Book and Media Reviews
the Mind (1986) appears: The effect of the cultural bomb is to / annihilate a people’s belief in their names . . . / in their heritage . . . ultimately in themselves. // It makes them see their past as one / wasteland of non-achievement and it / makes them want to distance themselves / from that wasteland.

As we discussed in class, this use of white text against a black screen is anything but simple. The use of black and white is integral to the film’s complex but clearly delivered politics and poetics. Time and again, it is how Kelly conveys her position. Whatever form those well-timed and precisely positioned white letters against the black screen take (and whether they communicate data about proliferating military bases or about lines of poetry), this is one way—and the class identified others, including the use of music by Billy Bragg, Black Square, Sudden Rush, and Jon Osorio—that Noho Hewa delivers its combination logos-ethos-pathos punch.

After our second class spent discussing the film, I asked my student if he wanted to pursue his complaint. Without elaboration, he said he did not. Whether this film and his classmates’ responses did more than startle him into a greater state of wakefulness, I cannot say. What I can say is that for some students, this film acts as a catalyst, one that propels them into a greater state of wakefulness, I cannot say. What I can say is that for some students, this film acts as a catalyst, one that propels them from a mix of tears and indignation into political action. I know because they have told me so, and because I see the ways they carry the lessons of Noho Hewa forward, into new as well as ongoing struggles that come with occupation and colonization—most recently, fighting for labeling of genetically modified organisms (GMOS); working to repeal legislation that criminalizes homeless people and the (De)Occupy Honolulu movement; and opposing the development of Mauna Kea as well as the latest incarnation of the state’s land grab: the legislature’s creation of the Public Land Development Corporation.

When I place Noho Hewa on my syllabi, I think of the sleeping student, and, even more, I think about those students who, after watching this film, were inspired to wake him up and to find other ways to claim their past and their future. Not only for my students in Hawai‘i but also for viewers in and beyond the Pacific, Noho Hewa serves as a wake-up call as urgent as it is beautiful.

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This impressive and weighty tome has been compiled by several contributors to provide a textbook for use in Marshall Islands schools and the College of the Marshall Islands. It provides a chronological coverage of major events in the history of the Marshall Islands beginning with an overview of archaeological accounts of the islands’ early history through to consideration of impacts of the Compact of Free
Association in the new millennium. Illustrations and excerpts from early accounts accompany interviews with eminent individuals together with their backgrounds. The text is presented in useful blocks for teaching purposes, interspersed with many photos, art, and time lines.

The main theme is the influence over time of iroij (chiefs; also spelled irooj) on trading, external relations, and internal control over lands and land users. The historical role of iroij is balanced by attention to outside influences including German, Japanese, and US, and particularly United Nations Trust Territory administration, and latterly the role of US negotiators in compiling the terms of the two Compacts of Free Association, an ongoing exercise. The compilers draw on early whaling, missionary, and trader accounts to illustrate how views differed, for instance: “In some instances, irooj showed respect for missionaries, even though their views disagreed” (149). Students will discover some of these varying views on their history when they research the pasts of their own atolls.

My personal experience of one iroij’s views of Marshallese history came from Lejolan Kabua, self-styled “King of the Marshalls,” who invited me to work on Namu, “his atoll” (Ralik chain), though I discovered three other iroij also held land there. He stressed to me the significance of many customs surrounding the place of iroij in Marshallese society; in particular I learned of the custom of “etetal in bojar,” which expressed the respect of a rijerbal (worker) for the iroij of the land. His account of Marshall Islands history came through in our discussions while he visited Namu and I visited his house on Ebeye, Kwajalein, sailing on his trading ship, the Waikiki Downtown, which he had run in the past with an all-female crew. At his house in Kwajalein he elaborated for me on a photograph of himself receiving a check from President Lyndon Johnson for $10,000—giving me a sense of his perspective of the relations between the United States and the Marshall Islands, particularly the payments to ri-Kwajalein (Kwajalein people) for US use of the atoll as a military base and for testing missile accuracy. However, as is evident in one of the more subtle dimensions of this new textbook, much of the history of the terms of agreement between states and politicians, US and local, continues to be scrutinized. The detailed terms of the agreement for US use of Kwajalein as part of all the Compacts of Free Association (past and present, including land-use agreements) will not only continue to provide interesting research topics when investigated by Marshall Islands students (387), but future students will be left with the task of making sense of all the forces that led to the establishment and institutionalization of the relationships between the United States and the Marshall Islands.

Themes notable for their mention in the text include brief discussions of navigation history and migrations, including accidental voyages as well as more recent Marshallese settlements in Arkansas, Seattle, Washington, California, and elsewhere in the United States. The use of cash, initially mainly from sales of copra, is another important theme, as it has influenced lifestyles, consumption,
and migration. The impact of nuclear testing from a Marshallese perspective is emerging in both poetic and prose forms as enlightened commentary on issues that have remained hidden and unexplained in Marshallese terms for so long. Relations between the Marshall Islands and other Pacific nations, such as neighbors Pohnpei, Kiribati, Nauru, Chuuk, and Saipan could be explored in further detail. The same could be said for changes in Marshallese well-being, both spiritual and physical, that are a current concern because of the high rates of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. An expansion of the text in this area would be useful for a greater understanding from both a historical as well as a medical perspective. All these topics can be developed in the proposed second edition, starting from this volume’s coverage and an expanded bibliography.

The orthography of Marshallese words as used in this volume highlights the official form of the written version of the Marshallese language as distinct from forms in more general usage. As indicated in the preface, the contributors have used the standardized orthography and spellings, with macrons and other diacritic marks that have been officially in school usage since 1994 (ix). Confusion persists, however, since after almost twenty years government and official documents have yet to adopt this orthography. For instance, the Bikini Atoll Town Hall still uses the long-familiar spelling of their atoll name over their portal, but the atoll is referred to as “Pikinni” in this text. Clearly the question of standardized orthography of indigenous languages will continue to be widely debated, but a detailed history of the dictionaries that have recorded Marshallese language by various agencies would be a useful addition to the second edition of this collection. However, even as it stands, the current version of Etto ñan Raan Kein: A Marshall Islands History is a valuable contribution to the growing number of histories of particular Pacific communities reflecting indigenous perspectives.

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Anthropologist Miriam Kahn brings her long history of researching issues of power, place, and identity in the Pacific to bear in this fascinating analysis of tourism in French Polynesia. In Tahiti Beyond the Postcard, she traces the roots of the industry back to European dreams of empire and romance, analyzes the transformation of natural-cultural sites into tourist sights, and studies the reconfiguration of these capital-infused places via Polynesian resistance. Drawing on archival research and long periods of fieldwork (1994–2010) in Raiatea, Huahine, Tahiti, and France, Kahn offers a dialogically structured examination of how peoples develop a sense of place and identity through everyday