of the actions, ranging from the openly resistant to the quietly mundane, that Hawaiians have taken to protect their culture from foreign encroachment. Our culture, beliefs, and stories live in the mundane practices of everyday life just as much, and perhaps even more, than some of the more demonstrative and seemingly elitist acts of survivance, insistence, and ‘onipa’a. Preparing and eating food, interacting with our family, joking with friends, killing time, talking story, all of these everyday practices are strongholds of our stories and worldview, and it is to the everyday that ‘onipa’a should take us next. We need to work on bringing our ‘ōlelo and mo‘ōlelo back into the realm of the mundane. Eating and hanging out with friends are innocuous acts that seem like the least political and subversive acts possible, but these acts from the realm of the mundane are deeply powerful “possibilities”, in Lyons’s sense of the word, that can easily carry our culture and mo‘ōlelo past the defenses of even the most ardent opponents of Hawaiian sovereignty because they seem so non-threatening on the surface.

### Escape from the Mundane: Comics as ‘Onipa’a

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts, “The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope”.<sup>18</sup> In the Hawaiian community, these mundane acts are, in certain ways, at the margins of the marginalized, neither threatening enough to be suppressed or demonstrative enough to be taken up as a means of resistance. They are ‘innocuous’. Yet, as Hawai‘i music scholar Aiko Yamashiro has pointed out, innocuous art forms such as popular music are “often seen as ‘harmless’ and ‘light’, thereby eluding criticism

<sup>18</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing*, 4.



and closer thought”.<sup>19</sup> The marginal and ‘harmless’ status accorded to non-elite art forms is the very thing that enables us to use these forms and styles to subvert the rhetorical imperialism that Scott Richard Lyons describes as “the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of debate. These terms are often definitional – that is, they identify the parties discussed by describing them in certain ways”.<sup>20</sup> To begin to set the terms of the debate, the strategies of insistence and survivance demand that our mo‘olelo have as much and as many mana as possible. We need to steal a page from hegemonic popular culture’s playbook and have our mo‘olelo infiltrate public consciousness through every possible mode, including the less well-regarded and more popular art forms such as comics, anime, video games, and clothing.<sup>21</sup> Mo‘olelo need to become so ubiquitous and everyday that they can do the work of ‘onipa‘a without seeming to. That way, we can replace the damaging definitions supported by rhetorical imperialism, and work towards defining ourselves.

By focusing on comics as an example, we can see how a popular and somewhat still-maligned genre can be transformed from a carrier of damaging stereotypical images into an effective way to disseminate our culture and identity to both outsiders and our own people alike. Comics critic Rocco Versaci describes one of the more insistent aspects of comics as follows: “comics are not expected to deliver significant social or political criticism and therefore possess what I call a ‘powerful marginality’ insofar as they are freer to express subversive or unpopular political ideas”.<sup>22</sup> This “powerful marginality” has drawn many native peoples to the comic form as well, moving them to produce graphic novels and comics such as *Maui: Legends of the Outcast*,<sup>23</sup> *Strong Man*,<sup>24</sup> *Koda the Warrior*,<sup>25</sup> *Tribal Force*,<sup>26</sup> and *Peace Party*<sup>27</sup> (to name only a handful) that tell their own stories and present their own heroes.

According to Tony Chavarria (Santa Clara Pueblo), the curator of Comic Art Indigène, an exhibition of Native American artists that work in the comics tradition: “it is only natural that this marginal art appeals to oft-marginalized indigenous people, for both have been regarded as a primitive and malignant presence on the American landscape”.<sup>28</sup> Despite the critical acclaim showered upon graphic novels like Alan Moore’s *Watchmen*,<sup>29</sup> Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,<sup>30</sup> and Frank Miller’s *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*,<sup>31</sup> the term ‘comic book’ is still often used as a pejorative for something that is ‘made for kids’, ‘crass’, ‘popular’, or ‘unrealistic’. In the United States, a huge public backlash took place against comics, which had been portrayed as “one of the causes of juvenile delinquency”; this came to a head with the 1954 Senate Subcommittee hearing and the establishment of the Comics Code.<sup>32</sup>

Some comics critics regard the witch hunt of the ‘40s and ‘50s as a dark time for the genre, fueled by misdirected parental hysterics.<sup>33</sup> The point, however, is that *those parents were right*. Though I doubt that comics really cause juvenile delinquency, their “powerful marginality” can easily subvert the established order. As Edward Said pointed out about his early fascination with comics in his introduction to Joe Sacco’s graphic novel *Palestine*:

<sup>19</sup> Aiko Yamashiro, “Ethics in Song: Becoming Kama‘āina in Hapa-Haole Music”, *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture*, 8.1 (2009), <<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/>>, 11 November 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty”, 452.

<sup>21</sup> Hawaiian-themed clothing designs are popular, but often lack deep or nuanced understandings of culture and mo‘olelo. An exciting intervention is apparel company Ke Alo Piko, whose designs come from a strong cultural background and careful research. Even their clothing tags, which they call “story tags” help pass on mo‘olelo. See *Ke Alo Piko* (2009), <<http://www.kealopiko.com>>. 11 November 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 149.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Sullivan, *Maui: Legends of the Outcast* (Auckland: Godwit Publishing, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Ishmael Hope, *Strong Man* (Juneau: Alaska ICE, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Mark L. Mindt, *Koda the Warrior* (Harvey, ND: Pony Gulch Publishing, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Jon Proudstar, *Tribal Force* (Los Angeles: Mystic Comics, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Rob Schmidt, *Peace Party* (Culver City, CA: Blue Corn Comics, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Tony Chavarria, “Indigenous Comics in the United States”, *World Literature Today*, 83.3 (2009), 47.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Moore, *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 1986–1987).

<sup>30</sup> Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns* (New York: DC Comics, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form, & Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 39.

<sup>33</sup> Amy Kiste Nyberg, "William Gaines and the Battle over EC Comics", in Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, eds., *A Comics Studies Reader* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 63. Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 105.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Said, Introduction, in Joe Sacco, *Palestine* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2002), ii.

<sup>35</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> Derek Parker Royal, "Foreword; Or Reading within the Gutter", in Frederick Luis Aldama, ed., *Multicultural Comics: From Zap to Blue Beetle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), x.

[comics] seemed to say what couldn't otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn't permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped, and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. I knew nothing of this then, but I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently.<sup>34</sup>

This idea of comics freeing us to "think and imagine and see differently" is a powerful facet of the genre, but it also leads to their dismissal as incapable of anything but 'escapism'.

This 'escapism' is not necessarily a bad thing, as one of the main lures of comics is that they can indeed be fun. Even the idea of escape itself can be turned to survivant purposes, as can be seen in Versaci's reframing:

[D]espite the great diversity among the many texts that surround our lives, they nevertheless have a common thread: however beautifully or ineptly or movingly or lifelessly conveyed, these works are someone's interpretation of how the world in which we live either is or was or should be or might be or might have been .... Seen in this light, "escape" does not have to preclude thinking; escape into these diverse worlds might mean, paradoxically, that we encounter meanings that are often lost in the chaotic din of our lives.<sup>35</sup>

Derek Parker Royal provides an analysis of how easily comics can offer this 'escape':

Because they utilize picture texts to guide our understanding of narrative, comics can have a more direct effect than that dictated by prose, eliciting a reaction that takes relatively little time to process. And given its reliance on symbols and iconography, comic art speaks in a language that is accessible to a wide audience, transcending many of the national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries imposed by other media and giving it a reach that is as democratic as it is immediate.<sup>36</sup>

Just as Vizenor took the oft-passive idea of survival and turned it into an active strategy for 'onipa'a, we can harness the marginality of comics and the seemingly carefree idea of escape and turn them into active and insistent tools that will help us to envision, create, and move towards a changed world, where our mo'olelo have more mana.

## Faster than a Speeding . . . Ma'a?: Constructing a Hawaiian Comic

In May 2008, the publishing arm of an organization dedicated to the advancement and education of Hawaiian youth contacted me about working with them as one of two 'cultural consultants' to collaboratively research and write a series of bi-lingual comics (separate volumes for Hawaiian and English) based on traditional Hawaiian mo'olelo culled mainly from Hawaiian-language archival and newspaper sources. The creative team brings together people with a variety of strengths, such as publishing experience, archival research skills, and cultural knowledge, and we answer to an editorial board made up of authors, cultural practitioners, academics, activists, and others in order to have a more collaborative and community-based focus on creating these texts. We were given a lot of leeway to propose topics for

---

the novels, and have gone through the process of researching and proposing three different mo‘olelo so far, but none have gotten past the initial development phase yet. Though the process of creating these comics is nowhere near complete, the stumbling blocks and issues that have arisen do shed some light on the issues that face our community in the quest for ‘onipa‘a.

Many of these issues have arisen because of our unfamiliarity with the production of comics and because we are not sure which paths to follow when deciding exactly what a Hawaiian comic should be, but these choices are what makes the genre so full of possibility. Literary scholar Frederick Luis Aldama points out the almost limitless possibilities facing comics author-artists:

The process of writing and drawing implies, at each instant, myriad choices (one word instead of another, one image instead of another, one or another style of lettering, etc.); in thinking in images, as with lucid dreaming, the author-artist (or author-and-artist team, as the case may be) is deciding which gaps to leave and which gaps to fill in.<sup>37</sup>

As I said above, ‘onipa‘a lives in the margins, the everyday, the mundane; in comics, each of the choices, the gaps, margins, and gutters, are what allow our team to create a ‘Hawaiian’ comic, as opposed to one that is just about Hawai‘i.

We are deploying Scott McCloud’s concept of “closure” to fashion a Hawaiian world to which both Hawaiian readers/viewers and the mo‘olelo itself can ‘escape’. Closure is the ability of a person’s mind to “fill in the blanks” between panels, which McCloud says fosters an intimacy between creator and audience.<sup>38</sup> He goes on to describe how comics manipulate the juxtaposition of words and images via a single sense to help create this new sensory world for ourselves: “it is an exclusively visual representation. Within these panels, we can only convey information visually. But between panels, none of our senses are required at all. Which is why all of our senses are engaged!” (89). It is with this concept in mind that we have gone about constructing our Hawaiian world of words and images.

The construction of such a ‘Hawaiian’ world is founded on the mo‘olelo themselves, but we are aware that the background and the mundane details are what engage our senses and enable a more intimate connection with the text. Whether the men’s malo, or loincloths, are tied correctly; whether the plants at a character’s feet plausibly grow in the area in which she or he is standing; whether the mountains in the distance actually look like the mountains of that place, all of these details create the world that we want the reader to escape to, though the reader might not actively notice them. Even the accurate visual representation of sound comes into play. Comics cannot convey actual sound but they portray them using the infamous onomatopoeic words: bam, pow, krakoom, etc. Hawaiians, however, represented sounds very differently. For example, the rooster’s ‘cock-a-doodle-doo!’ in English is “o‘o‘o‘ō!” for Hawaiians. Instead of a cat going ‘meow’, Hawaiian cats say “owau’. The Hawaiian word for ‘boom!’ is ‘kūakā!’

The portrayal of sound may seem like a minor point, but I am convinced that these hardly noticed and mundane details will determine how vivid and in-depth

<sup>37</sup> Frederick Luis Aldama, “Multicultural Comics Today: A Brief Introduction”, in Aldama, *Multicultural Comics*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 69.

<sup>39</sup> These titles come from sources which did not use modern Hawaiian orthography and will thus appear as they were written at the time.

<sup>40</sup> More research needs to be done, but there is some evidence in the body of the story that it is written by someone of royal standing and that H. R. H. stands for “His/Her Royal Highness”.

<sup>41</sup> H. R. H., “No ko Molokai”, *Ke Kumu Hawaii* (8 June 1836), 2.

<sup>42</sup> J. H. Kanepuu, “He Moolelo no Kana, ka Hanai a Uli”, *Ke Au Okeo* (19 December 1867–13 February 1868).

<sup>43</sup> Niuhelewai, “He Moolelo Kaao no Kana”, *Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (11 June 1891–19 August 1891).

<sup>44</sup> Abraham Fornander, *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore* (Bishop Museum Press, 1919) 436–439, 489–491.

<sup>45</sup> J. K. Mokumaia, “Kaao no Kana ame Niheu”, *Ka Nuipepa Kuokoa* (13 January 1927), 2.

<sup>46</sup> For insight on Hawaiian-language newspapers, see Leilani Basham, “Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i: He Mo‘olelo, He ‘Āina, He Loina and He Ea Kākou”, *Hānili*, 6.1 (2010): 37–72; Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 2010; Kuwada, “How Blue Is His Beard?”, *Marvels & Tales*, 23.1 (2009): 17–39; and Noenoe Silva’s work.

<sup>47</sup> M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 81.

we can make the reading experience for our audience. Comics can be very immersive and if every aspect of the world we construct is not covered, the ‘Hawaiianess’ will come across as a mere patina. If the bangs, biffs, pows, and booms are all still in English, it will be clear to the readers that they are still in an English-dominated world built on English-centric thought and sound. But, if we can build a Hawaiian world in which every sensory detail comes from a Hawaiian understanding and where Hawaiian is the main language of thought and expression, we can show our readers how different the world they escaped from could be.

The story we are working on now is about Hina, a beautiful woman, who gives birth to two children: Niheu and Kana. Niheu is a strong yet non-magical boy, while Kana is born as a rope and once he takes human form, he has superhuman strength and the power to stretch. Hina is abducted by Kaupe‘epe‘enuikauila, a charismatic bandit who conducts raids on the other chiefs around him from a nearly impregnable fortress on the island of Moloka‘i. Over the years of her captivity, she begins to fall in love with him because he treats her much better than her husband did. When her two sons are old enough, however, they journey to Moloka‘i to rescue her and fight several monstrous creatures on the way. Kana and Niheu attack Kaupe‘epe‘e’s fortress and he allows them to kill him so that Hina can be ‘rescued’.

In the same way that the project is bringing the different mana of our team members together, the team is also bringing together eight different mana of the mo‘olelo to create our script. The five main texts are from Hawaiian-language sources that were published between 1836 and 1927: “No ko Molokai”<sup>39</sup> by H. R. H.<sup>40</sup> (1836),<sup>41</sup> *He Moolelo no Kana, ka Hanai a Uli* by J. H. Kānepu‘u (1867),<sup>42</sup> *He Moolelo Kaao no Kana* by Niuhelewai (1891),<sup>43</sup> “Kaao no Kana ame Niheu” and “Kaao no Kana ame Moi” by Abraham Fornander (1919),<sup>44</sup> and “Kaao no Kana a me Niheu” by J. K. Mokumai‘a (1927).<sup>45</sup> To ensure that the Hawaiian mo‘olelo are honored, details are only taken from the three extant English-language versions of the story if the team feels that they fit in with a Hawaiian cultural understanding. We are taking care in the initial script and plot outlines to attribute each plot element to its specific source text so that this information can be taken into account when making decisions about which aspects of the different versions to include in the final script.

Though each plot detail will not be attributed in the final text, readers will be directed to the source texts in our paratextual material. We feel these pointers are especially important because of the Hawaiian community’s history of literacy. In the Kingdom era, Hawaiian mo‘olelo were important as carriers of culture, but also offered entertainment, so nearly every issue of every newspaper included at least one (and as many as four) serial installments of Hawaiian and foreign mo‘olelo.<sup>46</sup> Often, a single copy of a newspaper was purchased, read aloud to the entire family, and then passed along from house to house.<sup>47</sup> Mo‘olelo were everywhere and known to everyone, yet Hawai‘i went from being one of the most literate nations in the



world in the nineteenth century<sup>48</sup> to ranking thirty-ninth nationally in USA reading statistics in 1998, with Hawaiian students at the bottom of that group.<sup>49</sup>

One of the simplest reasons for this low literacy, at least judging by the mainly Hawaiian students who enroll in my Hawaiian Literature classes at the University of Hawai'i, is that they have been conditioned to not care about reading, or at least the kind of reading that they do for school. As mentioned earlier, a lot of books aim at telling mo'olelo or passing on cultural lessons to young children, but there is almost nothing Hawaiian, or even Hawai'i-based, after that to appeal to them as they grow into teenagers and adults. A great many of my students state quite emphatically that they don't like to read, and yet they go on to enjoy, and often love, reading the Hawaiian stories we go over in class. In fact, when pressed, they admit to really liking to read things like manga and Harry Potter, but none of those things are considered 'real' reading. It seems quite obvious that for most of them, being forced in school to read literature by people they feel no connection to, that neither engages nor entertains them, does not lead to a love for the act of reading. It just presents reading as another thing that is 'not for them'.

Basing these comics on authored Hawaiian mo'olelo from the Hawaiian-language newspapers, then, is meant to point readers to the source mo'olelo through explicit mention in the paratexts and show these young Hawaiians that there are stories out there 'for them'. If they seek out these mo'olelo, they might possibly become interested in interacting with other Hawaiian forms, whether they be books, newspapers, songs, dances, etc., and perhaps mo'olelo like these comics can even invite Hawaiian youth (and those of us who feel young at heart) to enjoy reading again. One problem with having this aim, though, is that we do not want to strip all of the fun from comics and make them into something with an explicit and heavy-handed message. Nothing is less innocuous than an 'educational', message-driven comic that smacks of assigned reading and discussion questions. In an interview with reporter Sarah Henning, Ishmael Hope, a Juneau storyteller and the writer of the Tlingit comic *Strong Man*, said: "If I started with the perspective 'Oh, I want to do something positive with morals that gives a good Alaska Native message', it would be an afterschool special ... It would be one of those lame things that I never, ever liked when I was a kid".<sup>50</sup> Like Hope, we are aware that even though we have a definite cultural and social agenda with the publication of these graphic novels, we must be very careful to balance our desire to give mana to our mo'olelo with the desire to make an engaging and entertaining comic.

## Conclusion

As Hawaiians continue to struggle for sovereignty, we must remember that each breath a storyteller shares with a mo'olelo gives mana to that story and those who experience it. We grow as a people every time one of our stories is recovered from the Hawaiian-language newspapers, gets read at the beach, or is told among friends. Thus, we must breathe not only our mana, but our possibilities into these mo'olelo,

<sup>48</sup> See Laura Fish Judd, *Honolulu, Sketches of the Life: Social, Political and Religious in the Hawaiian Islands from 1828-1861* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1880), 79; Albertine Loomis and A. Grove Day, *Ka Pa'i Palapala: Early Printing in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Mission Houses Museum, 1997), 31.

<sup>49</sup> Native Hawaiian Education Act. Pub. L 107-110. Sec. 7201-7207. 1 July 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Sarah Henning, "Alaska Comic Superhero", *Anchorage Daily News* (16 Feb 2007), *website*, <<http://www.adn.com>>, 25 November 2008.

---

and give the readers and listeners a chance to see not only what has been, but also what could be.

By combining the mundane with the insistent, the marginal with the survivant, comics such as the ones I have discussed are meant to be gateways of sorts that would simultaneously allow readers to seek out new mo‘olelo or demand that they be made more accessible and in various forms. Those who enter these gateways would be invited to escape, while still participating in ‘onipa‘a. Therefore, with the publication of seemingly innocuous and escapist Hawaiian mo‘olelo in comics form, readers will have a chance to experience (and perhaps create) worlds where things Hawaiian are mundane yet full of mana, story worlds and places where cultural values and messages do not stand out. Not because they are not important, but because they are *everywhere*.



hua ‘ōlelo: word  
fruit of speech  
thought  
‘ōlelo rolls off tongue  
a lyrical wave of sound

mo‘olelo: hi/story  
a succession of speech  
mo‘o  
‘ōlelo  
history rolls off tongue  
an institution of memory

ha‘i ‘ōlelo: to tell  
proclaim  
again and again  
memory embodied in tongue

ha‘ina: refrain  
the summary  
of what is told  
so we will never forget

---

**Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua**

He mele inoa no ku'u kumu aloha, 'o  
Haunaniokawēkiuhaleakalā

Noho nani ka hau  
I ka wēkiu o Haleakalā

Lā hahau wela ē  
He'e ka wai hu'ihu'i

Hui nā wāhine noho mauna  
Nā pua ohaoha i ka wai

Kahe a kinai ahi  
A nā kōlea ē

'Ike le'a Kaihuokalā  
I ka lāhui 'Ōiwi nei

Kahe nō kou mana  
O ia 'āina aloha

Pi'i hou a kupu  
Nā kupa aloha 'āina

He lei wehi i ka 'āina  
ka hau nani o Haleakalā

He inoa nō 'o Haunaniokawēkiuhaleakalā

---

## BOOKS RECEIVED:

Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Nancy Isenberg and Maddalena Pennacchia, eds., *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome* (Gottingen: V&R Unipress, 2010), 388 pp. ISBN 3899717406

Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubas, (eds.), *Remembering Patrick White: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), XVII + 218 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2849-4

Elena Spandri, *Wideworlds. L'orientalismo nella letteratura inglese e americana. 1760-1820*, (Pacini Editore, 2010), 229 pp. ISBN 9788863151756

Stefano Mercanti, *The Rose and the Lotus: Partnership Studies in the Works of Raja Rao*, (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), LVII + 221 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2833-3 56 / US\$ 84

Cristina Boscolo, *Odún: Discourses, Strategies, and Power in the Yorùbá Play of Transformation* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXX + 337 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2680-3 68 / US\$ 102

Maria Caridad Casas, *Multimodality in Canadian Black Feminist Writing: Orality and the Body in the Work of Harris, Philip, Allen, and Brand* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXXIV + 213 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2686-5

Melanie A Murray, *Island Paradise: The Myth. An Examination of Contemporary Caribbean and Sri Lankan Writing*. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXII + 226 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2696-4

Layla Al Maleh, ed., *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XII + 491 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2718-3

Michael Meyer, (ed.), *Word & Image in Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures*, ASNEL Papers 14 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XLIII + 379 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2743-5

Stella Borg Barthet, (ed.), *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XIV + 412 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2764-0

Charlotte Williams and Evelyn A. Williams, (eds.), *Denis Williams: A Life in Works. New and Collected Essays*, Foreword by David Dabydeen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXI + 238 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2791-6

Mike Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XVI + 249 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2712-1

Introduction

He mau hua: Notes from the Editors

<sup>1</sup> The poet No‘ukahau‘oli Revilla’s evocative and impassioned explanation of this phrase inspired this understanding of “i wai no‘u” as a powerful exhortation that far exceeds an everyday and mundane request.

<sup>2</sup> In 1887, an armed force made up of white residents compelled Kalākaua to sign a constitution that limited the monarchy’s power and disenfranchised Asians and a large number of Hawaiians.

See also Jon Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Anne Keala Kelly’s recent documentary *Noho Hewa The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai‘i* (Best Documentary at the 2008 Hawaii International Film Festival) makes this point visually and dialogically.

See <<http://www.nohohewa.com/>>. Historically foundational is another documentary, *Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (1993), co-produced and scripted by Haunani-Kay Trask.

<sup>4</sup> The United States Public Law 103-150, signed by then U.S. President Clinton in 1993, apologizes for “the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i” and “acknowledges the historical significance of this event which resulted in the suppression of the inherent sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian people” (<<http://www.hawaii-nation.org/publawall.html>>). No action followed.

E ka lahui, pehea la e hiki ai ia kakou ke ninau i ka aoao maikai, ke paa ole ia kakou ka moolelo kahiko o ko kakou Aina Aloha? [“O Nation, how are we to ask where the good path is if the ancient mo‘olelo of our beloved land are not known to us?”] Joseph Poepoe (17 January 1906)

Stand firm, my friends. Love for the land is more important to you and me than anything else. Be brave, be strong, be fearless and steadfast. Kuaihelani Campbell, *San Francisco Call* (24 September 1897)

Mohala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua  
*Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers*  
‘Ōlelo No‘eau

When I first began learning the Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai‘i, my teachers taught me that the phrase “i wai no‘u” meant that I wanted water to drink. But after studying Hawaiian culture, language, and history for several years, I learned that the simple request for water could have many other meanings.<sup>1</sup> When people wish to fight, they might challenge their opponents by calling out “i wai no‘u!” with the belief that their opponents will quench their thirst for a battle. Lovers might say this to each other in the throes of passion, wanting their desires to be slaked. The subjects of the Hawaiian kingdom might have said something similar to this to Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last reigning monarch, when they were asking for a new constitution to replace the oppressive Bayonet Constitution.<sup>2</sup> These examples reflect different facets of urgent desire, constant seeking, and yearning, all crying out to be quenched. This same deep thirst defines and motivates the contemporary cultural and political movement to recover Hawaiian sovereignty, language, traditions, and stories. [BKK]

Water was systematically diverted from Hawaiian subsistence farming and ecosystems to a plantation economy in the 19th and 20th centuries, and we continue in Hawai‘i today to see that drain supporting corporate tourism. For me the impetus to assemble this special issue of *Anglistica* lies in the awareness that Hawaiian sovereignty is an issue that concerns everyone, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, in Hawai‘i nei.<sup>3</sup> Current discussions indicate that, over the last forty years, both in the islands and in the continental United States, there has been a strong growth in public awareness of Hawai‘i’s colonial situation – the history of injustice suffered by the Hawaiian nation at the hands of U.S. government and economic imperialism with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893<sup>4</sup> and the annexation of

---

Hawai‘i as a territory of the United States in 1898, in the face of peaceful but strong Native resistance to this takeover. As Craig Howes and Jon Osorio<sup>5</sup> put it succinctly, “Hawai‘i will remain economically, socially, and ethically troubled as long as we refuse to come fully to terms with Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty”.<sup>6</sup> The same discussions make it clear that “to come fully to terms” with these political and economic claims goes hand in hand with changes in everyday practices, structures of feeling, ethics, civic responsibility. The creative and scholarly contributions in our issue of *Anglistica* reach into what can be learned, done, and imagined in the present to foster a culture in and for Hawai‘i, one that sustains Hawaiian sovereignty and does not naturalize injustice and greed. [CB]

Injustice and greed, however local they may be in their effects, can never be restricted to the local dimension: “Sustaining Hawaiian Sovereignty” in an Italian journal published in English and circulating on the world web is a way of reminding ourselves of that interconnectedness. It is a way of acknowledging, celebrating, sharing, and fostering both the more particular and the more far-reaching implications of the Hawaiian struggle: the wider waves that it is capable of stirring in the still waters of acquiescence to the ‘inevitability’ of limitless exploitation, growing inequality, and environmental devastation – in Hawai‘i as well as in Italy and worldwide. And it is also a way of reminding ourselves of the lasting importance of culture and of its power to engender and nourish affirmative political and social movements. [DI]

Writers, artists, scholars, dancers, poets, musicians, farmers, and fishers have all expressed a deep and unquenched thirst that has driven them to action. We are searching not just for literal water, by lobbying for water rights, restoring streams and fishponds, and reopening lo‘i, but also water that sustains us as a people through the reawakening and reinvigorating of our culture, language, and sovereignty. In many ways, the seeking is also the drinking because these efforts to find sustenance have provided it as well. For instance, the poet and writer Haunani-Kay Trask was inspired by the example of Lili‘uokalani’s tireless exertions to restore the Hawaiian nation. Subsequently, Trask herself brought Hawaiian issues to the forefront of Hawai‘i’s public consciousness and completely changed the way in which activists, scholars, and community members alike understood Hawaiian struggles. Through her passionate and relentless work, she has provided water for her peers and for those who have come after her, inspiring us to do the same for those who come after us. [BKK]

In this issue of *Anglistica*, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Eiko Kosasa, Kapulani Landgraf, and Brandy Nālani McDougall most explicitly engage with Haunani-Kay Trask’s own activist scholarship and poetry of fiery beauty. But Trask and her narrative of political consciousness start off the issue because all of the contributors are in active conversation with her steadfast determination to undo the material, institutional, and symbolic doings of colonialism and coloniality.

“Publishing for the indigenous writer ... is not only an ambitious dream, as it is for most writers. It is a necessary struggle against extinction”,<sup>7</sup> wrote Trask in

<sup>5</sup> Craig Howes and Jon Osorio, eds., *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 5. For more information about the book, “Water” by D. Kapua‘ala Sproat, and the many events following its publication, including speaker series and art/music/dialog events, see <<http://thevalueofhawaii.com>>.

<sup>6</sup> Published around the time that we put out our call for papers, *The Value of Hawai‘i* has made some small waves by enabling and nurturing civic debate around the question “what do you value about Hawai‘i and what can we do to protect it?”

<sup>7</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Indigenous Writers and the Colonial Situation”, *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 13.1 (1984), 81.

<sup>8</sup> Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004) is a groundbreaking study of how Hawaiians protested annexation in these newspapers.

<sup>9</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, 2nd edition), 128, 37. See the website *Mo'olelo Aloha 'Aina, Stories of Love and Struggle for the Land* <<http://moolelo.manainfo.com>>.

<sup>10</sup> The first known publication of the song was in *Ka Leo o ka Labui* (24 February, 1893), 3.

See *Buke mele labui. Book of national songs* facsimile reprint of the 1895 text edited by F. J. Testa (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Leilani Basham, "Mele Lāhui: The Importance Of Pono In Hawaiian Poetry", *Te Kaharoa*, 1 (2008), <<http://tekaharoa.com/index.php/tekaharoa/article/viewFile/54/26>>.

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada for noting that in "He Ohu no ka Poe Aloha Aina" the last line of the song is "No ka poe i aloha i ka aina" [for the people who love the land].

For a more commonly performed version, see <[http://www.huapala.org/Kau/Kaulana\\_Na\\_Pua.html](http://www.huapala.org/Kau/Kaulana_Na_Pua.html)>

<sup>13</sup> See <<http://www.hawaii.edu/oiw/>> for information about this landmark journal, "the first publication dedicated to the

1984. Starting in 1861, the publication of so many independent (as in not run by the government or the missionaries) Hawaiian-language newspapers over an eighty-year span showed that Hawaiians indeed recognized the power of print literature as an expression of survival and resistance.<sup>8</sup> Successfully adapting the technology of colonial conversion proved crucial to the transmission of Hawaiian history and stories, knowledge and values. From the nineteenth century into the present, including the Hawaiian Renaissance's artistic and activist revival in the 1970s and Trask's own scholarly and poetic publications, Hawaiian literature has persistently asserted aloha 'āina, "the Hawaiian responsibility to care for the land, to make it flourish", as a cultural and political force that, in a colonial situation, becomes a struggle for land, in opposition to the development of tourist resorts and military use, and in pursuit of the restoration of ceded lands and sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> This love for the land was and is also an expression of patriotism; it is love for the lāhui, the Hawaiian people and nation. The song "Kaulana Nā Pua" [Famous Are the Flowers], of which Jon and Jamaica Osorio present a contemporary rendition, was first published as "He Ohu no ka Poe Aloha Aina"<sup>10</sup> [An Adornment for the People Who Love the Land] and "Mele Aloha Aina"<sup>11</sup> [Song of Love for the Land], and it ends with a dedication to or affirmation of "ka po'e i aloha i ka 'āina" [the people who love the land].<sup>12</sup> For Māhealani Dudoit, the founding editor of *Oiwi*,<sup>13</sup> Hawaiian people's "link to the land as part of its 'living tissue' is ... the driving force of the Hawaiian movement".<sup>14</sup> This relationship to land also resonates with Thomas King's assertion that "The magic of Native literature – as with other literatures – is not in the themes of the stories – identity, isolation, loss, ceremony, community, maturation, home – it is in the way meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms".<sup>15</sup> That Hawaiian "cultural paradigms" and cosmology are not the norm in Hawai'i (just as Native American ones are not the norm in North America) politicizes this statement and makes Hawaiian literature, art, and scholarship<sup>16</sup> into expressions not only of survival and resistance, but into acts of decolonizing change, or, as Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada more precisely articulates it in his essay, of *'onipa'a*. [CB]

I feel very fortunate to be among the steadily growing number of scholars who can access the Hawaiian-language sources that have for so long been ignored in favor of histories of Hawai'i written in English, usually by people who were not supportive of Hawaiian aims, and based solely on English-language documents, themselves reflecting and promoting the views of the colonial regime. This is an exciting and heady time to write about Hawai'i, because Hawaiian history is literally being rewritten on a regular basis by scholars venturing into the massive Hawaiian-language archives of newspapers, manuscripts, songbooks, legal documents, recorded interviews, etc. The wider availability and accessibility of the Hawaiian-language newspapers alone have already enabled researchers to find new insights into Hawaiian history and culture nearly every time they turn a page. Those who focus on these sources ensure that a steadily increasing number of long-unheard Hawaiian voices once again narrate complex histories of struggle, collaboration,



resistance, insistence, heartbreak, and triumph that stand in stark contrast to the simplistic and monovocal story of a tragic but inferior people falling before the unstoppable juggernaut of colonialism.

This return to Hawaiian-language archival sources has not only invigorated scholarship about Hawai‘i, it has changed what we consider responsible and ethical approaches to research. There is an increasing expectation that if people are going to write about Hawaiian history and culture, creatively or academically, they must have some access to Hawaiian-language sources. Some academics and writers whose works were once deemed exhaustive and well researched are now considered myopic for not considering these sources. This is not to say that this earlier research or the English-language archives are not valuable, only that they are no longer sufficient for our needs. Though the demand for researchers with linguistic access may be seen by some as limiting and exclusionary, it can also provide opportunities for dialogue and reflection among scholars/authors who may now have to learn from or work with others to access this archive. This kind of collaboration gives all of us a chance to reevaluate our individual kuleana [‘responsibility, right, privilege’] in relation to both the topic and the archival material. People, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike, may find that their kuleana does not extend as far as it once did. [BKK]

Raised in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s as a bilingual child, I am aware of how my mother’s language would have been lost to me had it been Hindi or Tamil rather than English, which was at the time replacing French as the international language of power.<sup>17</sup> Newcomers to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in the nineteenth century would be expected to learn the Hawaiian language, but no institutional or social incentive for learning Hawaiian was in place when I came in 1983, though the state of Hawai‘i’s official languages are English and Hawaiian. It’s never too late to start learning a language, but I wish I’d started sooner. Whether I want to write about Hawai‘i or not, learning the indigenous language of this place is one of the ways to engage in more informed and self-reflective conversations to support Hawaiian sovereignty.

Several essays in this issue of *Anglistica* emphasize the significance of the Hawaiian-language revival that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s thanks to the struggles to institute language-immersion schools, and more recently charter schools as well as graduate programs in Hawaiian Language and Hawaiian Studies at the university. Before that, as Hawaiian political power declined, the suppression of Hawaiian-language use in the public sphere not only painfully dispossessed a people, but also resulted in the neglect of the Hawaiian-language materials published in the newspapers from 1834 to 1948. Over a hundred thousand pages in close to 100 newspapers provide a rich historical, cultural, and literary archive.<sup>18</sup> Noelani Arista writes in her essay, “The future of Hawaiian historical scholarship lies in the careful interpretation of a vast untapped reservoir of Hawaiian-language source material”. Today’s Hawaiian scholarship and art, as seen in this issue of *Anglistica*, are already meeting this challenge by deploying – and performing in the case of

mana‘o (thoughts) and hana no‘eau (artistic works) of Nā ‘Ōiwi (Kānaka Maoli, Native Hawaiians)”. The first three volumes are available at *UluKau, the Electronic Hawaiian Library*, <<http://ulukau.org/>>.

<sup>14</sup> D. Māhealani Dudoit, “Against Extinction: A Legacy of Native Hawaiian Resistance Literature”, 2, in Ibrahim G. Aoudé, ed., *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 39 (1999), <<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~aoude/pdf/17Dudoit.pdf>>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 2003), 112.

<sup>16</sup> In “Land, Leadership, and Nation: Haunani-Kay Trask on the Testimonial Uses of Life Writing in Hawai‘i,” Trask discusses contemporary Hawaiian music, traditional cultural practices, and photography as “forms of testimony” with interviewers Cynthia Franklin and Laura E. Lyons, *Biography*, 27.1 (Winter 2004), 222-249.

<sup>17</sup> That, as a well-educated Anglo-Indian growing up in the 1920s and 1930s in India, my mother knew English only speaks of course to one of the legacies of colonialism. In Hawai‘i, public education was limited to English-only schools in 1896.

<sup>18</sup> See M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i Ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010). The transformative force of the *Ho‘olau‘a‘i* project digitizing these newspapers

cannot be overestimated; see  
<<http://nupepa.org/>>. See  
also researcher Saho  
Fukushima's resource <<http://www.facebook.com/Hoolaupai>>.

<sup>19</sup> Trask's *From a Native Daughter*, Ty Kāwika Tengan's *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahale's *Holo Mai Pele* (Honolulu: Pacific Islanders in Communications, 2001), and others highlight familial and gendered relations to the 'āina countering touristic uses of land.

<sup>20</sup> "Creare una nuova cultura non significa solo fare individualmente delle scoperte 'originali', significa anche e specialmente diffondere criticamente delle verità già scoperte; 'socializzarle' per così dire e pertanto farle diventare base di azioni vitali; elemento di coordinamento e di ordine intellettuale e morale", *Quaderni del carcere: Il materialismo storico* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1971), 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas P. Spencer, *Kana Kūloko 1895: Ka Ho'ā'o 'ana e Ho'okabuli i ke Aupuni i Lōkahi 'ole 'ia ka Repubalika o Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 132-136.

No'u Revilla and Jamaica Osorio – cultural and linguistic self-determination, competence, interpretation, and creativity. But it is frustrating to realize, Arista also notes, that having “cultural and linguistic fluency in Hawaiian” is as of yet not considered “necessary in order to write Hawaiian history.” This of course matters not only to the writing of history, but to scholarship in other disciplines, including literature, where the protocols of indigenous genres and poetics are crucial. Aiko Yamashiro's poem, Kapulani Landgraf's artwork, and ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui's, Vincenzo Bavaro's, and Incoronata Inserra's essays, each also speaks differently to how caring about and for the land, historically and in the everyday, are part and parcel of this charge.<sup>19</sup> For myself, I think of Antonio Gramsci's words: “Creating a new culture is not just a matter of individuals making ‘original’ discoveries but also, and above all, of disseminating already discovered truths – of socializing them so to speak, and making them therefore the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral effort” (my translation).<sup>20</sup> The pressure and the promise are on. [CB]

For myself, one of the biggest revelations that came from the Hawaiian-language archive is the sheer diversity of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Hawaiians were not alone in their loyalty to the monarchy; they were not the only ones who were said to have aloha 'āina ['aloha for the land'] and aloha lāhui ['aloha for the nation/people']. One example among many came in the wake of the failed counter-revolt of 1895 that pitted the supporters of the Hawaiian kingdom against the newly-formed Republic of Hawai'i. A book published the year of the counter-revolt entitled *Kana Kūloko 1895: Ka Ho'ā'o 'ana e Ho'okabuli i ke Aupuni i Lōkahi 'ole 'ia ka Repubalika o Hawai'i* ['Civil War 1895: The Attempt to Overthrow the Discordant Government, the Republic of Hawai'i'] lists the names of those the authors call nā koa aloha 'āina ['the warriors who have aloha for the land'], the over three hundred people who were arrested after their armed attempt to restore the kingdom.<sup>21</sup> The list includes obviously Hawaiian names such as Poepoe, Aea, Kanakaole, Kukalahiwa, Kaohimaunu, and more, but it also includes names such as Rosa, Townsend, Silva, Walker, Chong, Matsumoto, Lycurgus, and a host of others.<sup>22</sup> Though it is likely that some of these people are part-Hawaiian, it is undeniable that a number of them are not Hawaiian by genealogy; they are, however, Hawaiian by nationality, and by allegiance. To honor the many loyal subjects of the Hawaiian kingdom of all ethnicities, such as these koa aloha 'āina, and to make the movement more inclusive, a number of contemporary leaders of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement have taken up the idea that to identify as a 'Hawaiian' is different than identifying as a 'Hawaiian national', and that activism must take place as indigenous peoples but also as a nation. The struggle for sovereignty based on the idea of the Hawaiian kingdom as a progressive, multiethnic nation remains a bit controversial, but it is gaining purchase, particularly among those who feel that this land and the culture that originated here are worth fighting for. The idea that we all have to pitch in to regain Hawaiian sovereignty might be difficult for some to swallow, but I think that it is one that still holds water. [BKK]

Rather than recognizing that the sovereignty movement is, in Haunani-Kay Trask's words, a "struggle for land, government, and international status as a recognized nation",<sup>23</sup> "the American government's responses to the sovereignty movement have been to insist that *race* is at the core of the political solution between Hawaiians and the United States".<sup>24</sup> Historian Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio proceeds to discuss not only issues of justice and self-determination in a global economy, but how the sovereignty movement in Hawai'i is gaining "more and more support over the past decade because it acknowledges the rights of nations under international law, and because it does not lead to the destruction of relationships among friends and families because of race".<sup>25</sup> The ongoing discussion within the Hawaiian movement of how ancestry works in relation to nationhood need not be confused with the bad faith of racializing indigeneity pursued by the US government.<sup>26</sup> Rather what it means for those of us who are not Hawaiians to support Hawaiian sovereignty continues to be complicated, and it demands grappling with and acting on the awareness of one's structural position *and* agency within a longer and persistent history of settler colonialism, capitalism, and occupation. Paul Lyons's essay is a powerful reminder and performance of how "Native/non-native collaboration against Empire within the arts" and the friendships that it sustains "have a history in Hawai'i, become a usable inheritance, and have an uncanny power to continue generating effects". While not seeking to homogenize distinct positionalities and projects, this special issue of *Anglistica* as well as our Introduction seeks in small ways to extend such anti-colonial practices and alliances in colonized and occupied Hawai'i. [CB]

The American government, on the federal and state level, has benefitted from portraying and viewing the Hawaiian sovereignty movement as an internal, mainly racial matter.<sup>27</sup> Keeping discussions of a nominal Hawaiian sovereignty within the existing political structure of the state or federal government, such as the recent attempts to give Hawaiians 'federal recognition', serves only to maintain the status quo and sidestep discussions of independence and de-occupation. That is why seeing the sovereignty movement as nationalist, anti-colonial, and de-occupationist has become so important in the last decade or two; it takes the movement back to the international level, where it has belonged since the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom. [BKK]

The wish to contribute to the international visibility of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and to foreground the complicated issues of ancestry, culture, language, land, and nationality that it raises, was among the reasons that originally induced us to propose to the editorial board of *Anglistica* a special issue devoted to "Sustaining Hawaiian Sovereignty". Other considerations, especially relevant for me as an Americanist who has for some time interrogated the field's presuppositions from a somewhat decentered perspective, pertain to the position of Hawai'i with respect not only to the United States as a political entity, but also to the disciplinary field of American Studies. Mainly occluded within the field – in spite of the powerful anti-imperialist thrust that has characterized the work of the New Americanists over

<sup>23</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: Locals in Hawai'i", in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 50.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, "Hawaiian Issues", *The Value of Hawai'i*, 18. See also Osorio's "'What Kine Hawaiian Are You?' A Mo'olelo about Nationhood, Race, History, and the Contemporary Sovereignty Movement in Hawai'i", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13.2 (Fall 2001), 359-379.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed analysis, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui's *Hawaiian Blood: Colonization and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> For example, Public Law 103-150, the so-called "Apology Bill" signed by Bill Clinton, admits the United States' role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian nation, but only apologizes to Native Hawaiians, neatly occluding the fact that many other people lost their country on that day as well.

<sup>28</sup> The landmark text is Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), a 672-page volume where, however, the annexation of Hawai‘i is only mentioned in passing.

<sup>29</sup> Respectively, the series “American Encounters/Global Interactions”, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Emily S. Rosenberg, and the series “Narrating Native Histories”, edited by K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Florencia E. Malon, Alcida Rita Ramos, and Joanne Rappaport, both with Duke University Press.

<sup>30</sup> “Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures” (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> See the recent issue of the journal of the American Studies Association, *American Quarterly*, 62: 3 (September 2010), edited by Paul Lai and Lindsay Claire Smith, devoted to *Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies*, which features a section on “Spaces of the Pacific” with several essays on Hawai‘i.

<sup>32</sup> I addressed some of these implications in “Reading across Fields: An Italian Americanist Looks at Hawai‘i”, *Tin Fish Net*, 3 (August 2007), <<http://tinfishpress.com/tinfishnet/izzo.html>>.

<sup>33</sup> Among the few exceptions are two issues I co-edited of the American Studies journal *Ácoma*, “Margini degli Stati Uniti” (2002, with Erminio Corti) and “Hawai‘i al di là del mito” (2004–2005, with

the last two decades<sup>28</sup> – and frequently forgotten in the discourse of even the most critically aware and politically committed Americanist scholars, the Hawaiian archipelago was for a long time, and to a large extent still is, virtually invisible on the map of American studies: an academic niche, or the mere regional setting and origin of a number of multicultural literary works, whose analysis justifies passing consideration for aims of contextualization. Of course, there have been exceptions: Rob Wilson’s *Reimagining the American Pacific* (2000) came out in the “New Americanists” series of Duke University Press edited by Donald E. Pease, where, since its inception in 1993, many of the most innovative books in American Studies have appeared. Other transformative works such as Noenoe K. Silva’s *Aloha Betrayed. Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (2004) or J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s *Hawaiian Blood. Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (2008), however, came out in more ‘specialized’ series;<sup>29</sup> and Paul Lyons’s fundamental *American Pacificism. Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (2006) was published under the rubric of Postcolonial Studies.<sup>30</sup> Book publication, to be sure, is influenced by a wide range of circumstances and considerations; what this pattern suggests to me, however, in its retrospective coherence, is that a concern with Hawai‘i was not perceived as necessarily belonging within the disciplinary endeavors of mainstream American Studies.

Only recently has Hawai‘i started to command sustained attention, within the American Studies field, as a generative space at the intersection of several current areas of scholarly inquiry and political intervention – imperialism studies, Pacific studies, ethnic and Asian American studies, Indigeneity studies, transnational and hemispheric American Studies.<sup>31</sup> A site of contradiction as well as confluence, Hawai‘i as the producer of its own critical discourse simultaneously uses, questions, and unsettles existing scholarly definitions, challenging many of the established conceptualizations and compartmentalizations of American Studies, and confronting it with the limits of its own epistemologies. While the origins of my interest in Hawai‘i have been frankly biographical, rooted as they are in long-standing personal ties that have spanned across decades and multiplied over the years, Hawai‘i has been an exceptionally rewarding object of literary and cultural attention not just because of the amazing richness of its artistic production, but exactly by virtue of its power to destabilize the assumptions – political no less than intellectual – of my scholarly field.<sup>32</sup>

To this day, the Italian representation of Hawai‘i in the commercial press is still tuned to the stereotypes of the exotic tourist paradise, and Italian scholars haven’t done much to redress that image.<sup>33</sup> Napoli-based Americanists, however, have for some time cultivated a strong interest in Hawai‘i, as witness the presence of two former students of “Orientale” among the contributors to this issue. The reasons for this, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> may lie in a sense of shared positionality vis-à-vis the operation of cultural hegemony and of political and economic power at both the national and the global level: a large metropolitan city tracing its history back to classical antiquity and the former capital of a kingdom, culturally rich and



---

blessed with a unique natural landscape, Napoli has a recent history of domestic colonialism, economic exploitation, political corruption, urban decay, and widespread criminality that make it a living paradox – simultaneously a part of the Global South and of the rich West, an emblem of the coexistence of the unachieved project of modernity and rampant neoliberal globalization. With this special issue of *Anglistica* we hope to nourish this sense of connection further, moving the Italian perception of Hawaiian issues to a new level of complexity, while offering the Hawaiian sovereignty movement new interlocutors – literally half a world away, but simultaneously also worldwide – for its creative and critical interventions. [DI]

E ō!<sup>35</sup> [BKK, CB, DI]

Mahalo to all contributors to this special issue and to those who helped in other ways to make it into what it is, especially Craig Howes, Katherine E. Russo, and Aiko Yamashiro.

Note: The individual authors and artists have chosen whether or not to italicize Hawaiian words and phrases in their pieces according to their own relationships and interactions with the language. The use of diacritical marks in Hawaiian-language writing was introduced in the twentieth century, and, following customary procedure, we have not added the glottal stop [ʻ] or the macron when quoting older texts.

Incoronata Inserra), and a special issue of *Anglistica*, “American Poets and Politics”, co-edited with Gordon Poole (1998).

<sup>34</sup> See note 29.

<sup>35</sup> This is a call to respond and to endure and persist.

---

## Haunani-Kay Trask

*Interviewed by **Eiko Kosasa** for *Journey for Justice**



Haunani-Kay Trask Interviewed by Eiko Kosasa for *Journey for Justice*, 2010, <<http://www.journeytojusticetv.org>>.

*Journey for Justice*, a half-hour program hosted by Dr. Eiko Kosasa, explores the lives of people dedicated to overturn structures of unfairness, oppression, and state-sanctioned violence in order to inspire others to create an egalitarian world. (from the website)



---

## Kapulani Landgraf

### Kū'ē i ka hewa

*Kū'ē i ka hewa* (resist the wrong) is in response to the Hawaiian people's inherent rights as a native people. The woven red images are from a Kūi ka pono march with over 10,000 people marching in Waikīkī in support of upholding these rights. The line of people in a row with iron nails are the people trying to take the native rights away. The words are from a traditional Hawaiian chant, which was a prophecy of the Hawaiian people to hold firm to their birthright/homeland.

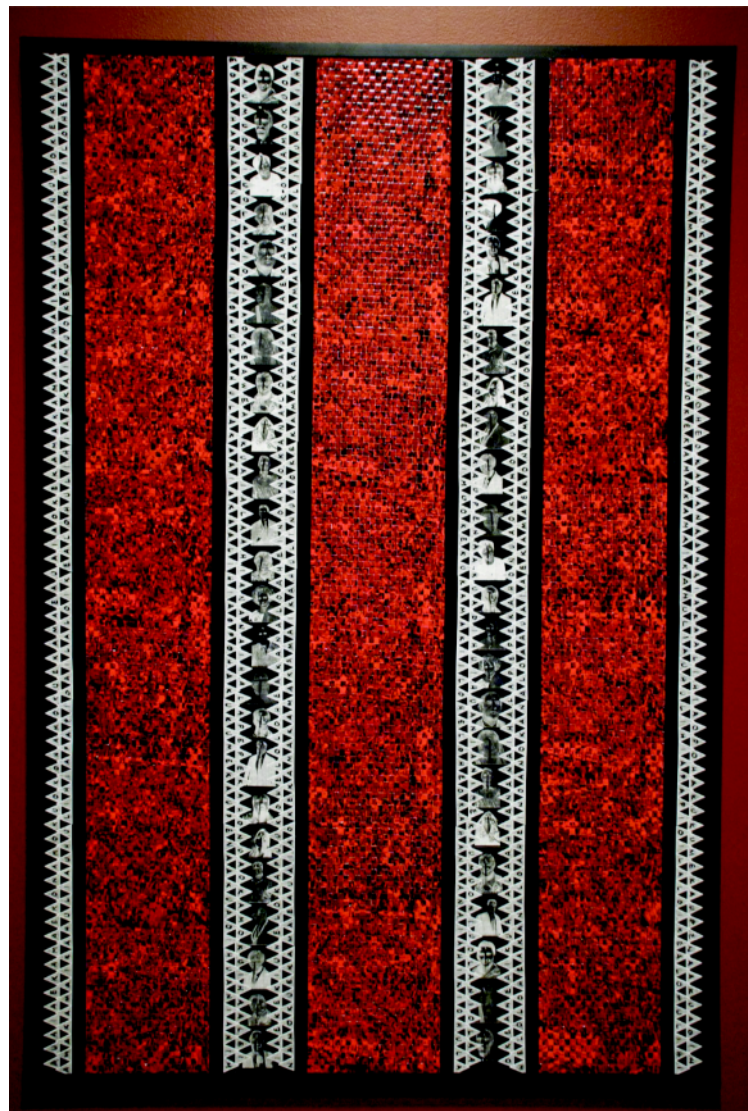


Fig. 1 - Kapulani Landgraf, *Kū'ē i ka hewa*, 'Ikuwā 2008, hand-woven silver gelatin collage with square head iron nails, exhibited in the group show 'Ili Iho, J.M. Long Gallery, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 2008, 96 x 48 x 3 inch, courtesy of the artist.

**We Have No Fida'iyn**

We have no fida'iyn.

Dancers and  
voyagers, speakers  
in all the tongues  
of compliance. But  
No fida'iyn.

We are drying, chanting,  
praying, begging. But  
no fida'iyn.

In the cities and suburbs, in the  
dying countryside, we travel  
with passports  
of anger.

Yet no fida'iyn.

But wait!  
from the farthest shore

A chant is born  
in the shadow of resorts.

And we are there, bowing  
to the lords  
of creation.

fida'iyn: In Arabic, the plural of fida'i, "one ready to sacrifice his life for his country".

## I ka mo'olelo nō ke ola: In History There Is Life

Na wai ho'i ka 'ole o ke akamai, he alahele i ma'a i ka hele 'ia e o'u mau mākua.

Why shouldn't I know when it is a road often traveled by my parents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, *Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1983), 251.

Liholiho's retort to yet another foreigner who praised his wisdom may have been uttered in exasperation while he was visiting London in 1824. We will never know if these flatterers were simply ingratiating themselves to royalty in the hopes of receiving a lavish tip, or if the praise was offered in earnest. Those who met Liholiho may have been genuinely astounded that a heathen king could be so intelligent, well-spoken, and well-fitted to appear in society. Liholiho, however, found fault with these intrusive statements of approval and replied in a tone that revealed his irritation. "*Na wai? Who?* is bereft of wisdom, for it is a path frequently traversed by my parents".

Liholiho's statement is a clear expression of sovereignty spoken from a place of confidence and mastery, assertive of his intelligence and chiefly status. The often traveled road that Liholiho described was more than a metaphoric reference to many generations of ancestors whose knowledge was tested through practiced application, refined through ingenuity and skill, and proven through political supremacy. Liholiho's statement was also a rebuke intended to remind the ignorant speaker of his lowly position in relation to Liholiho's high chiefly eminence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> My translation, "who is bereft of wisdom", provides a first tier of meaning, whereas Pukui's translation applies the basic phrase to the Chief's person – that becomes the basis for the rebuke: "Why shouldn't I know!"

In this brief essay I appropriate Liholiho's statement, offering a more expansive translation, one that might apply to my generation and those who follow. Na wai ho'i ka 'ole o ke akamai, he alahele i ma'a i ka hele 'ia e o'u mau kūpuna. Who of us is bereft of wisdom, for it is a road frequently traversed by my ancestors. My interpretation of this statement broadens Liholiho's claim of knowledge to include all Hawaiians – for as a people collectively we are the inheritors of rich wisdom traditions. These historical traditions have been passed down to us and to the world in oral, auditory, written, and published forms. Recognition of the scale of this inheritance has yet to permeate our communities, and has just begun to make an impression in scholarly discourse. Although it will be difficult to supplant the commonly recognized signifiers associated with Hawai'i that have made it a popular global tourist destination, this new scholarship will supply new and important understandings of Hawai'i's history. This work is currently being engaged across disciplines and in communities both at home and around the world. It is work that needs to be done in order to get at the deeper currents of Hawaiian knowledge, which I believe has much to offer the world.

Here I suggest that the future of Hawaiian historical scholarship lies in the careful interpretation of a vast untapped reservoir of Hawaiian-language source

material. I will also share a few of my own techniques for interpreting sources premised on Hawaiian ways of thinking and speaking, which I have been calling a kaona-conscious historical method.<sup>3</sup>

Due to innovations in American print culture in the early nineteenth century – and due in large part to the printing presses brought by the missionaries to the islands, the educational imperatives of the chiefs, and the overwhelming response of the people – Hawaiians began to write and publish Hawaiian histories, genealogies, chants, stories, prayers, and traditions less than a decade after the death of Kamehameha I and the arrival of the missionaries in 1820. Because of these developments, continuity in the passing on of Hawaiian oral historical and cultural traditions into writing and print may be unparalleled in the history of native peoples in the Pacific and United States. Add to this cultural treasure trove the daily reportage, news, opinions, advertisements, manuscripts, journals, business records, legal documents, and all the papers necessary to govern a kingdom, and a complex and important ‘record’ of native peoples’ lives produced in a native language begins to emerge.<sup>4</sup> Hawai‘i arguably has the largest literature base of any native language in the Pacific, perhaps all of native North America, exceeding 1,000,000 pages of printed text, 125,000 of which were Hawaiian-language newspapers published between 1834 and 1948.<sup>5</sup>

While a handful of historians and anthropologists have drawn on Hawaiian-language sources in their work, many scholars have relied upon a small pool of previously translated Hawaiian-language materials that are available, leading to what Anthropologist and Hawaiian Language Professor M. Puakea Nogelmeier termed “a discourse of sufficiency”.<sup>6</sup> The translation of works that have become known as the ‘canon’ consists of manuscripts as well as serialized entries from the Hawaiian-language newspapers on history and traditional religious practice by Hawaiian intellectuals living in the nineteenth century. These translations of newspaper articles make up a large collection, known as the Hawaiian Ethnological Notes (HEN). Ethnographers and folklorists, who worked at or were in some way attached to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, commissioned or undertook these translations from the 1890s through the 1950s as sources to fuel their writings on Hawaiian history and culture. Most of these scholars worked with Hawaiian experts who helped them translate and interpret the cultural and religious content of the texts. The canon includes the work of the ‘big four’ Hawaiian intellectuals: Davida Malo, Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, John Papa Ii, and K. Z. Kepelino Keauokalani.<sup>7</sup>

For all of the technical and theoretically sophisticated work of historians, anthropologists, legal historians, political scientists, and religious scholars writing about Hawai‘i, many have remarkably underutilized the most important tool available to the scholar: language. While many historians writing native history have had to create innovative methods to deal with a dearth of native language source materials,<sup>8</sup> historians writing about Hawai‘i and its global and oceanic connections during the nineteenth and early twentieth century do not face this difficulty because sources written and published in Hawaiian are not lacking. And yet, despite the huge amount

<sup>3</sup> I develop kaona consciousness to some extent in my essay, “Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning: *Kaona* as Interpretive and Historical Method”, *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 663–669.

<sup>4</sup> It will take some effort to move Hawaiian historical scholarship out of strip-mining for ethnographic momi, meaning the preference for digging for cultural pearls (momi) in the source material. Reading sources as examples of authentic tradition and culture is the norm rather than analyzing them in order to construct history.

<sup>5</sup> For a more in-depth description of the size, format and number of papers published per year over this span of time see M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Two of these authors, Malo and Ii were advisors to the ali‘i, and were trained in priestly traditions as keepers of different aspects of Hawaiian culture and oral tradition. Both men served in the court (aloali‘i) of Kamehameha I. See M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the*



*Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History from Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> The number of scholars across disciplines currently working with Hawaiian-language sources is increasing. See for example the work of Carlos Andrade, Noelani Arista, Cristina Bacchilega, Leilani Basham, Kamanamaikalani Beamer, John Charlot, Malcolm Chun, Kihei de Silva, Kahikina de Silva, Keola Donaghy, Kauanoe Kamana, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, Craig Howes, Lilikalā Kame'eiehiwa, Kekuhi Kanahale, Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, Larry Kimura, Lalepa Koga, Kale Langlas, Kapali Lyon, M. Puakea Nogelmeier, Kapā Oliveira, Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, Hiapo Perreira, Kalena Silva, Noenoe Silva, Amy Ku'uleialoha Stillman, Ty Tengan, No'eau Warner, Pila Wilson, Laiana Wong, and Kanalu Young..

<sup>10</sup> These scholars are indebted to the fine work of our kūpuna (elders), Mary Kawena Pukui, Edith McKinzie, and Rubellite Kawena Johnson. I am unable to provide the names of all of the native speakers (mānaleo), kūpuna, whose knowledge guided us, because the list would be too long to include here.

<sup>11</sup> Anishinaabe, Wampanoag, Ojibwe, Māori, and Hawaiian scholars and linguists in the coming years will re-cast histories of encounter through the skillful interpolation and interpretation of native languages sources. See the

of written and published Hawaiian-language material, the majority of histories produced about Hawai'i have been written as if these sources do not exist. If the last two centuries of Hawaiian historiography has been characterized by 'sufficiency', the future of Hawaiian history will be shaped by the scholarship of those who are adept at researching, reading, and interpreting Hawaiian-language source material.

The careful use of Hawaiian-language sources<sup>9</sup> in the writing of history, as well as innovative ways of interpreting these and other sources thus mark an important shift in the writing of Hawaiian history.<sup>10</sup> The work produced on Hawai'i will also make a significant contribution to writing on the history of encounter between foreign and native peoples since linguistic and cultural analysis of materials written by Hawaiians and others can add much to how historians approach histories of encounter.<sup>11</sup> Hawaiian history may also ironically provide one of the broadest testing grounds to begin to answer the oft-asked question "how *did* natives think?"<sup>12</sup>

Cultural literacy and linguistic fluency are necessary skills for all historians to cultivate. This statement would not be considered revolutionary if I were writing about historical scholarship in fields where the source language has some political power and contemporary cultural cache, or of languages that are thriving as the language of government or the *lingua franca* of capitalism. Simply put, Hawaiian is an indigenous language, one of innumerable languages almost eradicated towards the end of the nineteenth century through complex processes of global imperialism. Yet I find that I still have to continually make the argument (for what should be an obvious statement!) that cultural and linguistic fluency in Hawaiian is necessary in order to write Hawaiian history.

Linguistic facility, however, is not sufficient for the task of writing history. Training oneself to read, interpret, and translate sources is a constant endeavor. When first approaching a source, I pay attention to the genre of writing that I am focused upon: is the piece a mo'olelo (history, story), is it a mele (song), or any different number of chant or prayer forms – ko'ihonua (creation, genealogy), kanikau (lament), mele inoa (name song), etc.? Very often I need to familiarize myself with a particular genre by locating other productions or compositions similar to the one I am studying. Through a process of comparison, I am able to apprehend the conventions of any given genre. Once I feel comfortable identifying some of these conventions, I go back to the source I was looking at to see if the composer or writer has followed any of these conventions, if the piece is highly innovative, and to what extent it plays with or seems to violate these conventions. These are standard literary techniques employed by scholars who interpret texts.

After paying attention to genre, I isolate words and rhetorical or idiomatic phrases that seem specific to the literary form. Here is where my practice considers the Hawaiian cultural particulars governing a text. If the piece is a kanikau (lament), I expect to see certain kinds of imagery, somewhat standard allusions: the enumeration of wind, rain, and place names, or embodiments of grief – in the bowed limbs of a tree sodden after a heavy rain, for example. Chants and prayers to certain deities, like Pele the akua wahine (goddess) of the volcano, employ particular sets of words

descriptive of her connection to home places, the ‘geography’ of the volcano and her volatile temper and loves.<sup>13</sup> Some pieces of writing relevant to my work participate in the ever expanding nineteenth-century public sphere, authors’ contributions to political and genealogical debates, diplomacy, law, economic discussions, and trade. Writers of these subjects employed particular sets of words, phrases, and modes of idiomatic expression that are fixed, but that repeated with variation over time. They also experimented with and engaged British and American literary conventions of the time. Linguistic facility is simply the baseline necessary to begin my work: cultural literacy or rather cultural frames of vision and interpretation need to be constantly honed if the end result is to be a rich contribution to our knowledge of worlds past.

In order to increase my facility to interpret sources, I isolate phrases and words that stand out in the piece I am studying. I train my ear to listen for these words and phrases, as a means to understanding the weight, gravity and import of words people used to describe or communicate any given situation. Instead of using these sources to understand how Hawaiians thought in the moment, I seek literacy in Hawaiian modes of thought and action in order to better engage my sources. To facilitate this process, I search the online Hawaiian-language newspaper database to locate the word or phrase as it has been deployed in other written texts, as a way to gauge the range of meanings words and phrases carry and how they resonate in relation to others. Importantly, these include oral traditions that have subsequently been published or written down. In addition to understanding speech acts or writing in the context out of which they were produced, I try to locate the important word or phrases in other ‘texts’, manuscript or published sources that precede or are subsequent in time to the source with which I am working. After amassing a number of examples, I try to figure out when a word, phrase or concept has been introduced into Hawaiian discourse. Note that this information does not simply refer to publication date, since many times writers are recording spoken transactions that occurred years if not generations before. These spoken transactions differ from summaries or reconstructed descriptions and are often preceded by aural/oral mnemonic cues that point to a history or story being passed down *mai loko mai o ka waha* (from mouth to mouth).<sup>14</sup> Common cues I have identified are ‘wahi a’ (according to), and ‘ua ‘ōlelo ‘ia’ (it was said). Paying close attention to seemingly innocuous phrases like these can also help us avoid the mistake of conflating multiple oral ‘texts’ or traditions into a single source.

This process enables me to perceive a larger conversation, in a way that Hawaiian intellectuals participating in an oral tradition would have *heard* it. For these intellectuals were responsible for maintaining oral traditions from the deep past and their own presents drawing upon their historically trained memories as a repository from which they could provide important information on demand, advice to *ali‘i* for example, based on past utterance and present sense. At times they were called upon to craft ‘new’ traditions in the form of *mele* (songs), *oli* (chant, prayer), and *mo‘olelo* (history, story.)

work of Anton Treuer, Heidi Bohaker, and Jessie Little Doe Baird.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> See ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Huliha in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ Literature (1860–1928)”, PhD Thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> More discussion needs to occur in order to better understand the pedagogical discipline that went into training the Hawaiian aural/oral intellect. See Mary Kawena Pukui, “How Legends Were Taught” (Honolulu: HEN Ethnographic Notes 1602-1606. Nd. Bishop Museum Archives).



---

<sup>15</sup> See also Arista, “Histories of Unequal Measure: Euro-American Encounters With Hawaiian Governance and Law, 1796–1827”, PhD thesis (Waltham, Brandeis University, 2010) and “Navigating Uncharted Oceans”.

The ‘proofs’ or models for this method of reading and hearing that I am developing come from multiple sources.<sup>15</sup> As an active chanter for Nā Wa‘a Lālani Kahuna o Pu‘ukohola from 1998 to 2004, I had been tasked with the responsibility of introducing groups presenting ho‘okupu (offerings and gifts) before the ali‘i at yearly Ho‘oku‘ikahi ceremonies. The process required me to accept a group’s descriptive kāhea (call) to enter and come before the assembled kāhuna (priests) and ali‘i (chiefs). Their chant included information about where a group came from in poetic terms that often included genealogical information, and wind, rain, and place names – all important terms of connection between a particular place and group of people. In my chanted response, only if I paid close attention to what was being said to me in the kāhea would I be able to produce an artful and intelligent reply drawing upon important key names, words, and poetic allusions that stood out in the original chant. From that information, I was expected to haku (compose) an equally eloquent chant introducing the group, along with their gift to the ali‘i. This chant would link places, people, families, and gods, drawing upon the information presented to me, but was expected to be interspersed with poetic flourishes featuring linked phrases of related significance. This activity cultivates an ability to isolate words, immediately identify their significance in a web of relation to places, important ritual allusions, and genealogy. This practice presupposed a lot of previous knowledge in literature, religion, genealogy, and place, and in the year between ceremonies, chanters would practice and study in order to be ready for next year’s event. Historically, stacking the incidents of usage of a key word or word phrase sheds light upon the broadest and narrowest ways in which a word was employed. By stacking usage in this way, I not only come to an understanding of the different meanings and valences which adhere to a given word, but I am now empowered to start mapping out a web of associated meanings in which the word or phrase is embedded and lives. A simple example of this can be expressed if we consider the word wai and a portion of its web of meaning. The word wai means fresh water, and not surprisingly is also symbolic of health and life. The Hawaiian word for wealth is a reduplication of the word, waiwai, and so if I were to consider the ways in which the word was deployed in discussions regulating access to water, or kānāwai, as opposed to its application in terms of monetary or property rights, we would have some idea of the way in which usage in various discourses can tell us something about the particular meanings of a term or concept and its deeper significances in political and economic discussions.

The meanings of any words and word phrases are constructed by their relation to one another and to other words that orbit this web. Words in Hawaiian share resonance with other words. It is this associative way of constructing thought through the power of words that has inspired my methodology on writing Hawaiian history, and the history of encounter in particular. This approach to understanding language helps me to interpret the verbal and written Hawaiian exchanges between Hawaiians, and between Hawaiians and foreigners, in a very new way. Words can no longer be taken at face value. This process allows me to keep building cultural

---

history over time, by tracking the changes in fields of meaning over time. A new project undertaken by Harvard University and Google allows scholars to track the appearance of a word in works digitized on Google Books in English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese. With this program researchers can see the passages in books in which a word appears demarcated by time period; the program also tracks changes in usage over time providing a visual representation of how often any given word appears in print. Historians using this information can hypothesize about the different causes of a word's popularity. For example, it is no surprise that the word 'Hawai'i' skyrockets in popularity in English publications during WWII and shortly thereafter. Hawaiian scholars like me are left to catalog these incidents using their own range of reading and cataloging as a baseline.

I undertake this training because if a researcher is not able to confidently evaluate the words and actions of the Hawaiian actors in any history, then she cannot write an accurate history. If I am missing an apparatus to interpret, for example, what constitutes authority and power (mana), or how Hawaiians consulted mo'olelo of historical events or evoked past utterances as a means to gain insight into resolving difficulties in their present, then how indeed can I know how to tell the story? What will I use for the basis of what constitutes logical action for the historical actors I am seeking to understand?<sup>16</sup> These questions should spur thought-provoking discussions about how scholars proceed to write histories of encounter, colonization and imperialism.

My method of understanding sources is premised on an important idea, that Hawaiians had their own history and constructions of the Hawaiian past. It seems impossible to write about Hawaiian history without acknowledging this simple idea: that the Hawaiian actors in any history compared themselves and their own actions in relation to and in accordance with their own sense of history and their place in it. This is a simple idea that I think many historians overlook when writing native history, often imposing an a-historic logic upon a past alien to them. How can the actions and words of Hawaiians be understood if these are separated from Hawaiian formulations of the past? Hawaiians acted and spoke in ways that were consonant with their own sense(s) of history, which completely diverged from Euro-American visions of history or the world at the time.

I have lately applied this thinking and my approach to words and tracking usage to historical contexts.<sup>17</sup> Meaning is also constructed to some extent from the (historical) contexts in which a word phrase or utterance appears or is often evoked. But what I want to draw attention to here is the way that I go about understanding a phrase or word by excavating the historical context in which it is spoken or deployed.

A quick example of this can be found if we consider the famous 'olelo no'eau (proverb),

I ka 'olelo nō ke ola, i ka 'olelo nō ka make  
In speech there is life, in speech there is death.

<sup>16</sup> Logic is inclusive of not just a thinking process, but also worldview, religious practice, ritual and belief, and a number of other discrete ontological Western categories that are not commensurable in Hawaiian whose parameters are just beginning to be rediscovered.

<sup>17</sup> In "Histories of Unequal Measure", I reconsider an 1825 kapu (ban) on women going to ships for prostitution by locating historical moments when kapu were applied to a woman's or women's bodies. Most historiography dismisses the kapu as missionary imposition, rather than legitimate Hawaiian religio-legal construct.

---

Although I have not conducted a full search of historical incidents where this proverb has been evoked, of the examples that turned up, one was an important trace of the Hawaiian phrase in English as used by American Board missionary Rev. William Richards before an ‘Aha‘ōlelo (chiefly council). In my essay, “Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning: *Kaona* as Interpretive and Historical Method”, I provide a fuller analysis of this episode and its context. Here, however, I am interested in describing how this find made me further investigate the multiple and diverse applications of what has become stabilized as ‘proverb’ in Hawaiian language discourse. Richards’ proper evocation of the phrase before this council, undoubtedly in Hawaiian, was deployed as an ingenious means of defense. In 1827, Richards met with the chiefs to answer questions about a charge of libel brought against him by the English Consul in the islands. The chiefs were split as to whether or not Rev. Richards should be turned over to the Consul who demanded that Richards be tried by the English. One chiefly faction believed strongly that this was an affair that should be settled between foreigners, and that the council should take no part in it.

Gauging that these chiefs might gain the upper hand, Rev. Richards sought to place himself under the protection of the chiefs sympathetic to him by claiming that he was not a foreigner, but instead their subject.

It is for you to deliver us over to such hands as you see proper, for you are our chiefs. We have left our own country and can not now receive the protection of its laws .... If I am a bad man or have broken the laws of your country, it is for you to try, and acquit or condemn me – you alone are my judges – it is for you to send me from your shores, or protect me here. *With you is my life, and with you my death.* The whole is with you.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> William Richards to Jeremiah Evarts, 6 December 1827, (ABCFM–Hawai‘i Papers), emphasis is my own.

Here Richards clearly refers to what has become one of the best known Hawaiian proverbs, both at home and internationally. Today, this proverb is interpreted in many different ways and is generally applied to individuals, suggesting that one’s good words will produce good results, whereas words of negative connotation can cause the speaker or others, or some activity connected to that speech, to come to bad ends. The phrase has also been used to valorize the efforts of teachers and students teaching, learning and speaking Hawaiian, and to respect the mana (power, authority) of Hawaiian language by fostering its longevity.

But Rev. Richards’ application of this phrase to his own person, “with you is my life, and with you is my death”, suggests a deeper meaning, one that has historical traction and gives us insight into *whose* words when spoken meant life or death. Richards’ use of the proverb in this context before the ‘aha‘ōlelo illuminates the companion phrase that is implicit and need not be spoken. (Aia) I kā ‘oukou ‘ōlelo nō ku‘u ola, (Aia) I kā ‘oukou ‘ōlelo nō ku‘u make: Everything, my life, depends upon your words, the words of the ali‘i. Richards’ ingenious use of one part of the proverb, undoubtedly triggered his chiefly judges to complete the phrase.

I use these literary and exegetical techniques to interpret documentary sources that are reporting what people said and thought. These techniques also raise to the

---

fore the cultural power of language, since the way to know that a statement or utterance has historical gravitas depends in large part not only upon whose mouth it comes out of, but also if the person is able to speak in a way that is received as culturally and politically authoritative speech. It is no wonder then that Richards, who had been in the islands for a mere five years when he spoke these important words before the ‘Aha, eventually resigned from the mission and contributed in important ways to the formation of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Stumbling upon this phrase *in English* in a mission report was a find I did not expect.<sup>19</sup> It assisted me in confirming a theory of mine, that the phrase has primarily a religio-legal basis, and that it could be applied directly to the speech acts and judgment of ali‘i in an official capacity in the institution of the ‘aha‘ōlelo. In early western historiography the idea that a chief could have the power of life or death over the people has often been deployed to denounce Hawaiian forms of political power and governance. American missionaries, as the first such historians, employed this argument regularly to belittle chiefly power, condemning it as tyrannical. But as Rev. Richards’ situation illustrates chiefly power could be mediated by the voices and council of *other chiefs* in the ‘aha‘ōlelo. The proverb we have freighted with cultural meaning in the twentyfirst century had a previous life as warning and bore vital information for our ancestors, information that many people today have no knowledge of. The ali‘i had the power of life or death over the people through their words, but words also included prayer, chant, commands, decisions, findings, and judgments. These pronouncements occurred in specific contexts and rarely stemmed from mere whim or impulse. Richards’ situation gives us a rare glimpse of what transpired in the meetings of an early nineteenth century ‘aha‘ōlelo, and this knowledge leads me to seek out other official and officious places where chiefs were likely to make pronouncements of such gravity: religious ceremonies in the heiau (temple), diplomatic meetings of different Hawaiian chiefly groups, and between foreigners and chiefs. What information this seeking will yield derives directly from my method of stacking usage, building webs of meaning and resonance that extend to the comparison of historical contexts in which words and word phrases were evoked.

The topic of sovereignty and its relationship to history is important, and I would argue that a sovereign sense of history would be one that pursues inquiry in all manner of sources in Hawaiian *and* English. For too many years, Hawaiian-language sources have been ignored by historians, while in Hawai‘i a backlash against the use of English-language sources and the writings of American missionaries in particular is currently in vogue. Hawaiians did not live their lives isolated or cut off from the outside world; beginning in the late eighteenth century, the worlds people lived in, they built together: native and foreigners of different class, ethnicity, and nationality.

I hope that I have illustrated the necessity for historians and students of history to cultivate their skill in the reading and interpretation of Hawaiian-language sources. The question of sovereignty is one of confidence, mastery, intelligence and power,

<sup>19</sup> I work comfortably with both English and Hawaiian-language sources, and in writing my dissertation, I used this technique to listen for important ideas and phrases that resonated with the histories of the American missionaries. Thus, I search not only for eye- but ‘ear’-witnesses to historical events.

---

and I believe that developing our own methods premised upon past and present practice is one step in that direction. I have not sought after a historical method that runs along this pathway well-trodden by our ancestors out of a need to make a superior claim to cultural authenticity, but for its obvious suitability to the modes of thought and inquiry that shaped the very sources that I must use as the basis for writing any Hawaiian history, or histories of encounter and imperialism. In writing good history we will discover the lives of our kūpuna: *I ka mo'olelo nō ke ola. In history there is life.*



Saving the Nation

There is so much work left –

A century after the Overthrow, Annexation

Five decades since statehood

A quarter century since OHA was established

20 years since Waihe‘e led the State

15 years since the Apology Bill

and Kaho‘olawe’s return –

And we’re still waiting to see what Akaka can do for us.

I sit at my desk in Kuykendall, the cloud-draped shoulders of ‘Aka‘aka ma uka

hidden by foreign foliage and concrete

Another set of papers graded

Another class of haumāna Hawai‘i struggling

To pay bills, pass classes, honor mo‘okū‘auhau, understand the words, the deeds  
of our mythic ancestors,

practices of our ancient culture

decipher the kaona’ed nuances of mo‘olelo, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i

survive in a globalized economy

So much work left to save the nation –

300 years since Kamehameha

150 since Lili‘uokalani

Kūhiō, Wilcox, Nāwahī

50 since John Dominis Holt began writing

40 since Hōkūle‘a was dreamed to sail

30 since Eddie was lost

25 since George and Kimo were taken

15 since Haunani-Kay awoke the nation, proclaiming,

“We are NOT American, we will DIE as Hawaiians, we will NEVER be American!”

And we are still waiting – can Akaka do anything to help us?

Where are the leaders of our next generation?

Will we be defeated by American colonialism?

Justin Bieber? Jamba Juice? Quiksilver? Apple?

Who will remember the stories of Pele, Lono, Ka‘ahupāhau

Who will remember the chants of Hi‘iaka, Kumulipo, Kalapana

Who will remember the heroes Māui, ‘Umiāloa, Kaluaiko‘olau

Who will mālama the lo‘i

Who will practice our arts

Who will speak our ‘ōlelo

Who will heal the sick

Who will fight for justice?

---

They blog it, tweet it, text it, march it through the streets of Waikīkī,  
chant it, sing it, strum it, dance it, whispers clicking and humming, swirling through  
cyberspace, carried on the Kaiāulu  
winds –

*We will, kumu*

*We will, māka*

*‘Ae, no kākou e nā kūpuna*

*No kākou e nā ‘aumākua*

*No kākou, no kākou, no kākou*

## Mana Wahine: Feminism and Nationalism in Hawaiian Literature

### ‘Ōlelo Mua (Introduction)

Mana Wahine

She is your Grandmother  
My mother’s Aunt  
Your neighbor’s Tūtū lady  
Our Kūpuna

Mana Wahine

Her eyes mirror  
A lifetime of struggle  
A language fading  
A culture diminishing

Mana Wahine

She loves and shelters  
Placing her hopes in her children  
They will perpetuate a culture by learning  
They will perpetuate a race by surviving.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Moana Kaho‘ohanohano, “Mana Wahine”, *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 1 (Honolulu: Kuleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 1998), 110.

<sup>2</sup> The terms Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, Kanaka, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi and Kanaka Maoli are all synonymous and will be used interchangeably throughout this essay. Collectively they refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i.

<sup>3</sup> Mo‘okū‘auhau can include a genealogical connection to the land as well as to other people.

<sup>4</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Women’s *Mana* and Hawaiian Sovereignty”, in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 121–122.

<sup>5</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Hulihiia in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ Literature (1860–1928)”, PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i, 2007), 392.

From the ancient past to the present, Native Hawaiian<sup>2</sup> literature has highlighted particular themes important to Hawaiian culture, such as aloha ‘āina (nationalism) and mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy).<sup>3</sup> This is not an arbitrary pairing in Hawaiian tradition, as land is female and all living things are born from her. Hawaiian nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask points out that, “Our mother is our land, *Papa-bānau-moku* – she who births the islands. This means that Hawaiian women leaders are genealogically empowered to lead the nation”.<sup>4</sup> Such an intrinsic relationship with the ‘āina was a goal of Hawaiian nationhood in the past that continues into the present. The integral role of mana wahine (female empowerment) is equally evident, demonstrated within contemporary Hawaiian struggles in multiple ways, including the fight for sovereignty and maintaining control of ancestral lands. Mana wahine is also a key focus of cultural practices, a vital aspect of indigenous drives for sustainability and environmental initiatives. Moreover, it is evident in our production of Hawaiian literature, some of which I explore in this essay.

Mana wahine is a concept that is found throughout Oceania;<sup>5</sup> it is fundamental to indigenous female identity, although it is difficult to translate into English. *Mana* is “power”, usually referring to the spirit or essence of something living; *wahine* is “female”. Thus, the concept of ‘mana wahine’ implies a female-based power, strength, and resilience. It embodies feminist ideas, although this term is problematic,

because mana wahine “predates western concepts of feminism”.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, as Trask has argued, “western ideas of feminism react against, resist or seek equality with patriarchy. Mana wahine does neither”, as native women’s issues differ from haole (white) women’s: our struggle is against colonialism as we fight for self-determination as a people, not a gender.<sup>7</sup>

Within Oceania, mana wahine describes an indigenous, culturally-based understanding of female em/power/ment that is rooted in traditional concepts such as mo‘okū‘auhau, aloha ‘āina and kuleana (responsibility). It is the physical, intellectual and spiritual (or intuitive) power of women.<sup>8</sup> It is individually embodied, but often employs collaborative strategies with other women for the benefit of the ‘ohana (family) or lāhui (nation) where women are the source of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Trask explains that while Hawaiian women seek “collective self-determination ... through and with our own people ... including our men”,<sup>10</sup> mana wahine “asserts that women have our own power that is unique to us [and] can’t be shared with (or appropriated by) men”.<sup>11</sup>

For over a century, the intersection of ‘feminism’ and nationalism as negotiated through mana wahine have been important themes in Kanaka ‘Ōiwi political activism and the literary production that includes the foundational cultural concept of aloha ‘āina. Aloha ‘āina is “an old Kanaka concept based on the family relationship of the people to the land, and on the idea that people actually were born of the material of the land”.<sup>12</sup> Early-twentieth-century scholar Mary Kawena Pukui wrote that there were “many sayings (perhaps thousands) illustrating [such] deep love of the land”.<sup>13</sup> In the onslaught of colonialism, during the second half of the nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, aloha ‘āina developed “as a discourse of resistance ... a particularly Kanaka style of defensive nationalism” as Kānaka ‘Ōiwi struggled against Hawai‘i’s annexation to the United States.<sup>14</sup>

From that time to this, a substantial number of ‘Ōiwi Wahine (Hawaiian women) remain in the vanguard of Hawaiian politics and literature. Powerful voices for Hawaiian nationalism, from Queen Lili‘uokalani in the nineteenth century to Haunani-Kay Trask in this one, have kept issues of Hawaiian feminism and nationalism at the forefront of the Hawaiian quest to regain our political and cultural sovereignty, suggesting that it is not merely coincidental that these (as well as other) staunchly political and ‘mana-full’ Hawaiian women are also accomplished writers.

## Mana Wahine in a Literary Context

In the modern struggle for Hawaiian self determination, the proliferation of Hawaiian literature by Wahine ‘Ōiwi within the movement itself, writing about and as mana wahine, is just one manifestation of it, as these themes in our literature and the strength of our women go back mai ka pō mai, from the ancient past, to the present. Mana wahine is highly visible in traditional Hawaiian orature; mo‘olelo (history, stories) of the strength, wisdom, and resilience of Hawaiian goddesses and chiefesses abound – Papahānaumoku, the Earth Mother who birthed land; Haumea, the red earth woman who reincarnated herself over and over, with gods and goddesses born from different

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 392–393.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>10</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Pacific Island Women and White Feminism”, in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 263, 264.

<sup>11</sup> Cit. in ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal”, 392–393.

<sup>12</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel H. Elbert and Mary Kawena Pukui, *Hawaiian Dictionary, revised edition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1986), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 18.

parts of her body; Ka'ahupāhau, the shark goddess of Pu'uloa who saved the kama'āina (natives) of 'Ewa, O'ahu from the man-eating sharks of the other islands; Hina'aimalama, the goddess of the moon, who survived domestic abuse to become a powerful goddess of healing and patroness of women's art forms, such as kapa (cloth) production; and perhaps the epitome of mana wahine in our traditional literature, the fierce volcano goddess Pele and her beloved younger sister Hi'iakaikapoliopole, goddess of hula (dance), who was also a powerful healer and representative of the regenerative forest. These are just a few of the myriad of revered mythic women of the past kept alive through the legendary mo'olelo, hula, oli (chant), and mele (song) composed, remembered, and retold in their honor.

Aside from centering on such powerful female figures who commanded the respect of even the highest male ali'i (chiefs), a number of women (both chiefly and godly) throughout the mo'olelo were exceptionally skilled composers, chanters, singers, and hula practitioners.

### The Early Literary Period – Mo'olelo in the Nineteenth Century

Ka Palapala (reading and writing) was formally introduced to Hawai'i by American missionaries who arrived in the islands in 1819. By many accounts, Hawaiians eagerly adopted this new technology, resulting in an almost completely literate population by mid-century. Hawaiians were not just eager pupils and readers, they became prolific writers as well. Kanaka 'Ōiwi writing blossomed in the period from the 1860s–1920s when independent Hawaiian newspapers—over 75 in total—flourished.<sup>15</sup> While the missionary-run papers preferred to publish news and stories from the 'civilized' western European-American world beyond Hawai'i's shores, the independent newspapers, run and staffed by Kānaka 'Ōiwi, made generous inclusions of traditional literary genres. Printing the mo'olelo also fostered intellectual discussions (and sometimes vigorous debates) amongst the native population about their literary heritage and practices, often between the pages of the same newspapers (or of their competitors).

Because Hawaiian names are not gender specific, is it unfortunate that a more accurate count of Wahine 'Ōiwi writers publishing at this time is not possible. Women, however, did write and publish, and a few were quite well known and respected for their work.

One known writer is Emma Nakuina (1847–1929), a prominent Hawaiian woman of ali'i status who published several mo'olelo in English-language newspapers, as well as a collection of stories, *Hawai'i, Its people, Their Legends* (1904). In 1883, using part of her Hawaiian middle name, Kaili, she published the first English-language version of a Pele and Hi'iaka mo'olelo, "Hi'iaka: A Hawaiian Story by a Hawaiian Native".<sup>16</sup>

Because kaona (metaphor) is a crucial part of Hawaiian poetic composition, I argue in my own work that publishing the Pele and Hi'iaka mo'olelo over and over again was a political act throughout the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth

<sup>15</sup> See Esther T. Mookini, *Hawaiian Newspapers* (Honolulu: Topgallant Press, 1974) and M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa'a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> *Pacific Commercial Daily Advertiser*, August 25–October 13, 1883.



centuries to sustain Hawaiian nationalism. Through Pele's role as a destroyer and re-creator of 'āina, the extensive literature devoted to her developed a canonized vocabulary, including the huluhia chants. Huluhia means 'overturned'. Within the context of Hawaiian understanding, the volcanic eruptions and lava flows would huli or overturn the established order upon the land: Kāne, Lono, Kū and Kanaloa, male gods of the land and sea, were overcome by the untamable, unstoppable force of nature Hawaiians called Pele, whose name also translates to 'lava'. In the mo'olelo, the huluhia chants are performed in a series near the end, as Pele, consumed by a jealous rage, orders the destruction of her chiefly and mortal lover Lohi'au, and his body is consumed by lava from head to toe until only a pillar of stone remains.

Nakuina's mo'olelo was published a few months after King David La'amea Kalākaua's coronation on 12 February 1883. The king was very unpopular with Americans and other haole, in part because he revived traditional Hawaiian arts, such as hula (which had been banned in the 1830s under missionary influence, although it secretly continued underground); Kalākaua commissioned many hula performances at his coronation, including hula kahiko (ancient hula) dedicated to Pele and Hi'iaka, much to the chagrin and outrage of the haole. Nakuina held appointed positions in Kalākaua's government as the curator of the National Museum and as the national librarian. As a highly educated, respected member of the Hawaiian government with deep knowledge of Hawaiian traditions, Nakuina possessed the cultural expertise to understand how the nationalist intent of publishing "Pele and Hi'iaka" would speak to a Hawaiian audience.

Another notable composition demonstrating strong Hawaiian resistance to the 1893 U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy is Ellen Kekoahewaikalani Wright Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku" (Rock-Eating Song). This composition was alternately referred to as "Mele Aloha 'Āina" (Patriotism Song), although it is more commonly recognized by its first line, "Kaulana nā Pua" (Famous are the Children). This well-known and beloved mele was composed in 1893 as a mele aloha 'āina (patriotic song) demonstrating Kanaka 'Ōiwi sentiment strongly opposed to annexation of Hawai'i by the United States.<sup>17</sup>

The song was first published in 1893 in the Hawaiian newspaper *Ka Leo o ka Labui* under the name "He ohu no ka poe aloha aina" and is signed by "Kekoahewaikalani", Ellen Wright Prendergast's Hawaiian name; it was a popular song of its time, published under several names eight times, including the *Buke Mele Labui* (Hawaiian National Songbook).<sup>18</sup> Over a century since its composition, the mele is still sung, new renditions by Hawaiian artists are still recorded, and it is regularly incorporated into contemporary Hawaiian literature. Suffice it to say, it is an important touchstone for Kānaka 'Ōiwi, an anthem expressing aloha 'āina and mana wahine, which are pointedly intertwined in the image of the overthrown sovereign, Queen Lili'uokalani as demonstrated in the second line, "Kūpa'a mākou ma hope o ka 'āina" (we stand steadfast behind the land), which is reconfigured in the final stanza to "Ma hope mākou o Lili'u[oka]lani" (We are behind Lili'u, the

<sup>17</sup> For additional analysis of this mele, see ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, "He Lei Ho'oheno no nā Kau a Kau: Language, Performance and Form in Hawaiian Poetry", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17 (2005), 29–82; Amy Stillman "'Aloha 'Āina': New Perspectives on 'Kaulana nā Pua'", *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 33 (1999), 83–99.

<sup>18</sup> Leilani Basham, "He Puke Mele Lāhui: Nā Mele Kūpa'a, Nā Mele Kū'e, a me Nā Mele Aloha o Nā Kānaka Maoli", PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 2002), 4–5.

royal one). A hallmark of Hawaiian poetry, the kaona expressed in the mele is aloha ‘āina. Hawaiian ethnomusicologist Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman explains,

Two points are worth underscoring. *Kūpa‘a* expresses a firm, steadfast (*kū-*) bonding (*pa‘a*); *‘āina* is the generic term for land and can be extended to embrace the society residing thereupon. The phrase “*Kūpa‘a ma hope o ka ‘āina*” and its frequent reiteration (and other like sentiments) is an appropriate epitome to explain the expression of defeat in terms of fame, pride, and victory. Such a summation is rooted in the value of *aloha ‘āina*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, “History Reinterpreted in Song: The Case of the Hawaiian Counterrevolution”, *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 23 (1989), 1–30, 17.

The *Buke Mele Lābui* contains other mele aloha ‘āina composed by women. Although none are as well-known today as Prendergast’s “Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku”, they all exhibit the same high level of poetic composition, deep feeling of nationalism and pride, and unwavering support of Lili‘uokalani and Hawaiian sovereignty. “Ka Wohi Kū i ka Moku” (The Ruling Chief of the Island) and “He Inoa no Lili‘ulani” (A name chant for Lili‘uokalani) were composed by Benecia Satana. “Ku‘u Ipo Pua Lalana” (My Sweetheart Flower) was signed only as “Katie”, while “Ku‘u Pua Poni Mō‘ī” (My Crown Flower) was signed only as “Ellen” (perhaps Prendergast?). Annie K. Kaanoioikalani composed “Ho‘oheno no Wilikoki” (Esteemed is Wilcox), a song praising Hawaiian patriot Robert Wilcox, a Hawaiian nationalist who led an armed attempt to restore Hawaiian sovereignty after Lili‘uokalani was overthrown in 1893. The mele begins –

<sup>20</sup> Annie K. Kaanoioikalani, “He Mele no Wilikoki”, in F. J. Testa, ed., *Buke Mele Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2003), 92–93; mahalo to Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada for assistance with the translation and understanding key points of this mele.

Kaulana mai nei a o Wilikoki  
O ke koa wiwoole o ke ao nei  
Ua kohu anela ke ike aku  
I ke ku kilakila i Halealii  
Aohe poka e ku ai  
Aohe akamai e loa aku  
Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu  
I ka waha o ka pu e kani nei  
Noho mai Waipa i ka uahoa  
Opu loko ino he aloha ole  
No Hawaii oe, no Hawaii au  
Hookahi ke kupuna o Kakuhihewa

Wilcox is famous  
The fearless warrior of the world  
Who resembles an angel  
In the majesty of the royal palace  
No bullets can penetrate  
No one is smart enough to capture  
The Hawaiian child who dodges the spray of bullets  
Of the mouth of the gun sounding  
Waipā dwells in indifference  
An evil heart with no compassion  
You [Wilcox] belong to Hawai‘i, as do I  
Kakuhihewa [O‘ahu’s chief] is an ancestor.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>21</sup> In 1893 Kaluaiko‘olau, diagnosed with leprosy, was ordered to Kalawao on the island of Moloka‘i. He refused to go, deciding instead to take his wife and child and live in the remote and rugged Nā Pali region on Kaua‘i. His wife Pi‘ilani eventually published her account of their life in exile.

Wilcox is described as a hero deserving of high praise: he is a fearless warrior (ke koa wiwoole), resembling an angel (kohu anela) who can evade even the dust of the bullets shot at him (alo ehuehu) and is too smart (akamai) for capture by the evil-hearted ones without compassion (Opu loko ino he aloha ole), possibly a reference to the Annexationists or even to Robert Waipa, who did not allow Wilcox into the Palace in 1889 during his first armed insurrection against Kalakaua’s government. The phrase “Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu” is found in other mele ho‘ohanohano (songs of praise) of the time; it is also a reference to hardship in general, a line also found, for example, in mele for Kaluaiko‘olau.<sup>21</sup> The reference to the evil-hearted ones (opu loko ino) is also in Prendergast’s “Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku”. The composer solidifies Wilcox’s right to defend Hawai‘i and places him in a genealogy that binds them to the ‘āina

when she writes, “No Hawai‘i ‘oe, no Hawai‘i au/Ho‘okahi ke kūpuna o Kakuhihewa” (You belong to Hawai‘i as I do, the place of the ancestors of Kakuhihewa, O‘ahu’s famous chief). The chant concludes with this line, “He aloha lāhui ko Wilikoki” (Wilcox has love/respect/compassion for the nation).<sup>22</sup> The aloha expressed by Wilcox for the nation in the concluding line is not taken lightly, as aloha is a core philosophy of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi culture and identity.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 93.

Queen Lili‘uokalani herself is a writer most recognized for her autobiography, *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*, which provides a straightforward account of her fight to reestablish her authority and the Hawaiian government after the illegal overthrow and subsequent annexation of Hawai‘i to the United States. Lili‘uokalani, however, was also an accomplished composer of mele, with over 400 songs, many unpublished, attributed to her.<sup>23</sup> In 1867, she composed a new National Anthem for the Hawaiian kingdom, “Mele Lāhui Hawai‘i” (Hawaiian National Anthem).

<sup>23</sup> A selection of these has been compiled, edited, and translated with notes as *The Queen’s Songbook* (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1999).

Lili‘uokalani also translated the Kumulipo, an important Hawaiian chant detailing the creation of the Hawaiian universe. More than just an exercise in poetic translation, the Kumulipo had a great degree of political importance for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. Composed in the 1700s for the birth of the chief Kalaninui‘iamamao (The great supreme chief from afar), the chant is a ko‘ihonua, a genealogical connection of the chief’s birth back to the beginning of time. Politically, the chant assured his genealogical right to rule over the entire Hawaiian universe. The political significance of the chant was invoked again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lili‘uokalani’s brother, Kalākaua, who commissioned its first written text in 1891. Kalākaua revised the chant to connect his lineage back to Kalaninui‘iamamao, and thus back to the creation of the Hawaiian universe beginning with Pō, night, chaos, darkness, the primordial female element necessary for all creation. Regarding Pō, Hawaiian poet and scholar Brandy Nālani McDougall argues that mana wahine represents “a force that men must never ignore, for in a world where genealogical ranking [means] everything, the first ancestor [Pō, the female night who gives birth to herself] is the most powerful”.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal”, 392.

Lili‘uokalani’s translation of Kumulipo into eloquent, elegant English is perhaps, like Emma Nakuina’s work before her, an attempt to educate haole on the exquisite nature of Hawaiian literature, while evoking highly political and nationalistic texts focused on themes of pono (justice). Such powerful, evocative literary expressions were woven by powerful women who were also powerful leaders.

## Mana Wahine Today: Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Women’s Writing from the Hawaiian Movement Forward, 1960s–2010

Over the past few decades, a number of ‘Ōiwi Wahine writers have continued this genealogy of strong, eloquent female voices of our literary past, as we weave new songs, chants and stories of female empowerment and Hawaiian nationalism, strengthening the literary and political mana of the present by interweaving it with the similar expressions from the past.

---

These voices are particularly poignant, given the theft of Hawaiian sovereignty, the banning of Hawaiian language medium schools and courts of law at the end of the nineteenth century, and the folding of the Hawaiian language newspapers by 1948. A period of literary and artistic silence prevailed in the middle decades of the twentieth century, although our political commitment was never completely eradicated. Hawaiians had suffered a series of debilitating political, cultural, economic, social, and psychological blows, and recovery has been long and incomplete. A robust literary community active in the Hawaiian language for centuries had been effectively trampled upon. But like the hula, which had been banned earlier, Hawaiian literary production never ceased completely.

When Hawaiian writing re-emerged in the 1960s, it was in an altered, but still powerful form. The Hawaiian Movement of the 1960s–1970s dovetailed with the fight for civil and equal rights for women on the national level of U.S. politics. Consequently, the struggle to re-establish and re-invigorate Hawaiian culture and fight for political justice (especially in light of the 1959 vote for Hawai‘i statehood and the bombing of Kaho‘olawe since the 1940s) almost automatically assumed a position of support for women’s rights. Inside the Hawaiian community, however, this aspect of the Hawaiian movement was not inspired by white women’s feminism or their agendas, but by indigenous models of strong female roles and leadership in Hawaiian society from the goddesses of the ancient past to the political and community leadership of the modern era.

Since the 1970s, ‘Ōiwi Wahine writers have established themselves with force, as with elsewhere in Oceania, overtaking the literary production of ‘Ōiwi men by a substantial margin. With the majority of at least two generations of our lāhui cut off from our ancestral language, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writers now compose primarily in English that is sometimes mixed with Hawai‘i Creole English (more commonly known as “Pidgin”) and Hawaiian. Since the re-establishment of Hawaiian-language immersion education in the mid-1980s, more Hawaiians compose exclusively in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language). In all genres and languages used, themes of aloha ‘āina, nationalism, and justice continue, now combined with memory – an evocation of the past. Hawaiian sovereignty may have been overthrown in 1893, but Kānaka ‘Ōiwi of subsequent generations have made it clear that we still stand kūpa‘a ma hope o ka ‘āina – determined and steadfast behind the land; aloha ‘āina and aloha lāhui, love for the land and the Hawaiian nation, is still ever present and at the forefront of our minds and actions, and still expressed in our literature.

An important ‘Ōiwi Wahine writer is internationally recognized nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask, who has published both academic essays (*From a Native Daughter*, 1993) and two collections of poetry (*Light in a Crevice Never Seen*, 1994, and *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, 2002); both her scholarship and poetry have been included in a myriad of other publications in Hawai‘i and internationally. Trask’s work is forceful and unapologetically staunch in its message of mana wahine and aloha ‘āina. There are far too many of Trask’s poems that demonstrate these themes, and

---

her work is worthy of a separate study. However, I'd like to draw attention to a few selected poems that exemplify these themes.

Many of Trask's poems incorporate respected Hawaiian goddesses from whom Kanaka 'Ōiwi women draw inspiration. One example is "Nā Wāhine Noa" (Women Free from Kapu), which refers to "those released from the restrictive Hawaiian system of kapu".<sup>25</sup> The poem names Hina, a goddess of the moon associated with healing, and the primordial female element, Pō, while Pele, the volcano goddess is suggested through the images of "magma bodies" and "flowing volcanoes" –

<sup>25</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, "Notes", *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1994), 53.

Rise up, women gods.  
Have Hina as your goddess  
virgin, volcanic  
unto herself.

Without masters, marriages  
lying parasite men.  
Unto her self:  
a wise eroticism

moon drawn by the tides  
culling love  
from great gestating Pō  
massive night

birthing women's dreams:  
magma bodies  
flowing volcanoes  
toward moonred skies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., "Nā Wāhine Noa", 52.

The poem evokes mana wahine, encouraging modern Kanaka women to be empowered by our female godly ancestors and not be physically or emotionally enslaved by men. In traditional Hawaiian culture, these and other akua wahine were as powerful as the male gods or chiefs, and sometimes even more so. As goddess of the moon and creative arts, Hina breaks free from domestic abuse by her earthly husband to find eternal life and strength as an akua wahine.<sup>27</sup>

Part IV of the poem "Hawai'i" begins with a reference to Pele, "E Pele ē, fire-eater / from Kahiki". It mimics the traditional invocation to the fire goddess found in chants, "E Pele ē", asking for her attention and expressing reverence for the goddess. The poem shifts to referring to Papahānaumoku, the earth mother, and then Hi'iaka, goddess of the forest,

<sup>27</sup> Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1970), 220–221.

Breath of Papa's life  
miraculously becomes  
Energy, stink with

sulfurous sores. Hi'iaka  
wilting in her wild home:  
black *lehua*, shriveled  
*pūkiawe*, unborn 'a'alī'i.

---

Far down her eastern flank  
the gourd of Lono dries  
broken on the temple wall.

Cracked lava stones  
fresh with tears, sprout  
thorny vines, thick  
and foreign.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Trask, “Hawai‘i”, 35–36.

These stanzas describe the response of the ‘āina to the desecration of geothermal development; what was once a flourishing native environment is now in decay due to the vulgar drilling and its effects on the ‘āina, who embodies the gods. Pōhaku, or lava rocks, a kinolau (body form) of the goddess Pele, weep; the pain of the ‘āina literally causes invasive vegetation, a metaphor for colonization, to prosper. That the pōhaku are a central metaphor of Hawaiian identity and connection to ‘āina, so eloquently expressed by Prendergast and other ‘Ōiwi writers of the past, makes the image of the broken lava that much more poignant a symbol of the destructive forces of colonialism and its effects on the ‘āina and lāhui.

The second section of the poem is equally cloaked in kaona, this time referencing the haole invaders as kōlea (golden plover), an image for the Provisional Government (P.G.) also applicable to other foreigners who enriched themselves from Hawaiian resources, and then left, used by Prendergast and other Kanaka ‘Ōiwi writers of her day. Trask writes,

The *kōlea* tilts its way  
through drooping ironwoods  
thickened by the fat  
of our land. It will eat

ravenous, depart rich,  
return magnificent  
in blacks and golds.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 33.

Kōlea are migratory birds that feast on the abundance of the ‘āina in Hawai‘i; their feathers are a mix of black and gold. Here, the allusion is metaphoric to the riches gained by haole kōlea who prosper off Hawaiian ‘āina and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. To be “in the black” is a term used for financial success and health, and gold is also a symbol of wealth and political power.

The poem “Kaulana Nā Pua” directly recalls Prendergast’s nationalist anthem, albeit in a modern, violent context. “Three dark children”, presumably Hawaiian, are at the beach in a scene described in eloquent beauty,

Morning rains  
wash  
the damp sand cool  
and grainy. Over  
the cream of foam, young  
surfers hover, tense  
for the rising glory.



---

Beyond Ka'ena, a horned moon  
drifts, green chatter-chatter  
of coconut leaves  
expectant in the mist.

Into this idyll wanders “A passing tourist / florid in his prints” who “stoops for directions”. One of the children stabs the man in the eye in a rage. The scene is unexpectedly violent and shocking, and the conclusion of the poem confusing to those who don't understand its metaphoric references or Hawai'i's violent, colonial history. The poem ends,

Running over old  
rippled dunes, the children  
sing-song a tune  
out of time, time past

when their tribe  
was a nation  
and their nation, the great  
lava mother, Hawai'i.

Not yet do they know, not yet  
the bitter pity  
of the past, even as they sing it:

*Kaulana nā pua*  
“Famous are the children”,

taking the far curve  
of the beach  
in the bright glare  
of day.

Trask further celebrates the power of Kanaka 'Ōiwi female voices in literature and activism in the poem “Sons”. In response to a grandmother's pride in producing three sons, Trask writes,

I have no sons  
to give, no line of  
immortality.

I am slyly  
reproductive: ideas  
books, history  
politics, reproducing

the rope of resistance  
for unborn generations

But sons are not  
so earthbound. They soar  
beyond, somewhere

---

with a woman's trust  
in their fists.

And I,  
I stay behind  
weaving fine baskets  
of resilience

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., "Sons", 56–57.

to carry our daughters in.<sup>30</sup>

The basket metaphor alludes to community activism, which often carries familial ties and *kuleana* as well. This familial tie is demonstrated in the poem "Sisters", which Trask dedicates to her sister Mililani, a well-known sovereignty advocate and Hawaiian nationalist. The poem criticizes *haole* development and destruction of Hawaiian 'āina and people, while uplifting the women who fight against it,

III.  
destruction as a way  
of life cleaver  
*haole* culture  
killing as it goes

"no stone  
left unturned"  
no people  
left untouched

IV.  
in every native  
place a pair  
of sisters  
driven by the sound  
of doves  
the color of morning  
defending life  
with the spear of memory.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., "Sisters", 59.

These stanzas juxtapose the devastating, machine-like effects of colonialism with the *nearly* defenseless indigenous presence. The "pair of sisters" linked to the image of the doves evoke a sense of community and peace, while the vivid "color of morning" elicits hope in the image of the sun rising at dawn. While the "native places" may not have the same kind of destructive weaponry as the "*haole* culture" that separates the people from the land, simultaneously destroying both, there is a spirit of resistance in the power of memory and the words and stories of the ancestors.

Other 'Ōiwi Wahine writers of this period use their poetry to "defend life with the spear of memory", including Dana Naone Hall, Ho'oiipo DeCambra, Tamara Wong Morrison, Cecelia Kapua Lindo, Coochie Cayan, Mahealani Kamau'u (now Perez Wendt) and Puanani Burgess. Most of these women began publishing in the 1970s and 1980s, and many are still vibrant community leaders today.

Burgess's poem "Choosing My Name" is another good example of 'Ōiwi Wahine poetry that uses the image of spear and memory to uphold and defend Hawaiian identity and connection to land. In this poem, Burgess juxtaposes her three names – Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani, each embodying a part of her ethnic identity that carries real world consequences. In the poem, she tells us that Christabelle is her "real" name provided on identifying documents, Yoshie is her "home name" used by her Japanese family to remind them she did, indeed, belong to that side of the family, while Puanani, her Hawaiian name, is the name she chooses to identify herself, because it is her "piko [centering] name" that connects her "to the 'āina / and the kai [sea] and the po'e kahiko [ancient Hawaiians] – / my blessing; my burden / my amulet; my spear".<sup>32</sup>

The balance of contrasting images (land and sea, present and past) of nature and time are a hallmark of Hawaiian identity and poetic expression. Moreover, the contrast between her chosen name being both a blessing and a burden, an amulet and a spear, speaks to the problematic split of contemporary 'Ōiwi identity: the poet is caught between the positive cultural identification of her choice (blessing, amulet), and the negative effects of colonialism, by which Hawaiian language and identity – expressed through the political act of choosing to identify as Hawaiian – are turned into a burden many Hawaiians are made to feel.<sup>33</sup> Yet despite the weight of colonialism, Burgess is resilient and encouraged by her choice to also connect to the 'āina and the kūpuna, and she uses her name as a spear to defend her choice of identifying with her ethnic heritage. Symbolically, by exercising her right to choose, Burgess refuses to succumb to the pressures of colonialism that seek to homogenize Kānaka 'Ōiwi and transform them into multicultural Americans, effectively separating us from the lāhui and our ancestral lands. It is through remembering, reclaiming, and defending her cultural rights to self-identify as Hawaiian that Burgess asserts both mana wahine and aloha 'āina.

As the founder of *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, award-winning poet and essayist D. Māhealani Dudoit holds a special distinction amongst our contemporary 'Ōiwi Wahine writers. The first and only journal dedicated to the publication of Native Hawaiian writers and artists and fully staffed by a Kanaka 'Ōiwi editorial and production team since its inception in 1998, *'Ōiwi* has provided an important venue of literary and artistic expression for Kanaka 'Ōiwi writers and artists. Working in publishing, Māhealani was frustrated by the lack of access Hawaiian writers had to established literary publications; she knew that non-Hawaiian editors and publishers did not necessarily understand or value Kanaka 'Ōiwi cultural expression or literary aesthetics, resulting in Hawaiian writers being consistently shut out of publishing opportunities. Now in its tenth year and fourth issue, *'Ōiwi* has showcased some established writers like Trask and Perez Wendt, but more often than not has enabled many new voices – a considerable number of them, female – to be heard. At this time, *'Ōiwi* has published over 200 writers, 112 of whom are women; of these, only 30 had previously been published, significantly adding to the depth and breadth of Hawaiian women's literary and artistic voices being heard.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Puanani Burgess, "Choosing My Name", in Joe Balaz, ed., *Ho'omānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kūpa'a Press, 1989), 40.

<sup>33</sup> Larry Kauanoe Kimura's landmark essay on Hawaiian language and culture, "Native Hawaiian Culture", in *Native Hawaiian Study Commission Report* (Government Printing Office, 1985), provides an excellent analysis of this problem.

<sup>34</sup> For more information on the journal, visit their website: <<http://www.hawaii.edu/oiiwi>>.

---

Since its founding, *Ōiwi* has featured poetry, prose, essays, artwork, and testimonies by Ōiwi Wahine writers from the nineteenth century to the present, many of whom strongly express mana wahine and aloha ʻāina in their work, including the youngest emerging writers, such as Sherri Keahi Lee and Jamaica Heolimele Osorio.

Lee's poem "Kū'ē/ʻĪlioʻulaokalani" (Resist/Red Dog of the Heavens) refers to a contemporary event, a 2009 protest march through the streets of Waikīkī – Hawaiʻi's premier tourist destination, symbol of U.S. oppression and capitalism, and former lands and home of many Hawaiian aliʻi – to protest Governor Linda Lingle's proposed sale of Ceded Lands. ʻĪlioʻulaokalani is a culturally-based political organization dedicated to raising the cultural and political consciousness of Kānaka ʻŌiwi and others.<sup>35</sup> It is named for a chant from Pele and Hiʻiaka, in which Hiʻiaka, facing dangerous opposition in her travels, chants to the guardian 'dog' clouds of the heavens, who are her ancestors. ʻĪlioʻulaokalani is the red guardian dog cloud; thus, the color red, a symbol of blood and Hawaiian royalty, is evoked in multiple ways throughout the poem.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on ʻĪlioʻulaokalani, visit their website: <<http://www.ilioulaokalani.org>>.

The poem references many important Hawaiian cultural traditions, stories, and historic figures and events. From an American point of view, the taking of Hawaiʻi was complete in 1898, but Lee begins, "Even now the kamaʻāina are assembling / Turning the streets blood red", indicating that Kānaka ʻŌiwi have never ceased our protest of this illegal action. While native unrest is clear, "The haoles / Sleep in their beach-front hotels, / the loʻi having been / Covered, with a blanket of little white lies". Waikīkī, once noted for its bubbling, fresh water streams and acres of lush loʻi (taro gardens) have been metaphorically covered by the lies perpetuated after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian government, while physically being drained and covered over by multinational hotels.

Yet despite such visible, purposeful destruction, "Hāloa, our kaikuaʻana / the kalo, remembers". Like Kanaka ʻŌiwi writers before her, Lee evokes the spear of memory to protest American colonization and reengage with the ʻāina by evoking our mythical ancestor, Hāloa ("Long Breath"), the first kalo (taro) plant. Moreover, the kalo, "like our spirits / ...are bruised, / but not broken". Rather,

We stand strong together,  
In the face  
of legislation that intends to criminalize and "regulate" the practicing of our culture  
in the face  
of this foreign ideal of capitalism  
In the face  
of what the haole people are calling "progress"  
And in the face  
of U.S.  
Occupation  
militarization  
and colonization

---

We stand STRONG and TOGETHER!

The collective self-determination expressed in this section of Lee's poem then calls upon the image of Hawaiian akua wahine through the symbol of the full Māhealani moon, and Hawaiian ali'i through the reference to the Queen (Lili'uokalani),

for a Māhealani moon  
is rising:  
This is the mana  
Of a people oppressed  
Of a Queen betrayed  
Of a prophecy  
soon to be fulfilled  
And nā pua  
Bold, many, chanting  
I kū mau mau  
I kū wā  
A time of change is upon us:  
The 'āweoweo have returned.<sup>36</sup>

The poem is accompanied by a collage of images from Hawaiian history and the protest rally, set on the background image of a red fish, or 'āweoweo. Dreams of 'āweoweo or the sight of large schools of them are viewed by Kānaka 'Ōiwi as hō'ailona (signs/symbols) portending an important event. Marchers at this event were encouraged to wear red, to symbolize the color of blood; it is also a color that represents Hawaiian royalty, who were typically adorned in capes and other accessories made from scarce and thus precious red or yellow feathers of selected native forest birds.

A nationally-acclaimed spoken word poet, Osorio's poem "Kaulana nā Pua a'o Hawai'i" directly references Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku". In 2008, she presented the poem as part of a national slam-poetry event, performing this piece at the White House before an audience including President Barack Obama. In her introduction to the poem, Osorio eloquently discusses her thought process in composing it:

Even though I have only been writing ... for [a few] years, in my heart I have known these words for much longer – this protest, this 'eha [pain]. This pain is something we Hawaiians carry in our koko [blood]. My writing is a process of remembering that mana that we all carry. Those of us who write and sing are in many ways unconsciously re-membering what of our culture that has once been dismembered. These are the stories we carry in our iwi [bones]. As long as we keep singing, fighting, marching, chanting, Lili'uokalani will live with every word she carried in her mana. I write to keep my queen alive, I write to keep my father alive. I write, because I have been told so many times that I cannot, that my writing will not change the past because we must look forward; but in honoring our past we are looking forward, we are changing the world, one poem at a time .... There is much I still

<sup>36</sup> Sherri Keahi Lee, "Kū'ē/ 'Īlio'ulaokalani", *Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 4 (2009), 159, 162–163.

---

do not know, so much more I can learn from my father, and the people who have taught him, I look forward to that journey but in the meantime I will continue the journey that has already begun within me, hoping that somehow it leads me to justice. We are generations past nā po'e 'ai pōhaku, and yet, here I stand with stones in my mouth, tears upon my cheeks, and a fight in my heart that will not and cannot die until I do.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, "Kaulana nā Pua a'o Hawai'i", *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, 4 (2009), 301.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

The poem describes the events of the overthrow and Prendergast's composition as "a song to liberate a community".<sup>38</sup> Subsequent stanzas link this traumatizing event to those of annexation in 1898, describing the impact of the event on a "newly slaughtered country", and then to statehood in 1959, bluntly stating that at this time, "no one is singing". She reflects back on the overthrow of January 17, 1893, from January 17, 2008, commenting on the violent effects of American colonialism on Kānaka 'Ōiwi, beginning with the loss of historical memory, as "Hawaiians forgot to fight". As it points to generations of Hawaiians enduring suppression and abuse, the poem is dark in its realistic, unromanticized portrayal of the loss of Hawaiian sovereignty for Kānaka 'Ōiwi. Yet, like generations of Hawaiian writers before her, Osorio forcefully states that, "Mana cannot be created or destroyed by man / So that must mean we still stand a chance / But we need to honor what's been left ...to fight back". The concluding stanzas of the poem express Osorio's resolute determination to honor the past and fight back, presenting a rousing, encouraging call to action for the lāhui today:

So I may have lost sight in the tears my ancestors once cried  
But I'll show you my pride  
Tattoo my mo'okū'auhau to my tongue to never forget where my voice came from  
Who my loyalty is tied to  
And what nation my heart sings to  
I'll sing to you  
I'll chant continuously to show you that I am Hawaiian  
I have the scars and tattoos to show my alliance

Because the second I start worshiping the red white and blue  
Pledging allegiance to a nation that turn our eyes red  
People white  
And hearts blue  
Is the second I know the fight is through

And in 1893 we stood and promised to back Lili'ulani  
Daring to call ourselves the famous flowers of the land we weren't even willing to protect  
We promised to stand hand in hand fighting  
And here I stand  
At the palace  
'Iolani  
Screaming this song  
And no one is listening  
Here I stand holding the hands of ancestors trying to find voices  
But what's a voice when no one is listening  
What's a song worth  
That it can overthrow opinions  
When no one is singing?



---

You should be ashamed of yourself  
Because We should be singing  
And when you finally feel like joining me  
I will be here  
Waiting  
But not idly  
I will be singing

*Ma hope mākou o Lili'ulani*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 301–302.

Osorio's poem is a fiery proclamation of aloha 'āina and mana wahine, a demonstration of the loyalty to 'āina, identity, and nationhood still felt by Kānaka 'Ōiwi today. The poem ends with a line from Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku", showing Hawaiian determination to continue our fight for our nation, and our loyal dedication to our beloved Queen, symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty. Like human mo'okū'auhau that genealogically tie kānaka today with our ancestors of the past, Kānaka 'Ōiwi writing demonstrates its own literary mo'okū'auhau, intentionally referencing, remembering, and evoking both the sentiments expressed in past writing, and the collective desire for self-determination spanning political and literary expressions of the lāhui.

### Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana (Conclusion)

*Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana* is a common ending of Hawaiian mele that means, 'and thus the story is told'. Hawaiian literary expression has continued orally and in print for thousands of years, and it has always included female voices, singing songs of female empowerment and of love for our 'āina, our land, and our nation. In *Chanting the Universe*, Religion professor John Charlot writes that,

The fact that poetry has been used frequently for important occasions and purposes suggests that it has a utility thus far overlooked by historians ... Indeed ... poetry was felt ... to be the most congenial form for the expression of feelings and philosophy. Only by achieving some appreciation of that poetry ... will we be able to understand the concerns and coherence of certain Hawaiian policies and tendencies.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> John Charlot, *The Hawaiian Poetry of Religion and Politics: Some Religio-Political Concepts in Postcontact Literature* (Lā'ie: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1985), 29.

It is not surprising that the majority of 'Ōiwi Wahine writers today are also highly active political and cultural activists who are typically involved in a number and variety of groups, organizations and activities. While African American writer Toni Morrison tells us that "all art is political", it seems the extension of this thought is that all artists are politically active in the causes we passionately support. For 'Ōiwi Wahine, this typically revolves not around women's rights and issues, but around community activism, sovereignty, and our 'āina, utilizing mana wahine as a culturally and politically appropriate way of engaging these issues.

Furthermore, many themes in our traditional literature carry over into our contemporary writing. All reach back and connect us as Kānaka Hawai'i with Papahānaumoku, our Earth Mother and 'āina, solidifying our relationship with

---

her. Hawaiian literature is filled with images of powerful, mana-filled females who have the ability to destroy men, trample, traverse, or destroy their territories (and take their lives) without fear of retribution, and who command their respect. As literature reflects cultural values and social practice, the strong female characters and themes of mana wahine in our traditional and contemporary literature demonstrate a value of women and women's mana that the highly sexist white male-dominated colonizers of the nineteenth century found dangerous, difficult to control, and ultimately, worked hard to destroy. Today, 'Ōiwi Wahine lead the fight for sovereignty, to regain political control over our land base and self-determination for our people; lead the fight against crime, poverty, and drug abuse, for better housing and education; and lead us in our artistic and literary production. It is our kuleana, our responsibility as the carriers and bearers of our nation, our future generations, as the descendants of our ancestral earth mother to cherish and protect our rich cultural legacy – our ancestral home, our traditions, our heritage. In this way, we mālama (care for) our men – our grandfathers, fathers, uncles, cousins, sons, nephews, and grandsons, as well as our own mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, so that they may nurture us too, as 'ohana and lāhui.

---

ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui

Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au

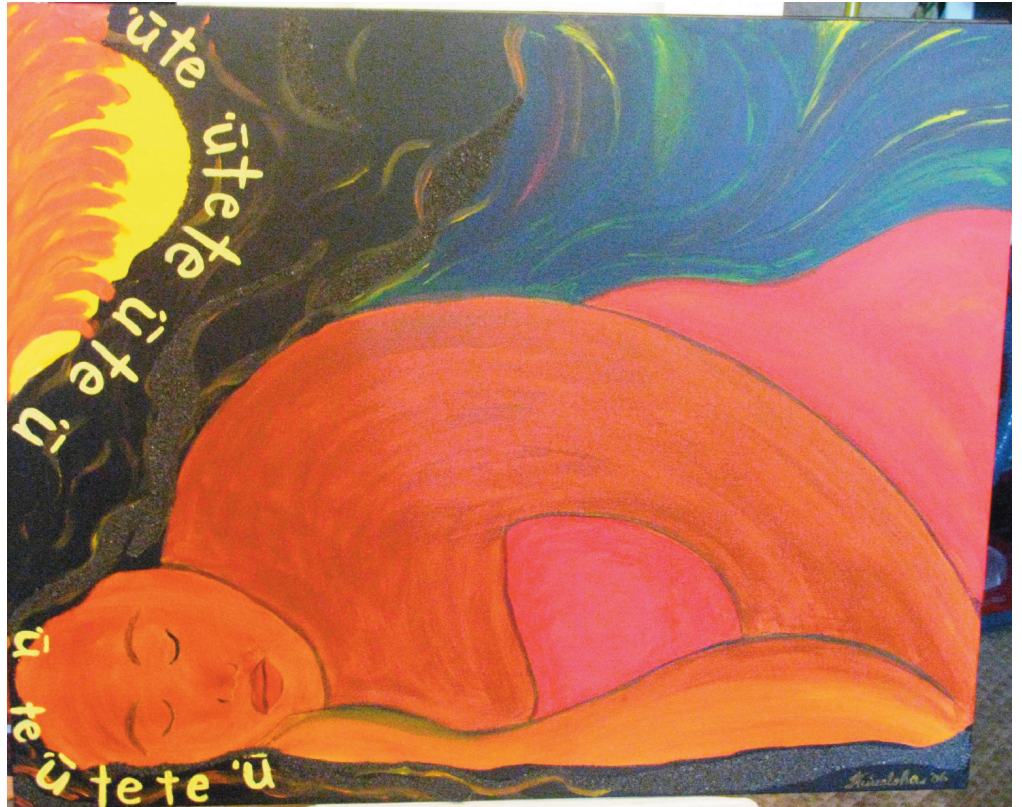


Fig. 1 : ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, *Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au*, 2007, Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18 inch., courtesy of the artist.

Pele sleeping is called “Pele’s Spirit finds Lohi‘au”. In the epic of Pele and Hi‘iaka, Pele wraps herself in a cloak (‘ahu) of kapa cloth at Kapa‘ahu, Hawai‘i. Her spirit hears drums sounding, ‘ū tē, ‘ū tē tē, and follows the sound across the archipelago to the island of Kaua‘i, where she meets Lohi‘au, the handsome chief of Hā‘ena, who is hosting a hula festival.



[ENTER]

Pull out chair. Sit the lady. Push in  
chair and lady. Then  
sit, man. [EXIT]

You came, and lady was brown, hard, articulate.  
You pulled out, telling the others The Lettuce is Bad.

They replied: kalo.  
They replied: to feed.  
They replied: queen.

But salads brought you destiny. You ordered new appetites, pulling pushing Fancy  
chair – luxurious furniture with a capital “F” like fuck, like feed, like fiction. To  
your table the appetites arrived but Fancy chair fuck kept you occupied.

*[occupied was occupation but not occupation that kept lady occupied]*

Your fuck was favor,  
your feed for labor  
your fiction official as cane.

[ENTER]

Pull out of the lady. Push in  
her chair. Then sit back. [MAN EXIT]

How did she get on all fours?  
all legs four legs  
done the in-between thing  
twice certainly  
capital “F.”

How did she get on all fours?  
From sit sit to squat squatting  
*venereal disease is impossible to translate*  
*fiction broke out*

On all fours: lady and  
Fancy chair conceded you something previous.

On all fours: savage and purchase –  
but mouths for that “Fancy” weren’t born yet,

like flags. dangling from the ceiling

[ENTER...something new]

Out of the chair, lady is pushing

pushing out something. You

stay inside instead of [EXIT]

They weren't flags.

They were flowers. Nā pua.

Un-pluckable above that chair, there  
to teach you what in and out, out in  
really mean.

“Bring the chair, bring it. He needs the push and pull to believe in himself again.”

There, there, now, Mr. Sit Man.

The labor is being carried  
out away from Fancy Chair, so you can dangle and dangle  
until you remember you never did use your legs. Sitter.  
Occupant.

Pulling out was never the best method,  
and now the push belongs to her.

[ENTER Sit Man with his chair]

Pulled out, pushed out. [EXITING] And now, the lady.

Now the lady.

**Hunger**

To plot for revenge  
is not revenge;  
that moment, rising,  
when you strike  
  
the American dead,  
shot through  
the lie of liberty  
into his white  
  
and vicious mind. That  
moment, imagined,  
when our Queen  
might have killed  
  
the invader, but didn't  
for fear of reprisal.  
But no one cares  
about vengeance now.  
  
Except you, seething  
young Hawaiian.  
  
Except you, spear  
of our nation.



From Uē to Kū'ē: Loss and Resistance in Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night Is a Shark Skin Drum* and Matthew Kaopio's *Written in the Sky*

<sup>1</sup> I define 'contemporary' Kanaka Maoli literature as our written *and* oral literature from the 1960s, particularly after John Dominis Holt's *On Being Hawaiian* (1964), often credited as spurring the 'Hawaiian Renaissance' to the present.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, in offering the 1960s as a periodic division, I also recognize that our contemporary literature is a mo'opuna, or descendant, of our earlier oral and written literature and must be situated within the larger, older framework of Kanaka Maoli literature, which is largely orature.

<sup>3</sup> John Dominis Holt, Introduction, in *On Being Hawaiian* (Honolulu: Kū Pa'a Press, 1976), 9.

Uē and kū'ē, or grief and resistance, are themes that pervade much of contemporary<sup>1</sup> Kanaka Maoli literature<sup>2</sup> because uē and kū'ē also punctuate our most recent history as a nation occupied by the United States for over a hundred years. Our occupation has entrenched American colonial ideology into nearly every aspect of our everyday lives. From the time we are born, to the time we die, and even beyond that, to the time our bones are held within our āina, our land, we are regulated by American law and cultural standards. We are a people who know loss profoundly and deeply, and in many ways we have come to be defined by this loss – loss of country, of governance, of land, of traditions, of language, of history, of genealogies, of ancestors, of family, of our self-respect. Certainly, these losses are a consequence of our colonial situation, and we number among the many casualties of American Empire. Still, this knowledge of our loss is precisely what compels us, as Hawaiians, to continue the struggle of recovering what was and maintaining those cultural traditions that have continued despite our colonization. It is in this grief that we find our will to resist.

In his Introduction to *On Being Hawaiian*, John Dominis Holt describes the inheritance of grief through Hawaiian cultural memory as sensing "a greatness, something intangible yet powerful and enduring once belonged to our people". However, Holt frames this loss as reparable through our continuance as native people: "[Hawaiians] know that some of this lives on in us. We are links to the ancients: connected by inheritance to their mana, their wisdom, their superb appreciation of what it is to be human".<sup>3</sup> Thus, our continuance as a people means the continuance of our ancestors. Recognizing this is resistant in and of itself, as a critical part of the colonial project is to sever our connection to our kūpuna, our ancestors, and consequently, our history and identity as sovereign people.

This paper examines two prime examples of Kanaka Maoli literature that frame the present moment of uē and kū'ē, Kanaka Maoli loss and resistance, by emphasizing cultural and ancestral continuance: Matthew Kaopio's novel *Written in the Sky* (2005) and Haunani-Kay Trask's poetry collection *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* (2002). I begin by contextualizing the politicization of the Kanaka Maoli text to then examine both texts in terms of their representations of loss and resistance. I conclude by situating these texts within the contemporary Kanaka Maoli Literary Movement, which I assert is reflective of our ongoing sovereignty as a people.

---

## The Politicized/Political Kanaka Maoli Voice: Speaking and Writing our Sovereignty

Because Kānaka Maoli are colonized people, nearly every example of our literary production, every rhetorical action – arguably, every effort to speak or write – disrupts the colonial ideological narrative and defies the severity of our colonial silencing. Edward Said asserts that the “enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of having an empire* ... and all kinds of preparations are made for it within a culture; then in turn imperialism acquires a kind of coherence, a set of experiences, and a presence of ruler and ruled alike within the culture”.<sup>4</sup> In this way, narrative functions as the vehicle for colonial ideology. Thus, the United States, following suit with its fellow European colonial counterparts, uses narrative largely in the service of colonial efforts. As identified by Said, these themes are often “premised upon the subordination and victimization of the native” and may include:

an ideological rationale for reducing, then reconstituting the native as someone to be ruled and managed[;] ... the idea of Western salvation and redemption through its ‘civilizing mission’[;] ... the security of a situation that permits the conqueror not to look into the truth of the violence he does[; and] ... the process by which, after the natives have been displaced from their historical location on their land, their history is rewritten as a function of the imperial one.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with this, the colonial narrative is culturally hegemonic<sup>6</sup> and made to appear normative. Newspapers and other forms of media become weaponry used by the state to maintain the ideological hegemony created by the dominant power. Through the media, the state is able to continue colonization and oppression while also obtaining a measure of consent from the colonized/oppressed, who are then led to believe (often through repetition of state ideology) that their oppression is normative.

The degree to which this colonial narrative (and its variations) affects the colonized is tremendous. In *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*, Haunani-Kay Trask asserts that Hawai‘i, as an occupied nation, has become so entrenched in American colonial ideology that “we cannot understand our own cultural degradation because we are living it .... we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression”.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the role of the Kanaka Maoli writer to disrupt and overturn the colonial narrative is key to sustaining Hawaiian sovereignty and decolonization because “just as culture may predispose and actively prepare one society for the overseas domination of another, it may also prepare that society to relinquish or modify the idea of overseas domination”<sup>8</sup> as well as to “clearly define the people, the subject of [the colonized writer’s] creation”<sup>9</sup> despite colonial silencing of these counter-hegemonic efforts.

Our writing has arguably always struggled against some semblance of colonial silencing, starting with missionary censorship (shortly after the introduction of writing by missionaries in Hawai‘i) in nineteenth century Hawaiian language

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 11, emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 131–132.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Gramsci refers to “cultural hegemony” as the process whereby a dominant class contrives to retain political power by manipulating public opinion, creating what he calls the “popular consensus”. For more, see his *Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1992), 233–238.

<sup>7</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1993), 145.

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Culture*, 200.

<sup>9</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York City: Grove Press, 1963), 163.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed examination of missionary censorship of Kanaka Maoli writing during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Trask, “Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization”, in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, eds., *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (New York: Bowman & Littlefield, 1999), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Frantz Fanon uses “national culture” to describe the “collective thought process of a people to describe, justify and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong”. *Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Kaopio, *Written in the Sky* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2005). Hereafter referenced in the text as *W/S*.

<sup>14</sup> In the poem, “I Not Homeless, I Jus’ No Mo’ One House”, performed at the 2005 Hawai‘i Book and Music Festival, ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele highlights how for Hawaiians, there is no “homelessness”, just “houselessness”, because Hawai‘i is our home and the ‘āina is where we will always belong.

newspapers<sup>10</sup> to the ignoring/erasure of Kanaka Maoli literature by the media and publishers, as well as within Hawai‘i’s school system, that continues today. This silencing makes evident the threat posed to the colonial narrative by Kanaka Maoli writers. However, as Haunani-Kay Trask rightly claims, the writing of all Hawaiians –

whether we write *mele* (songs) or *oli* (chants) or essays or speeches or poetry or scholarship – is a continuing refusal to be silent, to join those groups of indigenous peoples who have been disappeared .... Hawaiians are still here, we are still creating, we are still resisting.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the political role of contemporary Native Hawaiian writers in relation to Hawaiian people and culture is largely to counter the colonial narrative and its ideological hegemony, but also to serve decolonization and Hawaiian nationalistic efforts.<sup>12</sup>

For this reason, much of contemporary Kanaka Maoli literature focuses on our cultural losses and expresses how American colonization affects us as indigenous people. As such, it reflects our concern with overturning racist stereotypes and colonially-imposed narratives of our history, which have been used to justify our ongoing occupation. But perhaps most significantly, our contemporary literature emphasizes how we have survived, how our connections to our kūpuna have remained strong, as well as how we may recover what we have lost. Thus, our writing represents a powerful site of resistance, or kū‘ē, by expressing both our profound sense of loss, our uē, and our processes of healing and recovery, as can be seen in both Matthew Kaopio’s *Written in the Sky* and Haunani-Kay Trask’s *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*.

### Matthew Kaopio’s *Written in the Sky*

*Written in the Sky* relates the story of ‘Īkauikalani, a fourteen-year-old Kanaka Maoli boy who is homeless and must live in Ala Moana Park after his grandmother dies.<sup>13</sup> Under the guidance of his grandmother, who visits him in dreams, ‘Īkau struggles to survive as well as to search for his own identity and culture – all of which is made difficult by the often violent urban landscape of Honolulu. Homelessness is a key issue for Kānaka Maoli, as the majority of the homeless population is of Kanaka Maoli descent, a fact that highlights the colonial dispossession of our ‘āina. Without houses, many homeless families must live on beaches, where they have access to a source of food, showers, and spirituality through our familial connection to the ocean and the land. Invariably, evictions from beaches become important sites demonstrating this colonial dispossession. However, they also exemplify Kanaka Maoli resistance to further displacement and our defiant survival by returning to the land for our sustenance.<sup>14</sup> Thus, ‘Īkau, who used to live with his grandmother on a farm in Kahalu‘u, becomes homeless as:

[b]ills for dialysis and cancer treatments had run so high that the bank foreclosed on their homestead. Without any income, they couldn’t afford the rent in Honolulu. When she was hospitalized, most of their things were taken to the dump by the angry landlord

---

.... Eventually, he'd found a place to sleep under a bridge near the fishpond at Ala Moana Beach Park. (*WS*, 2)

That 'Īkau and his grandmother are evicted from their Homestead land (a Congressionally-mandated entitlement that is supposed to ensure Hawaiians have land on which they may live) highlights the irony that “space was appropriated from indigenous cultures and then ‘gifted back’ as reservations, reserved pockets of land for indigenous people who once possessed all of it”<sup>15</sup> and that this fails to adequately serve Hawaiians, who have no choice but to be homeless.

The use of the land after their eviction is later movingly questioned when he returns to Kāhala'u and sees “his grandmother's once-thriving home in shambles. No one had bought it after the bank had foreclosed on it. The yard was overgrown and the house was boarded up.... The yard had become a dump where careless people threw their garbage” (*WS*, 147–148). This underscores the injustice of Hawaiian displacement and the colonial use of land as a “source of money. Land is now called ‘real estate,’ rather than ‘our mother’, Papa. The American relationship of people to land is that of exploiter to exploited”.<sup>16</sup>

Despite his extreme poverty, 'Īkau takes spiritual sustenance from the 'āina, regularly practicing hi'uwai, which “gave one the chance to spiritually, as well as physically, wash away the debris of the previous day to begin the new day fresh” (*WS*, 4). He also views sharing food with his dove friends, Pegleg and Two-Toe, as spiritual: “Although he would have preferred to eat the entire [sandwich], he enjoyed sharing his blessings. Not only was his stomach full, but so was his spirit” (*WS*, 105).

Also, because of his own cultural beliefs and respect for the 'āina, 'Īkau regularly picks up trash as part of his daily routine, a practice embodying aloha 'āina or mālama 'āina, the reciprocal aloha between kanaka, or person, and 'āina. He is rewarded by finding what he calls the “Secret Garden”, containing watercress, strawberry guava trees “weighted down with fruit”, cherry tomatoes, and mangoes (*WS*, 98–100). Exemplifying how the 'āina offers both spiritual and physical healing, 'Īkau also finds kauna'oa to treat a fellow homeless man's gangrene, employing his grandmother's teachings of lā'au lapa'au, or Hawaiian herbal medicine: “From his grandmother he knew that it usually took five days to heal such a severe case of gangrene. Five was a powerful number in Hawaiian medicine. If the man was too far gone, the kauna'oa might at least provide him some relief” (*WS*, 99). Despite 'Īkau's ‘houselessness’, he finds he can be sustained by the 'āina, as well as by the human relationships he maintains with the other homeless people and friends – “Hawaiian”, who is killed by gang members, but imparts his wisdom through a journal he leaves behind; the Samoan manager at McDonald's who gives him leftover food; and “Gladness”, for whom he does yard work. Interestingly enough, when given the chance to live with Gladness or with family members on Kaua'i, 'Īkau chooses to remain at Ala Moana Park, a decision influenced by his special gifts that allow him an intimate connection with the 'āina and reinforce his special kuleana, or duty, to heal others.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 143.

---

Among the other prominent themes of loss within the novel are 'Īkau's loss of identity, culture and family. His loss of identity is most prevalent in his early ignorance of the meaning and genealogy of his name, "which he was ashamed of and never used" (*WS*, 2), as "most people could not pronounce [it] properly" (*WS*, 27). As if to demonstrate the importance of a name to identity in the Hawaiian context, Kaopio frames the novel in the third-person, regularly referring to 'Īkau as "the boy", until 'Īkau learns the significance of his name from his estranged grand-aunt, Mariah Wong. Through her, he learns he is named for his great-great-grandfather who was a kahuna and a descendant of priests who used *lā'au lapa'au* to heal others and could read omens in the sky. She also gives 'Īkau the gift of knowing his *mo'okū'auhau*, or genealogy (*WS*, 125–126).

From then on in the novel, 'Īkau shares his name proudly, which is also reinforced by Kaopio's use of his name. Empowered by the knowledge of his *mo'okū'auhau*, "the meaning of his name: 'Īkauikalani. The answer is placed in the heavens" (*WS*, 127) and the understanding that he continues his family's gift of healing and reading the clouds for *hō'ailona* (signs), 'Īkau further sees himself as the continuation of his *kūpuna*, which gives him a sense of purpose:

He was 'Īkauikalani, a direct descendant of ancient Hawaiian chiefs and powerful priests. And nothing anybody said or did would change that fact. As long as he lived, his ancestors lived. As a descendant of chiefs, he had a responsibility to care for those around him who were in need, and he accepted this calling and vowed to honor the legacy. (*WS*, 134)

While this knowledge of his name, and thus his identity, is empowering for 'Īkau, the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of names in the Hawaiian context is also shown to be tragic in the case of the character, Hawaiian. Though Hawaiian's real name is "Clarence Keali'i Holomaika'i III", he uses the name Hawaiian – perhaps illustrating an every-Hawaiian character, but also maybe negating his given name, which means "The Chief who Travels in Righteousness", as penance for "killing three people while driving drunk in a stolen vehicle" (*WS*, 28). However, as a homeless man, Hawaiian's name and identity are subsumed when he is killed: "With no hope of identifying the killers, the Honolulu Police Department officers wrapped up their investigation of the homicide of the homeless John Doe" (*WS*, 34). Thus, he dies, renamed with an Americanism that signifies namelessness.

Loss is also expressed through the passing of 'Īkau's grandmother and Hawaiian, and his Aunt Mariah Wong; however, throughout the novel, this loss is negated as his grandmother's, Hawaiian's, and his aunt's spiritual presences remain with him. His grandmother visits him in his dreams, protecting him and guiding him toward Mariah Wong. These dreams are "always so vivid. They seemed real, and his real life the dream" (*WS*, 92). Before she dies, she gives him a lock of her hair telling him that the "strands hold [her] thoughts ... [her] memories of what [she] know[s]. Of happy times ... with [him]" (*WS*, 129). Similarly, Mariah Wong visits 'Īkau in the form of a *pueo* after she dies.



---

Though not a family member, Hawaiian also appears to 'Īkau in a dream and remains to guide 'Īkau largely through his journal, which regularly "[feeds 'Īkau's] equally hungry soul with words of nourishment" (*WS*, 58). Kaopio's use of the word "feed" is significant, as not only is there a figurative use of the word "feed", framing "words" as food for the soul, but there is also the reference to hānai, feeding or adoption, which in the Hawaiian context establishes a sense of 'ohana between people. It is a reference to Hawaiian's hānai-ing of 'Īkau before his death, but also his continuous hānai-ing of 'Īkau by showing him where to get food and how to survive being homeless.

Significantly, Kaopio frames cultural loss, not in terms of total loss or irreparable disconnection, but in terms of lack of practice or ignorance of the ways in which we continue to practice traditional culture. For example, 'Īkau, though unaware that he is descended from a line of seers, is nevertheless innately aware of his ability to read signs in the clouds: "The sky turned orange, and the sun's final rays flashed green along the ocean's horizon ... The boy knew this was a good omen. But as the sky darkened, so did his visions ... the dying sun's final rays made the boy think of splattered blood" (*WS*, 23). This sign foretells the meeting and subsequent murder of Hawaiian by the gang members. Similarly, when 'Īkau sees the following hō'ailona of a double night rainbow, he knows his grand-aunt has passed away: "Clouds parted above him, revealing a bright, full moon that cast a pale-blue glow. The moonlight formed a rainbow, and he stared at it with wonder" (*WS*, 144).

This continued practice of his culture can also be seen in his attention to his dreams wherein he recognizes his 'aumakua, "a Hawaiian owl, a pueo, the guardian spirit of his grandmother's family ... [and in reverence] quietly, the boy chanted several lines of greeting and thanks he had learned from his grandmother" (*WS*, 51). That he believes in the dreams demonstrates that this traditional cultural belief continues to be taught and practiced from one generation to the next. However, that there is "a fresh pile of bird droppings with what looked like fur and bones in it ... [and] several large owl feathers" (*WS*, 54) by him when he wakes up, also demonstrates how 'Īkau's dream (and thus, dreaming for Hawaiians) is real. Kaopio privileges the Hawaiian perspective of dreams as hō'ike na ka pō and the spiritual belief that our 'aumakua give us knowledge in the night and also inspire us in our dreams.<sup>17</sup> George Kanahale describes dreams, in the Hawaiian context, as:

visions of another reality, parallel to those seen in the waking world. That is, the mind in dream produces symbols which have causal or purposive meanings, with some definite relationship to reality ... dreams were caused usually by the movements of one's 'uhane, or spirit, or by the 'aumakua. Hō'ike na ka pō (exhibits by the night) – wisdom given through dream.<sup>18</sup>

Rather than an instance of 'magical realism', as perhaps it would be framed within a western literary critical context, "the world of dreams and nature's responsiveness to human beckoning, and vice versa, are often integrated without self-consciousness

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of this belief, see Mary Kawena Pukui, "Moe'uhane, Hihī'o, a me Hō'ailona: Dreams and Symbols", in *Nānā i ke Kumu*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> George Kanahale, *Kū Kanaka: A Search for Hawaiian Values* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 46.



<sup>19</sup> Richard Hamasaki, "Mountains in the Sea", in Paul Sharrad, ed., *Readings in Pacific Literature* (Wollongong: University of Wollongong, 1993), 196.

into the waking world of Hawaiian belief and action".<sup>19</sup> Thus, the affirmation of his Hawaiian cultural practices and beliefs are powerful sites of identity for 'Īkau, exemplifying how the practicing of Hawaiian culture and beliefs can be empowering for Kānaka Maoli.

Kaopio's novel represents an important counter-hegemonic effort to overturn this damaging negation of Hawaiian-ness, by privileging distinctly Hawaiian ways of knowing and doing, thereby resisting colonial ideology seeking to discount Hawaiian epistemology. Thus, 'Īkau is alone, yet he is never alone, as the 'āina raises him alongside his kūpuna to learn what is pono, i ka wā pono (at the right time). Essentially, it is his knowledge of Kanaka Maoli cultural traditions, beliefs and spirituality and his knowledge of his place and purpose or kuleana within that cultural framework which empower 'Īkau. His separation from his Hawaiian culture is not irreparable, but a matter of remembering the teachings of our kūpuna: "He could hear his grandmother's voice so clearly. With her death, he'd lost everything: his name, his history. But he was recalling it now" (*WS*, 131).

### Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*

<sup>20</sup> Trask, *Night is a Shark Skin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). Hereafter referenced in the text as *NSD*.

Another significant site of counter-hegemony, Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* is a collection of poetry sectioned into three parts.<sup>20</sup> The first section, "Born in Fire", depicts five poems emphasizing her influences from our ancient orature, especially the mo'olelo telling of Pele and her sisters, Nāmakaokaha'i and Hi'iaka. The second section, "A Fragrance of Devouring", is comprised of several poems depicting Kanaka Maoli resistance to colonial exploitation and devastation. The collection concludes with the final section, "Chants of Dawn", whose poems largely emphasize cultural renewal and reawakening, especially through the erotic or sexual.

Like all the poems in the first section, the poem for which the collection is named, "Night is a Sharkskin Drum", references the powerful mo'olelo of akua wahine, especially that of Pele and her sisters. The first stanza represents a kāhea to return to the "night", or pō, the ancient time of the gods (as depicted by the *Kumulipo*), ka wā kahiko, with the "sharkskin drum" calling, "sounding our bodies black / and gold".

The next two stanzas frame the entrance of Pele, as "All is aflame / the uplands a *shush* / of wind. // From Halema'uma'u / our fiery Akua comes". Then the following oli is offered to announce her coming:

E, Pele e,  
E, Pele e,  
E, Pele e. (*NSD*, 5)

The repetition of these lines in the oli, which are used in traditional mele performed in honor of Pele, in effect, builds the mana of the words, while also welcoming her presence. The use of the 'ē' (shown in the original without the diacriticals) following

---

Pele's name, also denotes tremendous respect and affection for her, as it serves to emphasize her name. In naming her collection for this poem, then, Trask emphasizes myth as a powerful site of decolonization.

This can also be seen in the poem “Nāmakaokaha’i”, which is written for Pele’s older sister and enemy. As a “mo’o woman of kuapā”, or the dashing waves, Nāmakaokaha’i is represented in traditional mo’olelo as being in continual conflict with Pele, the goddess of the volcano. However, here, Trask emphasizes their mana wahine, or feminine power, as sister akua who share the same powerful mo’okū’auhau instead:

Born from the chest  
of Haumea, ...  
lizard-tongued goddess ...  
sister of thunder  
and shark –  
Kānehekili,  
Kūhaimoana –  
elder of Pele,  
Pelehonuamea. (NSD, 7)

Like Pele, Nāmakaokaha’i has “eyes flecked with fire” as she “summon[s] her family / from across the seas”, creating “sharks in the shallows, / upheaval in the heavens”. As a result of her “summoning”, the “Woman of the Pit” arrives:

Pele, Pele’aihonua,  
traveling the uplands,  
devouring the foreigner. (NSD, 8)

Trask’s reference to Pele’aihonua, or Pele-the-land-eater, as opposed to Pelehonuamea, or Pele-of-the-red-earth, emphasizes Pele’s power, often in anger, to destroy by “devouring”. That the foreigner is being “devour[ed]” is, of course, of primary significance here – the foreigner is both the object of anger and, thus, rejected by the land, which Pele embodies. This highlights how the use and depiction of traditional mo’olelo can be used politically in contemporary literature. As a strong display of literary mana, therefore, “legends and myths do not simply belong to the past. This is not to deny that myths and legends come from the past, but to attend to what these stories do in the present”.<sup>21</sup> Trask’s depiction of Pele’aihonua’s angry consuming of the foreigner represents her own outrage at the foreigner’s presence, which, after the earlier poems depicting the mo’olelo of the akua, seems particularly invasive.

In the second section, “A Fragrance of Devouring”, Trask largely depicts the “foreigner” as the devourer of both Hawaiian culture and land. Highlighting this, she states in “Writing in Captivity”:

In the midst of this ferocious suffering, I feel both rage and an insistent desire to tell the cruel truths about Hawai’i. These are bitter tales of falsity, of travesty: tourism and the

<sup>21</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai’i and the Politics of Place* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>22</sup> Trask, “Writing in Captivity”, 19.

<sup>23</sup> George Hu‘eu Kanahēle writes of kaona in *Kā Kanaka* that a Hawaiian “had to be bilingual: ... speak[ing] his native tongue ... but also ‘speak’[ing] the language of symbols”. The gourd “in dreams symbolized man: the filled gourd is the living man, and the broken gourd is the dead” (46-47).

prostitution of a people and culture; Christianity and the racism of its ideologies and clergies; American greed and arrogance and the embrace of violence; the constant erosion of a people’s self-respect through a colonization of the mind and the elegant spirit that once sustained it.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in the first poem in this section, “The Broken Gourd”, which is kaona, a literary device employing symbolic cultural meaning, for the ‘dead’,<sup>23</sup> Trask contrasts the wā kahiko, or the time of our kūpuna before western contact, with the current onslaught of colonial destruction and devastation:

Long ago, wise kanaka...  
hauled hand-twined  
nets, whole villages shouting  
the black flash of fish.

Wāhine u‘i ...  
nā keiki sprouted by the sun  
of a blazing sky ...

Each of us slain  
by the white claw  
of history: lost  
genealogies, propertied  
missionaries, diseased  
haole. (NSD, 11–12)

This devastation manifests itself in the land through “pockmarked maile vines, / rotting ‘ulu groves” caused by the “damp stench of money / burning at the edges” from the east and the “din of divine / violence, triumphal / destruction” from the west, leaving only “the bladed / reverberations of empire” (NSD, 11–13). Though American colonialism is deemed the hand of violence here, Trask also asserts that the east, through tourism, is also a part of the colonial enterprise that exploits and degrades the land.

<sup>24</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 144.

Essentially, all tourists to Hawai‘i, in supporting the tourist industry, also contribute to Hawai‘i’s “environmental degradation, low wages, land dispossession and the highest cost of living in the United States”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the poem “Kona Kai‘ōpua” references “long- / forgotten ali‘i, entombed / beneath grandiose hotels / mocked / by crass amusements / Japanese machines / and the common greed / / of vulgar Americans” (NSD, 16–17), while the poem “Tourist” describes the “glittering knives of money, / murdering the trees” (NSD, 20).

Furthermore, in “Dispossessions of Empire”, Trask compares the tourist industry’s exploitation of Kānaka Maoli to prostitution: “Even prostitutes know / their professions, but natives? // The empire degrades / through monetary exchange, / leaving quaint Hawaiians / dressing as ‘natives,’ / in drag for the 10 o’clock // floor show ... // hoping for tips / after the French kisses” (NSD, 35). However, she also contrasts the falsity of tourism’s colonial narrative of the happy and sexually alluring native with the extreme poverty in which many Kānaka Maoli live:

---

An orphaned smell  
of ghettos in this tourist  
archipelago: shanties  
on the beach, slums...  
and trash everywhere. (NSD, 35–36)

Her poem ends with what is “gained” by both Hawaiians and foreigners through tourism:

For the foreigner, romances  
of “Aloha,”  
For Hawaiians,  
dispossessions of empire. (NSD, 36)

Her description provides a rich example of counter-hegemony to the “racist ideology that claims we are better off as American citizens than we ever were as citizens of our own independent nation of Hawai‘i”.<sup>25</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the third section of *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, “Chants of Dawn”, is erotically charged, but also represents a return to the lushness and mana of the ‘āina. Trask writes of the traditional usage of erotic metaphor in “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”:

Because Hawaiian is a profoundly metaphorical language, and Hawaiians an openly erotic people, descriptions are always rendered with fertile imagery: the land is a fecundity of beauty; our traditional deities are gods of abundance, of plenitude .... It is commonplace in the Hawaiian worldview to see relationships as both political and erotic.<sup>26</sup>

Politically, Trask’s depiction of the sexual relationship with regard to ‘āina also resists earlier Christian missionary censorship of the Hawaiian voice, while simultaneously “repatriat[ing] ... what had been suppressed in the natives’ past by the processes of imperialism”.<sup>27</sup>

In “Upon the Dark of Passion”, the erotic is portrayed through lush images of the ‘āina: “Let our shadows / swell into longing // between breadfruit / and palm, throbbing” (NSD, 48), alluding to male genitalia represented by the ‘ulu, or breadfruit, and the niu, or palm. Similarly, in the final poem of the collection, “Into Our Light I Will Go Forever”, the land reflects erotic, regenerative mana:

Into the passion  
of our parted Ko‘olau,  
luminous vulva.  
  
Into Kāne’s pendulous  
breadfruit, resinous  
with semen. (NSD, 60)

Using a traditional trope of Hawaiian orature by then noting the lands along the ocean from He‘eia to Hale‘iwa, she notes the natural lushness of every place:

<sup>25</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, in Hereniko and Wilson, *Inside Out*, 167–182, 174.

<sup>27</sup> Said, *Culture*, 210.

---

Into our wetlands  
of He'eia,  
bubbling black mud ...

Into the hum of  
reef-ringed Ka'a'awa,  
pungent with limu ... (NSD, 61)

These images also serve to emphasize the life within the land, its actions and its smells. She then ends the poem with the lines: "Into our sovereign suns, / drunk on the mana / of Hawai'i" (NSD, 62) highlighting at once how the mana of Hawai'i could never be anything but sovereign, but also that the land reflects how Kānaka Maoli, who are of the land, must also look toward "our sovereign suns", taking our strength from the tremendous life force and power that still exists within the 'āina.

## Conclusion

Both Kaopio and Trask represent the strong and vibrant force with which Kānaka Maoli directly subvert and combat American colonialism with our counter-narratives, which place Hawaiians "at the center of the creative endeavor .... The focus is not on that which is *Haole*, or foreign, but on that which Hawaiians value: the land, the sea, the people, and their intimate relationships".<sup>28</sup> As such, both also frame the politics surrounding Hawaiian loss and resistance, the movement from uē to kū'ē, as one of cultural continuance and resistance through cultural practice. For Kaopio, our Hawaiian culture is an innate part of who we are as Hawaiians; thus, we must commit ourselves to seeking knowledge of who we are through our ancestors. For Trask, we need only to seek cultural and spiritual guidance from the 'āina, which embodies and houses our kūpuna; we can learn from the 'āina in this way.

Yet, they are not alone in their effort to affirm our Hawaiian sovereignty through literature – nearly all of our literature carries themes of loss and resistance, whether through the call for a return to traditions or spirituality or the outright demand for Hawaiian independence. Kanaka Maoli literature is complex and thriving, reflective of us as a lāhui, a people and a nation. That our literature is flourishing is largely rooted in the inner drive for Kānaka Maoli to articulate our history, our colonialism, and its injustices, as well as the strength within our traditions and the rich fluidity of our culture. This includes Alani Apio's moving plays *Kāmau* (1994)<sup>29</sup> and *Kāmau A'e* (1997)<sup>30</sup> about an 'ohana torn between fighting American colonialism and having to earn a living by participating in the tourist industry; Īmaikalani Kalāhele's collection of resistance poetry and art *Kalāhele* (2002),<sup>31</sup> featuring several kū'ē poems; Māhealani Perez-Wendt's *Ulubaimalama* (2008),<sup>32</sup> a moving poetry collection focused on grieving our loss of country; Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's plays, "Ka Wai Ola" and "Ola nā Iwi", both of which focus on colonial dispossession of land and of the bones of our kūpuna;<sup>33</sup> Wayne Westlake's posthumous collection, *Westlake* (2009)<sup>34</sup> Sage U'ilani Takehiro's *Honua* (2006)<sup>35</sup> and my own poetry collection, *The Salt-*

<sup>28</sup> Trask, "Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature", 173.

<sup>29</sup> Alani Apio, *Kāmau* (Honolulu: Palila Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Apio, *Kāmau A'e* (Honolulu: Palila Press, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Īmaikalani Kalāhele, *Kalāhele* (Honolulu: Kalamakū Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Māhealani Perez-Wendt, *Ulubaimalama* (Honolulu: Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, *Hawai'i Nei: Island Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, *Westlake*, ed. by Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Sage U'ilani Takehiro, *Honua: A Collection of Poetry* (Honolulu: Kahuaomānoa Press, 2007).

*Wind, Ka Makani Pa‘akai* (2008)<sup>36</sup>; as well as the many Kanaka Maoli writers published in the anthologies *Mālama: Land and Water* (1985),<sup>37</sup> edited by Dana Naone Hall, and *Ho‘omānoa* (1989),<sup>38</sup> edited by Joseph Puna Balaz; the four volumes of *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* edited by Māhealani Dudoit and ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui;<sup>39</sup> and the anthologies of Polynesian poetry *Whetu Moana* (2003)<sup>40</sup> and *Mauri Ola* (2010),<sup>41</sup> underscoring how Kānaka Maoli belong to the Pacific alongside our closest Pacific cousins.

Literature and art represent powerful sites of self-representation and indigenous articulation that serve to overturn the ideological hegemony of the colonial enterprise. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasizes how creating art or literature or ideas is about “transcending the basic survival mode” and contributing to “the spirit of creating which indigenous communities have exercised over thousands of years. Imagination enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones”.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, while “a substantial part of our writing draws upon the experience of living in a damaged world where the Native people have suffered unspeakable horror”,<sup>43</sup> the uē, or grief, we carry arms and strengthens us as we move forward, so that we may also recognize the potential for our writing to kū‘ē, or resist our colonization, to embrace life and hope.

<sup>36</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, *The Salt-Wind, Ka Makani Pa‘akai* (Honolulu: Kuleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Dana Naone Hall, ed., *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Balaz, ed., *Ho‘omānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kū Pa‘a Inc., 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Māhealani Dudoit and ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, eds., *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* (Honolulu: Kūleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 1998–).

<sup>40</sup> Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri, and Robert Sullivan, eds., *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poetry in English* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri, and Robert Sullivan, eds., *Mauri Ola* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2010; Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, 177.



**The Wounds of Our Nation**

The wounds of our nation  
are the children

with burned eyes  
and scarred bodies,  
floating out at sea,  
face down in salt.

The children of poisoned fields,  
black skies, drowned islands.

The children without history  
or memory.

At the far shore  
the children watching from the beach  
as the first ships came in.

---

## Kaulana Nā Pua

Performed by Jon, Jamaica, and Kamakana Osorio, with Tim Sproles on the mandolin (August 2009) for one of three “Native Hawaiian Writers” episodes on *Aloha Shorts*.



Fig. 1: Jamaica, Jon, and Kamakana Osorio, courtesy of Sammie Choy.

*Aloha Shorts* is a week radio program featuring Hawai‘i writers, actors and musicians, co-produced by Bamboo Ridge Press and Hawaii Public Radio. Taping and broadcasts are supported in part by the Hawai‘i Council for the Humanities. *Aloha Shorts* is co-produced by Sammie Choy, Craig Howes, and Phyllis Look, with Cedric Yamanaka as host, and Jason Taglianetti as engineer.

This excerpt is used with the permission of Hawaii Public Radio <<http://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/>>, *Aloha Shorts* <<http://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/alohashorts>>, and *Bamboo Ridge* <<http://www.bambooridge.com/main.aspx>>

Satisfied with the Stones:  
Notes on Masculinity, Land, and Family in Alani Apio's *Kāmau*

We do not value  
the government's sums of money.  
We are satisfied with the stones,  
astonishing food of the land.  
(Prendergast, "Kaulana Nā Pua")

MOM: *(pause)* You see these pebbles...  
ALIKĀ: Mom, I don't need you to tell me about rocks. I need  
you here.  
MOM: You don't know what you need, Alika. That's the  
problem. All I have is my stories. You will listen to them.  
(Apio, *Kāmau*)

"Kaulana Nā Pua" is one of the most popular *mele* (song or poem) in Hawai'i; written at the end of the nineteenth century, its title means 'Famous are the Flowers', but it is also known as "Mele Aloha 'Āina" (song for the people who love the land) or "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku" (stone-eating song). In 1893, during the provisional government in Hawai'i – after the overthrow of the kingdom and before the establishment of the republic – the Royal Hawaiian Band was required to sign an oath of loyalty, to renounce any allegiance to the Queen and the Kingdom. Otherwise they would have been fired and, as the historian Noenoe Silva reports, "they would soon be eating rocks". The members of the band refused to sign and "they walked away from their jobs and their paychecks".<sup>1</sup> The song was written by Ellen Kekoaohiwaikalani Prendergast when the band members told her their story, and it captures the heroic quality of the anti-annexationist struggle at the end of the nineteenth century. It bespeaks a heroism born out of sacrifice, political conviction, and moral integrity, which for too long has been erased from the historical accounts, and deleted from the memories of a people, but which continues to inspire later generations of Hawaiian activists.

At the center of this essay is a play that tells a very different contemporary story: there are no heroes, sacrifice has the bitter taste of compromise, and a sense of loss and defeat seems to cloud any possibility of redemption. In other words, the stones and the stories they tell seem to have lost their aura. *Pōhaku* is the Hawaiian word for stones and rocks, and as with most Hawaiian words it has multiple layers of signification and several symbolic connotations: it points to the phenomenon of being petrified or hardened, or else of being stubborn, and it may finally mean "weighted with rocks, hence stationary, not moving".<sup>2</sup> The idea of belonging and of home is thus already *heavily* embedded in the definition of 'stones', and from the outset it shows the weight of the contradictions that this play intends to explore. But most of all, the stones, as both the symbol of the

<sup>1</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 135.

<sup>2</sup> See the online Hawaiian electronic library <<http://ulukau.org/>> and the definition in its dictionary <<http://www.wehewehe.org/>>.

---

land and of generations of Hawaiians who invested them with sacred and secular meanings, are still at odds with the logic of the market, and in this play they seem to be losing the fight.

In 1994, Alani Apio's play *Kāmau*<sup>3</sup> premiered at Kumu Kahua Theater in Honolulu, about a year after the 'Onipa'a march to commemorate the centennial of the overthrow, "the single largest and most influential gathering of Hawaiian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" in which over 15,000 people marched.<sup>4</sup> At the center of this play, as in much of Native Hawaiian cultural production and history, lies a story of land expropriation. What is dramatized and explored is precisely the relation between the members of a family and the land they live on. The play, together with its sequel *Kāmau A'e* (1998),<sup>5</sup> the second part of an intended trilogy, stages the life of a contemporary 'obana, a Hawaiian extended family, focusing specifically on the lives of three men: Alika, the protagonist of the first play, and his cousins George and Michael, the latter of whom takes center-stage in the second play. The three men encounter three diverging destinies, which seem to reflect some of the most controversial social and political options available to young Hawaiian men. Alika works as a tour guide, Michael survives by fishing, and his brother George committed suicide a few years earlier, leaving behind his *haole* (white) partner Lisa and a young daughter, Stevie.<sup>6</sup>

From the second scene of *Kāmau* forward, the characters (and the audience) are confronted with a central question and the ensuing drama that will powerfully lead to the rapid unfolding of the play. The tourist company Alika works for, Aloha Tours, is expanding and Alika has been offered a promotion. Central to the company's expansion is the fact that it has purchased a vast coastal area and plans to build a new tourist resort there; said area, however, includes the beach on which Alika's family has been living for generations. The family will have to move and be relocated to a downtown condo.

Apio's play provides an interesting point of entry into an exploration of the issues of land and community I evoked above. More specifically, I intend to follow the lead of two crucial concepts in Hawaiian culture, as reflected in *Kāmau*: the notion of 'āina (land, earth) and the notion of 'obana (family, kin group). To some extent, the protagonist's inner struggle, and the engine of the dramatic action, emerges primarily from a tragic conflict between a responsibility, a *kuleana* (which can be translated as both 'responsibility' and 'right') towards the land and a *kuleana* towards the family. This conflict, I will argue, has to do with the impact of capitalism and colonialism on traditional Native Hawaiian culture – in which the notions of 'āina and 'obana seem to be intricately connected to each other and overlapping. In my exploration of this cultural tension I will pay particular attention to the dynamics of gender and masculinity, primarily because this is a play that explicitly focuses on male subjectivity in the contemporary social context of Hawai'i, but also because tracing the intricacies and contradictions of male identity formation in a Native Hawaiian context means to highlight the impact of capitalism and western individualism on the significance of land and family.

<sup>3</sup> Alani Apio, *Kāmau* (Honolulu: Palila Books, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Apio, *Kāmau A'e* (Honolulu: Palila Books, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> All references to the first play will henceforth be included parenthetically as *K*. The first play was also published in the collection *He Leo Hou. A New Voice. Hawaiian Playwrights* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 2003). The two versions differ slightly: the Palila edition is divided into 12 scenes; the Bamboo Ridge into 10.

<sup>7</sup> Cit. in Meredith Desha, “Kāmaur: Sacrifice and Collaboration”, in *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> See Dennis Carroll, “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local’ Theatre”, *The Drama Review*, 44.2 (Summer 2000), 138.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Chock and Darrell Lum, eds., *The Best of Honolulu Fiction. Stories from the Honolulu Magazine Fiction Contest* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1999), 21–31.

<sup>10</sup> Apio, “A thousand little cuts to genocide”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (25 February 2001); “Kanaka lament: Once a proud nation, Hawaiians today are defined as just a race”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (25 March 2001); “New Hopes Arise for Ancestral Culture”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (19 January 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> This information is partly taken from a private correspondence with the author. See also <www.kanuhawaii.org>

<sup>13</sup> ‘Kumu’ also means foundation, model, or teacher, as in ‘Kumu Hula’, a master and teacher of hula dance.

<sup>14</sup> See the editor’s introduction in Dennis Carroll, ed., *Kumu Kabua Plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, xi.

<sup>16</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature”, in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, eds., *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific* (Honolulu: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 167–182, 170.

## Kumu Kahua, the Community, and its Languages

Before I proceed to an analysis of the play, let me introduce the author and the specific conditions that made the writing and the staging of the play possible. Alani Apio grew up in ‘Ewa Beach on O‘ahu, in a family of modest circumstances. As the author puts it: “we were poor in a Western sense”.<sup>7</sup> He studied at the Kamehameha Schools (a school for Native Hawaiians founded by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop) and graduated in Drama and Theater at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He worked as a TV and theater actor, and in 1988 wrote a play for young adults, *Nā Keiki ‘O [sic] ka ‘āina* (*The Child [sic] of the Land*), produced by the Maui Youth Theatre.<sup>8</sup> He published poems in the *Hawai‘i Review*; a short story, “Ka Ho‘i ‘Ana: The Returning”, in *The Best of Honolulu Fiction*;<sup>9</sup> and a series of articles on Hawaiian sovereignty published in *The Honolulu Advertiser*.<sup>10</sup> However, “writing is not the major focus of Apio’s professional career”<sup>11</sup>: while his hobbies include wood carving in the Hawaiian tradition, he is one of the founders and the current board president of Kanu Hawaii, an association “committed to protect and promote island living” with projects of sustainability and community building.<sup>12</sup>

Both *Kāmau* and *Kāmau A‘e* were directed by Harry L. Wong III and produced by the Kumu Kahua Theater. Kumu Kahua, ‘Original Stage’,<sup>13</sup> is a small theater of 130 seats in downtown Honolulu, located in a former Post Office built in 1872 – two decades before the overthrow – and which underwent major restoration right before *Kāmau*’s premiere (1992–94). The theater was founded in 1971 by Dennis Carroll and eight graduates of the Theater Department of UHM (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa), with the explicit objective of promoting local playwrights and building a place in which the local audience could recognize itself, its problems, aspirations, and fantasies.<sup>14</sup> Founded explicitly as a community theater, in 1981 Kumu Kahua became independent from the Theater and Dance Department of the University and began its most prolific activity.

The play reflects the linguistic diversity of the archipelago, since it is written and performed partly in standard American English (which Alika speaks at work and with “mainlanders”), partly in Hawaiian, and partly in Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), colloquially known as Pidgin. Pidgin developed in the plantations as a lingua franca among settlers of disparate linguistic and national origins, and also as a coded language that protected the information exchange of the plantation workers from being understood by the landowners. With its influences mostly from Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, and Tagalog, it is still the most common vernacular spoken on the islands, especially among ‘locals’. In his *Native Men Remade*, Hawaiian scholar Ty Kāwika Tengan writes that “Pidgin has become a marker of ‘local’ (typically nonwhite, working-class) identity for people who were raised in Hawai‘i, and for men a similarly ethnic and ‘tough’ vision of masculinity”.<sup>15</sup> In 1999, Pidgin was criticized by the influential Hawaiian activist Haunani-Kay Trask for being “a gloss for the absence of authentic sounds and authentic voices”,<sup>16</sup> a falsification that pretends to be Hawaiian. Trask’s attack on a prominent cultural production in



---

Pidgin is in part a response to a tense historical relation between Locals and Hawaiians – two communities with different claims of ‘belonging’ and rights to the archipelago – and to the fact that the dominance of Pidgin among the Native Hawaiian population was not yet counterbalanced at the time by a collective effort to preserve and revive the Hawaiian language.<sup>17</sup>

The Hawaiian language, *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, has been central to the revival of Hawaiian culture and to the current sovereignty movement begun in the early Seventies. Alani Apio’s decision to make his characters speak in Pidgin aims at reproducing a social reality, while at the same time dramatizing a sense of cultural displacement and stressing the cultural significance of language in the definition of identity on the islands. In Scene 7 of the play, to focus on a specific passage, Michael and Alika are on their beach teaching their niece Stevie how to throw a fishing-net. Alika has not yet informed Michael of the company’s purchase of the land, and when a security guard tells them to leave that area, Michael is puzzled and reacts aggressively, calling him a “fagget haole” – a slur that significantly conflates a racial denomination with a homophobic one. The guard replies that he is in fact a Hawaiian, too.

MICHAEL: ... Dis guy, he says he’s one Hawaiian. So I like know, Bully, what makes you Hawaiian?

SECURITY GUARD: ‘O ko‘u Na‘au, ko‘u ‘ohana a me ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. ‘Ae, ‘ōlelo au i ka ‘ōlelo makuahine. A ‘o ‘oe?

(Michael cannot answer. He turns away and starts to go. The others follow.)

MICHAEL: Fuck! (K, 40)

“My guts, my family and the Hawaiian language”; this is what the guard replies in Hawaiian, confronting Michael on the terrain of language proficiency as a signifier of Hawaiian identity. “Yes, I speak the Mother tongue. What about you?” Michael cannot reply, and curses in English.

Using a strategy that is common throughout the play, Apio complicates any easy dichotomy. While acknowledging the significance of *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, he is dissociating it from a politically engaged position: fluency in Hawaiian does not necessarily mean an alignment with the nationalist movement, or a default feeling of unity among Hawaiians. More broadly, Apio forces the audience to consider the complexity and ambivalence of each of the staged conflicts, without any easy route of identification. The director defines the play as an “unsafe play”, and a reviewer wrote that Apio successfully prevents the play from being a “feel-good experience” for the supporters of any cause.<sup>18</sup> Along the same lines, the expropriation of the land is made possible because Alika’s family was renting it from the Chong family – a paradoxical legacy and sign of unequal power relations between Natives and Asian American settlers – and Alika had stopped paying rent some two years before. Therefore even the Chongs’ gesture of selling the land is not presented as a purposefully wicked action but instead, within a capitalist frame, it is a reasonable and even relatively generous behavior: “dey said as long as I keep da place clean an’ quiet dey not goin’ bodda. But dey said dey was goin’ fo’try an’sell da place” (K, 42). A similar dynamic is articulated when we learn that Alika’s boss is apparently

<sup>17</sup> On the complex political and cultural relation between Locals (mainly Asian Americans) and Hawaiians, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> John Berger, “Shades of Gray: Playwright refuses to treat Hawaiian issues as matters of black and white”, *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (November 7, 1997), D 1–3. Berger is discussing *Kāmau A‘e*, but his analysis can be applied to both plays.



---

negotiating strenuously with the agency in order to guarantee a decent solution for Alika and his cousin. This happens again when a white male tourist, Mr. Clemens, verbally attacks Alika for spoiling his and his wife's dream holiday, and we learn that the man has much more in common with the young Hawaiian than the two of them would be willing to admit (a story of land expropriation in the South, labor in the coal mines to support his family, a life on the verge of poverty).

It is very hard to tell the bad guys from the good ones in *Kāmau*, and indeed we are faced with the possibility that there may be none on either side. This is where the devastating process that will drive Alika to his choice begins. This ambivalence is both the strongest quality of the play and its weakest feature. On the one hand, we appreciate its ability to emotionally impact the audience and position it in a field in which there is no easy, nor right, choice. On the other hand, all the characters are granted both complexity and a certain degree of innocence. They are all relatively fair players in a predetermined game, and no possibility of transformation, no possibility of imagining new rules and new trajectories of behavior – in short, no available political change – is ever evoked as within reach.

The choice of the title is aligned with the very idea that the characters are players entrapped in a game whose rules exceed their control. *Kāmau* is a polysemic Hawaiian word and means primarily to keep on, to persevere, or to bear the burden. It also means to drink alcohol, and to cheer when drinking, an invitation to 'add a little more'. Throughout the play Alika is often heavily drunk, and the meaning of resistance and perseverance (to be faithful to one's own goals) is, so to speak, polluted by the imagery related to alcohol and by Alika's continuous drinking. Finally, the idea of a burden and of carrying it is more explicitly connected to the notion of responsibility that I mentioned before and to definitions of masculinity and gender identification.

### Tourism, Resistance, and the Gendering of Hawaiian Nationalism

Apio has stated that behind his first impulse of writing the play were some personal experiences concerning the suicides of a "number of [his] friends"<sup>19</sup> and his reflections on the conditions of life of many Hawaiian men: "Young Kanaka males have had the highest rate of suicide in Hawai'i since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation. Likewise, Kanaka have had the largest percentage of population imprisoned".<sup>20</sup> While these data and the emphasis on unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and incarceration mirror similar data concerning both the indigenous population of North America and ethnic minorities in the United States and their legacies of colonialism and homicidal cultural and economic policies, the gendering that is behind the Hawaiian data requires some analysis. In order to understand the peculiar situation of Hawaiian men we might first need to highlight a few crucial points related to the gendering of the land in Hawai'i, both in a traditional (and later activist) and in a colonial/touristic perspective.

Haunani-Kay Trask's foundational work *From a Native Daughter* highlights that the relation between Hawaiians and the archipelago is a familial one, as the title

<sup>19</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Apio, "Kanaka Lament".

suggests. The land, *‘āina*, is seen as the mother, and the natives are her children. In the Hawaiian language, Trask continues, the word *‘āina* grammatically takes up a possessive structure akin to that of the body or of parents, showing that the land is inherent to the people, which in turn cannot exist without her, as the *‘āina* cannot exist without the people.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, and this complicates an established capitalist norm, land cannot be ‘owned’, private property being a foreign concept in traditional Hawaiian culture, as in many other indigenous cultures. As Apio writes in one of his articles, “Who ‘owns’ this ‘āina? What a ridiculous notion. No one ‘owns’ this land: not America, not Na Kanaka. Our ali‘i never pretended to own this land. We didn’t even have the concept of ownership until foreigners imported it”.<sup>22</sup> Talking about the ever evolving situation of expropriation, Trask writes, “in familial terms, our mother (and thus our heritage and our inheritance) was taken from us. We were orphaned in our own land”.<sup>23</sup> This image of Hawaiians as “orphans” can be useful in conceptualizing Alika as representative of the sense of ‘loss’ of the Hawaiian people – and again, not as in loss of a property, but as in loss of one’s family, since the young man is orphaned of both parents. However, the spirit/ghost (*‘ubane*) of his mother, as we often see on the Hawaiian stage and in Hawaiian culture,<sup>24</sup> continues to be both a constant presence in Alika’s mind and an actual walking and talking presence in his life.

Whereas the genealogical understanding of the land produces a gendering of it, a far more devastating discourse produced by tourism is actively engaged in a parallel, though antithetical, production of a feminized archipelago. In the touristic iconography of Hawai‘i and in the western imagery related to the archipelago, the key figure at the center of the scene is almost always a woman; as Trask puts it, “above all, Hawai‘i is ‘she,’ the Western image of the Native ‘female’”.<sup>25</sup> Jane Desmond notices that Hawaiian men, when they rarely appear on postcards and photographs associated to the touristic circuit, are never with women. They are rather alone, or in the company of other men in fishing scenes. The absence of men is constitutive of the visual iconography, Desmond suggests, and has the intended effect of producing a feminized image of the islands, displaying Hawaiian women as available to the visual consumption of white males.<sup>26</sup>

The notion of the maternal figure of the *‘āina* in Hawaiian culture shares with the touristic fantasy the centrality of the feminine figure; the thesis of cultural prostitution articulated by sovereignty activists is the product of the overlapping and clash of both visual constructs. In the complex political context of contemporary Hawai‘i, tourism is promoted by the State, which is the target of much of the criticism of Native organizations. The idea of cultural prostitution embodied in the tourist industry evokes a scenario in which the masculinized State is the pimp, and the feminized archipelago is the prostitute.

The Hawaiian cultural renaissance has been characterized by a “strong leadership of women, in the fields of politics, scholarship, literature”.<sup>27</sup> The role of Hawaiian men in politics has been famously criticized by Trask, who wrote that while men “sought power in the Americanized political system ... they internalized the value

<sup>21</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 116.

<sup>22</sup> Apio, “New Hopes”. *Ali‘i* is the word to indicate the Hawaiian ‘chiefs’. However, as even this brief passage shows, they were far from analogous to feudal European Lords, to which they have been historically compared by Euro-American historiography.

<sup>23</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> For a brief exploration of Hawaiian ‘ghost’ stories and their relation to multiculturalism see Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 154–167.

<sup>25</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism. Bodies on Display from Waikiki to the Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 45–46, 122.

<sup>27</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 93-94.

of that system”, and that overall, “male leaders in our movement ... are not the most visible, the most articulate, nor the most creative”.<sup>28</sup> Trask emphasized what she saw as an overwhelming tendency of men to collaborate with the State – the names of Governor John Waihe‘e (from 1986 to 1994) and of controversial Senator Daniel Akaka come to mind – evoking the much too popular spectre of the ‘sell-out’.

<sup>29</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 10-13.

The past few decades have seen the rise of several *kāne* groups (Hawaiian men’s collectives). Hawaiian scholar Kāwika Tengan contextualizes Hale Mua, one of these groups, within the deeply gendered political context of Hawaiian nationalist movements.<sup>29</sup> These men are reacting to historical emasculation by both colonialism and tourism; as Tengan reports, this emasculation has been perpetuated within the sovereignty movement itself. The members of Hale Mua articulate a problematic rhetoric of crisis, dominant in many all-male groups throughout the United States and western Europe, that is rooted in a nostalgia for a sort of idealized ‘golden age of masculinity’ – in their case, a warrior ideal profoundly inspired by the Māori of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

<sup>30</sup> Trask, “Lovely Hula Hands”, in *Native Daughter*, 136-147.

The choice of placing a tour bus guide as an anti-hero at the center of this drama is thus extremely productive and enables the audience to think through the interconnections between the tourist industry and the specter of the emasculation of the Hawaiian man. Besides being responsible for increasing environmental damages, the tourist industry is the primary cause of the stellar speculations on the real estate market. Furthermore, while tourism perpetuates a paradisiacal image of the islands, it promotes a service economy that selectively limits job opportunities and perpetuates homelessness and poverty.<sup>30</sup> Tourism thus consolidates into the only game in town, promoting the cultural prostitution of Hawai‘i and creating what Trask defined as a “hostage economy” at the mercy of foreign (non-Hawaiian) investments, while the people held hostage are forced to attend – and many, like Alika, to participate – in their collective spectacularization as a touristic artifact for the First World.

<sup>31</sup> Desmond, “Picturing Hawai‘i: The ‘Ideal’ Native and the Origins of Tourism, 1880–1915”, *Positions: east asia cultures critique*, 7.2 (1999), 459–501, 493.

*Kāmaui*’s protagonist, in his role as tour guide, is performing to some extent what Desmond defines as “the ideal native”, “native enough to remain primitively alluring and exotic, yet intelligent, warmly welcoming and gracious, that is, feminized and most often female”.<sup>31</sup> Alika is, in fact, praised by his clients for being “gracious” and “helpful” and is encouraged by his boss to teach that attitude to the other workers (*K*, 9). Apio is not only showing that the hospitality and graciousness displayed for the tourist industry may well be a *mise-en-scène*, but in a somewhat Brechtian fashion he is, at least for the ‘tour guide moments’ of the play, employing a defamiliarization effect, a didactic distancing of the viewer from the performed action that is aimed at enhancing the audience’s critical evaluation of its own condition. Alika’s tour guide moments present the local audience of Kumu Kahua with the spectacle of their own touristic commodification, and underline in an implicit way what Noenoe Silva defines as “the process of writing Kanaka out of their own history”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 121.

---

In fact, the role for which Alika is being paid by Aloha Tours is to reinforce and justify the hegemonic narration of the paradise scenario, to produce a non-threatening and pleasant version of Hawaiian history and identity for the mainland tourists' consumption. In this version pre-annexation Hawai'i was a feudal country, Queen Lili'uokalani "gave up her throne" and the archipelago was eager to be "admitted" as a State (24–25).

ALIKA: I can't do dis fo' da res' of my life. I hate it. I hate da lies I havta tell. I hate da smell of coconut oil and da burned skin. I hate da cheap plastic leis, and da stupid assholes calling me one Indian and wanting fo' take my pitcha. (46)

As the play unfolds, Alika's disgust for his job and for the speeches he has to memorize and perform increases to the breaking point, when he refuses to recite his script and decides to tell a modified version, closer to the historical facts (K, 52). Central to his job is the performance of the spirit of *aloha*, which has been vastly co-opted and commodified by the tourist industry. In the compulsive industrial ethos it has become a controlling image, a repressive myth able to "disparage Native resistance to the tourist industry".<sup>33</sup> This oppressive, monetary connotation of *aloha* is well known to Alika: "My boss tells me fo work hard, spread da aloha, it's gonna pay off" (K, 49). It is also known to his mother, who is both pointing to the commercialization of the concept and to the necessity for Hawaiians to cherish it and embrace it: "You have to carry the burden, and to do that you have to keep your aloha for life. I know it sounds stupid, our aloha's been sold and used, but for us Hawaiians it's all we got" (K, 47–48).

<sup>33</sup> Trask, *Native Daughter*, 42.

## Familial Geographies and Territorial Genealogies, or the Interdependence of Land and Family

The play is rich in monetary metaphors and to some extent the central struggle of the protagonist originates explicitly from issues of employment, money, and economic evaluation. Many western theorists of masculinity studies have highlighted that dominant performances of masculinity, "hegemonic masculinities" to borrow from Robert Connell,<sup>34</sup> are connected with the management of privilege and power, where economic status is one of the central concerns. Michael Kimmel in his *Manhood in America* locates a primary arena for the performance of masculinity in the public sphere, in the realm of marketplace competition.<sup>35</sup> According to Kimmel, the defining feature of the dominant version of contemporary masculinity is that it is not verified or certified once and for all, as was the case for the earlier tradition of the "Genteel Patriarch" whose masculinity was validated by his possession of the land, and of the "Heroic Artisan" whose gender identity was securely tied to his artisan republican virtues.<sup>36</sup> The new masculine identity that emerged in the nineteenth century and became dominant in the twentieth century is for Kimmel the self-made man. The self-made man is defined by his "successful participation in marketplace competition";<sup>37</sup> deprived of an essential status, he is the product of

<sup>34</sup> Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia", in Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2007), 80–92.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 83.

---

his continuous and compulsive economic performance and he is crucially bound to notions of competition and success.

Since in a capitalist system the objective is profit and upward mobility, and since Alika's promotion to a managerial position could be simply a success story from a capitalist standpoint, most of what happens in *Kāmau* and the violent contradictions the young man faces take place outside the ideological frame evoked by the notion of the self-made man. In other words, Alika's story explodes definitions of male identity fashioned exclusively along the lines of economic success; in fact, uncritically accepting the promotion will question Alika's identity as a Hawaiian man, even as it will enable him to maintain and strengthen his role as economic supporter of his extended family.

There are many points in the play in which we see the dominance and pervasiveness of the capitalist system of investment, accumulation, and profit, but there are also other examples in which the market logic is defied, especially in the evocation of traditional Hawaiian fishing practice. Here the first fish is spared and thrown back into the ocean (K, 20), or fish are given away as a gift (K, 42), or again the very abundance of tuna is spiritualized, cherished, and preserved, untouched (K, 50). It is in relation to the *‘āina* that the market logic is utterly challenged.

Near the end of the play, Michael tells Alika a story that powerfully illustrates this point. Years earlier, their grandfather Tūtū Man had brought a young Michael to an area of the bay in which a multitude of tuna were mating. The grandfather invested the young nephew with the responsibility of taking care of that bay and the shrine (*ko‘a*) it hosted and to protect the fish, like his ancestors had been doing for generations. After Tūtū Man's death, however, tourist boats found the bay and Michael was powerless in the face of the hysterical slaughter the *haole* enacted on the mass of tuna. The scene highlights the structures of feeling that are inherent in Hawaiian nationalism and illustrates how, as Tengan also notices, “the remaking of the self ... proceeds through the reconnection with and retelling of mo‘olelo”,<sup>38</sup> legends, personal stories, and histories.

The words Tūtū Man told the young Michael in this memory capture a fundamental tension that pervades the entire play: “Nāu e mālama i kēia kai a me kēia ‘āina, i ola ku‘u ‘ohana” (K, 50), or as Apio translates at the end of his published play, “Yours is the responsibility to care for this ocean and this land, (and if you do) your family will thrive”. In other words, taking care (*mālama*) of the land (*‘āina*) is inseparable from taking care of one's family (*‘ohana*). Significantly, however, in Alika's dilemma we can trace these two terms as the opposite poles of a dichotomy: if the young Kanaka accepts the job and its consequences, he will be able to take care of his family as he will have secured the economic means for doing so. On the other hand, only by refusing the job will he be faithful to his responsibility to the land. The conflict is structured around these two ideals which – and this is the main point of rupture with Hawaiian traditions – seem to be antithetical.

The care for the land, *mālama ‘āina*, is the most traditional focus of nationalist claims. In its more popular formulation as “love for the land”, *aloha ‘āina*, it was

<sup>38</sup> Tengan, *Native Men*, 14.



also central to the anti-annexation struggle. The two words function approximately as “nationalism” or even “patriotism”, with the radical differences that I discussed above regarding the gendering of the archipelago and the fact that this ‘nation’ evokes not a people or a race, as Noenoe Silva’s *Aloha Betrayed* powerfully documents, but primarily the *land*. Besides being part of the name of an activist group and the name of a late nineteenth century newspaper, the term indicated the nationalist movement: “throughout the struggle Kanaka Maoli who worked to retain the sovereignty of their own nation called themselves ‘*ka po‘e aloha ‘āina*’”, the people who love the land.<sup>39</sup> The character of Michael is, especially in the sequel *Kāmau A‘e*, an explicit embodiment of this nationalist ethos, with his connection to the masculine genealogy of Tūtū Man, which occupies in that play an analogous position to Mom’s character in *Kāmau*.

Alika, instead, seems to prioritize his responsibility to his family: “All I like do is keep my ‘ohana togedda – four peopo’. I tell everybody dis is paradise – how frickin’ hard could it be fo’ keep four peopo’ togedda in paradise?” (K, 49). The character of Mom, in her often confusing lines, endorses the need for Alika to accept the job as necessary for the survival of his family. However, the inextricability of the two concepts of ‘ohana and ‘āina that is so clearly exemplified in their grandfather’s words can be traced throughout the play from the words of a young Michael who exclaims that “when you in da ocean, you wit’ youa ‘ohana” (K, 31) to Alika’s overall realization that moving away from the beach will mean to “sell out my cousin, my brudda, my ‘ohana” (K, 47). The overlapping of these two Hawaiian concepts is the result of particular ways of defining the relationship between people and land. It is also primarily connected with the pivotal importance of genealogy for Hawaiian culture and its conflation of time and space. In fact, as the Hawaiian scholar Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa writes, “genealogies *are* the Hawaiian concept of time, and they order the space around us .... genealogies anchor Hawaiians to our place in the universe”.<sup>40</sup>

The final scene of the play was born from the improvisations of the actors and constitutes an anxiety-inducing crescendo in which the offstage voices of the characters interpellate the protagonist with a wide range of expectations, evoked responsibilities, and things that he should be doing or not be doing. At the apex of this crescendo, Alika grabs his Aloha shirt and wears it, and in the same way the play began, he addresses the audience introducing it to another Aloha Tour. The conclusion of the play provoked strong reactions from the members of the audience “who were actually calling out to him ... not to go back to his job”.<sup>41</sup> It was also criticized for being the product of a defeatist attitude by many activists who were instead hoping for a more positive ending.<sup>42</sup>

The play articulates a unique perspective on the life of Hawaiian men in the contemporary political and social context of the archipelago. It refuses the clear-cut dichotomies commonly associated with nationalist militancy and cannot fully embrace the heroism of Hawaiian resistance invoked by many activists. Apio is staging a complex struggle that keeps unfolding in the present: the dark tones of

<sup>39</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Desha, *He Leo Hou*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Carroll, “Local Theater”, 138.



---

<sup>43</sup> Private correspondence with the author, 25 Aug 2010.

*Kāmanu*'s conclusion are a consequence of this logic. In a private correspondence about the 2007 restaging of the play and about its past and future staging in other Pacific Islands (New Caledonia and Solomon Islands), Apio noticed how critical it was that in 2007 and to this day, "with respect to our ability to govern ourselves and more independently chart our own future, not much had changed since '94. At least in '94 ... we had the sense that change was indeed possible".<sup>43</sup> However, *Kāmanu* is not meant to be a feel-good experience, a testament to Hawaiian courage and determination, but rather an invitation to debate; its foremost interest lies in exploring the feeling of loss and the everyday struggle of Hawaiian men while evoking the wider sociopolitical connotations of their situation.

## Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, Richard Hamasaki, and the Afterlives of (Native/non-native) Collaboration against Empire in Hawai'i

And because they are with us *in spirit*, they are whom  
we turn to for *inspiration*, and in that sense they are  
*always* returning.

(Rodney Morales, *Ho'ibo'i Hou*)

I tell you his spirit for me is always here; sometimes I can  
just feel him, his presence and I feel as if he's constantly  
inspiring me.

(Richard Hamasaki, "Interview")

When Wayne Kaumualii Westlake passed away in 1984 at the age of thirty-six in Hawai'i, many of his poems and writings remained unpublished. They sat in boxes in the Hawai'i-Island shed of Westlake's former partner, Mei-Li M. Siy, for seventeen years, until Siy organized and sent them along to Richard Hamasaki, who had been Westlake's friend, fellow-poet, and collaborator. Hamasaki and Westlake had worked together on a range of literary-pedagogic projects, increasingly committed to the exigencies of Hawai'i as a space of creativity and struggle, from editing the journal *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1976-1984) to founding a course on the Ethnic Writings of Hawai'i at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. Their aim, at a time when there was hardly any institutional support for polemical art by local and indigenous artists, was to "publish works which depicted a 'consciousness' of Hawai'i's contemporary social, economic, and political situation",<sup>1</sup> and to encourage Hawai'i writers to explore their own situatedness within Oceania. For Hamasaki, who had long sustained a literary dialogue with Westlake within his own work, Westlake's spirit was in the poems: "his / poems", as he wrote in the poem "Westlake", were in a sense "his / bones".<sup>2</sup> To re-present them required loving attentiveness. There were numerous editorial decisions to be made: which poems to include and which versions to prefer; what contextual and biographical materials to provide. The best guidance he received, Hamasaki writes in the afterword to *Westlake: Poems*, which finally appeared in 2009, was to "be true to Westlake".<sup>3</sup>

The question of how to "be true" to one's friend is an old one in the European philosophical tradition, which has come back in the work of Jacques Derrida and others, for whom friendship can be seen as modeling the political. Relations among citizens in the realized democratic state are to resemble those between friends. To be friends in opposition to the state, as in the case with friendships between Natives and Settlers in an occupied or colonized place, is to point to flaws in governance. For Leela Gandhi, in *Affective Communities*, collaborative friendships thus offer a powerful critique of both the colonial state and its pure negation in forms of anti-

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hamasaki, "Singing in Their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English", MA Thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 1989), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Hamasaki, *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (Honolulu: Noio Press, 2000), 11; hereafter referenced in the text as *SBD*.

<sup>3</sup> Hamasaki, Introduction, *Westlake: Poems by Wayne Kaumualii Westlake (1947-1984)*, ed. by Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 243; hereafter referenced in the text as *W*.

---

colonial nationalist thought. Personal collaborations are regarded here in the fully-loaded political sense, as re-significations of the image of collaboration with the State, whether as direct collusion or insufficient resistance (passivity). In developing radical, improvisational, inventive projects, the friendships that Gandhi discusses refuse “alignment along the secure axes of filiation”, thus imagining the postcolonial future as differently organized.<sup>4</sup>

Given the centrality of mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) in kanaka maoli (Hawaiian) thought, and the ways in which U.S. State attempts to diminish the significance of mo‘okū‘auhau are legally deployed against Hawaiian ‘entitlements’, alliances in Hawai‘i that elide identity-recognition run a different set of risks than those Gandhi describes in *fin-de-siècle* India. For one thing, the current call of the U.S. State is to see Native/non-native differences as matters of ‘race’ or ‘ethnic heritage’ in ways that would abrogate all kanaka maoli land and resource claims. One might then distinguish between the senses in which the State denies that the situation in Hawai‘i is (any longer) colonial, and the suggestion on the part of a line of legal scholars/Independence-activists that, since Hawai‘i was a progressive multi-ethnic state at the time of the overthrow, citizenship in a reconstituted Kingdom would not exclude Settlers/non-natives.<sup>5</sup> The first position (classic ‘settler colonialism’) displaces the Native through assimilation; the second, more focused on citizenship, would neither foreclose indigenous claims or the possibility of non-native belonging in an Independent Hawai‘i. In this sense, Gandhi’s suggestion that dissident collaborative circles, based on affective connections and outlooks that exceed issue-specific tactical alliances, can reinfect the tone and terms of political discussion, is apposite. Within such a project the friendship and dissident artistic projects of Hamasaki (who always foregrounds his own position as Japanese-American) and Westlake (who writes as an Hawaiian) figure one example of a mode and space of what might be called Native/non-native<sup>6</sup> collaboration against Empire within the arts. Such collaborative friendships have a history in Hawai‘i, become a usable inheritance, and have an uncanny power to continue generating effects.

Much of friendship theory emphasizes death as the time from which the meaning of the friendship, and the principles upon which it was founded, are to be reassessed or reaffirmed. What is honored in the friend is recuperated and faced outward toward the reader as the commitment to shared ideals. To accept oneself as heir to the editorial problem of being true to one’s friend’s literary remains stimulates such a process, in which the being-possessed of mourning becomes a form of continuing the collaborative relation and activity. To ask the question of how the friend would want his writings to appear, were he present, is in a sense to feel the friend as a presence in the now-context in which the poems are consolidated into a collection bearing his name. If one were not to impose one’s own vision and shape on the legacy of the friend, it would seem necessary to keep on collaborating with his spirit, which would in a sense keep coming back. Hauntology, as Jacques Derrida calls such returns, is when a particular mourned spirit shows the uncanny power to make injunctions upon the living. There are always, in such returns,

<sup>4</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of the ways in which Asian settler claims to belonging categorically obstruct kanaka maoli drives for self-determination, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> My preference for the term “non-native” over “settler” in this essay is not meant to question either that subjects are prepositioned or that a structural critique of colonial/occupation remains necessary, so much as to emphasize the force of collaborative relationships against the state.

several spirits in the archive that is attributed to a proper name. But the spirit or “specter” that is most compelling, Derrida writes, is the one who speaks to a crisis that remains urgent, offering direction at a time of an “out-of-joint-ness” that can only be imaged as “set right” or made more “just” in a “future-to-come”. (Place the Hawaiian word pono where Derrida uses “justice” and the theory here becomes more grounded in the poetics and priorities of Hawai‘i). The specter wants to cross the temporal gap, and can even seem to speak from the future, having gone in poetic flashes and revolutionary language conjunctions past the consciousnesses of those who read it in the present.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1994), 42. See Rob Wilson’s “Tracking Jack Spicer” on Spicer’s “lowghost” poetics that keep returning from the future (*Jacket*, 7 (1999), <<http://jacketmagazine.com/07/spicer-wilson.html>>, 1 August 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Craig Howes, Introduction, *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future*, ed. by Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 5.

In Hamasaki’s writings, ‘Westlake’ is, among other things, just such a visionary, haunting ‘specter’, who speaks through his poems and activist writings to an ongoing crisis, the loss of sovereignty, which can be seen as the root of many of the spiritual and physical ailments in Hawai‘i. One of the themes emerging from a recent collection of essays on ‘value’ in Hawai‘i, Craig Howes writes, is that “Hawai‘i will remain economically, socially, and ethically troubled as long as we refuse to come fully to terms with Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty”.<sup>8</sup> One could say, echoing Marx, that a specter is haunting Hawai‘i – the specter of sovereignty. This is to recall a line of thought in Hawai‘i, from the time of the overthrow forward, which prizes home rule, which was supported at the time of the illegal overthrow of the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hawai‘i (in 1893) by most kānaka maoli and many non-natives. This line of thought was vigorously reanimated in the late 1970s, with the Hawaiian Renaissance and activist land struggles, in relation to which what might be considered the beginning of an oppositional literary arts culture began to emerge, taking a variety of lines.

The fault lines within such ‘localism’, in its literary form, became evident in the mid-1980s, and were debated through the 1990s, breaking around the question of whether Hawai‘i was to be thought of as affectively part of ‘America’ – as region, ‘local’ movement, or sub-nation within it, for which ‘Bamboo Ridge’ (the focal point of much of the debate about the politics of ‘local’ literature, despite, or because, its editors take a generally apolitical stance toward literature) might figure as sign – or taken to be an occupied/colonized place, whose subjects might form alliances internally, articulating their politics with indigenous claims, in support of the principle of sovereignty, and externally, in relation to decolonizing movements in the Pacific and elsewhere. To dissident creative writer/artists in Hawai‘i, the call of the U.S. state to a participatory citizenship built on Hawaiian displacement or legal assimilation inspires no affective loyalty. In this light, while there is a maverick, irreverent spirit of Westlake that Hamasaki invokes in his framings of his friend’s work, the name ‘Westlake’ evokes and sparks a mode of critique, tethered to an unequivocal belief “in a separatist relation” with the U.S. (*W*, xx), while internationalist in its poetic formation and sensibilities. This ‘Westlake’ names the spirit of a trajectory seen from its activist endpoint; the title of the book containing his poetic legacy would simply be his name, *Westlake: Poems*.

In the most immediate senses, Westlake, Hamasaki, and what began as what might be called the *Seaweeds and Constructions* hui (group) worked toward creating a

space for a dissident Hawai'i poetics that situated itself within decolonizing Pacific frames. Their tactics were symbolically significant – confrontations (in letters to the editorial page, interventions at meetings, readings, and performances) of a set of institutions, such as the publishing culture and arts-funding organizations that did not at the time support local or indigenous work. It meant attempting to trouble at the curricular and pedagogical levels an educational system which undervalued kanaka maoli and Pacific literary traditions and productions. It meant being at odds with an 'English Department poetry culture' that had virtually no local or indigenous representation, and that was seen as promoting the ideas that fine literary models and teachers had to be imported from elsewhere, and that 'Hawai'i literature' was a colorful form of U.S. regionalism, best expressed through polished formal techniques that studiously avoided political engagement.<sup>9</sup>

From a radical viewpoint, all of these biases could be seen as elaborations – whether consciously maintained or not – of the workings of 'Empire', in the multiple and shifting senses of the term. One could refer here to an Imperial Anglo-Americanism, a set of anglo-centric attitudes about the meaning and function of literary arts culture, against which 'local' and indigenous peoples in Hawai'i began to make imaginative counter-claims; military-backed U.S. colonialism and the multi-sited project of interpellating subjects to collaborate with the U.S. State, which could be opposed by struggles for sovereignty and/or a commitment to leftist internationalism; and the exploitative and environmentally-destructive Empire of transnational corporatism, something that Hardt and Negri would come to describe in *Empire*, against which a pan-Pacific and global oppositional culture was forming across the Pacific.<sup>10</sup> Toward this end, *Seaweeds and Constructions* was ground-breaking in attempting to affirm cross-Pacific linkages as an imaginative correlative to political principle. Westlake and Hamasaki wrote in an introduction to an 'Hawai'i Edition' of *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* of beginning "artistic and literary exchanges between Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands",<sup>11</sup> not just to trade stories or engage in comparativism, but to empower collective expression and critique. The final issue that Hamasaki and Westlake co-edited, A Pacific Islands Collection issue of *Seaweeds and Constructions* (a collection of Pacific writing illustrated by Hawai'i-based artists), was presented as an expression of "cultural freedom and responsibility, a sensibility for human justice and a deep respect for the Earth" that were aimed to "stir thoughts and discussion in our .... exploited and endangered world".<sup>12</sup>

To advocate for and perform an understanding of the arts as an attempt to move the heart and consciousness politically against the structures of Empire in Hawai'i required for Westlake and Hamasaki both a highly place-centered, painterly aesthetic, informed by kanaka maoli expressive traditions, and an internationalist understanding of poetry. It eventuated in an ongoing commitment to an aesthetic that was multi-sourced and risk-taking, drawing openly upon the modes of anti-materialist, anti-exploitative thought to mourn and challenge what had and was being done to the 'āina (that which feeds, environment), indigenous and local cultures, and the

<sup>9</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask wrote in 1984 that there were only two small outlets for indigenous writing in Hawai'i at the time, *Seaweeds and Constructions* and *Ramrod*. "Indigenous Writers and the Colonial Situation", *Pacific Islanders in Communication*, 13.1 (1984), 77–81.

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hamasaki and Wayne Westlake, Forward, *Hawaii Edition. Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 6.1 (1981), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hamasaki, Preface, in *A Pacific Islands Collection. Seaweeds and Constructions*, 7 (1983), viii.



consciousness of Hawai‘i’s people, particularly k  naka maoli. Both Westlake and Hamasaki draw upon the wisdom and humor of Chinese sage-poets, dharma bums, Poundian modernism, and Japanese short satiric forms in developing a poetics that is openly about consciousness-raising. In Westlake’s oft-cited concrete poems, for instance, there is a subtle layering of what look like modernist-inflected Asian forms (haiku, Chinese ideograms) with a complex critique, as a poem which begins:

HAWAIIANS  
EAT  
FISH  
EAT  
HAWAIIANS. (*W*, 52, 225)

As ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui notes, the line contains both an injunction (Hawaiians should eat fish, or a traditional diet, avoiding unwholesome imports) and an historical echo of the 19th century apprehension that Hawai‘i would be consumed by colonial powers (David Malo’s warning that “they will eat us up”).<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the poem might be situated within the conventions of joyous recognition that all human things both consume and are consumed, and that this is as much a principle of artistic creativity as it is of physical survival.<sup>14</sup>

In Westlake’s more explicitly activist mode the emphasis is on how these natural cycles have been perverted, and with what effect. The concrete poem “HULI” (*W*, 130), which consists simply of the block-lettered word ‘huli’ turned upside-down, says it compactly. The word, one of whose primary meanings is ‘to turn’, evokes the overthrow of the Hawaiian government (ho‘ohuli aupuni), marked to this day by the flying upside-down of the Hawaiian Flag. Language in Hawai‘i has itself been ‘turned over’ to English: “Language the missionaries taught us was broken glass”, Westlake writes, echoing postcolonial invocations of Shakespeare’s Caliban (“you taught me language”): “Our tongues are still bleeding” (*W*, 225). The stress in a number of hard-hitting poems falls upon the crazy-making effects that flow from the loss of sovereignty. In literary terms, this might mean the sense of being held within restrictive institutional or imaginative structures, which, in Hamasaki’s remembrance, created in Westlake a “raging anger over his own brains being washed and hung out to dry upon line after line of dead literature”.<sup>15</sup> In material terms, it meant confronting a system, what Westlake spelled out as “Amerika”, in which “THE NAME OF THE GAME / IS PROFIT” (*W*, 143). In the face of the ugliness this produced, Westlake wrote poems of the mind in the act of recording impressions as it is acted upon. In this mode of embodied critique, Westlake documents the polluting effects of colonialism from interior perspectives, speaking through personae in a poetic diary mode (*W*, xi). The process makes his mind feel like a trash receptacle: “Wish I / could empty / my Mind / like an ashtray ...” (*W*, 171). Redemption feels possible only within a commercialized logic: “Tomorrow I / plan to cash / in my mind / like an empty / for the deposit!”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “He Lei Ho‘oheno no n   Kau a Kau: Language, Performance, and Form in Hawaiian Poetry”, *Contemporary Pacific* 17.1 (2005), 55–58. See also *W*, 252.

<sup>14</sup> Before theorizing creative writing as a gift akin to sharing food, Lewis Hyde invokes the Upanishads: “O wonderful! / I am food! ... / I eat food! ... / I, who am food, eat the eater of food”. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Hamasaki, “The Full Moon Claimed Westlake”, in *M  lama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, ed. by Dana Naone Hall (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 97.

<sup>16</sup> Westlake, *It’s OK If You Eat Lots of Rice* (Lafayette, IN: High/Coo Press, 1979), unpaginated pamphlet.



The critique of the effects of colonialism on subjectivity, as in much of first-wave Pacific and postcolonial literature, is most pointed in relation to tourism, of which Waikīkī appears as the inverted Mecca. In the poetic sequence, “Down on the Sidewalks in Waikiki”, written between 1972-3 under the pen-name Kamalii Kahewai, and unpublished at Westlake’s death, Waikīkī appears as a brutal physical manifestation of the spiritual desecration of Hawai‘i. The vantage point of the janitor who narrates the poems, “down” on the sidewalk, provides a bardic underview for the poet, who writes, “down on the sidewalk / in waikiki / I / SEE / EVERYTHING”, but who cannot simply observe without fearing for his own mind. When a starving, doped-up man breaks through a plate-glass window looking for BREAD, the janitor has to clean his blood from the bathroom (*W*, 143) and, subsequently, “wring his mind / like a blood-stained sponge” (*W*, 150); after days spent “cleaning piss / off the floor / of the japanese / tourist store” (*W*, 146), the tourists, whose self-crippling ignorance of the political economy behind their own presence in Waikīkī makes them no less complicit in the poet’s eyes, become one “gigantic PIG / PARADE / staggering by ...”. The streets, as a metaphor for mental life in Hawai‘i, come to feel inhabitable: “A SAVAGE / CAN’T LIVE / IN AMERIKA / and Amerika / i tell you / is EVERYWHERE” (*W*, 147); “i watch them / the Pigs – / the Pigs, / they watch me – / it’s enough to drive / any man / CRAZY” (*W*, 152). The kānaka maoli not displaced or made crazy undergo an assault on identity: as the persona of “Native-Hawaiian” puts it:

how we spouse  
 feel Hawaiian anymoa  
 barefeet buying smokes  
 in da seven  
 elevan stoa ... ? (*W*, 189)

The bitter final twist to this sequence is that the poet has chosen to immerse himself in the ugliness of Waikīkī in order to give his poems “bite” (“to give my poems / BITE / i sit all day / down on the / sidewalk / in waikiki” [*W*, 152]).

The sense that “injustice provokes poetry” (*SBD*, 68), and that a kind of ‘guerilla’ stance toward poetry is necessary to provide a biting critique from the margins, is frequently referred to in Hamasaki’s poems, as in a series of serio-comic, itchy poems spoken from the persona “red flea”, which appeared as the spoken-word CD and chapbook *Virtual Fleality* (co-produced with Doug Matsuoka) (see “Guerilla Writers”, in *SBD*, 57). This chastising mode is presented as enervating, and in the poem, “Land of the Dead”, “red flea” visits “the poet Wayne Westlake”, serves him sake, and receives poetic reassurance. The cover of *Virtual Fleality* visually references Westlake’s cover to *Anthology Hawai‘i*, put out by *Seaweeds and Constructions*, with its small red (flea) fingerprint, an echo of Westlake’s signature use of a red Chinese seal. Likewise, the cover of *Westlake: Poems* was designed in fighting red (by Mark Hamasaki) as a companion cover to Hamasaki’s *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (2000), a selection of poems written over a twenty-five year

<sup>17</sup> Mark Hamasaki likewise has had a long, productive collaboration with Kapu Landgraf. See the portfolio co-signed as “Piliāmo‘o”, *Mānoa*, 9.1 (1997), 119–136, and the forthcoming collection of photographs documenting the destructive process of building the H3 highway across O‘ahu.

<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson, *The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009), 35–37.

period. To read in such moments the ways in which Hamasaki keeps returning to ‘Westlake’ is to feel his alliances to principles of how to be an artist (poet, teacher, editor, music producer) ethically in Hawai‘i.<sup>17</sup>

*Spider Bone Diaries* opens with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of an immense sea of stars, and a luminous moon seemingly stippled with islands as in a map of the Pacific. In the Oceanian context, these skies might recall celestial navigation, and the epic voyages that raised and linked the islands, affirming connections. If the visual image suggests that the collection both honors those voyages and sees its own poetic voyaging as a form of wayfaring, under the wonder and immensity of the world that surrounds human actions, then the chant-like dirge that follows the serigraph introduces Westlake as one of its navigating spirits. “For He Who Wears the Sea Like a Malo” is inscribed “for Wayne Westlake (1947-1984)”. On the facing page is a translation of the poem into Rarotongan by Kauraka Kauraka, which honors Westlake in the sounds of a Pacific language at the outset. As Hamasaki notes, the title and refrain refer to the line “O ka malo kai, malo o ke alii”, used in the eulogy “He Mele Inoa no Naihe” (name song for Naihe), reprinted in Nathaniel Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawai‘i*,<sup>18</sup> in which the malo kai (the ocean as a malo) hides the nakedness of the swimmer. The honored speaker returns, wrapped in the sea, to speak a series of injunctions that pass through Hamasaki to direct the vision of the collection:

listen to our ancestors speaking  
and to those who know ways to heal

Finish what has been started  
placing one stone then another  
to never again be defeated  
and begin rebuilding shelter (*SBD*, 2)

Mourning for Westlake includes a general sense of loss, as well as a resolve to rebuild. Part of what needs finishing but is never quite finished, for Hamasaki, is the process of honoring his friend, tending to his legacy. Placing one stone and then another is in one sense a poetic process of building more habitable, hospitable, protective structures, which is here implicitly compared to building a heiau (shrine) or fortress. By asserting that ‘Westlake’ is with him in spirit from the outset of his collection, Hamasaki performs what is for him one afterlife of collaboration. A certain spirit of ‘Westlake’ enjoins the reader to attend to an as-yet-unfinished process of healing and cultural reorientation. What is spoken *for Westlake* is in a sense spoken *by* or alongside of him or in alliance with his spirit. To open by foregrounding this relation between poet, mourned friend, and a broader sense of mourning suggests that the poems and songs in *Spider Bone Diaries* will never get too far from what ‘Westlake’ represents. That much of the imagery is drawn from Hawaiian culture, Hamasaki writes in a note to the poem, is both a way of honoring Westlake and a performance of the ways in which, as he writes in a note to the poem, the traditions and literatures of Native Hawaiians have “indelibly shaped [his] own poetic voice” (*SBD*, 98).

---

The poem “Westlake”, a few pages later, presents Westlake as a haunting, recurrently spectral presence for the poet, and inscribes his legacy both within a broad activist movement and a collaborative arts circle:

Sometimes

I

see

him

in

a

crowd

still

suffering. (*SBD*, 8)

First brushing against Pound’s impressionistic haiku-like lines, “The apparition of these faces in the crowd”, Hamasaki goes on in the poem to picture a Westlake Agonistes engaged to the point of trembling, suspended in a state of engaged agitation: “His voice / would quiver / hands shake”.<sup>19</sup> The attempt to word his responses to events affects Westlake somatically, and it is the moment of passionate oppositional energy that Hamasaki marks.

His

hands

trembling –

Kaho‘olawe. (*SBD*, 8)

The word ‘Kaho‘olawe’ sounds, for a generation of readers, the cries of protest against the U.S. naval bombing of the island of Kaho‘olawe, and the grief Hawaiian activists felt at the disappearance of George Helm and Kimo Mitchell.<sup>20</sup> Kaho‘olawe hovers over Hamasaki’s collection and keeps coming back as an image of struggle, protest, loss, commitment. *Spider Bone Diaries* closes with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of ocean swells rising like mountains, scattered with ink-stars, over which the phrase, “DEATH AT SEA IS SWEET IF YOU LOVE THE SEA ALL YOUR LIFE” (an allusion to Helm and Mitchell as lost at sea) is repeated as a concrete poem in stacked sentences. On the facing page is a poem titled “‘Alalākeiki”, the name of the channel between Maui and Kaho‘olawe (meaning “child’s wail”), which recalls the “kinship / between islands”, and the ways that the “shoulders” of Haleakalā refuse to let Kaho‘olawe drift (*SBD*, 93). As a teacher in Poets in the Schools on Maui, Westlake had compiled chants, legends, poems, stories by elementary school students about Kaho‘olawe, which were dedicated to Helm and Mitchell, and featured in *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1978) and later “flung like jewels” in Rodney Morales’s *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou*.<sup>21</sup>

The penultimate stanza of “Westlake” positions Westlake explicitly as, for the poet, part of a collaborative circle. (*Seaweeds and Constructions* stopped publication with Westlake’s passing, and was succeeded by *Ramrod* and *O‘ahu Review*, edited by

<sup>19</sup> Hamasaki credits Pound’s work with inspiring a desire to “work collaboratively with other writers, musicians, artists, and printers” (*SB*, 104).

<sup>20</sup> Like nuclear testing in Oceania, the bombardment disregarded the land as living. Helm and Mitchell disappeared while trying to rescue Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer during an occupation of Kaho‘olawe. See Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

---

the poet Joe Balaz, with whom Hamasaki and Doug Matsuoka would collaborate on the amplified-poetry CD *Electric Laulau*). What Hamasaki foregrounds about the group is its conviviality and oppositional thinking:

Westlake, Oliveira, Takahashi, Matsuoka, Hamasaki  
heh, heh, heh ...  
a  
toast  
to  
“wrong thinking”. (*SBD*, 10)

Including artists, musicians, and writers, the group produced and distributed their work largely outside of funding structures, designing (through ‘Elepioa press) and printing their work themselves (in collaboration with presses, including Dennis Kawaharada’s Kalamakū and Susan Schultz’s *Tinfish*). Such creative circles, as Michael Farrell describes them, are marked by numerous, untraceable borrowings, conversations, critiques, that come to inform each member’s work. The circles might form through a common set of objections, in an anti-authoritarian mode, something in the spirit of “delinquent gangs”,<sup>22</sup> but they evolve into supportive, creative, durable networks, held through affective connections. Most of what has been done in terms of advancing the literary arts in Hawai‘i, it could be argued, has come out of such small collectives of friends, working to critique, support, and even staple together each other’s art.

Perhaps because the signs of such alliances are often removed or confined to acknowledgement pages, Hamasaki in *Spider Bone Diaries* includes extensive notes, contexts, and literary sources for the poems, and a substantial Introduction and Afterword to Westlake’s poems. There is an emphasis in this on documenting work that was shared, that emerged out of movements and in relation to events, on recognizing personal identity as formed within a web of traditions and relationships, so that the poems exist at some level as both personal history and an annotated record of a poetic response to a history upon which future generations of artists in Hawai‘i might build. The history of the poems comes to include their publishing histories, which includes a sense of the restricted options for oppositional art (on one’s own terms) in Hawai‘i. For Hamasaki, then, it couldn’t help but seem that the difficulty in publishing Westlake’s work emblemized publishing culture in Hawai‘i. The same year that he received the box of Westlake’s poems, Hamasaki answered Lee Tonouchi’s question about “whether or not anybody will evah get around to publishing one Wayne Westlake collection” with the suggestion that:

some people didn’t understand what he [Westlake] was doing, what he wrote about, how he wrote about it. Everything takes time, I don’t think it’s lost at all. I think his spirit will live, y’know. Whether anybody does anything about it from now on, his work has already been documented, and I think people can search it out and discover it.<sup>23</sup>

It thus seemed significant that, when *Westlake: Poems* was finally accepted by the University of Hawai‘i Press (as part of its Talanoa: Contemporary Pacific Literature

<sup>22</sup> Michael P. Ferrell, *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16.

<sup>23</sup> Lee A. Tonouchi, “Da State of Unlearning: One Profile on Richard Hamasaki”, *Hybolic*, 2 (2001), 84.

---

series) and fully edited and designed, Hamasaki was required to provide a subvention of several thousand dollars for publication. Hamasaki's response was to turn the process of raising funds for the subvention into both a pedagogic protest moment, a rally for the dissident arts themselves, and a celebration of the meaning and performance qualities of Westlake's legacy. The publication process of *Westlake: Poems*, at least for a moment, seemed an allegory of the situation that Westlake and Hamasaki had critiqued. Seeing the book into print highlighted both the historic lack of support and venue for dissident kanaka maoli artists (although now, within the changing structure of Empire, this was perhaps less an issue of ideological blockage than of the University of Hawai'i Press's acting like a bottom-line-driven corporation) and its undoing through the involvement of the arts community. The existence of the volume *Westlake: Poems* in its edited form would be a testament to the power of the spirit of a friendship and collaboration to keep sprouting new life; the hui that Hamasaki assembled to organize the fund-raiser for the subvention, which received the name "Ho'ūlu Hou Wayne Westlake" from Kapu Landgraf, came together in the name of and as an extension of a larger collaborative project. 'Ho'ūlu' might be translated as 'excite', 'taunt', 'stir up' and 'hou' as 'again', 'anew', or 'freshly': Westlake's words and example were to return as inspiration and provocation. The kaona (veiled meaning) of 'Ho'ūlu' included a reference to the word "ulu", not just as growth, but as breadfruit, one of Westlake's 'aumākua (family deities, ancestors) (see *SBD*, 251).

The fund-raiser illustrated a degree of responsiveness that marked a shift in consciousness about the value of dissident art, and its place in the community. Around one-hundred local artists, writers, and performers contributed to the event, held in 2006, which included a silent auction of donated literature and art. The funds raised far exceeded what was required for the subvention, and the surplus was donated to Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, which publishes *Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, to establish the Wayne Kaumualii Westlake monograph series, under the editorship of ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, that would publish works by kanaka maoli artists. To support a journal that maintains a distinct space of articulation for kōnaka maoli was illustrative of the honoring and valuing of kanaka maoli culture that Hamasaki saw as fundamental to his own art, and fundamentally behind his collaborative work in the arts with Westlake. Poetry collections by Māhealani Wendt-Perez (*Ulubaimalama*, 2007)<sup>24</sup> and by Brandy Nālani McDougall (*The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai*, 2008)<sup>25</sup> appeared in this series ahead of *Westlake: Poems*, which was finally launched in 2009, by another gathering of artists, who were asked to choose poems of Westlake's to perform. This was another occasion for the community to celebrate Westlake's legacy, hear ways in which his poetry spoke to and through people, and publically celebrate the ways in which the spirit of an old collaboration can have rich afterlives and keep coming back.

Among those poets who read Westlake's poems at the launching, it was the irreverent artist and activist 'Westlake' who seemed uppermost to consciousness. It is this 'Westlake', under whose accessible but layered line runs a bass-note of

<sup>24</sup> Māhealani Perez-Wendt, *Ulubaimalama* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, *The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

---

<sup>26</sup> Kimo Armitage et al., eds.,  
*The Statehood Project: A  
Spontaneous Collaboration* (Fat  
Ulu Productions, 2009).

mourning, who resurfaces strikingly in contemporary Hawai‘i writing. For instance, a dramatic response to the 50th Anniversary of Hawai‘i’s admission as a U.S. State (*The Statehood Project*),<sup>26</sup> performed at Kumu Kahua Theater by the group Fat ‘Ulu in the same year of the Westlake launching, included Westlake’s poem “Statehood” as a refrain:

15 years today  
    since STATEHOOD  
it’s raining  
i feel like  
    crying .... (*W*, 125)



Ho‘iho‘i (return/restore) speaks to the diaspora of Native Hawaiians from Hawai‘i and the inundation of non-Hawaiian ideas and values on Hawaiian land and the need to *holehole* (strip away) them.

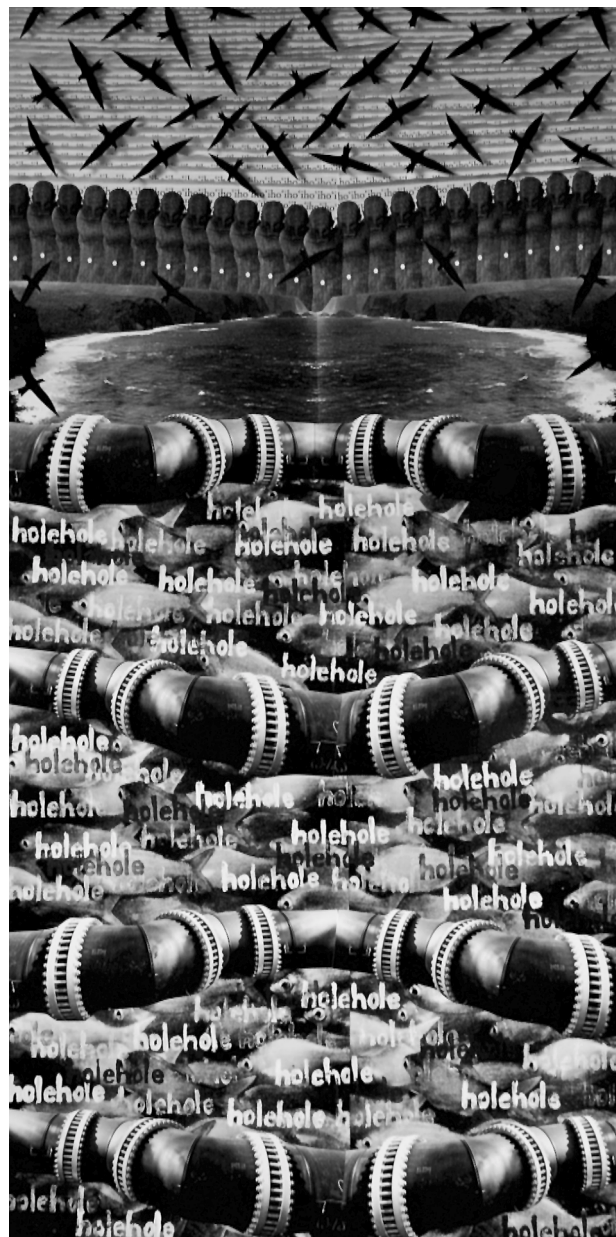


Fig.1 - Kapulani Landgraf, *Ho‘iho‘i*, Hilina ‘Ehu 2010, hand-stamped silver gelatin collage, 48x24x1 inch., courtesy of the author.

## Toward a Truly Sustainable Hawai'i: Sustaining the Native Hawaiian Sense of Place

<sup>1</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). See also Noel Kent, *Hawaii: Islands under the Influence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, "Hawaiian Sustainability", in Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, eds., *The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Kalo*, or taro, is the staple of the Native Hawaiian diet and, according to Hawaiian cosmogony, it is also an ancestor of the Hawaiian people.

<sup>4</sup> Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>5</sup> See Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1998); Gregory Cajete, "A Sense of Place", in *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996).

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'āina i ka Pono  
(The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness)  
(Hawai'i State motto)

A hot topic worldwide, sustainability represents one of the biggest issues at stake for Hawai'i today, given its continued state as an occupied nation and a highly militarized zone, as well as its island configuration and fragile ecosystem. The accelerated urban development spurred by corporate tourism in the past forty years has further raised the cost of housing and living, while also strongly impacting the local environment and destroying numerous Native cultural sites, including *heiau*, or religious temples, and ancient burial grounds.<sup>1</sup> Discussing sustainability in the Hawai'i context, therefore, means not only discussing the ecological future of the archipelago and its self-sustaining potential, but also acknowledging and evaluating the past and present exploitation of the indigenous natural and cultural resources through colonization, militarization, and globalization. More importantly, as scholar Davianna McGregor points out, it means promoting a notion of sustainability that is built on, and respectful of the "indigenous spiritual knowledge of the land, and for the Kānaka 'Ōiwi [Native Hawaiian] ancestors who provided stewardship for the land".<sup>2</sup> The Hawaiian expressions *mālama 'āina* (To care for the land) and *aloha 'āina* (Love of the land) illustrate the Native Hawaiian perspective on the relation between human and natural spheres, as it is based upon a relation of mutual understanding and caring. As scholar Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa explains:

In traditional Hawaiian society ... it is the duty of younger siblings and junior lineages to love, honor, and serve their elders. This is the pattern that defines the Hawaiian relationship to the *'āina* [land] and to the *kalo*<sup>3</sup> that together feed *Ka Lāhui Hawai'i* [Hawaiian Nation] .... The Hawaiian does not desire to conquer his elder female sibling, the *'āina*, but to take care of her, to cultivate her properly, and to make her beautiful with neat gardens and careful husbandry.<sup>4</sup>

Kame'elehiwa's statement shows how intimate the relation to the land is within Native Hawaiian culture as well as within other indigenous cultures around the world. It also illustrates a striking difference with the Western and capitalist ideas of landscape and land, which assume an external subject in the act of observing, controlling, buying, and selling.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the cultural, spiritual, and familial qualities of this relation set the indigenous perspective apart and beyond the international environmental movement and ecological thinking. Rather, Native Hawaiian culture offers a distinct, indigenous "sense of place".<sup>6</sup> Hawaiian scholar George Kanahale defines the Hawaiian sense of place as the Hawaiian people's

---

ability to relate to, and to know their space environment through language, astronomy, oral narratives, dance, and place names.<sup>7</sup> Given the Hawaiians' relation to, and knowledge of Hawaiian land, respecting and learning from their indigenous sense of place is essential for Hawai'i's community at large to build an ethically sustainable future for Hawai'i. Supporting sustainability in Hawai'i therefore means sustaining Native Hawaiian access rights to their ancestral land and cultural values.

In the following pages, I will explore issues of sustainability, as they are being discussed within Hawai'i's political, cultural, and academic circles, and as they have been represented by its contemporary literary communities since the 1960s. Through a comparison of these two spheres, I hope to show how the different and conflicting senses of place at stake within Hawai'i's contemporary scenario – as they are “known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested and struggled over”<sup>8</sup> – have over time not only contributed to the silencing of Native Hawaiian rights, but also represented a major obstacle to creating a truly sustainable way of living in Hawai'i. Fortunately, this situation has slowly started to change in the last few years, especially thanks to a growing support for the Native Hawaiian culture and rights on the part of the local community. For Hawai'i to become truly sustainable, however, it is necessary that the local community continue on this route, and toward a stronger and more consistent affirmation of Native Hawaiians' culture and their relation to land. Once the Native Hawaiian idea of sustainability becomes a socio-political and cultural reality, it can serve as an example for other ‘small places’ in the world struggling in the current globalized economy.<sup>9</sup> The Hawai'i example shows the importance of indigenous and non-indigenous groups working together to preserve the land and a close connection to it. What follows is the result of my seven-year-long living experience in Honolulu and my research experience at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. While my insights into Hawai'i's culture remain those of an outsider, I have personally witnessed the everyday struggles of the local population to survive in a costly and unsustainable tourist island-society.

## Sustainability in Hawai'i: A Brief Overview

The drastic changes to Hawai'i's sustainability in the last forty years have certainly not gone without notice in the local community. In particular, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a strong response to the extremely negative effects of overdevelopment on Hawai'i's natural and cultural environment. The protest organized by the inhabitants of Kalama Valley, as well as Waiāhole and Waikāne Valleys, against corporate development of the areas and the threat of their eviction helped the local community fully understand the dangers behind the local politics of development and encouraged them to take action against these politics.<sup>10</sup> The tenacious activity of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) to stop the exploitation of the island of Kaho'olawe as a site for military bombing practice, as well as Hawaiian activists George Helm and Kimo Mitchell's deaths during one of the

<sup>7</sup> George S. Kanahele, *Kū Kanaka: Stand Tall, A Search for Hawaiian Values* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 175.

<sup>8</sup> Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Firth, “Globalization and the Pacific Agenda”, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12.1 (2000), 178–192.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Nakamoto, “Land and Environment”, in Robert H. and Anne B. Mast, eds., *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 91–101.

<sup>11</sup> Kyle Kajihiro, "The Militarizing of Hawai'i: Occupation, Accommodation and Resistance", in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 170–194.

<sup>12</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 66.

<sup>13</sup> George S. Kanahale, *Restoring Hawaiianess to Waikiki* (Honolulu: G. S. Kanahale, 1993), 175.

<sup>14</sup> Serge A. Marek, "Waikiki Virtual Reality: Space, Place, and Representation in the Waikiki Master Plan", MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma, *Historic Waikiki* (Honolulu: DownWind Productions, 2001), <<http://www.downwindproductions.com>>, 10 August 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai'i* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 92.

<sup>17</sup> Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism", in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 31–38.

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see the UH Office of Sustainability website: *SustainableUH* (2009), <<http://sustainable.hawaii.edu>>, 13 March 2011.

PKO's landings on the island, contributed to enhancing local awareness of the ongoing military abuses of Hawaiian land.<sup>11</sup> This feeling of protest ultimately turned into a Native rights movement – the Hawaiian Renaissance – that asserted "Native forms of sovereignty based on indigenous birthrights to land and sea".<sup>12</sup>

The many accomplishments of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty and cultural movements in the last twenty years – the establishment of Hawaiian language immersion schools, the culturally-based Native Hawaiian charter school movement, and numerous other cultural education programs – have been accompanied by a growing interest in a sustainable future for Hawai'i on the part of the larger population of the islands. An attempt to "recover the Hawaiian sense of place",<sup>13</sup> that is, their way of knowing and caring for Hawai'i's natural environment, seems to characterize political and socio-cultural movements in recent years. The numerous appeals to 'Keep the Country, Country' appearing on bumper stickers and during protest marches clearly endorse this general concern over the current politics of development and its effects on the local environment. Such a concern has also led to the fostering of an ecotourist perspective that respects the Native cultural heritage. However, in practice, this call for redesigning Hawai'i according to a Native sense of place – from both a strictly urban planning perspective and a socio-cultural one – has often worked merely as a politically correct slogan employed at public talks and for election campaigns. As demonstrated in the Waikiki Master Plan (1992), the return to a 'Hawaiian sense of place' has often been applied to urban development projects that in fact contributed to perpetuate a colonial perception of the Native culture.<sup>14</sup> Even the use of Hawaiian names in renaming streets and buildings appeals to a sense of nostalgia for something that is disappearing,<sup>15</sup> thus turning ecotourism into a "tourism that fetishizes echoes of a supposed authenticity now available mostly to those with the ability to pay".<sup>16</sup> In other words, the appeal to sustainability, now widely circulating within global tourism discourse, seems to concentrate its focus on preserving the landscape and environment of Hawai'i, but not necessarily on the well-being of its people, and especially of the Native population.

While corporate-tourism discourse remains ambiguous when it comes to preserving and respecting the Native Hawaiian cultural heritage, both the negative post-9/11 impact on the tourist industry and the recent global economic crisis have shown, once again, the fragility of Hawai'i's socio-economic structure. Hawai'i continues to pour huge amounts of capital into the corporate tourist industry, which guarantees only low-paid, unstable jobs to the local population, while greatly benefiting global corporations.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, an increasing number of academic, cultural, and community projects are built on the notion of sustainability – a key word in a state with limited resources and a strong dependence on global ways of production and consumption. To name only a few, the University of Hawai'i Office of Sustainability now offers a wide range of cultural programs and community initiatives, while also fostering education on these matters among local residents.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the compelling promotional campaign to 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local', co-



---

designed by the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and UH College of Tropical Agriculture, has shown a “statewide effort to help increase demand for, consumption of, and familiarity with locally grown commodities”.<sup>19</sup> However, in my experience as a conscious consumer living in Honolulu, the primary target audience of this growing sustainable food movement largely remains the politically-aware higher-educated who can afford to buy at these ‘sustainable prices’ and the organic movement hipsters (mostly foreigners), while the larger local population continues to support the giants of corporate food industry such as Wal-Mart and McDonald’s primarily. That said, things are slowly moving, as can be noted in the growing number of sustainable farms owned by local farmers and featuring several staples of Native Hawaiian diet such as the *kalo*. Moving beyond the fancy organic food market toward locally-grown products is a first important step toward sustainability.

On the legislative front, the Hawai‘i Sustainability Task Force, founded in 2005, represents not only the biggest step made by the government so far, but also one of the most controversial aspects of Hawai‘i’s sustainability movement today. The work of the office has been compiled into the Hawai‘i 2050 Sustainability Plan, which sets five main goals for Hawai‘i’s sustainable future, ranging from economic self-sufficiency and environmental conservation to community and social well-being. It is particularly worth reporting here on one of the five steps towards Hawai‘i’s sustainability as described in the plan:

To preserve our island values, we need to recognize the primacy of the Kanaka Maoli while cultivating the active participation of people of all ethnicities in their practices. Community and ethnic organizations must be supported to ensure that our traditions continue to live and thrive through dance, festivals, education and art.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly enough, while explicitly promoting Native Hawaiian cultural heritage as crucial to a sustainable future for Hawai‘i, the statement fails to mention the need to ensure more sustainable land development politics and support Native Hawaiian rights to their land. Maintaining this support is crucial, since control over the land is the base for sovereignty – “the ability of a people who share a common culture, religion, language, value system and land base, to exercise control over their land and lives, independent of other nations”.<sup>21</sup> As I write, Native Hawaiian access rights to their land continue to be threatened by land politics favoring the interest of the larger land owners and international corporations.<sup>22</sup> While this confirms the still divergent senses of place emerging from the different groups that make up Hawai‘i’s society today – the Native community, and the tourist, military, settler, and environmentalist groups – it also raises a number of questions concerning the sustainability project as a whole. How can sustainability become a constructive project that improves the living conditions of the local community without excluding some of its groups, and, more importantly, without contributing to the silencing of Native Hawaiian voices?

<sup>19</sup> UH College of Tropical Agriculture website: *Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program* (17 September 2009), <<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/>>, 13 March 2011.

<sup>20</sup> *Hawai‘i 2050 Sustainability Task Force* (2007), <<http://hawaii2050.org>>, 13 March 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 71.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Keala Kelly, dir., *Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai‘i* (2008); see also Gordon Y. K. Pang, “Groups Protest Ceded-Land Stance”, *Honolulu Advertiser* (28 December 2008), B1.

---

## Native Hawaiian lessons in literary ecology

Having emerged in the late 1960s along with the Hawaiian Renaissance and the Native Hawaiian Sovereignty movement, Hawai'i's contemporary literatures have constantly explored the relation between the natural and the cultural and, in particular, the local politics of place. This strongly ecological perspective on the part of Hawai'i-based writers and scholars is mainly informed by the still rich and thriving Native cultural tradition.

The literary anthology *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, edited by Native Hawaiian writer and activist Dana Naone Hall and published in 1985, explicitly addresses the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land. As a first conscious effort to publish Native Hawaiian literature in English, *Mālama* also employs this ecological perspective to illustrate a Native Hawaiian aesthetics that is strictly connected to the place. In the poem “Ka Mo‘olelo o ke Alanui. The story of the road”, for example, Hall narrates the history of an old road on the island of Maui, now in the process of being destroyed. “[T]hose who propose [this project]” Hall reminds readers, “don’t know that the road is alive”,<sup>23</sup> since it bears the imprint of the gods that have walked upon it and contains the stories linked to their passage. Here, Hall is referring to a specific, well-known episode: the disturbance of a large Native Hawaiian burial site in the late 1980s, during the building of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Kapalua, Maui. This episode is also particularly famous because Native Hawaiians created a unified front to protest this development and the displacement of Hawaiian burial sites authorized by Hawai'i's state laws.<sup>24</sup> Their successful effort did not only help recognize Honokahua as a sacred site, but it also spurred the amendment of Hawai'i's law on historic preservation, Chapter 6E, to include “the care and treatment of prehistoric and historic burials”.<sup>25</sup>

According to local writer and scholar Richard Hamasaki, the anthology expresses a specific “sense of place”, a distinct “rootedness”, thanks to the constant references to places and situations distinctly local, as well as to the author's use of both Hawai'i Creole English and the Hawaiian language.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, this place-specific and direct knowledge of the natural world permeates Native Hawaiian literature, both oral and written, in English and Hawaiian; on the other hand, the poem, as well as the anthology as a whole, serves as a direct political message, especially since it was published at the same time that the road was being closed. The continued relevance of a publication like *Mālama* today confirms how much is yet to be done to ensure a sustainable future for Hawai'i. But beside its strong response to the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land, *Mālama* also offers an alternative perspective to non-native literary works through its focus on the land and the sea; this perspective, in turn, illustrates Native Hawaiian aesthetics, which is strictly connected to their intimate knowledge of places. As Hall declares in the preface to the volume, “it is this sense of belonging to the place, since the landing of the first canoes that we honor in this issue”.<sup>27</sup> In this

<sup>23</sup> Dana Naone Hall, ed., *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 148.

<sup>24</sup> See Franco Salmoiraghi, “Honokahua”, *Mānoa*, 19.2 (2007), 24–35.

<sup>25</sup> Sara L. Collins, “Historic Preservation”, in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Hamasaki, “Singing in their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English”, MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1989), 70.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, *Mālama*, 7.



---

sense, I believe that *Mālama* represents a crucial reference point for any literary work focusing on sustainability in Hawai‘i.

Published only four years later, *Ho‘omānoa. An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* enters the debate over land issues by focusing on further Native Hawaiian responses to the local politics of land. Here, the natural world is pictured as a threat to Hawai‘i’s population; such a transformation is reflected in the sense of loss felt by Native Hawaiians now that they no longer have access to their land, as suggested by the opening lines: “Nature has taken everything out of our hands / and we do not know whether to swim or fly”.<sup>28</sup> A particularly interesting piece is represented by Hall’s poem, “HAWAI‘I ‘89”:

The way it is now  
few streams still flow  
through lo‘i kalo [taro fields]  
to the sea.  
Most of the water  
where we live  
runs in ditches alongside  
the graves of Chinese bones  
to the green central valley  
where the same crop  
has burned in the fields  
for the last one hundred years .... (4)

<sup>28</sup> Joseph P. Balaz, ed.,  
*Ho‘omānoa: An Anthology of  
Contemporary Hawaiian Literature*  
(Honolulu: Kū Pa‘a Inc.,  
1989), 1.

Since the *taro* (kalo) is the staple of the Hawaiian diet and, more importantly, it is genealogically connected to the Native population, destroying *taro* means contributing to the death, both physical and spiritual, of Native Hawaiians. The semantic opposition between “streams” and “ditches” well indicates this passage from a dignified past to a degraded present.

Joe Balaz’s poetry featured in the same anthology, on the other hand, seeks to move beyond this past/present opposition by focusing on the present of the poet and by showing his continuity with the past. This strategy is clearly at work in the poem “MOE‘UHANĒ” (Dream):

I dream of the ways of the past –  
I cannot go back.  
I hike the hills  
and valleys of Waiawa ....  
I play in the waves of Waimea, and spear fish  
from the reefs of Kawailoa.  
I grow bananas, ‘ulu [breadfruit],  
and papayas, in the way of the ‘āina ....  
I cannot go back –  
I never left. (7)

The final line, “I cannot go back – I never left”, is particularly significant since it links, both culturally and linguistically, past and present in the name of one, living culture. Retrieving Native traditions, as suggested in the first line of the poem, “I

dream of / the ways of the past”, is therefore essential to reclaim one’s identity as a Native Hawaiian in the present. In the poem “SPEAR FISHER”, Balaz seems to give in, instead, to the past/present opposition, but only to oppose foreigners and locals, consumerism and sustainability, ‘us’ and ‘them’. “In Kona / A Midwest businessman / caught a marlin, / and hung it upside down / on a wharf – / At Hale‘iwa / I caught a kūmū, / and I ate it” (37). Interestingly enough, the Native way, as described in these lines, is also different from the ecologist perspective on the preservation of marine wildlife.

In a similar way, poet, scholar, and nationalist leader Haunani-Kay Trask’s poetry does not only denounce today’s condition of Hawai‘i’s land, but also presents a specific political message in response to the politics of development in Hawai‘i, of which she brings in concrete examples and then counteracts them from an indigenous perspective on place. Trask’s poetry, therefore, goes hand in hand with her work as a scholar and activist. In “Agony of Place”, a poem that appeared in the *Ho‘omānoa* anthology, Trask employs the notion of place both literally and metaphorically to describe the drastic shift for Hawaiians from order to chaos, and from life to death, due to colonization, militarization, and globalization: “in a land of tears / where our people go blindly / servants of another / race, a culture of machines / grinding vision / from the eye, thought / from the hand / until a tight silence / descends / wildly in place” (9). And yet, it is not real death that Trask envisions, but a torturing agony; in fact, the land is still there, still alive and beautiful. Ironically, its beauty represents a threat: “and yet / our love suffers / with a heritage / of beauty” (9). The mission of Hawaiian poets, scholars, and activists today consists in giving back voice to the land, and, in turn, in regaining their own voice.

Trask’s poem “BLOOD ON THE LAND”, in the collection *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (1999), is shaped as a chant of lamentation for the sad condition of the ‘āina:

Mourning floods the ‘āina  
 quiet oil of green  
 yellowing  
 lā‘ī leaves  
 ‘awapuhi  
 crumbling at the root  
 lizard skeletons wildly  
 strewn ...  
 below pesticidal  
 waterlands lazily  
 killing  
 sinister glare  
 off a smoking sea  
 and black  
 illuminations  
 as trees.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1999), 9. ‘Awapuhi is a type of ginger.

This image of degradation and death is reiterated throughout the book, until the Hawaiian soil has transformed into a huge cemetery, a “missionary graveyard”,

characterized by the “smell of death / smeared across the land / killing in the heart” (13). Even in this case, the poet’s expression of grief toward the current condition of the *‘āina* gives voice to an explicit critique of the specific aspects of this condition: “heiau stones lie crushed / beneath purple resort / toilets” and “two thousand bodies / [are] exhumed for Japanese / money, developers’ dreams, / and the archaeology / of *haole* knowledge” (9). These lines recall the controversy surrounding the building of the H-3 that led to the destruction of Hawaiian burial sites, and the one concerning the traffic in Hawaiian remains for the benefit of museum exhibitions. At the same time, the resilience of the indigenous culture is played out through the use of images and themes that are part of the Native tradition.

The poem “The Broken Gourd” in Trask’s latest collection (2002), reiterates the idea that the pre-colonial harmony between the people and the land is lost, since the land, a source of life, has transformed into an “aching earth”.<sup>30</sup> Blood covers a cracked ipu, now incapable of producing clear sounds, perhaps a reference to the forced silence of the Native voices: “a cracked ipu / whispers, bloody water / on its broken lip” (11). Past and present are strongly contrasted here: the tranquil and peaceful life of traditional times gives way to “smelly shores / under spidery moons, / pockmarked maile vines, / rotting *‘ulu* groves, the brittle clack / of broken lava stones”, so much so that Hawai‘i becomes “a poisoned *pae ‘āina* / swarming with foreigners / and dying Hawaiians” (12–13). In Trask’s view, corporate mass-tourism is responsible for completing a century-old process of destruction. In the poem “Lāhaina, 1995”, for example, Trask describes the effects of tourist pollution on the small city of Lāhaina, on the island of Maui: “drifting trash / clogs the shores, coating / the lost minds / of burnt-red tourists / staining the sand / with acrid oils” (18).

The second part of the book, “Chants of Dawn”, offers, however, a more hopeful vision of the future, represented by the image of the Hawaiian people that “arise and go, / sacred, into dawn” (39). Death and destruction here make space for a regenerated life, where Hawaiians can finally live a reciprocal and righteous life in their land: “out of the elegies / of love, let us enter / summer’s last sun” (58). Through love, both in its sense of aloha and in its sexual aspect, the land and the people are ultimately regenerated. This point takes us back to the first poem of the collection, “Born in Fire”, which introduces the reader to a Hawaiian sense of place through an invocation of the goddess Pele. By representing both the power of volcanic destruction, the “trembling breast of Pele” (3), and the power of regeneration that follows the eruption, Pele remains a crucial source of life and energy, also sexual energy, from which the poet-activist draws constant inspiration and courage. At the same time, Pele’s “craterous womb” (3) seems to suggest her protective role. The continuous references to Pele throughout the book therefore function as a powerful source of *mana*<sup>31</sup> and hope both for the poet and for the Hawaiian people.

<sup>30</sup> Trask, *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Mana* stands for divine power that comes from the gods or *akua*. See ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Hulihiia in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ literature (1860–1928)”, PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2007).

---

## Echoes of a Native Sense of Place in Hawai'i's 'Local Literature'

While the indigenous sense of place represents a major component of contemporary Hawaiian literature in English, it is also often reflected in the work of non-indigenous writers living in Hawai'i. Rodney Morales, who has written about Native Hawaiian cultural values and about the continued abuse of indigenous land, immediately comes to mind. An example of this type of work is the anthology *Ho'ibo'i Hou*, edited by Morales in 1984 and entirely devoted to the history of Kaho'olawe and the abuses of its land and resources.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho'ibo'i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

For the aim of this paper, however, it is important to look at Morales' novel *When the Shark Bites* (2002), in which the writer explores Hawai'i's land issues through the format of a family saga, since within the local literary scene it is the first notable example of a fictional work devoted to Hawaiian land issues. The novel focuses on two generations, that of Henry Rivera and his wife Kanani, who have directly participated in the Hawaiian Renaissance and the protests against the military exploitation of Kaho'olawe; and that of their older son, Mākena, still unaware of his own position in the world and of his genealogy. By the end of the novel, not only does Mākena fully understand his role within his family and community, but he also ends up continuing the cultural inheritance left to him by his parents and by his biological father, Keoni (a clear reference to George Helm). The acquisition of this spiritual inheritance therefore signals Mākena's coming of age.

The complex intersections between different characters and historical moments in the novel also link Mākena's individual moment of *Bildung* and a collective one on the part of the local community, including Henry and Kanani, who finally realize that they have given up Keoni's dream in exchange for the middle-class dream of a comfortable and safe family living. This reader is tempted to interpret this element as the author's direct criticism of the local community's general disinterest in Hawai'i's land issues, and as his effort to help foster the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture. While Part I of the novel is set in 1976, the time of the PKO's landing on Kaho'olawe, Part II brings the reader to 1991, and to UH student Alika's 'visitations' in search of oral-history information regarding Keoni's life. As the Riveras start bringing back memories of their past as activists during their interviews with Alika, a Japanese company buys the whole area of Waikīkī where they live, forcing them to move to the Wai'anae Coast. While their reaction is one of defeat, their neighbor Beth refuses to give up and is arrested. The episode gives Kanani the opportunity to express her hatred of the local developers,

people who ... refused to give in to the beauty of the surf at sunrise, unless it was a painting they had bought, or unless they could charge others for a look; people who refused to see the effect their decisions and methods had on others, refused to know how the lives of so many were diminished by their insatiable wish for more more more.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Rodney Morales, *When the Shark Bites* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 55.

As the past vicissitudes of the Riveras intersect with the current political events, Mākena becomes involved with the repatriation of Native Hawaiian remains. In a

---

crucial scene, Mākena steals the remains of Keoni and returns them to the land, thus contributing to change the course of his life as a Hawaiian, and that of the Riveras' family life toward a more righteous destiny.

The importance of recuperating the Native Hawaiian way is also underlined throughout the novel by the use of Hawaiian mo'olelo, and in particular the story of the shark-man Kawelo. While Mākena's grandma facilitates his and his younger brother's encounters with the sharks through her stories – “Dis is da time of da manō. She wen' look at my brother 'Analu and said, 'Da time of da sharks'” (114) – the Riveras ultimately learn to deal with the many “land sharks” in their life, such as the Japanese investors that had bought their house in Waikīkī. The importance of sharks in the Native culture, as well as that of learning how to deal with them – reiterated by the continuous references to Louis Armstrong's song “Mack the Knife”<sup>34</sup> – ultimately become a way for the characters to learn to read the signs of life.

While Morales's novel has been criticized by several community members, concerned that his impersonation of Native Hawaiian voices ends up perpetuating the century-old colonial silencing of indigenous voices, if anything, this publication has hopefully inaugurated a more sincere concern over Hawaiian land issues on the part of non-native writers. However, for this to happen, it is necessary for non-indigenous writers and community members to recognize our own position within Hawai'i's socio-political scenario and help Hawaiians reach self-determination.

The publication of *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* (1986) – a selection of Hawai'i's writers (mostly of Asian descent) previously published by the local Bamboo Ridge Press – had much earlier posed questions regarding the role of non-indigenous writers within Hawai'i's literary scene. In particular, local writer Darrell Lum's definition of “local literature” in the preface to the volume had generated several debates, since it included “a distinct sensitivity to ... the environment (in particular that valuable commodity the land)”.<sup>35</sup> This explicit, but ambiguous, reference to land as one of the defining elements of the ‘localness’ testifies to the circulation of the land-issues debate within Hawai'i's cultural scenario at the time; yet, it does not clarify the role, and responsibilities, of the non-native groups in this debate. In this sense, it has been read as a figurative example of “Asian settler colonialism”.<sup>36</sup> According to Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, the settler is characterized by his/her “laying a claim, both through the literal possession of land and the physical occupation of disputed space”<sup>37</sup>; Trask contextualizes this definition by declaring Hawai'i a “settler society”, in which “the indigenous culture and people have been murdered, suppressed, or marginalized for the benefit of settlers who now dominate our islands”.<sup>38</sup> While the ongoing investment of settlers into Hawaiian land is testified by their connection with the dominant middle-class group that emerged after WWII and took power during the Democratic years,<sup>39</sup> the problematic position of Bamboo Ridge comes from its publishing few Native writers over the years and, at the same time, its ambiguous appeal to the land and environment of Hawai'i which fails to mention both the importance of land for the native population and their ongoing struggle for sovereignty.

<sup>34</sup> The song also contains the line “when the shark bites”, which appears in the book's title.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Chock and Darrell H. Y. Lum, eds., *The Best of Bamboo Ridge: the Hawaii Writers' Quarterly* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Candace Lei Fujikane, “Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawai'i”, in Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 1-42.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, “Settler Colonies”, in Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Boston: Blackwell, 2000), 361.

<sup>38</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii: The Democratic Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985).



<sup>40</sup> Fujikane, “Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s *Saturday Night at the Pabala Theatre*”, in Joyce N. Chinen, Kathleen O. Kane, and Ida M. Yoshinaga, eds., *Women in Hawai‘i: Sites, Identities, Voices*, Special Issue, *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 38, (1997), 40–61.

<sup>41</sup> Lois-Ann Yamanaka, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “‘This Land is Your Land, This Land Was My Land’: Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of ‘Āina in Contemporary Literature of Hawai‘i”, in Fujikane and Okamura eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Lyons, *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7–15.

A particularly controversial example of a non-native writer writing about Hawaiian land is the work of the local Japanese writer Lois-Ann Yamanaka, who has in fact attracted much attention both locally and nationally not only because of her artistic merits but also because of her problematic representation of Hawai‘i’s racial scenario.<sup>40</sup> The novels *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*, *Blu’s Hanging*, and *Heads by Harry*, published from 1997 through 1999, work together as a trilogy centered around the *Bildung* of the main characters, all locals of Japanese ancestry. The final step of this growing process also coincides with a conscious, and yet problematic, rediscovery of Hawai‘i’s natural world.

The representation of Native land emerging from *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* is especially important to understand Yamanaka’s ecological perspective as well as her larger project as a local Japanese writer.<sup>41</sup> While in *Blu’s Hanging* the land “becomes a backdrop to human-centered drama, a place to escape the torments of one’s life”,<sup>42</sup> as is typical of much Euro-American literature and art, *Wild Meat* seems to show a deeper connection to Hawai‘i’s natural world by refusing to describe it solely as a landscape, that is, as a natural backdrop for the character’s actions and feelings. Rather, the writer constructs a *land motif* that serves as a narrative strategy to help Lovey complete her *Bildung* process and forge a specifically ‘local’ identity for herself and her family. As the girl’s father, Hubert, brings up his childhood memories connected to Kīpū plantation village, these images become alive in his daughter’s eyes. So, while for Lovey’s grandfather Japan represented both his place of origin and his final return after death, for Lovey and Hubert Hawai‘i becomes the main reference point for their life, her home-land. At the same time, as ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui illustrates in her analysis of *Blu’s Hanging*, the natural scenario described in this book is equally devoid of the spiritual and familial quality that characterizes a Native Hawaiian sense of place. Yamanaka’s use of this *land motif* to claim a ‘local’ identity for her characters further contributes to constructing “colonial view[s] of ‘āina”.<sup>43</sup> What is more, by piecing together her family history, the protagonist-narrator reconstructs the larger history of Japanese migration to Hawai‘i and through her vivid imagination recreates, on Hawaiian land, both Japan’s and Hawai‘i’s plantation world, a world where Native voices have disappeared. Even as they build strong connections to Hawai‘i’s natural world, the characters in *Wild Meat* ultimately make clear political claims to Hawaiian land, thus testifying to their position as settlers within the local socio-political scenario. Since local Japanese occupy a privileged position within Hawai‘i’s society, these political claims end up perpetuating Native Hawaiian displacement through Yamanaka’s erasure of Hawaiians from their ancestral land, as well as the silencing of Native Hawaiian access rights.

As these examples illustrate, both the local political discourse on sustainability and the ecological sentiment expressed by ‘local literature’ present numerous contradictions, while also echoing each other in terms of their ongoing exclusion of Native voices and their active ignorance<sup>44</sup> of the Native relation to land. Even when attention has been given to Native voices, it has often been done by



---

appropriating indigenous values and in order to carry out personal or group politics and interests. I can see how, in the last few years, extensive work has been conducted to reach sustainability on a socio-political level, and the growing role of Native Hawaiian literary and scholarly voices within the local cultural scene is equally promising. But in both cases, the only way to be really sustainable is to respect, and learn from, the Native Hawaiian sense of place and relationship to the land, as it is brilliantly represented through its literature and as it is asserted by Hawaiians' struggle for sovereignty.

A thesis on the Ko'olau Mountains

1. Preface.

In all my life  
I have never seen  
such  
huge,  
proud,  
green  
before.

An optical optimism:  
“This land belongs to you  
and your children,  
as far as their eyes can see”

2. Data collected.

Autonomous entity of the eye –  
Love  
at first sight patterns:  
a repetition of folds,  
ridge upon ridge upon ridge,  
a series of spines.

Home,  
an architecture of choice.  
Home  
clutched to bone.

The curtain sways sideways like light rain,  
like wet mist around a giant wrinkled fruit,  
like growing from a diet of rippling stone,  
like a burgeoning geometry,  
like distended consonants  
on the edge of falling.  
The mountain attests to all this (and more).

What if all I can see is a mountain?

My word against a mountain's.

---

### 3. The limits of this study.

run a way to run down earth my way down or run earth my root my run down to  
my bone my this or home grabs a muscled heart run out and this green a pouring  
ruin a pouring ruin not mine

### 4. Conclusion.

An optical optimism:  
“This land belongs to you  
and your children,  
as far as their eyes can see.”

(Until you lose your vision  
and all you have left  
is your staggered  
love.)



Fig. 1: Aiko Yamashiro, *Ko'olau Mts*, 2010, photograph, courtesy of Aiko Yamashiro.

Find Mana in the Mundane:  
Telling Hawaiian Mo'olelo in Comics

<sup>1</sup> Some historians consider the cultural revival that took place under the reign of David Kalākaua to be the First Hawaiian Renaissance, with the revival of the 1960s and 1970s as the Second Hawaiian Renaissance.

The Hawaiian people have made great strides in the areas of linguistic and cultural revival ever since the Hawaiian Renaissance<sup>1</sup> that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Various institutions and grass-roots groups, such as Hawaiian-language programs (community or academically based), hālau hula, and Hawai'i-based publishers with a greater cultural awareness have ensured that our 'ōlelo and our mo'olelo, our language and our stories, are once again seen and heard in an increasing number of everyday contexts: restaurants, grocery stores, books, television and the internet. As with any mass movement, however, this revitalization of culture and language has not encompassed all levels of the Hawaiian population.

Large gaps in cultural and linguistic knowledge have formed in the Hawaiian community, neatly following generational lines. In my family, for example, my maternal grandmother was a native speaker of Hawaiian and I am privileged enough both culturally and financially to have achieved a certain level of language ability from the university, but my mother speaks no Hawaiian and even ruefully tells the story of how, as a girl, she used to ignore her tūtū whenever he spoke Hawaiian to her. The denigration of the Hawaiian culture had become so ingrained in our society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries<sup>2</sup> that many parents decided not to teach their children certain types of knowledge, such as language, cultural practice, or even mo'olelo, as this knowledge seemingly had no place in the modern world. Again, my own family is exemplary, as my tūtū is said to have decided not to pass on a certain type of traditional healing in which he was an expert.

<sup>2</sup> Hawaiian authors decried this decline since at least the 1860s, but it is more visible during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; English became the medium of instruction for all government-subsidized schools, students were punished for speaking Hawaiian, and parents were advised not to teach it to their children.

A great number of Hawaiians born and raised during the first three quarters of the twentieth century were not taught their language and culture by their parents, and later, many of them were too old to take advantage of the opportunities to learn these things that they had helped to provide for their own children. My family is by no means unique in that our language use or cultural practice has skipped a generation or ceased completely, as many families also have 'lost generations' that have been culturally left behind. Many of these Hawaiians thirst for the knowledge that they missed out on and the stories that they have never heard, but also feel that they do not have the means to access them or that it is too late for them to successfully learn Hawaiian or join a hālau hula or work in a taro patch.

The efforts to reinvigorate and recirculate our 'ōlelo and mo'olelo have mainly and justifiably been aimed at young children, though attempts have been made to address the needs of the older generations as well. Yet this two-pronged approach dedicating our efforts towards our children and our parents actually threatens to create another lost generation. Our mo'olelo are presented in colorful picture books for children such as *No Ka 'Elepaio Kolobe: The Naughty 'Elepaio*<sup>3</sup> and *The Legend of*

<sup>3</sup> Malia Kruger, *No Ka 'Elepaio Kolobe: The Naughty 'Elepaio* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 2008).

*Kuamo'o Mo'okini and Hamumu, the Great Whale*<sup>4</sup> and in novel-length literary translations or re-presentations of traditional stories for a more 'sophisticated' audience such as *The Epic Tale of Hi'iakaikapoliopole*<sup>5</sup> and *Ka Mo'olelo Hiwahiwa o Kawelo*.<sup>6</sup> Yet, there are no versions of our mo'olelo explicitly aimed at those in these in-between generations, especially if they are not already avid readers.<sup>7</sup>

For many of us, if we want to read Hawaiian publications, we often have to produce them ourselves or help others facilitate their production, striving to do what Hawaiian scholar Noenoe Silva has described as "free[ing] our ancestral stories from the captured state, such that they become healthy frameworks for our own communal self-understanding, antidotes to the poisonous stereotypes of the colonizer".<sup>8</sup> The building of these "healthy frameworks" entails a move towards presenting mo'olelo in mundane rather than 'high' art forms, and this paper will explore how this move towards seemingly less threatening or valorized art forms can help prevent these in-between generations from being culturally left behind and contribute to what Scott Richard Lyons (Ojibwe/Dakota) has termed "rhetorical sovereignty".<sup>9</sup> The paper will then examine how comics in particular can serve as an important new vessel for our mo'olelo and describe a graphic novel project that I am a part of in which we are trying to harness what Rocco Versaci has called comics' "powerful marginality".<sup>10</sup>

## E iho ana o luna, e pii ana o lalo: The high shall be made low, and the low shall be raised up

Because we have been told who we are by other people for so long, Hawaiian identity and self-definition often start at a disadvantage and many facets of our culture have been dismissed as nothing more than outdated artifacts. Powerful stories and traditions have been co-opted and uprooted from their cultural contexts to be rendered as nothing more than innocuous reminders of a bygone era. Without culturally-relevant and carefully-constructed Hawaiian texts (in the broad sense of the term, including written, chanted, sung, and spoken texts) staking out a place for Hawaiian cultural practice in this current era and embracing these in-between generations, the damaging and oppressive images and stereotypes that often come from the classroom and the media constantly abrade and erode the foundations of cultural identity that we work so hard to build. Our mo'olelo contain our history, our worldview, even our genealogy, and in order to do them justice, we must strive for the "rhetorical sovereignty" that Scott Richard Lyons describes.

Lyons defines the overall pursuit of sovereignty very elegantly as "an attempt to revive not our past, but our possibilities" (449). This idea of sovereignty applies very directly to Hawaiian attempts to regain their self-determination, but also the desire to tell/read/hear our own stories. Lyons terms "rhetorical sovereignty" as "the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (449–450). If Hawaiians focus on struggling for rhetorical sovereignty

<sup>4</sup> Leimomi Mo'okini Lum, *The Legend of Kuamo'o Mo'okini and Hamumu, the Great Whale* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Ho'oulumāhie, *The Epic Tale of Hi'iakaikapoliopole*, trans. by Puakea Nogelmeier, Saho Fukushima, and Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada (Honolulu: Awaiaulu Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Ho'oulumāhie, *Ka Mo'olelo Hiwahiwa o Kawelo*, ed. by Hiapokeikikāne Kichie Perreira (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Hawaiian artist Solomon Enos had a serial comic strip entitled *Polyfantastica*, but it was more a reimagining of a broader Hawaiian and Polynesian history than a retelling of any specific mo'olelo. See *Polyfantastica* <<http://www.polyfantastica.org>>.

<sup>8</sup> Noenoe Silva, "Pele, Hi'iaka, and Haumea: Women and Power in Two Hawaiian Mo'olelo", *Pacific Studies*, 30.1–2 (2007), 160.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?", *College Composition and Communication*, 51.3 (2000), 447–468.

<sup>10</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature* (New York: Continuum Books, 2007).



---

within the larger movement for self-determination, we can pay more attention to “the goals, modes, styles, and languages” of the texts that we produce and direct them at the segments of our community that need them most.

Breaking mo‘olelo into its constituent parts ‘mo‘o’ and “ōlelo”<sup>11</sup> helps illustrate why these stories are so important to the community. ‘Mo‘o’ gets translated as ‘succession’ and “ōlelo” as language, talk, or speaking, so a common understanding of ‘mo‘olelo’ is as a succession of talk, which often gets read as a reference to the way stories and knowledge were passed down through the Hawaiian oral tradition. This succession matches what Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*:

For many indigenous writers stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed, 2004), 144.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 2.

Thomas King (Cherokee) neatly sums this idea up by stating: “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are”.<sup>13</sup> In the Hawaiian understanding of mo‘olelo, the lineal and generational quality of stories along with their capacity to carry culture really helps to explain how mana, the spiritual power and reverence that can be accumulated in all things, accrues to these stories as they are passed from person to person. Storytellers imbue their stories with breath and mana through the act of telling and their listeners inhale this mana and then have the chance to retell the story and add their breath to it as well. A further indication of the way mana accrues to stories is that each variation and variant of a story is itself called a mana. This recognizes that the diversity and variation among our stories is the very thing that gives them their mana, or power. This means that in order to re-empower our mo‘olelo, we have to insure that they exist in various versions, styles, and forms, both elite and mundane.

Many of the strides that Hawaiians have made over the last handful of decades in the pursuit of rhetorical sovereignty have been about ‘modernizing’ and moving Hawaiian cultural practices into the fields of high art or working towards recognition of Hawaiian arts as ‘serious’ art. For example, singer and kumu hula Keali‘i Reichel and others have taken hula and Hawaiian music to prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Hawaiian operas and hula dramas are regularly performed at the Hawai‘i Theatre, and Hawaiian art and artists are regularly featured in galleries and museums throughout the state. The last major translation project I was involved in,<sup>14</sup> the translation of *Ka Mo‘olelo o Hi‘iakaikāpoliōpele*, was also meant to carve out a space for Hawaiian mo‘olelo in the realm of high art. We had two limited-run “Centennial” versions: a slip-cased edition which sold for \$300, and a clamshell edition which was hand bound by Gregor Campbell in goatskin leather and green moiré fabric that sold for \$1500. There is currently an initiative afoot to fund the donation of 200 copies of the clamshell edition “to major institutions of learning in the United States, Europe, and Pacific nations”.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The translation project was headed by long-time Hawaiian-language translator Puakea Nogelmeier, while Saho Fukushima and I served as apprentice translators and editors.

<sup>15</sup> “Wehena – The Hi‘iaka Landmark Initiative”, *Awaiāulu: Hawaiian Literature Project*, <<http://www.awaiulu.org/landmark.html>>, 5 December 2010.



---

Though these attempts to justify the inclusion of Hawaiian art forms among these other high art forms have done a lot of very important work in terms of increasing the visibility of these Hawaiian arts and artists, this ‘respectability’ comes in large part from Hawaiian artists participating and performing in modes and styles that are recognizable to and appreciated by Western audiences and critics. Two consequences of this approach are that a very clear ‘Hawaiian’ identity has developed around these art forms and a lot of energy has gone into ensuring that Hawaiian arts and mo‘olelo are considered worthy of inclusion among the other high arts. While those two consequences actually seem pretty positive, two further issues arise out of them: 1) elite, fine arts are almost by definition not for a popular audience and 2) some of these art forms have become so elevated and so charged with ‘Hawaiian-ness’ that other Hawaiians who are less well-versed culturally become intimidated and turned away by the very thing that they desire.

Many Hawaiians have come through a heavily Westernized school system in which their culture and history were absent. This system reinforced the notion that the fine arts were things that ‘high-class’ white elites did: painting, literature, ballet, opera, modern dance, etc. The high-level of ‘respect’ for and dogged protection of similarly elite Hawaiian art forms has also succeeded at times in dissuading our young people from taking part in them because they are too ‘serious’, too elite, both in the Hawaiian and Western contexts. Having Hawaiian culture taken seriously is clearly something that we need to continue to strive for, but some of these connections to high art, instead of raising the esteem of many of these arts, have served to alienate large swathes of the young Hawaiian population, who see these arts as ‘not for them’. Framing Hawaiian arts as elite art forms, predominantly conforming to Western systems of values, can also allow outsiders to consume Hawaiian arts in ways that are palatable and understandable to them, oftentimes reducing cultural practices such as oli (chanting) and hula to nothing more than innocuous ‘song and dance’.

Yet, this innocuousness that has for so long stripped these practices of their cultural context and value can be deployed to our advantage. Anishinaabe poet and author Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance” is an important concept here in moving towards showing these ‘in-between’ generations that Hawaiian art and mo‘olelo really are ‘for them’ and exposing an often unsympathetic general public to our mo‘olelo in a way that can allow them to see why we fight and where we come from. Vizenor has defined “survivance” in many ways, but his explanation from *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* is particularly fitting here: “Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction”.<sup>16</sup> Rather than a passive survival, Vizenor’s notion of survivance encompasses and calls for all the sorts of things that native peoples have done and continue to do to ensure their survival as a culturally distinct people.

Hawaiian-language scholar and translator Puakea Nogelmeier’s idea of a “movement of insistence” is also useful here. He coined the phrase to “describe the vitality and confidence of the newly-expanded Hawaiian presence in the

<sup>16</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1994), vii.

---

<sup>17</sup> M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa'a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010), 86.

newspapers after the start of the native press”.<sup>17</sup> This vitality and confidence drove Hawaiians in the nineteenth century to take up literacy on a national level and use the relatively new technology of the newspapers in culturally appropriate ways that benefitted Hawaiian aims. Nogelmeier uses this idea of “insistence” to make it clear that Hawaiians were not just taking action in response or resistance to foreigners; they actively asserted themselves and their culture through whatever means were available to them.

Both survivance and insistence resonate with the Hawaiian concept of “onipa‘a”, which was the motto of both Kamehameha V and Queen Lili‘uokalani. ‘Onipa‘a commonly gets translated as “steadfast”; yet, as with most translation, this does not really encompass the entirety of the word. More of the word’s meaning can be seen when one breaks ‘onipa‘a down into its component parts: “oni” and ‘pa‘a’. “Oni” refers to movement, motion, and shifting, while ‘pa‘a’ means to be fixed, solid, rooted, and/or complete. The range of meaning here is much greater than the lack of forward motion and fixity implied by ‘steadfast’. When Hawaiians are ‘onipa‘a, then, it implies that they are moving and taking action while still being firmly rooted in their culture and beliefs.

Seen as survivance and insistence, ‘onipa‘a highlights all of the actions, ranging from the openly resistant to the quietly mundane, that Hawaiians have taken to protect their culture from foreign encroachment. Our culture, beliefs, and stories live in the mundane practices of everyday life just as much, and perhaps even more, than some of the more demonstrative and seemingly elitist acts of survivance, insistence, and ‘onipa‘a. Preparing and eating food, interacting with our family, joking with friends, killing time, talking story, all of these everyday practices are strongholds of our stories and worldview, and it is to the everyday that ‘onipa‘a should take us next. We need to work on bringing our ‘ōlelo and mo‘ōlelo back into the realm of the mundane. Eating and hanging out with friends are innocuous acts that seem like the least political and subversive acts possible, but these acts from the realm of the mundane are deeply powerful “possibilities”, in Lyons’s sense of the word, that can easily carry our culture and mo‘ōlelo past the defenses of even the most ardent opponents of Hawaiian sovereignty because they seem so non-threatening on the surface.

### Escape from the Mundane: Comics as ‘Onipa‘a

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts, “The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope”.<sup>18</sup> In the Hawaiian community, these mundane acts are, in certain ways, at the margins of the marginalized, neither threatening enough to be suppressed or demonstrative enough to be taken up as a means of resistance. They are ‘innocuous’. Yet, as Hawai‘i music scholar Aiko Yamashiro has pointed out, innocuous art forms such as popular music are “often seen as ‘harmless’ and ‘light’, thereby eluding criticism

<sup>18</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing*, 4.

and closer thought”.<sup>19</sup> The marginal and ‘harmless’ status accorded to non-elite art forms is the very thing that enables us to use these forms and styles to subvert the rhetorical imperialism that Scott Richard Lyons describes as “the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of debate. These terms are often definitional – that is, they identify the parties discussed by describing them in certain ways”.<sup>20</sup> To begin to set the terms of the debate, the strategies of insistence and survivance demand that our mo‘olelo have as much and as many mana as possible. We need to steal a page from hegemonic popular culture’s playbook and have our mo‘olelo infiltrate public consciousness through every possible mode, including the less well-regarded and more popular art forms such as comics, anime, video games, and clothing.<sup>21</sup> Mo‘olelo need to become so ubiquitous and everyday that they can do the work of ‘onipa‘a without seeming to. That way, we can replace the damaging definitions supported by rhetorical imperialism, and work towards defining ourselves.

By focusing on comics as an example, we can see how a popular and somewhat still-maligned genre can be transformed from a carrier of damaging stereotypical images into an effective way to disseminate our culture and identity to both outsiders and our own people alike. Comics critic Rocco Versaci describes one of the more insistent aspects of comics as follows: “comics are not expected to deliver significant social or political criticism and therefore possess what I call a ‘powerful marginality’ insofar as they are freer to express subversive or unpopular political ideas”.<sup>22</sup> This “powerful marginality” has drawn many native peoples to the comic form as well, moving them to produce graphic novels and comics such as *Maui: Legends of the Outcast*,<sup>23</sup> *Strong Man*,<sup>24</sup> *Koda the Warrior*,<sup>25</sup> *Tribal Force*,<sup>26</sup> and *Peace Party*<sup>27</sup> (to name only a handful) that tell their own stories and present their own heroes.

According to Tony Chavarria (Santa Clara Pueblo), the curator of Comic Art Indigène, an exhibition of Native American artists that work in the comics tradition: “it is only natural that this marginal art appeals to oft-marginalized indigenous people, for both have been regarded as a primitive and malignant presence on the American landscape”.<sup>28</sup> Despite the critical acclaim showered upon graphic novels like Alan Moore’s *Watchmen*,<sup>29</sup> Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,<sup>30</sup> and Frank Miller’s *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*,<sup>31</sup> the term ‘comic book’ is still often used as a pejorative for something that is ‘made for kids’, ‘crass’, ‘popular’, or ‘unrealistic’. In the United States, a huge public backlash took place against comics, which had been portrayed as “one of the causes of juvenile delinquency”; this came to a head with the 1954 Senate Subcommittee hearing and the establishment of the Comics Code.<sup>32</sup>

Some comics critics regard the witch hunt of the ‘40s and ‘50s as a dark time for the genre, fueled by misdirected parental hysterics.<sup>33</sup> The point, however, is that *those parents were right*. Though I doubt that comics really cause juvenile delinquency, their “powerful marginality” can easily subvert the established order. As Edward Said pointed out about his early fascination with comics in his introduction to Joe Sacco’s graphic novel *Palestine*:

<sup>19</sup> Aiko Yamashiro, “Ethics in Song: Becoming Kama‘āina in Hapa-Haole Music”, *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture*, 8.1 (2009), <<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/>>, 11 November 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty”, 452.

<sup>21</sup> Hawaiian-themed clothing designs are popular, but often lack deep or nuanced understandings of culture and mo‘olelo. An exciting intervention is apparel company Ke Alo Piko, whose designs come from a strong cultural background and careful research. Even their clothing tags, which they call “story tags” help pass on mo‘olelo. See *Ke Alo Piko* (2009), <<http://www.kealopiko.com>>. 11 November 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 149.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Sullivan, *Maui: Legends of the Outcast* (Auckland: Godwit Publishing, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Ishmael Hope, *Strong Man* (Juneau: Alaska ICE, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Mark L. Mindt, *Koda the Warrior* (Harvey, ND: Pony Gulch Publishing, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Jon Proudstar, *Tribal Force* (Los Angeles: Mystic Comics, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Rob Schmidt, *Peace Party* (Culver City, CA: Blue Corn Comics, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Tony Chavarria, “Indigenous Comics in the United States”, *World Literature Today*, 83.3 (2009), 47.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Moore, *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 1986–1987).

<sup>30</sup> Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns* (New York: DC Comics, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form, & Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 39.

<sup>33</sup> Amy Kiste Nyberg, "William Gaines and the Battle over EC Comics", in Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, eds., *A Comics Studies Reader* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 63. Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 105.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Said, Introduction, in Joe Sacco, *Palestine* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2002), ii.

<sup>35</sup> Rocco Versaci, *This Book Contains Graphic Language*, 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> Derek Parker Royal, "Foreword; Or Reading within the Gutter", in Frederick Luis Aldama, ed., *Multicultural Comics: From Zap to Blue Beetle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), x.

[comics] seemed to say what couldn't otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn't permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped, and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. I knew nothing of this then, but I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently.<sup>34</sup>

This idea of comics freeing us to "think and imagine and see differently" is a powerful facet of the genre, but it also leads to their dismissal as incapable of anything but 'escapism'.

This 'escapism' is not necessarily a bad thing, as one of the main lures of comics is that they can indeed be fun. Even the idea of escape itself can be turned to survivant purposes, as can be seen in Versaci's reframing:

[D]espite the great diversity among the many texts that surround our lives, they nevertheless have a common thread: however beautifully or ineptly or movingly or lifelessly conveyed, these works are someone's interpretation of how the world in which we live either is or was or should be or might be or might have been .... Seen in this light, "escape" does not have to preclude thinking; escape into these diverse worlds might mean, paradoxically, that we encounter meanings that are often lost in the chaotic din of our lives.<sup>35</sup>

Derek Parker Royal provides an analysis of how easily comics can offer this 'escape':

Because they utilize picture texts to guide our understanding of narrative, comics can have a more direct effect than that dictated by prose, eliciting a reaction that takes relatively little time to process. And given its reliance on symbols and iconography, comic art speaks in a language that is accessible to a wide audience, transcending many of the national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries imposed by other media and giving it a reach that is as democratic as it is immediate.<sup>36</sup>

Just as Vizenor took the oft-passive idea of survival and turned it into an active strategy for 'onipa'a, we can harness the marginality of comics and the seemingly carefree idea of escape and turn them into active and insistent tools that will help us to envision, create, and move towards a changed world, where our mo'olelo have more mana.

## Faster than a Speeding . . . Ma'a?: Constructing a Hawaiian Comic

In May 2008, the publishing arm of an organization dedicated to the advancement and education of Hawaiian youth contacted me about working with them as one of two 'cultural consultants' to collaboratively research and write a series of bi-lingual comics (separate volumes for Hawaiian and English) based on traditional Hawaiian mo'olelo culled mainly from Hawaiian-language archival and newspaper sources. The creative team brings together people with a variety of strengths, such as publishing experience, archival research skills, and cultural knowledge, and we answer to an editorial board made up of authors, cultural practitioners, academics, activists, and others in order to have a more collaborative and community-based focus on creating these texts. We were given a lot of leeway to propose topics for

---

the novels, and have gone through the process of researching and proposing three different mo‘olelo so far, but none have gotten past the initial development phase yet. Though the process of creating these comics is nowhere near complete, the stumbling blocks and issues that have arisen do shed some light on the issues that face our community in the quest for ‘onipa‘a.

Many of these issues have arisen because of our unfamiliarity with the production of comics and because we are not sure which paths to follow when deciding exactly what a Hawaiian comic should be, but these choices are what makes the genre so full of possibility. Literary scholar Frederick Luis Aldama points out the almost limitless possibilities facing comics author-artists:

The process of writing and drawing implies, at each instant, myriad choices (one word instead of another, one image instead of another, one or another style of lettering, etc.); in thinking in images, as with lucid dreaming, the author-artist (or author-and-artist team, as the case may be) is deciding which gaps to leave and which gaps to fill in.<sup>37</sup>

As I said above, ‘onipa‘a lives in the margins, the everyday, the mundane; in comics, each of the choices, the gaps, margins, and gutters, are what allow our team to create a ‘Hawaiian’ comic, as opposed to one that is just about Hawai‘i.

We are deploying Scott McCloud’s concept of “closure” to fashion a Hawaiian world to which both Hawaiian readers/viewers and the mo‘olelo itself can ‘escape’. Closure is the ability of a person’s mind to “fill in the blanks” between panels, which McCloud says fosters an intimacy between creator and audience.<sup>38</sup> He goes on to describe how comics manipulate the juxtaposition of words and images via a single sense to help create this new sensory world for ourselves: “it is an exclusively visual representation. Within these panels, we can only convey information visually. But between panels, none of our senses are required at all. Which is why all of our senses are engaged!” (89). It is with this concept in mind that we have gone about constructing our Hawaiian world of words and images.

The construction of such a ‘Hawaiian’ world is founded on the mo‘olelo themselves, but we are aware that the background and the mundane details are what engage our senses and enable a more intimate connection with the text. Whether the men’s malo, or loincloths, are tied correctly; whether the plants at a character’s feet plausibly grow in the area in which she or he is standing; whether the mountains in the distance actually look like the mountains of that place, all of these details create the world that we want the reader to escape to, though the reader might not actively notice them. Even the accurate visual representation of sound comes into play. Comics cannot convey actual sound but they portray them using the infamous onomatopoeic words: bam, pow, krakoom, etc. Hawaiians, however, represented sounds very differently. For example, the rooster’s ‘cock-a-doodle-doo!’ in English is “o‘o‘o‘ō!” for Hawaiians. Instead of a cat going ‘meow’, Hawaiian cats say “owau”. The Hawaiian word for ‘boom!’ is ‘kūakā!’

The portrayal of sound may seem like a minor point, but I am convinced that these hardly noticed and mundane details will determine how vivid and in-depth

<sup>37</sup> Frederick Luis Aldama, “Multicultural Comics Today: A Brief Introduction”, in Aldama, *Multicultural Comics*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 69.



<sup>39</sup> These titles come from sources which did not use modern Hawaiian orthography and will thus appear as they were written at the time.

<sup>40</sup> More research needs to be done, but there is some evidence in the body of the story that it is written by someone of royal standing and that H. R. H. stands for “His/Her Royal Highness”.

<sup>41</sup> H. R. H., “No ko Molokai”, *Ke Kumu Hawaii* (8 June 1836), 2.

<sup>42</sup> J. H. Kanepuu, “He Moolelo no Kana, ka Hanai a Uli”, *Ke Au Okeo* (19 December 1867–13 February 1868).

<sup>43</sup> Niuhelewai, “He Moolelo Kaao no Kana”, *Ka Leo o ka Lahui* (11 June 1891–19 August 1891).

<sup>44</sup> Abraham Fornander, *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore* (Bishop Museum Press, 1919) 436–439, 489–491.

<sup>45</sup> J. K. Mokumaia, “Kaao no Kana ame Niheu”, *Ka Nuipepa Kuokoa* (13 January 1927), 2.

<sup>46</sup> For insight on Hawaiian-language newspapers, see Leilani Basham, “Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i: He Mo‘olelo, He ‘Āina, He Loina and He Ea Kākou”, *Hānili*, 6.1 (2010): 37–72; Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 2010; Kuwada, “How Blue Is His Beard?”, *Marvels & Tales*, 23.1 (2009): 17–39; and Noenoe Silva’s work.

<sup>47</sup> M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa‘a i ka Leo*, 81.

we can make the reading experience for our audience. Comics can be very immersive and if every aspect of the world we construct is not covered, the ‘Hawaiianess’ will come across as a mere patina. If the bangs, biffs, pows, and booms are all still in English, it will be clear to the readers that they are still in an English-dominated world built on English-centric thought and sound. But, if we can build a Hawaiian world in which every sensory detail comes from a Hawaiian understanding and where Hawaiian is the main language of thought and expression, we can show our readers how different the world they escaped from could be.

The story we are working on now is about Hina, a beautiful woman, who gives birth to two children: Niheu and Kana. Niheu is a strong yet non-magical boy, while Kana is born as a rope and once he takes human form, he has superhuman strength and the power to stretch. Hina is abducted by Kaupe‘epe‘enuikauila, a charismatic bandit who conducts raids on the other chiefs around him from a nearly impregnable fortress on the island of Moloka‘i. Over the years of her captivity, she begins to fall in love with him because he treats her much better than her husband did. When her two sons are old enough, however, they journey to Moloka‘i to rescue her and fight several monstrous creatures on the way. Kana and Niheu attack Kaupe‘epe‘e’s fortress and he allows them to kill him so that Hina can be ‘rescued’.

In the same way that the project is bringing the different mana of our team members together, the team is also bringing together eight different mana of the mo‘olelo to create our script. The five main texts are from Hawaiian-language sources that were published between 1836 and 1927: “No ko Molokai”<sup>39</sup> by H. R. H.<sup>40</sup> (1836),<sup>41</sup> *He Moolelo no Kana, ka Hanai a Uli* by J. H. Kānepu‘u (1867),<sup>42</sup> *He Moolelo Kaao no Kana* by Niuhelewai (1891),<sup>43</sup> “Kaao no Kana ame Niheu” and “Kaao no Kana ame Moi” by Abraham Fornander (1919),<sup>44</sup> and “Kaao no Kana a me Niheu” by J. K. Mokumai‘a (1927).<sup>45</sup> To ensure that the Hawaiian mo‘olelo are honored, details are only taken from the three extant English-language versions of the story if the team feels that they fit in with a Hawaiian cultural understanding. We are taking care in the initial script and plot outlines to attribute each plot element to its specific source text so that this information can be taken into account when making decisions about which aspects of the different versions to include in the final script.

Though each plot detail will not be attributed in the final text, readers will be directed to the source texts in our paratextual material. We feel these pointers are especially important because of the Hawaiian community’s history of literacy. In the Kingdom era, Hawaiian mo‘olelo were important as carriers of culture, but also offered entertainment, so nearly every issue of every newspaper included at least one (and as many as four) serial installments of Hawaiian and foreign mo‘olelo.<sup>46</sup> Often, a single copy of a newspaper was purchased, read aloud to the entire family, and then passed along from house to house.<sup>47</sup> Mo‘olelo were everywhere and known to everyone, yet Hawai‘i went from being one of the most literate nations in the



world in the nineteenth century<sup>48</sup> to ranking thirty-ninth nationally in USA reading statistics in 1998, with Hawaiian students at the bottom of that group.<sup>49</sup>

One of the simplest reasons for this low literacy, at least judging by the mainly Hawaiian students who enroll in my Hawaiian Literature classes at the University of Hawai'i, is that they have been conditioned to not care about reading, or at least the kind of reading that they do for school. As mentioned earlier, a lot of books aim at telling mo'olelo or passing on cultural lessons to young children, but there is almost nothing Hawaiian, or even Hawai'i-based, after that to appeal to them as they grow into teenagers and adults. A great many of my students state quite emphatically that they don't like to read, and yet they go on to enjoy, and often love, reading the Hawaiian stories we go over in class. In fact, when pressed, they admit to really liking to read things like manga and Harry Potter, but none of those things are considered 'real' reading. It seems quite obvious that for most of them, being forced in school to read literature by people they feel no connection to, that neither engages nor entertains them, does not lead to a love for the act of reading. It just presents reading as another thing that is 'not for them'.

Basing these comics on authored Hawaiian mo'olelo from the Hawaiian-language newspapers, then, is meant to point readers to the source mo'olelo through explicit mention in the paratexts and show these young Hawaiians that there are stories out there 'for them'. If they seek out these mo'olelo, they might possibly become interested in interacting with other Hawaiian forms, whether they be books, newspapers, songs, dances, etc., and perhaps mo'olelo like these comics can even invite Hawaiian youth (and those of us who feel young at heart) to enjoy reading again. One problem with having this aim, though, is that we do not want to strip all of the fun from comics and make them into something with an explicit and heavy-handed message. Nothing is less innocuous than an 'educational', message-driven comic that smacks of assigned reading and discussion questions. In an interview with reporter Sarah Henning, Ishmael Hope, a Juneau storyteller and the writer of the Tlingit comic *Strong Man*, said: "If I started with the perspective 'Oh, I want to do something positive with morals that gives a good Alaska Native message', it would be an afterschool special ... It would be one of those lame things that I never, ever liked when I was a kid".<sup>50</sup> Like Hope, we are aware that even though we have a definite cultural and social agenda with the publication of these graphic novels, we must be very careful to balance our desire to give mana to our mo'olelo with the desire to make an engaging and entertaining comic.

## Conclusion

As Hawaiians continue to struggle for sovereignty, we must remember that each breath a storyteller shares with a mo'olelo gives mana to that story and those who experience it. We grow as a people every time one of our stories is recovered from the Hawaiian-language newspapers, gets read at the beach, or is told among friends. Thus, we must breathe not only our mana, but our possibilities into these mo'olelo,

<sup>48</sup> See Laura Fish Judd, *Honolulu, Sketches of the Life: Social, Political and Religious in the Hawaiian Islands from 1828-1861* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1880), 79; Albertine Loomis and A. Grove Day, *Ka Pa'i Palapala: Early Printing in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Mission Houses Museum, 1997), 31.

<sup>49</sup> Native Hawaiian Education Act. Pub. L 107-110. Sec. 7201-7207. 1 July 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Sarah Henning, "Alaska Comic Superhero", *Anchorage Daily News* (16 Feb 2007), *website*, <<http://www.adn.com>>, 25 November 2008.

---

and give the readers and listeners a chance to see not only what has been, but also what could be.

By combining the mundane with the insistent, the marginal with the survivant, comics such as the ones I have discussed are meant to be gateways of sorts that would simultaneously allow readers to seek out new mo‘olelo or demand that they be made more accessible and in various forms. Those who enter these gateways would be invited to escape, while still participating in ‘onipa‘a. Therefore, with the publication of seemingly innocuous and escapist Hawaiian mo‘olelo in comics form, readers will have a chance to experience (and perhaps create) worlds where things Hawaiian are mundane yet full of mana, story worlds and places where cultural values and messages do not stand out. Not because they are not important, but because they are *everywhere*.

hua ‘ōlelo: word  
fruit of speech  
thought  
‘ōlelo rolls off tongue  
a lyrical wave of sound

mo‘olelo: hi/story  
a succession of speech  
mo‘o  
‘ōlelo  
history rolls off tongue  
an institution of memory

ha‘i ‘ōlelo: to tell  
proclaim  
again and again  
memory embodied in tongue

ha‘ina: refrain  
the summary  
of what is told  
so we will never forget

---

**Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua**

He mele inoa no ku'u kumu aloha, 'o  
Haunaniokawēkiuohaleakalā

Noho nani ka hau  
I ka wēkiu o Haleakalā

Lā hahau wela ē  
He'e ka wai hu'ihu'i

Hui nā wāhine noho mauna  
Nā pua ohaoha i ka wai

Kahe a kinai ahi  
A nā kōlea ē

'Ike le'a Kaihuokalā  
I ka lāhui 'Ōiwi nei

Kahe nō kou mana  
O ia 'āina aloha

Pi'i hou a kupu  
Nā kupa aloha 'āina

He lei wehi i ka 'āina  
ka hau nani o Haleakalā

He inoa nō 'o Haunaniokawēkiuohaleakalā

---

## BOOKS RECEIVED:

Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Nancy Isenberg and Maddalena Pennacchia, eds., *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome* (Gottingen: V&R Unipress, 2010), 388 pp. ISBN 3899717406

Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubas, (eds.), *Remembering Patrick White: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), XVII + 218 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2849-4

Elena Spandri, *Wideworlds. L'orientalismo nella letteratura inglese e americana. 1760-1820*, (Pacini Editore, 2010), 229 pp. ISBN 9788863151756

Stefano Mercanti, *The Rose and the Lotus: Partnership Studies in the Works of Raja Rao*, (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), LVII + 221 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2833-3 56 / US\$ 84

Cristina Boscolo, *Odún: Discourses, Strategies, and Power in the Yorùbá Play of Transformation* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXX + 337 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2680-3 68 / US\$ 102

Maria Caridad Casas, *Multimodality in Canadian Black Feminist Writing: Orality and the Body in the Work of Harris, Philip, Allen, and Brand* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXXIV + 213 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2686-5

Melanie A Murray, *Island Paradise: The Myth. An Examination of Contemporary Caribbean and Sri Lankan Writing*. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXII + 226 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2696-4

Layla Al Maleh, ed., *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XII + 491 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2718-3

Michael Meyer, (ed.), *Word & Image in Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures*, ASNEL Papers 14 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XLIII + 379 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2743-5

Stella Borg Barthet, (ed.), *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XIV + 412 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2764-0

Charlotte Williams and Evelyn A. Williams, (eds.), *Denis Williams: A Life in Works. New and Collected Essays*, Foreword by David Dabydeen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XXI + 238 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2791-6

Mike Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), XVI + 249 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-2712-1