MALAMA ʻAINA: IDENTITY, RETERRITORIALIZATION, AND ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE OF HAWAIʻI

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the symbol of land through a comparison of six pieces of multi-ethnic literature of Hawai‘i from 2002 to the present. In contemporary Hawai‘i literature and criticism, poets, writers, and scholars are currently engaged in a debate over the value and perception of land, as presented in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura’s highly influential text *Asian Settler Colonialism*. In response to their claim that values of land in Hawai‘i can be reduced to a dichotomous structure of “settler” and “native,” I assert a multiplicitous theoretical model to this debate—that of the “rhizome,” created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their volume *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Using this botanical metaphor of interwoven narratives, I argue that Hawai‘i functions as a rhizomatic place, which allows for the reterritorialization of perceptions outside the dominant rendering of Hawai‘i as a “tropical paradise” but rather as a location of ecological vulnerability. Using this theoretical model, I examine the following texts: Haunani Kay Trask’s *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* and Lurline McGregor’s *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me*; Kaui Hart Hemmings’s *The Descendants* and Tara Bray Smith’s *West of Then*; and Gary Pak’s “The Guest” and Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s *Behold the Many*. 
DEDICATION

For Christina,

Mahalo nui loa, ku’uipo.

Aloha au ia ‘oe.
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INTRODUCTION

As a home to displaced indigenous peoples (Native Hawaiians or Kānaka Maoli), white settlers, and Local Asians, contemporary writers of Hawaiʻi have illuminated disparate values of the land, what Hawaiians call “ʻāina,” due its historical, ideological, mythological, and economic representations. The title of this work reflects a popular saying in the Islands, “malama ʻāina,” which translates to “care for the land that sustains us.” In the more than 200 years since Captain Cook landed at Kealakekua Bay on the island of Hawaiʻi, the Islands have undergone significant and potentially lasting ecological and cultural change. From the arrival of the American Missionaries in 1820 to the formation of a constitutional monarchy twenty years later, then the overthrow of the Hawaiian government in 1893 and its eventual statehood in 1959, Hawaiʻi has transformed from merely the most isolated populated landmass on the Earth to functioning as the outermost reach of American hegemony and the location of Native struggles to regain their sovereignty. During these 235 years, Hawaiʻi has become home to large immigrant groups from more than fifteen different nations, and their descendants have transformed the ethnic landscape from one of an indigenous people to an ethnic pluralism which is among the most diverse in the world. As globalization and modernity

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1 This reflects the Hawaiian language spelling of the islands which includes the ‘okina (‘), a glottal stop.

continue to change the physical and economic landscape of Hawai‘i, writers of different ethnicities have reexamined the land where they reside. “Malama ‘āina” resonates of many backgrounds, echoing the concerns of many Hawai‘i citizens regarding ecological changes from the increase in development due to the tourist based economy, and is seen frequently on tee-shirts and bumper stickers around the Islands.

While many Americans think of Hawai‘i as the fiftieth state and a popular tourist destination, for its residents it is a place layered in contentious history. Westerners transformed Hawaiian land from agrarian systems of sustainable farming to large plantations, which led to the arrival of thousands of immigrants predominantly from East and Southeast Asia in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. At the time of Western contact, the population of Native Hawaiians has been estimated to up to 800,000 people; now, those who identify as Native Hawaiians currently only make up approximately nine percent of Hawai‘i’s population, and Asians and whites make up 38 and 25 percent, respectively. The presence of these immigrants, who worked alongside Native Hawaiians in the plantations through the mid-twentieth century, contributed to significant shift in Hawai‘i popular culture, specifically in terms of language. In order to communicate in the fields, “Hawaiian Creole English” or “pidgin” was born and still functions as the most common spoken and written dialect among “Locals,” the name.


4 David E. Stannard, Before the Horror: the Population of Hawai‘i on the Eve of Western Contact (Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai‘i, 1989), 78–80.

5 “Hawai‘i QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau.” State and County QuickFacts. (Washington, DC, USA: U.S. Census Bureau).
appropriated to multigenerational residents of the Islands. While new cultures grew, Native Hawaiians suffered the gradual dispossession of land, language and culture. By the 1970s, as I will address in later chapters, Native Hawaiians sought to reclaim traditional practices and language in the form of a “Hawaiian Renaissance.” Also in the 1970s, Local Asians claimed their identity as different from Asians on the continent and established an outlet for producing stories outside of dominant American narratives about Hawai‘i through the creation of Bamboo Ridge Press. In the last twenty years, however, these identities have often come into conflict due to perceived economic differences and perceptions of land, as much of Hawai‘i’s literature displays.

As I will establish in the following chapters, contemporary Hawai‘i literature and its criticism directly addresses these tensions over the value and perception of land. In Chapter One, I will specifically address the current theoretical debate around perceptions of land as discussed in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura’s text *Asian Settler Colonialism*. In response to their claim that values of land in Hawai‘i can be reduced to a dichotomous structure of “settler” and “native,” I will assert a new, multiplicitous theoretical model to this debate—that of the “rhizome,” created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their volume *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Using a botanical metaphor of interwoven narratives, I will argue that Hawai‘i functions as a rhizomatic place, which allows for the reterritorialization, or restructuring, of perceptions outside the dominant rendering of Hawai‘i as a “tropical paradise.”

In Chapters Two through Four, I will closely examine six texts published since 2002 that specifically engage with the image of land in Hawai‘i, and ultimately, I argue, reveal an ecological consciousness that reflects an appreciation of both history and the
future. Given this theoretical framework, I will be examining the following works of fiction and poetry, paired with texts of similar content to illuminate the disparate yet overlapping experiences of the people of Hawai‘i. In Chapter Two, I will pair *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me* and *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, as representative of the Native Hawaiian experience with Americanization. Lurline McGregor’s novel demonstrates the deep connection to land among the Hawaiian diaspora, as her protagonist’s Western values and Americanization had led her away from Hawai‘i, but ultimately finds herself called back to the land of her ancestors. Trask’s *Night* deliberately confronts the American occupation of Hawai‘i through a collection of poetry, calling upon Native Hawaiian myths and songs for inspiration and the sound allegory of traditional Hawaiian chants. In the third chapter, *West of Then* and *The Descendants* represent of the Haole and Hapa-Haole (half-white, half-Hawaiian) experience as the struggle over learned Western values versus honoring Native claims to land. In Chapter Four, I conclude with Gary Pak’s “The Guest” from his collection entitled *Language of the Geckos* and Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s novel *Behold the Many*, representative of the Local Asian experience as immigrants, as they challenge the notion of “home” and struggle to find a place in society, given the history of Native displacement. Yamanaka’s *Behold the Many* functions as amalgamation of commentary on many of the above, as her tragic tale of a Local family faces the challenges of immigration and the modern era and ultimately finds solace in the landscape.

Moreover, I would like to explain my use of specific terms denoting certain places and ethnic groups. Inspired by work of Stephen Sumida and Candace Fujikane, I have chosen the following terminology and spelling to reflect Hawai‘i’s ethnic groups. First of
all, Hawai‘i, with the ‘okina, or glottal stop, which appears thus as a single inverted comma, is the correct Hawaiian language (ʻŌlelo Hawai‘i) spelling of the island archipelago. “Native Hawaiians,” however, does not use an ‘okina. “Hawaiian” is derived from “Hawai‘i,” the Anglicized form of “Hawai‘i, as evidenced by the English derivational suffix “-an,” which must be applied to an English morpheme. The ‘okina does not make the transition into English, either phonologically or typographically. I will refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i as “Native Hawaiian” (in English) and “Kānaka Maoli” (in Hawaiian), interchangeably. I will refer to multigenerational Asian residents of Hawai‘i by their preferred term of “Local.” As not all “Locals” are of Asian descent, I specify in the case of this literary debate and the works I have chosen by calling them “Local Asian.” Finally, I refer to settlers of Euro-American descent as “white,” “white settler,” or the Hawaiian term, haole, which means foreigner.

Finally, as someone raised in Hawai‘i, and whose ancestors arrived in the Islands nearly one hundred years ago, I have developed a deep and personal connection with the land I grew up calling “home.” As a Euro-American, I do not claim to understand every nuance of Hawaiian language or culture, but instead write from a Western perspective on a disputed space in hopes of acknowledging narratives from multiple perspectives. In our contemporary moment, Hawai‘i is a place that is comprised of the mixing between people whose stories are simultaneously independent and related, historical and imagined. All deserve to be heard.
CHAPTER ONE

INDIGENOUS PASTS, RHIZOMATIC FUTURES:
RE-THEORIZING LITERATURE OF HAWAI‘I

In 1997, Native Hawaiian scholar-poet-activist Haunani Kay Trask delivered the keynote speech at the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States annual conference and characterized Asians in Hawai‘i not as “Locals,” but as settlers, and thereby extensions of American Imperialism. This address, four years after the one hundred year anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian nation, combined many of her other scholarly texts ¹ on the subject of decolonizing Hawai‘i from the American culture that had subsumed it but also presented an opposition against other non-white peoples residing in Hawai‘i. Long a principal figure for the reinstitution of the Hawaiian nation, Haunani Kay Trask remains a derisive figure in Hawaiian politics as well as in the academic sphere. Her work inspired the 2008 collection edited by University of Hawai‘i professors Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura entitled *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*. Following the work of Trask and other Native

¹ Trask’s most famous scholarly text is *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999).
Hawaiian historians,² Fujikane and Okamura sought to “reexamine the past and present roles that Asians have played in the U.S. colony of Hawai‘i.”³ The collection goes onto to assert that all residents of Hawai‘i then fit into one of two categories, settler or native, thus problematizing both Local Asian and Euro-American identity in Hawai‘i and essentializing each ethnic group’s value of land. Meanwhile, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley’s collection entitled Postcolonial Ecologies presents a series of essays that embrace the subaltern subject and his or her relationship to the environment after the effects of colonization. They remark that while Ecocriticism currently appears to have a “singular American genealogy. . .[it] might be reconfigured in broader, more rhizomatic terms” and calls for attention to texts outside the continent.⁴ Furthermore, they cite the “chronic endangerment” posed by the United States due to its “excessive consumption, pollution, and waste as well as neocolonial forms of globalization, militarism, and development.”⁵ Like many other colonized nations, due to the gradual Westernization of the Islands, the Hawaiian landscape transformed from the tribal community based on a sustainable agricultural system to a tourism-centric economy based on the perpetuation of stereotypes of native culture and a paradisical mythology. In the modern era, gentrification, urban development, and tourist resorts and their byproducts dictate the shape of the environment. The destructive implications of these

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² Some of these Hawaiian historians include: Lilikaka Kame‘eleihiwa, Jonathan Kay Kamakawi‘ole Osorio, and Noenoe Silva.

³ Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 1.


⁵ DeLoughrey and Handley, Postcolonial Ecologies, 17.
developments, such as ecological disruption and pollution, are becoming of increasing concern.

Therefore, in response to the essentialist claims asserted by Hawai‘i literary critics in *Asian Settler Colonialism* by Fujikane, Okamura, Kosasa and ho‘omanawanui, in conjunction with DeLoughrey and Handley’s call for rhizomatic reconfigurations of postcolonial histories, I will employ Deleuze and Guattari’s botanical metaphor of the rhizome to reframe the critical debate over representations of land in Hawai‘i literature. As I will demonstrate, the trajectory of Hawai‘i literature and its criticism has shifted since the nineteenth century, often mirroring the political climate. Since the beginnings of Western contact, Native Hawaiians have suffered the gradual dispossession and displacement of land and culture, both socially and through Western legal channels. Additionally, descendants of Asian immigrants and white settlers find themselves challenged by their own self-determination, as neither indigenous nor wholly American (or any other nationality). As the following chapters will show, each writer reveals an engagement with interweaving narratives of multiple cultural influences, both enriching and destructive, and ultimately all demonstrate the formation of an ecological consciousness of concern for the place where they inhabit. This chapter will explicate the metaphor of the rhizome as a means of connection, forming assemblages among differences, as well as the continuous creation of narratives around a common, vulnerable land.

Writers of Hawai‘i literature, from the oral tradition to the written form, have long been occupied with the land. In 1991, literary scholar Stephen Sumida published the first multicultural history of literature in Hawai‘i entitled *And the View from the Shore*. His
collection maps literature of Hawai‘i from Native Hawaiian myths and legends up around the time of Captain Cook’s arrival through the creation of Bamboo Ridge Press and what became known as the formation of the Local, which I will address later in chapter four. At the time of its publication Sumida’s work was intended “as a catalyst” and provided a fresh perspective on Hawai‘i literature that incorporated analysis of texts from authors of multiple ethnic backgrounds, since previous attempts to anthologize “Hawaiian” literature were produced by white settlers about white settlers. Produced in 1959 alongside Hawai‘i’s admission to the Union, A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven put together a collection of writings about Hawai‘i, A Hawaiian Reader. It included work by Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London and Herman Melville and called itself “the exotic literary heritage of the Hawaiian Islands,” complete with an introduction by Hawai‘i novelist James A. Michener. Sumida also addresses these texts, as for many Americans they function as the introduction to the Islands, and serve as the foundation for Hawai‘i’s transformation into the paradise of the Pacific in the American imagination. Sumida problematizes this notion of paradise, and as I will establish in later chapters, exoticized portrayals of Hawaiian land and its people ultimately contribute to Native Hawaiian disruption and displacement. By the late 1970s, as Sumida documents, Hawai‘i literature experienced a surge of Native Hawaiian and Local Asian writers inspired by the Hawaiian Renaissance, a reemergence of traditional Hawaiian cultural practices including hula, chants, crafts and language. In 1978 and 1979, Sumida and others created the “Talk Story Ethnic American Writers Conference” aimed at sharing the

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creative writing of Hawaiʻi writers in response to Michener’s claim that “there is no Asian American literature of Hawaiʻi.” Bamboo Ridge Press, specializing in publishing literature “by and about Hawaiʻi’s people,” was created the same year, and featured work from Native Hawaiian writers as well as Local Asian. By 1994, however, motivated by the centennial anniversary of the Overthrow, Haunani Kay Trask reframed Hawaiʻi literature no longer as “Local,” but as something that should be “decolonized” as she and other Native Hawaiian writers were “writing in captivity.” As previously mentioned, current Hawaiʻi literary criticism stems from these works, as pieces by Fujikane, Kosasa, hoʻomanawanui, Luangphinth and others indicate, and no longer situate Hawaiʻi literature in an American multicultural context, but rather as a postcolonial literature that does not include those writers of Asian descent.

Trask argues that “Hawaiian Literature” is distinctively Hawaiian and should not be claimed by any settler group. She contends,

Some non-Hawaiians assert they are Hawaiian writers, and their work part of the canon of Hawaiian literature . . .Here, an immigrant/settler consciousness is attempting to dispossess our Native people through the backdoor of identity theft....By asserting a special island identity, these local Asian authors . . .hope to separate themselves from Asian writers elsewhere in the American imperium. Their claim to difference is precisely that they are local, that is, that are “from” Hawaiʻi. This kind of settler assertion is really a falsification of place and culture. Hawaiʻi has only one indigenous people: Hawaiians. Hawaiian culture is our culture; it does not belong to everyone but only to us.

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8 Sumida, And the View From the Shore, 239.


It is from this cue that Fujikane and Okamura wrote *Asian Settler Colonialism* on how Local Asians in Hawai‘i equally usurp Hawaiian culture as agents of American Imperialism. One article in the collection by Kānaka Maoli scholar hoʻomanawanui, “This Land is Your Land, This Land Was My Land,” explains that Hawaiian orientation and appreciation of the land are fundamentally different from those of settlers and goes on to equate Local Asians cultural influence as equally imperialistic. hoʻomanawanui provides the following equational form to explain the differences between Hawaiian and haole perceptions of the land: “Hawaiian: ʻāina → food → nuturing/sustaining → value of family. Haole: land → real estate/commodity → buying/selling → monetary value.”

In these terms, the ʻāina (or land’s) identity then reveals the cultural identity of the viewer. hoʻomanawanui’s formula highlights the present interpretation of land by Native Hawaiians and white settlers, and ultimately concludes that Local Asians’ align with those of white settlers. She goes on to cite Darrell Lum’s explanation of his connection to land in *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* when he says that he and other Local Asian writers have a “distinct sensitivity to ethnicity, the environment (in particular that valuable commodity, the land), a sense of personal lineage and family history.”

Given his characterization, hoʻomanawanui explicitly equates Asian Locals with white settlers, and states:

> The goals of the Asian settlers, like those of the haole Americans they pretend to despise yet secretly idolize, are to thrive in a capitalist environment and reap the benefits of hegemonic dominance... they are linked with the haole because of

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12 kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui, “This Land is Your Land, This Land Was My Land,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism*, ed. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 124.

their shared American values” which she argues are implied due to the use of words like “commodity” and “environment.”

Her formula reveals a Marxist critique of American consumer capitalism, emphasizing white settlers’ attachment to land as an example of commodity fetishism. She purports that land to the haoles is purely of an economic value, which in turn is the defining value of self-determination and subjectivity. Meanwhile, she posits that Hawaiians consider the land to be both the vehicle for sustenance and their genealogical ancestor, giving it a dual identity as utilitarian and familial, but equally metaphysical.

hoʻomanawanui goes on to specifically addresses the Local Asian appropriation of land and culture by challenging the texts of scholar Dennis Kawaharada, *Storied Landscapes* and *Local Geography*. hoʻomanawanui argues that despite Kawaharada’s attempts to acknowledge Native Hawaiian stories, he still embodies a “settler consciousness” in that “what Kawaharada is doing is typical of what settler writers like Lum and Chock before him tend to do—condense Kānaka Maoli and settler history, culture, and attitudes into something “local” in which parity of values is claimed” and in her view, is “unable to see ‘āina from a Kānaka Maoli perspective and thus repeatedly describe it in foreign terms: “landscape,” “geography,” “environment,” “nature.” She specifically takes issue with his title, arguing, “‘āina does not translate to ‘landscape’ because landscape implies a pristine, panoramic view of the land devoid of human beings; by being ‘land that feeds,’ ‘āina automatically includes humans . . . we are

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14 hoʻomanawanui, , “This Land is Your Land,” 127.

15 Ibid., 143.

16 Ibid., 127.
descended from the land and are related to and not separate from elements of ‘nature.’”

Kawaharada responded to this essay the following year, stating that his interpretation of “landscape,” as opposed to “āina” was indeed a Western one and did not attempt to supplant or define the Native Hawaiian narratives of the land. He explains, “I use ‘landscapes’ in my title (rather than ‘wahi pana’ or ‘āina’) to indicate that I’m writing about the islands as a settler, from a Western point of view, in the colonial language of English, and don’t trace my genealogy back to the kalo plant.”

Furthermore, he rebuts that his aim is to insert himself as a settler and not as an indigenous person, arguing, “The metaphor I use is of a landscape layered with stories, from the oldest to the newest.”

It is this debate over the layering of narratives that inspires my foray into re-theorizing the literature of Hawai‘i.

The current debate rests upon a temporal hermeneutic based in a Manichean binary, in that, critics such as Trask and ho‘omanawanui assert an opposition based on time of arrival and essentialist characterizations of Native Hawaiians as caretaking family members versus “settlers” as greedy capitalists. The dispute over interpretation of land reveals the intersections of cultures both distinct and overlapping in the contemporary moment. As a contested object of reference for the people of Hawai‘i, the land has become a simulacrum, embodying differing narratives from each cultural perspective, and demonstrates an imagined, liminal space by which it is altered depending on the viewer. Gilles Deleuze defines the simulacrum as “singularity, in-formality, and

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17 ho‘omanawanui, , “This Land is Your Land,” 128.


19 Ibid.
becoming”\textsuperscript{20} and “lives from difference” echoing Derrida’s “difference” of deconstruction, and that it “begins from the formless (chaos), its repetition is always unformable (different), and subject to events.”\textsuperscript{21}

In the second part of \textit{Capitalism and Schizophrenia} entitled \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari present the model of the rhizome to subvert the dialectic of the binary. As this chapter and the others in this thesis will explain, the concern over land in the contemporary literature of Hawai‘i and its literary criticism reveal an attachment to nature that is multiple in origins, and each writer’s connection to land is not limited to a binary of Native and settler. Fittingly, Deleuze and Guattari offer a comparison of thought to nature, arguing, “in nature, roots and taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one.”\textsuperscript{22} As this “anti-genealogy,” the rhizome consists of six characteristics which provide tools for deframing phenomena from their dichotomous structures: connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography, decalcomania (immanent process).\textsuperscript{23} As a model that reveals the connection among the heterogeneous and the multiple, such as the intersection of Native Hawaiian, Local Asian and white settler experiences, it does not rely on difference by dichotomy. This recognition of similarity and overlapping stems from the process of becoming rather than being, and revealing the lack of an outside or

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\textsuperscript{22} Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5. \\
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
other. As Deleuze and Guattari contend, “There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from these orders. In short, we think that that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity.”  

As Derrida asserts that there can be nothing outside the text, such is the case with the rhizome since there is nothing outside of it; therefore, all is connected. By sharing the same place, all participants in the land debates in Hawai‘i are thus in communication with one another, with each experience and interpretation affecting one another.

Through the connection of overlapping narratives and the interaction thereof, such as Native Hawaiian, Local Asian and white settler depictions of the environment, Deleuze and Guattari call this phenomenon a “plateau” which they call “any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome.”  

As the rhizome is a series of interconnected plateaus, like the multiplicity of differing perspectives that constitute a simulacrum; as with Derrida, there is not an outside, there is only difference, which Mikhail Bahktin argues leads to enrichment: “It is only in the eyes of another culture that forging culture reveal itself fully and profoundly. A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures . . . such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or

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24 Ibid., 23.
25 Ibid., 22.
mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched.”

In the context of contemporary Hawai‘i culture, critics Cynthia Franklin and Laura Lyons reject this notion of hybridity. Despite Hawai‘i’s transformation from an independent nation to United States territory, Franklin and Lyons argue that post-colonial formulations of identity and citizenry such as transnationalism, globalization, hybridity do not accurately examine what they call “cultural mixes that come out of an indigenous context” because of “the ways in which the indigenous insists on belonging—not simply in an abstract sense, but to specific lands.” For Hawai‘i, the perception of land embodies the racial tensions informed by the colonial past. However, when clinging to this linear temporality, the present and future remain tied to the past, as well as the politics that ensued. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, “everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics.” As scholars Franklin and Lyons rebut, “Native politics and culture cannot be subsumed into a globalized, heterogeneous domicile, nor equated with a naïve desire to return to a pre-contact past. If postcolonial criticism is to be responsible, if not revolutionary in its effects, the least that those of us who are non-natives can do is to recognize that what native peoples demand above all else is their right to self-determination.”

For Hawaiians, such self-determinism rests in their connection to “‘āina.” Nevertheless, in our contemporary context, as Campbell notes “spaces (and therefore identities and

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26 Campbell, Neil, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 16.


29 Franklin and Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity,” 74.
values) have become more fluid and less fixed, prone to multiple influences and
directions with places more porous, overlapping and intersecting as previously ‘closed’
definable locations interfuse and ‘travel.’ Thus the desire for ‘home-place,’ rootedness,
and belonging, for so long linked to a ‘landscaped’ sense of national and local identity, as
Stuart Hall terms it, needs to be rethought as well.\textsuperscript{30}

The layers of plateaus, like Kawaharada’s layering of narratives on the land of
Hawai‘i, denote a process of becoming. This process of becoming, de/reterritorializing
and forming new assemblages speaks to the challenge of separating the narratives from
their linear and dichotomous structures, specifically in regards to temporality. As critics
Burns and Kaiser assert in \textit{Postcolonial Literatures and Deleuze}, “in order for the
postcolonial to have the fully fledged potential of disrupting colonial domination, it must
withdraw from a logical of determination that locks the postcolonial present in an
uninterrupted line of continuity between past and present. By such a view, the colonial
past is insistently preserved as the historical memory of colonization with the present and
deals in a future that emerges as always already marked by the colonial encounter.”\textsuperscript{31} In
a linear temporality, the future along with the past remains marred by the colonial
encounter. Burns and Kaiser propose a Deleuzian alternative: “we can begin to reread
postcoloniality as a differential actualization of the (virtual) past, and, in doing so,
uncover a means to conceive of a genuinely original present in which colonial past co-
exist as a disjunctive factor. In this way, the colonial past persists within the postcolonial
present not as an over-determining or specifying legacy, but as the ground from which

\textsuperscript{30} Campbell, \textit{Rhizomatic West}, 25.

differential futures emerge in unpredictable, unforeseeable and ever new ways.” This differentiated future depends on process, brought on by movement and interaction. As culture is never stagnant, the multiplicity of the rhizome “encourages a reorientation of culture as both roots and routes, both dwelling and traveling.” As explored in Chapter Two of this thesis, contemporary Native Hawaiian writers such as Haunani Kay Trask and Lurline McGregor are engaged in what Maori writer Patricia Grace calls a “now-time,” denoting a spiral temporality that moves back and forth between the past and the present in order to consider both the traditional culture and the contemporary moment.

The process of interaction does not take away from indigenous culture but merely creates a new map of their interaction, which enriches the participants in the present moment. Homi Bhabha argues this interaction reveals a “Third Space” which “challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation, which Benedict Anderson so perceptively describes as being written in homogeneous, serial time.” Therefore, “hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or “purity” of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity.” So-called purity of cultures is of

32 Ibid., 15.
33 Campbell, Rhizomatic West, 4.
35 Bhabha, 156.
36 Ibid., 157.
great significance when it comes to Native Hawaiians in the American cultural imagination. In terms of identity formation and self-determination, American ideology privileges a blood quantum of purity over genealogy through the limits of multiculturalism, pluralism or an ethnic hybridity. In Kēhaulani Kauanui’s landmark study of impact of “blood quantum” on Native Hawaiian identity Hawaiian Blood, Kauanui explains: “Identity and difference are implicated by a dominant American history of defining Hawaiians through the overdetermined logic of dilution found in racial discourse broadly imposed on indigenous peoples.”

Along with sovereignty, the issue of Hawaiian blood and indigeneity has become a contested issue in settler state, as the western definition of racial determination has severe implications for land and identity for Kānaka Maoli. After the lands owned by the Hawaiian Kingdom were lost to the American government during annexation, the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act attempted the correct the displacement of natives and give Hawaiians rights to some of the lands for rehabilitation. A process to determine who in fact was Hawaiian was created, and henceforth, those determined to be 50 percent were deemed Native Hawaiian, others were not, which did not consider the native understanding of genealogy and ancestry. At present, even the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, an elected body who was formed to promote the interests of Native Hawaiians and, according to Kauanui, “is restricted to using its public lands trust funds for the benefit of its beneficiaries who meet the 50-perfect rule, while the Hawai‘i state constitution does not establish a source of funding for ‘Hawaiians’ who do not meet the 50-percent definition.”


38 Ibid., 25.
stratifications between Native Hawaiians creates a derisive atmosphere among Hawaiians, forcing many to explain how much Hawaiian blood they have as opposed to whether or not they have it. Hawaiians see this as a tool to divide the people instead of rehabilitating cultural practices.

While my study does not intend to resolve the issue of Native Hawaiian sovereignty and land appropriations, it does recognize the sovereignty movement as significant contributor to Native Hawaiian identity formation and perceived antagonism between different ethnic groups. As Kēhaulani Kauanui establishes,

Indigeneity is tied to sovereignty, where, the definitions of both are constantly negotiated and constructed in terms of competing interests (for example, vis-a-vis tribal nations and the United States). But in the realm of US recognition of indigeneity through federal policy, a people’s racial difference has to be proved as part of their claim to sovereignty. That “race,” “culture,” and “nation” are always inextricably linked presents a further paradox, since federal recognition of Native status is primarily framed as political category, not a racial one. And because indigenous self-determination, as Native peoples struggle for greater self-determination and political power, they simultaneously challenge and reproduce some of these very same dynamics and processes.39

In many examples of Native Hawaiian fiction, such as Lurline McGregor’s Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me, which will be examined in Chapter Two of this thesis, protagonists advocate for the acknowledgement of their heritage. For them, it not a question about how much “blood” they possess, but rather that they do, as a means to recognize the implications of their indigeneity. The characters often identify the greater repercussions of their heritage and the dispossession of land, as Kauanui explains, “blood quantum classifications of Hawaiianness have consistently been used to enact, substantiate, and then disguise the further appropriation of land while they obscure and erase sovereignty claims and conceptions of identity as a relation of genealogy to

place." Furthermore, the limitations of blood quantum not only have implications for federal recognition and land grants, but familial relationships: “claiming Hawaiianess can be considered a status claim to indigeneity. That is, there is a proprietary interest if not a property right”; meanwhile “blood quantum classification continues to have deep cultural resonance in day to day life as it operates in both cultural and legal contexts in terms of how one many think about race, belonging, and kinship.”

In this setting of displacement, in which peoples are forced from their lands or challenged to obtain them, “Signifiers become unhinged, meaningless, as they all point to something meaningful which is absent.” Despite the Hawaiians’ deep metaphysical connection to the land, it has been deterritorialized in the aftermath of colonization. Just as scholars Franklin and Lyons acknowledge that sovereignty advocates do not possess a “naïve desire for a pre-contact past,” but rather the right to self-determinism; said self-determinism, however, is not fixed. As Native American scholar Craig Womack argues, “Sovereignty . . .like the oral tradition, is an ongoing, dynamic process, rather than a fixed creed, and evolves according to the changing needs of the nation.” Sovereignty and self-determination, then, denote a process of reterritorialization, reclaiming ancestral lands through a spiral temporality as a place that connects pre-contact pasts and post-contact futures.

40 Ibid., 35.
41 Ibid., 15.
42 Ibid., 9-10.
43 Burns and Kaiser, Postcolonial Literatures, 27.
44 Craig Womack, Red on Red Separatism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 59.
While the importance of the land to Hawaiian identity formation remains pivotal to interpreting the simulacrum of land, it nevertheless serves as one multiplicity in the assemblage of this rhizome. Although the land signifies family and genealogy for the Hawaiians, historically it also embodies “home” for the Asian immigrant through the expression of labor. Land functions for the descendant of Asian immigrant just as it does for the Native Hawaiian in respect to its production of sustenance, thus making it essential to life. Similarly, the labor invested in plantation land forms a bond produced through work, specifically in the fashioning and contemplation of the land. Asian immigrants and Native Hawaiians also share a history of subaltern resistance as coworkers on the plantations. Although the Native Hawaiians connection to land has complex political implications established above, their connection to the land in the way it is explained by Kānaka Maoli scholars is a mythological one, and therefore just as abstract as that of the connection by the immigrant. While Deleuze uses the rhizome as the “anti-genealogy,” it is not to negate the narratives of the native Hawaiians, nor debunk their mythology, but rather to reframe these narratives, in addition to those of white settlers and Local Asians, from any hierarchical temporal hermeneutic. Haunani Trask contends, “Residence in Hawai’i does not make one Hawaiian, any more than residence in Samoa or Tahiti or China or Japan makes one Samoan or Tahitian or Chinese or Japanese.” Moreover, critic Jennifer Lui rebuts, “My ethnic background is Japanese and Chinese . . . I’ve never been to either of those countries, but would my

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writing be ‘Japanese literature’ or ‘Chinese literature’? Generations after Western contact and the arrival of the first immigrants, an assemblage of cultures has formed to create a rhizomatic layering of narratives; therefore, claims to interpret land are as fluid as the identity of the viewer. As Neil Campbell explains, “For under diaspora, identity is constructed as dynamic, interlinked, and hybrid. There is no authentic single ‘home-place’ in which one’s roots are planted, for identity is ‘spatial’ and fluid, formed by the ‘routes’ it travels and the contacts it makes rather than as a one-way transmission belt.” In the contemporary moment, the series of enunciations and assemblages all contribute to the reterritorializing within the rhizome.

Given this reterritorialization, the simultaneous attention to both past and present, as well as the familial connections to land, the issue of sustainability of the environment for future generations has resulted in a shift in ecological consciousness. Demonstrated by the texts that I will closely examine in the following chapters, each writer presents rhizomatic view of land, layered in stories of his or her pasts and questions on his or her impact on the future. In a Deleuzian sense, nature denotes “an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations,” therefore making the human impact on his or her ecology significant and direct. The interconnectedness implied in the botanical metaphor of the rhizome is a fitting one, then, for the human relationship with nature, as destructive acts can denigrate the environment. All ethnic groups acknowledge the land’s fragility when exploited through consumerism. The texts


47 Campbell, Rhizomatic West, 27.

48 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 512.
examined in the following chapters reveal not only an awareness of the negative impact that humans can have on the land but also the agency to protect it and make it sustainable.

As a place deterritorialized by western land ownership and commercialism, the contemporary Hawai‘i writers in this thesis suggest the desire to reterritorialize the land as something that can sustain them beyond profit. This push for sustainability, which Lawrence Buell defines as “a mode of subsistence . . . that can be maintained without detriment to the ecosystem,”49 is echoed in both Native Hawaiian and Local Asian writing. In Chapter Two, I examine the metaphor of the ahupua‘a in Hauanani Kay Trask’s poetry, which denotes the ancient Hawaiian land system of sustainable farming. Later, in Chapter Four, I examine Gary Pak’s portrayal of sustainable farming, as one of his character uses his horticultural knowledge to benefit his community. In both of these examples, each of these writers integrate the layered histories of the Islands within their characters’ cultural consciousness; nevertheless, both show an awareness of the impact of their actions for future generations and are not trapped in one version of the land based in the past.

All six of the texts that I examine in the thesis will demonstrate recognition of the harm that humans can bring to the land. As these texts show, the view of land in Hawai‘i literature is an anthropocentric one. From the Native Hawaiian anthropomorphization of the land itself as a family member, to the essentialist view of the settler’s ability to “own” the land, contemporary Hawai‘i literature reveals an interest in preservation and sustainability not for the sake of the biosphere, but for the anthropocene, the geologic era marked by humankind’s alleged emergence as the dominant influence on earth’s geologic

Given this assumed agency with the environment, due to the rhizomatic connections of all living things within it, these texts also assert a stewardship for the land. As nineteenth and early twentieth century writers of Hawai‘i deterritorialized the land as a “paradise” or as *terra nullius*, writers of the last twenty years have reterritorialized it as a place that requires caretaking and cultivation, either as a provider of sustenance, the reflection of labor, or as a family member, both ancestors and descendants.

Through this reterritorialization, contemporary Hawai‘i writers reveal the development of their ecological consciousness through the rhizomatic layering narratives of self-determinism, which marks an assemblage of experiences both simultaneous and interwoven. As a part of a larger network of Oceania, the westernmost point of the United States, the immigrant’s adopted home, and diverse biological ecosystem, Hawai‘i demonstrates a sense of place continuously reimagined based on the connections being formed within it. While acutely aware of the interplay between history and the present, Hawai‘i writers illustrate the importance of land, not as an object, but as a life source. As Frantz Fanon concludes, “the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and above all, dignity.”

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51 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 9.
CHAPTER TWO

NATIVE HAWAIIAN LITERATURE AND SPIRAL TEMPORALITY

In his landmark essay entitled “We Are the Ocean,” Epeli Hau’ofa reminds us in the following passage that for the peoples of Oceania:

We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated out ourselves.¹

Since annexation to the United States in 1893, Native Hawaiians or Kānaka Maoli have fought to regain control of the land from which they were dispossessed. In Haunani Kay Trask’s collection of poetry Night is a Sharkskin Drum and Lurline Wailana McGregor’s novel Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me, women of Native Hawaiian ancestry challenge their neocolonial present moments while engaging with their indigenous pasts. In these texts, Native Hawaiian characters come to identify with their heritage despite their Americanization by connecting to the land and reveal contemporary Hawaiians in the fight against mental colonization and an erasure of their indigenous culture.

Trask’s 2002 collection of poetry directly confronts the effects of Americanization after Western contact on both the land and its dispossessed people,

¹ Epeli Hau’ofa, We are the Ocean: Selected Works (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 39.
while McGregor’s novel presents a female protagonist torn between her heritage and her American professional life on the continent. Trask and McGregor’s interplay between Native Hawaiian mythology and imagined American futures place them in what fellow Polynesian author Patricia Grace calls a “now-time.” For both of these authors, this now-time is reflected in their connection with ‘āina, which Native Hawaiians credit as their genealogical ancestor. Both Trask and McGregor’s writing is marked by a variety of disruptions, those of temporality, culture and ecosystems. Through each writer’s a-linear temporal scope and the connection with the land as expressed through natural images, Trask and McGregor acknowledge the disruption of culture through the disruption to the environment.

After a Western presence in the Hawaiian Islands for over one hundred years, the Hawaiian kingdom was abrogated by a small band of American businessmen in what American President Grover Cleveland called “an act of war.”\textsuperscript{2} From Captain Cooke’s arrival in the Islands in 1778, Native Hawaiians experienced significant cultural shift after Western contact; Kamehameha I of the island of Hawai‘i united the islands under one kingdom, which had previously been disparate kingdoms ruled by individual chiefs. Kamehameha’s victory in 1810 was solidified by the use of modern Western warfare such as cannons and thereafter established the islands as a monarchy. Over the course of the next century, Hawaiians experienced the abolition of the Kapu system, the introduction of Christianity, widespread communicable diseases, Western land ownership and ultimately the dissolution of their sovereign nation and American statehood.

Haunani Kay Trask dedicates her collection to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the Nigerian writer and scholar most famous for his essay entitled, “Decolonizing the Mind,” as his advocacy

\textsuperscript{2} Haunani Kay Trask, \textit{From a Native Daughter} (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), 15.
for using one’s native language to attempt to reverse the effects of colonialism, which permeate all aspects of culture.

Trask and McGregor’s work is movement toward reterritorializing Hawai‘i as the home of their ancestors, not simply the tourist locale that it is today in the present popular American imagination. However, prior to its current presentation in modern media, Hawai‘i’s place in nineteenth century popular culture was one of the primitive and the exotic, reinforced by the travel journals and fictional renderings of Western adventurers. Young men like Herman Melville took to the high seas for a sense of adventure outside of the New England mundane, while others came to spread the word of their god. As Trask and McGregor confront, by the American missionaries’ arrival in Hawai‘i in 1820, Western culture had permeated many aspects of Hawaiian life due its new identity as a Western trading outpost. Until the present day, the missionaries and their descendants have held highly influential positions in Hawaiian government and politics, as well as owning a significant portion of Hawaiian land and leading its most powerful companies. The legacy of the missionaries is mired in controversy, which has been thoroughly documented by themselves and their contemporaries; Trask, especially, comments on their impact in her poetry.

While the motivations and experiences varied, the romantic vision of the Islands remains, and throughout the discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the subaltern were often presented as ignorant, devoid of culture, passive, and delusional, thus reinforcing Edward Said’s “dogma of Orientalism” that the Orient, or in our case, the “other,” is “incapable of defining itself.”3 While politically active in addition to her

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scholarly work, especially her highly influential essay “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature,” which seeks to establish “Hawaiian Literature” as those by the indigenous peoples of Hawaiʻi, Trask’s poetry is a direct commentary on this cultural displacement as well as a proclamation of self-determination. Despite these acts of erasure and deterritorialization by Western influence, Native Hawaiians have since sought to reclaim or reterritorialize land as ʻāina once again, therefore both defining themselves and the land in their own terms. As indigenous scholar Jodi Byrd explains, the need to define the indigenous culture outside colonial discourse becomes imperative for reterritorialization:

Any assemblage that arises from such horizons becomes a colonialist one, and it is the work of indigenous critical theory both to rearticulate indigenous phenomenologies and to provide (alter)native interpretative strategies through which to apprehend the colonialist nostalgias that continue to shape affective liberal democracy’s investment in state sovereignty as a source of violence, remedy, memory and grievability.4

A number of both cultural and geographical displacements experienced by Native Hawaiians after Western contact propel the interest in self-determination for Trask and McGregor. Specifically the issues of the Hawaiian Homelands, as discussed in Chapter One, which leads to the complex relationship between land ownership and blood quantum, and the ecological destruction of Kahoʻolawe, an embodiment of the displacement and disregard for both the native peoples and ecosystem through American nuclear testing. During the 1980s, Trask and other Hawaiian nationalists protested the American military bombing of Kahoʻolawe on the grounds that there were sacred lands on the islands. This sparked a debate between Trask and political science professor

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Roger Keesing, who accused Trask of “inventing” her culture in response to colonialism.\(^5\)

Elizabeth Deloughrey weighed in on the debate, challenging his argument as an example of neo-colonialism:

> Here deconstruction functions as a strand in the complex fabric of globalization; its localization is Hawai‘i has has a profound impact on the Kānaka Maoli sovereignty movement...According to this line of argument, indigenous resistance is unthinkable without its western intellectual genealogy... Keesing evacuated indigenous epistemologies and enclosed them within a European genealogical framework. Unable to break itself from a Manichean bind of power and counter-resistance, the native subject in Keesing’s argument, is forever locked in a (false) aporia. This impetus to break free of western epistemologies of resistance has profoundly influenced [other Polynesian writers’] vision of the entanglement between indigenous subjects and the state apparatus that enforces “liberation” from personal, cultural, and national history...to secure a strategy for indigenous sovereignty that is neither predetermined by western epistemology nor a facile reaction against it.\(^6\)

Given these debates and the perceived dependence of the desire for sovereignty contingent upon a Western praxis, this essay functions not as an argument for Native Hawaiian sovereignty claims but for self-determination formulated through the return to traditional values espoused by ancient Hawaiians in conjunction with impact of displacement. Just as the Native Hawaiians experienced displacement through colonization, the cultural and political appropriation of the “landscape” (in Western ideology) leads to its destruction; these texts reveal Trask and McGregor’s ecological consciousness in connection to identity formation.

> For Kānaka Maoli, ʻāina is the genealogical ancestor, as explained by one of the most sacred chants, the Kumulipo, or creation myth. As Kānaka Maoli sociologist Shawn Malia Kana’iupa‘uni, explains,


The islands were born from Papahanamoku, earth mother, and Wakea, sky father, who also gave birth to kalo, the taro plant and main staple crop of traditional Hawaiians, and ultimately, the people. As such, the genealogy of the Land, the Gods, Chiefs, and people intertwine with one another, and with all the myriad aspects of the universe.7

With this mythology, the Hawaiian archipelago is intimately connected to Kānaka Maoli through genealogy, culture, history and spirituality. The natural elements (land, wind, rain) and creatures of the islands are considered primordial ancestors: they are the older relatives of living Kānaka Maoli. Both share an interdependent, familial relationship that requires malama (care) and kia’i (guardianship) for the older siblings who, in turn, provide for the well-being of the younger siblings.8

The Kumulipo reveals that for Native Hawaiians, an ecological consciousness of preservation is rooted not only in protecting ʻāina from destruction, but also interested in its sustainability for future generations. As Trask notes in “De-Colonizing Hawaiian Literature,” such a connection to land and environmental sustainability is present in both physical and metaphorical iterations: “The social sphere is familial, containing both eros and power and displaying a relatedness to the human and natural worlds that is tactile, sensual, and always metaphorical.”9 Through the familial connection to ʻāina, this anthropomorphization of the landscape indeed reveals an anthropocentric view of the environment, but one that supports a biospheric ideology, speaking to the interconnectedness of all beings, and the agency of the human to make a significant

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impact on the earth. The Hawaiian vision of land is that of an equal partnership interested in mutual sustainability and caretaking, not one of dominance. The Native Hawaiian ecological awareness is one with the land, not against it. Just as with the taro/kalo crop, it is the responsibility of the Hawaiians to nurture the crop so that it in turn nurtures them. Such indigenous blurrings between mythology and politics are not uncommon among indigenous peoples, as Ursula Heise discusses Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko’s approach to mythology and the land in her examination of ecocosmopolitanism: “Silko describes an alternative type of community reliant on a mythological mode of perception that accepts neither a fundamental dividing line nor a fusion between nature and human culture. Instead, it infuses every feature of the contemporary landscape with mythological origins and significance.”

The Native Hawaiians believed that the ‘āina possessed mana, or a divine power. Some lands, wahi pana, or sacred places, were deemed especially spiritually significant. In McGregor’s novel, her protagonist Moana, is challenged by her foil when he proclaims:

> When people talk about mana today, they think of it as external, as a spiritual power that has to be acquired. But mana is already inside us, we’re born with it. Our ancestors used it in their everyday lives. They understood the connection of all things, the trees, the stones, the fish, the sky. Our role as humans was to be the guardians and for that, we had mana to help us carry out our responsibilities.

Despite years of disconnection from her family and Native Hawaiian traditions, Moana instantly feels drawn to the islands upon return, where uncanny forces ultimately propel her to move back home and abandon her life on the continent. Over the course of the novel, she shifts back and forth through the present and past in a series of dreams and

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stories, a spiral temporality that always revolves around her land and native culture. Thus, Moana reterritorializes what had been a place of frustration due to family troubles to a place of pride and responsibility, or kuleana, in order to reconnect with her family and herself.

Just as McGregor reterritorializes the land into a place of interwoven narratives, both past and present, Trask, too, employs a spiral temporality in her poem, “Into Our Light I Will Go Forever.” The speaker follows the sun around the island of O’ahu, as she and the presumably Native Hawaiian interlocutor explore nature through images of procreation with translations noted in the footnote below:

Into the passion of our parted Koʻolau\textsuperscript{12}, luminous vulva.

Into Kane’s\textsuperscript{13} pendulous breadfruit, resinous with semen.

Into our wetlands of Heʻeia\textsuperscript{14}, bubbling black mud.

Into our spangled, blue-leafed taro, flooded with wai\textsuperscript{15}.

Into Waiahole\textsuperscript{16}, chattering with rains and silvered fish.

\textsuperscript{12} Mountain range on the windward, eastern side of the island of O’ahu.

\textsuperscript{13} Major Hawaiian male deity representative of procreation. He appeared in many manifestations, including breadfruit and banana.

\textsuperscript{14} Lush land division on the windward, Koʻolau side of O’ahu.

\textsuperscript{15} Any liquid other than seawater; could be semen.

\textsuperscript{16} Land division on the windward, Koʻolau side of O’ahu.
Into our shallows of Kualoa, 17 translucent Akua. 18

Into the hum of reef-ring Ka`a`awa, 19 pungent with limu.

Into our corals of far Kahana, 20 sea-cave of Hina. 21

Into our chambered springs of Punalu`u 22 ginger misting.

Into the songs of lost La`ie, 23 cool light haunting.

Into murmuring Malaekahana, 24 plumed sands chanting.

Into the sheen of flickering Hale`iwa, 25 pearled with salt.

Into the wa`a 26 of

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17 Land division, point, and beach park on the windward side of O`ahu considered one of the most sacred places on the island.

18 God; supernatural; divine.

19 Land division on the windward, Ko`olau side of O`ahu.

20 A valley, bay and stream on O`ahu.

21 Goddess of the moon.

22 District on O`ahu famous for black sand beaches.

23 Land division on the north shore of O`ahu.

24 Land division on the north shore of O`ahu near Kahuku.

25 Small community on the north shore of O`ahu.
Kanaloa,\(^{27}\) voyaging
moana nui.\(^{28}\)

Into our sovereign suns,
drunk on the mana\(^{29}\)
of Hawai‘i. \(^{30}\)

The poem begins with the titular stanza, and moves from the sea “into the passion/ of our parted Ko’olau/ luminus vulva” then “Into Kane’s pendulous/ breadfruit, resinous/ with semen” reminiscent of the birth images of the Kumulipo, in which Ao and Po combine to create the universe through the unification of the “luminous” and “resinous”– or light and dark. She continues around the island with metaphors of the erotic:, taro “flooded with wai” (semen) and “sea-cave of Hina.” Additionally, Trask’s trope of place-based imagery reveals a return to the indigenous, as her movement around the island shifts from stanza according to ahupua‘a, the land division system used prior to the Great Mahele of 1848. Such a reference evokes indigenous identifiers as well as the traditional Hawaiian emphasis on sustainability, as the ahupua‘a served as a sustainable and equitable process of sharing the land’s resources through fish ponds, taro patches and the like. As scholar Luciano Minerbi explains, the ahupua‘a reveals a society based in shared responsibility and equity:

> The island was so divided to ensure that the ahupua‘a would provide to the maka‘āinana (commoners) access to its many resources, according to three major ecological zones: 1) firewood, timber, birds, and plants of the forest in the mauka zone; 2) planting of potatoes or dry taro field cultivation in the upland, and

\(^{26}\)Canoe.

\(^{27}\)Major Hawaiian deity; god of the underworld who also built the canoe.

\(^{28}\)The deep ocean.

\(^{29}\)Divine power.

\(^{30}\)Trask, “Into Our Light I will Go Forever” in Night is a Sharskin Drum (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 60-62.
planting of irrigated taro lo‘i (pond fields) served by ‘auwai (ditches) in the alluvial lowland areas of the kahawai (streams) and tree crop plantations such as breadfruit trees in the “agricultural zone”; and 3) fishing and shellfish, limu (seaweed) and salt gathering on the reef, including fish management in the many types of fishponds in the “coastal zone.” Hawaiians had specific names for these places such as the wao akua (men’s forest) where the tree-fern grows and were people farmed.  

In Trask’s poem, each ahupua‘a and each place reveals its unique attributes, but as is noted in Kualoa, Akua (God) is “translucent.” As the sun sets when it reaches Hale‘iwa, the speaker steps into the canoe of Kanaloa, associated with sailing as well as the underworld, and is often paired as the opposite to Kane the creator, thus signifying the life cycle. She concludes with the stanza, “Into our sovereign suns/ drunk on the mana/ of Hawai‘i” as the land, the sun and the “moana nui” (deep ocean) can only be sovereign, and cannot be dispossessed of their “mana” (divine power). After a series fraught with anger, this poem ends the collection with a hopeful tone, one that espouses the possibility of reterritorialization after colonization, that the land is ripe for procreation, and the light or power is always attainable. As she argues in her essay, “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature,” Trask explains, “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.” Trask asserts traditional values within in a contemporary context and acknowledges the interconnectedness of all of her images. Imagery of land, in the Native  

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Hawaiian view, is one of “abundance”; through her metaphor of procreation, she seeks not only to reproduce the land, but to protect it.

McGregor’s protagonist also experiences such empowerment in stewardship, but identifies that a failure to uphold her kuleana will have dire consequences. She is reminded by her uncle, “The earth is alive, Moana. . . It needs to be nourished, taken care of”\(^33\) and that “if you don’t take care, the well-being of the Hawaiian people will end.”\(^34\) Again, the connection between the Native Hawaiian people and their ancestral land is direct, and requires attention directed at a vulnerable ecology. Moana’s activist cousin, Lei, who is studying Hawaiian history at the University of Hawaiʻi identifies these connections as well as her ability to contribute:

Lei mused that five years ago, it could have been her own soda cans that she was clearing out of the stream. Now she wondered what she could do to make other beachgoers take responsibility for their own ‘opala (garbage). Like everything else, it went back to the peoples’ loss of stewardship over the own land, but she could see that things were changing. As the community members regained pride, they were taking back control of their lives and their ʻāina. Just like Uncle Albert said: change starts with one person making a decision to make things better.\(^35\)

Both Trask and McGregor address the disruption to the environment caused by the materialism of Westernization. In *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me*, Moana comments on the damages to the ocean brought by the introduction of the “Super Ferry,” which was a short-lived (2007-2009) commuter ferry from Oahu to Maui that was suspended to environmental violations and concerns. Lei emphasizes the loss of traditional Hawaiian values around concern for the environment: “There’s already been extensive damage to our reefs and marine ecosystems. . . Everything’s good for us when it’s in the name of

\(^{33}\) McGregor, *Deep Blue Sea*, 43.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 42.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 88.
jobs and the economy. And of course, everything’s always in the name of jobs and economy.”  

As a student of her peoples’ history, and dripping with sarcasm, Lei presents the challenge of the postcolonial subject with an ecological consciousness. McGregor asserts, “They pondered how many more year it would be before people wouldn’t even be allowed to go in the ocean, like at so many other once-pristine beaches in the world.” As Bruce Harvey acknowledges, the divergent aims of the Western government opposed to those of indigenous peoples with an ecological consciousness echo Lei’s remarks on the economy:

The state officers and administrators that maintain or help spread capital in Hawai‘i, which literally covers up the indigenous landscape with mega-resorts and services catering to US naval bases, wage a continuous war against radical separatist groups, who would face the future by returning the nation to an original eco-friendliness.

Furthermore, in Trask’s poem “The Broken Gourd,” she echoes these frustrations with post-contact destruction. She invokes the lyric “I” on a journey through island ecologies after an anthropomorphized gourd, a vegetable turned hula percussion instrument that bleeds “toward our aching earth.”

After the last echo
where fingers of light
soft as laua’e
come slowly

toward our aching earth,
a cracked ipu

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36 McGregor, Deep Blue Sea, 64.

37 Ibid., 65.


39 A fragrant fern.

40 Gourd; drum made from a gourd.
whispers, bloody water
on its broken lip.

This night I crawl
into the mossy arms
of upland winds,

an island’s moan
welling grief:

Each of us slain
by the white claw
of history: lost
genealogies, propertied
missionaries, diseased
haole

Now, a poisoned pae ʻāina swarming with foreigners
and dying Hawaiians

A common horizon:
smelly shores
under spidery moons,
pockmarked maile vines,
rotting ulu groves
the brittle clack
of broken lava stones

Out of the east
a damp stench of money
burning at the edges.

Out of the west
the din of divine
violence, triumphal
destruction.

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41 Group of islands, archipelago.
42 A native twining shrub with fragrant shiny leaves used for decoration or lei.
43 Breadfruit.
At home, the bladed reverberations of empire.\textsuperscript{44}

In the poem, the islands become diseased, rot and break after the capital driven foreigners dispossess the Hawaiians over their homeland. While Trask’s anger is clearly apparent, the most striking aspect of the poem is the human-like qualities attributed to the land in that the earth is capable of becoming not only destroyed, but diseased, echoing the impact of Western disease post-contact. After she hears the whispers of the bleeding gourd, she attempts to return to the safety of nature, only to find it mourning its losses. The speaker positions herself on the globe, referring to her surroundings of East and West, described as “a damp stench of money” and the “din of the divine” respectively, highlighting American economic interests and Japanese quests for Empire. She positions her lyrical “I” in a pivotal shift in political power in the islands, as she concludes her poem at home with “the bladed/ reverberations of empire,” referring to the Bayonet Constitution, which King Kalakaua signed in 1887. This shifted most of his power to local elites, a decision he felt forced at proverbial knifepoint due to intimidation provided by an armed militia. The image of Kalakaua is especially significant, as he began the first Hawaiian Renaissance during his reign with the reimplemention of traditional Hawaiian practices such as the hula, which the missionaries had previously outlawed.\textsuperscript{45} The gourd, or ipu, is a common musical percussion instrument used in the accompanying chant for hula kahiko, the traditional form of hula without any Western dance influences. As a metonym for ancient Hawaiian practices, the broken gourd thus “echoes” or

\textsuperscript{44} Trask, “The Broken Gourd” in Night is a Sharkskin Drum (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 11-13.

\textsuperscript{45} Haunani Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 25.
“reverberates” a dispossession of land and its subsequent destruction, and reiterates Trask’s intertextual spiral temporality.

Throughout McGregor’s novel, Moana experiences a series of literally earth-shattering moments that propel her to action. In the end, her new Hawaiian friend points out the obvious connection: “The epicenter of these quakes is in the ocean, in a direct line from your aunt’s former property. This isn’t the first time there have been unexplainable quakes associated with the theft and violation of cultural property. . . Have you ever thought that maybe the earth, our ancestors, are protesting all the greed and corruption going on in Hawai`i?”⁴⁶ While the novel is named *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me*, Moana, which means “Ocean,” ultimately reveals that there is nothing between she and the she, and that like Epeli Hau`ofa’s influential essay on Oceanic identity mentioned at the beginning of this essay, she *is* the Ocean. Meanwhile, as Bruce Harvey contends, “For Trask, the maternal sublimity of the Hawaiian geo-gods constitutes a unique, irrefutable, and primal sensuality,”⁴⁷ and furthermore, reveals a connection to the environment layered in many histories. Each writer examines her ecological concerns through an ever-shifting spiral temporality, demonstrating that the formation of contemporary Native Hawaiian identity is fused in the past, present and future.

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⁴⁶ McGregor, *Deep Blue Sea*, 111.

CHAPTER THREE

(HAPA)HAOLE LITERATURE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

In the opening sequence to Alexander Payne’s 2011 Academy Award winning film *The Descendants*, international audiences experienced a montage of disparate images of life in Hawai‘i: a beautiful white sandy beach; a city bus; a tropical rainforest; a homeless person. Hawaiian iconography in the American imagination relies heavily on the perpetuation of its paradisical stereotypes as the fiftieth state and popular American tourist destination. In the film, George Clooney’s character directly confronts this notion in the voice-over in the film’s opening scene:

“My friends on the mainland think just because I live in Hawai‘i, I live in paradise. Like a permanent vacation—we’re all just out here drinking mai-tais, shaking our hips, and catching waves. Are they nuts? How can they possibly think our families are less screwed up, our heart attacks and cancers less fatal, our grief less devastating? . . .Paradise. Paradise can go fuck itself.”

Such is the setting of Hawai‘i’s contemporary literature for the American settler. Caught between two potentially conflicting identities as both American and Hawaiian, characters in these texts reflect upon the land in which they live in order to make sense of this struggle, while acknowledging that Hawai‘i’s identity in the American imagination is one of both isolation and allure. Although politically annexed to the United States, the
Islands’ history as an immigrant destination among the indigenous population engenders a socio-cultural identity that must mitigate a space between indigeneity and settler aesthetics of the land. Kaui Hart Hemmings’s *The Descendants* and Tara Bray Smith’s *West of Then*, explore themes of cultural hybridity as the protagonists reexamine their individual identities as products of the collective social landscape. In a place with a dwindling indigenous population and an ever-growing array of immigrants, “Local” identity remains disputed and residents struggle to define their cultural relationships with their heritage. Many residents, like Hemmings’s and Smith’s characters, are descendants of both the settlers as well as the subaltern, looking to find their identity somewhere in their perception of the land. In this essay, I will address the setting of the Hawaiian Islands as a symbol of liminality, engaged in a process of reterritorialization from a singularly American perspective to one that engages with indigeneity. I will specifically address how each author’s portrayal of land illuminates the socio-cultural and geographic tensions that contribute to the rhizomatic layering of narratives for both the white settler and mixed-raced Native Hawaiians well after annexation, demonstrating the contradistinctions within haole literature that are often in dialogue with Native Hawaiian instead of against them.

As examined in *The Descendants*, in both the 2008 novel by Kaui Hart Hemmings and the film it inspired, modern-day Hawai‘i is a place of ideological obstacles, misunderstandings, and misrepresentations, specifically in regards to determining identity within the context of American settler colonialism. As the home of displaced indigenous peoples, Native Hawaiians or *Kānaka Maoli*, continue to fight for ancestral lands and in turn reclaim their identity. The quest of identity self-determination and
acknowledgement relies on substantial subversion against the mental colonization of Western ideology and practice, a framework that Hemmings and other contemporary authors wrestle with, making the personal emblematic of the political. In these texts, Native Hawaiian characters come to identify with their heritage despite their Americanization by connecting to the land, which they credit as their genealogical ancestor, and reveal contemporary Hawaiians in the fight against mental colonization and an erasure of their indigenous culture.

Hemmings’ *Descendants* addresses just what its title might suggest, namely the implications of lineage and an experience far removed from one’s ancestors, as Matt King, a part-Hawaiian, part-haole (Caucasian), wealthy lawyer and land owner, is torn over the prospect of selling the land that belonged to his ancestors while his wife is in a coma. Āina, land, functions as a metonym for the Hawaiian people and their cultural heritage. Hemmings’ is a work of fiction, and often reads like a memoir as she shares both Hawaiian and European ancestry like her protagonist, Matt King. Smith is the descendant of white settler colonizers, and much of the memoir examines her frustrations with being haole in Hawai‘i. Each author lived similar upbringings in Hawai‘i—they both attended Punahou School¹ and came from historically powerful families²—nevertheless, both examine the place of Hawai‘i and its people through a critical eye, wary of its colonial history and the indigenous relationship to the land.

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¹ The largest independent school in the United States, founded by American missionaries in 1841.
² Hemmings’s step-father is a Hawai‘i State Senator. Smith is the descendant of sugar plantation owners.
Smith prefaces her memoir with a political map of Hawai‘i. She begins, “Let us orient ourselves”\(^3\) and continues to explain Hawai‘i’s geographic location on the globe: “We are on the most isolated inhabited landmass on the globe; there is nothing as populated for thousands of miles in any direction. East is west; West is east.”\(^4\) In the Islands, because of the ancient system of land division known as ahupua‘a, where the property is divided from mountain to ocean, mauka to makai, places are referenced in relation to the ocean or the mountains, not east and west. According to Smith, as the descendant of settler colonizers, much feels backwards—time, culture—and it begins with geography.

Smith’s expression of “backwards” embodies a rhizomatic layering of narratives on the landscape, as varying perceptions of the land denote a conflict in its portrayal and reception. These two pieces explore the challenges brought by the tensions in contemporary Hawai‘i culture; it is not one of “happy pluralism” as most representations in Hollywood and otherwise have promoted for more than one hundred years.\(^5\) Since the advent of American tourism to the islands in the late nineteenth century, the tourist industry has been a proponent of cultural production based in Orientalist ideology, as explored in Paul Lyons’s *American Pacificism*, with exotic natives and landscapes. After the arrival of Western missionaries and the implementation of Western agricultural industries like pineapple and sugarcane, laborers from all over the world immigrated to develop them. At present, after generations of intercultural marriages, many citizens of Hawai‘i became labeled as “multicultural” and subsequently championed for their ability

\(^3\) Tara Bray Smith, *West of Then* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 2.

\(^4\) Smith, *West of Then*, 3.

\(^5\) Franklin and Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity,” 65.
to coexist amicably. Such harmonious representations gained fuel in the 1920s by scholars and officials from both Hawai‘i and the continent, coinciding with the first boom of the Hawai‘i tourist industry and the development of the Waikiki suburb, as the president of the University of Hawai‘i, David Crawford told a group in Los Angeles in 1929, Hawai‘i was “demonstrating the possibility of the meeting of Orient and Occident on terms of friendship that practically eliminate race prejudice.”

This seamless coalescing of East and West in Hawai‘i’s space of cultural production dovetails the American “melting-pot” narrative, ignoring centuries of an indigenous culture. As scholars Franklin and Lyons have noted,

Native Hawaiians [are cast] as but one part of Hawai‘i’s multicultural ‘racial paradise’—in other words, as akin to any other hyphenated American identity. On the other hand, this same rhetoric posits an essential and authentic Hawaiian identity now lost as a result of factors such as intermarriage and the inroads of American popular culture. This discourse presumes that familial mixings have so diluted the blood quantum of Native Hawaiians and American influences have so transformed their cultural practices that any claim to a separate political identity can only be spurious and invalid.

Likewise, as Candace Fujikane purports, “In a multicultural ethnic studies framework, claiming America often inadvertently ends up reproducing the settler colonial claims to Native lands made in white settler historiography.”

This adopted identity as a paradise, racial and otherwise, functions two-fold in the displacement of indigenous counter-narratives, thus revealing both a rhizomatic landscape and a process of reterritorialization. First, the perception of Hawai‘i and the rest of the Pacific as a terra/aqua nullius, a space void of culture where one can be

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6 Shelley Sang-Hee Lee and Rick Baldoz, “A Fascinating Interracial Experiment Station”: Remapping the Orient-Occident Divide in Hawai‘i.” American Studies 49, no. ¾ (Fall/Winter 2008): 87.

7 Franklin and Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity,” 50.

8 Fujikane, Asian Settler Colonialism, 194.
produced or superimposed; secondly, as a space of “erasure” with the distortion and elimination of cultural practices and language. Elizabeth DeLoughrey contends that the representations of the American Pacific are limited by their post-colonial lens, arguing that “the amnesia in post-colonial studies about the extent of US imperialism is precisely because the Rim configures the Pacific as *aqua nullius* and its islands synonymous with isolation.”

As established in Chapter One, space and geography are interpreted very differently by Native Hawaiians and Hawaiʻi’s settlers. As Karen Kosasa explains, the projection of *aqua or terra nullius*, or “Blankness,” then “provides an imaginative “ground” or fertile terrain for creating and circulating heroic images of America and Americans. It allows settlers to visualize their activities as beginning positively from a *terra nullius* and not negatively over the ruins of another culture . . . In the middle of the Pacific, generation of settles in Hawaiʻi are thus educated and encouraged to see the geographic terrain as sites/sights of opportunity similar to those in the continental United States, as blank spaces to be filled with localized versions of the American Dream.”

Hemmings work addresses what Kosasa calls the “ideological education” of Native Hawaiians and other contemporary citizens of Hawaiʻi living in an Americanized cultural dynamic, while they struggle to claim their indigenous heritage despite their cultural Americanization.

Furthermore, Kosasa contends that the settler imaginary maintains colonization through what she calls “acts of erasure” which produces “an American imaginary where concepts and images of ‘blankness’ and blank spaces proliferate. Within these

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imaginative spaces settlers visualize their work as always beginning within a primordial emptiness and innocence. Here, blankness is assumed to represent and uninhabited terrain. But this blankness has been produced to meet a need, much a like a commodity. And like many commodities, it is involved in numerous dissimulations and misrepresentations.” In *The Descendants*, the protagonists reach an impasse at which they must choose one identity over the other once they have recognized their intersection of the incongruent counter-narratives of American acculturation and indigenous genealogy. Despite many Native Hawaiians feelings of colonization, post-colonial formulations of identity and citizenry such as transnationalism, globalization, hybridity do not accurately examine what Franklin and Lyons call “cultural mixes that come out of an indigenous context” because of “the ways in which the indigenous insists on belonging—not simply in an abstract sense, but to specific lands.”

It is precisely in this connection to land and what it represents in Native Hawaiian culture, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, that is a reminder of their indigeneity for the characters in these works of fiction.

The challenges presented by many scholars of Hawai‘i literature and history demonstrate the importance of the connection between people and land; for displaced indigenous peoples such as Native Hawaiians, this dispossession has dire consequences in terms of identity formation. In Kēhaulani Kauanui’s detailed examination of colonialism and sovereignty in Hawai‘i entitled *Hawaiian Blood*, she explains that the example of Native Hawaiian displacement is important to understand in the context of American imperialism as it “has to do with the significance of land in the founding and

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12 Franklin and Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity,” 52.
subsequent expansion of the US nation-state into territories that are other peoples’ homelands. . . Settler colonial societies are premised on displacing indigenous peoples from (or replacing them on) the land. White Americans positioned Kānaka Maoli as inevitably disappearing Natives.”13 Hawai‘i’s cultural identity in the Western imagination began to shift during the conquests of European Imperialism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Initially, the lure of adding Hawai‘i to empire was an economic motivation as critic Rob Wilson notes that “geography was being restructured along oceanic pathways of economic flux and cultural liquidity that were linking space—and racial frontier—of Asia and the Pacific to international and global designs centered in Europe and the United States”; ultimately Hawai‘i became the “western outpost of Anglo Saxon civilization and a vantage ground of American commerce in the Pacific.”14

Present-day scholarship most commonly characterizes these cultural shifts in the nineteenth century as a direct extension of American Manifest Destiny, as the missionaries’ interests quickly shifted in a period of twenty years from the salvation of savages to saving their own interests. In 1840, during the rule of the longest reigning monarch, Kamehameha III, American businessmen influenced the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and eight years later, the Great Mahele, a re-division of land that westernized land ownership and greatly benefitted European and American interests. One third of the land went to the King, nearly all of the remainder was purchased by foreigners. Land division, as Hawaiian historian Kameʻeleihiwa argues, had three inspirations: Americans wanted to secure land to establish plantations, missionaries

13 Kauanui, Hawaiian Blood, 18.

believed that privatizing the land would promote “thrift and industry” to civilize the Hawaiians, and land ownership would prevent the looming threat of foreign powers taking it by any other means. This act solidified the Western presence in the islands, reinforcing Cook’s desire for the Pacific to be more accessible to Westerners.

During the 1840s, Hawaiʻi experienced a number of annexation attempts from foreign powers such as Britain, France and the United States, which ultimately led to the unprecedented exploratory tour of the future Kings Kamehameha IV and V to Britain, France and the United States along with an American advisor to King Kamehameha III, Minister Plenipotentiary Gerritt P. Judd. This tour proved to be a formative experience not only in the lives of the future kings, as they experienced first-hand the racist attitudes of antebellum Americans and thus maintained an anti-American approach in their future reigns, but conveyed the American influences over the monarchy to the rest of the world in the form of Judd. Meanwhile, leprosy first appeared in the islands in 1848, later creating a nationwide pandemic, just as the whaling and sugarcane industries boomed, which led to the immigration of peoples from East Asia to Puerto Rico. As Rob Wilson writes,

The Pacific served nineteenth-century writers not just as home or site of belonging, but as space in which to project unequal visions of religious, commercial, and cultural capital. The Pacific became a site in which writers and artists could leave the metropolis….to act out their subjective “voyages of self-discovery” if not to “verify their fantasies” conversion on the native and themselves.

By the end of the nineteenth century, after interest from a number of Western nations as well as Japan, the United States annexed Hawaiʻi in 1898 after its monarchy


had been overthrown five years prior. American narratives often portray this take over as an inevitability and a welcome arrival of American democracy to an unstable nation.

However, at the time of the overthrow, Kēhaulani Kauanui contends,

Kānaka Maoli organized into two key nationalist groups. The Hui Aloha ʻāina and the Hui Kalai ʻāina each submitted petitions representing the vast majority of the Kānaka Maoli; together, their petitions numbered over 38,000 signatures, at a time when only 40,000 Kānaka Maoli (including those who were racially mixed) resided in Hawaiʻi. In the two petitions, Kānaka Maoli clearly stated their opposition to becoming part of the United States in “any form or shape.”

Due to the Overthrow, the lands belonging to the kingdom became property of the federal government, and now belong to the state. Now, American hegemony permeates through modern Hawaiʻi culture, and Hemmings and Smith effectively portray the challenges of mitigating identity when their characters descent from those who led to Hawaiʻi’s cultural shift.

During the twentieth century, Hawaiʻi became progressively more suburbanized, turning small towns into strip malls—a transformation Hemmings’ protagonist admits that he likes at the beginning of the novel. In the hospital, Matt expresses his discomfort living in Hawaiʻi, despite it being the place of his ancestors: “I run down the hall with my daughter, feeling like I'm in some other country. All around, people speak pidgin English and glare at the two of us like we’re crazy white fools, even though we’re Hawaiian.”

Matt’s discomfort arises from the loss of his indigenous identity and a personal obliviousness to anything outside of his work, demonstrating his own mental colonization. He contemplates his own land and reflects on his level of content with Westernization: “We drive through Kailua town, which has been recently remodeled to

17 Kauanui, Hawaiian Blood, 28.

look like a strip mall in any nice suburb in America. Tourists are everywhere, and they’ve never come to our town much before. I know that when I sell the land the buyer will develop it into something exactly like this, even though I like the way the strip mall looks.\textsuperscript{19} After Matt becomes aware of his neglect and subsequent family ills, he begins a transformation toward recognizing the effects of colonialism and begins reclaiming his indigenous identity. Smith, too, identifies these losses, but only within the context of Imperialism: “This was America, though, the fiftieth state . . . Tom Seleck had once lived right down the road . . . So had Jack Lord. Other than a few remaining plantations, Hawai‘i sugar was gone. Kahala Mall had a Gap and a Banana Republic and a Starbucks.”\textsuperscript{20} In the early 21st century, Hawai‘i had become something unrecognizable to both Hawaiians and its early settlers. With the introduction of increasingly more foreigners and a host of new immigrant laborers to support Hawaiʻi’s tourism industry, Hawaiʻi’s economic growth perpetuated the tensions created by colonialism.

By the mid-20th century, Hawai‘i itself became a product. Far removed from the continental United States but with the exposure of television shows, Hollywood films, and a booming tourism industry, it became a marketed as a haven for those wanted to escape the pressures of their world. Following foreign economic success after annexation in addition to its stunning physical beauty, Hawaiʻi became marketed as a utopia for the outside consumer. Paradise, as Hemmings’ pieces point out, has its limitations, but the overwhelming perception persists, as Ann Rayson notes: “Nothing, it is thought, ever happens in Hawaiʻi or changes there, ‘there’ as opposed to ‘here.’ Hawaiʻi fulfills the

\textsuperscript{19} Hemmings, \textit{The Descendants}, 30-31.

\textsuperscript{20} Smith, \textit{West of Then}, 21.
role of America’s Shangri-la, seemingly far removed from the divisive racial tensions and
domestic problems of the ‘real’ America.”

By the mid-20th century, Hawai‘i itself became a commodity. Far removed from
the continental United States but with the exposure of television shows, Hollywood films,
and a booming tourism industry, it became a marketed as a haven for those wanted to
escape the pressures of their world. Just as her ancestors experienced as immigrants who
came to Hawai‘i and had success in the sugar industry in the 19th century, Smith
inherited the American belief that “Hawai‘i itself [was] a land that could cure what ailed
you” and that “paradise changed people, made them better than they were before: richer,
more powerful. Regular people became royalty.” Following foreign economic success
after annexation in addition to its stunning physical beauty, Hawai‘i became a utopia for
the outside consumer.

Anthropologist John Okamura concurs, acknowledging that the perception of
Hawai‘i’s “racial paradise” has its pitfalls, just like any other place: “The everyday
reality of race and ethnic relations does not always correspond to normative behavioral
prescriptions, and indeed there are ethnic antagonism and hostility which are commonly
expressed covertly or indirectly.” Hence, Hawai‘i becomes an unattainable fiction for
its visitors as its history and the identity of its people are far from ideal. This post-modern
sense of the dark side of paradise runs rampant through The Descendants. For both
authors, skepticism permeates many layers of their work, from the environment, family,

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22 Smith, West of the Then, 69; 71.

individual identity and the future. Hemmings introduces the environment with a cynical approach in order to convey the disillusioned version of Hawai‘i that she is about to portray: “The sun is shining, mynah birds are chattering, palm trees are swaying, so what.”24 Smith’s doubts about paradise are equally overt as she conveys in one dialogue between her mother and a friend: “‘you grew up here? Paradise, man. Paradise.’ I shuddered. This? This was nothing.”25 Paradise connotes a place where life’s ills cannot befall you, much less a place burdened with racial tension and guilt, which is in this case, manifested in the same individual, like Hemmings’s Matt King.

Similarly, expectations of paradise leave little which to look forward. As Smith expresses, “When you’re from paradise, where do you go from there?”26 The socially imposed expectations of paradise leave individuals like Smith with an indeterminate sense of purpose and a confused identity. As she ages and matures, much like Matt King’s personal awakening, Smith recognizes the shortcomings of paradise due to the education of life experience and her knowledge of history. She contends, “We don’t believe in paradise because paradise is inviolate, and nothing on earth, since the age of the ship and the airplane, is inviolate. Everything fell apart a long time ago.”27 Smith’s disillusionment is not limited to herself and her personal experiences. Hemmings addresses this discontent with a series of binaries: “We have breadfruit, bananas and mangoes, but all of these things rot and bring flies. We have a sparkling pool, but at the end of the day, it’s filled with leaves . . . We have gorgeous soft wood floors, but we also

24 Hemmings, The Descendants, 3.
25 Smith, West of Then, 33.
26 Ibid., 33.
27 Ibid., 89.
have flying cockroaches, cane spiders, termites and centipedes that love these wooden floors and rafters as well.”

Paradise is not what one might think it should be; in both works, the juxtaposition of opposites further highlights the tensions of the characters’ cultural identity.

Ultimately, the land itself becomes a reminder of heritage as the landscape impacts Matt’s historical memory when visiting another island: “I feel as though I’ve gone back in time. There’s an abandoned look to Hawai‘i, like it’s just been hit by a tsunami . . . The air gets colder, and there’s a slight vog hanging over everything—a cross between fog and volcanic ash, the smell of it like gunpowder—that adds to the mood of abandonment and destruction.”

Matt’s family trauma mirrors Hawai‘i’s—change and ambivalence. Colonized Hawai‘i looks nothing like the Hawai‘i of old. For Hemmings and Smith, this Hawai‘i was American, suburban and commercialized.

For the Kānaka Maoli, the land is the genealogical origin, not a possession. As Kānaka Maoli literature scholar ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui contends, “‘āina does not translate to ‘landscape’ because landscape implies a pristine, panoramic view of the land devoid of human beings; by being ‘land that feeds,’ ‘āina automatically includes humans . . . we are descended from the land and are related to and not separate from elements of ‘nature.’”

Hawaiian orientation and appreciation of the land are fundamentally different from those of settlers, for example, Kānaka Maoli traditionally used the land division system of ahupua’a, where the property is divided from mountain to ocean, mauka to makai, and places are referenced in relation to the ocean or the mountains, not

29 Ibid., 79.
30 ho‘omanawanui, “This Land,” 128.
east and west. As stated in Chapter One, ho‘omanawanui provides the following equational form to explain the differences between Hawaiian and haole perceptions of the land: “Hawaiian: ‘āina→food→nurturing/sustaining→value of family. Haole: land→real estate/commodity→buying/selling→monetary value.” 31 In these terms, the ‘āina or land’s identity then reveals the cultural identity of the viewer. The determination of this view becomes precisely the issue for Smith and Hemmings, as Smith’s narrator explores her relationship with Hawai‘i in relation to her family history but not as her genealogy, while Hemmings’s Matt King struggles to identify with the ‘āina while believing he should. This land consciousness, or lack thereof, then, embodies the challenges presented by colonization and its aftermath as ho‘omanawanui concludes: “in the Kānaka Maoli worldview, the connection between Kānaka and ‘āina is not just theoretical; it is direct.” 32

The state motto of Hawai‘i, “ua mau ke ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono,” the life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness, was written by King Kamehameha III in 1843, after the Islands were nearly annexed by the British. For native Hawaiians, the islands are the “one hānau,” the “birth sands;” as Candace Fujikane argues: “Mixed race Hawaiians are still genealogical descendants of the land despite their settler ancestries; to argue anything less is an act of colonial theft that takes Hawaiians’ genealogical heritage away from them.” 33

Hemmings, too, demonstrates these effects of colonization in The Descendants. While driving on a neighbor island, Matt points out a historic location with which his daughter is unfamiliar; surprised, he asks, “What kind of Hawaiian are you?” To which

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31 ho‘omanawanui, “This Land,” 124.
32 Ibid., 125.
33 Fujikane, Asian Settler Colonialism, 5.
she astutely responds, “Your kind.” Hemmings details this recognition through Matt’s assessment of history: “I think of our bloodline’s progression. Our missionary ancestors came to the islands and told the Hawaiians to put on some clothes, work hard, and stop hula dancing. They make some business deals on the way, buying an island for ten grand, or marrying a princess and inheriting her land, and now their descendants don’t work. They have stripped down to running shorts or bikinis and play beach volleyball and take up hula dancing.” For his character, these notions prove excessively challenging as he identifies as both a descendant of the missionaries as well as the Hawaiians that they displaced. After Matt loses his wife, he shifts his values to his family and its history, replacing his bitterness over the frivolity of modern day Hawai’i culture with recognition of his family’s history. He concludes, “This is our responsibility . . . We’re Hawaiian—it’s a miracle we own this much of Hawai‘i. Why let some haole swoop it up?” Hemmings here employs the Hawaiian concept of kuleana, or responsibility, to begin Matt’s self-determination as a Hawaiian. He has developed a purpose around embodying his indigenous culture for his family, and in turn other Kānaka Maoli, by keeping the land.

For Hemmings, familial tragedy is the agent of change for her characters to recognize their mental colonization, and the impact of their genealogy, as Matt declares:

But now I find myself not wanting to give it up—the land, the lush relic of our tribe, the dead. The last Hawaiian owned land will be lost, and I will have something to do with it. Even though we don’t look Hawaiian, even though our

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34 Hemmings, *The Descendants*, 79.


36 Ibid., 230.
constant recombining has erased the evidence of our ethnicity, sharpening our flat faces, straightening our kinky hair, even though we act like haoles, going to private schools and clubs and not having a good command of pidgin English, my girls and I are Hawaiian, and this land is ours.\textsuperscript{37}

Many of Hawai‘i’s current social tensions arise from the lack of recognition given to those who trace their genealogy there as connected to the challenges of Western land ownership. Similar to the plight of the Native American peoples in the continental United States, for the Hawaiians, as previously explained, land and identity go hand in hand when it comes to developing a sense of one’s place in the social landscape. As one geographer contends, “While all cultural landscapes are understood to be contested spaces among competing stakeholders, this insight firmly centers the cultural landscape ... within the greater and more pronounced struggles for domination and autonomy.”\textsuperscript{38}

Since the arrival of Westerners to Hawai‘i, the battle for autonomy has persisted throughout various cultural movements and political regimes. In the 1960s and 1970s, Hawaiians experienced resurgence in identity reclamation, commonly referred to as the Hawaiian Renaissance, where people of Hawaiian descent, Kānaka Maoli, began expressing interest in and performing traditional native Hawaiian practices. This movement began with the specific intention of counteracting the tourist driven perceptions of Hawaiian culture and addressed the Americanization of the people and their practices. Traditional Hawaiian songs (mele), hula, crafts and Hawaiian Studies became exceedingly more popular among Kānaka Maoli, along with Hawaiian Sovereignty, the notion that Hawai‘i should once again become its own nation.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Hemmings, \textit{The Descendants}, 79.
\end{footnotes}
Hawaiian blood and indigeneity, along with sovereignty, has become a contested issue in Hawai‘i, as the western definition of racial determination has severe implications for land and identity for Kānaka Maoli. As mentioned in Chapter One, Kauanui argues that “Indigeneity is tied to sovereignty, where, the definitions of both are constantly negotiated and constructed in terms of competing interests.”

Matt develops the recognition of how many Native Hawaiians are dispossessed of land and does not want to be another without his ancestral lands. It is the understanding of genealogy, and not the colonially imposed restrictions of blood quantum, that enable these fictional characters to break free of American determinism. In *The Descendants*, Matt experiences a dramatic shift in self-identification, ultimately forming his individual identity around his immediate family and considering the implications of lineage. While discussing his daughters, he notes, “they were also descendants of somebody, generations of prints on their DNA, trace of human migrations. They didn’t come out of nowhere. Everyone comes from someone who comes from someone else, and this to me is remarkable . . . I let . . . my old ways go . . . as well as who we were before this, and now it’s just the three of us. I glance over at the girls, taking a good look at what’s left.”

Matt decides to keep the land, reacquaints himself to his family that he had ignored, and reclaims the indigenous identity that he had lost.

Smith, too, acknowledges a hybrid identity; hers is cultural instead of racial. She begins her final chapter with a Hawaiian proverb on ancestry and identity: “ku’u ewe, ku’u piko, ku’u iwi, ku’u koko” (my umbilical cord, my navel, my bones, my blood).

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As kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui explains, “the word ‘iwi’ (bones), a metaphorical reference to people, is synonymous with both being Native to a place and being one’s homeland.” While Smith’s appropriation of Hawaiian culture may be deemed problematic because she does not ethnically identify as such, she nonetheless attempts to pay homage to Hawaiʻi’s indigenous people, despite not being able to articulate the ideological influences of the passage. She ends her novel with recognition of Hawaiʻi’s identity as a settler colony, and attempts to acknowledge both its indigenous past and its present American identity: “The coiner of the term manifest destiny was obsessed with the idea that America was new, unburdened by history. In Hawaiʻi the past is not extinct. Ghosts just want to be heard, which is why we remember them.” While Smith may not be Hawaiian herself, as an individual influenced by native culture she, too, has carried on the traditions of honoring family and ancestry. Likewise, Matt King ends his identity struggle in the final lines of the novel while he takes his wife’s ashes out to sea. After contemplating the life of his deceased wife and his future life with his daughters, Matt concludes the novel by saying: “And even though the art of wayfinding has been lost to me, I try to steer us to shore in as straight a line as possible.” The novel ends with a hopeful tone despite Joanie’s tragic death, as Matt and his daughters have reconciled their differences and have united as a family. In the film, after the scattering of Joanie’s ashes, the movie concludes with a scene of Matt and his daughters sitting on the couch eating ice cream together. In the end, with Matt’s reunion with his daughters and his decision to

41 Smith, *West of Then*, 263.

42 hoʻomanawanui, “This Land,” 125.

43 Smith, *West of Then*, 308.

44 Hemmings, *The Descendants*, 263.
keep his ancestral lands, Hemmings suggests attempts to set a course directed toward his family and his heritage and rejects the settler identity of self and land for work and profit, respectively.

Both *The Descendants* and *West of Then* illustrate the rhizomatic layering of narratives by addressing the effects of colonialism and the continued relevance of indigenous rights in contemporary Hawai‘i. Despite the hegemonic influence of American ideology and imagination in the state, Kānaka Maoli demonstrate a commitment to ancient traditions and a continued desire for self-determinism and indigenous recognition. Kānaka Maoli scholar Keheaulani Kauanui asserts that the determination of Native Hawaiian identity should only be decided on their own terms:

Hawaiians’ traditional form of considering who belongs and who descends from the ʻāina relies on bilateral descent over and above constructions of blood quantum. Kānaka Maoli are still an inclusive people, with a long history of incorporating outsiders. Only by ignoring Hawaiian genealogical practices could exogamy be viewed as a one-way road to cultural disappearance, where racial purity is confused with survival and leads to an assumption of inevitable decline.45

As established previously, the Hawaiian determination of indigeneity despite generations of intermarriages does not lead to a termination of indigenous culture, but rather speaks to what Kauanui calls a “cultural resilience.”46

These texts reveal an attempt to give voice to a native people fighting for an indigenous culture that is neither diluted nor dwindling. As scholars Franklin and Lyons conclude, “Native politics and culture cannot be subsumed into a globalized, heterogeneous domicile, nor equated with a naïve desire to return to a pre-contact past.


46 Ibid.

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. . .The least that those of us who are non-natives can do is to recognize that what native peoples demand above all else is their right to self-determination. While Hawai‘i maintains a rich cultural history populated by a diverse array of peoples and traditions, and Native Hawaiian culture progressively challenges hegemony, it is important to acknowledge both the prolonged genealogy of indigenous groups and the continued celebration of ancestral traditions as well as astute contemporary literary examples of identity determination such as these. Both *The Descendants* and *West of Then* mark an important awareness of the colonial history and subsequent racial politics for the people of Hawai‘i through their interweaving narratives. In the American imagination, the geographic location in the Pacific, coupled with the Islands’ physical beauty engendered a utopian vision which ultimately proved to be an environment filled with tension. While each author expresses her relationship with the Hawaiian people from differing vantage points, one as mixed-race Hawaiian and the other as the descendant of a settler, each ultimately concludes at a position of admiration for native traditions and a desire to acknowledge indigenous culture. Hemmings and Smith do not provide us a solution for the issues of cultural hybridity, but rather, educate the rest of the world on Hawai‘i’s rich, albeit transitional identity with an evolving appreciation of place. Each author reminds us that each interpretation of land contributes to its portrayal in society, and encourages the recognition all aspects of identity, even when they may be in conflict with one another. Through their acknowledgement of Hawaiian nativism and exploration of the American notions of paradise in a place wrought with tension, these authors demonstrate an awareness of the multitude of voices that all reveal the importance of land in Hawai‘i.

47 Franklin and Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity,” 74.
CHAPTER FOUR

LOCAL ASIAN LITERATURE: PAK AND YAMANAKA’S SEARCH FOR HOME IN “THE GUEST” AND BEHOLD THE MANY

Since its inception in 1978, Bamboo Ridge Press has engaged in counter-hegemonic dialogue about the role of Asian Americans in Hawai‘i. Nearly forty years later, the dialogue has shifted from one of activism to one of defense. What began as a press advocating for “Local” and Native Hawaiian narratives, became the most prolific publishing company in Hawai‘i, and are now criticized for committing “acts of erasure” against the Native Hawaiians. In 2008, University of Hawai‘i professors Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura produced the highly influential collection, Asian Settler Colonialism, a re-examination of the roles that Asians have played in Native Hawaiian displacement. The impact of this collection has been monumental, shifting the examination of Hawai‘i literature from one of haole and local to settler and native. As land remains a pivotal issue in the cultural consciousness of the people of Hawai‘i, specific challenges regarding definitions of land have become a highly contested issue in Hawai‘i literary discourse. Bamboo Ridge writers such as Gary Pak and Lois-Ann Yamanaka have contributed to these renderings of the Hawaiian landscape, both as a contested space and place of solace. In the case of Asian diasporic writers of Hawai‘i, an
iteration of land does not commit an act of erasure but rather further reterritorializes the land as a vulnerable environment, subject to the destructive acts of humans, thus mirroring the concerns made by Native Hawaiians in Trask and McGregor’s works discussed in Chapter Two.

Prior to the 1970s, most of Hawai‘i’s published literature was written by haoles or non-residents of Hawai‘i. When Bamboo Ridge Press was established, it sought to publish literature “by and about Hawai‘i’s people.”¹ Today, it features most of Hawai‘i’s best-known authors, such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka, who received national attention when she won the Asian American National Book Award for Blu’s Hanging only to have it annulled due to its controversial portrayal of Filipino Americans. This conflict revealed not only the complex and tension-fraught pan-Asian American identity, but also revealed the racial tensions in Hawai‘i, as even the Atlantic Monthly ran a story called “This Hawai‘i is not for Tourists” in 1999.² Racial tensions in Hawai‘i date back to the point of western contact and the arrival of Asian immigrants in the nineteenth century, and as discussed in Chapter Three, the image of Hawai‘i as a multiethnic racial paradise is modern media propaganda. Such positions have been well documented, including the work of Ronald Takaki, Gary Okihiro as well as Jonathan Okamura, the co-editor of Asian Settler Colonialism, who wrote Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i. In that study, Okamura explains that celebratory narratives of a cohesive multicultural Local identity tend to ignore the interior stratification of members within the “Local” group: while Locals of Japanese, Chinese, and white (haole) descent tend to belong to the middle and


upper-middle class and tend to be well represented in the higher echelons of business and politics in the islands, those coming from Filipino, Samoan, Tongan, or Micronesian parentage remain lower down on the socioeconomic scale and are not as well represented in Honolulu’s colleges, board rooms, or the chambers of city hall.³

Nevertheless, the co-editors of Asian Settler Colonialism reveal that their representation of Local Asians as settlers and thereby agents of American Imperialism and its destructive impact on Native Hawaiian people, land, and culture, can also be read as essentializing Asian Americans. While they address that not all Asian Americans are economically empowered, they maintain that they nevertheless have more political mobility than Native Hawaiians. Although the arguments made by Fujikane, Okamura and Trask concurrently dictate much of Hawai‘i literary criticism, this is not a new debate. In his 1991 landmark survey of literature of Hawai‘i, Steven Sumida acknowledged, “There are some opponents of recognizing Local literature, who, in an attempt to deny the intellectual merit of viewing Hawai‘i as a pluralistic, multicultural, and multiracial society with sharp distinctions, insist on lumping all Hawai‘i’s locals except Native Hawaiians under the category of the colonizer . . . as though owning the plantation and laboring in its fields were the same thing.”⁴ These claims dated back to 1987, and persist today. Seri Luangphininth explains the origins of some of these sentiments, as ethnic labels have changed over time, but ultimately reveal the challenges of inclusion and remnants of xenophobia:

With the labels of kama‘āina (local-born) claimed by both local Asians and


⁴ Steven Sumida, And the View from the Shore (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 249.
Anglo-Americans, and malihini (one unfamiliar with a place or custom) used to label off-Island Native Hawaiians, competing visions of home and the battle over legitimacy encourage responses to that threat and perhaps account for re-emerging suspicions of ‘Asians’ and ‘Haole’ at a time of perceived menace by the ‘outside.’

This image of a menace to describe Asian immigrants in America is unfortunately not unfamiliar. Asian racial images such as “yellow peril” and the “model minority” have remained despite decades of cultural shifts and political activism. As Colleen Lye explains, “yellow peril and model minority are best understood as two aspects of the same, long-running racial form, a form whose most salient feature, whether it had been made the basis for exclusion or assimilation, is the trope of economic efficiency.”

Therefore, critics of Local Asians in Hawai‘i reveal a neo-Orientalist sentiment based on Local Asian economic success. To assert a Manichean binary based on essentialism and the perpetuation of Asian American stereotypes is the perpetuation of a colonial structure, which is especially disappointing given many of these scholars’ aims to “de-colonize” Hawaiian literature. What then, can be done to properly acknowledge the experiences of both Local Asians and Native Hawaiians? Gary Pak and Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s text do engage with Asian diasporic tropes but reveal an experience that specifically engages with Hawai‘i as a cultural setting. While the indigenous displacement of the Native Hawaiians, the labor experiences of Local Asians, and colonialism of Westerners are decidedly different their motivations and roles in Hawai‘i’s current dynamic, so too should be the way we examine them, by just that—difference. As scholar Seri Luangphinith notes, “postmodern/postcolonial theories—theories expounding the

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dissolution of empire, the racial binary mirror, and the contemporary drive towards hybridity—have not necessarily provided adequate solutions to Hawai‘i’s literary and scholarly crisis.”

She then cites Hawaiian activist Puanani Burgess who asserts a “pan-racial belonging vis-à-vis social responsibility,” arguing that “the most important thing, is that the ‘āina, the land, is color blind. She doesn’t know if you are Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian or haole. She knows only if you love her; she knows you if you respect her. And when you treat her as all mothers should be treated—with dignity and respect—then she gives you back that dignity and respect.”

Here Burgess’s remarks align with those of Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, who advocate that all histories “might be reconfigured in broader, more rhizomatic, terms” and that “postcolonial poetics attends to the fragmented conditions of colonial displacement or diaspora without either idealizing fragmentations or yearning nostalgically for wholeness; it is instead an exercise in imagining relations in new ways in order to forge new epistemologies.”

This reterritorialization of land in Hawai‘i is an opportunity to recognize narratives and epistemologies of varying cultures, as each of them contribute to its current aesthetic. This does not discount either group’s contributions and struggles, as it is layering of narratives, simultaneous and interwoven. As exhibited by Gary Pak and Lois-Ann Yamanaka, native, settler and Local Asian make up the present manifestations

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8 Luangphinith, “Homeward Bound: Settler Aesthetics in Hawai‘i’s Literature,” 72.


11 Ibid., 29.
of land in the culture imagination of Hawai‘i. Given these cultural contexts in the contemporary moment, Pak specifically infuses cultural conflicts into his work as he sees his writing as activism. Pak acknowledges the dual and contradictory identity as an American, as one who had previously been proud to be an American, but was disappointed when learning of the destructive nature of Imperialism, which he then swears to “approach head on and resolve.” His story entitled “The Guest” is a clear step in that resolution. Teresa Shewry explains that Gary Pak:

imagines a possible community at least partly in a transnational space. The socialities that Pak imagines are both durable and provisional, tied to the enduring patterns as well as the uncertainties of water’s restless pathways from sea to atmosphere to land. Emphasizing the agency of varied life forms and ecosystems that coalesce around water, Pak takes us past a framework that sees these as isolated human struggles and that poses ecology as a passive, static, plastic frontier for incorporation.

Just as Pak acknowledged his frustration with American imperialism, here he identifies the human tendency to transpose its social problems into a destruction of the landscape, therefore denying it of any agency and subject to our behavior. As portrayed in “The Guest,” the land and its use becomes the object of conflict for two former friends, Colbert, a Local man of Japanese descent and Herman, who becomes known as “Guava Man,” a man of Hawaiian descent. After Herman returns home as a psychologically damaged veteran of the Vietnam War, he squats on Colbert’s property. What begins as a favor to an old friend ultimately becomes a violent conflict, as Herman begins farming on Colbert’s property and hangs a Hawaiian flag from a tree. The land reveals the stark contrast between Local Asian and Native Hawaiian interpretations for land, but


13 Pak, Language, xiii.

nevertheless reveals Pak’s own sensitivities to Native Hawaiian land claims. By acknowledging the land as a source of conflict and as a reminder of Native Hawaiian displacement, he reterritorializes land not as his own, or as symbolic of just one narrative, but rather the rhizomatic location of multiple, simultaneous and interwoven narratives.

Pak’s character of Herman embodies the Native Hawaiian traditions of both cultivation and sustainability, as he transforms a weeded area into a garden. When Colbert challenges Herman to leave his property, they have the following exchange, with both characters speaking in Pidgin, or Hawaiian Creole English:

Colbert: “And if anything, you my guest, but dah way you talking to me, you not my guest. You one intruder.”
Herman: “I know my history. You get the fuck off my ‘āina! You dah guest!”

Herman claims that he is “pono-ing” the land, which Hawaiian language scholars Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel Hoyt Elbert explain that “pono” has multiple meanings, most commonly of which is “righteousness,” but also denotes resources, uses and plans, and hope. For Herman, his gardening space embodies each definition, as he lives off the land in a sustainable fashion and redefines an undesirable space, saying “dah weeds not weeds” and put them to good use. After he employs his horticultural knowledge for the betterment of others when he makes a poultice and bandage for an injured young girl, he reveals his relationship with nature based in indigenous culture. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, Pak correctly identifies the Native Hawaiian connection to land as the geneaological ancestor, but employs the character of Herman to reveal how this ideology

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is translated in a present context. Pak narrates, “Guava Man talked to them about the different plants he had growing and the legends of the area, and when asked by the girls how did he know what kinds of plants to grow and how did he know about those stories of constellations and fish and rocks, he’d shrug his shoulders and say that he just listened to the voices that were carried by the winds. ‘Dey my kupuna,’ he said. ‘Dey make me understand.’”

Elizabeth DeLoughrey reinforces this connection in *Postcolonial Ecologies*, noting, “we see that biotic and political ecologies are materially and imaginatively intertwined, and that one vital aspect of postcolonial ecology is to reimagine this displacement between people and place through poetics.” Through Herman, Pak advocates for an ecological consciousness of sustainability just as Herman does, “pono-ing” the land—putting it to good use. While this indeed reveals an anthropocentric view of the land and its uses, as humans can be the guardians of land, it, too, reveals the land’s vulnerability to human conflict and subsequent destruction. In the final conflict, frustrated over their disparate values of land, Colbert takes Herman’s Hawaiian flag and burns it, sparking a quickly spreading fire that engulfs a tree in flames. Pak’s rendering of this social and ecological conflict thus reveals the potential destructive nature of racial conflict and the negative impact of cultural misunderstandings. Just as Teresa Shewry remarks, this attention to history or lack thereof has lasting implications, as “Pak builds a complex way of sensing a community’s past, present and future possibilities.”

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19 Shewry, “In Search,” 629.
Furthermore, Pak’s identification of such tensions reveals the continuous struggle over the impact of colonialism, which Elizabeth DeLoughrey remarks:

> the environmental sciences that tell us that we can no longer afford to ignore our human impact on the globe are an ironic by-product of a global consciousness derived from a history of imperial exploitation of nature. In fact, if we turn to this deeper history, we see how colonial violence was mystified by invoking a model of conserving an untouched (and often feminized) Edenic landscape. Thus the nostalgia for a lost Eden, an idealized space outside of human time, is closely connected to displacing the ways that colonial violence disrupted human ecologies.\(^\text{20}\)

Pak’s rendering of the disrupted environment engages with the debate over the impact of colonialism, recognizing that an ambivalence toward history leads to destruction. Land ownership, dominance, or as Lois-Ann Yamanaka expresses, any iteration of hierarchical subjugation only lead to devastation.

Deloughrey’s conclusions segue perfectly into Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s text on a violated landscape, which is rendered feminized and vulnerable. In her 2006 novel *Behold the Many*, the book opens in 1939 with the discovery of a raped and murdered woman, enveloped in the floral landscape. Yamanaka’s violent portrayal of this female victim mirrors both the vulnerability and destruction of the environment seen in Pak’s “The Guest” but also echoes the symbolism employed in Trask’s poetry on imperial exploitation. For Yamanaka’s victim, the juxtaposition of her violated body within Hawaiian ecology is only fitting given their parallel experiences with the violent destruction of the environment after Western contact and the complexities of immigration.

Yamanaka opens her novel with the following passage:

> Kalihi Valley
> 1939

The valley is a woman lying on her back, legs spread wide, her geography wet by a constant rain. Waterfalls wash the days and nights of winter storms into the river that empties into the froth of the sea.

In the valley, the rain is a gossamer cloth, a tempest of water and leaves. The rain is southerly with strange foreboding. The rain is northerly with cool rime. The rain glistens on maiden fern, the wind rustling the laua‘e, the palapalai touching her there where it is always wet and seamy. The valley is a woman with the features of a face, a woman whose eyes watch the procession of the celestial sphere; a woman with woodland arms outstretched and vulnerable, a woman with shadowy breasts of ʻaʻaliʻi and hapuʻu, lobelias and lichens; a woman, a womb, impregnated earth.

O body.

When they find her, she is shiny, she is naked, she is bound, but for her legs, spread open and wet with blood and semen. Tears in her eyes, or is it rain? Breath in her mouth, or is it wind? Her thicket of hair drips into her mouth, sliced open from ear to ear. She is pale green, the silvery underside of kukui leaves; her eyes and lips are gray, the ashen hinahina; her fingers and feet are white, the winter rain in this valley.

O body.

O beloved Hosana.

Ultimately, the novel enfolds the stories of three sisters, sent away to tuberculosis sequestration where two of the three die. Haunted by her sisters’ ghosts and the other children who have died from tuberculosis, Anah lives a miserable existence until the birth of her daughter, Hosana, who would later be murdered. Hosana develops an affinity for nature, embracing a role of stewardship towards plants and animals and returns to be among them when she dies. Hosana haunts her mother until she reveals who had murdered her, a white man hired by a jealous lover. Dominance over a woman, just like the Western conception of dominance over nature, is exercised by a white male in a colonial setting—only for him to escape unscathed. At her funeral, the priest reinforces this ecological connection with his reminder that from the earth we came and to the earth we return. It is after Hosana’s death that Anah is finally freed from her demons, and nature responds: “The trees, the bushes, the flowers, the grasses, the lichens, and the

mosses, a coterie of verdant arms and fingers, move in delicate response, the morning illuminating the deepest reaches of the valley, the valley that is a woman.”

She then dies, returning to the earth herself, reminding her family that like the earth, “my spirit will not leave them, a neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children’s children forever.”

Yamanaka demonstrates the earth not only as a vulnerable to human destruction but also as the earth mother. A common trope among many world literatures, the earth as a both a woman and a mother encourages the human protection thereof and the violation implicit in its destruction. Yamanaka specifically employs images concurrent with Native Hawaiian creation imagery, just as seen in the poetry of Haunani Kay Trask and other Native Hawaiian writers. The use of Native Hawaiian images such as the laua’e (fragrant fern) and other indigenous plants in the context of an act of dominance against a character who represents the very land subject to imperialism reveals Yamanaka’s recognition of layered histories in Hawai‘i.

As Erin Suzuki has noted, Local Asian uses of Hawaiian mythology and symbolism is not without controversy. Furthermore, she argues that “Local identity is hardly monolithic in its authority,” that writers such as Gary Pak refuse to reinforce a Local hegemonic identity, and “many points of Local cultural identification—particularly the ones that refer to place and genealogy—mirror and mimic Native Hawaiian, rather than Anglo-American, cultural forms.”

The issue for many Hawai‘i literary critics, such as ku’ualoha ho’omanawanui and Karen Kosasa, that any use of Hawaiian ideology

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22 Yamanaka, *Behold the Many*, 336.
23 Ibid., 336.

or mythology constitutes an “act of erasure” or a further displacement of indigenous peoples. The use of Native Hawaiian imagery in literary forms of non-Natives is then interpreted as an appropriation of culture. Suzuki employs the term as defined by Terry Goldie and Chadwick Allen, and “to point out the way that Local identity, which already understands itself as a heterogeneous or multiplicitous construct, ceases to have oppositional or critical meaning if it does not foreground or bring into question the constantly shifting grounds of its own tactical construction.”

She does concede, however, that many “Local narratives . . . have lost sight of their own contingency and refuse to interrogate the colonial framework that has continued to shape Hawai‘i’s cultural and political landscape in the twentieth century.” While this can be the case for many Local writers, it is not the case for all, specifically Gary Pak, who openly criticizes some Local claims to land ownership, as he does in “The Guest.” Pak, however, directly acknowledges his and other Local Asians’ place as non-natives; the Local character in the his story is “the guest,” not the host. Yamanaka, as Hawai‘i’s most prolific novelist, has been widely criticized for said appropriations, but as Suzuki notes in her reading of Yamanaka’s *Father of the Four Passages*, she “strategically appropriates the localized and site-specific Native Hawaiian concepts . . . that have contributed to the structure and framework of this identity, resulting in a kind of cultural plagiarism that works to erase the historical and material differences between Local and Hawaiian cultural practices.”

However, in *Behold the Many*, Yamanaka reveals a distinct appreciation and recognition for Native Hawaiian images and struggles. Local Asian culture, as previously

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 176.
established, is heterogeneous and multiplicious, and in rhizomatic terms, in the process of becoming, as Suzuki also notes, “the Local home is never a static space or place” due to the challenge of occupying a hybrid identity. Moreover, Lisa Lowe explains, “as with other diasporas in the United States, the Asian immigrant collectivity is unstable and changeable, with its cohesion complicated by intergenerationality, by various degrees of identification and relation to a ‘homeland,’ and by different extents of assimilation to and distinction from ‘majority culture’ in the United States.”

Due to the complex setting of historically based racial tensions and cultural usurpations in Hawaiʻi, both Gary Pak and Lois-Ann Yamanaka reveal Hawaiʻi’s ecology to be a place of reterritorialization and a layering of interwoven narratives. Like the jacket cover of his collection states, “The worlds of Pak’s Hawaiians, Local Asians, and the haoles sometimes intersect and collide and other times remain parallel, but each world is haunted by the past.” Both writers seek to reveal an Local Asian aesthetic that demonstrate the multitude of experiences with indigeneity and while they do identify the richness of the native culture and its images, neither seek to supplant it, but rather to acknowledge it in addition to the struggles of immigration and diaspora.

As Lisa Lowe emphasizes in her reading of Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, he argues that “the challenge facing any movement dismantling colonialism (or a system in which one culture dominates another) is to provide for a new order that does not reproduce the social structure of the old system.” Therefore, to assert a tertiary

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group with a multiplicitous identity into a binary formulated by colonialism only perpetuates it. She elaborates that “another alternative is necessary, a new order, neither an assimilationist nor a nativist inversion, which breaks with the structures and practices of cultural domination and which continually and collectively criticizes the institutions of rule.”

Like Native Hawaiians, Local Asian have too shifted into an acute ecological consciousness inspired by historical and contemporary events, thus demonstrating a responsibility to an increasingly more vulnerable biosphere despite an evolving sense of “home.”

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32 Ibid., 31.
EPILOGUE

In Yi-fu Tuan’s oft-cited book *Space and Place*, he explains, “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value . . . if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”¹ Moreover, at the conclusion of Gary Okihiro’s *Island World: A History of Hawai‘i and the United States*, he describes Hawai‘i as “islands that move,”² while Lawrence Buell asks in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, “what is the meaning of place in a globalized world?”³ Place, specifically the place of contemporary Hawai‘i, as I have explored in this thesis, is an intersection of experience, both static and in motion. As all six of the chosen texts have demonstrated, writers and their characters have migrated and paused through time and through spaces in order to develop their perceptions of the land in the literature of Hawai‘i. Trask and McGregor have reclaimed ʻāina through an appreciation for ancestry and the future, duplicating traditional images while also creating their own. Hemmings and Smith navigate the implications of an imagined history and struggle to

¹ Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.
find themselves in an ever-changing, conflicted metaphysical landscape. Identifying the tensions, and seeking to both acknowledge and respect them, Gary Pak and Lois-Ann Yamanaka explore the difficulties of finding a home in a place they love, all while experiencing trauma.

As the first chapter of this thesis explains, contemporary literature of Hawai‘i represents a multitude of differential experiences within a contested space mired in controversy. Through the processes of de- and reterritorialization, the land holds a diverse collection of narratives that will continue to be reconfigured and reconceptualized as people will continue to move, to stay, to engage and imagine. Okihiro concludes, these Islands “convey a Hawaiian and Polynesian erudition, uniting land with water, humans with over life forms, inanimate objects, and the totality of their environments . . . Although distinctions demand acknowledgement, unions oblige recognition.” While anthropocentric, the human engagement with the environment, regardless of scale—be it with plant life, geologic features, or the imaginary line of the horizon—is intimate and direct. As the work of Haunani Kay Trask and Lurline McGregor assert, the land has mana; it is powerful. These texts have demonstrated that the land indeed has power, one that drives Native Hawaiians to fight for their sovereignty over it, for white settlers to imagine it as a paradise, and for all of these writers to desire to call it home. Each and every iteration reflects the contemporary culture; there is no singular perspective.

These works embody the growing global consciousness toward sustainability and the fragility of the environment when vulnerable to human destructive acts. While the discourse over land and nature has transformed over the last three hundred years from that of conquest and exploration to taming the dangerous wilderness to contemporary

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ideologies such as gaia, ecophilosophy and ecotheology, the world around us, or the world we are in and a part, has remained of critical concern to humankind. Hawai‘i, in this way, does reveal some of the world’s pressing ecological concerns, especially in regards to its push for sustainability, preservation, and stewardship. In terms of scale, considered to be one of the most significant interests in Ecocriticism today, it is important to consider Hawai‘i’s position in all of its iterations—ecological, historical, geographical, economic as well as symbolic. Metaphorically speaking, Hawai‘i’s land has been of great impact and importance, especially in the American political imagination.

Ecologically, the importance of the scale again becomes relative. Just as the editors of Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century argue, “Spatial arrangements are made in everyday practices among and other life and are tapped into broader processes such as time, imperialism, global economy, ecology, evolution, and memory. Spaces of literary environmentalism are not simply about what is said to be present by dominant discourses.”

5  Binaries of core/ periphery, space/ place, hegemon/ subaltern have long been incorporated into academic discourse, and more recently, the growing shift toward subverting, flipping or inverting them. As the chapters of this thesis demonstrate, dichotomous structures such as cores and peripheries are losing relevance in a globalized world where the lines between global, local and national territoriality are substantially blurred and may no longer exist. For the authors discussed in this thesis, they indeed demonstrate an appreciation of the “local,” but as the layered narratives of the rhizomatic landscape reveal, a global, integrated interaction based on the movements between peoples is inherent in the cultural dynamics in Hawai‘i.

As a topic that deserves more critical attention in the future, such dynamics of interaction are not just reserved to Hawai‘i. While Hawai‘i is often called “the crossroads of the Pacific,” the entire Pacific region has been labeled a space, or place, of transit since the time of the ancient Polynesian voyagers. Epeli Hau’ofa famously argued that the Pacific was not a vacant space, but rather the “pathway to each other and everyone else.” The Pacific Ocean, broadly speaking, is a rhizome itself, full of connections and layers, and without a single point of origin. Gary Okihiro explains that these connections are increasingly concrete, as the vast region of the Pacific creates interactions both human and otherwise biological: “Migration offers opportunities for mixtures that deny simpleminded discriminations and groupings. The ocean currents carry coral and fish larvae great distances, and migrating humans, with and against oceanic tides, populate the earth’s seas in all its climatic zones . . . There is a notable void when history traces only the activities of humans and not their ancestry and connections with the land, water, and sky and their manifestations and life forms.” While the Native Hawaiians landed in Hawai‘i over three thousand years ago, they were not the first living beings to inhabit the Islands; plants, trees, animals, and other life forms were there long before. While I do not dispute their indigeneity, in this time of ecological concern in rapidly developing global economy, it is important to remember that plants and other living creatures are indigenous, too.

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7 Epeli Hau’ofa, “The Ocean in Us,” *We Are the Ocean* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 58.

8 Okihiro, *Island World*, 219; 211.
The Pacific region, with its diversity among peoples, environments, and economies, has become increasingly more prevalent in the popular imagination around the world, as the twenty-first century has been heralded as the “Pacific Century.” While ecocritics look for new ways to examine the multiple topics trending in the discipline due to new threats and new revelations about the environment, scholars must also remember to engage with the stories from the people of the Pacific as well. As Edward Said noted, “Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, . . . Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is . . . about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.”9 As the many peoples of the Pacific and their writers have revealed, land and its imaginings demonstrate a profound relationship between humans and the environment. As we continue to move, interact, create and imagine, it is our kuleana, our responsibility, to malama ʻāina, to nurture the land; it is also our responsibility to take care of and respect one another.

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