

2011

Beyond Colonization, Commodification, and Reclamation: Recognizing and Retheorizing the Role of Religion in Hula

Christine E. Chan
Pomona College

Recommended Citation

Chan, Christine E., "Beyond Colonization, Commodification, and Reclamation: Recognizing and Retheorizing the Role of Religion in Hula" (2011). *Pomona Senior Theses*. Paper 3.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/pomona_theses/3

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Pomona Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pomona Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

BEYOND COLONIZATION, COMMODIFICATION, AND RECLAMATION:
RECOGNIZING AND RETHEORIZING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN HULA

by

CHRISTINE EMI CHAN

Erin Runions, Religious Studies Thesis Advisor
Anthony Shay, Dance Thesis Advisor

Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies at Pomona College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

POMONA COLLEGE
Claremont, CA

APRIL 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of wonderful people who must be recognized for their invaluable contributions to this thesis. Although the shortcomings of this project are decidedly my own, any and every success must be credited to the network of faculty, friends, and family who have supported me throughout this process.

First and foremost, I am forever grateful to the Pomona College Religious Studies Department. Many thanks, especially, to Professor Erin Runions, who always provided me with thoughtful guidance, patient encouragement, and constructive criticism when I needed it most; Professor Oona Eisenstadt, who has continually pushed me work harder, think smarter, and stand firmer; and Professor Zayn Kassam, who has advised me kindly and wisely for the past four years. Their scholarly insight and academic prowess have been both wildly intimidating and incredibly inspiring. Thank you all for encouraging me to write this thesis and pushing me to pursue everything a little further.

I am also incredibly thankful for the Pomona College Dance Department. Laurie Cameron, John Pennington, Meg Jolley, and Professor Anthony Shay: without the dance and the knowledge of dance you have gifted me, I would have been completely lost. Thank you also to Asia Ayabe (PO '14), Lila Glick (PO '12), Katelyn Muir (SC '14), Katie Pelland (PO '11), and Emily Simmons (SC '14) – the lovely dancers who breathed life into my choreography this past fall.

A special thank you to the Muir Family: Uncle Andrew, Aunty Maggie, Chelsea, Katie, Riley, and Geordie for welcoming me into your home and allowing me to take over your dining table during Spring Break. Words cannot express what a blessing you are to me. To Jenn Nishioka, Jen Liao, Gabby Ventura, and Meela Mehdi: I could not have asked for better friends to spend night after late night with in the Psych Lab. Lauren Tonetti: Thank you for posting kind words on my door and for buying me caffeinated drinks at the Motley. Issu Shimomoto: Thank you for feeding me kakimochi and love. Daniel Ross: Thank you for reading my terrible, awful, ugly drafts; and thank you for always finding something nice to say. And to all my friends who have provided me with a home away from home, a family away from family, and some of the best memories of my life: Thank You!

Finally, last, but certainly not least, endless thanks to my parents, Derrick Chan and Jan Takamine, and my sister, Noelle Chan, for always loving me and supporting my dreams. I would like to dedicate this thesis to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
CHAPTER 1	
Demean and Conquer: Hula and the Colonial Project	
Introduction	5
The Orientalization of Hula.....	7
Hula Kahiko: Ritual Movement in Pre-European Hawai`i	10
The Construction of Religion.....	12
Hula `Auana: A Recycled Tradition.....	15
Conclusion.....	16
CHAPTER 2	
Hawai`i's Most Exotic Commodity: Hula and the Tourist Industry	
Introduction	17
Imagined Intimacy and Imperial Hospitality	19
Colonization Continued.....	22
The Spiritualization of Hula.....	28
Twisting Tourist Culture: Attempts at Appropriation.....	30
Conclusion.....	31
CHAPTER 3	
Rethorizing Tradition: Hula and the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement	
Introduction	33
Revival and Resistance.....	37
Disengaging the Discourse of Purity.....	40
Rethorizing Hula	42
Conclusion.....	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	46

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, April 28, 2011, twelve contestants exhibited their knowledge and skill of Hawaiian language and dance in hopes of winning the title Miss Aloha Hula 2011. The competition, which has been a part of the Merrie Monarch Festival – an annual event established in honor of King David Kalākaua – since the early 1970s, is committed to the perpetuation of Hawaiian language and traditions as well as the development of “a living knowledge of Hawaiian arts.”¹ Thus, the Merrie Monarch Festival values both traditional and contemporary performances of hula. Yet, modern interpretations of Hawaiian music and dance often raise debates amongst participants, judges, and observers over whether a certain costume, song, or piece of choreography signifies Hawai`i enough to be considered hula.

Given the history of colonization and commodification in Hawai`i, it is no surprise that non-traditional performances are met with critical reception. However, in this thesis, I hope to destabilize the popular binary juxtaposition of authentic Hawaiian art and (mis)appropriated tourist kitsch. I argue that hula has been Orientalized and wrongly associated with religion not only by colonizers and the tourist industry, but also by those whose response to colonization is a call for purity and authenticity in the practice of Hawaiian culture. I am specifically referring to people who romanticize and mythologize hula and Hawai`i prior to European contact. Therefore, I am interested in presenting a retheorization of hula that (1) recognizes hula as a recycled tradition, (2) acknowledges the unique history of the indigenous people of Hawai`i, (3) does not limit participation to certain bodies, and (4) acknowledges, without over-emphasizing or de-emphasizing, the role of religion in the history of hula.

In Chapter 1, I analyze excerpts from Nathaniel Bright Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of Hula* and sources collected in Dorothy Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly’s *Hula: Historical Perspectives* to argue that hula was Orientalized to facilitate European colonization. I particularly highlight accounts that characterize hula and

Hawaiian people as foolishly primitive and uncontrollably sexual. This chapter also illustrates how hula was associated with an inferior religion to further justify the presence of Europeans in the Hawaiian Islands.

In Chapter 2, I examine how tourist websites and tourist performances of hula perpetuate colonization by portraying hula and the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl as hyper-sexualized, on the one hand, and hyper-spiritualized on the other. In addition to looking at *Hawaii's Official Tourism Site* and the Paradise Cove website, I also draw on the works of Joyce Hammond and Jane Desmond, who attended and critiqued the Kodak Hula Show and Germaine's Lū`au, respectively. In both Chapters 1 and 2, I also discuss some responses of Hawaiian people to the colonial project.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I argue that Haunani-Kay Trask's "Lovely Hula Hands': Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture" and Momiala Kamahele's "Īlio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture" reinforce some aspects of Orientalism. In response to their efforts in the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement, I offer a retheorization of hula that neither perpetuates nor reinforces the Orientalist tendencies of colonizers and/or Hawai`i's tourist industry.

¹ *Merrie Monarch Festival*, 19 Apr. 2011, Merrie Monarch Festival, 2011 <<http://www.merriemonarch.com/home>>.

Demean and Conquer: Hula and the Colonial Project

Introduction

On January 20, 1778, the crews of the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* became the first Europeans to set foot on the Hawaiian Islands. Upon arriving at Waimea Bay, on the island of Kauai, Captain James Cook claimed and named the archipelago in honor of his patron, the fourth Earl of Sandwich.² In doing so, Cook opened the door for subsequent explorers, traders, and missionaries, forever changing the history and culture of Hawai`i. From that day forward, every aspect of Hawaiian life was influenced by the presence of Europeans.

In addition to introducing the land and people to goats, cattle, Christianity, firearms, and a multitude of diseases, European explorers, traders, and missionaries also began producing the first records of Hawaiian society. Prior to this, Hawaiian people primarily maintained their culture through oral traditions. Thus, journal entries by these explorers, traders, and missionaries compose the major sources of literature on Hawai`i before the 20th century.

Unfortunately, these works are by no means objective – or even accurate – accounts of Hawaiian life. Wrought with European Orientalism, these reports illustrate the process by which

² "Hawaii," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011, Web, 19 Apr. 2011, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/257332/Hawaii>>.

“European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.”³ In other words, European-written histories of Hawai`i successfully framed the Hawaiian Islands as Europe’s inferior Other.

Edward Said describes this relationship as Orientalism – “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁴ To put it another way, Said understands the relationship between the West (the Occident, Europe, the imperial rule) and the East (the Orient, the Other, the colonized) as one of power. In *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Meyda Yeğenoğlu explores the intersection of Said’s Orientalism and feminist criticism by concentrating on the figure of the Oriental woman. According to Yeğenoğlu, because “Orientalism is mapped powerfully onto the language of phallogentrism,”⁵ the Orient is signified as feminine, dangerous, and in need of civilizing by European men. In such cases, the Orient is also often associated with secular paganism. This classification of the Other as incapable and eager for Occidental influence is particularly evident in European accounts of hula performances.

In this chapter, I argue that hula was Orientalized to facilitate European colonization by analyzing excerpts from Nathaniel Bright Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of Hula* and sources collected in Dorothy Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly’s *Hula: Historical Perspectives*. I am particularly interested in the characterization of hula and the Hawaiian people as childish, unrefined, feminine, and highly sexualized. I also focus on the association of hula with an inferior religion by drawing on the work of anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler who states that although before the arrival of Europeans, there were three structured movement systems: ritual mourning, ha`a, and hula; the distinctions

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003): 3.

⁴ Ibid. 3.

⁵ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 11.

between these three patterns were lost on the Europeans. The imperial process that followed was similar to the “European conquest and subjugation of Africans”⁶ via the lens of comparative religion mentioned in David Chidester’s *Savage Systems*. However, colonization does not indicate disempowerment. Using Saba Mahmood’s concept of agency as “delinked from the goals of progressive politics,”⁷ I argue that in response to colonization, hula dancers exercised their agency by choosing to collude with European expectations for authenticity in staged performances.

The Orientalization of Hula

European accounts written during the colonization of Hawai‘i⁸ are riddled with Orientalist characterizations of hula as childish, unrefined, feminine, and highly sexualized. For example, according to Nathaniel Bright Emerson, hula is the “door to the heart of the people...so intimate and of so simple confidence are the revelations the people make of themselves in their songs and prattlings.”⁹ Emerson portrays the hula as juvenile, nonsensical, and representative of Hawaiian culture, a move that casts all Hawaiians and all aspects of Hawaiian life as the inferior

⁶ David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996): 219.

⁷ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 34.

⁸ Following the expeditions of Captain James Cook, Hawai‘i was visited by fleets of American whalers and flocks of New England missionaries. These groups, along with a constant flood of European explorers and traders, greatly influenced Hawaiian culture and politics. In the early 1800s, with the help of Western military technology, Kamehameha the Great united the Hawaiian Islands and established systems of government and exchange based on European models. In addition to adopting the English system of rule by monarchy, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i also embraced European institutions such as “churches, taverns, and mercantile establishments” (“Hawaii”). The deep connection between the Hawaiian Islands and Europe is even embodied by the Hawaiian flag, designed in 1816. The flag consists of eight alternating stripes of white, red, and blue – representing the eight Hawaiian Islands – with the British Union Jack suspended in the upper left corner (“Hawaii, flag of”).

By the mid-1800s, however, England’s strong relationship with Hawai‘i was superseded by a new bond with the United States. The liaison appeared stable until 1893, when American conspirators deposed the reigning monarch, Queen Lili‘uokalani, by a coup, imprisoning her in her own palace. The Republic of Hawai‘i was established, and the sovereign Kingdom of Hawai‘i was no more. Over the next few generations, while the U.S. was progressing, depressing, and engaging in a series of global conflicts, Hawai‘i was slowly transforming from a republic to a territory, and, in 1959, to a state. Today, the eight islands of the Hawaiian Archipelago – Ni‘ihau, Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Lanai, Kaho‘olawe, Maui, and Hawai‘i – are collectively claimed as America’s 50th State.

⁹ Nathaniel B. Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909): 11.

Orient. A passage from Captain James Cook's journal similarly belittles the Hawaiian people, describing one of their hula implements, the `ulī`ulī, as "like a child's rattle."¹⁰

Edward Said asserts that the characterization of the Orient as "irrational, depraved (fallen), [and] childlike,"¹¹ concomitantly characterizes the Occident as rational, righteous, mature, and able because the Orient is understood as the "contrasting image, idea, personality, experience"¹² of Europe (or the West). In this way, "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient,"¹³ which establishes the Orient as representative of everything that is foreign and inferior to the West.¹⁴ Thus, by characterizing hula as prattling and childlike, Emerson and Cook also characterize themselves as educated, self-reliant, and able to help the unsophisticated Hawaiian people. The relationship between European colonizers and colonized Hawaiians is recast as one between civil redeemers and the savages they save.

In addition to characterizing hula and Hawaiian people as childlike and uncivilized, Orientalist writings also sexualize the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl as the embodiment of Hawaiian culture. Meyda Yeğenoğlu's *Colonial fantasies: Towards a feminist reading of Orientalism* expands Said's analysis of Orientalism to suggest how individual aspects of a culture are taken to represent cultural difference as a whole. In recognizing the attention early Orientalist writers give to the veil, Yeğenoğlu argues that the "figure of the 'veiled Oriental woman' has a particular place in [18th and 19th century European] texts, not only as signifying the Oriental woman as mysterious and exotic but also as signifying the Orient as feminine, always veiled, seductive, and dangerous."¹⁵ Traise Yamamoto similarly argues that "constructions of the orientalized other – and specifically of the infantile and hyper-feminine

¹⁰ Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1980): 15.

¹¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003): 40.

¹² Ibid. 1-2.

¹³ Ibid. 204.

¹⁴ Thomas J. Prasch, "Orientalism's Other, Other Orientalism: Women in the Scheme of Empire" (*Journal of Women's History* 7.4 1995): 174-190.

¹⁵ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 11.

Asian women – functions primarily to reassert the coherence and primacy of the Western subject.”¹⁶

The sexualization of the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, in addition to her depiction as peculiar and infantile, is evident in the writings of Emerson and other Europeans – most of whom are men. Emerson’s comparison of “the physical resemblances of the Hawaiian dance to the languorous grace of the Nautch girls, of the geisha, and other Oriental dancers”¹⁷ is of particular note because by grouping the hula with the dances done by women in India and Japan, Emerson relegates Hawaiians to the realm of the feminine and Americans to the realm of the masculine.

Another example of the sexualization of the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl is the musings of David Samwell, a surgeon aboard the *Discovery*:

Saturday February 27th... The Girls we have brought with us buy Cloth here for the iron & other things they have got from their Husbands; soon after our coming to an anchor they performed a dance on the Quarter deck which we had not seen before, it might be perhaps to express their Joy on their safe arrival at this place, it was performed by two at a time – they did not jump up as in the common dance but used a kind of a regular Step & moved their Legs something like our sailors dancing a Hornpipe, they moved their Arms up and down, repeated a Song together, changed their places often, wriggled their backsides and used many lascivious Gestures. Upon the whole we thought it much more agreeable than their common Dance [Beaglehole 1967:1221-1222].¹⁸

Although Samwell found the outing pleasant and the performance “agreeable,” there is also judgment in his description of hula as “lascivious.” Here, Samwell associates the hula, and perhaps the Hawaiian people, with sexual desire, indecent behavior, and a lack of morals. This association is accompanied by the parallel association of Europeans with decency and ethics.

¹⁶ Traise Yamamoto, “In/Visible Difference: Asian American Women and the Politics of Spectacle” (*Race, Gender & Class* 7.1 2000).

¹⁷ Nathaniel B. Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909): 11.

¹⁸ Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1980): 17.

Similar tendencies are also evident in the writings of Captain George Vancouver, whose work employs a more condescending tone. In the following passage, he recalls a hula concert:

[H]ad the performance finished with the third act, we should have retired from their theatre with a much higher idea of the moral tendency of their drama, than was conveyed by the offensive, libidinous scene, exhibited by the ladies in the concluding part. The language of the song, no doubt, corresponded with the obscenity of their actions; which were carried to a degree of extravagance that was calculated to produce nothing but disgust even in the most licentious.¹⁹

Vancouver evidently believes one hula performance is enough to develop an understanding of the “moral tendency” of Hawaiian dance, although he seems to have formulated an opinion of hula, and perhaps the Hawaiian people, before observing any movement. He claims that he would have been more satisfied by the concert had the program not included the final hula ma`i (a dance to honor the genitals of the chief), yet even after being presented with other dances, he continues to reference “the disgusting obscenity exhibited in former entertainments.”²⁰ In doing so, Vancouver reinforces his understanding of the Orient as morally depraved and Europe as righteous and decent.

Thus, Emerson, Samwell, and Vancouver Orientalize hula as feminine, lascivious, and immoral, while concurrently portraying themselves as proper, honorable European men. Such characterizations ultimately justify the presence and influence of Europeans in the Hawaiian Islands. In this way, the Orientalization of hula facilitated the project of colonization.

Hula Kahiko: Ritual Movement in Pre-European Hawai`i

In addition to Orientalization, the colonial project was also facilitated by the conflation of ha`a and hula. In her study of the Hawaiian dance genre known today as hula pahu, anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler discusses the existence of “three structured movement

¹⁹ Ibid. 132.

²⁰ Ibid. 21.

systems”²¹ in Hawai`i before the arrival of Europeans. Her sources include records written in both English and Hawaiian, illustrations produced by both foreign and indigenous artists, and historical voices, which have been passed down from generation to generation. Kaeppler acknowledges that her research is tainted by European influence – as the majority of her sources are written by Europeans – and the fact that the oral transmission of traditions is an imperfect process. However, she maintains that in examining these sources side-by-side, her analysis determines common themes and presents a “credible reconstruction”²² of pre-European Hawaiian movement systems.

The first pattern of movement, used in mourning ceremonies, was associated with the recitation of lamentations, locking one’s fingers behind one’s head, stretching one’s arms toward the sky, and beating one’s breast. The second pattern, ha`a, used in the “worship of the gods in sacred situations,”²³ was performed by individuals designated to carry the priest’s taboo belongings. These movements were also accompanied by text as well as the pahu drum. The third pattern, hula, was used in entertainment and included “a series of lower-body movement motifs performed symmetrically and a wide variety of hand-arm motifs that alluded to words of the text and were performed in conjunction with a variety of sound-producing instruments, such as gourds and rattles.”²⁴ Although hula performances often paid homage to Hawaiian gods and goddesses,²⁵ the dance primarily served to maintain the social hierarchy. Upper class individuals and families would have hula performed in honor of their ancestry and accomplishments. As what would today be considered commissioned formal entertainment, “hula performances paid allegiance to the rank-based sociopolitical system, which honored and validated social distinctions.”

²¹ Adrienne Kaeppler, “Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study” (*Dance Chronicle* 27.3 2004): 297.

²² Adrienne Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances, Volume I: Ha`a and Hula Pahu: Sacred Movements* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993): 1.

²³ *Ibid.* 6.

²⁴ Adrienne Kaeppler, “Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study” (*Dance Chronicle* 27.3 2004): 297.

²⁵ Hula was often performed in the name of the goddesses Pele, Hi`iaka, or Kapo`ulakina`u, or the god La`amaikahiki.

Thus, although all three structured movement systems were associated with the narration of text and some form of percussion, the context in which each was performed varied. It is particularly important to note that only ha`a served “to worship the gods, who would look favorably on the requests of the performers and the congregation, especially requests dealing with the fertility of land, sea, and people;”²⁶ the hula was never performed in religious settings. However, the differences between these three patterns would become indistinguishable after the arrival of Europeans.

The Construction of Religion

European confusion of ha`a and hula united concepts of hula and a non-Christian religion, which was quickly dismissed by European missionaries. According to David Chidester, author of *Savage Systems*, the process of first denying, then discovering, and finally dismissing indigenous religion is an important part of the colonial project. Drawing from the history of comparative religion in southern Africa, Chidester notes that the discovery of indigenous religions indicates a certain degree of success in the colonial project:

[T]he discovery of an indigenous religious system on southern African frontiers depended upon colonial conquest and domination. Once contained under colonial control, an indigenous population was found to have its own religious system. Ironically, however, the religion discovered was the same as the religion denied.²⁷

In other words, colonizers often recognized the religion in indigenous populations only after colonial power was established. In order to understand the customs and traditions of the indigenous people, eighteenth century Europeans looked to the process of comparison. “During the eighteenth century, European comparativists generally assumed that there were four religions in the world – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Paganism, with the last sometimes divided into

²⁶ Adrienne Kaeppler, “Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study” (*Dance Chronicle* 27.3 2004): 301.

²⁷ David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996): 19.

ancient, heathen, and diabolical forms.”²⁸ Thus, indigenous religions were often categorized as Pagan – savage, vulgar, and wicked. Interestingly, one population’s assignment of an inferior religion by people in power is not limited to the colonization of southern Africa, or even the colonization of people abroad. Chidester notes the application of imperial comparative religion in the development of a universal definition of the Other:

In isolating a primitive religious mentality, which was attributed to “savages” all over the colonized world, imperial comparative religion brought its analysis home by asserting that the same mentality was shared by animals, children, women, rural peasants, the urban working class, the deaf and dumb, criminals, and the insane in Europe.²⁹

Therefore, it is no surprise that Europeans, specifically Christian missionaries, demonized Hawaiian religion to substantiate the colonial project.

In their article on Orientalism, exoticism, and self-exoticism in belly dance, Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young discuss Orientalist assumptions in the study of dance. Their analysis of Curt Sach’s *World History of Dance* demonstrates that Oriental dances are often assumed to have religious significance.³⁰ Indeed, while Adrienne Kaeppler’s analysis of pre-European dance distinguished three structured movement systems, European observers failed to differentiate between them. This led to the conflation of ha`a, used in sacred rituals, and hula, used in entertainment. Whether the affiliation of hula and Hawaiian religion was a consequence of European ignorance or strategic planning is unclear. It is possible that colonizers were aware not only of the difference between ha`a and hula but also the degree to which hula performances signified the honor and status of the reigning monarch. In such a case, the Europeans would have been cognizant of the imperial muscle behind the practice of comparative religion.

Regardless of how it occurred, the conflation of hula and religion is evident in the documents of Nathaniel Bright Emerson. In *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs*

²⁸ Ibid. 17.

²⁹ Ibid. 4.

of the Hula, he writes that the hula “gave itself to the celebration of those mythical times when gods and goddesses moved on the earth as men and women and when men and women were as gods.”³¹ Thus, Emerson bombastically redefines hula as a religious ritual. And in the quintessence of Orientalist literature, Emerson characterizes hula and the Hawaiian people as hysterically invested in lesser systems of belief, pleasure-seeking, and uncontrollable sexual desires:

The people were superstitiously religious; one finds their drama saturated with religious feeling, hedged about with tabu, loaded down with prayer and sacrifice. They were poetical; nature was full of voices for their ears; their thoughts came to them as images; nature was to them an allegory; all this found expression in their dramatic art.... They were, moreover, the children of passion, sensuous, worshipful of whatever lends itself to pleasure. How, then, could the dramatic efforts of this primitive people, still in the bonds of animalism, escape the note of passion? ...when they do step into the mud it is not to tarry and wallow in it; it is rather with the unconscious naïveté of a child thinking no evil.³²

Emerson characterizes Hawaiian theatrics, and accordingly Hawaiian people, as inspired by nature, “superstitiously religious,” overwhelmingly passionate, and innocently childlike. For Emerson, Hawaiians effortlessly communicated with nature and fervently practiced their religion to the degree that their devotion overwhelms their performances of “dramatic art.” Again, Emerson conflates hula and religion. This passage also characterizes both hula and religion as passionate and primitive. As “children of passion,” the Hawaiian people are depicted as animalistic, hedonistic, and simplistic. Thus, hula is associated with an inferior religion.

Although Emerson’s picture of hula is slightly aggrandized, his opinion was widely shared amongst European explorers, traders, and missionaries. In her examination of “Acculturation in Hawaiian Dance,” Adrienne Kaeppler focuses on the attitudes of Christian missionaries:

³⁰ Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young, “Belly Dance: Orientalism – Exoticism – Self-Exoticism” (*Dance Research Journal* 35.1 2003): 21.

³¹ Nathaniel B. Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909): 12.

With the coming of the Europeans many changes became visible in the music and dance as well as in culture values. These included song texts honoring their gods and their chiefs. Thus, the Christian missionaries declared the *hula* pagan, sinful, and a breeding place for lust. In spite of their efforts to destroy the *hula*, it only went underground, and reappeared from time to time to the disgust of the missionaries and their Christianized followers. However, some Hawaiians, who had embraced Christianity, did not feel that the *hula* was antagonistic to the new religious concepts, and, for the most part, *hula* tabus remained in force.³³

Here Kaeppler is referring to the prohibition of *hula* following the baptism of Queen Ka`ahumanu. After converting to Christianity, the queen regent “began to look upon the *hula* as a ‘heathen practice’ ...and forbade its performance in public.”³⁴ Thus, the European conflation of *hula* with a pagan religion – and consequently inferiority – was so powerful that even the Queen came to look upon the practice with disgust. However, as Kaeppler mentions, not all practitioners paid attention to either the Queen’s baptism or her edict.

Hula `Auana: A Recycled Tradition

In response to the Queen’s prohibition – and European Orientalization in general, *hula* dancers demonstrated agency in deciding to collude with European expectations of *hula*. Here, I rely on Saba Mahmood’s understanding of agency as performative³⁵ to argue that although such performances sought to please European audiences, those performing were not powerless. In his article “Dressing the *Hula*: Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii,” Christopher Balme discusses the staging of *hula* concerts as rife

³² Ibid. 12.

³³ Adrienne Kaeppler, “Acculturation in Hawaiian Dance” (*Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 4 1972): 41.

³⁴ Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1980): 36.

³⁵ Mahmood’s discussion of agency stems from her examination of the role of women in the Islamist movement. In *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Mahmood is interested in the tendency of Western feminists to portray Arab and Muslim women as “passive and submissive beings shackled by structures of male authority” (Saba Mahmood, 6) Rather than propagate the myth that all women in the Middle East are brainwashed into subservience to men, Mahmood suggests an alternative way of conceptualizing agency, outside the binary of resistance and subordination.

with “cross-cultural misunderstandings,” highlighting the “genuine attempts”³⁶ of Hawaiians to cater to what they perceived to be European expectations of authenticity. In addition to performances of hula, Hawaiians also put on boxing and wrestling exhibitions for their European visitors.³⁷ Thus, according to Balme, Hawaiians were quite active in the theatricalization of their culture.

Conclusion

Since Captain Cook first arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, Hawai`i has been framed as the Orient by European explorers, traders, and missionaries, as well as some Hawaiians who chose to play to European fantasies of Hawaiian culture. According to Edward Said, “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences.”³⁸ In Hawai`i, hula was the primary site for Orientalization because it encapsulated so many of those qualities. By characterizing hula as childlike, feminine, and morally dubious, Orientalist accounts facilitated the European colonization of the Hawaiian Islands. The association of hula with an inferior religion further assisted the colonial project. Although Europeans and Americans eventually gained power in the islands, Hawaiians were not passive in the process. Throughout both the European and American occupations, Hawaiians chose to portray their dance and culture in a way that allowed them to perpetuate the narratives of their ancestors. Sadly, efforts to perpetuate Hawaiian traditions were and still are often eclipsed by the sensationalist tactics of Hawai`i’s tourist industry.

³⁶ Christopher Balme, “Dressing the Hula: Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii” (*Paideuma* 45 1999): 235.

³⁷ Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1980): 19.

³⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003): 1.

Hawai`i's Most Exotic Commodity: Hula and the Tourist Industry

Introduction

An areal view of Waikiki cuts to a shot of the USS Arizona Memorial; flashes of a fire dancer's flaming staff, Honolulu's statue of Kamehameha the Great, the iconic hips of a "native" hula girl, and a close-up of Lady Liberty overlooking Punchbowl National Cemetery follow. These images from the opening sequence of the CBS remake "Hawai`i Five-O"³⁹ perpetuate the tourist's fantasy of Hawai`i as beautiful, exotic, and decidedly American. The thirty second clip, which juxtaposes elements associated with pre-contact Hawai`i – such as the fire dancer, King Kamehameha, and the hula girl – with symbols of Western, specifically American, influence – such as the USS Arizona Memorial and the statue of Liberty, effectively portrays the 50th state as foreign yet familiar. This collage of scenery, landmarks, and "native" bodies set to the original "Hawaii Five-O" theme song, glosses over centuries of racial, sexual, and political conflict in the islands. There is no reference to the history of Orientalism and violence that characterized the colonization of Hawai`i by both Europe and the United States; yet, since the first episode aired in September 2010, the Aloha State has thoroughly embraced the television series and the publicity

it generates for the tourist industry, Hawai`i's leading employer, revenue producer, and growth sector.

Because Hawai`i is exceptionally dependent on tourism, it is no wonder that portrayals of Hawai`i as both exotic paradise and American state – portrayals that attract tourists – are not only staged by Hollywood, but also encouraged by the State. While the endorsement of tourism may be economically beneficial, the tourist industry perpetuates the colonial project by continuing to Orientalize hula through the appropriation and commodification of the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl. Drawing on Laura E. Donaldson's critique of Western fetishizations of indigenous cultures,⁴⁰ I contend that tourist descriptions and experiences facilitate imperialist tendencies, such as the reduction of an entire people to simple, one-dimensional characters, particularly, the hyper-sexualized foreign woman and the spiritually attuned being.

In this chapter, I argue that the tourist industry perpetuates colonization by continuing to uphold the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl as either hyper-sexualized or hyper-spiritualized. First, I discuss how the Hawaiian hula girl has always been used by tourism to construct relationships between Hawai`i and the United States. Although the methodology has changed since the first half of the 20th century, the tourist industry continues to accommodate the desire of visitors to experience intimacy with Hawai`i and Hawaiian culture, specifically via interactions with the hula girl. Following this brief historical overview, I examine how tourist websites continue to facilitate colonization by romanticizing Hawai`i, hula, and the bodies of "native" performers. I both draw and elaborate on the works of Joyce Hammond and Jane Desmond, who have critiqued tourist descriptions of Hawai`i and the hula girl as primitive, idyllic, sensual, and feminized. In addition to studying how the tourist industry has hyper-sexualized the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, I explore the influence of religious tourist

³⁹ *Hawaii Five-O – Main Title Sequence*, By CBS, 28 Mar. 2011
<http://www.cbs.com/primetime/hawaii_five_0/video/?pid=rsYgvHFih9A9JayDe0eh4e0iMAf90dr_&vs=Default&play=true>.

experiences of Hawai`i on the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl. Here, I rely on the notions of New Age misappropriation and fetishization in Laura Donaldson's "On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism." Although Donaldson is primarily concerned with critiquing what she terms New Age Native Americanism, or NANA, her understanding of fetishization can be applied to the misappropriation of any (indigenous) culture. In conclusion, I look at attempts to appropriate tourist culture in response to the colonial project. Here, I employ the work of Christopher Balme, whose heavy-handed assertion that "hotel entertainment is associated with the most negative aspects of tourism"⁴¹ does not prevent (and may even allow) an understanding of hula performances for tourists as potentially subversive.

Imagined Intimacy and Imperial Hospitality

Following the overthrow of Queen Lili`uokalani, the United States claimed jurisdiction over the Hawaiian Archipelago, first as the Republic of Hawai`i, then as the Territory of Hawai`i. On August 21, 1959, Hawai`i became the 50th state to join the Union. Throughout this process of occupation, annexation, and admission, the United States promoted and practiced what Adria Imada calls "imagined intimacy"⁴² and "imperial hospitality"⁴³ in order to establish a particular relationship with Hawai`i/Hawaiians. Performances of hula by "native" women were crucial to this process. Therefore, whoever controlled these performances controlled not only the portrayal of Hawai`i and Hawaiians, but also the relationship between Americans and their newly acquired land.

⁴⁰ Laura E. Donaldson, "On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism" (*Signs* 24.3 1999): 677-696.

⁴¹ Christopher B. Balme, "Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center," (*Theatre Journal* 50.1 1998): 57.

⁴² Adria L. Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire," *American Quarterly* (56.1 2004): 114.

⁴³ Adria L. Imada, "The Army Learns to Luau: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in Hawai`i," *The Contemporary Pacific* (20.2 2008): 329.

According to Imada, imagined intimacy describes the “fantasy of reciprocal attachment”⁴⁴ between Americans and Hawai`i/Hawaiians and is a consequence of the hula circuits of the 1930s and 1940s. During this time, tourism began to eclipse agribusiness as Hawai`i’s most lucrative industry; therefore, “Hawaiian bodies and Hawaiian culture... became valuable commodities”⁴⁵ in the promotion of tourism in the continental United States. Many women left Hawai`i to perform in American nightclubs and showrooms where hula was staged for “middlebrow American entertainment.”⁴⁶ For instance the Hawaiian Room, located in the basement of the Lexington Hotel in New York, catered to American fantasies of Hawai`i and the Hawaiian hula girl. The décor and ambiance were carefully crafted to evoke images of Hawai`i. Tropical plants, murals of Hawaiian landscapes, “native” foods, and vacation-worthy drinks set the scene for the Aloha Maids, the Lexington Hotel’s troupe of four hula dancers. All four women were from Hawai`i, slim, slightly tanned, and brunette.⁴⁷ This was the ideal phenotype for hula dancers, and because these were the only women from Hawai`i many Americans saw, their bodies came to represent a “feminized version of Hawai`i... offering their *aloha* – the promise of intimacy, affection, and veneration – to the United States.”⁴⁸

In addition to portraying Hawai`i as open, vulnerable, and desiring of the United States, hula performances in the United States allowed Americans who had never visited and would never visit the islands access to a foreign yet familiar place. Imada argues that in consuming performances of hula as well as the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, “Americans could believe that they belonged to an optimistic, playful, and tolerant nation.”⁴⁹ Thus, imagined intimacy created the illusion that America and its territory were one and the same.

⁴⁴ Adria L. Imada, “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire,” *American Quarterly* (56.1 2004): 114.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 112.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 126-130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 114.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 135.

Imagined intimacy treated hula and the Hawaiian hula girl as a commodity and invited Americans to partake in Hawaiian culture. Similarly, imperial hospitality appropriated hula and the Hawaiian hula girl in order to invite the U.S. military to colonize the Hawaiian Islands. In Hawai`i, tourism and the military (US Department of Defense spending) have always been the state's first and second largest sources of income, respectively. Teresia Teaiwa has coined the term "militourism" to describe the "profound symbiosis between militarism and tourism,"⁵⁰ which "reduce Oceania to mere sites for the playing out of modern dramas: heroic triumph over nature/the Native on one hand and on the other, romantic indulgences in nature/the Native."⁵¹

The militourism industry is on display in the United States military produced film *Luau: A Native Feast*. Shot during World War II, the video portrays idealized social relations between U.S. servicemen and Hawai`i locals. The majority of these interactions are filmed at a scripted lū`au, at which Hawaiian men prepared the food while Hawaiian women entertained the officers with performances of hula. "[T]he idealized social relations portrayed in the scripted luau serve to project an illusory peace over a continuing military occupation."⁵² Therefore, although the military presence generated "frequent eruptions of racial and sexual strife," these truths were occluded from the film.⁵³ Furthermore, Imada argues that military cameras created a "sexualized rapport" between military men and Hawaiian women.⁵⁴ Again Hawai`i and the Hawaiian hula girl are portrayed as desirous of the United States. Thus, "*Luau* portrays a harmonious, yet hierarchical relationship, with the Natives in the position of cheerful and cooperative supplicants, and the haole as gentlemen callers."⁵⁵

Although the relationship between the United States and Hawai`i was not as one between equals, Americans, particularly the United States military believed the relationship to be

⁵⁰ Teresia K. Teaiwa, *Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania*, Diss, University of California Santa Cruz, California, 2001: 5.

⁵¹ Ibid. 196.

⁵² Adria L. Imada, "The Army Learns to Luau: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in Hawai`i," *The Contemporary Pacific* (20.2 2008): 331.

⁵³ Ibid. 336.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 340.

consensual. This twisted friendship is understood as imperial hospitality. The portrayal of the Hawaiian hula girl both as a familiar foreign object and as desirous of the United States was used by the tourist industry to control the relationship between Hawai`i and the United States.

Although this analysis focuses on the period when Hawai`i was not yet a state, the assertions made regarding the imperial project continue to be applicable after the allied victory, post statehood, and today.

Colonization Continued

In the modern age of Google, Facebook, and YouTube, the internet is one of the Hawaiian tourist industries' most powerful tools for maintaining imagined intimacy and imperial hospitality between Hawai`i and the United States. Websites, such as *Hawaii's Official Tourism Site*⁵⁶, are the primary source from which potential visitors glean information about history, weather, and entertainment on the islands. However, the information is far from unbiased. As this website and similar sites are designed to appeal to individuals, couples, families, and groups looking for a tropical vacation, Hawai`i ends up being romanticized and sexualized as intoxicating yet soothing, erotic, and exciting – the perfect paradise. By focusing on and emphasizing beauty, drama, and pleasure, these sites gloss over Hawai`i's colonial history, while simultaneously perpetuating colonization. “The people of Hawaii would like to share their islands with you,” the homepage for *Hawaii's Official Tourism Site* coaxes, “The fresh, floral air energizes you. The warm, tranquil waters refresh you. The breathtaking, natural beauty renews you. Look around. There's no place on earth like Hawaii.”⁵⁷ In six short sentences, the reader is inundated with striking images of island life while being encouraged to overlook the fact Hawai`i has a history rooted in colonization, white supremacy, and patriarchy.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 432.

⁵⁶ *Hawaii's Official Tourism Site – Travel Info for your Hawaii Vacation*, 2011, Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.gohawaii.com/>>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

In a fashion similar to the opening sequence of “Hawaii Five-O,” *Hawaii’s Official Tourism Site* dismisses the problems of colonization, but emphasizes the benefits of Western influence in otherwise untouched areas. The island of O’ahu is particularly highlighted as a place where “Hawaii’s timeless beauty blends with the modern luxuries of today.”⁵⁸ In addition to these written descriptions, photographs of landscapes, natural phenomena, and tourists taking pleasure in these scenes from a safe, comfortable distance decorate *Hawaii’s Official Tourism Site*. This statement and these images imply that there are areas that remain as virginal as they were before the arrival of Europeans, yet visitors will not be without running water, cell phone reception, or English-speaking tour guides.⁵⁹ However, the fact that running water, cell phone reception, and English-speaking tour guides are only in Hawai`i because Europeans and Americans were able to wrestle the land from the Hawaiians is not mentioned. Thus, the process of romanticization glosses over Hawai`i's problematic history of colonization while encouraging tourists to emulate the imperial process.

The Paradise Cove website offers further examples of romanticized descriptions of Hawai`i, but these pages focus on Hawaiian culture. The Paradise Cove website is centered on the presentation of Paradise Cove as “Hawaii’s Best Luau.” According to the website, lū`au packages include round trip transportation from Waikiki, a “tropical Mai Tai greeting,”⁶⁰ and a buffet menu feast, along with several other activities ranging from arts and crafts to storytelling. The visitor is ensured that the lū`au packages provide guests with an “authentic Hawaiian experience.”⁶¹ However, rather than authenticity, the main event seems to focus on escape and pleasure. The round trip transportation from Waikiki promotes the idea that the event is a

⁵⁸ “Oahu: The Heart of Hawaii,” *Hawaii’s Official Tourism Site – Travel Info for your Hawaii Vacation*, 2011, Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.gohawaii.com/>>.

⁵⁹ Although visitors to Hawai`i are not limited to the Caucasian U.S. mainlander, this chapter focuses on the experiences of the (primarily white, middle class) American tourist. This is because the relationship between colonized and colonizer is most strongly demonstrated by the consumption of the figure of the hula girl by American tourists.

⁶⁰ “Luau Packages.” *Paradise Cove Luau – Hawaii’s Best Luau*. Paradise Cove. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com/index.htm>>.

diversion and there is a boundary that must be crossed in order to participate. At the lū`au, guests are constantly offered a variety of entertainment as well as food and encouraged to delight in the merriment, which reinforces the themes of pleasure and leisure. Thus, tourists become acquainted with a romanticized version of life in Hawai`i. Fundamental to this Hawaiian lifestyle is the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl.

The fantasy of the Hawaiian hula girl as harmlessly sensual is perpetuated by the maintenance of the ideal phenotype for hula dancers mentioned above: slim, slightly tanned, and brunette. Furthermore, the hula girl can never be associated with a specific face and/or body. The Paradise Cove photo gallery, especially the Paradise Cove Extravaganza album, both highlights the performer's bodies while demonstrating that both the men and women possess the desired characteristics discussed earlier. No explanation or identification accompanies these images, which makes the "native" bodies more accessible (as commodities). The Paradise Cove homepage reiterates this theme. The page features links to "lū`au packages," "custom events," "reservations," and a photo of four women donning ti leaf skirts, wearing flower lei, and yielding `uli `uli, a hula implement made from a hollow gourd adorned with brightly colored feathers. Although four women are in the picture, only one face is visible, and this is barely a profile. Thus, the focus remains on the tourist's experience of the lū`au, rather than on the identity of the performers. Thus, the Paradise Cove website romanticizes and hyper-sexualizes the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl.

Scholars Joyce Hammond and Jane Desmond also recognize the processes of romanticization and hyper-sexualization in their examinations of The Kodak Hula Show and Germaine's Lū`au, respectively. As analyzed by Hammond, the Kodak Hula Show, which ran from 1937 to 2002, was designed "specifically for the benefit of tourists who wished to take

⁶¹ "About Paradise Cove." *Paradise Cove Luau – Hawaii's Best Luau*. Paradise Cove. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com/index.htm>>.

photographs of hula dancers under ideal photographic conditions.”⁶² Staged first on the beaches of Waikiki, then in Kapiolani Park, the show was influenced by Western expectations. Although the performances were free and open to the public, this packaging and presenting of hula is an example of cultural commodification. The performances presented a romanticized view of Hawai‘i (and the Hawaiian hula girl) because the show not only highlighted beauty, but also emphasized lightheartedness. The fact that the show and the parking for the show were both free supported this theme. Furthermore, “tourist predilections [shaped] performers’ choices,”⁶³ meaning the performances at the Kodak Hula Show were “idealized and romanticized distillation of elements of Hawaiian culture selected for tourist entertainment.”⁶⁴

For example, the hula kahiko used to be performed, but was abandoned because the tourists did not want to listen to the chants and watch the stronger, sterner movements. Given this observation, Hammond notes that even though the tourist industry embraces hula, where early colonization demonized it, Westerners continue to gaze upon Hawai‘i, Hawaiians, and hula through an Orientalist lens:

In the postmodern tourism industry, tourists may seem ironically to reverse the process of colonial predecessors by valuing that (or, more accurately, a representation of that) which was formerly destroyed and/or condemned by Western missionaries, colonial administrators, and travelers. However tourists continue the process of appropriation of Others and their resources in many of tourism’s rituals and practices.⁶⁵

Therefore, the Kodak Hula Show presented tourists not only with ideal photographic conditions, but also with the images they expected and demanded to see.

One image that all tourists were (and still are) compelled to see was (is) the figure of the sexualized Hawaiian hula girl. Although the Kodak Hula Show employed many women, not all

⁶² Joyce D. Hammond, “Photography, Tourism and the Kodak Hula Show.” (*Visual Anthropology* 14.1 2001): 3.

⁶³ Ibid. 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 4.

of which fit the ideal phenotype for hula dancers, the performance always focused on the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, rather than on individual dancers. This is similar to the work done by the photograph of four women on the Paradise Cove homepage. By refusing to allow one specific face and/or body to be associated with hula, the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl remains a romanticized trope, a symbol of the tourist industry's Hawai`i. The creation and maintenance of this figure is supported by tourist expectations of Hawaiian lifestyle, philosophy, and spirituality. Thus, Hawai`i and the Hawaiian hula girl are characterized as carefree, sensual, sexual and eager to share their culture with tourists.

The Kodak Hula Show's presentation of hula and the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl as open and available for consumption by tourists provides the audience with entertainment and optimal photographic opportunities. Although a degree of fetishization tainted the performance, the degree is not as severe as that observed by Jane Desmond at Germaine's Lū`au. This may be because unlike at the Kodak Hula Show, an important element of Germaine's Lū`au is audience participation. Thus, the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl is hyper-sexualized to make her more appealing to (primarily Caucasian U.S. mainlander) tourists.

Desmond notes that the tourist industry manufactures these one-dimensional figures of the Native Hawaiian to cultivate Hawai`i's unique destination image. Again, the tourist industry's perpetuation of oversimplified notions of Hawai`i and the Hawaiian effectively erase the context in which hula is founded and performed:

The complex history of immigration, colonialism, and cultural change – involving early Polynesian voyagers; European traders; European and Euro-American missionaries and businessmen; Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese plantation workers; U.S. servicemen; as well as more recent arrivals from Samoa, Tonga, and the U.S. mainland.⁶⁶

In her analysis of Germaine's Lū`au, Desmond highlights the fact that tourists are led to believe

that Hawai'i encourages sensual and sexual encounters. The sensuality and sexuality of the place are condensed into the image of the Hawaiian hula girl. This characterization of Hawaiian hula girls is particularly emphasized when juxtaposed beside the clumsy, white men who are called on stage to dance and interact with them. Desmond finds it is interesting that male performers are allowed to display individuality, but female performers are not. Once more, the association of a specific face/body with hula would spoil the tourist's fantastic image of the exotic, yet innocuous hula girl.

Thus, Germaine's Lū`au uses soft primitivism to appeal to tourist audiences. "The innocence associated with the Edenic trope prohibits knowing, aggressive deployment of sexual allure, making the hula girl nonthreatening to men and women alike and associating her more with sensuous heterosexual romance than with sex per se."⁶⁷ Operating within the matrix of heteronormativity, Germaine's Lū`au portrays the Hawaiian hula girl as childlike and sensual to draw the audience into participation, rather than distant observation. Desmond notes "[almost] all tourist shows incorporate some version of [the] teaching-the-tourist-to-dance motif, usually playing on the awkwardness of the neophyte and the embarrassment that is supposed to accompany shaking your hips (badly) in public."⁶⁸ Although one can reason that the (perhaps alcohol-induced) carefree atmosphere of tourist shows allows audience members to overcome their inhibitions more easily, I would say that audience members participate because they desire to interact with the Hawaiian hula girl.

Here, Desmond would claim that the underlying impetus is heterosexual desire: men desire the attention of the sensual Other, while women desire to learn from the "'primitives' who, being closer to nature (knowing how to hang loose), are 'naturally' more comfortable with their

⁶⁶ Jane C. Desmond, "Invoking 'The Native': Body Politics in Contemporary Hawaiian Tourist Shows." (*The Drama Review* 41.4 1997): 85.

⁶⁷ Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999: 12.

⁶⁸ Jane C. Desmond, "Invoking 'The Native': Body Politics in Contemporary Hawaiian Tourist Shows." (*The Drama Review* 41.4 1997): 95.

sexuality and hence can release that sexuality in others.”⁶⁹ However, I argue that the desire to interact with the Hawaiian hula girl goes beyond a desire to experience her sensuality and sexuality. The commodification of hula is rooted in the tourist’s hope that the romanticized lifestyle of the Hawaiian hula girl can be acquired by participating in her dance. Tourists influenced, whether consciously or not, by the New Age movement find this portrayal of the Hawaiian hula girl particularly attractive. Knowing this, the tourist industry has hyper-spiritualized, as well as hyper-sexualized, the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, moves that not only emulates but also perpetuates colonization.

The Spiritualization of Hula

One example of the spiritualization of hula can be found on the website of the Polynesian Cultural Center. Founded on O’ahu in 1963 and sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Polynesian Cultural Center seeks “to help preserve and perpetuate the more ideal aspects of Polynesian culture, and to provide work opportunities for students at the adjoining Brigham Young University – Hawaii.”⁷⁰ The fact that the Polynesian Cultural Center assumes the authority to judge which aspects of Polynesian culture are more ideal than others illustrates a parallel between the mission statement of the Polynesian Cultural Center disparaging attitudes of David Samwell and Captain George Vancouver in the previous chapter.

The required approval of Polynesian Cultural Center performances by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adds a religious element to the relationship between the “native” performers (colonized pagans) and the audience (colonizing missionaries). Although the website does not explicitly mention the role of religion in this exchange, written and pictorial descriptions of the activities and shows offered by the Polynesian Cultural Center portray the “native” body as more spiritually attuned than that of the tourist. For instance, “Hā – Breath of

⁶⁹ Ibid. 95.

Life”⁷¹ is a dramatic tale of love and bravery, set in the South Pacific. The audience is encouraged to “Come. Breathe it in. And let the island spirit live in you long after your departure.”⁷² The implication here is that there is something mystical about the performance that can be transferred to (and taken home by) members of the audience. Therefore, in addition to romanticizing the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl, the Polynesian Cultural Center also imbues her with spirituality previously not present.

For Laura Donaldson, the New Age movement’s “search for alternative sources of knowledge...lifestyles and spiritualities”⁷³ reinforces 19th century Anglo-European imperialism by Orientalizing indigenous cultures as primitive and, thus, closer to nature and more spiritually attuned.⁷⁴ In her article, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism,” Donaldson argues that the framing of Native American culture as pre-historical promotes the belief that Native Americans possess wisdom from ancient sources (usually thought to be Nature), while the framing of the Native American as the Other exposes cultural elements to the process of fetishization. Drawing on the work of feminist critic Mieke Bal, Donaldson’s notion of fetishization focuses on the abduction of objects from their original contexts.⁷⁵ In other words, fetishization strips cultural elements of their historical meaning, sometimes imbuing the tradition with spirituality and/or religiosity where there previously was none.

Considering the majority of people involved in New Age movements are women, it is troubling that “the description of fetishization in terms of abduction and denuding ironically recalls some of the most oppressive social processes deployed against women by a masculinist

⁷⁰ “What is the purpose of the PCC?” *Polynesian Cultural Center Official Site – Best Hawaii Luau*. 2011. Polynesian Cultural Center. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.polynesia.com/faqs.html#purpose>>.

⁷¹ “Hā – Breath of Life.” *Polynesian Cultural Center Official Site – Best Hawaii Luau*. 2011. Polynesian Cultural Center. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.polynesia.com/ha.html>>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Laura E. Donaldson, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism,” (*Signs* 24.3 1999): 677.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 684.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 686.

society: their reduction to sexual objects, for instance.”⁷⁶ Yet, fetishization remains an integral part of New Age movements.

Those who have been inculcated with the New Age obsession with “native” spiritual traditions comply with Mohawk poet Beth Brant’s belief that “the new-age is merely the old-age – capitalism cloaked in mystic terminology, dressed in robes and skins of ancient and Indigenous beliefs.”⁷⁷ In other words the process of fetishization is this century’s version of colonialism. Thus, the tourist industry’s treatment of hula as a commodity, stripped of complexities that might trouble Hawai’i’s destination image, certainly perpetuates the colonial project. Yet, because hula is a performance tradition, there is space within tourist displays of hula to speak against tourist culture.

Twisting Tourist Culture: Attempts at Appropriation

In “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire,” Adria Imada contends that the tourist industry offers Hawaiians the opportunity to perpetuate their culture, though within certain restrictions.⁷⁸ Christopher Balme acknowledges this same possibility in his analysis of the Polynesian Cultural Center in “Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center.” Balme notes that while attempts to provide tourists with ‘authentic’ representations of Polynesian culture perpetuate colonial ideas about the islands, the performances by the Samoan and Tongan ‘villagers’ deconstructs the tourist gaze. According to Balme, this is accomplished through the use of performative mimicry; he writes, “Instead of imitating the colonizer and developing forms of subversion by holding up a distorted image of the European, the Samoans and Tongans appear to be mimicking European

⁷⁶ Ibid. 686.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 680.

⁷⁸ Adria L. Imada, “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire,” *American Quarterly* (56.1 2004): 119.

projections of themselves.”⁷⁹ In other words, the Samoan and Tongan ‘villagers’ subtly coerce their audience into self-examination, turning the visiting tourists into a spectacle.

Although Balme’s analysis does not include Hawaiian ‘villagers,’ his observations directly apply to performances of hula, at the Polynesian Cultural Center and anywhere else tourists may be called to reassess their understanding of hula and/or the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl. Perhaps, an adaptation of the “teaching-the-tourist-to-dance motif,”⁸⁰ would provide the right backdrop for performative mimicry. Rather than satisfy touristic fantasies, performers could parody caricatures of themselves as excessively primitive, exaggeratedly sexualized, and extremely two-dimensional.

Conclusion

The tourist industry has always used the hyper-sexualized and/or hyper-sexualized hula girl to perpetuate colonization in Hawai`i. In the beginning of the 20th century, the figure of the Hawaiian hula girl was employed to construct feelings of imagined intimacy and imperial hospitality between Hawai`i and the United States. Today, tourist websites continue to Orientalize hula and frame Hawai`i and Hawaiian culture as the Other, ripe for consumption. Both Joyce Hammond and Jane Desmond recognize this process of Orientalization and work to expose the tourist industry’s roots – colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy – in their analysis of the tourist industry in Hawai`i. Building on their work, I argue that in addition of sexualization, hula also undergoes spiritualization in an attempt to cater to tourists searching for “alternative sources of knowledge...lifestyles, and spirituality.”⁸¹ Here, I rely on Laura Donaldson, who, resembling the objectives of both Hammond and Desmond, advocates a “demystification of [the New Age movement] and an exposure of its roots in the legacies of

⁷⁹ Christopher B. Balme, “Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center,” (*Theatre Journal* 50.1 1998): 60.

⁸⁰ Jane C. Desmond, “Invoking ‘The Native’: Body Politics in Contemporary Hawaiian Tourist Shows.” (*The Drama Review* 41.4 1997): 95.

historical and neo-colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchal capitalism.”⁸² Christopher Balme’s suggestion that performative mimicry can be used to subvert colonization is an example of one attempt to expose the ugly history behind the tourist industry; however, a retheorization that goes beyond performances for tourists is needed.

⁸¹ Ibid. 677.

⁸² Ibid. 694.

Rethorizing Tradition: Hula and the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement

Introduction

Onipa`a – be steadfast. This was the motto of Queen Lili`uokalani, Hawai`i's last reigning monarch.⁸³ Indeed, throughout her rule, Queen Lili`uokalani strongly opposed U.S. occupation and sought to rectify the injustices endured by the people of Hawai`i. She was especially concerned with injustices that were the consequence of European and American imperialism and spoke against those crimes of colonization. Her commitment to the fight for self-determination and reparation for the people of Hawai`i inspired and continues to inspire the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. Thus, “*Onipa`a!*” has become the rousing and unifying cheer of Hawaiian resistance. However, this does not mean that the movement is without internal conflict. In fact, the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement is the site of major tension between discourses of purity and discourses of hybridity in the debate over who may identify as “Hawaiian.”

In the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement, discourses of purity assume that the desire for self-determination and reparation is limited to those of Native Hawaiian ancestry. Individuals

whose families have lived in Hawai`i for generations or who have immersed themselves in Hawaiian culture, but do not possess authentic blood are excluded. Conversely, discourses of hybridity embrace Hawai`i as a “multicultural ‘racial paradise’”⁸⁴ where everyone is included; however, this inclusivity erases the unique experiences and historical struggles of Native Hawaiians. In “Remixing Hybridity: Globalization, Native Resistance, and Cultural Production,” Cynthia Franklin and Laura Lyons attempt to address the tension between these discourses. Through the analysis of two creative expressions of cultural mixing, the authors strive to reveal and critique “the unproductive binary opposition between... ‘nativist authenticity’ and diasporic or poststructuralist forms of identity and community.”⁸⁵ Although Franklin and Lyons focus on contemporary Hawaiian music, I believe their discussion to be useful in introducing the same issues in relation to hula.

“Remixing Hybridity” introduces the issue of Hawaiian sovereignty by discussing the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court case *Rice v. Cayetano*. Rice, a white man from the island of Hawai`i, argued that the exclusive elections policy of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which restricted the vote to only those who possessed Hawaiian ancestry, was unconstitutional. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs, an organization that oversees the Kingdom of Hawai`i, defended its policy, saying that the elections should be restricted to people of Hawaiian ancestry because the group existed to support just those people.⁸⁶ In the end, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rice’s opinion that the exclusive elections policy was unconstitutional. Franklin and Lyons credit the success of his case to an overwhelming army of attorneys and “popular contemporary rhetoric on race.”⁸⁷

⁸³ Mary Kawena Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No`eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ Cynthia Franklin and Laura Lyons, “Remixing Hybridity: Globalization, Native Resistance, and Cultural Production in Hawai`i,” (*American Studies* 45.3 2004): 50.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 51.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 49.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 50.

Specifically, Franklin and Lyons believe that rather than viewing the world as partitioned and disjointed, people tend to see a multiracial, multicultural paradise. This is especially true in America, and even more so in Hawai`i. Everyone is understood to contribute to the beautiful variety that is our nation. On the one hand, this places minority populations, such as Hawaiians, on equal footing with all other ethnic and racial groups. On the other hand, this celebration of equality erases the unique situation of indigenous people. Thus, Franklin and Lyons see the Supreme Court's ruling as a "refusal to recognize Native Hawaiians' special political status as indigenous people, who as a result of treaties signed with the United States, maintain legal claims to 1.8 million acres of land in Hawai`i."⁸⁸

In other words, Franklin and Lyons suggest the Supreme Court made their decision based on the belief that the characteristics that people share are more important than the characteristics unique to each person. Just as Mexican-American, Japanese-American, and Italian-American identities are valued above their non-hyphenated counterparts, Hawaiian people are absolved into the American cultural identity. Thus, this discourse of universality weakens the claims of indigenous people who seek cultural or political identities beyond that of a hyphenated American. This is also known as a discourse of hybridity, diaspora, postcolonialism, and/or post-structuralism. Because these systems of knowledge often set out to debunk nationalist or nativist claims, they frequently produce a dualistic understanding of the world. Such schemes assume that Hawaiians center their demands on genealogical purity or cultural authenticity; however, this is not necessarily true. In this way, both "discourses of authenticity and cultural hybridity can work to undermine native cultural and political identities and rights."⁸⁹

It is with this knowledge that Franklin and Lyons attempt "to critique the complicity of discourses of postcolonialism in the erasure of indigenous cultural forms and political

⁸⁸ Ibid. 49.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 50.

struggles.”⁹⁰ In their analysis of Joe Balaz’s spoken word album *Electric Laulau* and Hapa’s cover of U2’s “Pride (In the Name of Love),” Franklin and Lyons deduce that “culturally-mixed music can serve as a form of resistance to repressive politics – local, national, and international – as well as an alternative to apocalyptic visions of globalization.”⁹¹ Yet, the tension between indigenous rights and postcolonial analyses remain. In their conclusion, Franklin and Lyons offer the following suggestion for future studies:

Native politics and culture cannot be subsumed into a globalized, heterogeneous domicile, nor equated with a naïve desire to return to 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 people demand above all else is their right to self-determination.⁹²

While I agree that it is important to recognize the rights of indigenous people, acknowledgement alone does not resolve the issue of purity versus hybridity.

Therefore, in this chapter, I highlight aspects of hula practices that do not perpetuate the Orientalization, spiritualization, and fetishization of European and American colonizers to name a current retheorization that is beneficial to those who identify as Hawaiian. First, I provide a brief historical overview of the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance and the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement in order to understand the arguments in Haunani-Kay Trask’s “‘Lovely Hula Hands’: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture” and Momiala Kamahale’s “‘Īlio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture.” Next, I discuss how the use of hula by these two Native Hawaiian leaders involved in the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty reinforces some of the injustices they are working to push against. Finally, I offer a retheorization of hula as a performative art form that (1) recognizes hula as a recycled tradition, (2) illustrates (so as not to fetishize by decontextualization) the unique plight of the indigenous people of Hawai`i, (3) does

⁹⁰ Ibid. 51.

⁹¹ Ibid. 58.

⁹² Ibid. 74.

not limit participation to certain bodies, and (4) acknowledges, without over-emphasizing or de-emphasizing, the role of religion in the history of hula.

Revival and Resistance

The Hawaiian Renaissance, also known as the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance and the Second Hawaiian Renaissance, began in the 1970s. Characterized by a resurgence of Hawaiian culture, this movement included opposition to tourist-centered culture, interest in Hawaiian language, or `ōlelo Hawai`i, the creation of a new genre of Hawaiian music, and the revival of hula. Overall, the Hawaiian Renaissance attempted to counter the spectacle that tourists believed to be Hawaiian culture and the perpetuation of that spectacle by the Hawaiian government and people.

The renewed interest in Hawaiian language can be credited to Mary Kawena Pukui, who wrote several books on `ōlelo Hawai`i, most notably *Ōlelo No`eau*, a book of Hawaiian proverbs and poetry. As `ōlelo Hawai`i regained popularity, Hawaiian music began giving prominence to the sounds of slack-key guitars. Often, slack-key guitarists such as Gabby Pahinui, Keola and Kapono Beamer, and the members of Hui `Ohana – Dennis Pavao and the Ka`apana Brothers, sang in `ōlelo Hawai`i.⁹³ This style of music greatly contrasted the hapa-haole songs of pre-Hawaiian Renaissance Hawai`i, which showcased Ragtime melodies and mostly English lyrics.

Just as music received a makeover, hula experienced quite a revival during the Hawaiian Renaissance. Following Queen Ka`ahumanu's prohibition on hula, the dance was rarely performed outside the realm of the tourist industry. Thus, prior to the Hawaiian Renaissance, cheapened, fetishized versions of hula dominated the scene. Then, in 1971, George Na`ope and

⁹³ George S Kanahale, "The Hawaiian Renaissance," *Kamehameha Schools: Kapalama Campus*, 12 Dec. 2010 <<http://kapalama.ksbe.edu>>.

Auntie Dottie Thompson organized the first hula competition at the Merrie Monarch Festival.⁹⁴

Amy Stillman argues that the festival was established “expressly for the purpose of attracting tourists and tourist dollars,” but the content of the event does not support the destination image associated with Hawai`i.⁹⁵

The hula performed at the Merrie Monarch Festival is much less sexualized than that which is performed for tourists at the Paradise Cove Lū`au or Germaine’s Lū`au. The hula `olapa (dancer/s) do not necessarily fit the tourist’s fantasy of the Hawaiian hula girl, and the costumes worn must be historically accurate to the time period in which the song being danced was written. The Merrie Monarch Festival also celebrates `ōlelo Hawai`i.

Thus, the Hawaiian Renaissance, which influenced all aspects of Hawaiian culture, revitalized Hawaiian pride. Moreover, the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement had been at work since 1893, however, it was not until the Hawaiian Renaissance that the movement gained momentum. Although there has been resistance to the United States since Queen Lili`uokalani was overthrown in 1893, the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement gained strength and popular support when the fight for self-determination worked in tandem with the Hawaiian Renaissance.

Following her overthrow, several organizations were established to support the Queen while she was under house arrest. Immediately following the coup, the Kingdom of Hawai`i was established. This organization worked with Lili`uokalani while she was in exile to restore the monarchy. However, after the Uprising of 1895, Lili`uokalani abdicated the throne because she did not want any more blood to be shed. Several years later, in 1900, the Home Rule Party of Hawai`i was established by Robert Wilcox. The group was dedicated to Hawaiian nationalism, however, their ideas were often seen as radical. Their refusal to speak English and desire to grant Hawaiian magician-priests, or kahuna, medical licenses led ultimately to their failure in 1912.

⁹⁴ *Merrie Monarch Festival*. 19 Apr. 2011. Merrie Monarch Festival. 2011
<<http://www.merriemonarch.com/home>>.

⁹⁵ Amy Stillman, “Hawaiian Hula Competitions: Event, Repertoire, Performance, Tradition,” (*Journal of American Folklore* 109.434 1996): 361.

Although they did not last more than a decade, the spirit of the group was resuscitated in 1997 when Vickie Holt Takamine reestablished the organization as the Aloha `Aina Party.

Other contemporary groups also perpetuate the spirit of the Royalist Organizations. These assemblies continue to seek sovereignty as well as redress for the overthrow of the monarchy and the occupation of the islands. However, the specific goals and methods of these groups vary. The Bishop Estate was established in 1915 according to the will of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a prominent woman and descendent of Kamehameha the Great. Bishop Estate includes the Bishop Museum, which displays the largest collection of Polynesian cultural artifacts, and the Kamehameha Schools provide quality, subsidized education to Hawaiian children.

In 1978, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs was established. Their website states their mission as such:

To mālama (protect) Hawai`i's people and environmental resources and OHA's assets, toward ensuring the perpetuation of the culture, the enhancement of lifestyle and the protection of entitlements of Native Hawaiians, while enabling the building of a strong and healthy Hawaiian people and nation, recognized nationally and internationally.⁹⁶

When the Democratic Party of Hawai`i was founded in 1900, their customs were more pragmatic than those of the Home Rule Party, and they gained sponsorship from the American Democratic Party. They also staunchly supported the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which is a controversial project that provides Hawaiians with a certain blood quantum with cheap housing and ceded lands. It is because of these issues that the final two groups exist in the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. The Nation of Hawai`i is the brainchild of Bumpy Kanahele. In 1989, the Nation of Hawai`i took over the Makapu`u Lighthouse, and refused to give up their occupation until the government offered to exchange the land surrounding the lighthouse for land in nearby towns. Another active group is called Ka Lahui, which was established in 1987 by Mililani Trask and her sister Haunani-Kay Trask. The goal of this movement was and is

decolonization and self-government. Although radical, their views are supported by Poka Laenui (Hayden Burgess), the head of the Institute for Advancement of Hawaiian Affairs, and their rallies often draw media attention.

In “‘Lovely Hula Hands’: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture,” Haunani-Kay Trask demonstrates that in the debate between discourses of purity and discourses of hybridity, she tends to privilege ancestry over acculturation. “‘Īlio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture” similarly exposes Momiala Kamahele’s position. Both Trask and Kamahele understand hula to be a political tool, however, in the following section, I argue that their view of hula through a discourse of purity perpetuates European and American Orientalizations.

Disengaging the Discourse of Purity

In “‘Lovely Hula Hands’: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture,” Haunani-Kay Trask compares Hawai`i’s relationship with the tourist industry to the relationship between a sex worker and her pimp. In introducing the character of the harlot, however, Trask must also acknowledge the character of the innocent virgin. She does this by romanticizing pre-contact Hawai`i, pre-contact Hawaiian culture, and pre-contact hula. Trask describes authentic, pure hula as natural, or without “clownlike makeup,” solely Hawaiian, or independent of other Polynesian cultures, “powerfully erotic,” physically demanding, sacred, and a celebration.⁹⁷ Trask usually write with flourish, but this description goes beyond melodramatic. The passage is just as much a spectacle as is the airbrushed hula girls in Waikiki.

The first requirement is the transformation of the product, or the cultural attribute, much as a woman must be transformed to look like a prostitute – that is, someone who is complicitous in her own commodification. Thus hula dancers wear clownlike makeup, don

⁹⁶ “Vision & Mission,” Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Office of Hawaiians Affairs, 11 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.oha.org>>.

⁹⁷ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai`i*. Revised ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 1999) 144.

costumes from a mix of Polynesian cultures, and behave in a manner that is smutty and salacious rather than powerfully erotic. The distance between the smutty and the erotic is precisely the distance between Western culture and Hawaiian culture. In the hotel version of the hula, the sacredness of the dance has completely evaporated, while the athleticism and sexual expression have been packaged like ornaments. The purpose is entertainment for profit rather than a joyful and truly Hawaiian celebration of human and divine nature.⁹⁸

In romanticizing pre-contact Hawai`i and pre-contact Hawaiian culture, Trask devalues all other expressions of Hawaiian identity and essentially erases Hawai`i's complex history of colonization. This is not decolonization; this disregard for context is a sort of fetishization. Like an American tourist who takes souvenirs across the Pacific Ocean, Trask tears the figure of the Hawaiian hula dancer across time. Thus, Trask's description of pure tradition perpetuates the Orientalization and fetishization of hula.

Momiala Kamahale is guilty of similar charges. In “`Ilio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture,” Momiala Kamahale recounts the protest of Senate Bill 8, specifically the way she and other leaders used hula to legitimize their position. Like Trask, Kamahale retells the event with grandeur:

Each time the drums sounded, we heard ‘refuse to part with your traditions.’ Each time the voices of the kumu hula chanted, we believed the central message, “defend and protect your way of life.’ And each time the dancers swirled in rhythmic body movements, we implicitly understood our responsibility to ‘keep traditions precious, for one day they will be taken.’⁹⁹

Kamahale draws on emotion and the assumption that people see great value in connecting with ancient traditions. However, the use of hula in a non-traditional setting, in a struggle that has become about maintaining tradition, does not sit right. This is because the politicization of hula is inconsistent with the discourse of purity. Rather, the discourse of purity is incongruous with the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. Thus, in the final section of this chapter, I use Craig

⁹⁸ Ibid. 144.

⁹⁹ Momiala Kamahale, “`Iio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture,” *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): 54.

Womack's notion of tradition to name a retheorization of hula that is beneficial to those who identify as Hawaiian and seek Hawaiian sovereignty.

Retheorizing Hula

In Adrienne Kaeppler's article "Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study," Kaeppler offers the following definition of tradition: "...tradition is a continuous process – constantly adding and subtracting ideas and practices, constantly changing, constantly recycling bits and pieces of ideas and practices into new traditions."¹⁰⁰ This is exactly the process that has produced the majority of hula performed today. Rather than buy into Western ideas of preservation, which is embedded in the narrative of progress, Kaeppler suggests focusing on perpetuation. Where preservation calls for judgment to be placed, perpetuation refers to the belief that knowledge of the past makes for a better future.¹⁰¹ Daniel Heath Justice's interpretation of Craig Womack's definition of traditionalism offers a similar lens for viewing traditions:

In *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Womack argues for 'an alternative definition of traditionalism as anything that is useful to Indian people in retaining their value and worldviews, no matter how much it deviates from what people did one of two hundred years ago.' With this pragmatic definition, we avoid the trap of requiring an absolute pre-Columbian precedent for the continued existence of Native peoples and Native cultural expression today while leaving open the important practice of drawing on history for useful inspiration and continuity without fetishizing it as a deadening, taxidermic standard for contemporary authenticity.¹⁰²

In other words, tradition can be recycled into anything that is useful for those who identify with it. In the case of hula, the Merrie Monarch Festival, Patrick Makuakane's halau *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka*

¹⁰⁰ Adrienne L Kaeppler, "Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study," *Dance Chronicle* 27.3 (2004): 294.

¹⁰¹ Cynthia Franklin and Laura Lyons, "Remixing Hybridity: Globalization, Native Resistance, and Cultural Production in Hawai'i," *American Studies* 2004: 53.

¹⁰² Daniel Heath Justice, "Notes Toward a Theory of Anomaly," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 214.

Wēkiu, and the University of Hawai‘i John A. Burns School of Medicine Department of Native Hawaiian Health offer such presentations.

These performances are an excellent example of how hula should be conceptualized, as they (1) recognize hula as a recycled tradition, (2) illustrate (so as not to fetishize by decontextualization) the unique plight of the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, (3) are inclusive to all bodies, and (4) do not over-emphasize or de-emphasize the role of religion in the history of hula. Indeed, the mission statements of both the Merrie Monarch Festival and *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu* acknowledge the need to perpetuate, not preserve, hula. Patrick Makuakane refers to the style of *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu* as hula mua – the hula that evolves.¹⁰³

The Department of Native Hawaiian Health similarly acknowledges how hula can be employed beyond tourist performances, or even performances in general. Currently, research is exploring how the practice of hula can be used to address the health disparities between Native Hawaiians and the general population.¹⁰⁴ Unlike European and American colonizers, the tourist industry, and Trask and Kamahēle, the Merrie Monarch Festival, Makuakane’s halau, and the Department of Native Hawaiian Health allows hula to be defined in its own right.

Another difference between previous theorizations of hula and the (re)theorization I am attempting to draw out is the lack of an “ideal phenotype” in the Merrie Monarch Festival and *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu*. Both the tourist industry and some groups involved in the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement limit participation to certain bodies. However, neither Merrie Monarch Festival contestants nor members of Makuakane’s company are required to be slim, tanned, brunette, or Native Hawaiian. Similarly, studies done by the Department of Native Hawaiian Health on the use of hula as a cardiac intervention do not limit their participation to a particular

¹⁰³ *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu*, 19 Apr. 2011, *Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu*, 12 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.naleihulu.org/index.htm>>.

¹⁰⁴ Kaholokula, Joseph Keawe‘aimoku, Erin Saito, Cecilia Shikuma, Mele Look, Kim Spencer-Tolentino, and Marjorie K. Mau. “Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research.” *Hawaii Med J.* 67.8 (2008): 218–222.

body type. Although the study was developed to focus on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, the results can be applied outside the phenotype of the original cohort

Finally, the Merrie Monarch Festival, Makuakane's halau, and the Department of Native Hawaiian Health provide context for each class and performance. Announcers at the Merrie Monarch Festival are often experts in Hawaiian culture and share their knowledge of the song, dress, and flowers presented along with the dance with the audience before each performance. Similarly, Makuakane encourages his company members to learn about the culture through immersion rather than fetishization, and the Department of Native Hawaiian Health explain their study before allowing patients to consent to using hula as treatment. Moreover, this kind of work bridges the gap between Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and academics and scholars trained in Western schools of thought. This promotes decolonization without erasing the history of colonization in Hawai'i and in hula.

Conclusion

Since 1893, the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement has been seeking some form of autonomy for the Hawaiian Islands. However, debates over whether non-Native speakers, non-indigenous people, or non-Hawai'i residents should be allowed to participate in the movement has prevented the group from obtaining unity, and perhaps success. Interestingly, the arguments of Haunani-Kay Trask in "Lovely Hula Hands': Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture" and Momiala Kamahale in "Īlio`ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture" are possibly more damaging to the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement than the presence of non-Native speakers, non-indigenous people, or non-Hawai'i residents at Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement events. In attempting to celebrate hula, Trask and Kamahale reinforce Orientalist tendencies to romanticize hula and Hawai'i. Therefore, I offer a retheorization of hula by drawing out aspects of hula presentations that (1) recognize hula as a recycled tradition, (2)

acknowledge the unique plight of the indigenous people of Hawai`i, (3) do not limit participation to certain bodies, and (4) acknowledges, without over-emphasizing or de-emphasizing, the role of religion in the history of hula.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 1 – Demean and Conquer: Hula and the Colonial Project

- Balme, Christopher. "Dressing the Hula: Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii." *Paideuma* 45 (1999): 233-255.
- Barrère, Dorothy B., Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly. *Hula: Historical Perspectives*. Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1980.
- Chidester, David. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.
- Emerson, Nathaniel B. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909.
- "Hawaii." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/257332/Hawaii>>.
- "Hawaii, flag of." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1355590/Hawaii-flag-of?anchor=ref949709>>.
- Kaeppeler, Adrienne. "Acculturation in Hawaiian Dance." *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 4 (1972): 38-46.
- . *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances, Volume I: Ha`a and Hula Pahu: Sacred Movements*. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993.
- . "Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study." *Dance Chronicle* 27.3 (2004): 293-311.
- Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Prasch, Thomas J. "Orientalism's Other, Other Orientalism: Women in the Scheme of Empire." *Journal of Women's History* 7.4 (1995): 174-190.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 25th Anniversary ed. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.
- Shay, Anthony and Barbara Sellers-Young. "Belly Dance: Orientalism – Exoticism – Self-Exoticism." *Dance Research Journal* 35.1 (2003): 13-37.
- Yamamoto, Traise. "In/Visible Difference: Asian American Women and the Politics of Spectacle." *Race, Gender & Class* 7.1 (2000): 43-56.
- Yeğenoğlu, Meyda. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

CHAPTER 2 – HAWAII'S MOST EXOTIC COMMODITY: HULA AND THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

- "About Paradise Cove." *Paradise Cove Luau – Hawaii's Best Luau*. Paradise Cove. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com/index.htm>>.
- Balme, Christopher B. "Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center." *Theatre Journal* 50.1 (1998): 53-70.

- Desmond, Jane C. "Invoking 'The Native': Body Politics in Contemporary Hawaiian Tourist Shows." *The Drama Review* 41.4 (1997): 83-109.
- . *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Donaldson, Laura E. "On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism." *Signs* 24.3 (1999): 677-696.
- "Hā – Breath of Life." *Polynesian Cultural Center Official Site – Best Hawaii Luau*. 2011. Polynesian Cultural Center. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.polynesia.com/ha.html>>.
- Hammond, Joyce D. "Photography, Tourism and the Kodak Hula Show." *Visual Anthropology* 14.1 (2001): 1-32.
- Hawaii Five-O – Main Title Sequence*. By CBS. 28 Mar. 2011 <http://www.cbs.com/primetime/hawaii_five_0/video/?pid=rsYgvHFih9A9JayDe0eh4e0iMAf90dr_&vs=Default&play=true>.
- "Oahu: The Heart of Hawaii." *Hawaii's Official Tourism Site – Travel Info for your Hawaii Vacation*. 2011. Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.gohawaii.com/>>.
- Imada, Adria L. "The Army Learns to Luau: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in Hawai'i." *The Contemporary Pacific* 20.2 (2008): 329-361.
- . "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire." *American Quarterly* 56.1 (2004): 111-149.
- "Luau Packages." *Paradise Cove Luau – Hawaii's Best Luau*. Paradise Cove. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com/index.htm>>.
- Polynesian Cultural Center Official Site – Best Hawaii Luau*. 2011. Polynesian Cultural Center. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.polynesia.com/luau.html>>.
- Sitzer, Kelly Dawn. *Hawaiian Hula as Commercial Performance*. MA Thesis, Texas Tech University, Texas, 2004.
- Teaiwa, Teresia K. *Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania*. Diss, University of California Santa Cruz, California, 2001.
- "What is the purpose of the PCC?" *Polynesian Cultural Center Official Site – Best Hawaii Luau*. 2011. Polynesian Cultural Center. 28 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.polynesia.com/faqs.html#purpose>>.
- CHAPTER 3 – RETHEORIZING TRADITION: HULA AND THE HAWAIIAN SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT
- Franklin, Cynthia and Laura Lyons. "Remixing Hybridity: Globalization, Native Resistance, and Cultural Production in Hawai'i." *American Studies* 45.3 (2004): 4980.
- Kaeppler, Adrienne L. "Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study." *Dance Chronicle* 27.3 (2004): 293-311.
- Kaholokula, Joseph Keawe'aimoku, Erin Saito, Cecilia Shikuma, Mele Look, Kim Spencer-Tolentino, and Marjorie K. Mau. "Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research." *Hawaii Med J*. 67.8 (2008): 218-222.

- Kamahele, Momiala. "'Iio'ulaokalani: Defending Native Hawaiian Culture." *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): 38-65.
- Kanahele, George S. "The Hawaiian Renaissance." *Kamehameha Schools: Kapalama Campus*. 12 December 2010 <<http://kapalama.ksbe.edu>>.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. "Notes Toward a Theory of Anomaly." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (2010): 214.
- Merrie Monarch Festival*. 19 Apr. 2011. Merrie Monarch Festival. 2011 <<http://www.merriemonarch.com/home>>.
- Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu*. 19 Apr. 2011. Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu. 12 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.naleihulu.org/index.htm>>.
- Pukui, Mary Kawena. *ʻŌlelo No ʻeau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1997.
- . "Hawaiian Hula Competitions: Event, Repertoire, Performance, Tradition." *Journal of American Folklore* 109.434 (1996): 357-80.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaiʻi*. Revised ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1999.
- "Vision & Mission." *Office of Hawaiian Affairs*. 11 December 2010. Office of Hawaiians Affairs. 11 December 2010 <<http://www.oha.org>>.