In the preface of *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place: Tradition, Translation, and Tourism*, author Cristina Bacchilega warns the reader that her book is not about Hawaiian legends. It is focused on critically examining the historic and contemporary production of legendary Hawai‘i—English-language translations of Hawaiian mo‘olelo (stories) published in popular magazines and books beginning in the late nineteenth century. According to Bacchilega, the translated mo‘olelo strategically served the needs of the settler culture. They conjured up alluring and non-threatening images of the Islands that were important to the nascent tourist industry. They were also mistakenly associated with Western conceptions of legends, myths, and fairy tales from the past and were hence misunderstood and trivialized. Even today, non-Hawaiian readers are largely unaware of the differences between traditional mo‘olelo and their translations and are unable to appreciate the ways the original stories conveyed cultural, genealogical, and historical information through a range of storytelling practices. To address this settler ignorance, Bacchilega chronicles the production of this particular genre of settler translations, analyzes important features of its texts, and underscores the political repercussions of its legacy.

After 1898, when Hawai‘i became a territory of the United States, the production of legendary Hawai‘i intensified. Taking advantage of new printing technologies, publishers illustrated stories with attractive photographic reproductions of scenery and people, which helped market Hawai‘i as an elite travel destination. This pairing of text and imagery, often published by the Hawaii Promotions Committee (established in 1903), contributed to the creation of a new colonial imaginary with far-reaching consequences. As the production of translated stories increased, settlers began to see themselves as the experts on Native life while Hawaiians became the informants. This erosion of Native authority paralleled the displacement of Native Hawaiians from the land—an issue that remains pertinent to contentious discussions over Hawaiian sovereignty initiatives and land claims today. Although the stories of legendary Hawai‘i were not written exclusively by or for non-Hawaiians, they served “primarily non-Hawaiian interests at a crucial political juncture” (6). They thus reinforced the ideological beliefs of settlers who supported the 1898 annexation of Hawai‘i, the pivotal moment when Hawai‘i became a colony of the United States (or an occupied nation, according to a number of Hawaiian scholars).

Bacchilega’s project joins those of other settler writers focused on Hawai‘i’s colonial histories, such as Gaye Chan, Andrea Feerer, Cynthia Franklin, Candace Fujikane, Eiko Kosasa, Laura Lyons, Paul Lyons, Jonathan Okamura, Sally E Merry, Judy Rohrer, and Houston Wood. As a professor of English at the University...
of Hawai‘i, Bacchilega uses her expertise in translation and folklore studies to scrutinize the rhetorical strategies of legendary Hawai‘i. She identifies herself as a malihini (newcomer) and non-Native scholar with limited knowledge of the Native Hawaiian culture and language. Despite an impressive command of the latter, her admission reflects an intention to locate her project within (and not outside of) a history of colonial translations. While many of the historic translators eliminated the meaning of history from the word “mo‘olelo,” her objective is to recover it. To guide her re-vision of Hawai‘i as an indigenous storied place, she turns to the work of Hawaiian scholars.

Bacchilega begins her analysis not in the late nineteenth century but in the present with a text that reframed her understanding of land in Hawai‘i: Anne Kapulani Landgraf’s Nā Wahi Pana O Ko‘olau Poko (University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994). Although Landgraf’s project may resemble other books on landscape photography, for Bacchilega it offers a different conception of nature. Each photograph is accompanied by a text in Hawaiian and an English translation that offer vivid details of prominent physical landmarks and/or references to humans, gods, and kupua (beings who can take many forms). Through her research on wahi pana (storied places), Landgraf retrieves place-specific Hawaiian knowledge.

When Bacchilega turns her attention to an examination of early legendary Hawai‘i collections, she introduces the concept of the “paratext,” borrowed from the study of narratology. Paratext refers to the “verbal and visual apparatus of a text in print” (75), which frames a reader’s interpretative process and sets the parameters for the generation of meaning. The paratext can consist of the “preface, introduction, notes, genre denomination, illustrations, cover, graphics, and self-representation of the author/translator/editor” (75). This concept is helpful for considering how readers generate meaning as they move through the pages of a magazine or book. Hence, when Bacchilega examines popular translations by Thomas G Thrum—editor and sometimes author of stories in Paradise of the Pacific magazine (begun in 1888) and compiler of Hawaiian Folk Tales: A Collection of Native Legends (1907)—or translations by William D Westervelt in Legends of Gods and Ghosts (1915), Legends of Old Honolulu (1915), and Hawaiian Legends of Volcanoes (1916), she describes how the prefaces were frequently addressed to nonresidents. This explains why most translated stories lacked the geographic details found in traditional Hawaiian stories; those details were irrelevant for people who lived elsewhere. For the sake of expediency, translators also deleted auspicious recitations of place names and genealogies, once integral features of traditional storytelling practices.

As already evidenced by Landgraf’s book, not all English translations perpetuated the violations associated with the recoding of native knowledge in colonial publications. Bacchilega underscores the complexity of legendary Hawai‘i and the importance of paying close attention to details (eg, by examining paratextual elements) that can suggest alternative, opposi-
tional readings. Such is the case with *Hawaii, Its People, Their Legends* (1904), by Hawaiian scholar Emma Kaili Metcalf Beckley Nakuina. Interestingly enough, Nakuina’s text was published by the Hawaii Promotions Committee as a promotional project with a large number of photographic illustrations. Even though it visually resembled publications by Thrum and Westervelt, its constellation of paratextual elements created a different interpretative framework. In contrast to most legendary Hawai‘i stories, it included far fewer images of coconut trees; no references to generic waterfalls, cliffs, and valleys; more references to specific places like “Kapi‘olani Park, burial caves at Hā‘ena, and the heiau at Kawaihae” (126; italics in original); and many more photographs of Hawaiians in Western dress. It thus represented Hawaiian places as inextricably tied to Hawaiian knowledge, and Hawaiian people as highly capable of negotiating colonial codes of civility and dress.

Bacchilega proposes that we view Nakuina’s stories and Landgraf’s book as “autoethnographic expressions” (6)—texts in which colonized subjects assert their agency and articulate oppositional views by utilizing the colonizer’s tools. Recognizing the subtle differences between texts that support colonial ideologies and those that work against it can be a way to participate in a “politics of translation.” This requires that translation itself be “problematized, not in the service of a hopeless untranslatability” (16) but in the hopes of learning from another culture through an “ethics of reading.”

Although written clearly, Bacchilega’s book is no easy read. The reader’s undivided attention is required to follow her densely argued comparative analyses as they perform the meticulous work of counter-hegemony that Antonio Gramsci called the “war of position” and likened to trench warfare (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 1971*). Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place should become essential reading for those interested in unworking the legacies of colonial literature and visual culture. In her final chapter, Bacchilega describes classroom activities in which students discuss their responses to reading “multicultural” ghost stories set in Hawai‘i. In these pedagogical moments, we glimpse how the author has created opportunities for students to analyze popular appropriations of Hawaiian cultural knowledge and question their circulation through colonial translations.

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It is a familiar idea in Pacific studies that two normative orders can exist side by side or one on top of the other. In land tenure, for example, one piece of land may be governed by custom and another by introduced land