

Mo'olelo as Social and Political Action: Responding to Jack Zipes (De-Disneyfying Disney) and Wazyatawin (From the Clay We Rise)

Folktales and Fairytales: Translation, Colonialism, and Cinema Symposium
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Aloha nui kākou; I greet you in the language of my ancestors of this 'āina (land). I was invited to respond to Jack Zipes' and Wazyatawin's outstanding key note presentations. Among other important points, Zipes discussed Disney's utopian-framed vision of conquest which reinforces the status quo of what we call today settler colonialism. Moreover, I would extend Zipes argument and suggest that Disney's cinema storytelling tends to reinforce settler colonialism—of which it is both product and tool—and the benevolent “master” narrative of indigenous dispossession and displacement that Wazyatawin discussed so eloquently in her presentation. Zipes noted, however, that there have always been counter-narratives and alternative traditions which have resisted Disney's vision. These alternative narratives include—as Wazyatawin reminds us—indigenous truth telling, which have continually worked to “de-Disneyfy” (or decolonize) the settler colonial narrative, including the animated and real-life tales the Disney conglomerate churns out daily through various mass-media outlets. This saturation of the settler narrative has resulted in, “scarcely an adult or child born in the twentieth century who, in the western world, has not been exposed to a Disney fairy-tale film or artifact.”¹ Far from harmless, these kinds of narratives justify conquest and settlement over lands and indigenous peoples. In this context, indigenous stories can function as social and political action and “serve as a subversive reminder that the ‘truth’ pedaled by settler society,” for example, “is not our truth,” as Wazyatawin so eloquently stated. She noted our “experience of colonization,” which has “propelled/transmuted our traditional knowledge into the miasma of irrelevancy.”² For generations, settler society has conditioned indigenous people “to devalue or forget the knowledge of our origins, as the only knowledge that mattered was that which served to invalidate our claims to our homeland and relegate us to a status of immigrants or even invaders of an earlier age.”³

As a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) scholar, I would like to discuss the mana‘o (thoughts) Zipes and Wazyatawin shared within the context of Hawai‘i and indigenous literary nationalism, where mo‘olelo (story⁴) can function as social and political action. The focus of this symposium on folk and fairytales in relation to translation, colonialism, and cinema has been the translation of oral stories to literature and then to cinema in the medium of English. However, because we are located in Hawai‘i, I would like us to remember the crucial roles such acts of translation—both linguistic and cultural—play within the context of culture, history, and story.

Hawaiian mo‘olelo was originally oral, passed down for centuries through storytelling, song, and dance; Hawaiian and translated foreign mo‘olelo have been in print in Hawai‘i for over a century. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, only a handful of scholars have examined Hawaiian language adaptations of fairytales and folklore from other countries, and much work remains to be done.⁵ In the meantime, Kanaka Maoli scholars like me have continued to work with traditional Hawaiian mo‘olelo, both oral and written, examining, analyzing, interpreting and even defending them. The importance of mo‘olelo was recognized by earlier Kanaka Maoli intellectuals who collected, published, and wrote about their importance to identity and nationhood, rallying Kanaka Maoli to social and political action.

In her MA thesis on King David Kalākaua’s *Legends and Myths of Hawaii* (1888), Tiffany Ing (2003) notes that the collection was published after Kalākaua was forced to sign the Bayonet Constitution of 1887, which stripped him of political power, and transferred power to the haole (white) elite.⁶ Ing astutely observes that Kalākaua’s publication of these Hawaiian stories in English was part of a larger political strategy to preserve Hawaiian culture. Kalākaua’s efforts were not isolated; many Kanaka writers contribute to the strategy of strengthening Kanaka culture and politics by publishing Hawaiian mo‘olelo. Noenoe Silva’s (2004) work also explains that one such tradition, the epic of the volcano and hula sister goddesses Pele and Hi‘iaka, is “intertwined with the political resistance of the lāhui [nation].”⁷ It is important to understand the political function of the mo‘olelo, as “reading the historical and political intertextually with literature allows us to see how some of these processes work and...add[s] to our collective understanding of the immense variety of

possible modes of resistance to colonialism.”⁸ An example of the political and cultural importance of mo‘olelo is described in the introduction of Simeon Pa‘aluhi and John E. Bush’s “Ka Mo‘olelo o Hi‘iakaikapoliopole” (1891), in which they passionately appeal to their audience, reminding them of the importance of Hawaiian mo‘olelo—

The legends and epic tales of the ancient times of our ancestral land were truly beautiful . . . [and] something of Hawai‘i that needs to be cherished. . . [the] loss and misinterpretation of our legends is a sign for us to look deep within and address our concerns about the longevity of this nation built upon the soil of our ancestors[;]. . . we must continue to publish the true stories of our lands [or]...It won’t be long...before the existence of our nation will be lost. The stories provide the younger generation with the reason to uphold our intimate and fond attachment to our revered land, notable sites and prominent heroic deeds of our ancestors.⁹

Unfortunately, many of the concerns expressed by Kanaka writers over a century ago are still with us. Today, we too are concerned about the longevity of the texts and their application for future generations. Today, however, we also compete with television, video games, the Internet, DVDs, and cinema for the attention of our ‘ōpio (youth); our kūpuna (ancestors) would marvel at the speed and ease of modern computer and digital technology which makes the preservation of and accessibility to our mo‘olelo easier than anything they might have dreamed. In a globalized, internet-connected world, however, misappropriation of Hawaiian mo‘olelo is even more rampant; this technology does not come without danger, or cost. This is perhaps best illustrated through one of Zipes’ points: that Disney’s “shared spectacular vision of efficiency, exploitation, and expediency” promotes capitalism and “a vision of how social relations should be ordered.”¹⁰ The ideological underpinning of this strategy “was intended to shape the vision of audiences so that they would want to see and consume more of the same.”¹¹ Let us here examine how these elements come together within the context of one Disney animated film, *Lilo and Stitch* (2002).

De-Disneyfying Disney: A Hawaiian Context

To date, most of Disney’s mainstream animated offerings have focused on westernized European folk and fairytales (*Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*), with the exception of *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), and *Lilo and Stitch* (2002). Lilo and Stitch are fictitious creations of the Disney imagination, Lilo drawn from an awkwardly imagined Native Hawaiian culture, and Stitch plucked from a tired cliché of western space alien fantasy. Despite—or perhaps because of—this clumsily imagined, preposterous pairing, *Lilo and Stitch* has been a huge success for Disney. Through this fictitious cartoon, Disney has become an arbiter of Hawaiian culture for audiences around the globe. There is much to be said about the many ways Disney misrepresents Hawaiian culture in this film (and even beyond), but I will focus on two examples: disconnection from the ‘āina and the concept of ‘ohana (family) that the movie advertises itself to represent.

For those not familiar with the film, the basic premise is that “Lilo,” an orphaned girl with a penchant for Elvis Presley music, is lonely; she visits a local animal shelter to adopt a dog, which is how Stitch—a failed experiment from an alien planet—enters her life. Together, the two share various adventures, in the end, creating their own sense of “family.” Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois, the creators of *Lilo and Stitch*, first envisioned the story set somewhere in rural Kansas, until “Sanders happened to glance at a map of the Hawaiian Islands.”¹² This inspired the pair to move the setting of the story, as “animation has been set so much in ancient, medieval Europe—so many fairy tales find their roots there. . . . But that choice went on to color the entire movie, and rewrite the story for us.”¹³ For Native Hawaiians, land and place are essential to our identity, something not randomly plucked from a map. In fact, the connection between place and story is so intimate and natural that a specific term exists in Hawaiian language to describe it—*wahi pana*, “place known/made famous through story, and/or the stories attached to it.”¹⁴ It is the recasting of the story to Hawai‘i (more specifically, to the island of Kaua‘i) which creates the uneven storyline, and allows for the injection of racist, patronizing, and colonial undertones into the film.

Set in rural Kansas, “Lilo” would most likely have been a white girl with a more identifiably mainstream American name (perhaps Dorothy, in tribute to another lonely orphaned girl from rural Kansas with a dog?). Such a setting and characterization might render Lilo’s disruptive social behavior at the beginning of the film, and her misidentification of Stitch as a dog, rather than the mean-spirited, destructive alien that he is, quite humorous, and their redemption in the end of the film more touching. Yet changing the location of the film to Kaua‘i (the island where I was raised, still live, and have ancestral family ties), and creating a main character who is identifiably Native Hawaiian changes how an audience—at least an informed one—interprets this otherwise classic comedic trope of youthful misfits and mistaken identity. That Lilo, a young, indigenous female character, cannot recognize that Stitch’s alien character *is not* a dog speaks to the colonial trope of native (and female) as stupid. Her undisciplined behavior, perhaps typical of an orphan child seeking her place in the world, comes across as settler colonialism storytelling at its best—an uncivilized native (female) in need of domestication. While Lilo’s parents have died, Lilo is not alone—she has an older sister, Nani, who tries to care for her. This situation puts the siblings at odds with the government, represented by the Department of Social Services. Here the movie draws from a tired stereotype—another indigenous family depicted as dysfunctional and inept at handling their own domestic affairs, in desperate need of the government’s paternalistic shepherding, guiding them along the fixed path from savagery to civility, playing into and reinforcing settler ideas already held about indigenous peoples.

This positioning of Lilo (who is by default representing Native Hawaiians as a whole) as inferior is reinforced through other mechanisms in the film: her idolization of Elvis Presley isn’t just a school girl crush, it is an upholding of American culture, as brokered by an iconic white man (who made a career off a music form leeches from African American culture), whose own Hawai‘i-based films, *Blue Hawaii* (1961), and *Paradise Hawaiian Style* (1966) also contributed to the colonial imagining of Hawai‘i.¹⁵

Yet despite these egregiously negative, stereotyped characterizations, what is most disturbing is how Disney places itself as the source of Hawaiian culture values through its insistence in redefining

what they are. First and foremost is the Hawaiian concept of ‘ohana (family). This is a main message of the film, whose oft-cited feel-good tag line, “‘Ohana means nobody gets left behind” has redefined what this word means to an otherwise ignorant and gullible audience.

Relocating the story to Hawai‘i solved a problematic point for the writers—how to redeem Stitch, “a dangerous and nearly indestructible genetic experiment escaped from another planet.”¹⁶ As Zipes notes, the evolution of Disney’s fairy tale film requires a moral basis, which in *Lilo and Stitch* is Stitch’s transformation from “evil” to “good.” DeBlois acknowledges, “the story called for Stitch to mend his ways under the influence of Lilo”; however, “it was unclear what about her would bring such a change.”¹⁷ This point became clear to DeBlois on a trip to Kaua‘i, where a tour guide “explained to us the Hawaiian concept of ‘ohana, a sense of family that extends far beyond your immediate relatives. That idea so influenced the story that it became the foundation theme, the thing that causes Stitch to evolve despite what he was created to do, which is destroy.”¹⁸ Thus, Disney appropriated the concept of ‘ohana for commercial profit, but because the writers do not understand the culture (and do not appear to want to learn more about it), they distort the concept of ‘ohana.

Esteemed kupuna (elder) and cultural scholar Mary Kawena Pukui has written extensively on the cultural values of ‘ohana within a Hawaiian paradigm. The basic definition of the term is family. But it is the etymology of the word that is critical to Hawaiian cultural epistemology. The word ‘ohana is derived from the word ‘ohā, the “taro corm growing from the older root, especially from the stalk called kalo; tender plant...shoot, sucker, branch... *fig.*, offspring, youngsters.”¹⁹ Therefore, the kalo and ‘ohana are conceptually linked, connected as well through traditional metaphor.

Many customs and practices connect kalo and ‘ohana, and “[reinforce] family closeness and loyalty.”²⁰ One example is the poi bowl. Traditionally, families ate from one large bowl of poi placed in the center of the mat or table, and because of this sharing, many protocols were developed around proper etiquette in the sharing of poi. This reinforced ‘ohana bonding (in addition to sharing the sacred food), because “when the poi bowl [was] open, there must be no haggling, quarreling, [or] arguing” so as not to offend the spirit of Hāloa, first ancestor, who was physically represented by the poi itself.”²¹ If this rule was violated, the warning, “Ke hō‘ole mai nei ‘o Hāloa” (Hāloa will nullify

it) would be voiced, as “it was from the first-born child of Heaven and Earth that all taros descended[, and] in remembrance of this, all taro, poi, and the bowl of poi were revered.”²²

In Hawaiian tradition, Ho‘ohōkūkālani²³ (To Generate Stars in the Heavens) became pregnant from Wākea (Sky Father); she miscarried, and together they buried the stillborn child near the house. The next morning, a kalo plant grew up from the spot where the child was buried; this first kalo plant was named Hāloanakalaukapalili, “Long Stalk with Quivering Leaves.”²⁴ Ho‘ohōkūkālani became pregnant again; this time she has a healthy baby boy named Hāloa in honor of the first-born Hāloanakalaukapalili. Thus, as the Dakota people believe they are created from the clay of Minisota as Wazyatawin shared, Kanaka Maoli believe we are the younger sibling of the kalo plant, born from our ‘āina, ‘ohana to kalo, and in extension, to all elements of nature within the Hawaiian environment.

Perhaps the most important aspect of ‘ohana is a spiritual one, through the practice of *pule ‘ohana* (family prayers), often shortened (as it is in my family) to the word ‘ohana alone. The practice of (pule) ‘ohana was described by Pukui as “always linking the Hawaiian family...first to the deities, later to the Christian God. Always this was a part of the major prevention or remedy of discord, the *ho‘oponopono* [process to make right].”²⁵ It is this spiritual element of ‘ohana which is most noticeably absent in Disney’s depiction of a Hawaiian family, and is arguably the most needed element in correcting Lilo’s wayward ways, anchoring her cultural identity in the ‘āina as well as her human relatives.

Pukui was careful to emphasize that “everything relating to [the] individual is within the matrix of ‘ohana: an individual alone is unthinkable in the context of Hawaiian relationship.”²⁶ Yet translated by Disney, Lilo exists as an *individual* who has no deep connections to place, community, or even family—there are no other siblings besides Nani, no parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins, important relationships within the complex and intricate web of Native Hawaiian kinship. Integral cultural support practices such as hānai (often translated as “adoption” *lit.* a practice of feeding) are ignored by Disney, leaving Lilo abandoned by a larger Hawaiian community who is visibly absent in the film.

The mo‘olelo of Hāloa also reminds Kanaka Maoli of our kuleana (rights and responsibilities) within the ‘ohana. Pukui stressed that “a younger sibling obeyed the older one; the elder child cared for the young one.”²⁷ In the Hāloa story, Native Hawaiians are represented by the second-born Hāloa, and are thus metaphorically the younger sibling to the kalo.²⁸ In Disney’s Pelekai ‘ohana, this is certainly not the case—Lilo and Nani constantly bicker, and Lilo demonstrates no respect for her older sister Nani, who does her best to safeguard her younger sister. Reframing the story within the western context of individualism erodes the strength, beauty, and complexity of the ‘ohana concept, and does a great disservice to Hawaiian culture—Stitch is redeemed *as an individual*, a point necessary to fulfill Disney’s narrative formula. However, it is a point made at the expense of traditional Hawaiian family values and a destroyed indigenous familial structure. In this manner, *Lilo and Stitch* upholds the master narrative of settler colonialism, as invested in this narrative as Minnesota’s settlers are in the lie of benevolent colonial settlement of Dakota lands shared by Waziyatawin.

Disney thus re-presents Hawaiian culture and kinship as fitting the trope of the ignoble savage that justified the taking of native lands, dispossession of native people, and appropriation of our cultural practices. While Native Americans are correct to critique Disney on these and other points with *Pocahontas*, no other scholarship has connected *Lilo and Stitch* to this same rhetoric of conquest.²⁹ *Lilo and Stitch* works precisely because of this; it is a feel-good story that is set in an exotic enough location to be thrilling and slightly dangerous, but safely ensconced within the familiarity of settler colonialism, where the restless and ignoble savages are easily subdued by paternalistic government intervention.

Because Disney’s narrative mimics the master narrative of conquest and settlement, upholding the status quo as Zipes pointed out, the settler audience is content with Disney’s cultural brokering; they can sit back and feel confident that because they watched *Lilo and Stitch*, they now understand what Hawaiian culture is all about.³⁰ The problem, of course, is that real natives with real knowledge and real cultural commitment exist in the world, real people whose cultural knowledge and practice doesn’t jibe with Disney’s portrayal.

The success of *Lilo and Stitch* has subsequently spawned a lucrative and multifaceted spinoff industry for Disney with a soundtrack and other audio CDs, a television cartoon series, toys, games, and a myriad of *Lilo*-related paraphernalia, including a 2005 released-straight-to-DVD sequel to the 2002 animated film, *Lilo and Stitch 2: Stitch has a Glitch*. Hawaiian scholar, educator, and composer Kīhei DeSilva has written a scathing critique—and deservingly so—of the Disneyfication of Pele, Hi‘iaka and Lohi‘au, an important traditional Hawaiian mo‘olelo, featured in *Stitch has a Glitch*. DeSilva, incensed by Disney’s “fast and loose” translation of this sacred mo‘olelo and cultural treasure, concludes that, “We cannot, must not, make the connection that Disney expects of us. This is Disney at its most subversive. *Stitch has a Glitch* makes a cotton-candy lie out of a complex metaphor and then feeds that lie back to us as cultural truth. . . and we who cherish our traditions are faced with yet another situation in which we have to un-teach before we can teach.”³¹

What incenses DeSilva and other cultural practitioners and scholars is the blatant disregard for a people and our traditions. The Disneyfication of Kanaka Maoli and our cultural practices have real world outcomes that can do more damage to Hawaiian mo‘olelo—history, story, tradition—as the Disneyfied, Disney-defined versions of Hawaiian culture become, to borrow Sadhana Naithani’s term, “the folktale called Hawai‘i.” In other words, Hawai‘i and Hawaiian culture become a folktale that is freely translated, corrupted, and expropriated by the west for its own exploitative purposes and financial profit.

Despite the continuity of settler colonialism on native lands and insistence of translating native people and our cultures in a way that is paternalistic and self-satisfying to settler colonials, indigenous people are equally insistent in continuing to fight for our ‘āina, our traditions, and our way of life. This point, of mo‘olelo as social and political action, was eloquently expressed by Waziyatawin’s presentation, “From the Clay We Rise.” Indeed, Waziyatawin’s moving presentation provides a way for indigenous people to de-Disneyfy (and thus decolonize) ourselves, a way to “un-teach” the “colonial lie disguised as cultural truth” as DeSilva affirms.

Hānau maiā Hāloa mai (Born from the Lo‘i): Mo‘olelo as political action

In 2008, the state of Minnesota celebrated 150 years of statehood; in 2009, the state of Hawai‘i celebrated fifty, choosing, like the state of Minnesota, to ignore an opportunity of truth telling in just how the state came to be, including the massive dispossession of Kanaka Maoli from our lands and the freedom to practice our culture. The Dakota people of Minisota used this opportunity, as described by Waziyatawin, to “[call] into question the narrative of our history that justifies the invasion and theft of our lands, the brutal colonization of our people, and the policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetuated against us. We are struggling to illuminate the injustices that . . . permeate our daily lives.”³²

There are many Hawaiian examples of mo‘olelo being evoked as a rallying call for political action, but I’d like to focus on a specific important and timely example, the recently proposed genetic modification (GMO) of kalo (taro). Because of the story of Hāloanakalaukapalili described briefly above, kalo is *the* most important plant crop in Hawaiian culture. In January 2008, as the state began preparations for the 2009 statehood celebration, Senate Bill 958, dubbed “Hāloa’s Law,” was introduced during the 2008 Legislative session; this bill proposed a ten-year moratorium on all genetic modification and testing of kalo in Hawai‘i. Over two thousand pages of public testimony on this bill, the majority of which were against GMO, were submitted into the public record. Many arguments against the genetic modification of kalo were presented. However, the Hawaiian mo‘olelo of Hāloa prominently figured in the majority of testimonies given by Native Hawaiians. Over forty-seven variants of the mo‘olelo were submitted as part of the written testimony record, not including drawings and short testimonies submitted by school children.³³

One letter, submitted by Nohealani Nihipali, clearly illustrates the importance of the mo‘olelo for Hawaiians today. In the course of her testimony, she evokes the Hawaiian creation chant Kumulipo (“Source of Deep Darkness”) as well as her genealogical link to Papahānaumoku, Wākea, and Hāloanakalaukapalili through the birth of her son, Kama‘ehukahakilinolani, whom she describes as “a healthy and existing product of HALOA.”³⁴ She then connects her work in a lo‘i

(taro garden) while she is hāpai (pregnant) as assisting in development of her unborn child, as he is “energized by the thrill of sweet smelling lepo earth.”³⁵ She continues,

clearing his senses he inhales the makani’s [wind’s] sweet breeze passing through him so he is consistently reminded of what comes next—HA [breath], HA which brings LIFE to our LOA longevity. He is our gift, his uHAnē [spirit] comes through Akua (spiritual connection). He is Hanau [born], then his iewe [afterbirth] comes forth, resembling Haloa’s roots, looking and feeling just like kalo; we kanu [bury] it in Papahanaumoku, this very earth which stabilizes him. . . nurtured through my bosom, he is graced with the presence of this earth. His first introduction to food [poi] is from Haloa. Every single element of kalo nurtures him with unrelenting strength.

Now, he is at our side while lepo [soil] run through his toes as we harvest his next meal. He is not sick for the first four years of his life. As he becomes a toddler, poi is thickened and this continues to be the recipe for this Hiapo, my first born son. Mahalo Akua [thanks to God], mahalo na Aumakua [thanks to the guardian spirits], mahalo ku‘u mau Kupuna [thanks to my beloved ancestors], mahalo Haloa [thanks to Hāloa, the taro and first ancestor] for providing this keikikane [boy] with these blessings of life.³⁶

Nihipali acknowledges, as do so many Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, the key place kalo holds at the center of Hawaiian culture, as a staple crop and metaphor for kinship ties, the basic social structure of society. Pukui stresses that ‘ohana is a “blood tie”; this blood tie, or genealogical connection that “is the core of ‘ohana in its broad meaning of concept, or emotional force[,] or with concept put into practice, the core of “‘ohana living’ or the “‘ohana way of life’...to be ‘ohana you must all come from the same root or be linked by the same piko³⁷.”

The papers and presentations throughout this symposium have been illuminating, inspirational, and also disturbing. The first two I’m sure are a given. But why disturbing? Because of the vast proliferation of colonial invasion and intentionally skewed “translation” of native cultures

that have been presented in different contexts, but particularly in the films shown and discussed throughout the symposium. I find DeSilva’s conclusion to his *Lilo and Stitch* critique a call to action—to reject Disney’s settler narrative, to embrace truth telling, and fight, as Waziyatawin and her Dakota people, “for a more just future for our grandchildren...revealing the master narratives as myth and...blast[ing] the truth from the center of our crying souls.”³⁸

“So where do we find harmony in these unstable times?” DeSilva asks. He responds to his own question by suggesting mo‘olelo as social—and in extension—political action.

It starts with our own careful learning of *Hiiakaikapoliopole*. Of plot, character, and kaona [metaphor]. And it absolutely requires the reintroduction of this mo‘olelo into the bosoms of our families. We turn off the DVD players, we gather the kids and grandkids at our feet, and we ha‘i mo‘olelo [talk story]. It’s a long story. It takes years of bedtimes to tell and retell. When told and retold, it will again become part of us.³⁹

Ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana (thus the story is told). This is a commonly heard refrain signaling a Hawaiian mele (and sometimes mo‘olelo) is coming to a close. Native American writer Thomas King reminds us all that “the truth about stories is that’s all that we are.”⁴⁰ For indigenous people, our mo‘olelo are our identity and history, they live within and shape our blood and our bones. This remembering and retelling on the part of indigenous peoples is part of the process of decolonizing our minds, as African writer Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981) asserts, and is also a key aspect of asserting indigenous nationhood, vital to our survival. Do with this story what you will, King tells his audience. “Forget it. But don’t say in the years to come,” he warns us, “that you would have lived your life any differently if only you had heard this story. You’ve heard it now.”⁴¹

Post-script

In May 2009, I took part on a tour of special sites of Dakota land, “Native Twin Cities,” offered to participants of the NAISA (Native American and Indigenous Studies Association) Annual Conference, held at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul. The tour was led by Pam

Halverson (Bdewakantuwan Dakota), a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, and elder Sheldon Wolfchild (Bdewakantuwan) of the Two Rivers Community Development Corporation. Our group was comprised mostly of Native American and indigenous educators from around North America and the Pacific. We visited several sacred and important Dakota sites of “Minisota Makoce”, among them a traditional burial ground, the sacred spring at Bdote and Mendota (Fort Snelling), which I had first heard about from Waziyatawin. Mr. Wolfchild shared Dakota stories and history echoing Waziyatawin’s. As we passed the sprawling international airport bordering the highway dividing it from Fort Snelling State Park, he told our group about the paving over of Dakota grave sites, including one for his father. Our big yellow school bus then wound its way through the park, where mostly white people picnicked with their children, cast fishing rods on the serene ponds and lakes that dotted the landscape, bicycled and hiked the lush trails on that lovely spring afternoon, and basically ignored the site marking the dark history of Fort Snelling and Dakota genocide and ethnic cleansing. Later at the spring near an old, abandoned BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) building the tribe was negotiating with the Federal government to take possession of and transform into a community center, we had the privilege of meeting a Dakota elder and his family, who were spending the afternoon at the spring. Here, we heard more stories and history, and saw for ourselves the resiliency and determination of the Dakota people of Minisota Makoce. It was a sobering experience made much more so because of Waziyatawin’s presentation that had spurred my interest in participating in this tour, paying my humble respects to the Dakota ancestors who fought so valiantly for their land from which they rise, and who so poignantly inspire their Dakota descendants today.

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¹ Jack Zipes, “De-Disneyfying Disney: Notes on the Development of the Fairy-Tale Film,” (keynote address, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, September 2008).

² Wazyatawin, “Maka Cokaya Kin (The Center of the Earth): From the Clay We Rise,” (presentation, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, September 2008).

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Mo‘olelo is a term which encompasses a wide variety of meanings, including oral and written sources of history and all forms of story, including folklore, myth, legends and history. It is derived from the term *mo‘o‘ōlelo* (“succession of talk”), clearly demonstrating a close relationship between oral and written transmission of knowledge. Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, rev. and enl. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1986), 254.

⁵ Examples include Niklaus Schweizer, “Kahaunani: ‘Snow White’ in Hawaiian: A Study in Acculturation,” in *East Meets West: Homage to Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr.*, ed. Roger L. Hadlich and J. D. Ellsworth, (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1988), 283–89; Cristina Bacchilega and Noelani Arista, “The Arabian Nights in the *Kuokoa*, a Nineteenth-century Hawaiian Newspaper: Reflections on the Politics of Translation,” in *Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Ulrich Marzoph, ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 157-182; and Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, “How Blue is His Beard? An Examination of the 1862 Hawaiian-Language Translation of ‘Bluebeard.’” *Marvels and Tales* 23 no. 1 (2009): 17-39.

⁶ A detailed analysis of this historical time period is discussed by Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio in his book, *Dismembering Lāhui* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002). A copy of the 1887 constitution is posted on the Hawai‘i Independent and Sovereignty (Nation of Hawai‘i) website, <http://www.hawaii-nation.org/constitution-1887.html>.

⁷ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 21.

⁸ *ibid.* 28.

⁹My translation. The Hawaiian text from Pa‘aluhi and Bush reads: He nani nō ho‘i a he nanea maoli nō nā mo‘olelo a me nā ka‘ao o ka wā kahiko o ko kākou ‘āina, a he mea nō ho‘i a ka Hawai‘i e hi‘ipoi ai e like me ka hiala‘ai o kēlā a me kēia lāhui i nā mo‘olelo, nā ka‘ao, a me nā mele o ko lākou ‘āina hānau. ‘O kēia hā‘ule‘ule ‘ana o nā mo‘olelo, ‘o ia kekahi ‘ōuli a ke kilo e nānā ai me ka na‘au i piha i n‘ mana‘o hopohopo no ka mau ana o kona lāhui ma luna o ka ‘āina o kona mau kūpuna, no ka mea, e hō‘ike mau ana ka mo‘olelo i‘o maoli o nā ‘āina i kākau ia nā mo‘olelo...‘A‘ole he lō‘ihi o ka noho ‘ana o ka lāhui a nalo aku mai ke ao ke ho‘omaloka a ho‘opaina lākou i ka hi‘ipoi ‘ana me nā ohohia nui i nā mo‘olelo a me nā mele o nā ano a pau, a kama‘ilio mau i mua o ka poe ‘ōpio i kumu e mau ai ua ho‘oipo a me nā li‘a ana o ka na‘au o ke kanaka i ke aloha ‘āina ma muli o ka hō‘oni ‘ana o nā mo‘olelo a me nā mele e pili ana i kona one hānau, nā wahi pana a me nā hana kaulana a kona mau kūpuna. Simeon Pa‘aluhi and John E. Bush, “‘Ōlelo Ho‘akaka [Introduction], He Moolelo no Hiiakaikapoliopele.” *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 5-6, January 1893. Diacritical marks to original text added.

¹⁰Jack Zipes, “De-Disneyfying Disney,” 13.

¹¹ibid.

¹²Pat Davis, “Disney Goes Hawaiian.” *Hana Hou*, May/June 2002. www.hanahou.com.

¹³ibid.

¹⁴Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, rev. and enl. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1986), 377.

¹⁵Elvis Presley’s films are but a small part of the much longer history of such colonial representations of Hawai‘i, going all the way back to earlier films such as *Bird of Paradise* (1932), Bing Crosby’s *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), and Betty Grable’s *Song of the Islands* (1942).

¹⁶Davis, “Disney Goes Hawaiian.”

¹⁷ibid.

¹⁸ibid.

¹⁹Pukui and Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, 276.

²⁰Mary Kawena Pukui, Haertig and Lee, *Nana i ke Kumu*, vol. 1 (Honolulu: Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, 1972), 170.

²¹ibid.

²²E. S. Craighill Handy and Mary Kawena Pukui, *The Polynesian Family System of Ka‘ū, Hawai‘i* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1972), 115, 193.

²³Some traditions e.g. Kepelino, *Kepelino’s Traditions of Hawaii*, trans. Martha Warren Beckwith (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1932) cite Ho‘ohökūkālani as the mother of Hāloa, others, e.g. Pukui and Handy, *Polynesian Family System* cite Papahānaumoku (The Foundation who Gives Birth to Islands), Wākea’s spouse and counterbalance as Earth Mother, as Hāloa’s mother. Kame‘eleihiwa argues that Wākea’s desire of his daughter Ho‘ohökūkālani sets up the ‘Aikapu (“Sacred Eating”) religious system, in which men and women eat separately, and certain food items were restricted for male consumption only; this religious system remained in place until officially broken in 1819 following the death of Kamehameha I, when his son Liholiho (Kamehameha II) sat with his mother Keōpūolani and regent Ka‘ahumanu (favorite and most politically powerful wife of Kamehameha I) and ate food with them. Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Lands and Foreign Desires, Pehea lā e pono ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992).

²⁴*Hā* has multiple meanings; the primary ones referenced through the name Hāloa being both breath, “to breathe upon” and the stalk of the taro plant. Pukui and Elbert, *The Hawaiian Dictionary*, 44.

²⁵Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, *Nana i ke Kumu*, vol. 1 (Honolulu: Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, 1972), 170.

²⁶Handy and Pukui. *The Polynesian Family System*, 75.

²⁷Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, *Nana i ke Kumu*, 170.

²⁸Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Lands*, 24.

²⁹An excellent example of Native American criticism of Disney’s *Pocahontas* is Cornel Pewewardy’s, “The Pocahontas Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for Educators,” *Journal of Navajo Education*, (Fall/Winter 1996/97). <http://www.hanksville.org/storytellers/pewe/writing/Pocahontas.html>.

³⁰In addition to the actual film, the DVD version includes “extras” such as “DisneyPedia: Hawaii” (also included in the 2009 two-disc “Big Wave” edition under the new title, “DisneyPedia: Hawaii—The Islands of Aloha”). In this extra, Lilo and Nani narrate information about the islands over picturesque locations and activities within the islands. Reviewer Luke Bonanno notes it is “a social studies lesson whose pacing may exceed its target audience’s comprehension rate, but it’s fairly edu-taining.” Luke Bonanno, Review of “Lilo & Stitch: 2-Disc Big Wave Edition DVD,” <http://www.ultimatedisney.com/liloandstitch.html>.

³¹Kihei DeSilva, “Review, ‘Stitch has a Glitch.’” Kaiwakiloumoku Hawaiian Culture Center, Kamehameha Schools, <http://kaiwakiloumoku.ksbe.edu>.

³² Waziyatawin, “Maka Cokaya Kin,” 4.

³³ A complete history of this bill, and all related testimony can be viewed online at the State of Hawai‘i Legislative website, <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/lists/getstatus2.asp?billno=SB958>.

³⁴ Hawai‘i State Legislature, State Senate Agricultural Committee, Testimony of Nohealani Nihipali before the State Senate Agriculture Committee, Hawai‘i State Legislature, (Honolulu, March 19, 2008).

http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/Testimony/SB958_AGR_03-19-08_INPERSON_A_.pdf.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ The authors note in the text that “the *piko* or umbilical cord of a grandchild was considered the ‘blood link’ between the child and the two pairs of grandparents.” Pukui, Haertig and Lee, *Nana i ka Kumu*, 170.

³⁸ Waziyatawin, “Maka Cokaya Kin,” 4.

³⁹ DeSilva, “Review.”

⁴⁰ Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories, a Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), 2.

⁴¹ *ibid.* 29.