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LOCALS ONLY:

**The Postcolonial Exotic and Representations of Asian Settlers and Native Hawaiians in
“Hawaiian” Literature**

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In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis,

2021-22 academic year, Pomona College, Claremont, California

Readers:

Char Miller

Kevin Dettmar

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to my brilliant first reader Char Miller for your compassion, guidance, and rapid Outlook replies. Thank you to my second reader Kevin Dettmar for helping me avoid the word “aforementioned”: I only used it once here. I look forward to working with you both again. I will send you things on time next semester.

For my family: perhaps you will not slog through this document, but I appreciate your unconditional love and support and Facetimes. Mom, I’ll call you more often next semester.

For my friends, especially my housemates: I will take any opportunity to share with the public that I love you all. Thank you for teaching me that friendship is not a transaction, it is a conscious decision.

For Aidan: you are awesome.

Preface and Positionality

Statement by my friend Kaira Ka'aihue:¹

The annexation of the Hawaiian Kingdom came as a result of the United States' constant thirst for power. As Hawai'i welcomed American businessmen, wives, and children, these very people they welcomed decided to try and claim Hawai'i for themselves, all the while stripping away Hawai'i's land, culture, language, religion, and monarchy. The overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani catalyzed a never-ending war between the Native Hawaiians and the U.S. government. We haven't stopped our fight.

Many people know that Hawai'i is a part of the United States. But what they don't know is how white men imprisoned our Queen (Lydia Lili'u Loloku Waleana Wewehi Kamaka'eha Lili'uokalani—her full name) within her own castle to force her to surrender her throne, her land, her people. When she gave up her throne, it was to protect her people. Yet the opposite happened...these men forbade all Hawaiians from speaking 'Ōlelo Hawai'i within schools, churches, homes, and even when just walking down the street. Hawaiians were forced to learn English. The Americans would beat kids if they were overheard speaking 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. They murdered Hawaiians in cold blood for showing support to Queen Lili'uokalani after her throne was stolen.

In her autobiography *Hawaii's Story By Hawaii's Queen*, Lili'uokalani wrote about her travels throughout the islands to visit her people. She recalled staying in a plantation home cared for by my mother's side of the family. My great-great-grandmother Emmalia Keawe lived on

¹ Kaira is the reason that I am focusing on Native Hawaiian/Asian settler relations in Hawai'i and has been one of my best friends since we were four. I recently learned that her family was one of the first kānaka families whose land was stolen by the United States government. I want to offer her an opportunity to share her story in her own words.

Kaua'i in Waimea. Her father, Lawai Keawe, owned all of the land in Waimea, from the mountain to the sea. They were farmers and caretakers of many, many acres and would fish, hunt, and farm for all of those who lived in Waimea to share communally.

When the U.S. took over, they stole my family's land. They ripped out all documentation of Hawaiian peoples' land and water rights from the Hawai'i State Archives. They went to each family to have them give up their rights, and when my family tried to fight back, there was no longer documentation of who owned the land. To this day, the pages are still missing, and their torn remnants remain buried in the Archives. It's an illegal act and yet...no one can do anything. My mother's family continues to try to gain back their land today. On my father's side we are the Ka'aihues. "Ka"=the, "aihue"=protector. We were the protectors of the ali'i (chief) bones. When an ali'i or a member of the royal family would pass away, the Ka'aihues would prepare a proper burial and protect their bones from sunrise to sunset. What they did to my mom's family, they did to my dad's in Hana, on the island of Maui. It breaks my heart. Writing this makes me cry. What the U.S government did was WRONG, and NEEDS to be set straight. It truly brings pain to all Hawaiians. We fight constantly and our voices aren't heard.

Listen to Hawaiians sing "*Mai Wakinekona a Iolani Hale.*" Lili'uokalani anonymously wrote the song's lyrics and published them in a weekly Hawaiian language newspaper, surreptitiously announcing how she came to be imprisoned and how much she loves her people. It still brings tears to everyone. After the Queen wrote her *mele*, someone published a response coded in song lyrics: "We have heard you, oh heavenly one, our ruler, and we support you." Lili'uokalani responded: "My love for you will never be broken."

We protest peacefully, and we beg for what we deserve. It's not in our nature to fight or show violence. It's not what our Queen wanted from her people. We live our lives loving because of her. And she went down with a long fight.

“Na kaula e pale.” We shall defend. We will continue to defend.

- Kaira Ka'ahue

Personal Positionality

Given the historical and cultural content within this thesis, I must explicitly acknowledge my own identity and positionality. I write as a privileged part-time resident on O'ahu and as a Japanese-American settler of Hawai'i. I do not identify as Native Hawaiian, nor do I claim to speak for kānaka maoli or the Ka Lāhui, the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. I was raised by adoptive parents in a second home in Hawai'i, one that they purchased to act as a middle ground between Tokyo and New York City, the two places that my parents primarily grew up. Embarrassingly enough, until this past summer I had never interrogated my own role as a non-Native resident of O'ahu and as a naïve perpetuator of settler colonialism. I had never thought about the brutal history of the settlement of Hawai'i or my role as passive consumer of the islands.

Hawai'i is still home for me; it is where my dad always tells me I first opened my eyes to see the world in color. Honolulu remains the one place in my life that contains a majority of people who look like me (although this, too, is evidence of settler colonialism), a place where I don't constantly have to tear apart and reconstruct my Asianness for those around me. And I

spent my summers and winters there blissfully ignorant: I went to preschool at the Unity Preschool on Monsarrat Avenue, where I learned the alphabet (“A is for Aloha”) and was bussed to swimming lessons where I hopped from foot to foot because the pavement was too hot and I refused to wear shoes. I graduated from preschool to summer school at Punahou, where I learned hula and tennis and Japanese and how to make soy-braised kalbi short ribs with gochujang sauce. I thought I belonged because I made friends who looked like me but who were invariably impressed by my seemingly glamorous New York City life.

My knowledge of Native Hawaiian culture unfolded slowly. I am grateful to have been doubly rendered hānai, adopted with open arms, by Kaira and her family. I went to large family barbecues on the beach with her grandmother, who was my babysitter, eating poi and kalua pig and chicken long rice. I witnessed the raucous, joyous closeness of her family firsthand as they talked story in Pidgin for hours. I cannot claim to be a part of her family and often felt an uncomfortable distance when navigating Kaira’s family events, but I have only ever been treated as a welcome new addition to her home in the fifteen or so years that I have been lucky enough to know the Ka’aihues and the Meyers.

Notes on Language and Methodology

I incorporate ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i, or the Hawaiian language, throughout this piece. All translations will be included in the text and in the glossary. I do not read or speak ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i, and many translations from ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i to English can neither adequately express the nuances of certain phrases nor portray the richness of Hawaiian culture. Moreover, in a thesis that focuses so heavily on language while being written in English, some cultural values will inadvertently get lost, reifying colonial constructions of power. I hope that readers will be able to

both interrogate their own positionalities and independently do linguistic research in an attempt to grasp the nuances of ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i.

Introduction

The first half of my two-semester thesis analyzes tropes in postcolonial ecocriticism and applies them to literature written by Asian settlers of Hawai'i, in order to evaluate what successful anti- and de-colonial praxis would look like in English and World Literature. While postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to understand how colonialism and its legacies interact with humans' natural and built environments, I am interested in how postcolonial ecocriticism navigates and conceptualizes of newer states such as Hawai'i. In my first Chapter, I investigate how the United States' violent legacies of colonization linger throughout the Islands today. For Native Hawaiians, or *kānaka maoli*, material loss is empirical and straightforward: land, water, energy are all commodified and sold back to them at unaffordable prices. Thus, I am more interested in looking at the immaterial: the cultural production of Hawai'i, the mainland imaginary of Hawai'i and how it reproduces and reifies the islands' colonial history, and how fiction by and for Hawai'i can function as a worldmaking vehicle that allows for de- and postcolonial futures.

While Captain Cook, the first “discoverer” of the Islands, the whaling industry sailors, the missionaries, and the agribusiness owners that rapidly followed in succession post-contact, were mostly white men, to reduce the pre-, post-, and neocolonial history of Hawai'i to a simple white-not white binary is reductive and displaces guilt from Asian settlers onto white settlers. Indeed, complicating the *kānaka*-white (or “*haole*,” in ‘*Ōlelo Hawai'i*) binary is the presence of Asian people, from plantation laborers to tourists, who have transiently and/or permanently settled in Hawai'i. Settler colonists have historically and stereotypically been white men, so implicating and monolithicizing “Asians” as a whole feels uncomfortable and awkward. However, looking at the statistics of who has accumulated social, financial, and cultural capital

in Hawai'i, East Asians—particularly the Japanese and the Chinese—also have profited directly at the expense of Native Hawaiian dispossession. Clearly, settlers aren't always white men wielding guns and germs and steel: I, too, am a settler. Learning to *unsettle*, sit with, and rebuild my conscience plays into one of my goals as a student and thesis-writer to “stay with the trouble,” as Donna Haraway labels her 2016 book. Perhaps selfishly, by turning to fiction by and for people of color in Hawai'i, I hope to make sense of my own place within the islands as a Japanese American settler.

Thus, in my thesis I critically examine Asian authors' works from and about Hawai'i to understand how, within the confines of an isolated archipelago, people of color have assumed power as the dominant and dominating racial, ethnic, and cultural (REC) group as the very same group remains marginalized on the mainland. Fiction written by Asian residents in Hawai'i, such as *Language of the Geckos* by Gary Pak, or *All I Asking for is My Body* by Milton Murayama—and the publishing presses that brand themselves as champions of the local author—have the potential to either combat the commonly-held view that Hawai'i is a post-racial paradise, or further entrench this neoliberal multiculturalism through the erasure of Native Hawaiian characters and voices.

Settling, whether it be on stolen land or for the status quo, is never the answer, and neither are “settler moves to innocence,” tactics by which colonizers attempt to absolve their guilty consciences (Tuck and Yang 2). Kānaka maoli were and are not settlers in either sense of the term. They practice both passive and active resistance to white and Asian hegemony on the islands, they refuse to be forcibly assimilated by outsiders, they cultivate a unique Hawaiian identity, leading to a renaissance of Hawaiian culture, and many continue to push for Hawaiian sovereignty through writing. Anthologies such as *The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past*,

Shaping the Future and *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* provide a scholarly kānaka lens through which I analyze works by Asian and kānaka authors.

Ecofiction functions both aesthetically, through the figurative language used to construct a narrative in a world outside our own, and sociopolitically, by setting guidelines for material transformation and imagining alternate realities. Truly decolonial fiction avoids both invisibilizing narratives and traps of neoliberalism and sentimentality that promote colorblindness. By identifying these traps and pitfalls that exist within current literature from Hawai'i, I hope that I can set forth guidelines for anticolonial transformation within the publishing industry in Hawai'i. Writing with empathy without veering into the nostalgic, writing to imagine expansive, liberated alternatives for yourself and others—these themes have the potential to take root in Hawaiian literature. And indeed, the current examples of successful decolonial literature from Hawai'i imagine alternate futures for kānaka maoli and their relationships to both Asian immigrants and white descendants of missionaries. Perhaps Hawaiian literature will be the transformative site of a new form of dynamism and multiculturalism.

Chapter 1: A Brief, Selective, and Incomplete History of Hawai'i

Waves of settlement of Hawai'i, from Captain Cook to Asian laborers to tourists

First contact and “first contact”:

Polynesians first discovered and colonized the Hawaiian Islands between 1000 A.D. and 1200 A.D., sailing in double-hulled voyaging canoes and navigating by the stars. Hawai'i is the most isolated archipelago on Earth, more than two thousand miles in any direction from the nearest inhabited lands, and Polynesians were able to strike land without modern-day technology (Stannard 161). Until contact with white settlers, there was no concept of privately-owned land or water; rather, land was divided up into ahupua'a, units of land based on watershed boundaries, where people worked and lived. Moreover, the population of Native Hawaiians pre-contact is estimated to be around 800,000 people (Trask, “Hawaiian Sovereignty” 162).

Hawai'i's first contact with white settlers ushered in enormous cultural upheaval: after British explorer Captain James Cook first landed in Hawai'i in 1778, Hawai'i became another station for the sandalwood, fur, and whaling trades in the northern Pacific (Papacostas). White missionaries soon began to journey to the Sandwich Islands (as Hawai'i was then called) to spread Christianity starting in 1819. Missionaries founded Protestant mission schools in the 1840s and introduced English to Hawaiians, who at the time lacked a written language. They also developed a written Hawaiian language, 'ōlelo Hawai'i, starting in 1820, and by 1826 had a working alphabet of twelve letters, kahakō (macrons), and 'okina (glottal stops). Missionaries and sailors didn't simply bring language, goods, and 'progress'— they also brought venereal diseases and tuberculosis that decimated the majority of the kōhōloka population. In 1831, the first official all-island census counted only 130,000 Native Hawaiians (a half-century decline of

almost 85%); in 1850 there were less than 85,000 Natives; by 1890 the number of kānaka dwindled to 40,000 (Fujikane 5).

Asian labor, plantations and agribusiness:

Settlers introduced a capitalist economy, leading to the privatization and commodification of natural resources such as water; this maximization of agricultural productivity and urbanization came at the direct expense of Native Hawaiian land and water rights. The Hawaiian Islands, full of lush vegetation, rushing waterfalls, chirping tropical birds, balmy temperatures, and both fresh and saltwater sources, practically ensured that crops would thrive (which would, in turn, guarantee profit from these ‘untouched’ lands). The Kōloa Plantation, established in 1835, became the first large-scale sugar plantation on the islands (Davis 17). The success (here measured in capitalist terms) of the Hawaiian Kingdom closely aligned with the success of the sugar industry, and water was often privatized and diverted by the government for sugar as the number of plantations throughout the islands increased to a maximum of eighty (Wilcox).

Finding the kānaka “insubordinate and ungrateful”—and also rapidly diminishing in number, thus unable to meet demand for labor—plantation owners began to contract laborers from China, Japan, Korea, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in 1852. By 1890, Hawaiians made up less than half the population (45%) while *haoles* and Asians made up 55% of the population; by 1910, around 43,000 Asian immigrants worked on white plantations (Trask, “Decolonizing” 9). Plantation managers segregated workers into ethnic enclaves, staggering wages and relying on nationalist tactics to divide laborers and to incentivize work; Filipinos received the lowest pay while Eastern Asians earned (incrementally) higher wages (Cachola 287). Despite these tactics,

workers first protested along lines of “blood unionism,” or shared ethnicity, striking, leading work stoppages, and sabotaging facilities (Najita 112). Later realizing that protests were more effective when interethnic organizing on a larger scale, laborers developed a new sense of class awareness, communicating in burgeoning Pidgin English and sharing food (Takaki 289). Yet this interethnic organizing markedly did not include Native Hawaiians.

The intermingling of REC groups contributed to the common view of Hawai’i as multi- and post-racial—indeed the current demographics of Hawai’i reflect a multiethnic society, with 23.89% of people identifying as two or more races (“2020 Census Data”). However, Hawai’i’s racial diversity was used by Congress to help achieve permanent control of Hawai’i, craft a multicultural, inclusive image of the U.S., and ultimately aid the establishment of military bases throughout Asia and the Pacific (Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire* 53). Moreover, diversity was wielded as propaganda during the Cold War: in the 1940s and 1950s, Congress realized that Hawai’i’s multiracial population could win over the “hearts and minds of newly decolonized nations” given growing anti-Western sentiment (Saranillio, “Why” 281). But the U.S. government did not include k̄naka in this propaganda, and Native Hawaiians were further erased from the historical Hawaiian narrative that the U.S. was recreating and rebranding.

Politics and the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy:

During the period of privatization of natural resources and the sociopolitical and economic growth of American plantations, the United States government began to strip the Hawaiian monarchy of much of its power. In 1887, King David Kalakaua was forced to sign “The Bayonet Constitution” at gunpoint by an anti-monarchist, pro-capitalist American militia, transferring power from the kingdom’s government to American ‘government officials.’ Later, in 1893, the U.S. military overthrew the (much reduced, but still standing) Hawaiian kingdom

under the rule of Queen Lili'uokalani by placing her under house arrest until she ceded her rule to Sanford Dole of the Dole Plantation. The U.S. finally annexed the Hawaiian Islands in 1898. No Native vote was ever taken (Trask, "Hawaiian Sovereignty" 73). Finally, Hawai'i became American property in 1900 with the U.S. Organic Act under President McKinley, which granted U.S. citizenship to all citizens of the Republic of Hawai'i. Asian immigrants were not granted citizenship given legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, and the Immigration Act of 1917. Hawai'i became a state in 1959.

Selling bodies, selling products, selling paradise

"Cultural prostitution":

The intentional cultural production of Hawai'i in the U.S. haole, or white, imaginary has forced Native Hawaiians to participate in their own dispossession and subjugation to serve the booming tourist industry. The grotesque exploitation of k̄anaka bodies—I use "bodies" explicitly to emphasize the fetishization and objectification of Native Hawaiian women—erases the history of colonization while contributing to the reestablishment of Hawai'i as a sensual playground of fantasies for the wealthy visitor. The whaling industry's sexploitation of k̄anaka women beginning in the 19th century repeats itself in a contemporary, more insidious iteration.

And the numbers of wealthy visitors are perhaps equally as grotesque and unimaginable: in 2019, the 10,424,995 visitors spent \$17.75 billion, generated \$2.07 billion in state tax revenue, and supported 216,000 jobs ("Hawai'i Visitor Statistics"). At the time of statehood in 1959, Hawai'i's residents outnumbered tourists by more than 2 to 1. By contrast, at the turn of the 21st century, tourists outnumbered Hawaiian residents by 6 to 1 and Native Hawaiians by 30 to 1—

the ratios continue to skew as the number of tourists increase each year (Trask, “Hawaiian Sovereignty” 138).

Hanauni-Kay Trask aptly labels the tourist industry’s exploitation of Hawaiian values as “cultural prostitution” in her collection of essays *From a Native Daughter* (17). Malia Akutagawa echoes Trask, writing that “Cultural prostitution...means being on display and looked upon with fascination” (153). From the beginning of Hawaiian tourism-in-earnest in the 19th century, aspects of kānaka culture—from language to traditions such as lū’aus and hula—are (com)modified, cheapened, and sexified, cleansed of any traditional significance. The traditional value of “aloha” as reciprocal love, gratitude, and generosity has been co-opted to sell everything from plane tickets to shirts to cars. Put pithily, “Aloha has been seriously fucked with” (Revilla and Osorio 126). Similarly, the hula, an ancient form of kānaka dance with complex religious meanings, has been rendered mere exotica and erotica. Despite a resurgence in Hawaiian culture, Hawaiian women are “marketed on posters from Paris to Tokyo promising an unfettered ‘primitive’ sexuality” (Trask, *From a Native Daughter* 17). Sure, hula has not been eliminated—but it has been distorted for gawking tourists and continues to reductively define Hawai’i to its visitors. The combination of (neo)colonialism, global corporate tourism, militarization, and heteropatriarchy has led to the creation of “an occupied country whose hostage people are forced to witness (and, for many, to participate in) our own collective humiliation as tourist artifacts” (Trask, *From a Native Daughter* 17). Remember the 216,000 jobs “supported” by the tourist industry? How many of those came at the expense of the perversion of Hawaiian culture and the economic exploitation of kānaka workers?

The land that tourists built:

Tourism not only has a negative cultural impact, but also has a heavy environmental impact: the main concern is urban development, which encapsulates sub-issues such as the diversion of land and water titles from Native Hawaiians to private companies, habitat loss, energy use, the introduction of invasive species, and the production of waste/pollution. A 2013 study of five tourism sectors on the Big Island, led by Osamu Saito, estimated that in 2010 the industry was responsible for “21.7% of the island’s total energy consumption, 44.7% of the island-wide water consumption, and 10.7% of the island-wide waste generation” (584). There have been few inter-island studies on the waste generated in Hawai’i. In analyzing these numbers, it is important to note that the Big Island experiences the third-highest amount of tourists across the Islands on average: in 2019, for example, out of 10,386,673 total visitors, 6,154,248 visitors (59% of the total) went to O’ahu while only 1,763,904 visitors (17% of the total number of visitors, or 30% of the amount of visitors to O’ahu) flew to the island of Hawai’i (“2019 Annual Report”). Thus, if scaled linearly, we could assume that the Big Island’s tourism industry only generates about a third of the amount of waste and a third of the total energy and water consumption in O’ahu.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, Hawai’i experienced a construction boom to accommodate the growing international tourism industry. The two main concrete supply companies, Ameron HC&D and Maui Concrete and Aggregate, purchased, transported, and used 48,000 tons of Hawaiian sand a year to construct buildings and beautify beaches (Landgraf 37). While there were a few hotels in Waikīkī before 1900 (which is now the most popular location for tourists), in 1937 the Hawaii Tourist Bureau inventory counted 2,543 hotel rooms across all of the islands, in 1960 there were 9,232 rooms, and by 1973 there were 36,608 rooms (Wolbrink 36). A

December 2019 survey counted 46,980 rooms in hotels with more than twenty rooms (about 88% of hotels) throughout the Hawaiian Islands (“Hotel Performance”).

Ka Lāhui and the resurgence of grassroots sovereignty movements

The Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement began in the 1960s in response to the rapid urbanization of the islands and the appropriation of Native Hawaiian lands held in trust by the Hawaiian government (which was quickly becoming majority-Asian). While Indigenous Hawaiians had been protesting individually against white hegemony for centuries, the sixties brought about more formal sociopolitical mobilizing and organizing. The sovereignty movement gained traction in the 1980s, and today around ten sovereignty groups exist throughout the islands. The largest group is Ka Lāhui Hawai’i. Ka Lāhui was formed as a grassroots initiative in 1987 by Mililani B. Trask, older sister of Haunani-Kay Trask, and claimed a membership of 21,000 by 1997. They call for the repatriation of Native lands and the reestablishment of Hawai’i as a sovereign nation, defined by the following elements: a strong and abiding faith in *Akua* (often meaning God or gods); a people united by a common culture; a land base; a robust government structure, and an economic base (Trask, “Ka Lahui”). Despite these groups’ efforts and despite multiple introduced proposals, Native Hawaiians remain unrecognized by the U.S. government. Importantly, *kānaka* have never called for expulsion of all foreigners within the islands, but rather accountability for settlers’ discourses and practices that come at Native expense (Saranillio, “Why” 290).

As I have written, this chapter does not provide a comprehensive guide to Hawaiian history. Inevitably, I have left out crucial details and cannot summarize the entire history of Hawai’i in a mere seven pages. However, I want to create a foundation upon which I will build the succeeding chapters. The waves of settlement in Hawai’i, from Polynesian voyagers to 2021

tourists, have all (intentionally or not) contributed to the creation of Hawai'i in the global cultural imaginary to sell bodies, products, the idea of paradise-on-Earth. Given the brutal history of the Islands, it is easy to think of Hawai'i as completely fabricated by the rest of the world, garnished for foreign consumption: Hawai'i as the innocent prey, the world as the leering predator. While this is true to an extent, a fair amount of writing from the Islands plays into and off of these stereotypes in order to appeal to the mainstream and achieve financial and social capital in the mainland United States. On a more hopeful note, and in a converse sense, a fair amount of writing from the Islands offers up radical, de- and anticolonial solutions that seek to undo centuries-old constructions of Hawai'i. In my next chapter, I will explore the relationship between decolonization, literature, and the environment, examining the publishing-industrial complex in Hawai'i as a mechanism for both the undoing of and reification of racial, ethnic, and cultural stereotypes about residents on the islands.

Chapter 2: “Hawaiian”/Hawaiian Literature

(De)colonization and the environment

Colonialism and extraction, exploitation of humans and non-humans, and capital accumulation are inextricable. As Gray and Sheikh write, “Colonialism has always entailed the cultivation of lands as well as that of bodies and minds, through the imposition of a dominant (colonial, neo-colonial, modernist and now neoliberal) form of culture” (164). These “cultivated...bodies and minds” have historically been transformed into sacrificial less-than-humans or non-humans in order to permit—encourage, even—structural and environmental violence. It’s a classic chicken or egg question: did we first prioritize humans over other natural species to enact imperialist environmental violence on a planetary scale, or did we first hierarchize humans over other humans to permit labor and resource extraction, and imperialism on a (comparatively) local scale? Alternatively, are they parts of a whole that allows for the continued exploitation of people and the Earth? Regardless, the pyramid of power flows from some humans at the top to most other humans to the natural world at the base.

A genuinely post-imperial, decolonial conception of community necessitates a re-imagining of humankind’s relation to nature that goes above and beyond the neoliberal term “Anthropocene.” “Anthropocene” implies that all of us share equal responsibility in the climate crisis, which is empirically untrue; one hundred investor and state-owned fossil fuel companies are responsible for around 70 percent of the world’s historical greenhouse gas emissions (Hyman par. 1). “Capitalocene” better reflects the idea that colonialism and the accompanying drive to exploit Earth’s ecosystems, including its human and non-human inhabitants, ultimately serve capitalism. The academic area of postcolonial ecocriticism, first elucidated in-depth by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, rests on the assumption that environmental exploitation and

domination is central to Western imperial, colonial, racist conquests. Under colonialism and imperialism, not only were the subaltern rendered inhuman—and thus treated as part of nature, as beasts—but they were also forcibly integrated over time to Western culture, rendering complete cultural and environmental restitution difficult if not impossible. “Decolonial restitution” is a vague umbrella term that requires the deconstruction of colonial mindsets as well as the literal redistribution of property/propertized land. As Tuck and Yang explicitly state, “Decolonization requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and the abolition of private property” (2). This is a big ask. In a world built by and for the .01%, how can the pursuit of critical consciousness and social justice tangibly support truly anti-imperial and decolonial goals? Attempts are either mere neoliberal virtue signaling or written off as “settler moves to innocence” by the same authors who call for repatriation and abolition (Tuck and Yang 2). Settler moves to innocence, as defined by Tuck and Yang, are tactics that colonizers use to “play Indian” to absolve themselves of guilt (9).

Frantz Fanon implicitly acknowledges these moves to innocence that so (seemingly- heroically) try to absolve settlers of guilt in his writings, but decolonization was never that simple to him: violent revolutions against oppressors and the repatriation of land were insufficient. Satisfying, yes, but inadequate to address the deep-rooted, underlying issues sowed by centuries of exploitation and extraction, or a “struggle against omnipresent death” (Opperman 69). The colonized—and their descendants—suffer from this “omnipresent death,” what Opperman describes as “the cumulative weight and exhaustion of an unlivable life in which the conditions of life, such as water, air, food, and labor, reduce life to a struggle for survival” (70). This narrow view of life and its possibilities, and the existing structures that prevent the imagination of decolonial futures, prevent those descendants of the colonized from liberating

themselves from the afterlives of imperialism and colonialism. Fully decolonizing the mind, then, requires dissecting and divorcing the colonial past from the present. In fact, Fanon tasked Indigenous scholars with *writing* for liberation, to write “with the intention of opening up the future, of spurring [the people] into action and fostering hope” (Fanon 167).

Potential worlds: literature and radical worldbuilding

Donna Haraway, in a lecture entitled “Making Oddkin: Story Telling for Earthly Survival,” states that “It matters what stories tell stories. It matters what thoughts think thoughts...the job...is to somehow inhabit the troubled contact zones...and undo and redo each other.” Fictional stories, especially those with the perhaps-hyperbolized stakes of “earthly survival,” implicitly require “undo[ing] and redo[ing]” our world by virtue of their being fiction. Fiction challenges us to contemplate the alteration of our current existences, to (purpose)fully if not permanently inhabit an imaginary space, and to reject our own immediate experiences of the world that are so often rooted in a sensationalist media cycle and selectively canonized historical texts. History is supposedly objective, but in the case of Hawai’i (as is the case with many colonized places), Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo writes that Hawai’i’s millennia-long history has been condensed intentionally in a way that “foregrounds the ways in which foreigners have shaped the islands while minimizing Native presence and connection to land” (380). To Nolte-Odhiambo, the history of Hawai’i can neither be told from a distance nor rely on (white, male) constructions of Hawai’i’s history: *kānaka* must tell their stories in more creative, subjective, imaginative ways.

Fiction, in essence, encourages readers to do what Poyner labels “making scalar connections,” playing with storylines across time and space to think across different spatio-temporal scales (55). T.J Demos, in his essay “Beyond Despair: Potential Worlds and Eco-

Fictions,” writes that “Eco-fiction constitutes nothing less than a radical futurity” (78). Radical in the etymological sense of Latin’s *radix*, reaching both *to* the root to connect the Earth’s exploitation to our current societal ills, and also *from* the past to the present in order to draw connections between past violence and present conditions. Māhealani Dudoit, kānaka poet and essayist, corroborates Demos’ claim in an interview with her peer ku’ualoha ho’omanawanui, tying the issue to the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement and writing that this “movement was and is part of a nationalist movement; i.e., the dynamics of nation-building in literary form” (119). For a culture that was so forcibly stunted, literature becomes a way in which kānaka can rebuild and enrich their pasts, resituate their presents, and construct their futures. Imagining the unimaginable suddenly becomes less scary and less “radical” (in the sense of the right-wing buzzword that harkens back to the Red Scare) when tied to fiction; places such as Wakanda and Middle Earth become not fanciful other worlds but rather potential sites of material transformation.

The publishing-industrial complex in Hawai’i

Pitfalls of literature: the postcolonial exotic and the fine line between postcoloniality and postcolonialism

On this very page I sang the praises of literature’s role in imagining de- and post-colonial futures for subaltern group. However, publishing industries—especially those that arise during a postcolonial period—frequently fall into traps of what Graham Huggan labels the “postcolonial exotic,” the process of commodity and culture fetishism in order to mass-market and sell books to a (usually) Western audience (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 14). The postcolonial exotic can also be viewed as a seventh addition to Tuck and Yang’s six settler moves to innocence, or perhaps can extend the settler moves to innocent into the supposedly “post-settler” 21st century. The

concept, depending on how it is wielded certainly can encompass sentiments of “settler nativism...settler adoption fantasies...colonial equivocation...free[ing] your mind and the rest will follow...re-occupation and urban homesteading” and what Tuck and Yang call “a(s)t(e)risk[ing] peoples,” a clever play on at risk/asterisk that emphasizes the paradoxical in/disclosure of the subaltern (10-22).

The genre of the postcolonial exotic boasts marginality and political resistance against (usually) Western hegemony as its main themes, even as this very genre operates under these hegemonic confines in a literary world so monopolized by a handful of (again) Western publishing houses. Huggan concludes in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* that the postcolonial exotic is integral to cultural production; that is, the representations of the postcolonial exotic within literature contribute to and reify cultural stereotypes about the postcolonial Other (21). Dobrota Pucherová, drawing on Huggan’s seminal work, elaborates that the postcolonial exotic genre of literature occupies a site of discursive conflict between postcolonialism and postcoloniality, two discourses that are two sides of the same coin.

To clarify the difference between these similar (yet opposing) terms: *postcolonialism* in literature is supposedly anti-colonial, involving the conscious evaluation of marginality and the questioning of how value is bestowed via “imperial epistemologies and institutional structure” (Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 22). Post- and anticolonial writers strive towards this ideal of literary postcolonialism; however, given the increasingly neoliberal, globalized nature of the creation, processing, and distribution of books, authors (intentionally or not) fall into the trap of literary postcoloniality. *Postcoloniality* in literature, reliant on the global market, capitalizes on the “worldwide trafficking” of “cultural otherness” and its resulting “culturally othered artifacts” (Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 22). This “trafficking” ironically ends up reaffirming and

reifying Western centers of cultural production and capital, further entrenching postcolonial writers (and, by proxy, postcolonial states) in a cycle of dependency. Under neoliberal globalization, neocolonialism, late-stage capitalism, or all of the above, “postcolonial” becomes a marketing strategy, a buzzword for “woke,” just-past-center-left culture.

Writers are thus stuck in a Catch-22. Their *works* may gain social capital—from everyone in the mainstream audience to anticolonial, leftist academics—due to their perceived capacity for spurring anti-colonial resistance, but their *words*, by virtue of being popularized and inevitably commodified, become diluted through widespread distribution. Moreover, while (most) postcolonial writers recognize that “the value of their writing as an international commodity depends...on the exotic appeal it holds to an unfamiliar metropolitan audience,” these very authors “risk becoming complicit with the cultural imperialism they denounce” (Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 25). Authors can easily veer into the postcolonial exotic to promote their works, co-opting terms and stereotypes to sell the Other. Consequently, words such as “resistance,” “authenticity” and “subalternity” lose their radical meanings and instead “circulate as reified objects in a late-capitalist currency of symbolic exchange” (Pucherová 29).

Huggan continues:

Various exoticist maneuvers—the construction of the representative foreign writer; the appeal to local color; the search for, or assertion of, an “authenticity” not normally ascribed to one’s own culture—can be traced in the metropolitan marketing of postcolonial literature. (“The Postcolonial Exotic” 26)

These “exoticist maneuvers” sound remarkably similar to Tuck and Yang’s “settler moves to innocence” (2). Both tactics absolve settler guilt by claiming or faking indigeneity and authenticity. But Huggan shifts the blame from the authors themselves to the vague, geographically dislocated “metropolitan” areas of the world (although, given context, we can assume “metropolitan” is synonymous with “white and Western”). While faceless publishers and

distributors in far-off cities may be the root cause of the often-essentializing marketing tactics that accompany so-called foreign books about the Other, authors are not free from culpability. They, too, perpetuate the cycle of selling culture to sell books/selling books to sell culture. We can accuse the “metropolitan marketing of postcolonial literature” for perpetuating these fetishizing approximations to authenticity—but to complicate the binary of isolated Other author/metropolitan white publisher, what if these very “exoticist maneuvers” come from within the *local* community, not a far-off metropole? What if this local community exists within a rapidly-expanding metropole, one that is part of a world superpower (albeit forcibly)? And what if the marketing and publishing industry itself claims to be anti-colonial? Authors who write from and about the Hawaiian Islands still wrestle with the pitfalls of the postcolonialism/postcoloniality paradigm and the tendency towards the postcolonial exotic. These authors must navigate the tension between accruing literary renown on the mainland United States while maintaining small-town localness and, yes, “authenticity.”

Interlude: origin story of the emergence of a “Hawaiian” literary industry

This is how the widely-accepted tale of the birth of Hawai’i’s literary scene goes. In the 1970s, the Hawaiian literary scene emerged from the depths of the Pacific’s very own heart of darkness. Given the resurgence of scholarly and artistic interest throughout the U.S. in ethnic writers, heroic founders of Talk Story, Inc.—Marie Hara, Arnold Hiura, and Stephen Sumida, all of whom are East Asian—decided to plan a writer’s conference (Sugano 124). The very first Talk Story Conference occurred on O’ahu in 1978 and was attended by some 150 people. The Conference aimed to encourage the budding literary scene throughout the Hawaiian Islands, honor multiculturalism, and for “ignored voices” to start their own literary publications and journals, thus forming smaller, inclusive communities (Padilla). (Keep in mind that at this point

the population of Hawai'i was 33% white, 33% East Asian, 14% South East Asian, 12% kānaka, and 2% Black: who, then, was being ignored? [Schmitt]).

Constructions of “localness,” home, and belonging

The wholesome, liberal—soon to be neoliberal—origin tale of the literary industry in Hawai'i offers up more insidious alternative to Huggan's and Pucherová's theories about postcolonialism/postcoloniality and the postcolonial exotic. In Hawai'i, there are no overseas, metropolitan, shadowy publishers delineating and policing what counts as “local,” or “Hawaiian,” or “authentic.” Instead, there are East Asian figures such as Stephen Sumida: well-intentioned, well-educated, definitely-not-bigoted because they believe in multiculturalism and amplifying ethnic voices. But in all of the texts through which I have combed to gather information about the first Talk Story Conference in 1978, there are about two mentions of actual Hawaiians. Sumida, reflecting on the first conference in his work *And the View From the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i*, writes that “It was as if a local literary ‘tradition’ were being created from scratch. Its authors would consider Hawai'i a home...would identify with being of Hawai'i” (238). Where to start with this quote? Sumida assumes that he, Hara, and Hiura “created” a “local literary ‘tradition...from scratch” (although he is able to avoid directly praising himself via the passive voice), just as he assumes that there were no preexisting literary traditions on the island. This quasi-violent, wholly reductive erasure of centuries-old kānaka maoli literary and oral traditions is a microcosm of the tensions between Asians and Native Hawaiians (more on this later). Moreover, the repetition of “would” (authors “would consider Hawai'i a home...would identify with being of Hawai'i”) underscores the permeability of the concepts of home, belonging, and localness to ethnic settler communities in the literary world of Hawai'i. The process of writing is transformative, establishing authors “home” in, “local” to, and

“of Hawai’i”: but why didn’t these authors consider Hawai’i their home before the production of written work? Home—or belonging, or localness—is not something you can try on and discard haphazardly. If you have to work and produce something tangible in order to consider a place “home,” it’s probably not your home in the first place.

Asian-American settlers whose families go back generations on the islands occupy an unsettling liminal space where they are neither able to lay claim to the islands nor able to remember a time before residency in Hawai’i. Garrett Hongo, fourth-generation Japanese academic and poet from Hawai’i (and fellow Sagehen!), regards the meaning of “home,” for the contemporary Asian-American in Hawai’i, with sympathy. Home, he suggests, is a perpetual state of loss and alienation, one that stems from the incessant desire for a “place and attendant culture somehow ‘fixed’ in the scheme of things, a thing easily characterized and identifiable” (288). The discomfiting space that Asian-American residents occupy, in a way, echoes Hawai’i’s own place in the world. Robert Wilson, professor of writing at Hawai’i Pacific University, proposes that Hawai’i, too, is a “‘liminal space’ of racial negotiation and cultural mixedness,” one that has been “represented in countless fictional works as an in-between, ‘East/West’ and ‘Asian/American’ site, where [Asian] citizens...work to overcome primordial ties [to become] fully modern and ‘Americanized’” (par. 51). Hawai’i is both a visitor’s paradise and a site of contention between its Asian residents (to belong or not to belong?). But to emphasize this binary between East and West, Asian and American, glosses over the history of kānaka maoli literature that has no need for this binaristic view of Hawai’i, and no need to interrogate the meaning of “home.”

Indeed, kānaka maoli were busy expanding and fortifying their own literary traditions while Sumida was claiming to have revitalized the entire literary culture of Hawai’i. In the 1980s

and 1990s, Native Hawaiian writers and poets began to create experimental, explicitly anti- or postcolonial works to counter stereotypes of Native Hawaiians as primitive or exotic (and potentially in response to the Asian-washed literary canon of “Hawaiian” writers?). Kānaka poets such as Wayne Kaumuali’i Westlake, Dana Naone Hall and Joe Balaz played around with ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i and Hawai’i Creole English, or pidgin, in their works, developing a new styles of reclaiming Hawaiian heritage. These poets would also spotlight kānaka characters who either subtly or explicitly undid essentializing views of the postcolonial exotic Native.

Given the rise of tourism and the continued production of Hawai’i in the mainland imaginary, this “‘local’-based,” postmodern, postcolonial poetry emerged as a “means by which local/ethnic/indigenous identity (and these are not the same claims) could protect themselves against homogenizing forces of the global-culture industry and the U.S. mainstream” (Wilson par. 5). Instead of turning to and relying on the “global-culture [literary] industry” and the mainstream to explain kānaka culture to the world, Hawaiian writers turned inwards to “protect themselves.” Thomas W. Bean, former professor of Education at the University of Hawai’i at Hilo, corroborates this claim. According to Bean, 21st-century Native Hawaiian authors have carved out postcolonial spaces that “embrace distance from the mainland and localization of the arts” by focusing on “hybrid indigenous cultures, multicultural and polyethnic communities, and a local literary scene that affirms ethnic heritage and culture” in their works (par. 13).

Paradoxically, by drawing away from the mainland U.S. and instead investing in the local Hawaiian literary and arts scenes, kānaka maoli are able to create an expansive and generative environment for “Hawaiian” literature to flourish. This environment amplifies marginalized voices while also allowing space for “hybrid...multicultural and polyethnic” people and communities.

While perhaps Wilson and Bean have overly-optimistic view of the liberating possibilities of Hawaiian literature, kānaka authors and poets like Balaz and Hall are able to avoid exposure to the postcolonial exotic and the conflation of postcolonialism and postcoloniality. Their writing is not for the mainland gaze. Hall, for example, never explicitly mentions Pacific Island locations or ethnic themes in her poetry between 1972-1984 (Hamasaki 43). Instead, she claims localness through the unsaid. “Local” and “localization” as used by Wilson and Bean are not the same as the term used by Sumida: one is a quietly confident genealogical claim to indigeneity, while the other is an assumed label that can easily be shrugged off should the market dictate that “local” writing is uncool.

Case study: Bamboo Ridge Press and exoticist maneuvers

Despite all the critical thought put into problematizing notions of belonging and home, stickers exclaiming “LOCALS ONLY” abound in Hawai’i, colorfully policing who gets to claim the islands as home. But just as these stickers are indiscriminately purchased and stuck onto surfboards, cars, fences and other random surfaces by anyone from visiting tourists to Indigenous Hawaiians, so too has the term “local” been both co-opted and indiscriminately applied to authors who write from and about Hawai’i. Perhaps the best example is Bamboo Ridge Press (BRP), a “Hawaiian” publisher and journal. Formerly *Bamboo Ridge: Journal of Hawai’i Literature and Arts*, created in 1978 as a result of the Talk Story Conference, the press is one of the longest-running, best-known publishing houses in Hawai’i and has brought authors such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Gary Pak, and Nora Okja Keller to the mainland. BRP remains rooted in a sense of place (as nearly all of its authors reside within the Hawaiian Islands), and contributors consistently write about themes that are espoused as culturally ‘Hawaiian’: filial obligation, ethnic identity, translocality, and cultural revitalization (Padilla). From an uncritical lens, in its

almost fifty years of existence, BRP has curated a brand boasting authentic, local Hawaiian literature while publishing lucrative books that receive national attention and support from the mainland.

However, while Bamboo Ridge claims to be a journal and press by and for local Hawaiian writers, the house's refusal to acknowledge that there are historical, material, and cultural differences that (perhaps irreconcilably) separate kānaka maoli and Asian settlers from each other is, to once again borrow from Huggan and Pucherovà, a dangerous conflation of postcolonialism and postcoloniality. Tactics such as place-based specificity and the construction of "local" all contribute to the seemingly-novel success of BRP. To reiterate, Huggan's proposed "exoticist maneuvers" include "the construction of the representative foreign writer; the appeal to local color; the search for, or assertion of, an "authenticity" not normally ascribed to one's own culture" ("The Postcolonial Exotic" 26). Applied to BRP, we find that the press aligns with each one of these maneuvers.

1. *"The construction of the representative foreign writer" (Huggan, "The Postcolonial Exotic" 26).*

Bamboo Ridge exists in a closed loop. Its founders Eric Chock and Darrell H.Y. Lum, both East Asian writers raised in Hawai'i, publish mostly Asian authors. These "Asian settlers who trace their 'island roots' back to Hawai'i's sugar plantations and no farther," to quote ku'ualoa ho'omanawanui, a professor of English Literature at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, disguise themselves under the sweeping label of "local" to claim authenticity (121). In a neoliberal country that claims to value ethnic others, particularly the model minority, their works are consumed eagerly. The themes contained within BRP are not *too* foreign or radical, just different enough to be valued at the periphery of the cultural canon. In reality, writes Rodney

Morales wryly, Bamboo Ridge's supposed representations of exotic, foreign writers are merely "middle-class Asians, defined by middle-class Asians [within] a literature in which the major characters...are Asian" (125).

Echoing his contemporary Stephen Sumida, Eric Chock writes that "Our expectations [with Bamboo Ridge] were that...we would end up with a representative array of the best writing about Hawai'i by people of different ethnic backgrounds, a literary picture which was almost non-existent at the time" (11-12). Both Sumida and Chock assume that local Hawaiian literature did not exist pre-1978: the "almost non-existent" literary scene would have been forever lost without Chock and Lum! Ironically, the publishing of their first anthology, *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* (1986), revealed their biases. The authorship in the anthology is over ninety percent Asian; *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* conspicuously excluded people indigenous to the place that Chock and Lum maintained as their home. The "representative array" of people "of different ethnic backgrounds" that Chock so loftily wishes to cherry-pick clearly does not include Native Hawaiians (11-12). To return to Huggan, Bamboo Ridge does not position itself as the "representative foreign writer" but rather the "representative foreign" *press* ("The Postcolonial Exotic" 26). By assuming the role of catalyst for a new, multiracial generation of authors from Hawai'i—"LOCALS ONLY," essentially—Bamboo Ridge Press, intentionally or not, hampers opportunities for authentic kānaka decolonization.

2. "*The appeal to local color*" (Huggan, "*The Postcolonial Exotic*" 26).

"Local color" in literature refers to heavy-handed descriptions of a place's unique features. The term serves to root readers in a vivid setting, (re)creating places (and often, in postcolonial literature, recreating stereotypes). While authors published by Bamboo Ridge do rely on regionally-defined dialects, such as pidgin, and vibrant, Romanticized descriptions of

Hawai'i's lush environment, I would like to slightly change the meaning of "local color." Instead, I propose that "local color," when applied to Bamboo Ridge, can apply to humans as well. We know that Chock and Lum group ethnic writers under the broad term "local." But in also groupnig ethnic writers under the term "local color," the phrase becomes a tactic used by publishers and featured authors alike to create the *appearance* of diversity. By including people of "color" in literature, they meet diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, but because these POC are mere "colors," they are essentialized and reduced to the background.

In the preface to Bamboo Ridge's 1998 anthology *Growing Up Local*, Lum suggests that "Sharing a common enemy, local culture has often been characterized as a culture of resistance against the dominant white culture and rooted in the struggles of the working class of Hawaii's sugar plantations" (12). To Lum, "local culture" begins not with actual locals (that is, Indigenous Hawaiians), but rather in the sugar plantations (which actually employed very few kānaka). History is a palimpsest for Lum, one that he can rebuild via BRP. More importantly, this passage reveals the main unifying factor that inextricably links all people of color: "a common enemy...the dominant white culture." Lum assumes not only a romanticized sense of solidarity between ethnic groups imported for labor, but also, as ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui writes, all "*publishers* assume a position of 'solidarity' of '*writers of color*' against a common enemy—all things haole" (120, emphasis mine). Publishers' grouping all 'writers of color' from Hawai'i together against a haole (white) "common enemy" is an amalgamation and erasure that ends up upholding existing and unequal power dynamics between kānaka and Asian Americans.

Through the dual lenses of "local color" (the way Huggan suggests we read the term) and "local color" (the way I suggest we read the term), the content within Bamboo Ridge's anthologies—particularly those written by BRP's founders and editors themselves—represent

not an anticolonial move to inclusion but rather the emergence of a “troubling multiculturalism” under the guise of “sharing and fair play,” one that “may be a new brand of colonialism in which successful Asians have established a hegemonic relationship over those who are less fortunate” (Morales 114-115). Chock and Lum, the “successful Asians” in this scenario, have the power to edit out the “less fortunate” (kānaka maoli) or reduce them to ornaments...local color, and local color.

3. *“The search for, or assertion of, an ‘authenticity’ not normally ascribed to one’s own culture” (Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 26).*

Chock and Lum assume shared cultural values, literary themes, and significance of language between white, Asian, and Native Hawaiian authors, one that is seemingly “authentic” to their version of local Hawaiian literature. (Having essentially constructed this genre, they get to assert what is authentic or not). To continue with Lum’s preface to *Growing Up Local*, his writing perhaps epitomizes this “assertion of an ‘authenticity’ not normally ascribed to [their] own culture” (Huggan, “The Postcolonial Exotic” 26). Although the anthology includes Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Eastern Asians and white people, the collection is based on fabricated claims to (also fabricated) Hawaiian cultural familiarity.

Lum writes that “The ‘What school you went?’ question has its roots in the Native Hawaiian method of identifying oneself by geography and genealogy much as Kamakau described people in *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*,” Lum writes (11-12). I am pretty sure he made this up. Seri Luangphinit, hapa professor of English at the University of Hawai’i at Hilo, holds similar doubts: “The parallel Lum draws between the Native Hawaiian practice of *mo’oku’auhau* (genealogy)...relies on the mimicry of indigeneity, the imitation of which allows for acceptance, inclusion, and the right to speak of shared interests and experiences” (67). Lum’s “mimicry of

indigineity” is a clear settler move to innocence, to return to Tuck and Yang. He plays at going Native, appropriating Native Hawaiian practices to justify his particularly egregious cultural borrowing practices. Lum continues:

The immigrant laborers...entered a native Hawaiian culture that valued interpersonal relationships and love for the land. Their own values of family loyalty, obligation, and reciprocity coincided with those of native Hawaiians: an orientation that valued harmony between people, minimized personal gain or achievement, and shared natural resources. This cultural accommodation on the part of native Hawaiians and immigrant labor was born out of a tradition of hardship, struggle, and conflict that counters the romantic notions of blended cultures, the melting pot, or a multiethnic Hawai’i based on a democratic sharing of cultures. (12)

“Local Genealogy” assumes that Native Hawaiian values can be perfectly (retro? post?) fitted onto “immigrant laborer” values. Ironically, Lum spits up a list of sentimental, Romanticized, vague cultural ideals at the same time that he pushes back against “romantic notions of blended cultures.” Lum *embodies* these notions. Listing vague terms like “harmony” and “obligation” “love for the land” does not a local hybridized culture make—I think if you try hard enough, you could identify these ideals in most cultures. Lum also glorifies “a tradition of hardship, struggle, and conflict” as the catalyst for “cultural accommodation.” What “tradition of hardship”? The diction of “tradition” cements what was essentially indentured servitude as historically inevitable, something that *had* to happen to allow for the melding of two cultures. Once again, Lum obtusely ends up perpetuating the “romantic notions” against which he protests. Lum’s own search for and assertion of authenticity reads as a stretch to absolve his own conscience.

Authors from Hawai’i and exoticist maneuvers

Huggan’s exoticist maneuvers are not confined solely to publishers; authors, too, struggle with navigating authenticity. To paraphrase myself: authors who write from and about the

Hawaiian Islands must still wrestle with the pitfalls of the postcolonialism/postcoloniality paradigm and must learn to navigate the tension between accruing literary renown and maintaining a sense of localness and/or authenticity. Indeed, Chock and Lum's conflation of claims to localness and Hawaianness is a "colonial appropriation echoed by so many 'local' [Asian] writers" (ho'omanawanui 122). Hawaii-based Asian writers—those who label themselves "local" without acknowledging the contextual realities that render any sort of equalizing between kānaka and Asian Americans reductive—end up perpetuating a neoliberal color blindness while absolving themselves of any sort of residual settler guilt.

Eastern Asian authors based in Hawai'i who have achieved attention from mainland media conglomerates like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*—such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka and Nora Okja Keller—are caught between the home and the mainland, the local and the global. In "Whose Paradise? Hawai'i, Desire, and the Global-Local Tensions of Popular Culture," Morris Young explain that, upon achieving international acclaim, "...the Local is no longer self-contained...as it enters into global contexts" (198). Even supposing these authors fit the idea of the "Local," and even supposing these authors fully acknowledge the contextual authors between Asians and Native Hawaiians, the fact remains that their literary works no longer belong to them as the books enter "global" circulation. "Hawai'i still remains 'mysterious,' waiting to be explored by the curious who cannot make the distinction between complicated local politics and representations and the grandiose images of Paradise," Young continues (198). Consumers will consume. In the increasingly technologically connected and globalized—yet stagnantly unquestioning—Global North, readers can easily access "grandiose images of Paradise" marketed by non-kānaka without ever attempting to make a "distinction between complicated local politics and representations." What they see is what they get: books

such as Yamanaka's *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* or Keller's *Comfort Woman*, visual media like *Lilo and Stitch* and *Moana* and *Hawai'i Five-O*. All shape the outsider's imaginary of Hawai'i in the 21st century, and all, unwittingly or not, end up reaffirming and reproducing an outsider's (read: NON-LOCAL'S) perspective of Hawai'i while overlooking *actual* Hawaiians.

Because when people are indiscriminately inducted into the "LOCALS ONLY" club via a media and publishing industry built by and for non-kānaka, consumers feel as though they are being let in on a little secret. So long as this phenomenon occurs, the elusive definition of and parameters to qualify as a "local" will remain tenuously out of reach. Thus, the "'local' remains a suspicious and troubling basis for a collective identity and literary studies" (Luangphinit 54). To return to Haunani-Kay Trask: "If it is truly our history Western historians desire to know, they must put down their books" and listen to "the people, the *'āina*, the stories. Above all, in the end, the stories...Our story remains unwritten" (*From a Native Daughter* 120). Any party even tangentially interested in Hawai'i "must put down their books" (or at least critically interrogate them) and seek out and listen to and read and watch kānaka voices, words, actions. They are out there, although perhaps not within Bamboo Ridge's oeuvre.

Chapter 3: Asian-Hawaiian Relations, On and Off the Page

Asian settlers and kānaka sovereignty: drawing the line between solidarity and erasure

To provide context for my literary analysis of works by East Asian authors such as *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* by Lois-Ann Yamanaka and “The Guest” by Gary Pak, I must first explore the relationship between Native Hawaiians and Asians in Hawai’i from the latter half of the 20th century to today. As we have seen in the previous chapter, publishers and writers from Hawai’i such as Chock and Lum often neglect Native Hawaiian words and claims to sovereignty, instead preferring to romanticize intercultural and interethnic relations on the Islands to craft a narrative of harmonious multiculturalism. On the other hand, scholars such as the Trask sisters and Eiko Kosasa have worked for decades to try and understand the relationship between these two groups of people. These scholars remain unclear as to what the best route is to solidarity, decolonization and liberation for all groups within Hawai’i.

I briefly gave background information about kānaka sovereignty groups such as Ka Lāhui in Chapter 1. To reiterate, these groups are rooted in the belief that Hawai’i ought to exist as a sovereign nation once more, with land repatriation and delinkage from U.S. control. They do not wish to expel foreigners within the islands, but rather wish to hold settlers accountable for their actions that have directly (and indirectly) contributed to Native Hawaiian disenfranchisement. Haunani-Kay Trask, who was a kānaka activist, professor, and scholar and who established the Kamakakūolani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, delineates requirements for social justice more explicitly, drawing attention to the Japanese population’s prominence within Hawai’i. “Justice for us would require, among other things, an end to Japanese Democratic Party control over Hawaiian lands and waters...Japanese [people] constitute only 21.9 percent of the population of Hawai’i, but they are 40 percent of the

Senate and 40 percent of the House of Representatives...By contrast, Hawaiians constitute 22.1 percent of the population compared to 8 percent of the Senate and 10 percent of the House,” Trask writes (“Settlers of Color” 5). She accuses the Japanese Democratic Party of Hawai’i of maintaining American hegemony. Indeed, these legislators perpetuate Opperman’s idea of omnipresent death, “control[ling] Hawaiian lands and waters” and backing the Hawaiian prison complex that so disproportionately incarcerates Native Hawaiians. From 1996-2002, in fact, Japanese settlers ran the Hawai’i Department of Public Safety (which oversees all adult county jails and state prisons). During this time period (and still today) kānaka were incarcerated at a higher rate than any other REC group on the Islands: in 2002, Hawaiians were 22 percent of Hawai’i’s population, yet constituted 38 percent of the male inmate population and 44 percent of the female inmate population (Sonoda 102).

Trask not only implicates the Japanese Democratic Party, but *all* Asian settlers, regardless of geographic origin. She continues: “the children of Asian settlers...claim Hawai’i as their own, denying indigenous history...Exploitative plantation conditions thus underpin a master narrative of hard work and the endlessly celebrated triumph over anti-Asian racism” (“Settlers of Color” 20). The “master narrative” to which she refers highlights the fact that neo/liberal politicians have carefully curated an image of Hawai’i in the mainland imagination since its “discovery.” However, Trask’s rendering of Asians as a monolith by writing indiscriminately about all “children of Asian settlers” ignores the fact that there is still significant stratification between East and Southeast Asians in Hawai’i. Japanese and Chinese settlers in Hawai’i have accumulated significant financial and sociopolitical capital throughout the Hawaiian Islands. In the plantation days of the late 19th-early 20th centuries, East Asians earned more than their Filipino counterparts; today, the Japanese, the highest-earning East Asian group,

earns \$32,129 per capita, while Filipinos make \$21,403...and Native Hawaiians make \$20,664 per capita as of 2018 (“Selected Races” 12).

There is a fine line between reinforcing stereotypes of East Asians as the spineless, model minority and calling *in* Asian settlers to stand in solidarity with the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Trask clumsily falls into a reductive either/or binary. Either *we* (Native Hawaiians) or *they* (Asians, as a monolith) are liberated. Instead, we need an expansive and inclusive view of liberation: “Triumph over anti-Asian racism” should be “endlessly celebrated,” *and* Asian settlers who problematically claim localness within a place to which they are not Indigenous should be taught otherwise (Trask, “Settlers” 22). Eiko Kosasa, a third-generation Japanese scholar and resident of Hawai’i, neither reinforces East Asian stereotypes in her writing nor displaces responsibility from Asian settlers onto white settlers. Instead of hierarchizing blame, she focuses solely on the role of Asian settlers within the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural context of Hawai’i. Kosasa writes that “Native Hawaiians are the Indigenous people of the islands. It is their nation that is under U.S. occupation; therefore, only Native Hawaiians are colonized. The rest of the population, including myself, are settlers...” (1). She candidly recognizes her culpability and implicates herself in the violent and oft-rewritten history of foreigners’ colonization of Hawai’i. Kosasa elaborates that “We, as Asian settlers, are not members or citizens of any Native nations occupied by the United States...It is colonialist to think that Asian settlers could participate in any process that decides Native self-determination or sovereignty or to think that Asian settlers could accept any positions/posts on any colonial government panel or committee” (225). She once again implicates herself (“We”) and alludes to what Haunani-Kay Trask calls “Japanese Democratic Party control” by acknowledging that Asians *do* occupy “positions/posts on...colonial government panel[s].”

Kosasa successfully toes the aforementioned line by paradoxically reinforcing what Asians and Native Hawaiians can and cannot do. She firmly assigns authority over the “process[es] that decid[e] Native self-determination or sovereignty” and on “posts on any colonial government panel” to *exclusively* Native Hawaiians. Seri Luangphinit pushes against Kosasa, accusing her of “maintaining a rigid and oppositional demarcation of race” in favor of a “safer avenue” (72). To accuse Kosasa of promoting an “opposition demarcation of race” is to misread her words: Kosasa never promotes opposition between Asians and Native Hawaiians, but rather sits with the discomfort of the negative. By delineating the roles of native Hawaiians and Asian settlers, Kosasa both refuses to conflate the plights of both groups within the U.S. under the umbrella term “people of color” *and* also to place all of the blame on white settlers of Hawai’i (they are not even mentioned in this piece). While Kosasa does not offer any solutions as to what Asian settlers of Hawai’i ought to do instead of uphold the status quo, I choose to read her words optimistically. By withholding tangible solutions to the tensions between Asians and Native Hawaiians, she leaves the rest up to our imaginations and creates an expansive field of possibilities as to what we, as Asian settlers, can do to unsettle the status quo and stand in solidarity with the kānaka sovereignty movement. No opposition here.

East Asian approximation to whiteness and the maintenance of hegemony

That is not to say that the canon of East Asian writing from and about Hawai’i has been flawless. A particularly patriotic Asian-American thought pattern arose throughout the Islands in the Interwar period. One essay entitled “Duties of the Hawaiian-Born Chinese” reveals the assimilation to and adoption of American beliefs regarding racial difference. The authors write that “The Hawaiians can be helped and they can help themselves. It is up to them to do or die. In the changing character of their people as regards ‘easy living,’ in the preservation of their

daughters for their own people, in the solving of their own social problems, lie the salvation and perpetuation of the Hawaiian race...Hawaii is our home, to America do we owe our allegiance” (8). Fears of miscegenation (“preserv[ing] their daughters for their own people”) and cries for “salvation” echo early white missionary attempts to bring civilize Native Hawaiians. Moreover, the ideas of being helped and helping yourself, doing or dying echoes the “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps” American ethos. The American Dream, to these writers, is within reach if Hawaiians cast off their beliefs of “easy living.” The authors of “Duties” rely on k̄naka stereotypes (lazy, reliant on the nonexistence welfare state) to position themselves as full-blooded, patriotic Americans in their fully-American “home” Hawai’i: *this* is a truly oppositional work, to recall Luangphinit’s words.

This prime example of Asian settler exceptionalism—and the accompanying subjugation of Native Hawaiians as the sub-subaltern—leads to what Haunani-Kay Trask labels “the latest elaboration of foreign hegemony” and a “twice-told tale” of colonization (“Settlers of Color” 47). Asian political and economic success has historically been used as evidence of Hawai’i’s harmonious multiculturalism, a bookend to the racist history of plantation labor exploitation and hyper-surveillance during and post-World War II. But “success” has often just meant assimilation and approximation to whiteness. Maile Chow, the mixed race k̄naka-Asian protagonist in Tom Peek’s *Daughters of Fire*, offers a (fictional) consequence of the beliefs written down in “Duties”: “I want to live the haole lifestyle, like the other Chinese and Japanese in Hawai’i—like my father—safe, secure, and prosperous” (197). Chinese and Japanese have, in real life, obtained a “haole lifestyle...safe, secure, and prosperous,” the authors of “Duties” would be pleased to know. This lifestyle—both a byproduct of globalization, late-stage consumer capitalism, and a cunning assimilation tactic of the white ruling class—attracted (and continues

to attract) Asian settlers in Hawai'i to disregard kānaka maoli in favor of assuming the mantle of haole-ness.

Importantly, instead of placing the blame on Asian settlers, as some kānaka authors and scholars do, Peek shifts the responsibility of the creation and maintenance of the status quo onto the “haole[s].” Indeed, Japanese scholar and longtime Hawaiian resident Eiko Kosasa argues in her article “Ideological Images: U.S. Nationalism in Japanese Settler Photographs” that “The Japanese settler community was ‘herded’ down this path of U.S. nationalism and continues to be ‘directed’” (225). Gary Okihiro echoes her claim: given the rapid militarization of Hawai'i and the praise of Asian World War II veterans—including Daniel K. Inouye, former senator of Hawai'i, after whom Honolulu's international airport is named—“Nisei [second-generation Japanese people] were driven to patriotism, with virtually no other choice...whether that meant quiet acceptance of inequality or complicity in the destruction of things Japanese” (Kajihiro 172). This forced assimilation meant Asian settlers in Hawai'i had little power to resist white military and political hegemony. Within the so-called melting pot of Hawai'i, social stratification becomes clear with the creation and reification of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups both on and off the page.

“The Guest” by Korean-American author Gary Pak pits a wealthy Japanese homeowner against a landless, mixed-race Native Hawaiian. Herman Penorio, Jr. occupies Colbert Nakamatsu's front yard, living in a tent and staunchly ignoring Nakamatsu. The conflict comes to a climax when Penorio, Jr. hangs a Ka Lāhui sovereignty flag from Nakamatsu's mango tree. Penorio, Jr. says that Nakamatsu is “...not Hawaiian. Dis land used to belong to my ancestors....I claiming ‘em back,” to which Nakamatsu retaliates “Fucking crazy listening to dis...Dis *used* to be yo' ancestors land. And anyway, you not even full-bloodied Hawaiian. What you get, one

fingernail Hawaiian?” (Pak 102). Pak navigates the kānaka plight seamlessly. Nakamatsu is a highly unsympathetic character; he angrily exclaims “You not even full-bloodied Hawaiian” when he himself is not “Hawaiian” in the Indigenous sense. Despite Penorio, Jr.’s being only “one fingernail Hawaiian,” Nakamatsu has no single foothold (or fingernail-hold) on the “Hawaiian” label. He instead reverts to relying on a garbled version of the “one drop rule” (“one fingernail,” instead) and colonial equivocation, “ambiguously avoid[ing] engaging with settler colonialism” while remaining “cryptic about Indigenous land rights in spaces inhabited by people of color” (Tuck and Yang 19).

Herman Penorio, Jr. holds grudges against Japanese settlers in Hawai’i for their proximity to whiteness, saying “Yo’ mind already fuck up, brah. You what you are, brah. One fat Japanee, hand fed by dah gov’ment” (Pak 101). Calling Nakamatsu “one fat Japanee” is perhaps harsh, but not uncalled for. Also—despite my first impressions—this comment is not racialized. Mean, perhaps, but it does not rely on Japanese stereotypes. Penorio, Jr. likens Nakamatsu to a gluttonous consumer “hand fed by dah gov’ment” and bloated with political power-by-proxy (he also inadvertently inverts the stereotypes of laziness explored in “Duties of the Hawaiian-Born Chinese”). Tom Peek highlights similar tensions between the majority-Japanese establishment and Native Hawaiians in *Daughters of Fire*. Fictional kānaka maoli governor Calvin Kamali’i’s aide states that ““They don’t really approve of Native Hawaiians, you know.’ Kamali’i knew exactly who *they* were, the same Japanese-American establishment that fought his nomination three years earlier...” (Peek 169). This “Japanese-American establishment” reaches into every sphere of Hawaiian life, fictional or not. Japanese tourists are the consistently the largest group of international tourists to visit the Hawaiian Islands each year, and Japanese firms have spent over seven billion dollars on real estate in Hawai’i since 1986 (Trask, “Settlers of Color” 50).

Indeed, Japanese dominance in Hawai'i is the status quo. As of 2008, Asian settlers composed 63% of the Hawaiian state legislature (with Japanese people alone making up 40% of both the Senate and the House of Representatives), whites made up 25%, and Hawaiians only 9% (Fujikane 5, 24). Moreover, late 20th-early 21st century legal cases such as *Rice v. Cayetano*, *Arakaki et al. v. the State of Hawai'i*, and *Arakaki et al. v. Lingle* have ruled in the favor of Asian settlers at the direct expense of Native Hawaiian sovereignty (Fujikane 14). The Japanese *are* historically and currently “dah gov’ment” in the Hawaiian Islands, as Penorio would say, which means Nakamatsu becomes a sort of auto-cannibal in this regard—again, inverting stereotypes of Native Hawaiians as uncivilized, backwards, etc. (Pak 101). Clearly, Native Hawaiians have reason to fear and begrudge both distant spheres of Japanese influence *and* disproportionate influence from ‘local’ Japanese members of the ruling Democratic establishment.

Paradoxically, Nakamatsu’s use of pidgin to communicate with Penorio, Jr. is another one of Tuck and Yang’s settler moves to innocence, this time the settler adoption fantasy. Nakamatsu adopts an Indigenous way of speaking while also blurring the cultural delineation between the two men. Subtly, Pak does away with the simplistic Asian-versus-Hawaiian tropes of elitist proper English v. Hawaiian Creole English, more commonly known as pidgin. The two men are similar in a lot of ways: they speak the same pidgin and they have spent the same amount of time on the islands (as they are high school classmates). However mixed Penorio, Jr. may be, and however much Nakamatsu tries to gatekeep Hawaiian identity, the concepts of belonging and localness boil down to blood and genealogy and ancestors.

Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers: subalternization via fetishization

Lois-Ann Yamanaka's novel *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996), a novel set in 1970s Hilo, almost entirely erases Native Hawaiian characters and, in turn, asks if Yamanaka can still label herself as a "Hawaiian writer." Yamanaka published her first novel *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theater* (1993) through the notorious Bamboo Ridge Press and went on to achieve mainland popularity for her contentious third novel *Blu's Hanging* (1997).² The main characters in her second novel *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* are all second or third-generation East Asian residents of Hawai'i, save for one hypersexualized mixed-race boy and a handful of white characters. The singular (half) k̄anaka maoli character, a boy named Jenks, functions as the love interest for Yamanaka's protagonist Lovey Nariyoshi. Yamanaka's use of a singular brown body (again, I use "body" intentionally here to emphasize Jenks' lack of inherent personhood) functions both as one of Tuck and Yang's settler moves to innocence (settler nativism) and one of Huggan's postcolonial exoticist maneuvers (local color) (12; *Postcolonial Exotic* 26).

Despite the lack of k̄anaka maoli in the novel, prejudices abound. Gina, a popular Okinawan bully in protagonist Lovey's grade, tells Lovey that she is "...one queer fucka, your whole family, fuckin' ka-naka style everybody sleeping on your living-room floor, eh? No mo' nuff beds and blankets so gotta use army sleeping bags from the Surplus Store, eh?" (Yamanaka 209). Gina relies on tired, recycled tropes about Native Hawaiians being lazy, poor, overpopulous—all stereotypes that stem from the first wave of white missionaries to settle in Hawai'i, through the "Duties" article, to the 21st century. By equating Lovey—who is a third-generation Japanese-American girl—to a "ka-naka," Gina attempts to further degrade and

² Yamanaka was accused of portraying Filipinos in a racist light, as well as for entirely erasing Native Hawaiians in a novel that is set in Hawai'i (see ho'omananui 2008; Wilson 2002; Nolte-Odhiambo 2018; Nishimura 2005).

exclude Lovey from their majority-Asian class (which, again, features one half of a “ka-naka”). Lovey is acutely aware of the social and racial hierarchies at play in American society; she hails Shirley Temple as her idol and repeatedly wishes to be blonde and blue-eyed throughout *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*. To be labeled “ka-naka,” therefore, is to be labeled untouchable.

However, to be mixed is to be labeled worthy of love. Lovey Nariyoshi narrates that “In our school, if part Hawaiian goes with pure Jap, that’s the ultimate. Everybody wants a hapa girlfriend or boyfriend. Everybody wants a part Hawaiian person” (Yamanaka 244). The stereotypical fetishization of Polynesians is here complicated by introducing the fantasy of mixing or blending races. While “ka-naka” is an insult, “part Hawaiian” is the ideal (Yamanaka 209, 244). Not *too* Native, not *too* “Jap”: “Everybody wants a part Hawaiian person,” no one wants the whole Hawaiian. In a perversion of the typical purifying narrative of eugenics, to be hapa is to be wanted. Extrapolated to the actual population demographics of Hawai’i, the 25 percent of people who identify as two or more races can partially explain both the popularity and normality of being hapa *and* Lovey’s adolescent desire to straddle the line between within Not-Other/Not-Not-Other *Wild Meat* (“2020 Census”). Given the (manufactured) Asian proximity to whiteness in Hawai’i, Asian characters rely on subjugating and degrading Native Hawaiians to boost their own social, political, and financial capital. Subalternizing³ Hawaiians is another way of sidling closer to and aligning with the white ruling class, to delineating a marked difference between “us” and “them.” In a metatextual move, Yamanaka *also* degrades Native Hawaiians in her works to boost her own social and financial capital. If these forms of capital are measured in critical mainland acclaim, Yamanaka’s bevy of awards (the Pushcart Prize—twice!, the Lannan

³ NB: I don’t think this is a real word, but “subalternizing” fits well within the context and I will continue to use it throughout my thesis. To provide a loose definition of “subalternize (vb): the act of rendering someone subaltern”.

Literary Award, the Asian American Literary Award, and the American Book Award, etc.) make her a billionaire.

Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* and Gary Pak's "The Guest" both raise questions of agency on three different levels—that of the characters, that of the authors, and that of East Asian settlers as a monolithic group. On a textual level, these works function as opposites: while Herman Penorio, Jr., is a "full-blooded Hawaiian" character, while Jenks is a mixed-race, half Hawaiian character whom the protagonist views more as an exotic, masculine ideal than as a peer (Pak 102). Penorio, Jr., is a character who holds equal ground with his Japanese rival Nakamatsu. In fact, he literally occupies his rival's grounds. On the other hand, Lovey regards Jenks as more of a figure on a pedestal than as a real human. Blinded by his exotic attractiveness, Lovey, Gina, and the rest of the girls in their grade who have crushes on Jenks do not acknowledge the fact that he is a member of the group that they so denigrate.

On an authorial level, while both Yamanaka and Pak are East Asian writers and residents of Hawai'i, they handle the "local" distinction of their characters, their works, and themselves differently. Yamanaka has "gone national," says Darlene Rodrigez, a Hawaiian-Filipina writer and teacher in an interview with the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, and thus "has a responsibility to avoid capitalizing on stereotypes...we have to ask how other people are reading and understanding her work outside of the context of Hawaii" (Kam). Knowingly or unknowing, Rodriguez harkens back to Young's claim that authors' "literary works no longer belong to them" as their books enter the global context, yet "Hawai'i still remains mysterious" (198). Mainland readers cannot parse apart the difference between Hawai'i's local politics and fabricated images and thus Yamanaka great power comes with great responsibility. By contrast, Pak is a much less famous author, unconstrained by far-off publishers and liberated in the themes

he can discuss (although the ways in which these authors write about delicate “local” tensions could simply boil down to each of their own privately-held biases, I don’t want to assume authorial intent).

Regarding the question of East Asian settlers’ agencies as a monolithic group, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* and “The Guest” subtly bring Hawai’i’s “Japanese-American establishment” to light (Trask, “Settlers of Color” 50). Pak’s character Penorio, Jr. calls out Nakamatsu’s complicity in Japanese hegemony on the islands and thus asks readers to question the ways in which they potentially and unknowingly perpetuate the marginalization of kānaka. On the other hand, *Wild Meat* positions lower-class, small-town Japanese families against white counterparts with little to no mention of kānaka maoli other than to sexualize and/or deride them. *Wild Meat*, then, feeds into the Asian settler’s American Dream of exceptionalism and approximation to whiteness. Lovey’s dreams are confined solely to looking like Shirley Temple and having a white name. Pak and Yamanaka are but two East Asian authors within the canon of multiethnic writers from Hawai’i. However, their texts in conversation with academic theory about what it means to be an Asian settler, and under the economic and sociopolitical realities of East Asian dominion in Hawai’i, offer up not solutions for achieving unilateral solidarity but rather jumping off points for engaging in critical analysis and personal reflection.

Conclusion (Thus Far)

In this first section of my thesis, I explore the history of Hawaiian colonization, the paradigm of postcoloniality/postcolonialism, exoticist maneuvers and settler moves to innocence. These arguably more “concrete” (or at least peer-reviewed) examples of written knowledge, placed in conversation with more “abstract” examples of fictional literature, fill the imaginative gaps in each of these genres of writing, opening up a realm of possibilities for the future of post-, de-, and anticolonial ecofiction and ecocriticism. The blurring of genres that have begun to emerge with works like *Sharks in the Time of Saviors* by kānaka author Kawai Strong Washburn or “Language of the Geckos” by Gary Pak shifts our starting question as readers from “What is a realistic change or win?” to “*What is the world we want to build?*” (Imarisha). After all, should we restrict ourselves to writing solely about what we think that publishers want to read, and thus what mainstream wants to read, “even our imaginations must remain forever colonized” (Chatterjee 5).

Future Directions/Reflections

Next semester, I plan to continue my line of analysis between Asian-kānaka-white authors and complete a more literature-heavy half. I have identified three motifs that stretch across the REC groups of authors and characters within the twenty-or-so fictional texts that I have already read: ‘āumakua (mythological animal ancestors), ‘āina (land), and the inclusion of pidgin English. I originally planned to analyze the relationships between Asian, white, and kānaka authors from Hawai’i in this first half of my thesis, but as I started the writing process I found myself caught up in navigating the distinctions between author, scholar, character and publisher. Transitioning between fiction works, analyzing characters and diction and other

examples of figurative language, and dense, jargony scholarly texts—all alongside avoiding the conflation between characters and authors' identities—proved to be more difficult than I expected. It requires simultaneous functioning on different planes of thought, almost. Thus, I pivoted to interrogating solely Asian writers/settlers in Hawai'i and their treatment of kānaka characters, values, ideologies—arguably the most difficult relationship to analyze within “local” literature due to each group's simultaneous claims to belonging, cross-cultural value diffusion, and an external concerted effort to manufacture a neoliberal sense of solidarity between the two. I am left with more question than I have found answers throughout my months of research, and there is always more to edit, add, and read. Luckily, I have another semester of work ahead of me.

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