

PARADISE ISLE:
HOW HOLLYWOOD CREATED AN IMAGINARY HAWAI'I

MASTER OF ARTS
IN
HAWAIIAN STUDIES

May 2024

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Key Terminology: Hawai'i, Kānaka 'Ōiwi, Kānaka Maoli, Native Hawaiians, military, military-industrial complex, movie, film, film critique, film analysis, imaging, framing, cinematography, editing, paradise, *From Here to Eternity*

Abstract

The purpose of this MA study is to showcase how Hollywood films from the twentieth-century have come to define the universal expectations of what Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians should be like. The definitions used are the byproducts of a compilation of tropes and themes produced by outside sources unfamiliar with the content and working with a foundation built on colonialism, racism, and ignorance. The main topics to be examined will be the following: how the Islands of Hawai‘i have come to be defined as a paradise; the reoccurring caricatures of Native Hawaiian men and women; how the military-industrial complex of the United States has used its relationship with the former two to create a biased narrative of Hawai‘i; and finally, the consequences of these tropes on viewers. The study will be conducted by using a film that has become synonymously associated with Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians, and the military—*From Here to Eternity*. The study will dissect the movie and examine how even the smallest detail has contributed to a false narrative of Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians, and the military-industrial complex. This research study aims not to demean or discredit the work done for the film but to present an understanding of where all these tropes came from and why they do not offer an accurate portrayal of the subject matter.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Joseph Kanaina Kini, who may not remember me much these days, but who I will remember always. And to my mother, Sheila Carroll Kini, for all her strength, wisdom, and support in everything I do in life. And to my family and friends for all their support with an acknowledgement to my nieces and nephews, who are the future of our lāhui, and who make me proud every day. Finally, to my kūpuna, who walked these islands long before me and live on in us all.

Acknowledgements

This thesis paper would never have been completed or even survived without the help and support of some very important people. First, to my Chair, Kumu April A.H. Drexel, and to my Committee, Kumu Lia O’Neill Keawe and Kumu Wendell Kekailoa Perry, mahalo for all your hard work and support in this process. I would not have been able to get here without you three and your past years of teaching and support. Second, mahalo to my family for putting up with me and my bouts of whining whenever I encountered writer’s block. And finally, mahalo to my kūpuna, who are with me always. I can only hope that I make you proud with this piece of work.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction:	1
Research Questions	3
Theoretical Framework	3
Research Methods and Procedures	5
Chapter 1: Waikiki Wedding	6
Introduction	6
Tropical Eden	10
Paradise is Politics in the Pacific	30
The Imagined Hawai‘i	41
Summative Critique	50
Chapter 2: Bird of Paradise	55
Introduction	55
Picturesque Polynesians	56
Naked Paradise	62
The Hawaiian Flowers in Eternity	80
Summative Critique	89
Chapter 3: Blue Hawaii	93
Introduction	93
The Territory of Hawai‘i	95
In Harm’s Way	100
Beyond Paradise	108
Summative Critique	115
Conclusion	118
Filmography	124
Bibliography	127

Introduction

Growing up on O‘ahu, I spent the first part of my younger years sitting in front of the television. As the only girl in a house full of boys at least six years older than me, there were not many games I could participate in, let alone have shared interests with. My parents were also not the best playmates being older when they had me and busy with work and running a house full of children. So, I spent much of my time watching the talking picture box in my living room during the early set of my childhood. While I watched many cartoons and sitcoms, most of my attention was usually given to the movies I saw. Movies were great because they were long enough to hold my attention but short enough not to bore my child self. To this day, I still prefer watching a movie over a ten-season-long television show. I never overthought the movies I watched because, for the most part, a lot of the subject matter was beyond my understanding at the time. But I will never forget the feelings I had when I saw the movie *Hawaii*.¹

Hawaii is a 1966 film based on the novel of the same name by James A. Michener, published in 1959. It follows the life of a Calvinist missionary and his family in the Hawaiian Islands during the nineteenth century. As a child, I paid little attention to the plot, characters, or the different portrayed themes. I did not care about anything but the familiar scenery and the people in the background who looked like my family and friends. I watched that movie feeling uncomfortable and horribly lost as I understood that everything portrayed in that film reflected Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians. I went away from that movie feeling emotions I did not have the words to name—such as inadequacy, belittlement, and frustration—and an impression that

¹ *Hawaii*, directed by George Hill (The Mirisch Company, 1966), 3:06:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/22890/hawaii#overview>.

something was wrong with my home and people—which meant that something was wrong with me.

Those feelings have never gone away. Even now, as an adult with a clear understanding of the situation and a solid grasp of my identity, I still cannot shake those feelings. Logic rarely has a place in the face of emotions, and that movie left an emotional scar on me that has yet to fade. But why? Why did a film I saw once when I was seven, whose characters and plot I could not recall, leave behind such an impact that I still cannot shake to this day? And who else has seen these types of films and been left with a feeling of inadequacy that lingered on for years?

The movie *Hawaii* is not the only take on the Hawaiian Islands and the indigenous people. As shown with the Jurassic Park franchise, there are many movies that have been filmed on the islands merely to use the natural beauty as a background prop without any mention or acknowledgement to the islands themselves. And when movies about Hawai‘i or Hawaiian character are created, the stories, plots, and characters do not accurately portray the islands or the people in a fair or accurate light. But no matter what the film is about and no matter where it is set, these movies all partake in the common tropes² that dictate that Hawai‘i is a ‘paradise’ filled with ‘savages’ who are somehow both ‘friendly and welcoming’ to all visitors and yet also ‘promiscuous, violent, and lazy.’

This thesis will examine these tropes in conjunction with the impact they can have on a viewer. It will do this by looking at one of the films produced by Hollywood in the last century that has become synonymously associated with Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians: *From Here to*

² *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Trope: a common or overused theme or device,” accessed February 1, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trope>.

Eternity. The film will be dissected and broken down to show how a few simple pictures can have devastating consequences on an unsuspecting viewer.

Research Questions

The main research questions that will be undertaken throughout this study have been divided into three chapters that cater to answer the following four questions. The first question is, “what are the types of themes presented in this movie?” This question aims to narrow down the themes constantly recycled throughout films about Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians. The second question will be, “what are the problems of perpetuating these themes?” This query is to narrow down the critical problems in films further and explains why these details are so toxic to the viewer. The third question will be, “what are this movie’s effects on Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians, and the indigenous culture?” This question will bring forth how Hollywood has come to define the indigenous people of Hawai‘i under a particular lens, and how these stereotypes have come to play a part in how we, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, perceive ourselves. The fourth and final question is, “how does this movie display the military-industrial complex in Hawai‘i?” The focus of this question is to probe how *From Here to Eternity* explores the relationship between Hawai‘i and the United States Armed Forces and the overall image it presents throughout the movie. After answering all of these questions, the results will be examined in the conclusion where final thoughts and assessments will be made.

Theoretical Framework

This study aims to display two narratives that work together to present one story: one of an outside worldview and one of a Native Hawaiian worldview. Therefore, it is only fitting that the theoretical framework of this research study accurately displays these differences through

two very different forms of methodology. Thus, this study will showcase the American methodologies of research such as phenomenology,³ epistemology,⁴ film analysis,⁵ film theory,⁶ and historiography.⁷ To act in opposition with these methodologies are the Hawaiian forms of methodology such as papakū makawalu⁸ and ‘ike maka⁹ as well as broader fields such as Hālau o Laka, Kūkulu Aupuni, Kumu Kahiki, Mālama ‘Āina, and Mo‘olelo ‘Ōiwi.¹⁰ It is important to

³ Herbert Spiegelberg, “Phenomenology,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (2017), August 23, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/phenomenology>. Phenomenology is a form of research that focuses on the study of phenomena as they manifest in our experience as well as the way we perceive and understand phenomena, and the meaning phenomena can have in our subjective experiences.

⁴ Avrum Stroll, “Epistemology,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, A.P. Martinich, August 26, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/epistemology>. Epistemology is a discipline that focuses on how knowledge is produced and validated. It deals with knowledge in terms of what can we know, and how can we know it.

⁵ Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 161. Film Analysis is when a film is analyzed by using the fields of study such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, sound, and editing.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 180: Film Theory is a form of research within the academic discipline of film studies that questions the essential attributes of motion pictures as well as provides conceptual frameworks for understanding a film’s relationship to reality, society, the viewer, and other arts.

⁷ Richard T. Vann, “Historiography,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 17, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography>. Historiography is a discipline that examines history through the examination of historical sources, the selection of particular details from the authentic materials in those sources, and how the synthesis of those details is structured into a narrative that becomes known as history.

⁸ Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary: Hawaiian-English, English-Hawaiian*, Rev. and enl. ed (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 317: foundation or surface, as of the earth, and 228: numerous, many, much, in great quantities, respectively. When combined together, Papakū Makawalu can be understood as a discipline used in teaching and understanding Hawaiian culture, ideas, knowledge, and values.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 96: to see well; observant, to recognize and accost in a friendly way, and 224: eye, eye of a needle, face, countenance; presence, sight, view, respectively. When combined together, ‘Ike Maka can be understood as a tool of research that carefully examines and critiques the artistic renditions of visual hegemony, rhetorical tropes, and representation from the view of a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi.

¹⁰ Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, *Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge*, <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/hshk/kamakakuokalani/> (Accessed October 26, 2021). These are the areas of concentration as stated by Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge: “Hālau O Laka: Native Hawaiian Creative Expression. Kūkulu Aupuni: Envisioning the Nation. Kumu Kahiki: Comparative Hawai‘inuiākea and Indigenous Studies. Mālama ‘Āina: Hawaiian Perspectives on Resource Management. Mo‘olelo ‘Ōiwi: Native History and Literature.”

note that these two worlds of methodologies operate very differently from one another. Still, these differences are needed to accurately survey the problems displayed in the themes of the film.

Research Methods and Procedures

This study will be conducted using the following research methods and procedures. First, before any writing can begin, I will break up the film *From Here to Eternity* into sections to be viewed, and in each viewing, I will take notes on the themes being showcased in each scene. As there are many themes and details to take note of, there will be multiple viewings over the course of the research in order to capture as much information as needed. Second, the themes will be broken up into three chapters to better focus on the content. These three chapters will look at the following themes: chapter one will focus on the Hawai'i Islands and how they are portrayed alongside Native Hawaiian culture; chapter two will feature Native Hawaiian men and women and how they are depicted; and chapter three will look at the military-industrial complex as it relates to Hawai'i and *From Here to Eternity*. Each chapter will first go over the origins and history of the themes before looking at examples in other movies produced in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Finally, the chapter will look at a selection of scenes in *From Here to Eternity* that correlate or use the themes mentioned earlier and they will be broken down using film theory and the two schools of methodology. This is the film review section of the thesis where the themes will be examined critically. Furthermore, each title of the three chapters and subheadings are named after a movie that relates to the themes being discussed within that particular chapter, and will feature a quote from a movie or scholarship that defines the purpose of the chapter. Finally, the overall research will be examined in the conclusion where another quote or saying will be used to further define the content.

Chapter 1: Waikiki Wedding

“If Hollywood was a dream factory, Hawai‘i was one of its most successful products. The Paradise of the Pacific, the tourist mecca that Hawai‘i was steadily becoming, depended on those movie images. Hawai‘i increasingly lived off its own myth, and therefore collaborated to a great extent in creating and perpetuating it.”¹¹

Introduction

With a drumroll opening, the screen goes from black to a flash of white and gray as a picture of a young woman appears on the screen. She stands draped in a white toga with a dark cloth across her right arm while her left hand holds up a torch of beaming white light. Behind her silhouette are fluffy clouds and the word *COLUMBIA*¹² in bold script. This picture lingers for a short while as the drumroll is joined by a bugle and soon more instruments as the music ramps up in pitch and energy, and the screen fades to black. But, just as quickly as it disappears, it brightens again to present a black and white film reel of soldiers running up to form three lines. As they do so, the music picks up in pace, now sounding as if the film is announcing the arrival of a hero returning home victorious. Finally, as the music reaches its highest pitch, the soldiers all stand perfectly in position as the opening title of the film forms on the screen, covering most of the soldiers—*From Here to Eternity*.¹³

The title card lingers for only a few seconds before cutting away to announcing the main actors featured in the film. As the names go by, the soldiers in the background continue with their formation, twirling their guns and obeying the commands being called somewhere

¹¹ Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 59.

¹² *From Here to Eternity*, directed by Fred Zinnemann (Columbia Pictures Industries, 1953), 0:08, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/16762/from-here-to-eternity#overview>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 0:17 to 0:20.

offscreen. When the three lines turn right, a lone soldier holding a flag runs forward to stand in the lead, and after another order, they march off. As they move, the camera follows them, turning to the left before freezing in place. It is then that the viewer sees a lone soldier in the distance, walking up to the viewer with a lazy, loose stride that stands out from the rigid marching of the other soldiers. As he draws closer to the group, the gaps between the marching soldiers frame him as a soldier who stands apart from his fellows. He is part of the base but yet not at the same time. While the viewer does not yet know it, this lone man is the film's protagonist, Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt, who has just transferred to the island of O'ahu in Hawai'i. When he is at least close enough to see his face clearly, a set of words flash across the screen in all capital letters—*SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, HAWAII 1941*.¹⁴

This is how the 1953 film *From Here to Eternity* opens and introduces the audience to its main character in the setting of Hawai'i. Based on the 1951 novel of the same name by James Jones, the movie follows the lives and struggles of U.S. Army soldiers stationed on the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i, in the months leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁵ Directed by Fred Zinnemann and written by Daniel Taradash, it featured some of the most well-known stars of that era, such as Montgomery Clift, Burt Lancaster, Frank Sinatra, Deborah Kerr, and Donna Reed. The film was nominated for thirteen Academy Awards and won eight of them, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Supporting Actress.¹⁶ In 2002, the film was even selected for preservation in the United States

¹⁴ Ibid., 0:21 to 1:21.

¹⁵ Patricia Bauer, "From Here to Eternity," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/From-Here-to-Eternity-film-by-Zinnemann>.

¹⁶ "The 26th Academy Awards," Oscars.org, March 25, 1954, <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1954>.

National Film Registry by the Library of Congress due to its reverence as a film that is “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” to American film history.¹⁷

The plotline of *From Here to Eternity* is a look at the everyday life of the common soldier in the U.S. Armed Forces while stationed in Hawai‘i. It is based on the author, James Jones, and his real-life experiences while stationed in Hawai‘i during the 1940s, where he witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor. But other than the title, principal characters, and the main ideas of the plot, the book differs significantly from the film version. Jones wrote his best-selling novel as a scathing critique of the U.S. Army and how military corruption runs rampant and uncontrolled, with the lowest-ranking soldiers being abused and mistreated by the superior officers. The story is set against a backdrop of the real Hawai‘i of the times, with violence, murder, alcoholism, suicide, adultery, miscegenation, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, homosexuality, racism, and homophobia¹⁸ running rampant. The movie version either modifies or changes these elements, or has completely cut them out from the story as it went against Hollywood’s Hays Code¹⁹ at the time. Hollywood’s Hays Code, or the Motion Picture Production Code as it was officially named, was a set of rules and regulations put out by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) that all other major studios in the United States had to abide by from 1934 to 1968. It was nicknamed the Hays Code after Will H. Hays, the president of MPPDA from 1922 to 1945. Some of the rules and guidelines included

¹⁷ Sheryl Cannady, “Librarian of Congress Adds 25 Films to National Film Registry,” Library of Congress, December 17, 2002, <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-02-176/librarian-of-congress-adds-25-films-to-national-film-registry/2002-12-17/>.

¹⁸ Delila Konzett, *Hollywood’s Hawaii: Race, Nation, and War* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 148.

¹⁹ Bob Mondello, “Remembering Hollywood’s Hays Code, 40 Years On,” NPR.org, August 08, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/2008/08/08/93301189/remembering-hollywoods-hays-code-40-years-on>.

things like no profanity, no nudity, no miscegenation, no mention of childbirth or sexually transmitted diseases, no ridicule of institutions like the clergy, and many, many others. These rules and guidelines made producing movies on controversial topics challenging, and *From Here to Eternity* is no different. Therefore, to meet these requirements, much of Jones's original work had to be erased and rewritten by Daniel Taradash.

Taradash did this by first cutting out any mention of miscegenation, prostitution, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, racism, suicide, or even profanity. Another example is that he turned all the brothels into social clubs, with the second female lead, Lorene, no longer being called a prostitute but instead implied to be one. He also rewrote the plot of the first female lead, Karen, from being an adulterer with gonorrhea that made her infertile to an initially faithful woman who lost her child and was rendered sterile due to the negligence and adultery of her husband. This now justifies her own adultery and relationship with the other male lead, Milton Warden, through the duration of the movie. Another example is that all of the characters of color were changed to be either Caucasian or completely written out along with any relationships that were miscegenation. But the most significant change that Taradash made was cutting out the critique of the U.S. Army and turning the story into one where the Army punishes the bad guys for their crimes which is quite different from the indifference and coverups displayed in the book. This was done deliberately, not due to meeting the Hays Code, but to secure cooperation with the U.S. Army²⁰ to shoot on location on their bases in Hawai'i. Yet by detracting so much of the original content, Jones's story of exploitation and corruption set within

²⁰ Konzett, "Hollywood's Hawaii," 149.

the confines of the colorful and occupied Hawai‘i becomes just another whitewashed tale used to justify the military-industrial complex²¹ in Hawai‘i.

While this version of Jones’s story may not be the one he wanted to show to the world, the movie *From Here to Eternity* still exists by itself and carries on a legacy passed down through artwork, literature, songs, and the films that came before Jones ever set his pen to paper. This legacy is part of a larger body of works that started long before the dramatic war call of American soldiers marching in beat. This legacy sits much further back in history, back to when Hawai‘i and the rest of the Pacific were seen as unknown lands in uncharted waters. It is within these first interactions between the people of the Pacific and European explorers that the legacy of Hawai‘i and the other Pacific Islands became cemented in the world narrative as the tropical Garden of Eden.²²

Tropical Eden

When the French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville first arrived in Tahiti in 1768, he called it the “La Nouvelle Cythère,” meaning *New Cytheria* in reference to the mythical birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. He called it this due to the alien beauty of the islands that was so different from his native France with its harsh winters and rugged terrains. Bougainville further compared the island’s lush foliage and abundance of natural resources to being “transported into the garden of Eden,” for he could think of no other way to compare the islands. The British naturalist Joseph Banks was of a similar mind, referring to Tahiti as

²¹ Rachel Weber, “Military-industrial complex,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 30, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/military-industrial-complex>.

²² DeSoto Brown, “Beautiful, Romantic Hawaii: How the Fantasy Image Came to Be,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 20, (1994): 253-71. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504126>.

resembling the foundations of Britain itself with its mythical landscapes,²³ while Captains Samuel Wallis and James Cook recorded their own parallel romantic impressions on their visits to Tahiti and Hawai‘i. Due to these descriptions, it became known throughout Europe and America that the Pacific Islands were a place of unforeseen beauty, the last remnants of the Garden of Eden²⁴ in living form, a newly discovered place of paradise, a tropical Eden in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean.

The concept of a paradise²⁵ in physical form is not a new idea. It has been broadly articulated worldwide and can be found in many cultures throughout history. Paradisiacal notions are often an idealized place of exceptional happiness and delight and are often contrasted against the uncertainties and miseries of human civilizations. This is to enhance further how a paradise is the preferred option being a place of only peace, joy, and prosperity. In a paradise, there is never fear, misery, or unfairness, only contentment and fulfillment where all needs and wants are forever met. The concept of paradise may also be cosmogonical, eschatological, or both, and is often paired with an underworld or places of great suffering and torment. A typical example throughout Western literature and art of a paradise is the Judeo-Christian tale of the Garden of Eden.

The story is described in Genesis 2:4–3:24 as a place wherein rivers flowed out of Eden to the world’s four corners and where the Tree of Life and Tree of the Knowledge of Good and

²³ Jeffrey Geiger, “The Garden and the Wilderness: Tropes of Order and Disorder,” in *Facing the Pacific: Polynesia and the U. S. Imperial Imagination*, ed. (Honolulu, Hawai‘i: University of Hawai‘i, 2007), 18.

²⁴ Paul Hooper, “The Summer Isles of Eden.” In *Elusive Destiny: The Internationalist Movement in Modern Hawaii*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1980), 08-09.

²⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Paradise,” accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/paradise-religion>.

Evil sit at its center. As the tale goes, God created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and tasked him with tending to the garden and naming all the animals therein. He gives Adam only a single command to never eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and grants him a helper for his work, made from Adam's rib, named Eve. The two then lived together in bliss and innocence, always nude and unashamed of it as they performed their duties in the garden. Then came the deceitful serpent who tricks Eve into disobeying God and eating a fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She shares it with Adam, and the two grow aware of their nudity and become shamed, and don fig leaves as garments. When God sees this and realizes their crimes, they are punished, with Eve experiencing the pain of childbirth and subordination to man while Adam must work, toil, and sweat for his subsistence. They are then clothed with animal skins before being cast out of the Garden of Eden forevermore with an angel armed with a sword of fire standing guard to prevent their return.²⁶ While the story of the Garden of Eden acts more as a theological tool to explain the origins of humans and contrast the previous state of innocence and bliss to the present reality of sin, misery, and death, it has still been taken to refer to a literal place. There have been many attempts to find the Garden of Eden throughout the centuries and many theories and speculations on what it could have looked like if it existed. The Pacific Islands, with all their mystery, foreignness, and unseen beauty, were included in these speculations following their discovery in the eighteenth century.²⁷

²⁶ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Garden of Eden," accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Garden-of-Eden>.

²⁷ Kalissa Alexeyeff et al., "Whose Paradise? Encounter, Exchange, and Exploitation," *The Contemporary Pacific* 30, no.02 (March 2018): 269-295. DOI: 10.1353/cp.2018.0028.

Bougainville described Tahiti in his reports as an Edenic locale²⁸ occupied by a new race of beautiful and welcoming people living in harmony with the natural land. His vivid descriptions of the islands and their native people created a new genre of fantasy and ignited a fascination in the hearts of the French people. When additional reports of other islands with similar beauty and character came from Captain James Cook and Admiral George Anson, the rest of Europe came to know and obsess over the idea that these small islands were visions of a lost Christian utopia from long ago. This interest and fascination created a “Polynesian vogue” in Europe,²⁹ where country houses were redesigned to hold Tahitian verandas, Polynesian wallpaper became fashionable, young men clamored to join crews, and, most prolific of all, artwork and literature on the islands began to emerge.³⁰ This fascination is best described in the following quote by the late native scholar and political activist, Haunani-Kay Trask: “Since the eighteenth-century arrival of Westerners in my Native land, Hawai‘i has been much vaunted as a “paradise” of sunny beaches, lush, unspoiled valleys, erupting volcanoes, and happy Natives. Thanks to Hollywood movies and tourist industry propaganda, this paradisaal myth endures. To the West, and increasingly to Japan, Hawai‘i represents a Pacific playground for escape or romance or recreation. It is a fantasy, a state of mind.”³¹

The accounts of these newly discovered gardens inspired many Europeans and Americans to express their own experiences on the islands or their interpretations of what they

²⁸ Alexeyeff, “Whose Paradise,” 274.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

³⁰ John Connell, “Island Dreaming: the contemplation of Polynesian paradise,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 29, no.04 (October 2003): 557, doi:10.1053/jhge.2002.0461.

³¹ Haunani-Kay Trask, ed., *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 151.

may experience if they visited the isles. Some, like John Webber and William Hodges, expressed this through art³² with paintings like the *View of Huahine*³³ by Webber and *A View of Matavai Bay in the Island of Otaheite, Tahiti*³⁴ by Hodges. Others expressed their interest through literature, writing accounts of their travels and experiences on the islands like Bougainville and Cook did in their reports and the personal journals of their crews. Soon to follow this were fictional stories based on or inspired by the Pacific Islands that ranged from historical romances to mystery thrillers to adventure tales. These stories tend to be set within the confines of a Pacific Island, with the main characters usually of European or American ethnicity and the plot following their struggles and growth.

One example of these novels is the historical romance *The Story of a New Zealand River* by Jane Mander,³⁵ which tells the tale of an English woman named Alice Roland who moves with her children to Pukekaroro, New Zealand to reunite with her husband, who has been working there. They move into a small, remote house in the forest and must learn to live together in a foreign place in 1920. The novel explored many of the twentieth century's political, religious, moral, and social issues, such as women's rights and sexual liberation. Still, it gave no acknowledgment of the social issues of the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Māori, in their fight for equality against the British. This is common in these novels as they tend to ignore

³² A Mārata Ketekiri Tamaira et al., "Beyond Paradise? Retelling Pacific Stories in Disney's Moana," *The Contemporary Pacific* 30, no.02 (2018): 302, <https://www-jstor-org.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/stable/26776153>.

³³ John Webber, *View of Huahine*, 1785, wash and watercolor, 38.60 x 55.30cm, The British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Oc2006-Prt-25.

³⁴ William Hodges, *A View of Matavai Bay in the Island of Otaheite, Tahiti*, 1776, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 137.2 cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, <https://interactive.britishart.yale.edu/critique-of-reason/343/a-view-of-matavai-bay-in-the-island-of-otaheite--tahiti>.

³⁵ Jane Mander, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 04.

the indigenous people as central characters and never feature their lives or cultures as being essential to the plot. And when they are used in the story, it is rarely done so accurately and instead is based on the previously mentioned ideas of paradise.

Another example of the notion of paradise is the epistolary erotic novel by the Marquis de Sade, Donatien Alphonse François, named *Aline et Valcour; ou, Le Roman philosophique*.³⁶ Initially published in 1795, the novel explores the contrast between two fictional countries: a brutal African kingdom, Butua, and a South Pacific island known as Tamoé. Butua is led by a lustful and cannibalistic ruler and a callous priesthood who rule over the people through fear and allow atrocious crimes to be committed without consequences. Tamoé, in contrast, is led by the peaceful philosopher-king Zamé, whose reign is one of prosperity and happiness with citizens who live in peace and joy in their island kingdom. While the novel primarily explores the themes of democracy and anarchy, it still uses very harmful and inaccurate depictions of African nations as evil and dumb savages with no actual resemblance to any real African tribe or ruler. The themes depicting the Pacific Island nation and its ruler are similarly simplified and shallow with no real connection to real Pacific Islands or their rulers who were, ironically enough, usually war chiefs who waged battle against each other for land, resources, and power. Yet it is this trope—of the Pacific Islands being places of exotic beauty, innocence, peace, and pleasure—that would become a common theme as the world’s fascination for the islands continued to hold strong. It would remain strong through the invention of other creative means of expression such as photography and filmmaking.

³⁶ Marquis de Sade, *Aline and Valcour*, trans. Jocelyne Geneviève Barque and John Galbraith Simmons (New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2019), 02.

Photography is the art form and practice of creating images by recording light. This can be done either electronically by means of an image sensor, or chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as photographic film.³⁷ Many versions of it have been sampled throughout the centuries but it did not become commercially available until the 19th century. As with other means of art and expression, Hawai‘i and other Pacific Islands became the subject of much fascination and marvel for photography. But the photos taken of the islands and her native culture yet again followed the same pattern of themes presented before—an exotic paradise filled with innocence, peace, and pleasure for anyone willing to cross the Pacific Ocean. There are countless examples of such photographs taken during the 19th century that all follow the same pattern of featuring an array of beaches, mountains, and valleys—but each one is framed to bring out the features that have become synonymous with Hawai‘i by this point in time. This can be best described as a rhetorical trope in action, with Kanaka ‘Ōiwi scholar and professor Lia Keawe³⁸ defining them as the following: “Rhetorical tropes are repeating images, and the imagery—paradise—is synonymous with Hawai‘i the world over.” These tropes, being repeated and shared throughout the world, would only grow to become bolder and more prominent following the creation of filmmaking at the start of the twentieth century.

The first films to feature Hawai‘i as the main focus are short pieces showcasing the people of the islands performing tricks for the camera, such as diving for coins or going about their daily lives on the island of O‘ahu. The recordings are all silent and in black and white and feature no actual plot or conflict but act more as home movies of the islands. They were

³⁷ Helmut Erich Robert Gernsheim, Andy Grundberg, and Beaumont Newhall, “History of photography,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (2024), January 20, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/photography>.

³⁸ Lia Keawe, “Ki‘i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai‘i” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008), 4, <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/e3e0274d-5f3f-425a-98d3-5bece2de8fb0>.

eventually shown to the public at the Opera House in Honolulu on February 5, 1897. The titles of these short clips included³⁹ *A Watermelon Contest*, *The Great McKinley Parade*, *Arrival of the Empire State Express*, and the *New York Fire Department on Active Duty*. Longer and more detailed films would not be produced until John Griffith Wray filmed and produced two romantic dramas titled *Hawaiian Love*⁴⁰ and *The Shark God*⁴¹ in Honolulu. Both featured actors from the continental U.S. who were unfamiliar with Hawai'i or the native culture. The plotlines are similarly flawed as both showcase incorrect assumptions and ideas about the Hawaiian Islands and Native Hawaiian culture. Furthermore, the films spend a great deal of time showcasing the scenery of the islands alongside the scantily dressed women dotted throughout the background, though the movie makes no mention or indication that the island or women play a part in the plotline.

But as mentioned, these films are romantic dramas, a deliberate decision due to the romantic idealism so strongly associated with Hawai'i. The plot of *The Shark God* is centered around a pair of heterosexual lovers, Keoli and Keala, who are happily in love until a dancer, Pililani, from a nearby village, seduces Keoli away with a spell. Another man, Kane, who is in love with Keala, tries to break the spell and free Keoli and eventually succeeds with Keoli reuniting with Keala. Pililani, seeing that her spell failed, seeks out a witch doctor and begs him to pray to the Shark God to strangle her rival to death. The witch doctor does as she asks and

³⁹ Alice Kim. "First Night at the Movies in Hawaii," Hawai'i Digital Newspaper Project, November 3, 2015, <https://hdnpblog.wordpress.com/historical-articles/first-night-at-the-movies-in-hawaii/>.

⁴⁰ *Hawaiian Love*, directed by John Wray (Compagnia Cinematografica Champion, 1913), 15:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0357733/>.

⁴¹ *The Shark God*, directed by John Wray (Compagnia Cinematografica Champion, 1913), 15:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0358139/>.

starts to pray the girl to death, quickly affecting Keala, much to the horror of Keoli and Kane. Kane seeks out Pililani and discovers the truth, and strikes down the old man until he dies and Keala is saved. However, Kane is horrified by his actions as the old man is a sacred person, and so he swims out to sea to sacrifice himself to the Shark God the old man was previously seen being prayed to.

What makes *The Shark God* an important example is that it uses concepts similar to Native Hawaiian culture rather than the authentic culture. For example, the witch doctor's character originates from South African nations and has no relation to Native Hawaiian culture in any form. That the movie insists on using this character shows how little attention has been given to Native Hawaiian culture as there exists a person of similar nature within Hawaiian culture called a kahuna⁴² who could have played this role. Furthermore, there is never any attempt to explain how the witch doctor has magic and why he is using it to help Pililani murder an innocent woman. Another example is the concept of a shark god, which has become a common stereotype throughout the Pacific as a form of a pagan god. The movie does not explain which shark god it is named after, as there is more than one shark deity amongst the pantheon of Hawaiian gods, and no attempts are ever made to explain this god or his place in Kane's life or why the islanders fear him so greatly. This remains the same throughout the rest of the movie, with the plotline using only broad and general concepts of Native Hawaiian culture and never delving into the cultural meaning behind these constructs. Instead, they are merely plot devices to move the story along.

⁴² Ibid., 114: priest, sorcerer, magician, wizard, minister, expert in any profession.

The second film, *Hawaiian Love*, is another romantic drama with a simple plot centered around a native girl named Lahela. She is being pursued by another native named Kalike, whom she shows little interest in though he is deeply enamored with her. Lahela soon meets a Caucasian captain of a small trading vessel, who seduces her and convinces her to marry him and run away together, leaving behind a heartbroken Kalike. But the Captain soon shows his true colors and begins to abuse Lahela along with his crew, which drives the crew to sink the ship and escape on the only boat. The Captain and Lahela escape and return to the shore, where he leads them to a Chinese man selling liquor. The Captain trades Lahela to him for liquor, leaving her behind to fend off the stranger. Luckily, Kalike appears and rescues Lahela, and strangles the merchant before taking Lahela to seek out the Captain. When the Captain sees him, he grows scared and stumbles back, falling over a cliff and to his death. The film then ends with Lahela and Kalike reuniting and Lahela finally accepting his love and returning it.

While *Hawaiian Love* does not use any cultural elements in their storytelling, the plot does mimic a well-known stereotype often associated with indigenous women. This theme is that native women are promiscuous by nature and always eager to engage in sexual activities with foreign men, usually of the Caucasian variety. This trope can be traced back to the first interactions between Western explorers and Native Hawaiians, where explorers like Captain James Cook recorded their thoughts and impressions of the native women as being vulgar and wanton in their interactions with his crew. But as these accounts only show one side of the encounters, it is unknown if these native women were as sexually explicit as stated or if they were merely labeled as such due to their state of dress being one of partial or full nudity. Regardless of the truth of these encounters, the stereotype has been formed, and it has remained a strong theme associated with Hawai'i and her native daughters and has continued to be used in

films. This trope will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter. Meanwhile, *Hawaiian Love* plays up this theme but does temper it by making Lahela in love with her sailor partner and willing to run away with him. The film is also unique in that it makes the Captain the villain of the story and Kalike the hero, as later films would reverse this, making the foreigner the hero and the native man the rivaling love interest or villain.

Following the creation and relative success of these two films, others soon followed in the same likeness, playing up the romantic appeal of the islands, the exotic beauty of the natural terrain, and the foreignness of Native Hawaiian culture. These films are either romantic dramas or romantic comedies, both genres needing to have some sort of romance in the movie to, again, play up the idealism and romanticism so strongly associated with Hawai‘i. Films such as *The White Flower*⁴³—a romantic drama about a mixed native girl falling in love with a white American man—promoted itself by having the lead actress perform actual surfing in the film, wear a grass skirt and a plastic lei, and dance a form of hula that is not culturally accurate. Other movies, like *Hula*⁴⁴, a story about the daughter of a pineapple plantation owner in Hawai‘i who falls in love with a married white man, feature longshots of the beaches, valleys, and fishponds being worked by the people of the islands. The main character, Hula, is also supposed to be a wild child who lives a natural life within the untamed islands. There are constant shots of her riding on horseback through the valleys with the Ko‘olau mountains in the background, or as she lounges, barely dressed, in a natural pond⁴⁵ with fresh vegetation around her. The movie

⁴³ *The White Flower*, directed by Julia Ivers (Paramount Pictures, 1923), 1:30:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0014603/>.

⁴⁴ *Hula*, directed by Victor Fleming (Paramount Pictures, 1927), 1:04:03, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018016/>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:42 to 2:30.

*Aloha*⁴⁶—another dramatic love story about a mixed native woman falling in love with a Caucasian man against the advice of everyone they know—also presents long and lingering shots of the beaches as waves lazily roll in. Further shots are taken of the island from the sea which grants the viewer a full, horizontal picture of the island. While all these films are presented in black and white and mainly silent films, they still manage to frame the shots of the islands as places of wonder and beauty.

As for the Native Hawaiian cultural practices and customs used, *Hula* features the main character, Hula Calhoun, performing hula in a grass skirt, a floral-patterned top, a lei, and flowers in her hair. Sadly, the actress's performance is far from a traditional Hawaiian dance and resembles more of a toddler jumping around trying to replicate what they saw rather than any proper dance.⁴⁷ Yet, despite these mistakes, the hula performance is implied to be overtly sexual, with Hula shaking her hips, thighs, rear, and breasts in a suggestive manner that has all the men in the audience fixated on her, clapping and hollering until two men end up fighting over her. This version of the 'hula' performance would become a common trend for movies on Hawai'i, nearly always featuring the main female character dancing a solo or participating in a group performance with other women. If a man does participate in the hula performance, it is only ever as a musician or background figure. *Aloha* does the same, with the main character, Ilanu, performing a solo dance called the Dance of Love for a ceremony and then later at a party in San Francisco for her newly met Caucasian in-laws, who are scandalized along with their guests by her dance. Both movies also use the false custom of a native woman committing suicide by

⁴⁶ *Aloha*, directed by Albert Rogell (Tiffany Productions, Inc., 1931), 1:30:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/67138/aloha#overview>.

⁴⁷ *Hula*, 40:49 to 42:40.

jumping into an active volcano in order to appease an angry Fire Goddess. What this custom is exactly, and its importance to Native Hawaiian culture is never explained in the movie, nor is the Fire Goddess ever identified past this generic term, let alone her place in the pantheon. It is simply implied by the plot that, because Hawai‘i has active volcanoes, it must be used for human sacrifice of beautiful maidens. The movie further implies this to occur because the native people of the islands are still primitive and their cultural traditions must mirror beliefs such as worshiping a volcano and believing that human sacrifice will grant them magical protection from the volcano should it erupt.

Yet, as technology advanced and began to incorporate voice acting into films, new avenues were opened for directors and producers. Romantic and comedic musicals like *The Flower of Hawaii*,⁴⁸ *Waikiki Wedding*,⁴⁹ *Hawaii Calls*,⁵⁰ and *Honolulu*,⁵¹ became a big hit with audiences. These films still played up the appeal of the islands’ wild and undeveloped land alongside the exotic and primitive look of Native Hawaiian culture. But now they had new ways of viewing it through the lens of fun musicals where native women performed hula in scandalous grass skirts that presented the viewer brief glimpses of their thighs and hips while American actors crooned love songs on the beach under the moon. There were, of course, still the more dramatic stories—such as *The Flower of Hawaii*—but what appealed to audiences more were the

⁴⁸ *The Flower of Hawaii*, directed by Richard Oswald (Rio-Film GmbH, 1933), 1:26:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0219557/>.

⁴⁹ *Waikiki Wedding*, directed by Frank Tuttle (Paramount Pictures, 1937), 1:29:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/94966/waikiki-wedding#overview>.

⁵⁰ *Hawaii Calls*, directed by Edward F. Cline (Bobby Breen Productions, Inc., 1938), 1:03:08, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/77494/hawaii-calls#overview>.

⁵¹ *Honolulu*, directed by Edward Buzzell (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation, 1939), 1:23:01, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/2015/honolulu/#overview>.

lighthearted movies to counteract the dark state the world was in at that time as the Great Depression⁵² ravaged the United States and the rest of the world. Escaping to the movies was one of the few reliefs available to the people at the time, with 60 to 80 million Americans attending the movies each week.⁵³ It did not seem to matter that these films of sunny islands and funny dances were fabrications because the fantasy of it all was what the audiences wanted in order to escape their bleak reality and, indeed, would come to help sustain national morale in the long run.

Some movies took advantage of the ignorance of their audience on Hawai‘i and created their own lore of Native Hawaiian culture, as featured so heavily in the Bing Crosby piece *Waikiki Wedding*. In it, Crosby plays the role of a publicity agent named Tony Marvin, who works for a fictional pineapple business named Imperial Pineapple Company. It is assumed that a pineapple company was chosen over a native plant as this fruit had become synonymous with Hawai‘i after the many years of pineapple plantations set up across the islands. The plot itself focuses on the male lead, Tony Marvin, trying to draw attention to the company by creating a publicity stunt where a young woman can enter a contest to be crowned their “Imperial Pineapple Girl,” and win a trip to Hawai‘i for three weeks of romance where at the end of the trip, her impressions would be published in the press for publicity. Unfortunately, the winner of the contest, a young woman named Georgia Smith from Birch Falls, and her friend Myrtle, are bored and intend to cut the trip short and return home. Therefore, the president of the company,

⁵² Steven Mintz, “The Movies Meet the Great Depression,” *Digital History*, June 8, 2023. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/topic_display.cfm?tcid=125.

⁵³ Little, Becky. “10 Ways Americans Had Fun During the Great Depression.” *History*. June 8, 2023. <https://www.history.com/news/great-depression-entertainment-monopoly-movies-radio>.

J. P. Todhunter, orders Tony to create a romance for Georgia so that she will finish the trip and tell her story. Tony then creates an adventure for Georgia where she must return a black pearl to a shrine on a smaller island to keep the volcano from erupting and destroying the village below. By the end of their fake adventure, Georgia and Tony have fallen in love, and he regrets tricking her and confesses the truth where she is naturally furious at him. But after more comedic shenanigans and tricking Georgia into forgiving him, they finally get together and the movie ends with a chorus singing two of the songs from the film “Blue Hawaii” and “In a Little Hula Heaven.”

While *Waikiki Wedding* makes it clear that the pearl storyline is fake, it is also implied that everything else presented as Native Hawaiian culture is to be believed. For example, take the opening scene where the viewer is presented to what looks to be a traditional Hawaiian wedding of a local couple. The guests are all dressed in leis, flowers, capes, and floral-patterned wrap dresses, and the man who is marrying them is dressed in a feathered robe and a feathered cap. Their ceremony is performed in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i⁵⁴ but is conducted as a Christian or Jewish wedding would be with the two swearing vows to each other. Then the groom wraps a cloak around his bride and then chooses his good friend, Tony, or the Haole⁵⁵ as he calls him, for the bowl ceremony in which Tony gives them his blessings and then shatters the bowl on the ground. Everyone then cheers, a woman splashes some water, a little girl throws a bouquet in the air, and everyone erupts into song.⁵⁶ While this version of a wedding is very cheerful and entertaining, it is not a true reflection of an authentic Native Hawaiian wedding, and that is because in pre-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 284: Hawaiian language.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 58: white person, American, Englishman, Caucasian; formally, any foreigner.

⁵⁶ *Waikiki Wedding*, 2:30 to 4:18.

contact Hawai'i, there was no concept of a wedding ceremony. In pre-contact Hawai'i, if a couple wanted to be together, then they simply did so. The only formal ceremonies that did exist were reserved for the ali'i⁵⁷ and they did not resemble the musical wedding shown in the film. The Hawaiian wedding ceremonies performed now in present day are a relatively recent invention dating back to the nineteenth-century when the first missionaries came to Hawai'i, bringing with them the teachings of Christianity and the concept of a Judeo-Christian wedding ceremony. Due to their influence on the Hawaiian people, it was their wedding traditions that were practiced and passed down into the modern age.

Other examples of fictional cultural pieces include making up a game where if you give a person a lei they must then kiss you; having Native Hawaiians jumping and dancing on oversized drums in a manner that looks nothing like hula; and finally making every native run around wearing only a grass skirt, a malo⁵⁸, skirts, a lei, and all the men going shirtless, even at night when the temperature goes down and the air gets colder. They are also always featured barefoot, even when walking on sharp rocks or dangerous areas. The ceremonial attire of a kahuna is also incorrect as they show him adorned in a thick feather headdress with shells and beads and a thick necklace with fake shark teeth, metal ornaments, beads and shells, and a skirt of feathers, shells, and beads.⁵⁹ Overall, this costume of the kahuna looks more like a generalization of what Native American formal attire could be, which is another example of placing all indigenous people together in one box. The most interesting piece though is when the characters get lost in the jungle and two of them encounter a wild chimpanzee in the trees who then scares them into

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20: chief, chiefess, officer, ruler, monarch, noble, aristocrat, king, queen, royalty, regal, aristocratic, kingly; to rule or act as a chief, to govern, reign; to become a chief.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 233: male's loincloth.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 55:54 to 56:06.

falling out of the tree.⁶⁰ This is an interesting detail to add because the families of *Pan*, *Pongo*, and *Gorilla*⁶¹ are not native to Hawai‘i and would not be seen in the wild, but rather only ever at the Honolulu Zoo.

But the most important detail to take away from *Waikiki Wedding* is that it is all built around the idea of finding romance in Hawai‘i, a rhetorical trope at play yet again. The contest promises it to the winner, Georgia goes to Hawai‘i expecting to experience it, and Tony fulfills it without questioning why anyone would go on vacation and expect a romance to be included like a gift basket. That is because, by this point in time, Hawai‘i had become known as a romantic paradise, and films like *Waikiki Wedding* only further supported the impression and would help in cementing the legacy of the Hawaiian Islands as a place of romance in future years. Other films that embrace this vision is *Honolulu* and *Hawaii Calls*.

Honolulu is a story loosely based on the old fable *The Prince and the Pauper* but where a movie star named Brooks Mason temporarily switches with another fictional pineapple plantation owner in Hawai‘i named George Smith. The two men then get caught up in the chaos of each other’s lives and relationships until they realize that they appreciate their original lives over the fantasies. Just as *Waikiki Wedding* did, *Honolulu* plays up Hawai‘i as a “magical isle” and a “heaven on earth” for all who visit⁶² while providing musical numbers. The first of these performances include a woman dancing a greatly exaggerated hula in a plastic grass skirt with a

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1:00:37 to 1:02:30.

⁶¹ Matthew Mitchell, Mary Gonder, “Primate speciation: A case study of African apes,” *Nature Education Knowledge*, June 8, 2023, <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/primata-speciation-a-case-study-of-african-96682434/>.

⁶² *Honolulu Trailer*, 0:11 to 0:20.

fake waterfall gushing behind her in the moonlight.⁶³ The other is a high energy and elaborate number which features a full band, multiple backup dancers, and a solo number where the actress performs an interesting mix of hula and tap dancing.⁶⁴ While an entertaining piece, the dance has nothing to do with authentic hula, and the costumes of straw skirts and shiny gold tube tops share but a shadow of a resemblance to a more traditional Hawaiian attire. There are also, of course, the now typical long shots of the island with a focus on the beaches, valleys, and mountains.

The second movie, *Hawaii Calls*, is a story about two boys who sneak onto a ship going to Hawai‘i and the adventures they encounter along the way. Mixed in with the story are musical numbers and dancing scattered between dynamic shots of O‘ahu. There are long, sweeping shots of the ‘Ewa plains, the old dirt road of the Pali, the rocky beaches, surfing on longboards, and a view from the Ko‘olaupoko⁶⁵ looking down at the valleys below.⁶⁶ There is also, of course, a collection of hula performances scattered throughout the movie, all of them women who look to be a good mix of ethnicities. It is also important to note that *Hawaii Calls* is one of the few films to showcase the locals as actual people of mixed ethnicities and color as well as having them speak ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as commonly as English. While it is still a film that exploits the natural beauty of O‘ahu and Native Hawaiian culture, it at least tries to get the cultural examples correct.

Finally, there is the musical *The Flower of Hawaii*, which takes the real life of Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last reigning monarch of Hawai‘i, and turns it into a love story of a lost

⁶³ Ibid., 50:12 to 50:53.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1:06:42 to 1:12:43.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 166: windward sides of the Hawaiian Islands.

⁶⁶ *Hawaii Calls*, 29:00 to 29:40.

princess who chooses her lover over the throne. The movie is based on a German operetta, *Die Blume von Hawaii*, by Paul Abraham⁶⁷ that premiered on July 24, 1931, at the Neues Theater in Leipzig, Germany. But the film differs from the operetta in quite a few ways and now stands alone as its own version and is still loosely based on the life of Queen Lili‘uokalani. The plot features a young woman named Susanne Lamond who lives in Paris and works as a cigarette saleswoman but has dreams of being a singer. She is unaware that she is the last princess of Hawai‘i and that her real name is Princess Laya. Hawai‘i is currently being fought over by Hawaiian Nationalists being led by a pretender to the throne, Prince Lilo Taro, and the U.S. Governor Harrison who wants to marry the prince to his niece Bessy to further support the U.S. claims to the islands. He is unaware though that Bessy is in love with his secretary, Buffy, and that they plan to run away together. Susanne is tricked into going to Hawai‘i to perform as an artist and is accompanied by the attaché Captain Harald Stone who falls in love with her. The Liberation Movement kidnaps her when she does arrive and try to force her to marry Prince Lilo Taro in the old palace but Susanne objects. She has also fallen in love with Stone and wants to marry him, and so she renounces all claims to the throne and titles and follows him, leaving Hawai‘i behind to be fought over by Prince Lilo Taro and Governor Harrison.

The Flower of Hawaii stands out as it uses very broad and general shots of greenery and beaches that could be passed off as Hawai‘i to those unfamiliar with the islands but not to anyone who has visited. It also incorrectly portrays Native Hawaiians and the culture, dressing them in clothes that look more suitable to the desert than an island, using harmful stereotypes like blackface, and making a confusing number of monkey jokes as monkeys are not found in

⁶⁷ Richard Traubner, ed., *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (London: Routledge, 2003), 273.

Hawai‘i. But the worst detail to be used is the inaccurate portrayal of Queen Lili‘uokalani and the history of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, which was overthrown in 1893 and then illegally occupied and annexed to the United States as a territory and eventually a state in 1959. Queen Lili‘uokalani was staunchly loyal to her people and kingdom and it would have been against her very character to have chosen a lover over her people. Ignoring and altering the real history of the Queen and the kingdom does a disservice to their memories and efforts to retain independence. And even though it is a fictional story, it is still a means of passing along information to an audience that very likely does not know anything of the real history behind the film or Hawai‘i.

By this point in time, whether a silent dramatic romance or a bright and sunny musical, the Hawai‘i films have all followed a sort of guideline for elements and themes that have become intertwined with Hawai‘i. These elements include the maiden performing a dance she calls ‘hula’ in a grass skirt with colorful leis and flowers in her hair; grass shacks built on or near the beach; natives dressed in mere wraps and lavalava; an active volcano that requires the sacrifice of a native woman; wild and untamed jungles and valleys; and of course, the sandy beaches with sunlight and glossy waves. The themes involved are always based around the idea that Hawai‘i exists as a place of beauty, a paradise where one will find romance hidden in each tumble of a wave.

All of these small inconsistencies to Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiian culture may not seem to be a big deal when limited to a single movie. But when each film is listed out and the details looked over, it becomes clear that there is a consistent pattern repeating itself with the creation of each new film. This pattern is using the most well-known stereotypes on Hawai‘i and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi to recreate the same romantic setting framed by an exotic and alien culture that, while

entertaining in its strangeness, is ultimately regarded as lesser due to its primitive aesthetic. It would not be until World War II touched the shores of Hawai‘i that a new take on the islands would be created.

Paradise is Politics in the Pacific

Before 1941, Hawai‘i existed merely as a vacation and trading post for the United States, sitting on the peripheral view of the country as the prize of U.S. commercial and cultural expansion into the Pacific. But following the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entrance into World War II, it became the commanding center for the war in the Pacific to stop Japan’s expansion. Even when the war ended and the need for such a strong military presence in Hawai‘i died out, this idea of the islands stayed in place. But with Hawai‘i as a place of importance to the rest of the country and, therefore, the world, it now required an updated image. Gone were the days Hawai‘i was a simple set of islands with grass shacks, topless women, and wild jungles. Now it was modernized and civilized, a place where visitors could tour the beaches of Waikīkī without any fear because the U.S. Armed Forces were there. The exotic appeal of the islands and her people was still there only now it was tamed and controlled by the occupation of the United States. This idea is also important because it came at a time when the middle-class was on the rise and the creation of commercial jets made traveling easier and quicker than previous methods. Now, Hawai‘i was no longer limited to merely the wealthy and elite who could afford the long travel aboard a ship. It was now accessible to anyone who wanted to visit and experience the romantic isles themselves.

War movies further strengthened this interest as they struck a personal connection in the viewers with their portrayal of WWII and Pearl Harbor. With the war still so fresh in the minds

of many, movies based on these topics captured the audience's attention as it brought about a sense of nationalism, mourning, and victory. Naturally, Hollywood took notice of this, and started producing movies based around the war and Pearl Harbor, and they became the new trend for Hawai'i films alongside the usual stock of romantic musicals like *On an Island with You*⁶⁸, and comedic slapsticks like *Ma and Pa Kettle at Waikiki*⁶⁹. The war films produced in the following years included a strong mix of genres with some being more serious and somber like *December 7th*⁷⁰, *In Harm's Way*⁷¹, and, of course, *From Here to Eternity*. These are films that focus on the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. response to entering the war. Other films are more lighthearted, focusing instead on the winning outcome of the war and the chance to rebuild the U.S. into something greater as shown in *Blue Hawaii*⁷². But no matter what the genre or plot used, the films all follow the same formula with the themes of paradisaical and romanticism, only now they manage to establish Hawai'i as a place that has been modernized and improved upon by the presence of the United States.

One of the original films is the 1943 documentary, *December 7th*, which is a propaganda documentary directed and produced by John Ford and Gregg Toland on behalf of the United States Navy. It detailed the attack on Pearl Harbor and how the U.S. became involved in World

⁶⁸ *On an Island with You*, directed by Richard Thorpe (Loews Cineplex Entertainment, 1948), 60:47:02, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/2040/on-an-island-with-you#overview>.

⁶⁹ *Ma and Pa Kettle at Waikiki*, directed by Lee Sholem (Universal Studios, 1955), 60:19, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/82222/ma-and-pa-kettle-at-waikiki#overview>.

⁷⁰ *December 7th*, directed by John Ford and Gregg Toland (Office of War Information, 1943), 32:01, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/332302/december-7th#overview>.

⁷¹ *In Harm's Way*, directed by Otto Preminger (Paramount Pictures, 1965), 2:45:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/4651/in-harms-way#overview>.

⁷² *Blue Hawaii*, directed by Norman Taurog (Paramount Pictures, 1961), 60:41, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/69214/blue-hawaii#overview>.

War II. The storyline is an interpretation of how December 7, 1941 played out and the outcome of the Attack on Pearl Harbor. It starts by describing Honolulu as an unsuspecting city with soldiers and sailors who are on guard against sabotage or domestic threats but not against invasion from abroad. The airplanes at Hickam Airforce Base and the ships at Pearl Harbor are all shown to be at rest with the off-duty soldiers and sailors are shown to be sleeping, playing ball, or at Sunday mass. At the aircraft warning system, a private detects a fleet of airplanes approaching, but he is assured by an officer that they are probably American planes returning from a training mission. But shortly after, the Japanese planes begin to fly over the island from different directions, beginning the attack.⁷³

Recreated shots depict the Japanese airplanes attacking, along with shots of buildings, ships, and personnel being destroyed as American servicemen return fire with guns and battleships. The narrator emphasizes the heroism of the American defenders and on Japanese losses, including the capture of two-man submarines. Tribute is also paid to the American lives lost. Several of the deceased servicemen are featured with their names and hometowns along with pictures of the soldiers and their families. The fallen are meant to represent a range of American geographic locations and ethnicities, but each is voiced by the same actor in order to drive home the idea that everyone is the same as American citizens. A memorial service then follows, accompanied by the song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” that is followed by a bugle playing “Taps.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid., 8:05 to 17:03.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 19:32 to 24:13.

The concluding segment of the documentary focuses on countering Japanese propaganda and displaying American preparations for reprisal and war. The narrator also notes the influx of U.S. personnel and material from the mainland and how America's military presence in the islands for the past decades has allowed them to build up strong military and naval bases in Hawai'i.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the narrator takes note of the large Japanese population in Hawai'i and how the attack served to "further complicate the already complex life of the Japanese in Hawai'i," alongside images of Japanese merchants and others covering up Japanese-language signs or replacing them with patriotic names in English, while Japanese language schools and Shinto temples have been closed. The narrator ends the documentary by promising that "all they who take the sword shall perish by the sword."⁷⁶

As *December 7th* is a propaganda documentary, it shows real footage and shots of the island O'ahu, which was very developed and modernized at that time due to all the previous work done by the monarchs to renovate the capital city, Honolulu. The footage reveals the paved roads, busy cars, towering buildings, electric lights, and active community that made up Honolulu. All of these small details show how industrialized and developed the island really was, which counters previous movies that emphasized the wild and undeveloped look of the islands that appealed so strongly to audiences. This also further disproves the myths that Hawai'i needed the United States to become a civilized state to modernize it as the Kingdom of Hawai'i was already modernized at the time. Proof of this can be found best with 'Iolani Palace, the home of King Kalākaua and later Queen Lili'uokalani, which used electricity and phone lines before the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 25:01 to 27:06.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 32:07 to 34:00.

Presidential White House of the United States did. This myth and the harm it perpetuates will be further examined in chapter three.

Furthermore, the documentary still highlights key features associated with the island such as swaying coconut trees, clear beaches with rolling waves, the looming mountains, and a long shot of the volcano Lē‘ahi, commonly known as Diamond Head. These are all common sites associated with Hawai‘i and are used often in opening scenes of films like *Hula* and on tourist merchandise such as postcards, mugs, refrigerator magnets, and other memorabilia. The documentary also gives little attention to the unique mix of ethnicities and cultures that makeup Hawai‘i, using instead the narrative of uniformity in order to present a solid front to the world. It should be noted though that this message of equality does not last as future films based on Pearl Harbor and WWII would show only Caucasian soldiers and sailors and erases the ones of color and different ethnicities.

Another example of a serious war film is *In Harm’s Way*. Produced and directed by Otto Preminger and starring John Wayne, the plot follows the lives of several naval officers stationed in Hawai‘i during the Attack on Pearl Harbor and start of World War II. The movie starts with the Attack on Pearl Harbor where Navy Captain Rockwell “Rock” Torrey, a divorced Naval Academy graduate and career officer, is ordered to lead several U. S. Navy vessels against the Japanese but ends up being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The mission ends in disaster and upon his return to base, Torrey is assigned to a desk job. Meanwhile, Torrey’s executive officer, Commander Paul Eddington, has learned that his unfaithful wife was killed in a car crash during the attack in the company of an Army Air Corps officer, with whom she just had a wild fling with on a local beach the night before the attack.

Several months pass by with Torrey having grown attracted to a Navy Nurse Corps lieutenant named Maggie Haynes. She informs him that his estranged son, Jeremiah, is now an ensign in the Naval Reserve. As retaliatory naval operations are being set into motion, Torrey is promoted to Rear Admiral where he is to spearhead the mission of capturing several key islands. Participating in the operation are Eddington, Haynes, and Jeremiah. On Gavabutu Island, a springboard for the attack, Torrey launches a successful foray and boosts morale among his troops, and wins the respect of his son, who asks to be transferred back to his PT boat. Meanwhile, Eddington, tormented by the memory of his wife's infidelity, gets drunk and rapes Jeremiah's girlfriend, Annalee, at a beach party. Annalee fears she may be pregnant and commits suicide, and Torrey breaks the news to Jeremiah, thereby cementing the bond between them. To redeem himself, Eddington undertakes an unauthorized reconnaissance mission where he is able to radio the exact size and location of the enemy force moving to intercept the U.S. invasion group before he is shot down. In the battle that ensues, the American force is largely destroyed but manages to force the Japanese forces into retreat. However, Jeremiah is killed in the battle and Torrey is gravely wounded. He is sent back to Hawai'i to recuperate in Maggie's care and is assured that he will soon be back in action to command a new task force in the war.

In Harm's Way is a very straightforward war movie that focuses mainly on the war, bureaucratic infighting, and the lives of the main characters. Extraordinarily little attention is given to Hawai'i or the Native Hawaiian culture but when it is used, it is mainly as a plot device or as a scenic background. For example, the beach is used mainly in scenes where a party is taking place such as in the opening scene when Eddington's wife is having an affair on the

beach⁷⁷ and the Navy beach party where Annalee is assaulted.⁷⁸ Other examples of the island mainly consist of off-duty scenes such as a fictional bar that uses a lot of bamboo, shells, tropical plants, and tropical patterns⁷⁹ and the numerous housing of the soldiers. Even the ending credits are of waves rolling across the sand and the crash of waves.⁸⁰ The few times Native Hawaiian culture is used in the movie is mainly as decoration pieces or to remind the viewer that the movie takes place in Hawai‘i. For example, during the Navy party at the beginning of the film, the officers all wore a lei and had tiki torches⁸¹ lighting up the pool area.⁸² It should be mentioned though that tiki torches have no real connection to Hawaii or the Pacific as a whole, and are part of the mainstream Tiki Culture that originated in California in the 1930s. But due to their close resemblance to cultures of Pacific Islands, many films used tiki torches as props to further exoticize the scenes, and remind the viewers that the location is meant to be Hawai‘i.

At the second party Hawaiian music is being played in the background while the guests drink tropical alcohol with fancy fruit and umbrellas.⁸³ At a welcoming celebration, real canoes are used by a group of brown skinned men who are implied to be natives, who are all shirtless and dressed in a malo and various lei. At the front of the canoe sits a figure of a possible Hawaiian deity though its features are not clear. The men use the canoe to escort Eddington to a

⁷⁷ *In Harm's Way*, 4:20 to 5:36.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:54:23 to 1:58:37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 34:01 to 36:05.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:44:31 to 2:47:29.

⁸¹ Wayne Curtis, "Tiki," *American Heritage*, Volume 57, Issue 4 (August 2006): <https://www.americanheritage.com/tiki>.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 00:16 to 4:01.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 42:13 to 45:27.

Navy ship where he delivers a basket full of Bird of Paradise flowers and bananas to Maggie.⁸⁴

Who the god is or why he is placed at the front of the canoe is never explained nor mentioned in the film. It can be assumed to merely be there as yet another prop to remind the viewer that they are in the Pacific.

While *In Harm's Way* does not go out of its way to exploit Hawai'i or Native Hawaiian culture the same way earlier films did, it still uses the same main stereotypes in order to further reinforce the impression that these images are common in Hawai'i. Furthermore, these stereotypes—the white beaches, the tacky leis, excessive use of bamboo, and obsession with the ocean—do not have anything to do with the plot or characters, and can be assumed to be there merely to remind the viewer that this takes place in Hawai'i. It should also be noted that, while the civilians are made up of people of color, there are none to be seen serving in the Navy nor are they portrayed as being in any position of power. This detail will be discussed further in the second chapter along with why this is a common theme in Hawai'i films.

The final film to be examined is the much lighthearted piece, *Blue Hawaii*, which is one of the three Hawai'i films to star musician Elvis Presley. *Blue Hawaii* is the first of the trilogy to be produced and follows a simple plot around a young man named Chad Gates—played by Presley—as he returns home to Hawai'i after spending two years in the Army. Once back in Hawai'i, he is expected by his parents to take a job in his father's prosperous pineapple business, Great Southern Hawaiian Fruit Company, but he refuses and instead goes to work as a guide for the tourist agency where Maile, his mixed French and Native Hawaiian girlfriend, is employed. His first assignment is to escort a schoolteacher, Abigail Prentace, and the four teenaged girls in

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1:08:44 to 1:10:52.

her care around the island. One of the girls, Ellie Corbett, develops a crush on Chad which he ignores. Later at a restaurant, Chad ends up in a fight with a drunken tourist who made advances towards Ellie which gets him arrested. Chad is later bailed out and reprimanded by his domineering Southern mother who blames it all on Maile's influence, but Chad ignores her words. He does end up fired from his position as a tour guide by Mr. Chapman, which makes Maile quit her job in protest too. The couple decide to independently continue providing tourist activities to Abigail and the four youths, including Hawaiian-themed cookouts with live music, a visit to (another) fictional pineapple plantation, parties, boating, and horseback riding on Kaua'i.

While on Kaua'i, Ellie attempts to seduce Chad in his hotel room one night but he refuses her advances which makes her flee in a stolen jeep with the intent to commit suicide. Before Ellie can drown herself, Chad pulls her out from the shore and at first attempts to speak to her but then decides to punish Ellie by giving her a spanking. The next morning, at breakfast, Ellie seems to have been reformed and is now pleasant, friendly, and well-mannered, and even jokes about the spanking from the night before. Meanwhile, Abigail has found romance with Jack Kelman, Chad's uncle, and with Jack's help, Chad and his father resolve their differences about Chad's future. Chad and Maile then decide to form their own tourism business called Gates of Hawai'i, and begin arrangements to provide tourist services for his father's large network of fruit salesmen. The film then ends with Chad and Maile's lavish outdoor Hawaiian wedding ceremony, which convinces even Chad's mother into accepting the marriage.

Blue Hawaii is a post-war movie that was filmed in Hawai'i and uses a lot of sections of the islands and Native Hawaiian culture to tell the story. From the opening long-shot of the volcano Lē'ahi in the background and Waikīkī beach in the front to the concluding shot of the colorful wedding, this movie uses every moment to display the beauty of the islands. The film

also does a fair job of showing an equal number of shots of the natural part of the islands—mainly the beaches, the ocean, the pineapple fields, and some open greenery—alongside the modernized and developed parts of the islands—such as the Waikīkī strip, Honolulu Airport, houses, and the modern architecture. And while the movie covers much of O‘ahu and parts of Kaua‘i, it mainly sticks to the more tourist friendly locations, such as the beaches and bungalows. This presents a very colorful Hawai‘i for the viewer to see but is still one that is carefully staged so that none of the darker aspects of the islands, such as the poorer sections, the homeless, the polluted landsites, are never seen.

When it comes to Native Hawaiian culture, the film uses a lot of it throughout the plot with some of it being true depictions of the culture and others being the more romanticized ideals. For example, in the beginning of the film, the main couple, Chad and Maile, stop at a grass shack next to the beach to change their clothes for swimsuits and then go swimming in the ocean. While there they run into some locals on a canoe who all have instruments that they pull out for a musical number led by Chad.⁸⁵ Clearly, locals do not carry around musical instruments on canoes to break out in song, but neither are there grass shacks on the beaches. If one was to build a hale⁸⁶ next to the beach in a traditional manner, then it would not look as it did in *Blue Hawaii*. Another example is the many parties and lū‘au⁸⁷ events that Chad attends which, for the most part, act as avenues for him to sing and perform. These performances use real Native Hawaiians as musicians who perform on authentic Hawaiian instruments and dancers who

⁸⁵ Ibid., 9:33 to 15:49.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 52: house, building, institution, lodge, station, hall; to have a house.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 214: Hawaiian feast, named for the taro tops always served at one; this is not an ancient name, but goes back at least to 1856, when so used by the Pacific Commercial Advertiser; formerly a feast was *pā‘ina* or *‘aha‘aina*.

perform hula.⁸⁸ However, the hula performed is something one is more likely to see in Waikīkī entertaining the tourists, and their costumes are fake plastic grass skirts and bikini tops while the musicians used rainbow feathered⁸⁹ ‘ulī‘ulī⁹⁰ rather than the more traditional coloring of red and yellow. All of these small details were changed to better fit what the audience expected to see and what would entertain them more. This is also why the Hawaiian wedding⁹¹ featured at the end is a colorful and sweet scene that has nothing to do with Native Hawaiian culture. As stated earlier in this chapter, there are no Native Hawaiian wedding ceremonies from the pre-contact era, and what does exist now is based on Judeo-Christian traditions. Therefore, the wedding scene in *Blue Hawaii* is a complete work of fiction that was added to bring the movie to a close and to continue the romantic imagery of the Hawai‘i Islands.

Films like *December 7th*, *In Harm’s Way*, and *Blue Hawaii* frame the Hawaiian Islands as a place that has been upgraded due to the civilizing presence of the United States while also still using the well-known themes of romanticism and paradisaical. By this point in time, it can be assumed that film makers simply saw these themes as being part of the very identity of Hawai‘i and saw no reason to question it or challenge these ideals.⁹² That is why they are so strongly presented in a serious war film like *From Here to Eternity* as we will now explore.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1:05:14 to 1:06:56.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 44:01 to 46:06.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 368: a gourd rattle, containing seeds with colored feathers at the top, used for the *hula* ‘ulī‘ulī (at one time there were no feathers); to rattle.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1:37:42 to 1:40:58.

⁹² Sarina Pearson, “The Influence of Fiction and Cinematic Excess on the Factual: Pacific Documentary and Act of War,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 45, no. 01 (June 2010): 111, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25701210>.

The Imagined Hawai‘i

For a movie strongly pushed by both the director and producer to be filmed on location in Hawai‘i, *From Here to Eternity* shows remarkably little of the actual islands outside of the army barracks and beaches. All of the bars, clubs, and restaurants used were fictional, and any locations used to film in were greatly modified. In all honesty, the film could have been made on a set in California and there would have been no difference. The small parts of the island that are shown are explicitly used in support of the storylines and themes of the film, with the best examples of these being the beach kiss scene, the walk downtown, and the restaurant date. There are other minor instances of the island being used as a framing device but these examples are so small and unnoticeable that they do not even register to the viewer unless one is searching for it. Furthermore, to better break down the layers that make up the themes of these scenes, it is important to look at how the creators used the film tools of narrative,⁹³ mise-en-scène,⁹⁴ cinematography,⁹⁵ and editing⁹⁶ for the three prementioned scenes.

The first scene is the iconic beach kiss⁹⁷ which is the most well-remembered scene of the movie, having appeared on the advertisement posters and being the first thing people think of when they hear the movie title. Yet this scene has more to it than merely rolling around on the

⁹³ Ibid., 276: narrative is the distinctive qualities of storytelling in cinema and films as against other vehicles or media of narrative.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 268: mise-en-scène, in cinema, are the contents of the film frame, including elements of the profilmic event such as performers, settings, costumes, lighting, color, props, and composition.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 79: cinematography is the process of capturing movement of film, more specifically, the planning and control of lighting and camera during the film production.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 136: editing is the complex process informing decisions during pre-production about what setups, shots, and scenes to shoot, and which of these will be included in the final film, and in what order.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 35:36 to 36:10.

beach and getting sand in uncomfortable places. To get an idea of how this scene is used, the first thing to be examined should be the narrative⁹⁸ aspect. This scene focuses on the characters Warden and Karen, who are on their first date at a “secret” part of the beach. At this point in the story, they are merely friendly, having admitted to their mutual attraction to one another but hesitating to take that attraction further. Since the camera is the only narrator of the story, we, the audience, know that this relationship is dangerous as Karen is married to Captain Dana “Dynamite” Holmes, the boss of Warden. If their affair is exposed, then Warden risks getting thrown out of the Army on dishonorable discharges, and they both risk going to prison for adultery. Yet, despite these dangers, they risk upsetting their lives for a relationship together. We see this gamble when they go on a date to the beach together, out in the open where anyone could spot them, and engage in making out on the shore in their swimsuits. This decision is supported as being the correct one by the *mise-en-scène*, which frames it as one that is romantic and passionate.

With the *mise-en-scène* aspect, the viewer must not look at not just the actors on screen, but everything included in each frame. In this case, it would be the beach background and the music used. As Warden and Karen lay stretched out on the shore, exchanging kisses as the waves roll in around them, the background music swells with the orchestra’s melody. Karen then rises to her feet and runs to the blanket stretched out on the sand, where she collapses, and Warden follows her, standing over her with water dripping off him before dropping down to exchange more passionate kisses with her. The main focus of this entire scene is to be romantic and passionate. It does this best by playing up the theme that Hawaiian beaches are associated as

being romantic with their white sand, clear waters, rolling waves, and sunny sky. Even the rocky enclosure is framed to make the scene feel like a private atmosphere by creating a wall between the characters and the outside world and encasing them in their own little bubble. There is no need for either character to say that the scenery is romantic because the framing of the scene does it for them. Yet it could not accomplish this so very successfully without the aid of past tropes and themes from former movies and images that paint Hawaiian beaches as a place of romance and passion.

The cinematography further supports this with the use of the camera shots. The scene starts with a medium long shot⁹⁹ of the ocean as the waves swell and tumble about. It then focuses on a single wave as it rolls onto the beach, leading the viewer to the couple lying on the shoreline in a long shot.¹⁰⁰ It stays as a long shot as it follows the couple as they rise to their feet and run back to the blanket on the sand, where Karen collapses on her back. The camera then switches to a medium close-up¹⁰¹ of Warden as he stands over Karen before falling to his knees to kiss her further. These different camera shots are essential to note as they take the time to show the ocean and beach alongside the characters, reinforcing the themes of romance, paradisiacal, and even exploitation in this scene as the natural elements are being used to further

⁹⁹ Dave Monahan, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 449: medium long shot, also known as the *plan Américain*, or *American shot*, it is a shot that shows a character from the knees up and includes most of a person's body.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 449: long shot is a shot that presents background and subject information in equal measure and is as much about setting and situations as any particular character. It shows the full human body and some of its surroundings and establish the relative placement of character within a setting can function as establishing shots.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 449: medium close-up is a shot that shows a character from the middle of the chest to the top of the head. It provides a view of the face that catches minor changes in expression, as well as some detail about the character's posture.

enhance the scene. The structure of all of this as a blooming romance in a paradise is also not accidental but intentional, leading us to the final film tool: editing.

Editing has always been a means to either make or break a film, which is certainly true for this movie. For this scene, the editing manipulates the time flow to pass seamlessly with the smooth transition between camera jumps so that there are no noticeable breaks between the scenes. The editing has also done an excellent job of hiding any possible passerby on the beach or boats out at sea, which would ruin the illusion of being a ‘private, secret spot’ that Warden claims it to be. Furthermore, it is due to editing that the romantic atmosphere is so prevalent in this scene as it focuses on the key traits—the ocean, the beach, the clear sky—to paint the illusion of the perfect date while also masking the very real attributes of any beach such as rocks, overgrown plants, rubbish, and tourists. This gives further support to the idea that the islands exist merely as an idyllic paradise for any couple looking for a romantic date at the beach.

The second scene to take note of would be the walk downtown¹⁰² in Honolulu where the viewer should get their first look at the civilian side of the island. Instead, they are presented with a staged downtown with a designed background and characters who are set up to appear as the local residents of Hawai‘i. These actors were carefully selected and styled by their ethnicity, with elderly Chinese men wearing traditional attire with a *chángshān* and rounded black hats, Caucasian soldiers dressed in their uniforms or Aloha shirts if they are off duty, and Caucasian women in knee-length A-line dress with puffed shoulders, and precisely two ethnically ambiguous men dressed in Aloha shirts who could pass as Native Hawaiian. As with the first

¹⁰² Ibid., 27:41 to 28:23.

scene, this scene too will be examined using the film tools of narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing.

Looking at this scene from a narrative view, making the background characters mostly Caucasian gives the viewer the impression that this is the norm for Hawai‘i. It would reassure the predominantly Caucasian audience that Hawai‘i, while being an exotic place to view, is also a safe one where people like them are plentiful. This is incorrect as Caucasian men and women were mainly in the minority in Hawai‘i during the 1940s,¹⁰³ but having a piece of America be so diverse would not be normal to them. Therefore, turning everyone white in the film cuts out this unease and makes it more enjoyable and relatable for the viewers. Interestingly, it was not only downtown that is devoid of color but also Schofield Barracks. Any ethnic identity, such as Jews, Hispanics, Filipinos, Native Americans, and even African Americans, is replaced with white men in the film. It is white soldiers who now sing the African American blues such as *Re-enlistment Blues*¹⁰⁴ and any ethnic friction or racism between them is gone now, replaced instead by differences in personalities and tempers.

In terms of the mise-en-scène, the staging of making all the background characters either Caucasian or Asian is the first message to the viewer that Hawai‘i is a place friendly to white people while still being exotic. Further cementing this message is how the background characters are Chinese men dressed in traditional Chinese attire like a *chángshān*, long pants, and rounded black hats, which is very reminiscent of the Chinese railroad workers of California, and therefore very familiar to the viewers. The Caucasian and two mixed men dressed in Aloha shirts give the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 22–23.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 45:36 to 46:07.

impression that this is the normal attire of the locals (when in reality only the tourists would wear the bright Raylon shirts during this era) and give the impression of a place unprepared for the war coming for it. Furthermore, there are even lone Caucasian women allowed to walk alone at night through downtown, sometimes giving soldiers like Prewitt a come-hither look when they sway by, suggesting a sense of safety even for women. The uniforms of the army, navy, and military men are deliberate as they give the viewer an impression of protection and safety, implying how guarded Hawai'i is even before the Attack on Pearl Harbor. The background buildings and streets that Prewitt and Maggio wander through are all of Western design and architecture, and the "social club" they head to is named the New Congress Club instead of anything Hawaiian or Asian. In fact, the only Hawaiian-named establishment we hear of in the film is the Kalakaua Inn, which is spelt incorrectly. Everything else is named in English only.

The cinematography also further supports this impression of Hawai'i with the camera movements and composition of the shots. While Prewitt and Maggio remain the main focus of the camera, the viewer is still given a good look at their surroundings and the people they pass by. The entire walk to the club is done in a long shot that emphasizes the people and surroundings and how they engage with each other. More specifically, it emphasizes how Prewitt reacts positively to everything, showing the audience that he is enjoying his first time off the base even if it is only a walk downtown. The editing also further strengthens the viewer's impression with the speed, continuity, and pace of the scene. The walk downtown is meant to pass by at a moderate speed as the camera follows Prewitt and Maggio in their walk to the New Congress Club with a master shot¹⁰⁵ that does not break. This speed gives the viewer enough time

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 260: master shot is a continuous shot containing the entire action of a particular scene that covers the characters, setting, and action in one take.

to take in the background characters and scenery at a glance but not long enough to linger over and think on. The editing also creates a sense of spatial awareness¹⁰⁶ in this scene. It is implied that this street is small, narrow, and overcrowded with people like any busy city would be at this time. Interestingly this confined space scene is set right after the scene where Warden and Karen head to the secret beach where the viewer is given the impression of immense space, openness, and privacy. This change in atmosphere and spatial awareness is intentional as it makes the differences between the freedom of the beach and ocean with the confinement of the packed city stand out even more.

The final scene we will examine is the outdoor restaurant date¹⁰⁷ that Warden and Karen engage in before being forced to flee as some soldiers and their dates enter the restaurant. While only a short scene, it stands out as being the only time the viewer sees an outdoor restaurant in Hawai‘i and a live band performing Hawaiian songs. In some ways, the scene resembles a Hawaiian postcard with the bamboo and rattan furniture placed everywhere, hanging lights dangling from palm trees, and an open platform with four men in Aloha shirts playing instruments. It looks like something one would see in a Waikīkī hotel or a restaurant advertising a ‘real life’ lū‘au experience. Warden and Karen are enjoying the performance while sitting on a floral settee under a large tree with drinks on a nearby table. Warden is holding Karen’s right hand while she stares at him with adoration and passion. As the music progresses, Karen’s lust seems to grow stronger with every syllable. She begins to caress Warden’s hand and then kiss it

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 165: filmic space (also known as ellipsis, cinematic space) is the space created within the film frame as opposed to the space of the real world or of the profilmic event. It is a wholly distinct type of space, one that can only be created on the cinema through film tools.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1:09:50 to 1:11:25.

while keeping eye contact with him before he pulls her into a tight hug. The passionate scene is abruptly cut short as Warden recognizes two couples suddenly entering the restaurant and they must sneak out before being spotted. While this scene lasts for only a few minutes, it still stands out as one of the few glimpses the viewer gets of the island setting.

Looking at this scene from the narrative perspective, it is meant to show the progression of Warden and Karen's relationship as well as the dangers they face in continuing their affair. It is meant to be a steppingstone into their discussion on where their affair is going and if they have a future together. But it is also important in that it paints a scene of another romantic date between two lovers, which again supports the ongoing practice of using Hawai'i as a place that can be exploited for one's own benefit. In this case, it is in making a movie with romantic dates and secret rendezvous for adultery affairs. Regardless of reasons though, it still continues to perpetuate the idea of Hawai'i as a paradise for romance and pleasure.

The *mise-en-scène* further supports this as the setting and background characters are all staged in a manner that fits with the concept of a romantic date on a tropical island. The restaurant is in an open space with tropical plants placed everywhere and palm trees lined with dim lighting and a live band playing Hawaiian music. The furniture, all made up of bamboo and rattan, mainly consists of small round tables with only two or four chairs, clearly showing that it is catered towards couples. On each table are small vases of flowers though it is too dark to see what type of flowers they could be. The stage that holds the four musicians is really just a wooden platform with five steps placed in the front. The musicians are all dressed in Aloha shirts and long pants and are sitting down with each seeming to hold an instrument though it is hard to see due to the angle of the camera. Interestingly, the camera never once focuses on the men

performing on the small stage, and in fact leaves their faces to be shadowed by the soft light¹⁰⁸ so that it is difficult to get a good read on their features. This stands out in contrast to Karen and Warden, whose faces are very clear and visible as most of the soft light is directed on them. The music is also sung in a low and sensual voice and spoken only in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i which, to a non-speaker, could sound exotic and arousing. Karen is certainly affected as her expression of lust grows stronger in tune with the singer and beat of the drum. The restaurant is also mostly empty with the few patrons there seated away from Warden and Karen, which adds privacy to their date and another romantic aspect to the scene. Interestingly, Karen’s drink even has a little umbrella in it, perfectly fitting to the mold of a date in paradise.

When examining this scene from the cinematography view, it shows that this scene was first filmed with a long shot to present the overall staging of the restaurant and singers. After that the camera shifts into a medium shot¹⁰⁹ of Warden and Karen cuddling together on the settee before moving closer into a medium close-up to show how they are holding hands and showing affection to each other. The final shot type used is a close-up¹¹⁰ of Karen’s face when her expression of adoration shifts into one of lust as she watches Warden while listening to the music being played. The couple is consistently framed by the width of the tree they are sitting under, which shows that they are seeking both privacy in their date but also discreetly hiding from the other patrons and the world as they cannot afford to be caught together.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 453: soft light is light that is scattered or diffused so that it does not follow a direct path between the light source and the subject.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 449: medium shot (MS) is a shot framed to show the human body from the waist up.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 84: close-up (closeup, close shot, CU) is a shot in which an object, or the head of a person, takes up a good part of the frame. This close-up is effective in conveying a character’s emotions and in drawing attention to a significant objects and details in a scene.

Finally, looking at the editing aspect for this scene, the most important detail to take note of is how the close-up view of Karen's face is paired in sync with the Hawaiian melody being sung in the background. With the camera poised so close to her face and the music being edited in the background to match the change in her expressions, it is implied to the viewer that the music is in part to blame in her change in demeanor. The changes in her face, from simply enjoying herself on a date to growing aroused, is matched in sync with the beating of the drum, and the low voices of the men crooning in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. Whether her arousal is due to the beat of the song, the foreign words, or the combination of both remains unknown, but there is no denying the cause and effect being played out on the screen. With that said, this concludes the examination of the three scenes using the film tools and it is now time to draw all of this information together for the final thoughts.

Summative Critique

From the first contact with Western explorers to the creation of filmmaking, Hawai'i has always been a place of speculation and fantasy to the outsiders looking in. Due to the remoteness of the islands, a narrative was created based partly on truth and partly on misconceptions that came to characterize Hawai'i as almost mythical place, a Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden with a tropical twist. These rhetorical tropes can be found everywhere from pieces of literature written on the islands to artwork, music, songs, operas, photography, and finally films. But with filmmaking came a new and specific type of storytelling: one that can be preserved and shared around the world to all manner of audiences. It is through this narrow and shallow lens that Hawai'i has been viewed, time and time again, in different forms like musicals and romantic-dramas. And while many have enjoyed looking at the islands and her native culture, very few have questioned the authenticity behind the images being presented to them.

In the opening quote of this chapter, it states that Hollywood is a dream factory and the idea of Hawai‘i is one of the best products to ever be put out. This is true as we have seen with films like *Waikiki Wedding* and *Hula*, which embraces the romantic idealism perpetuated by Hollywood in relation to the Hawaiian Islands. Through the magic of Hollywood, the islands were depicted mainly as a place of natural beauty and tropical wonder where anyone can visit and indulge in the sandy white beaches and tropical jungles. Little attention or efforts were made to see past the beauty to the rich history buried in the sands that dates back to five million years¹¹¹ of existing as a competent, unique ecosystem, and three thousand years¹¹² as a home to a thriving indigenous group. This group of people transformed the islands into a united country, independent and strong enough to stand as equals with the likes of the United States, Great Britain, France, and many other powerful countries. This country was modern and forward thinking thanks to the work of the constitutional monarchy, long before the United States took control of the islands. Yet when films like *Hawaii Calls* and *Blue Hawaii* finally did acknowledge the very modernized capital and well-developed infrastructure across the islands, all the credit was laid at the feet of the United States and the Armed Forces, and no acknowledgement was ever given to the previous monarchs of Hawai‘i. This misconception also further perpetuates the myth that Hawai‘i needed the United States to survive and was made better for it when the truth is the islands were an independent power long before the United States ever took notice of Hawai‘i. And while they are happy to take credit for the modernization of Hawai‘i, there is never any acknowledgement to the damage done through the occupation, colonization, and militarization of the Hawaiian Islands. Haunani-Kay Trask explains this best: “For visitors to Hawai‘i, these

¹¹¹ Steve Olson, *Evolution in Hawaii: A Supplement to Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science*, (Washington DC: National Academies Press, 2004), 84.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 103.

statements are quite shocking because the Hollywood, tourist poster image of my homeland as a racial paradise with happy Natives waiting to share their culture with everyone and anyone is a familiar global commodity. No matter how false and predatory this image remains, hordes of tourists from both the Euro-American and Japanese First Worlds believe enough tourist propaganda to spend millions on a romanticized “Pacific Island” holiday. For these foreigners, any ugly truths about the real conditions of Native Hawaiians are an unwelcome irritation, and it is far simpler to ignore misery and injustice than to acknowledge and address their realities.”¹¹³

In addition to the incorrect presentation of the islands, the native culture of Hawai‘i has been misrepresented through films. The center focus on the indigenous culture has always been rooted in the more exotic and outlandish features such as its native religion, attire, rituals, architecture, etc. Movies such as *The Shark God* and *Blue Hawaii* exploit these aspects by taking the most foreign or shocking parts and manipulating them to fit their own narrative. Other films, such as *Hula* and *Aloha* use stereotypes or misconceptions to create false ideas and customs such as sacrificing a person to an active volcano, or performing a tap dance and labeling it as hula. All of these ideas do not accurately reflect the indigenous culture of Hawai‘i and are merely diluted versions of the real forms, torn apart and restitched together to create a new production to entertain the viewers. And while it can be argued that this is merely harmless fiction being produced as a means of entertainment and monetary value, it is still reinforcing inaccurate and unfair representations of Native Hawaiian culture. This is especially dangerous for younger generations who many not know anything about the culture and can take a movie’s

¹¹³ Ibid., 18.

representation to be fact over fiction and can lead to furthering the lies and negative stereotypes associated with them.

What makes all of these inaccuracies truly troubling is that they did not have to be this way. Kānaka ʻŌiwi are seasoned storytellers and have been sharing their tales through various means such as music, songs, and hula since time immemorial. Hula, in particular, is a great avenue of storytelling because it is such a physically expressive form that uses the entire body to convey the story. Furthermore, hula can be shown without sound sometimes, depending on the song and dance being performed, which means it could have been used in the early stages of filmmaking with its silent pictures, or in the later pieces with music and song. Regardless of the timing, hula could have been used as a means of telling a story, or moving the plot along in a new, unseen manner that could have drawn in a larger audience. Other forms of Hawaiian storytelling are mele¹¹⁴ and oli¹¹⁵ which are the Native Hawaiian versions of songs, poetry, and chanting without dance involved. These forms would have thrived in the musical genre and could have easily been featured in a few scenes of *Hawaii Calls*, *Blue Hawaii*, or *Waikiki Wedding*. These avenues were never explored, mentioned, or even acknowledged by Hollywood and shows how little effort was made to truly understand the Native Hawaiian culture.

All of these small details—from focusing on only the pristine perfection of the islands to inventing new cultural traditions that are falsified—have been repeated consistently through each Hollywood film until they have become the norm to creators and viewers. It is no surprise that in present-day people have come to view Hawai‘i through these lenses. Yet Hawai‘i and the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 245: song, anthem, or chant of any kind; poem, poetry; to sing, chant.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 285: chant that was not danced to, especially with prolonged phrases chanted in one breath, often with a trill at the end of each phrase.

indigenous culture are not alone in these inaccurate representations and false tales. The native people of the islands, the Kānaka ʻŌiwi or Native Hawaiians, have also been portrayed inaccurately and in a derogatory fashion in many films. In the next chapter we will examine how and why Kānaka ʻŌiwi became a work of fantasy in Hollywood imageries that are, ultimately, upheld in *From Here to Eternity*.

Chapter 2: Bird of Paradise

“A Hawaiian isle—a land of singing seas and swinging hips—where volcanoes are often active—and maidens always are.”¹¹⁶

Introduction

At the halfway point of *From Here to Eternity*, the soldiers head to a local bar¹¹⁷ to enjoy themselves and relax after another day at work. At the bar, the viewer is presented with an elderly Chinese man dressed in a *chángshān* and a round black hat standing at an antique-looking register behind the bar. A waitress outside the bar gathers some drinks onto her tray to deliver to the patrons. We, the viewers, can see only the left side of her figure for a moment before she turns her back to the camera completely, but this is enough for the viewer to get a look at her physique. Her floral dress hugs every line and curve of her body while showing a peak of dark skin on her back and bare arms. Her black hair is bound up and overshadowed by the colossal hibiscus flower behind her left ear. Around her neck are a string of beads, but whether it is a simple necklace or an elaborate lei is unknown. As she walks through the bar in black heels, her hips sway back and forth gracefully, looking more like a dancer than a waitress. The camera follows her, along with the eyes of the bar patrons, who all leer or stare at the woman as she calmly goes about her job. Some even exclaim, “Wow!” as she walks by, showing how impressed they are though whether it is due to her body or walk remains unknown.

When she reaches her customer, First Sergeant Warden and his fellow soldier known only as Pete, she wordlessly serves them their beer and glass cups before moving on to the following table. All the while, Warden and Pete watch her closely, with smiles that show every

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 52:46 to 53:16.

tooth. When she goes to walk away, Warden calls out her name, Rose, and she pauses and then walks back over to the duo with a questioning look. She leans closer to Warden, and he asks her if she knows why he likes to have her serve him his beer, and before she can reply, he tells her the answer: “So’s, I can watch you when you walk away.”

This casual display of sexual harassment goes unremarked and unexamined for the rest of the movie, which is not surprising considering the context of the plot. What is a surprise is that Rose the Waitress, who utters not one word, is only one of two prominently shown Native Hawaiian women throughout the film. Yes, *From Here to Eternity*, a film set in Hawai‘i, has only one named character who appears to be Kanaka ‘Ōiwi and a handful of others who appear as mere background characters. Everyone else, from the main cast to the minor characters to the background ensemble, is primarily Caucasian. One may question, then, why bring the subject up if there is no exotic native girl to gawk at during the runtime of *From Here to Eternity*? The answer is complicated, involves more facets than what the viewer sees on the screen, and begins much earlier than when the film takes place. We must return to when European and American explorers first came across the Pacific Islands and engaged with the native inhabitants. It was there, in the first few moments of the meeting, that this saga began.

Picturesque Polynesians

When the rest of the world finally recognized the Pacific Islands, there came the question of establishing borders amongst the islands and what names to give the many different islands. While the most straightforward answer would have been to ask the native people what they called themselves and how they addressed each other, the people of Europe and America decided to take the more challenging road by taking matters into their own hands. Thus, the Pacific was

divided into three quadrants: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. The term was first coined in 1756 by the French scholar Charles de Brosses, who originally applied it to all the islands in the Pacific¹¹⁸ but was not used as an official definition until 1831 when French explorer Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville¹¹⁹ offered them up as terms to fit with his own theory on the Pacific. Dumont d'Urville argued that two races occupied the many islands, and he based these claims on the physical attributes of the people and their cultures.

Dumont d'Urville argued that the first race was average height with a standard body form and well-proportioned limbs. This race had a 'coppery' complexion, straight to wavy hair, and had formed nations on their islands with political structures like monarchies. The second race had darker complexions, almost black, with curly to frizzy hair. Dumont d'Urville called their facial features ugly; their body forms frail and small with disproportionate limbs. He further claimed their cultures as primitive and barbaric, with small tribes that marked them as inferior.¹²⁰ His conclusion from these observations was that the islands occupied by the first race should be categorized as Polynesia, Micronesia, and Malaysia, while the second race was from Melanesia, Australia, and Papua New Guinea. But more significant was that Dumont d'Urville declared that the first race was the superior one between the two for they had a lighter skin tone and facial features that were somewhat similar to that of Caucasians.¹²¹ This distinction further encouraged

¹¹⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Charles de Brosses," accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-de-Brosses>.

¹¹⁹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville," accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jules-Sebastien-Cesar-Dumont-dUrville>.

¹²⁰ Serge Tcherkézoff, "A Long and Unfortunate Voyage towards the 'Invention' of the Melanesia/Polynesia Distinction 1595–1832," *The Journal of Pacific History* 38, no.02 (September 2003): 175–196, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169638>.

¹²¹ Tcherkézoff, "A Long and Unfortunate Voyage," 186.

the existing impressions of Polynesians and, therefore, Native Hawaiians formed following the first interactions between Europeans and Americans and Kānaka ʻŌiwi.

It is known that when explorers first came across the Pacific Islands, they were mesmerized not only by the islands, but by the islanders themselves. Captain Cook described Native Hawaiians somewhat positively, describing them as being of middling stature, firmly made with features that were open and good-natured. He was impressed with their swimming prowess, complimenting them as vigorous and active swimmers. He noted that they were constantly diving under canoes, swimming to others at a great distance. Even the women, with infants at their breast, could jump overboard and swim to the shore without endangering their little ones while the surf was high and dangerous. He also noted how eager the women were to engage in sex with his crew, though this is only his interpretation of the situation. Other theories believe that native women were interested in exchanging sex for British goods or obtaining the mana or power of the foreign men. Regardless of the motivations behind the women, it is known that Cook dubbed them as lustful and wanton women, a stigma that would stick with them forevermore.

Other examples of interpretations of native people are art pieces that tread between realism and romanticism. As noted by Bernard Smith, many illustrations took one of two directions: either they based their art on empirical observations of geography, physiognomy, nature, and material culture, or they created pieces with a romanticized, artistic presentation in mind. Yet even when made with scientific intent, there was still a measure of stylistic language

to their work due to their academic training¹²² in art. An example of these differences can be found in the works of Sydney Parkinson and John Webber. Sydney Parkinson was one of the natural history draftsmen hired by Joseph Banks to accompany Captain Cook on his first voyage through the Pacific. He had been tasked to provide a close-up, accurate botanical and zoological records and portraits of what they saw in the Pacific. His initial attempts to draw the indigenous peoples were hesitant and uncertain, but he soon developed a style that matched his intentions for scientific study. He showed this in his portrait of the Māori Chief Otegoowgoow, using a realistic perspective to paint the man's tattoos, jewelry, hairstyle, and clothing. He even included small details in his work, such as the carving on his fish-tooth necklace and the bell-shaped ear ornaments. The result was a scientific and unbiased painting of Chief Otegoowgoow.¹²³

But on the other side of the spectrum, artists like John Webber embraced the romanticism of the islands in his artwork. Webber, a professional draftsman who sailed with Captain Cook on his third voyage into the Pacific, was trained in the classical academic art tradition. He showed his skills best as an artist in his renditions of the native people, with one of the best examples being Poedua, the daughter of Orio, the chief of Ra'īātea of the Society Islands. His depiction of Poedua is both the real and the ideal version of her as he seems to want to present her as she is but still cannot help but sprinkle in his own impressions and biases. Webber's goal was to showcase a woman who was a mix of the Biblical Eve and a Grecian goddess, as that was how

¹²² Patricia Johnston, "Advertising Paradise: Hawaii in art, anthropology and commercial photography," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, ed. Eleanor Hight and Gary Sampson (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 193.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

he viewed the native women he came across. The overall painting and its impression can be summed up best in the following quote:

Poedua looks directly at the viewer, suggesting her self-awareness as a member of the indigenous elite and perhaps acknowledging her role here as spectacle for the Western viewer. The subtle tattooed patterns on her arms and hands indicate specific cultural difference, while the jasmine flowers adorning her hair, the large plantain at the left, and her feather fan provide a more general sense of tropical place. The verdant landscape and softly modulated sky are even more generic markers of nature. To a European viewer, the enclosure of the “precivilized” woman in nature suggested idyllic Eden. In this heavenly paradise the artist poses Poedua in the manner of an antique statue, with subtle contrapposto and a graceful disposition of her arms. He sexualizes her through the depiction of her bare breasts, but such representation speaks equally to European ideals of both the primitive and the fashionable – and to both romantic and neoclassical art. The high empire waistline of Poedua’s drape and her bare breasts parallel the formula that Webber’s countryman Henry Fuseli utilized for the central female figure in a number of his highly charged romantic history paintings of the 1780s and 1790s. In Fuseli’s hands this iconography could be developed to suggest a range of genres, from the theatrical to the erotic. The manner of dress and pose also evoke contemporary neoclassical Europe, where a woman of aristocratic status such as Pauline Borghese commissioned the renowned Italian sculptor Antonio Canova to create her bare-breasted portrait sculpture

in the form of Venus. Webber's exotic Poedua thus becomes familiarized as both Eve and classical goddess.¹²⁴

Further focus on the bodies of Kānaka ʻŌiwi followed with the introduction of photography to the islands. From the aliʻi to the makaʻāinana,¹²⁵ countless photos exist of Kānaka ʻŌiwi living their lives. Even more so following the illegal overthrow of the monarchy in 1893 as a campaign was undertaken to persuade the American public to support the annexation of the islands by promoting photographically illustrated books and articles.¹²⁶ Within these books and articles were photographs of Native Hawaiians, passive and exotic in their beauty and bearings.¹²⁷ Hawaiian women wearing lei were posed, gazing upward as if anticipating salvation. Hawaiian men wearing only a malo are framed spearfishing. Portraits of children dressed in Western clothes represented the assimilation of Native Hawaiians into American culture. The lei sellers were the most frequently reproduced image of Hawaiian women in promotional publications,¹²⁸ as the hula girl would not become a staple of Hawaiian gimmicks until the 1930s. Before it became part of the public perception of Hawaiʻi, it was part of the underground photography rings that peddled indecent photos to interested buyers. The theme of “scantily dressed hula girl” became a big seller in 1908, coinciding with the establishment of permanent

¹²⁴ Ibid., 196.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 224: commoner, populace, people in general; citizen, subject; people that attend the land.

¹²⁶ Lynn Ann Davis, “Photography Illustrated Books About Hawaiʻi, 1854–1945,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 35 (August 2001): 101-140, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03087298.2001.10443231>.

¹²⁷ James L. Steven et al., *Picturesque Hawaii: A Charming Description of her Unique History, Strange People, Exquisite Climate, Wondrous Volcanoes, Luxurious Productions, Beautiful Cities, Corrupt Monarchy, Recent Revolution and Provisional Government* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Publishing Co., 1894), 239.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 104.

military bases on O‘ahu, including a United States Navy base at Pearl Harbor and an Army base at Schofield Barracks.¹²⁹

This fascination for Native Hawaiian men and women only grew as filmmaking presented a new avenue to showcase them. But just as with writing, painting, and photography, filmmaking was only a tool to present a set narrative that followed the creators’ expectations for what they believed were Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. These impressions set the groundwork for what would become the defining features of Native Hawaiians in Hollywood.

Naked Paradise

The stereotypes or themes often associated with Kānaka ‘Ōiwi can be broken into two main groups based on Western ideas of gender: men and women. Transgender people, those of both sexes, and those who claim none, are never acknowledged by Western scholars as a legitimate category and have been largely ignored from being labeled by these themes and thus cannot be included as such. Furthermore, most of the speculation and labeling has been done through the gaze of heterosexual men. This minimizes the amount of scholarly knowledge to only a heterosexual perception of Kanaka men and women. Therefore, it will be the only ‘gaze,’ so to speak, that will be used to scrutinize the following labels, with the first up being native women.

It is a common trope for Pacific Islands like Hawai‘i to be represented as a native woman or referred to with a female pronoun. For Native Hawaiians, this stems from the land being Papahānaumoku, or the earth from which all Kānaka descend from, and is used as a form of

¹²⁹ Ibid., 107.

respect. But the Western view stems from that of colonial conquest, perceiving the islands as unused resources to be claimed before other nations, much like how a man may lay claim to an unmarried young woman. And just as they take pride in securing the young woman's virginity, so do they claim the islands' fertile land. With such a strong emphasis on treating Hawai'i as a woman, it is little surprise that the notion extended to Native Hawaiian women as well.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Kanaka women have always been perceived as being overtly sexual and wanton by European and American explorers. This is due to multiple reasons, the more obvious ones being cultural differences. For example, Kanaka women at this time would dress in fewer clothes and would sometimes leave their upper body bare. European and Americans would perceive this as a form of seduction or lewdness when in reality, it was due to the practicality of the hot climate of Hawai'i. Another reason is due to the view on sex being polar opposites with Native Hawaiian culture regarding sex as a common occurrence for pleasure and power that men and women were free to pursue as they pleased. But Western cultures view sex as sacred, private, and rigidly set, with only married couples engaging in it to be the only acceptable manner. Therefore, when confronted with a culture that treats sex as something ordinary, Western societies naturally condemned them and marked them as heathens obsessed with sex.

Native women, in particular, carried the heavy stigma of being sexual deviants due to the Judeo-Christian beliefs that women were naturally more inclined to sin and lust. A final reason for the Western interest in Native women can also be chalked up to the fetishization of women of color, which is a common theme for indigenous women, African women, Asian women, and many others. Native Hawaiian women, in particular, fulfill the fantasy of the hula girl with her grass skirt, coconut bra, and flowers in her hair; she has become so intertwined with the notion of

Hawai‘i that one cannot mention it without thinking of the other. In many ways, the hula girl image has become a signifier for Hawai‘i¹³⁰ and the idea of paradise and romance in the South Seas. Some examples of the fetishization of native women can be found in the films *The White Flower*, *Aloha*, and *Bird of Paradise*¹³¹.

The White Flower and *Aloha* are romantic dramas with plots based around a woman, usually one who is mixed with a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, falling in love with a Caucasian man against the wishes of her family or his. However, it is essential to note that none of these films use women who are Kānaka ‘Ōiwi as the leading actress. This is partly due to Hay’s Code banning any miscegenation amongst their actors, even if only in fiction, which restricted directors to using only actors of the same ethnicity. But even after the code changed to allow it, Native Hawaiian women are still overlooked as potential actors. They are still played by white women, as seen in the 2015 film *Aloha*¹³² where the mixed Kanaka ‘Ōiwi character, Allison Ng, was played by the full Caucasian actress Emma Stone.¹³³

But as mentioned, these movies shared the same plotline revolving around a native woman falling in love with a Caucasian man and the conflicts that follow. For example, *The White Flower* has a very basic plotline revolving around a mixed woman named Konia

¹³⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹³¹ *Bird of Paradise*, directed by King Vidor (RKO Radio Pictures, 1932), 1:20:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0022689/>.

¹³² *Aloha*, directed by Cameron Crowe (Sony Pictures Releasing, 2015), 1:45:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/2084543/aloha#overview>.

¹³³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Whitewash (transitive verb): to alter (something) in a way that favors, features, or caters to white people; to portray (the past) in a way that increases the prominence, relevance, or impact of white people and minimizes or misrepresents that of nonwhite people; to alter (an original story) by casting a white performer in a role based on a nonwhite person or fictional character,” accessed June 11, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whitewash>.

Markham, who is told by a fortuneteller that the man who presents her with a perfect white flower will be her true love. Konia believes this and later falls in love with Bob Rutherford, who offers her a gardenia at a banquet. But Bob is engaged to another woman, Ethel Granville, and refuses to break the engagement even as his feelings for Konia grow. Another man, a Kanaka named David Panuahi, is also in love with Konia and, out of jealousy, tells her to ask a kahuna to put a death curse on Ethel. The jealous Konia does so but grows remorseful as she sees Bob's devotion to his dying fiancée and asks the kahuna to remove the curse and save Ethel. She then leaves to jump into a volcano when Bob appears and stops her, explaining that Ethel broke off their engagement and professes his love for her. The film then ends with Konia and Bob together and happily in love.

The story of *Aloha* is similar to *The White Flower* in that it features a mixed native woman, Ilanu, falling in love with an American man named Jimmy Bradford, and no one wants them to be together. But whereas *The White Flower* is a relatively straightforward heterosexual love story on a beach, *Aloha* is much darker because it frames miscegenation as a mistake that will always end badly. The plot follows a mixed woman, Ilanu, who is in love with American Jimmy Bradford, who has been on the island for nearly a year overseeing his father's business. Her grandfather, the village chief, wishes for her to marry another native man, Kahea, and warns her to stay away from Jimmy by reminding her that her mother only suffered when she married a white man and was driven to suicide by jumping into the volcano. But Ilanu disregards his warnings and continues to pursue Jimmy, who wants nothing more than to return to his old life in San Francisco, where his sweetheart Elaine Marvin waits. Another American man, Old Ben, also warns Jimmy not to get involved with a native girl by pointing to his six mixed children and quoting *The White Man's Burden* by Rudyard Kipling. Jimmy ignores the warning, though, and

eventually does fall for Ilanu, who is, in turn, banished from her home and island. They then marry, and Jimmy brings Ilanu back to San Francisco. During a party in Jimmy's honor, Jimmy's sister Winnie gets Ilanu to do an island dance, which many guests find vulgar and offensive. Included in these guests are some of the investors who threaten to pull their funding. Jimmy's father, Bradford, orders him to send Ilanu away and get the marriage annulled, but Jimmy refuses and leaves with Ilanu for the islands. Jimmy works in a stock room, and he and Ilanu live in poverty, which strains their relationship. One day Elaine visits and tells him that his father is gravely ill, so Jimmy returns home and lets his dying father think he has left Ilanu in order to take over the family business.

Three years later Ilanu and Jimmy have a son, Junior, and they live together with Winnie. However, tension continues to grow amongst them all, and to calm things down, Jimmy takes them all back to the islands on a vacation cruise. While on the ship, Winnie gets Ilanu drunk, and Junior, trying to wake his mother, falls into the ocean and is rescued by Elaine. Upset by the incident, Jimmy forbids Ilanu to be around Junior and leaves him in the care of Elaine. Ilanu then overhears some guests chatting about how she has ruined Junior's life, and as the ship nears her home island, she sees the bubbling volcano and cries. She kisses Junior through the glass that separates them, then rows to the volcano. Jimmy, whom Elaine has persuaded to apologize to Ilanu, sees her in the boat and hears Kahea sing "Aloha 'Oe."¹³⁴ Kahea explains that the song means farewell and that Ilanu is going to join her mother. Jimmy chases after Ilanu in a motorboat but is too late and can only watch as she jumps into the volcano. On the ship, Junior

¹³⁴ Lili'uokalani. *Aloha 'Oe*. Honolulu, Hawai'i: 1878. <https://digitalarchives.hawaii.gov/item/ark:70111/0bwc>.

asks Elaine for his mother, who holds him and cries, while Jimmy stands on the beach, heartbroken.

Aloha is, clearly, very different from *The White Flower*. While it follows the native woman and Caucasian man's love story again, it frames the entire relationship as wrong and unacceptable, with the outcome being a tragedy. It establishes this theme through multiple means, one being that it makes examples of other miscegenation relationships in the movie's first act. The first one is Old Ben, a white man who married a native woman and had six children with her, whom he calls 'half-caste.' He laments to Jimmy that his choice to stay and raise a family with a native woman was foolish as it ruined his life and created mixed children who would never fit in anywhere. He even goes so far as to quote *The White Man's Burden* by Rudyard Kipling, a poem that supports imperialism as being the duty of white men and that he should have done as such instead of staying on the island and marrying a native woman. The second example used is Ilanu's mother, a native woman who fell in love with a white sailor who eventually left her behind, pregnant with Ilanu. She grew so distraught by his leaving that she jumped into a volcano, ending her life and leaving the young Ilanu behind. These two examples show the future outcome of Ilanu and Jimmy's relationship, which comes true at the film's end when Ilanu repeats her mother's suicide.

Another way *Aloha* perpetuates this theme is by comparing Ilanu to Elaine, Jimmy's previous sweetheart, who is Caucasian and from a wealthy family. Throughout the film's second and third halves, we see that Elaine is cultured, kind, and intelligent, matching Jimmy as a partner. In contrast, Ilanu is portrayed as uneducated, wild, and vulgar with her 'heathen native dancing' that she performs at the party. Elaine is also established as a better mother figure than Ilanu, being attentive to Junior at all times, and even saving his life when he falls into the sea

while Ilanu was passed out from drinking alcohol. Even at the end, when Junior asks for his mother, he is quickly consoled and distracted by Elaine's presence, implying that she will likely be his new mother figure. This constant comparison between the two women makes Elaine look to be the better partner for Jimmy, and the better choice of a mother for Junior over Ilanu, implying that for a Caucasian man like Jimmy, the best choice would always be the Caucasian Elaine.

Furthermore, the movie implies that Ilanu and Jimmy's relationship is wrong through the constant disapproval from the people around them. Both families disapprove of them being together and warn that nothing good would come from them marrying each other. Ilanu's grandfather and Bradford even go so far as to disown the couple, and Jimmy even has to lie to his dying father in order to inherit the family business. Even strangers express their disapproval which is ultimately what pushes Ilanu to suicide as she concludes that she has cursed her son to a difficult life where he will never belong and will continue to be a burden to him and Jimmy both. Ultimately, the plot establishes that people should marry within their ethnicities because doing otherwise will bring only trouble and disaster for all involved. This was done deliberately to meet the beliefs of the time that dictated that racial mixing was wrong and deserved only ridicule. Conclusively, *Aloha* is a film that implies that while native women are lovely to view and engage with, they should not be taken seriously as life partners or mothers.

This idea is repeated in *Bird of Paradise*, which features Mexican actress Dolores del Río as a young native woman named Luana who falls in love with a Caucasian man and pays for it by leaping to her death in a volcano. The story follows Johnny Baker, a sailor aboard a yacht traveling the Pacific Ocean, who comes across an island with friendly natives. He is saved from a shark by one of them, Luana, the island chief's daughter, and is invited to stay with them.

Johnny, infatuated with Luana, decides to spend a few weeks on her island and bids his shipmates goodbye as they leave to continue their voyage while promising to return for him. But although Johnny and Luana fall in love, Johnny is repeatedly warned not to pursue her as she is forbidden to be touched by any man as she has been promised to a neighboring native prince. When they are finally caught kissing, Luana is forced back to her village by her angry father and the tribe's medicine man, while Johnny is banished and warned never to return. A sympathetic native woman informs Johnny when Luana's wedding is about to take place. He follows the wedding party and snatches Luana during the pre-nuptial dancing, and carries her off to another island. On their secluded island, which they dub *Paradise*, Johnny and Luana live in romantic bliss for several weeks, with Johnny dreaming of taking Luana to San Francisco to live together. But Luana begins to worry about the curse of the volcano named Pele, which stipulates that when Pele erupts, she must be sacrificed to calm it. And as she fears, Pele begins to erupt, and her people, led by the medicine man, come to take Luana back to be sacrificed. Johnny tries to protect her but is pierced with a poison arrow and ends up tied to a stake with Luana at the mouth of the bubbling volcano. But before they can be sacrificed, Johnny's shipmates rescue them and take them back to the ship, where Johnny is examined and predicted to die from the poison arrow. Luana, believing her sacrifice will save Johnny and her tribe from the erupting volcano, leaves the boat with her people and gives herself to the volcano.

Much like *Aloha*, *Bird of Paradise* is a film where the relationship between Luana and Johnny is framed as doomed due to their racial differences. Both Johnny's friends and Luana's father warned him time and time again, stressing that no happiness would come from their union due to their racial differences. This warning is further strengthened by the volcano erupting, signaling that Luana has upset the balance of nature with her relationship with Johnny and must

pay for it with her life. The other sailors even refer to Rudyard Kipling's quote *The White Man's Burden* again, lamenting that the relationship was doomed from the start due to their difference in race. Ultimately, *Bird of Paradise* restates the same message of *Aloha* that miscegenation is wrong and such relationships will only end badly.

Furthermore, all three films have scenes that showcase the bodies of the three leading actresses in provocative and sexual manners. In *The White Flower*, Konia is shown in a bathing suit as she surfs and lounges on the beach, wears a grass skirt and floral-patterned bandeau when she dances, and adorns a skirt and bandeau made up of fabric and canvas when attending parties. In *Aloha*, Ilanu wears a sarong or grass skirt and bandeau on the island and dresses with a short hemline and lowcut neckline on the continent. But *Bird of Paradise* is the most graphic as Luana is shown in the initial opening floating belly-up in the water and later swimming and diving in the ocean in full nudity. She performs topless with only lei to cover her breasts as she and other native women put on what is implied to be hula but looks more like seizures. In a later scene, Luana is also forcibly held down by Johnny to be kissed in a manner that looks like an assault, yet it is implied to be romantic due to the framing of the scene. The camera also highlights her face and body, and the visiting Caucasian men comment on her sensuality and exotic beauty. But the most apparent similarity between the three films is that the lead actress performs an exaggerated and sexualized form of hula at some point in the movie. Each time she does, the romantic interest and all the men in the audience are captivated by it. This frames both hula and the Kānaka 'Ōiwi performing it as a South Sea succubus who seeks only sex with anyone who comes across her.

The second stereotype associated with Native Hawaiian women is the trope of innocence or naivety. Since first contact with foreigners, there has been an impression that Native

Hawaiians are not as intelligent as their paler counterparts due to the differences in culture and societies. While this trait tends to be used in a derogatory fashion for Native Hawaiian men, for women, it is seen as a sweet and endearing trait to the heterosexual man. And while this theme may not seem very degrading at first appearance, it is quite demeaning to treat a grown woman as a child simply due to her ethnicity and sex. Again, examples of this trope at play can be found in *Bird of Paradise*, as Johnny spends most of the first half of the movie cooing at Luana and nodding patronizingly as she speaks to him in her ‘native’ language. He never tries to communicate with her or attempt to understand her language and waits for her to learn English for him. Even when she saves him from nearly being killed by a shark, he merely smiles at her, calls her sweetheart, and then rests his chin on his hand as he listens to her excitedly recite the story. There is never any attempt to treat her as intelligent or capable, merely as innocent and childlike, with no awareness of what the world is like.

This theme is also repeated in the films *Hawaii Calls* and *Blue Hawaii* with the characters Hina and Maile. Hina is a Hawaiian woman and the older sister of Pua, the best friend, and sidekick of the main character, Billy Coulter, who helps Pua and Billy escape from the police. While a kind and good-intentioned woman, she is nonetheless presented as naïve in her interactions with the other characters. Maile is Chad’s girlfriend in *Blue Hawaii*, is half Hawaiian and half French, and has a hot temper and jealous streak concerning Chad. But she is also naïve and gullible as she repeatedly falls for Chad’s words, goes along with his schemes without question, and even dismisses his flirting and kissing other women in front of her. Furthermore, these two themes—sexualization and naivety—are not only forced upon Native Hawaiian women but on Native Hawaiian men too, but they are used very differently.

Native Hawaiian men have their own set of degrading caricatures to follow. Their bodies are scrutinized and labeled as barbaric due to appearance, style of dress and adornments, and mannerisms. This stereotype dictates that they are savage brutes who are dangerous and foolish, and uses Native Hawaiian culture to support these claims. This originates from Native Hawaiian culture and history, where wars and battles were waged for power, land, resources, personal vendettas, and many other reasons. Even Kamehameha I, who was the most well-respected and admired ali'i by the other nations, was still seen as lesser due to his appearance and well-earned reputation as a warrior, as quoted in the following:

KAMEHAMEHA THE GREAT. It is doubtful, all things considered, whether any other savage race ever produced a man of such prowess in war, and of such statesmanship and rare judgment in the art of government in time of peace. Kamehameha was the last of those ancient feudal chiefs who, by reason of physical and intellectual superiority, were born to lead their people.¹³⁵

Some film examples showcasing Native Hawaiian men as violent savages can be found in the likes of *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*¹³⁶ and *Aloma of the South Seas*.¹³⁷ The first example, *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, is a comedy and adventure piece where a wealthy man bets his socialite friends that he can recreate civilization on a deserted island in the Pacific and turn it into a tropical version of New York. The lead, Steve Drexel, voluntarily strands himself on the island

¹³⁵ James L. Steven et al., "Picturesque Hawaii," 32.

¹³⁶ *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, directed by A. Edward Sutherland (United Artists, 1932), 1:16:01, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0023243/>.

¹³⁷ *Aloma of the South Seas*, directed by Alfred Santell (Paramount Pictures, Inc., 1941), 1:17:01, <https://prod-www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/67141/aloma-of-the-south-seas#overview>.

with his dog and gets to work building his city, befriending some of the “native” wildlife, such as a monkey, parrot, and a wild goat that is captured in one of his traps. He attempts to capture one of the natives but fails as he escapes. Eventually, he encounters a native woman who gets caught in one of his traps while fleeing from her betrothed from one of the nearby islands. Steve names her Saturday and begins to teach her English to communicate better. Throughout the rest of the film, they grow closer in an obvious romantic sense but never actually admit to their relationship. Soon some of the men that Steve bet against trick the natives from a nearby island into attacking his settlement and ruining his progress. The leading character defeats the hostile natives in time for his friends to arrive and see that he has won the wager. But at that moment, another war party of natives arrives and attacks all the men. Steve holds them off while his friends save his animals and run for their yacht. After a harrowing chase, he joins them in the pursuit, and together with Saturday, they board the boat and escape. The movie ends with Steve taking Saturday back to New York, where she performs to an appreciative crowd in the Ziegfeld Follies.

Mr. Robinson Crusoe is a movie loosely based on the novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe in 1719. The novel follows a young man named Robinson Crusoe who ends up shipwrecked on an uninhabited island off the Venezuelan coast and is forced to adapt to it to survive. The movie uses this plot point and demonstrates how the lead character, Steve Drexel, can build up a society just like the primitive natives of the Pacific, only much quicker and better. Ignoring this inaccurate and false narrative that a lone stranger could master an entire ecosystem on his own in a short amount of time, the story showcases the native men as merely ignorant brutes who are quick to act with violence.¹³⁸ They are so vicious and dangerous that even a native

¹³⁸ Ibid., 56:20 to 1:01:55.

woman—the romantic interest, Saturday—chooses to flee to another island¹³⁹ rather than marry one of them. Furthermore, they are never given any redeeming qualities or even a personality and are framed merely as ferocious savages. While the ignorant and violent natives were likely cast this way to make the leading man look better, it is still a damaging and demeaning trope to cast on Pacific Islanders like Native Hawaiian men.¹⁴⁰

The second example is the film *Aloma of the South Seas*, a story of a Pacific Islander prince named Tanoa, who is sent to the United States under the care of his guardian, Corky, to be educated as he will one day take the throne. He is engaged to another native girl named Aloma, who falls in love with Tanoa's best friend, Revo, while he is away. Fifteen years later, Tanoa returns to take over the throne after his father's death but finds it difficult to adjust to the island after living in America for so long. He does, though, come to appreciate the island's natural beauty and the locals' easy lifestyle. A high priest tries to arrange for Tanoa and Aloma to meet, but both refuse as neither wishes to be in an arranged marriage to a stranger. Aloma escapes from her guardian, Tarusa, on the proposed meeting day and swims at a lagoon while Tanoa escapes to go fishing at the same place. There they meet each other and, after their introductions, pretend they are on their first date and fall in love. This makes Revo, who is also in love with Aloma and jealous of Tanoa, extraordinarily jealous and dangerous.

Revo demonstrates his deep hatred for Tanoa by killing a goatherd without reason, which frightens Aloma into trying to protect Tanoa by telling him she is in love with Revo. Another woman named Kari, also in love with Revo, reveals the truth to Tanoa, who advises her to take

¹³⁹ Ibid., 25:51 to 26:51.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1:01:55 to 1:07:07.

Revo from the island or he will be executed. Revo refuses to leave and challenges Tanoa early the next morning to a fight that Tanoa ends up winning. He allows Kari to take Revo onto a boat, and the two sail off together. But as Kari proclaims her love for Revo, he kills her and heads back to the island. Meanwhile, the island is celebrating as it is Tanoa and Aloma's wedding day, but Corky learns of Revo's return. After the ceremony, Revo kills the high priest and then begins to strafe the gathered guests with a machine gun. Corky returns fire with a handgun as he covers for Tanoa, who climbs a high cliff to reach Revo to stop him. At the same time, the island volcano violently erupts, which the islanders interpret as their god's wrath. Revo dies in a rockslide while Tanoa, Aloma, Corky, and others escape the hot lava flow. Finally, the eruption subsides, and although there has been destruction, the islanders are safe, and Tanoa and Aloma are together.

Aloma of the South Seas is a relatively straightforward story of the romantic-drama genre, but it showcases the dangerous barbarian trope through Revo. His character acts as a foil to Tanoa, who is framed as the better man because he was raised in the United States, whereas Revo grew up on the island. Tanoa is framed as educated and civilized, seeking to end disputes with words but having no trouble using violence if pushed. In contrast is Revo, who is presented as ignorant and primitive due to his traditional upbringing and is quick to use violence to get his way. His choice to engage in violence, whereas Tanoa chooses peace, is depicted as wrong and immoral, but not surprising as he was not raised as Tanoa was in the Western world.

The second trope associated with Native Hawaiian men is the buffoon or jester image. This type of stereotype usually designates a Native man as a friend or lackey who follows the

hero around for the duration of the movie and provides comedy relief with his idiocy.¹⁴¹ He is often portrayed as ignorant and unintelligent and is usually shorter than the male lead, often obese or overweight¹⁴² in some manner in comparison with the hero. These attributes are always displayed as negative traits and used for comedy at the cost of humiliating the character.

Furthermore, he also always speaks in heavy Hawai‘i Creole¹⁴³ but in a way that is derogatory of the existing languages¹⁴⁴ and incorrect. This mocking of language is inherently exaggerated and performative since it is not a genuine attempt to learn the language but relies on familiar linguistic patterns that non-natives might recognize. By having the character speak this way, the mocking imitation supports the negative stereotypes associated with the language speakers being mocked. An example of these stereotypes playing out can be seen in *50 First Dates*¹⁴⁵ and *Lt. Robin Crusoe, U.S.N.*¹⁴⁶. *50 First Dates* is essential to note as it features characters with heavy Hawai‘i Creole accents who exist as comedy acts. For example, the Native Hawaiian character, Ula, played by Robert Schneider, is used as the comic relief throughout the movie, with most of his comedy relying on his accent and mannerisms when speaking.

¹⁴¹ Colby Miyose et al., “Eh... You Hawaiian? Examining Hawaii Five-0’s ‘Hawaiian,’” *Prism* 15, no.01 (December 2019): 68, <https://www.prisjournal.org/uploads/1/2/5/6/125661607/v15-no1-a5.pdf>.

¹⁴² Ida Yoshinaga, “Disney’s Moana, the Colonial Screenplay, and Indigenous Labor Extraction in Hollywood Fantasy Films,” *Narrative Culture* 06, no.02 (September 2019): 190, <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/narrative/vol6/iss2/6/>.

¹⁴³ Ermile Hargrove et al., “Hawai‘i Creole,” *Language Varieties*, University of Hawai‘i, June 11, 2022, <https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/hce.html#top-hce>.

¹⁴⁴ Christina Higgins et al., “Styling Hawai‘i in Haole wood: White protagonists on a voyage of self discovery,” *Multilingua* 31, no.02 (January 2012): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2012-0009>.

¹⁴⁵ *50 First Dates*, directed by Peter Segal (Sony Pictures Releasing, 2004), 1:31:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/454514/50-first-dates#overview>.

¹⁴⁶ *Lt. Robin Crusoe, U.S.N.*, directed by Byron Paul (Walt Disney Productions, 1966), 1:50:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/81319/lt-robin-crusoe-u-s-n#overview>.

The second film, *Lt. Robin Crusoe, U.S.N.*, is a family-friendly comedy created by Walt Disney Productions in 1966. The storyline is similar to that of *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* as it too is loosely based on the novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. The plot follows Navy Lieutenant Robin "Rob" Crusoe, a pilot performing a routine flying mission when an emergency forces him to parachute into the Pacific. Crusoe drifts on the ocean in an emergency life raft for several days and nights until landing on an island. He builds a shelter for himself, fashions new clothing out of available materials, and begins to scout the island, discovering an abandoned Japanese submarine from World War II. Scouring the submarine, Crusoe also discovers a NASA chimpanzee astronaut named Floyd according to his nametag. Together, the two make life more comfortable by building everything from a pagoda-style bamboo hut to a golf course.

Soon after, they are joined by a native girl whom Robin nicknames Wednesday. She explains that due to her unwillingness to marry a man picked by her father, the chieftain named Tanamashuhi, he now plans to sacrifice her and her sisters to Kaboona, a massive stone effigy on the island. Tanamashuhi claims to be able to communicate with the stone and claims that he must sacrifice his daughters to appease it or the island volcano will erupt and consume them all. Soon, Robin and Wednesday are joined by the other women from the island, all of whom dote on Robin without ever explaining why they are attracted to him. Not far behind them, Tanamashuhi arrives with his warriors, and Robin uses paraphernalia from the submarine to combat him, culminating in the destruction of the Kaboona statue. Finally, Tanamashuhi is forced to make peace with Robin, and the women all celebrate with him over their victory. But when he learns that dancing with Wednesday is interpreted as a marriage proposal, he is forced to make it known that he does not wish to marry her and then flees to avoid her wrath. Pursued by the mob of native women, he is spotted by a U.S. Navy helicopter, and he and Floyd escape onto it and

leave Wednesday and her people behind. Large crowds turn out for their arrival on an aircraft carrier deck, but Robin ends up being ignored as Floyd steals all the attention.

Lt. Robin Crusoe, U.S.N. is a comedy and family-oriented film, so the focus is on making the audience laugh. While a majority of the humor stems from the lead character, Robin, who is played by actor and comedian Dick Van Dyke, other sources are the native men who come with Tanamashuhi. They are portrayed as clumsy, unintelligent, uncivilized, and easily outmaneuvered by Robin and the women. This bumbling fool act is mainly used for comedy, but this does not mean it is not belittling native men. Furthermore, they are implied to be easily manipulated by Tanamashuhi and the Kaboona statue, which paints them as gullible and foolish. They are also inferred to be incompetent at doing their tasks, such as keeping Wednesday from running away and again during the assault on Robin and his village. Ultimately, *Lt. Robin Crusoe, U.S.N.*, consistently reaffirms Polynesian men as idiotic, inept, and crude.

As to stereotypes and themes that can be applied to both native men and women, they include the classic noble savage¹⁴⁷ trope and the benevolent image trope. First, the noble savage is a classic literary character of indigenous blood meant to embody the idealized concept of an uncivilized man who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. While it has appeared in many works of fiction and philosophy, the stereotype has been chiefly employed in early anthropological works focused on Native Americans, who are fetishized for their traditional way of life.

The second stereotype is the benevolent image which takes the hospitable and friendly customs of Native Hawaiian culture and turns it into a personality trait that all Kānaka ‘Ōiwi

¹⁴⁷ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (California: University of California Press, 2001), 02.

possess which makes naturally inclined to be more friendly, warm, and generous to visitors than others. Unfortunately, this trope has become a gimmick commonly used by the tourist industry, which advertises the concept of the aloha spirit as if it is a commodity that can be bought and sold. As Haunani-Kay Trask explains so eloquently: “Aloha and its kindred aloha spirit were fundamental marketing ploys in tourist advertisements of Hawai‘i in the islands and abroad in the 1930s.”¹⁴⁸ Some examples of this trope at work can be found in films like *Waikiki Wedding* and *Blue Hawaii*. In *Waikiki Wedding*, the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi eagerly help out the main characters in everything from singing backup for Tony when he serenades Georgia to creating and acting out an entire village and romantic adventure. *Blue Hawaii* is the same, with the cast of natives acting as backup singers to Chad, performing hula, and generally being available to help whenever Chad or Maile need them.

A final stereotype is not so much a stereotype as it is a common theme concerning Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, which is the whitewashing of native people in films. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this trend was started due to the Hays Code condemning any interracial relationship onscreen, fictional or real, and racism against people of color. It continues today due to multiple factors, such as traditions, expecting white actors to bring in more money, and ongoing racism. Some examples of present-day whitewashing can be found in the previously mentioned film *Aloha* and *The Descendants*¹⁴⁹ (2011), which features foreign actors playing characters meant to be Native Hawaiian rather than employing real actors who are Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. Yet, for all the stereotypes and tropes that Native Hawaiians are boxed into, the most common theme in films is

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 162.

¹⁴⁹ *The Descendants*, directed by Alexander Payne (Ad Hominem Enterprises, 2011), 1:55:01. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1033575/>.

the complete erasure of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi in Hollywood movies.¹⁵⁰ Whether the film is based on Hawai‘i or uses the islands as a setting, the native people are almost always excluded from being shown or mentioned in the movie. If they are brought up at any point, then the film will omit, trivialize, or condemn Kānaka ‘Ōiwi in some manner or another. *From Here to Eternity* is no different in this regard, as the movie has gone to great lengths to downplay the existence of Native Hawaiians in every way possible during the length of the film.

The Hawaiian Flowers in Eternity

As stated, *From Here to Eternity* has very few scenes of actual Kanaka ‘Ōiwi characters that appear on the screen. When they do appear, the most prominent role they play is as background characters who act as support to the main cast. But even as background characters and extras, there are very few natives to spot in the crowds of Caucasian men in uniforms and Aloha shirts. When they are spotted, they are only within the frame for a short while before disappearing from view. Therefore, there are only two scenes that will be examined from the movie as they show characters who are coded to appear Native Hawaiian. The first is Prewitt’s date with Lorene at the Kalakaua Inn and the second is the bar scene described at the beginning of this chapter. The third and last scene to be examined will be Prewitt’s first visit to the New Congress Club to compare how the white background characters are treated compared to the other two scenes. As with the first chapter, this one shall be analyzed using the tools of narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing.

¹⁵⁰ Pono Sukanuma, “Talking Stories: An Analysis of Haolewood’s Attempts to Tell Hawaii’s Stories Through Movie Trailers” (Thesis for Undergraduate Honors Capstone Projects, Utah State University, 2018), 27, <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/honors/448>.

The first scene is at the Kalakaua Inn,¹⁵¹ where Prewitt meets his love interest, Lorene, for their first date. While there, they speak about their pasts and grow closer before being interrupted by a drunk Maggio. He entertains the couple with his antics and then the guests crowded around the bar before being dragged away by Prewitt, who, by this point, realized that Maggio skipped out on his night patrol. While this scene is essential as it leads to Maggio getting caught and punished for deserting his post, it also stands out for having one of the extras at the bar implied to be at least part Native Hawaiian due to her darker skin tone, dark curly hair, and the flowers draped in her hair. Therefore, in this scene, we will walk through how she is treated and viewed as a background character.

Looking at this scene with the narrative in mind, the viewer is first focused on Prewitt and Lorene sitting at the bar and speaking about their pasts. It is a profoundly emotional moment that further cements their relationship and ties to each other. They are soon joined by a drunk Maggio, who entertains Prewitt and Lorene, and the rest of the occupants sitting at the bar with his shenanigans. The viewpoint is then focused on him as he stands between two couples at the bar, pretending to gamble and making quips that have Prewitt and Lorene smiling and laughing. While the view remains fixed on Maggio for this duration, the viewer can still see how the two couples box him and how they react to his antics. Both couples are heterosexual and mainly Caucasian, with only one of the women looking to be part Native Hawaiian. The Caucasian couple, sitting to the right, pays Maggio no mind, with the woman wrapped up in whatever it is the man is whispering into her ear. But the mixed couple to the left of Maggio watch him perform and laugh at his jokes before turning back to each other and conversing. However, every

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 1:01:42 to 1:58:05.

few seconds, the woman turns back to look at Maggio, still smiling at him. She does it so often that her companion begins to look annoyed at losing her attention.

By this point, Maggio has stopped with his jokes, so there is no reason for her to keep looking back at him with her bright smile other than the chance that she likes him. Meanwhile, the other woman is still wrapped up with her companion, not bothering to glance at anyone else in the room. As the scene continues and Prewitt realizes that Maggio is in trouble, the viewer can see that the implied Native Hawaiian woman, while still flashing smiles at Maggio, has also started another conversation with another man even as her date stands there with her. Looking over this scene, it is implied through the placement of characters and gestures that the Native Hawaiian woman is interested in Maggio, even with her date at her side. What that interest could mean is ambiguous, but that she has the attention of other men clearly implies something more sexual.

The *mise-en-scène* of the scene adds further details to this possible impression. First, there is the Kalakaua Inn that, despite its name, looks mainly like a Chinese restaurant with paper lanterns, Asian artwork on the walls, wooden furniture, and teapots. Even the waitresses are Asian and dressed in floral patterned *cheongsam* with their dark hair pinned up. Everything is spotless, shiny, and new. The patrons are still mostly Caucasian men in uniform and aloha shirts, but there are also people with mixed ethnicities thrown in. Everyone is dressed formally in floral-themed clothes except Lorene, who wears a plain blouse, and the uniformed soldiers. The two women blanketing Maggio wear dresses cinched-in at the waist with full skirts and squared shoulders with floral print, but the flowers are different, as is the coloring of the dresses. More specifically, the native woman has tropical flower designs and dark coloring, whereas the other woman has a lighter-dyed dress with daisies printed on them. The native woman also has her

dark, curly hair hanging loose and free with flowers behind her left ear, while the other woman has her hair pinned up while wearing a pearl necklace and pearl earrings. These small details may not seem significant to the film's overall plot, but they aid in the ongoing theme of uplifting the white characters and keeping racial barriers in place.

Regarding the cinematography, the camera remains at eye level and focuses on the main characters in a medium shot. The framing of Prewitt and Lorene is at first done with just them but soon switches to include Maggio between them. When Maggio moves further to the center of the bar, he ends up standing between the two couples, while behind him are more background characters. Throughout Maggio's drunken one-man performance, he remains framed by the couples, with the native woman given more notice as she stands at his right with her back facing him and therefore has to turn her whole body to look at him. This makes her frequent looks and bright smiles even more noticeable to the viewer. In contrast, the other couple has the man next to Maggio while he nuzzles the Caucasian woman and whispers to her. She is set in a position where she can see Maggio in a much more obvious way, yet the shot's framing shows us that this is unlikely as she remains staring into her date's eyes, playing the role of a loyal woman to the man before her.

The final aspect, the editing of the scene, creates a smooth transition from the last tense scene of Prewitt arguing with Lorene to a more relaxed one that hits the viewer when the neon Kalakaua Inn sign flashes across the screen. Even throughout Prewitt and Lorene's very personal conversation, there is no urgency or sense of tension until Maggio reveals his screw-up, and Prewitt begins to panic. The pace also remains consistent and does not pick up until, again, Prewitt starts to panic over Maggio leaving his guard post without permission. But the most notable piece of editing is how the camera manages to capture the native woman's face and

reactions to Maggio's antics when in several instances, this should be too difficult to accomplish due to where she is standing. But the editing of different angles allows the audience to see her face along with the men she is speaking to and the several other extra characters, including the second couple. Now, this could be argued to be a mere coincidence as Maggio was standing next to her, but in films, everything is done with a purpose in mind.

The second scene that will be critiqued is the bar scene where all the soldiers gather for drinks. As mentioned, this scene features the only named character who appears part Kanaka 'Ōiwi, Rose. She is a bar waitress and is beautiful with her dark hair, smooth skin, and graceful stride. Though she does not do anything but walk across the bar, all the soldiers take notice and turn to watch her go by with the biggest grins on their faces. Rose, in turn, seems unbothered by the stares, but she also does not look like she enjoys it either. It is, ultimately, a pointless scene that has little to do with the film's overall plot, yet it still exists for a reason. This reason can be determined by examining its narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing.

First off is the narrative aspect of this short scene. As with the rest of the film, the camera is the narrator, and from the very opening, the view is set on Rose as she picks up a tray of drinks from the bar. It follows her as she gracefully walks across the room to Warden's table, drawing all eyes to her figure. The camera captures how all the soldiers turn in their seats and stop mid-conversation to stare at her with smirks and grins that she ignores. Even when she delivers the drinks to Warden and listens to his attempt at flirting, her stony expression never falters. It is implied that she is used to being sexualized by the bar occupants and has come to expect it in some form. It is also important to note that none of the men comment on their fellows' behavior towards Rose. Instead, they share smiles and looks when she passes by, with Warden's companion, Pete, even cackling in delight at Warden's comment to Rose. None of the other staff

at the bar try to stop the soldiers nor even seem to pay any attention to it. Ultimately, the message the viewer receives from this interaction is that it is expected that Rose will be harassed and leered at by the bar patrons. But is this due to her being a Native Hawaiian woman and therefore already labeled as being overtly sexual? Or is it simply because she is a beautiful woman? The *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, and editing answers this question.

Looking at this scene with the *mise-en-scène* in mind, the bar is large and built with bamboo and decorated with palm leaves, Asian artwork on the walls, and dangling industrial lights. The bartender is an older Chinese man who is, once again, dressed in the traditional attire of a *chángshān* and a black round hat. A younger Asian man stands next to the older man dressed in a white collared shirt, thick black glasses, and his dark hair gelled back out of his face. These two men are the only other staff that the viewer sees for a brief few seconds before the view moves to Rose and stays on her. Rose, as described earlier, is dressed in a tight floral-themed dress with a bead necklace, a large white flower in her hair, and black high heels. Rose's appearance is glamorous for her profession, but it is also modified with small details to add to her sexual appeal. First, there is the matter of her dress being tighter than the dresses the other women in the film are wearing and cut to reveal a good portion of her upper back while the sleeves sit nearly off her shoulders. Her beaded necklace looks like it is meant to be shells or something similar and on her wrist is a thick bracelet that could be made of wood. Finally, there is the flower behind her ear that takes up a good portion of her hair. The contrast of the white hibiscus flower against her dark hair draws in the eye at first glance and holds it. Rose is, for all purposes, made up with a tropical taste that distinguishes her from the other women in the film. Even her dress has tropical-themed plants, whereas the other women have plain or floral dresses with plants from outside of Hawai'i. The details of this will be further discussed in the next

scene, where we will look at how the white women of the New Congress Club are treated in comparison. For now, let us move more onto the cinematography of this scene.

The cinematography reinforces the view by keeping the camera's focus on Rose by switching from a medium shot to a medium long shot as it trails behind her. The camera remains at eye level, and while we get a few glimpses of her face when she turns, the viewer is mainly presented with her backside and hips as she walks through the bar. Due to this angle, the viewer can see where she's going, along with all the reactions of the men who watch her walk by. As stated before, they mostly smirk and leer, with some even catcalling her when she passes by. Throughout her walk, Rose is illuminated by soft light and is framed by the sitting soldiers, who all turn in their seats to watch her walk by. The unspoken message of all this is that it is not essential to see Rose's face as it is her body and what the viewers can imagine with it that matters here. The final aspect to examine is the editing of the scene. The most significant edit to this scene is that it was shot in two locations. The first location shows Rose standing at the bar, picking up her tray of drinks, and then walking through the maze of occupied tables. It stops when she reaches the back of the room before picking up again in a new part of the bar that the viewer can interpret as the back of the bar. She continues walking and ends up at Warden's table where she wordlessly delivers the drinks before continuing. The editing for this is reasonably smooth enough that there is no noticeable cut between the two scenes and, more obviously, keeps the sections that feature Rose's body over her face.

The third and final scene to be dissected will be Prewitt's first visit to the New Congress Club,¹⁵² where he meets his love interest for the film, Lorene. The scene starts with Maggio

¹⁵² Ibid., 28:20 to 33:38.

leading Prewitt to a downtown building with a flashing sign above it spelling out *New Congress Club*. Maggio knocks on the front door, where next to it sits a sign that lists all the things allowed at the club and restricts it to members only. A woman in her later years quickly welcomes them, dressed in a dark evening gown with her hair curled and pinned on top of her head. Maggio calls her Mrs. Kipfer and she warmly invites them into a waiting room where a younger woman, Annette, greets them and helps Prewitt sign up for the club. They then move on to the main room packed with men and women dancing, chatting, and drinking, where Maggio quickly sweeps up a young woman into a dance while Annette leads Prewitt around. She introduces him to several other women he shows little interest in until he spots Lorene standing away from the crowd in a long black evening gown. Lorene notices him too, as she sends off a soldier she is speaking to, and the two share a look that shows their mutual interest in each other. This scene is meant to introduce the audience to the second romantic pairing of the film and begin Maggio's own plotline. It also shows the stark differences in how Caucasian women are presented compared to Native Hawaiian women.

Starting with the narrative, this scene is meant to showcase the red-light districts of Hawai'i, but only in a manner that follows the Hays Code. This is why it is called a club, not simply a brothel, and is painted as a high-class place. And while at this gentlemen's club the members are welcomed and encouraged to relax, drink, dance, and enjoy themselves, there is still an undertone to it being a bordello that the viewers can pick up on. The narrative accomplishes this by showing the women as flirty and hanging onto the men who visit and later has a cutaway scene where Lorene leads Prewitt off to a room before changing to another scene. When the view returns to them, they can be seen adjusting their clothes and lighting up their cigarettes, indicating that they had sexual relations. Furthermore, the narrative also uses the New

Congress Club subplot to introduce how normal these types of places are in Hawai‘i that they can openly advertise to the public without fear of repercussions. It implies to the viewer that Hawai‘i, being a place of pleasure, indulges in every form of it.

The *mise-en-scène* further supports this narrative with the design and layout of the club and the presentation of the women working there. From the moment Prewitt and Maggio enter the building, it is evident that this place is seeking to present itself as one of wealth and class. The interior is clean and neat, with rattan furniture and a tropical theme printed in everything from the heavy velvet drapes to the artwork on the walls to the brass chandeliers. All the women, who are all Caucasian, are also dressed in delicate gowns with sparkling jewelry, and their hair and face are made up as if attending an opera or a ball. Even Mrs. Kipfer is dressed in her finest dark evening gown, accessorized by jewel earrings, a black choker, and sparkling bracelets, with her hair curled and pinned on top of her head. These women are also all given names and allowed to speak a line or two, a right not granted to Rose or the other native woman. What is interesting about all these women is that they are sex workers, and the usual connotations that follow this label should be negative and degrading, but instead, the various elements show them as being classy and acceptable to the viewer. This is a stark difference from how the Native Hawaiian women were presented with the implication that, even while working the least respected job available, white women are still inherently better than brown women. The men crowding around the women are all dressed in aloha shirts or the uniform of the army, navy, and others. Unsurprisingly, all the men present are Caucasian.

The cinematography of this scene uses mainly medium and medium close-up shots for the scene’s duration while the camera remains fixed at eye level. This gives the viewer a better look at the faces and expressions of both the primary and the background characters. The camera

even focuses on the faces of several background characters when Prewitt is introduced to some of the women working there. They are given a clear and complete view as they speak their lines, charming the viewer with their bright smiles as they bat their eyes at a disinterested Prewitt. Even the lighting brightens their faces in the best way possible, highlighting their features and making them glow.

The final aspect, the editing of the scene, supports the cinematography further with a consistent pace and continuity for the scene that does not falter. The cut and transitions to different angles and other scenes are smooth and do not distract the viewer from the overall movie. Most importantly, the editing keeps the camera focused mainly on the faces of the women Prewitt meets instead of just their bodies. This is in contrast to how Rose was presented in the previously examined scene, where her body was the main focus over her face. The shot of all the women is also much clearer and more focused with a brighter light that allows the viewer to see them in the best way. None of the other background women, including Rose, are ever given such a clear and positive presentation.

Summative Critique

From the moment of first contact in the eighteenth century to the present day, there exists a sense of fetishization, voyeurism, and exploitation of the bodies of Native Hawaiians. Examples of this can be found in pieces of literature, paintings, songs, and photography used to capture the essence of the bodies and appearances of Kānaka ʻŌiwi throughout history. Native Hawaiian women, in particular, stood out due to the differences in culture and religions that allowed the women of Hawaiʻi the freedom to dress in less clothing and choose their own lovers. The opening quote of this chapter paints this image sharply by comparing the sexual desires of

Native Hawaiian women as if driven by a force of nature that is instinctual and uncontrollable as an active volcano. This would not be a terrible label to carry if it was not the only trait acknowledged as being the identity of Native Hawaiian women as seen in pieces like *Bird of Paradise*, the title of this chapter. The film's main female lead, Luana, exists only as a caricature of lust and innocence as she inadvertently seduces the male lead simply by swimming, dancing, and smiling at him. This theme set a precedent forever more that Native Hawaiian women are, by nature, lustful and overtly sexual, and forever uncivilized and unrestrained.

Native Hawaiian men are not spared either from being judged. With their tattooed physique and darker complexions, they are often labeled as violent and ignorant savages of a primitive culture. This negative stereotype is also tied into racism as ethnic groups with darker complexions are often looked down upon as being inferior and savage in comparison to lighter skinned ethnic groups. For example, take the common and racist stereotype of African-American men in the United States as being dangerous and violent criminals who sell drugs and assault white women. So strong is this stereotype that, in 1955, an African-American teenager, Emmet Till, was murdered for offending a white woman, Carolyn Bryant, in her family's grocery store. This was a lie made up on Bryant's part that would result in the abduction, torture, and murder of the innocent Till by a group of white men who took Bryant's word as the truth without any proof of evidence or further investigation. These men only had their own racist beliefs fueling them, and so strong was their own inner biases towards black people, that they didn't bother to stop and consider if a fourteen-year-old black boy in the United States South would really do something as dangerous as assault a white woman seven years his senior.¹⁵³ This racist bias extends to

¹⁵³ *Library of Congress*. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/murder-of-emmett-till/> (accessed February 01, 2024).

Kānaka ʻŌiwi men too and, as with native women, these labels would go on to become the defining characteristics of Native Hawaiian men. So strong and deep were these ideals that they lasted through the centuries in the writings of scholars, the paintings of artists, the stark shots of photographs, and finally, onto the big screens of movie theaters.

Hollywood is one of the most substantial sources of these themes. The industry has used them in the creation of over 776 different movies¹⁵⁴ set within or about the Pacific, with Hawaiʻi and her native people being the main topic or being used as a template for fictional Pacific Islands. In these films, the image of the seductive island maiden and the primitive barbarian was brought to life alongside other expectations such as grass skirts, hula performances, and a good deal of bare skin being displayed. These images became encoded into the identity of Kānaka ʻŌiwi and can be seen in countless films over the length of a century. At times these tropes can be seen as harmless, as shown in the musical films *Waikiki Wedding* and *Blue Hawaii*, where the Kānaka ʻŌiwi act as backup singers and dancers when needed to entertain. But most of the time these themes are degrading as seen in films like *Aloha*, *The White Flower*, and *Aloma of the South Seas*, where the native woman is reduced to a sex doll with no autonomy of her own, and the native man a murderer or villain and little else.

But the worst theme throughout all of these films is the one of miscegenation. Not only because it is founded in racist and false theology but because it does not work in a place like Hawaiʻi, where interracial marriages and mixed children are the norm and has been since Hawaiʻi was still a Kingdom. But this aspect is absent and stigmatized as wrong in Hollywood

¹⁵⁴ Mathew B. Locey, *White Lens on Brown Skin: The Sexualization of the Polynesian in American Film* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2023), 17.

films like *From Here to Eternity* due in part to the Hays Code, which prohibited movies from showing interracial couples, but also because miscegenation was the norm for the continental United States. To show Hawai‘i, in all her real beauty of mixed ethnic groups living together in harmony, would be seen as a challenge to the systematic racism that kept ethnic groups divided throughout the United States. This is why the filmmakers of *From Here to Eternity* sought to create a Hawai‘i where Caucasians were the majority seen on screen and miscegenation did not exist. To question the hierarchy of power and control that placed Caucasians at the top would only hurt their own interests in the long run. Yet these restrictions do not stop the characters *From Here to Eternity* from lusting after Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, just as many others did in the movies that came beforehand. Thus, Hollywood’s legacy continues to maintain that it is acceptable to lust after and indulge in the bodies of Native Hawaiians but not to take it any further than that. After all, a Kanaka can only ever be a lover, never a spouse.

But *From Here to Eternity* does not stop at merely erasing the real version of the people of Hawai‘i. The film has also undergone drastic changes in how it presents the U.S. Armed Forces as both an institution and as a force of power and influence in the Hawaiian Islands. More specifically, the film has reworked how the characters regard it, how the viewers come to see it, and how Hawai‘i exists within the confines of the U.S. Armed Forces. How the film accomplishes this as well as the history of the relationship between Hawai‘i and the U.S. Armed Forces will be further examined in the third chapter that focuses on the military-industrial that currently still occupies Hawai‘i.

Chapter 3: Blue Hawaii

“However, with the new stronghold of the US military in Hawaii, it remained to be seen if Hawaii could ever truly shake off white rule in its postwar history where the military-industrial complex wove its tentacles around the islands in the form of land grab and various forms of subcontracting to mainland businesses that still define Hawaii’s economy today.”¹⁵⁵

Introduction

As the previous scene of Warden hiding Prewitt’s disappearance from his superiors fades out, a new one emerges of a solid wooden door with the words *COMMANDING GENERAL* engraved across it. This view too quickly fades away to reveal a room occupied by two older white men in uniform: one sitting off to the left of the screen while the other sits behind a massive wooden desk in the center. Behind them are a wall-length map of the Pacific Ocean and an American flag set to the side in a stand while sunlight flickers into the open window. The man sitting to the side has a set of papers in his hand, and as he begins to speak, it becomes clear that he is listing off a series of investigated crimes of abuse and mistreatment afflicted upon Private Prewitt at the hands of his commanding officer, Captain Holmes. As he continues to list off all of the physical, mental, and emotional abuse endured by Prewitt, the camera slowly draws back to reveal two more uniformed men in the room. One sits in another chair to the right, his back facing the screen, while the other stands straight and tall but with a noticeable tenseness to his shoulders and back. As the camera is set at an angle, the viewer can see part of his face, and they realize that the man is Captain Dana “Dynamite” Holmes, the main antagonist in the story. As the man concludes his speech by identifying the accused as Holmes, the viewer realizes they are watching the villain finally pay for all the unfair suffering he put Prewitt through.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 156.

Once done listing the charges, the man stands and hands the documents to the man sitting behind the large table in the center of the shot. He is older than the other three men in the room and carries an air of authority as he stares down Holmes, showing that he is the Commanding General. When he asks Holmes for an answer, the camera swings around to reveal Holmes, who quietly admits that he has none. His face is haggard and tense, with none of the cocky arrogance from before. His shoulders slump slightly with his admission as if knowing his fate is sealed. Interestingly, behind him, on the left side of the wall, is a large map of the island of O'ahu, while beneath it sits a globe of the world.

The camera pans back to the General behind the desk, who reminds Holmes that it is his duty to care for the soldiers in his command in a somber tone. His face is stoic, but there is no hiding the disgust in his eyes as he tells Holmes that he can keep his uniform until the court-martial is concluded. Holmes reacts immediately, begging the General to avoid a court-martial if possible, looking close to tears as he begs. The General does not look moved, but the man who spoke first offers a solution that Holmes should submit a letter of resignation which the General quickly agrees. He orders Holmes to submit it to him by that afternoon, commenting that the better everyone will be as soon as Holmes is gone.

The scene then cuts to Holmes's office, where a new commanding officer informs the unit that Holmes has been discharged from the Army, and his boxing brigade is to be demoted to ordinary soldiers once more. All of the benefits and achievements they gained under Holmes are stripped away and cannot be regained through winning boxing matches. During this scene, we,

the viewers, finally see the good guys right the wrongs of the wicked and make the bad guys pay for their crimes.¹⁵⁶

Unfortunately, this scene only occurs in the movie version of *From Here to Eternity*, as it ends very differently in the book. In the novel, Holmes gets away with his crimes and gets promoted to Major, which he obsesses over in both versions. This was the author's intention as he wished to expose how deeply corruption runs through the Army and that it was easy for men like Holmes to get away with it without ever facing the consequences. It is a disappointing but realistic fate for this type of story. And while this small change to the script may not seem very important to the overall film, it is crucial to the United States Army, which seeks to present only a noble image to the rest of the world. This is a consistent trend for films on the U.S. Army and the other armed branches, as they always insist on showing only the best with little to no criticism of the power structure, toxic culture, and corruption in the ranks. This insistence on using films to paint a false picture even extends to Hawai'i, as they have used movies to tell a story about the relationship between Hawai'i and the U.S. Armed Forces that is very different from the reality.

The Territory of Hawai'i

As with the previous chapters, this story begins earlier, back to when the United States first acquired control of Pearl Harbor as a naval base in 1887. This access came about due to the mechanisms of a select group of businessmen who were the descendants of the American missionaries that first came to the islands in 1820. This group—who called themselves the Committee of Safety—created a new constitution severely limiting the power of the reigning

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:37:51 to 1:39:10.

sovereign, King Kalākaua, and his cabinet. While these men were citizens of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, they desired to become citizens of the United States, and got their way soon enough in the illegal overthrow of 1893.¹⁵⁷ By using the presence of the U.S. Marines as a threat, the group forced the current monarch, Queen Lili‘uokalani, to relinquish her crown to them in order to protect her people from being killed. She stepped down while believing that the United States would honor their treaty with the Kingdom Hawai‘i that recognized the islands as a sovereign power and ally to the United States. She believed that they would review the case and honor their word and return power to her. Four days later, 1,300 U.S. troops arrived to establish their first permanent garrison and began consolidating the United States’ control of the islands even as the people and their Queen protested the illegal occupation of their home. While President Grover Cleveland attempted to return the monarchy to the Queen, he ultimately failed after losing the presidential re-election to President William McKinley, who pushed to annex the Hawaiian Islands to become a territory of the United States in 1900.¹⁵⁸ With Hawai‘i as a colony, it gave the United States the power to push back in the Spanish–American War and the Philippine–American War while colonizing the Philippines, half of Sāmoa, Guam, and later the Northern Mariana Islands.¹⁵⁹

The annexation opened the doors for further military expansion into the islands, starting with taking possession of the 1.8 million acres of Government and Crown Lands, which

¹⁵⁷ Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 123–163.

¹⁵⁸ Adria Imada, “The Army Learns to Luau: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in Hawai‘i,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no.02 (January 2008): 332, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23724874>.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (London: Picador, 2020), 12–23.

comprised over 40% of the total acreage of land. They would maintain a level of control that would only grow following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1942, when Hawai‘i was used as headquarters for the entire Central Pacific Command of the U.S. Armed Services during World War II. Known as the “Pacific Theater,” Hawai‘i was ground zero for commanding the battlefields and was a place of rest and leisure for millions of soldiers, defense workers, and military administrators¹⁶⁰ who came to the Islands. When Hawai‘i became the fiftieth state in 1959, the State of Hawai‘i assumed control over the majority of these lands, but the U.S. military still held onto 10% of the land and leased even more back from the state for profit. Currently, they still control at least 5% of the total land in Hawai‘i, with a bulk comprising military bases, reservations, training sites, and testing grounds for weapons.¹⁶¹ One of the most famous training grounds and testing areas is a small island southwest of Maui and southeast of Lāna‘i named Kaho‘olawe.

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Kaho‘olawe had held little interest to the United States Armed Forces. But following the attack, the United States Army declared martial law throughout Hawai‘i and claimed control of Kaho‘olawe for training. On December 7, 1941, the island was designated as a training site for soldiers who were to be sent to engage in the War in the Pacific. The island was considered a critical necessity as the success of their battles relied on accurate naval gunfire support that suppressed or destroyed enemy positions while ground forces struggled ashore. Soldiers from across the United States who were to be sent to fight in the Pacific were trained by using Kaho‘olawe as bombing practice and to prepare for the brutal

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 334.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 333.

assaults on the Marshall Islands, the Marianas and Peleliu, and Papua New Guinea.¹⁶² But the training and testing did not stop following the end of World War II in 1945. Instead, with the arrival of the Korean War (1950–1953), it was used to train warplanes and aircraft carriers as they played a critical role in attacking enemy airfields, convoys, and troop staging areas.

Therefore, Kaho‘olawe continued to be used as a training isle but now as a mock-up for practicing pilots from the Barbers Point Naval Air Station on O‘ahu. The training continued as the United States entered the Cold War (1947–1991) and the Vietnam War (1955–1975), with mock-ups of aircraft, radar installations, gun mounts, and surface-to-air missile sites being placed across the small island for pilots and bombardiers to use for training.¹⁶³

The final nail in the coffin for Kaho‘olawe occurred in 1965 when the United States Navy conducted a series of operations to determine the best blast resistance of ships. Three tests were performed off the coast of Kaho‘olawe with 500 tons of conventional TNT detonated¹⁶⁴ on the island near a target ship called the USS *Atlanta* (CL-104). While the boat was damaged, it still managed not to sink. Unfortunately, Kaho‘olawe was not so lucky as the blasts created a crater on the island known as Sailor Man’s Cap that has cracked and destroyed the only source of freshwater on the island. While efforts have been made since to restore the island to its former glory, the damage has been done forever more. The constant onslaught and misuse of Kaho‘olawe is only one example of the United States Armed Forces using the Hawaiian Islands

¹⁶² William Chapman, “Hawai‘i, the Military, and the National Park: World War II and Its Impacts On Culture and the Environment,” January 28, 2024. <http://npshistory.com/>.

¹⁶³ Doulton-Lee Ho, “Lessons from the World War II Bombings of the Island of Kaho‘olawe,” Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, February 3, 2024, <https://ppeh.sas.upenn.edu/lessons-world-war-ii-bombings-island-kahoolawe>.

¹⁶⁴ Cory Graff, “Kaho‘olawe: The Pacific’s Battered Bullseye,” The National WWII Museum. June 18, 2023. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/kahoolawe-island-us-navy>.

for their use and gain without considering the ramifications it could have on the islands and Native Hawaiians. Examples of land misuse include fire exercises in Mākua Valley and Waikāne Valley on the island of O‘ahu; training grounds at Pōhakuloa on Hawai‘i Island; and over 161,000 acres of the Ahupua‘a Kawaioloa on O‘ahu for training. Despite its small size, there is even a missile test range station on the island of Kaua‘i.

Other problems brought about by being home to the U.S. Armed Forces include having to house all the soldiers and their families, which takes up more than a quarter of the island of O‘ahu. Some of that land is considered sacred and spiritual to Native Hawaiians, yet it is used for leisure activities reserved only for military use. There are also helicopter overflights, military convoys on the roads, and warships sailing on tourist beaches. Much of the personnel equipment is stored across multiple bases such as Schofield Barracks, Hickam Air Force Base, Wheeler Air Force Base, Kāne‘ohe Bay Marine Corps Air Station, and various other military installations. The military also brings about accidents through sheer laziness and incompetence, such as the Ehime Maru Tragedy in 2001 and the Red Hill Water Crisis of 2021 that is still ongoing.¹⁶⁵

Currently, Hawai‘i is home to all branches of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Space Command, with eleven bases being housed on the island of O‘ahu. Yet despite all of the harm and negativity that the U.S. Armed Forces brings to the Hawaiian Islands, the outside world is under the impression that they are a welcomed presence in the islands. One of the reasons for this lies in Hollywood films that have painted the relationship between Hawai‘i and the U.S. Armed Forces as one of mutual benefits instead of the parasitical relationship it truly is.

¹⁶⁵ Ireland, “Sugar-Coated Fortress,” 04.

In Harm's Way

The noble and shining reputation of the military-industrial complex in Hawai'i has been crafted in part through Hollywood films that are based on the U.S. Armed Forces in Hawai'i. This was done through different film genres that can be roughly broken into the following timeline: South Seas fantasy films that glorified colonialism and the exotic of the Pacific (1915–1933); mass ornamental military musicals with plantation culture lurking in the background (1934–1941); World War II combat films and war propaganda documentaries to bolster enlistment and justify the military's presence in Hawai'i (1941–1945); and finally post-World War II films that combine military and tourism ventures in a mixture of war films, romantic comedies, and social problem films (1946–1980).¹⁶⁶ With so many large bodies to work with, it is not surprising that the U.S. Armed Forces were able to create the narrative of being a wanted and necessary presence in Hawai'i. It had years to work on this reputation and could use many forms in films that pushed its agendas. The best examples of this in deliberate action are the World War II Era (1941–1945) and the post-World War II Era (1946–1980).

The first section is the World War II Era where combat films and war propaganda documentaries were made to bolster enlistment numbers and boost the people's spirits. The movies following up to World War II always emphasized how different Hawai'i was from the United States to draw in visitors and viewers. The movies focused on the natural beauty of the islands and the enticing natives and played up the romanticism of the isles. This was done by repeating the same themes and visual reminders with a particular emphasis on the undeveloped land, the endless beaches, native girls performing hula, pagan religious symbols, native men in

¹⁶⁶ Konzett, "Hollywood's Hawaii," 05.

canoes, and an excessive amount of natives' skin. An example of this would be movies like *Hula* and *Bird of Paradise*, which glorified aspects of Hawai'i that were exotic and outlandish. But with the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States joining World War II, Hollywood had to change to reflect a new narrative where the Hawaiian Islands were a part of the United States and just as American as the rest of the continent.

The Hawaiian Islands became a rallying point for Americans following the Attack on Pearl Harbor even as most citizens did not even know where it was located. The leaders of the U.S. Armed Forces and politicians saw that motion pictures could be a great propaganda machine as they could reach large masses of people and instill a spirit of patriotism and the will to fight in the viewers.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, Hollywood needed to change the already preconceived conceptions of Hawai'i from a place of fantasy as a paradise in the faraway Pacific to just another state where baseball is typical, and apple pie is a beloved dessert. But if Hawai'i was to become more American, that meant getting rid of the exotic natives with their bared skin and grass shacks. They had to be replaced with white people in Aloha shirts, urban living, and a scattering of Native Hawaiians and locals who acted mainly as background scenery.¹⁶⁸ Doing so would create a sense of familiarity in the viewers, who were mostly Caucasians. One of the best examples of this is the *December 7th* documentary covered earlier in chapter one.

As discussed previously, *December 7th* presented Hawai'i as a developed and modernized state with paved roads and electric lights. It stressed how industrialized and developed the island of O'ahu is now in comparison to the previous state of a wild jungle. The documentary praises

¹⁶⁷ Ireland, "Sugar-Coated Fortress," 228.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

the efforts of the American and Caucasian businessmen as being the cause for this, calling them the “backbone of Hawai‘i” that keeps it running though this is proven to be false as discussed before. The documentary even goes so far as to claim that Hawai‘i was ultimately a place of paradise that had its guard down for too long. This lack of vigilance was part of the reason why the Japanese succeeded in their sneak attack. The documentary further implies that now that Hawai‘i is fully secured as the command center of the Pacific, then there is nothing to fear from the Japanese. It is also important to note that the War Department banned the original 83-minute version of *December 7th* from being shown as the U.S. military objected to its portrayal of ineptitude throughout it. The one shown to the public was a heavily edited 32-minute version¹⁶⁹ that had no form of criticism of the Navy.

Another essential example to take note of is the *Battle of Midway*¹⁷⁰. It is a short documentary (only eighteen minutes) that covers the Japanese Attack on Midway Atoll, an island set in the westernmost part of the Hawaiian Islands Archipelago. It contains actual footage of the attack that was taken by John Ford¹⁷¹ when he was invited to the atoll to film atop the roof of the base’s powerhouse with his handheld sixteen-millimeter Eyemo camera. Ford was able to do this due to the U.S. military receiving advance notice from decoded intelligence that warned them of Japan’s plans to capture Midway to get a foothold on the Pacific. Thanks to this tipoff, the U.S. was able to trap and destroy a significant number of the Japanese Imperial Fleet, including irreplaceable carriers and aircrafts, over the course of three days, June 4 to 7, 1942. This battle

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 237.

¹⁷⁰ *The Battle of Midway*, directed by John Ford (United States Navy, 1942), 0:18:00.
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034498/>.

¹⁷¹ Konzett, “Hollywood’s Hawaii,” 101.

stands as the largest sea battle in history and marked the end of Japan's domination of the Pacific. The documentary captured actual footage of the battle with three different narrators who explained the island and the importance of the battle.

Thanks to these two documentaries, Hawai'i became known to the rest of the country and the world for its military losses and victories. The islands were no longer merely a place to visit for the beaches and hula girls but a site of mourning and celebration for the U.S. Armed Forces. These sites became embedded in the identity of the islands just as so many other features did, like shots of the beach and swaying palm trees. In a way, it seemed that the U.S. Armed Forces had laid claim over the islands and set their legacy as the ones of most value, as seen with the Pearl Harbor National Memorial that stands above any indigenous site of mourning for battlegrounds and mass graves. This impression would only grow as WWII ended and the world entered a new age where movies on Hawai'i would glorify the U.S. Armed Forces as it became the military-industrial complex it is today.

The post-World War II era produced a range of movies that fell into roughly two categories: armed forces glorification and tourist exploitation. The first, armed forces glorification, refers to films that focus on WWII events (such as the Attack on Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Midway), personal stories of the soldiers, and movies that explore the potential threats that foreign powers could play against the United States. The second category, tourist exploitation, are movies that support and promote the tourist industry by advertising the islands as a desirable location to visit. It does this through a range of genres such as musicals to adventure-actions to romances. There also exist movies that focus on the history of Hawai'i, such

as *Hawaii* and *The Hawaiians*,¹⁷² but these films favored Caucasian characters and their experiences in the islands over actual Kānaka ʻŌiwi. Examples of the armed forces glorification can be best seen in war films like *Midway*.¹⁷³ In contrast, movies that focused on the personal lives of the soldiers include *In Harm's Way*, and potential foreign threats can be seen in *Big Jim McLain*.¹⁷⁴ For an example of films on tourist exploitation, the most common ones include *Blue Hawaii* and *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*.¹⁷⁵

Midway is a 1976 war film that follows the Battle of Midway from June 4 to June 7, 1942. It starts before the battle, chronicling the timeline of events that led up to the Battle of Midway, beginning on April 18, 1942, and ending with the battle. It is, at its core, a combat film that glorifies war and the victory of America over the Japanese in the Pacific. No real attention is given to Hawaiʻi past Pearl Harbor and the Midway Atoll. No mention of the damage done to the islands following the December attack, or the state of the local people who were living through a war. The focus remains set on the soldiers and the upcoming battle at Midway, which is the formula that most war movies—such as *Task Force*¹⁷⁶ and *Sands of Iwo Jima*¹⁷⁷—set in Hawaiʻi follow. There are never attempts to explore the stories of Hawaiʻi residents or even a soldier

¹⁷² *The Hawaiians*, directed by Tom Gries (Mirisch Productions, Inc., 1970), 2:23:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/34208/the-hawaiians#overview>.

¹⁷³ *Midway*, directed by Jack Smight (Universal Pictures, 1976), 2:11:01. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074899/>.

¹⁷⁴ *Big Jim McLain*, directed by Edward Ludwig (Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 1952), 1:30:00, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0044418/>.

¹⁷⁵ *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*, directed by Michael Moore (Paramount Pictures, 1966), 1:31:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/22782/paradise-hawaiian-style#overview>.

¹⁷⁶ *Task Force*, directed by Delmer Daves (Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., 1949), 1:56:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/11179/task-force#film-details>.

¹⁷⁷ *Sands of Iwo Jima*, directed by Allan Dwan (Republic Pictures, 1950), 1:40:00, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/23383/sands-of-iwo-jima#overview>.

from Hawai‘i joining the war. The focus always remains on the U.S. Armed Forces and the Caucasian soldiers from the continent being stationed in Hawai‘i, as shown in films like *In Harm’s Way*.

In Harm’s Way was discussed in chapter one, where it was used to single out the patterns of misrepresenting Native Hawaiian culture and showcasing the island’s tropes. Now, in chapter three, it can be examined again as an example of how war films, especially WWII films, always feature white, heterosexual soldiers and their experiences being stationed in Hawai‘i. These movies never bother to explore the experiences of other soldiers of different ethnicities, religions, or sexual preferences stationed on the islands, nor give any focus to the local people who would be living alongside these soldiers. Instead, the most thought given is usually to the local sex workers who entertain the soldiers, as is shown *In Harm’s Way*. This trend would be continued even in the future, as proven with *Pearl Harbor*,¹⁷⁸ where the cast was all Caucasian, from the continental United States, and used a storyline that was focused on a love triangle over the Attack on Pearl Harbor. Ultimately, what these movies seek to accomplish is to merely glorify the victories achieved by the U.S. Armed Forces in Hawai‘i while ignoring the steep costs that come from turning the island of O‘ahu into a giant resting stop and training ground for the thousands of soldiers flooding through Hawai‘i.

The final film example is *Big Jim McLain* which focuses on post-WWII Hawai‘i and the threat of Communism creeping into the United States. The plot focuses on two investigators from the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) named Jim McLain and Mal

¹⁷⁸ *Pearl Harbor*, directed by Michael Bay (Touchstone Pictures, 2001), 3:30:12, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0213149/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0.

Baxter, who are sent to Hawai'i to track American Communist Party activities. They are set to investigate everything from insurance fraud to the sabotage of a U.S. naval vessel and plan to have local unions go on strike to close down the docks. After receiving tips from a reporter, the agents begin searching for Willie Nomaka, a former party treasurer, who has allegedly experienced a nervous breakdown and is being treated by psychiatrist Dr. Gelster. The doctor's secretary, Nancy Vallon, is helpful, as well. McLain asks her on a date, and a romance develops. However, Nomaka is eventually found under another name in a sanitorium, heavily drugged and unable to speak. The Communist Party Leader, Sturak, orders Dr. Gelster to get rid of him, but McLain rescues Nomaka and takes him to safety. However, two of the communists kidnap Baxter, and Gelster accidentally kills him when giving him an injection of truth serum. Sturak then orders the party members to attend a meeting and orders Gelster to confess his party membership to the authorities and identify several nonessential members. He hopes the government will believe that their party has been destroyed and leave them alone so that the others can continue their work. The meeting is interrupted by McLain, who punches out one of the communists after the communist uses the "N-word" but is quickly overwhelmed by the more significant number. Luckily the police arrive and save McLain and place the communists under arrest. The men responsible for Baxter's death are convicted of murder, but McLain and Nancy Vallon see the other members plead the Fifth Amendment and go free.

Big Jim McLain is a film focused on the Cold War and the fear of communism that was so strong throughout America following the end of World War II. That it took place in Hawai'i was intentional as it is meant to imply that the islands are as much a part of the states as the continent and, therefore, must be just as highly protected from the influence of communism. Furthermore, this movie gives the U.S. Armed Forces support and legitimacy for their presence

in Hawai‘i and in their claims to always be vigilant in the surveillance of the state lest an enemy infiltrates the country.

As for the movie examples of the second subcategory, tourist exploitation, the first is *Blue Hawaii*, which has been covered in the previous two chapters. It has been added here because it is an excellent example of how plantations shifted their business focus into tourism. Chad, a soldier returning home from deployment, is the son of a pineapple plantation owner, Fred Gates, who wants his son to take over the family business, the Great Southern Hawaiian Fruit Company. But Chad believes (and proves correct) that the plantation era is ending in Hawai‘i and that the best new capital is tourism. Furthermore, Chad takes his group of tourists on adventures through O‘ahu, showing off all the fun activities guests can indulge in. It is also important to note that all the locals and Native Hawaiians involved in the tourist activities look thrilled to be there as if entertaining the group is the highlight of their day. No one ever shows anything but friendly smiles and welcoming attitudes. At the end of the film, Chad and his girlfriend, Maile, decide to open their own tourism business—Gates of Hawaii—and begin arranging tourist services for Chad’s father’s extensive network of fruit sales associates in the continental United States and Canada.

The second example is *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*. The third and last film starring Elvis Presley, who plays the role of an airline pilot named Rick Richards. Currently unemployed due to being a playboy, he returns to Hawai‘i to reunite with his old friend, Danny Kohana, to establish a charter helicopter service to fly tourists around the islands. They start working on their business and hire a secretary named Judy Hudson, who intrigues Rick even as he dates other girls. But when Rick accidentally skims the roof of the car of a Federal aviation agent and forces him into a ditch, he ends up grounded until a hearing can determine if his license should

be revoked. But before the trial can be held, Rick discovers that Danny has crashed his helicopter in a remote section of the island and has a broken leg and no way to get help. So, Rick violates the order, flies to Danny's location, and rescues him. Later, at a celebratory party, Rick's many girlfriends learn of his flings with other girls and gang up on him, forcing him to flee. The movie concludes with Rick winning Judy's affection and successfully pleading his case with the aviation agent who restores his license.

Paradise, Hawaiian Style is, at its core, an unofficial sequel to *Blue Hawaii*, as it features the same tropes and themes as the first movie. It glamorizes the tourist industry as the best business means for the islands to survive with and hosts many musical scenes that use the same generic Hawaiian themes discussed in chapter one. Some scenes were even filmed at the Polynesian Cultural Center on O'ahu, which is a heavily coded tourist theme park. Furthermore, *Paradise, Hawaiian Style* uses the same collection of dark-skinned locals to perform with Rick as he entertains the happy tourists booked on his flights.

Ultimately, the post-WW II era ended the age of fantasy where Hawai'i was a place of unseen beauty with exotic natives that few could reach. The movies that followed showed very urban islands with Caucasian residents sunning on the white beaches of Waikīkī. It was an all-American place with American values with a strong military presence that protected the thriving tourist industry that joyfully welcomed guests from the continental U.S. to visit. This narrative remained strong for years on end, thanks in part to films like *From Here to Eternity*.

Beyond Paradise

From Here to Eternity is a war movie that focuses on the mundane life of soldiers pre-World War II. Most of the story is set at the army barracks and focuses on their daily life, with

only the occasional breakaway scene to disrupt it. There are little to no substantial interactions between the soldiers and the people of Hawai‘i, nor is there any exploration of the island beyond the few beach scenes and trips into town. With so little to work with, only two major scenes that can be thoroughly dissected using the tools of narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing to understand how the movie supports the growth of the military-industrial complex in Hawai‘i. These two scenes are when Prewitt tells Loraine how much he loves the army despite the abuse he is enduring, and the ending scene where Prewitt dies at the hands of his fellow soldiers. These two scenes are chosen because they best show the toxic relationship between the soldiers and the armed forces which reflects the relationship between Hawai‘i and the military-industrial complex that rules the islands.

The first scene¹⁷⁹ occurs halfway into the movie when Prewitt and Loraine are on a date at the Kalakaua Inn before Maggio joins them. During their conversation, Prewitt shares his struggles on base with Holmes and his lackies, and a sympathetic Loraine comments on how he must hate the Army now for putting him through such abuse. But Prewitt surprises her by denying this and explaining that he loves the Army more than anything because it saved him from homelessness, and gave him a purpose in life. This is the first time the viewer is given any insight into what Prewitt thinks of his situation, his feelings on the Army, and why he remains so loyal throughout the rest of the film. With these facts in mind, this scene’s narrative is significantly restricted, limiting the viewer’s perspective to the idea that the Army is always a force of good and righteousness. Even Prewitt, the victim of the Army, remains optimistic and

¹⁷⁹ *Eternity*, 1:02:24 to 1:03:17.

forgiving of his circumstances. He is never angry at the system that fails him, nor does he blame it for his circumstances. This insistence of never assigning any fault or responsibility to the Army is intentional as the moviemakers seek to present the Army in the best light.

This message is further supported through the *mise-en-scène* though it is done subtly. Prewitt and Loraine are having this conversation at the Kalakaua Inn, which, as previously discussed, resembles a Chinese restaurant filled with soldiers in uniform or Aloha shirts. The constant showing of soldiers mingling in the background and living their lives is intentional, as it is meant to imply that their presence is the norm in Hawai‘i. Sitting at the bar, Prewitt and Loraine share stories of their pasts and get to know each other better, which is when his abusive situation and unfair treatment are mentioned. When Loraine says that he must hate the Army, Prewitt physically relaxes and the lines in his face soften up in a way that he has not shown before in the film. He even slinks down further in his chair as a small smile tugs at one corner of his lips. He is revealing his vulnerability and a gentleness he has not previously shown the viewer before, even during his time with Loraine. He only shows this soft, sentimental side when he speaks about the Army and how joining it gave him a purpose in life. Presenting Prewitt in this manner shows how deeply he loves the Army and how loyal a soldier he is at heart. It is the romanticized version of a soldier that young men aspire to be, which is what the movie and the Armed Forces are targeting.

The cinematography of this scene further enhances Prewitt’s soft demeanor and honest response in order to drive home how genuine his feelings are. This is done through a medium close-up shot of Prewitt as he leans one arm on the bar and slouches against it to stare at Loraine.

It is also a slight high-angle shot¹⁸⁰ with Loraine and the camera looking down at the drooping Prewitt, which shows his vulnerability and weakness for the moment. The lighting focused on his face is a soft light to further enhance the romanticism of Prewitt's words and accentuate his love and loyalty for the Army. Even the framing of Loraine supports the message by first showing her in a hard light at the beginning of the conversation to mirror her skepticism and disbelief that slowly shifts into a softer light as Prewitt speaks on, showing how he has convinced her and changed her feelings into one of understanding and sympathy. Like Prewitt, she is also shown in a medium-close up so that the viewers can see her face and, therefore, the change in her expressions from one of stony anger to a softer one of understanding sympathy. By the end of the conversation, it is implied to the viewers through her expressions and the cinematography that Prewitt's explanation has successfully persuaded Loraine to believe in the Army.

The editing of this scene is not as prominent as others as the focus is on Prewitt's speech, which requires acting more than anything else. What editing that has been done is to enhance the scene, mainly through the use of the shot/reverse shot¹⁸¹ that is used to show the faces of Prewitt and Loraine throughout the conversation. This allows the viewer to see the change of emotions as Prewitt explains his feelings and history for the Army while also revealing the change in Loraine's opinion as she listens to him. This bit of editing, showing Loraine's change in feelings from negative to positive, is meant to reflect the viewer and how they too may change their impressions from bad to good even after watching Prewitt suffer. It is saying that if the victim,

¹⁸⁰ Monahan, *Looking at Movies*, 448. High-angle shot is a shot that is made with the camera above the action; it typically implies the observer's sense of superiority to the subject being filmed. Also known as a *down shot*.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 453: shot/reverse shot is one of the most prevalent and familiar of all editing patterns, in which the camera is repeatedly crosscutting between shots of different characters, usually in a conversation or confrontation. When used in continuity editing, the shots are typically framed over each character's shoulder to preserve screen direction.

Prewitt, does not hold a grudge against the Army for his circumstances, then what right does the viewer have?

The second scene¹⁸² is the death of Prewitt as he tries to rejoin his platoon after the Attack on Pearl Harbor. Following the surprise attack, tension is high, and security has been tightened with soldiers patrolling everywhere. Prewitt—who was in hiding after killing the sadistic stockade Sergeant Judson to avenge his deceased friend Maggio—missed the Pearl Harbor attack and feels guilty and obligated to return to his company. Despite Loraine’s pleas to stay with her, he leaves and tries to sneak back to join them but is spotted and shot down by a pair of patrolling MPs who do not recognize him as a fellow soldier due to his casual attire. Warden later identifies him and says he was a good soldier but a very stubborn one who refused to play the system that Holmes had set up. This passing comment is the only bit of sympathy Prewitt earns from Warden as he quickly returns to the hardened leader, yelling at the other soldiers to get back to work as they do not know what the Japanese plan for next. The scene finally ends with Warden and the others jogging off down the beach before fading away into the next scene.

The narrative of this scene is focused mainly on the end of Prewitt’s life and, therefore, the conclusion of his plotline and the movie. He dies trying to return to his company, which redeems his initial desertion and shows his loyalty is still with the Army. Even Loraine, who begs him not to go back and instead stay and marry her, cannot convince him to give up his loyalty to the Army. He leaves the woman he loves behind and returns to the Army while knowing that he may end dishonorably discharged for his crime and desertion or sent to prison. But Prewitt still chooses to go back and pays for his loyalty by being shot down by his fellow

¹⁸² *Eternity*, 1:53:50 to 1:55:49.

soldiers. As he lies dying on the beach, he shows none of his usual fire or righteousness that had driven him to fight against the oppressive mistreatment of Holmes and his goons. Instead, he accepts his fate and quietly dies without a hint of bitterness or anger at his fate. This is a deliberate change to Prewitt's character and is meant to further reinforce the picture of a loyal, dedicated soldier who believes in the U.S. Army to the point of dying for it. Warden's words further support this as he comments that while Prewitt was too stubborn and it cost him his life, he was still a good soldier who loved the Army more than anyone else. Prewitt's tragic end is meant to inspire the viewer with empathy and pride for a young man who loved the Army so much he would rather die at their hands than be separated from it.

The *mise-en-scène* further strengthens the narrative through the characters' setting, attire, and placement. The timing of the day is undecipherable due to the black-and-white tone, which is intentional as it adds to the situation's tension. Prewitt has lost track of himself, and his conclusion is blurry at this point, which is indicated by the vague timing of the day. Furthermore, Prewitt is not in uniform but in an Aloha shirt and trousers and has no Army identification to prove his identity. This lack of identity is mainly a plot point to give Prewitt a reason to sneak in, but it can also be taken as him feeling lost and disconnected while away from the Army. Without it, Prewitt thinks he lacks a purpose and has no direction or idea of how to exist outside of his status as an American soldier. The location of Prewitt's death is also deliberate as he dies on a beach, which can be interpreted as a border between life and death, with Prewitt even singing a dirge as his life slips away. All of this is meant to enhance the drama and tragedy of Prewitt's death while also showing that Prewitt does not blame the MPs or the Army for his fate. Warden's presence also further supports the lack of accountability as he does not question the MPs or order an investigation into Prewitt's death. What blame he does bring up, he lays on Prewitt for being

too stubborn and set in his ways to play the system. His prompt dismissal of Prewitt only further supports the reoccurring theme of how little regard the leaders have for the men serving under their command.

The cinematography for this scene is focused on dramatizing Prewitt's death without making it unrealistic. To do this, the camera uses a mix of different shot types to capture the scene. There are long shots used to show Prewitt running and trying to escape only to be shot; medium shots to show the soldiers chasing him and then shooting him; medium close-up shots of Warden and his reaction to Prewitt's body; and finally, a close-up shot of Prewitt's face as he dies. The scene uses a hard light when focused on the faces of Prewitt and Warden to add a sense of bleakness to the scene. Furthermore, the angles used are mainly eye-level for most of the scene but switch to a low-angle shot¹⁸³ when Warden kneels down next to Prewitt to bid goodbye. This is important to note because this sort of shot can be read to mean that Warden is looking down on Prewitt, or it could be in reference to Warden's position as a sergeant who had power and authority over Prewitt. As with the previously examined scene, the editing was minimal here as the scene needed the skills of the actors more than anything else. What was done was the manipulation of time, jumping ahead several hours to Warden arriving on the scene to identify the body and give orders to take it away. There was also the use of the shot/reverse shot method again to show the faces of both Warden and Prewitt when Warden does his ending monologue. Doing this drives home Warden's point that Prewitt loved the Army more than any other soldier, to the point of dying to return to it.

¹⁸³ Monahan, *Looking at Movies*, 449. Low-angle shot is a shot that is made with the camera below the actions; it typically places the observer in a position of inferiority. Also known as a *low shot*.

Summative Critique

Let us return to the opening quote of this chapter that states the United States Armed Forces has turned Hawai‘i into a military stronghold that controls the land, resources, and economy of the islands. More importantly, though, the quote summarizes the uncertainty and power that the United States Armed Forces holds on the islands. Since the U.S. Armed Forces first acquired their naval base in 1887, they have only continued to spread throughout the Hawaiian Islands like the invasive Albizia Tree spreads through the upland forests of the islands. From Pearl Harbor to Kaho‘olawe to Red Hill, the U.S. Armed Forces has grown into a military-industrial complex with a monopoly on the land and natural resources that has been continuously mishandled, misused, and exploited. But despite the protests and criticism from local residents and scholars alike, little attention or concern has been given to the militarization of Hawai‘i by the rest of the country and the world at large. This is partly due to the false narrative produced by Hollywood films that paint the relationship between Hawai‘i and the U.S. Armed Forces as one of mutual benefits instead of the reality of being a parasitical relationship. One example of the unfair power dynamics between the two is the tragic Massie-Kahahawai Case.¹⁸⁴

In 1931, Thalia Massie, a young Navy wife, alleged that she had been kidnapped and raped by “some Hawaiian boys” in Waikīkī. Five young men were arrested and stood accused of her rape but no evidence linked them together. Further mishandling of evidence and contradictory testimony led to a mistrial and one of the accused, Horace Ida, was kidnapped and beaten by a group of Navy men. The second, Joseph Kahahawai, was eventually kidnapped and

¹⁸⁴ John Rosa, *Local Story: The Massie-Kahahawai Case and the Culture of History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014).

murdered by Thalia's husband, Thomas Massie; her mother, Grace Fortescue; and two Navy men. Despite witnesses who saw the kidnapping take place and the later discovery of his body in Massie's car, the group were convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter. But pressure from the United States Congress and the Navy forced the territorial governor, Lawrence McCully Judd, to commute their sentences. The four served one an hour in the governor's office at 'Iolani Palace before being set free. No further penalty was ever given and the murderers moved on with their lives while the family of the victim and the people of Hawai'i continued to mourn for their lost son. The case still stands as a testimony to the power and control that the Armed Forces truly hold over the islands and her people.

Furthermore, documentaries and films like *December 7th* and *Big Jim McLain* present a narrative that Hawai'i is as a part of the continental United States as Washington and Florida are. There is never any acknowledgment of the Kingdom that existed before or the role the U.S. played in the overthrow and occupation of that Kingdom. Nor is there any acknowledgment of the diverse ethnicities encompassing the islands, choosing instead to paint the islands with only one white color as if doing this will make it come true. Furthermore, the narrative of an equal partnership between the islands and the U.S. Armed Forces is false, as there is a power imbalance between the two. *From Here to Eternity* stands as the best example of this false relationship, for they present it as the norm for Hawai'i rather than the fiction it is. Furthermore, the movie stands as an example of how the U.S. Armed Forces hides the truth to the real relationship between Hawai'i and the U.S. behind fancy yet fake stories just as *From Here to Eternity* hides the flaws of the system it is trying to uplift.

In *From Here to Eternity*, the film goes out of its way to present a military force that stands for justice, honor, and integrity. The film wishes to establish the idea that when there are

officers who abuse their power, they are always found and held accountable, with justice being served, as shown with Holmes. The soldiers are always painted as good and loyal with Warden choosing to endure working under Holmes over quitting, and Prewitt literally dying just to return to his company. There is never any anger or resentment in either of them for the system that has failed them. Prewitt, in particular, holds no fury for the abuse he endures at the hands of his fellow soldiers, nor in his friend Maggio's death due to torture at the hands of another soldier, or even for his own accidental end. He simply accepts his fate and dies nobly in the end. The problem with this plotline is that there is nothing noble about Prewitt dying for an institution that is meant to protect him but failed in every way possible. Nor is there anything noble in the mistreatment and exploitation of Hawai'i at the hands of the United States Armed Forces. That they refuse to acknowledge their crimes and insist on hiding behind Hollywood propaganda to boost their own reputation does not erase their failures. It only makes them out to be an unethical institution that will not own up to their own history and present-day actions. But despite this bleak ending to the film and the ongoing occupation of Hawai'i, there still exists a sense of hope in changing the portrayal of the islands on the big screen. The next chapter will examine how this can be done and why it is important for movies to present a fair and accurate representation of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians, and Native Hawaiian culture.

Conclusion

“The movie is not about Hawai‘i as such. It is, instead, a very conservative and macho movie that serves to reinforce traditional social structures both within the U.S. military and more widely in America as a whole.”¹⁸⁵

The closing scene¹⁸⁶ of *From Here to Eternity* is a bittersweet one as both Loraine and Karen stand on the ship’s deck, pulling away from O‘ahu, leaving Hawai‘i and their experiences behind. As they are standing next to each other, they start a conversation while watching the island go by. Karen reflects on her experiences in a positive light, mentioning how Hawai‘i is the most beautiful place she has ever seen and tosses her two leis into the sea. She explains to Loraine about a local legend: that if the lei floats back to the beach, you’ll return one day, but if it sails out to sea, you won’t return. Loraine, naturally, has a more negative outlook on it all. She spins a tale about Prewitt being her fiancé and a bomber pilot and dying during the Pearl Harbor attack. As she lies about Prewitt being a hero, Karen recognizes his name and Loraine from Warden previously speaking about them, but does not call out the other woman for her lie. Instead, she remains quiet as the camera pans over to the two leis floating on the ocean’s surface, drifting away on the waves as the closing *THE END* appears across the screen.

And so ends *From Here to Eternity*, released in 1953 and based on the novel of the same name released in 1951. The film opened to rave reviews and is regarded as a masterpiece and an essential contribution to the United States National Film Registry. Yet, despite all this prestige, the truth is that *From Here to Eternity* is a film that took the author’s original intentions to bring

¹⁸⁵ Brian Ireland, “Sugar-Coated Fortress: Representations of the U.S. Military in Hawai‘i” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), 247, <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/3728939a-3998-431b-95bf-d947c694aa94/content>.

¹⁸⁶ *Eternity*, 1:56:00 to 1:58:05.

enlightenment to the public that the U.S. Armed Forces are as flawed and corrupt as any other organization, and rewrote it into a story of military patriotism, exploitation, abuse, whitewashing, and racism. It erased the real Hawai‘i and her native people and replaced them with pale imitations modeled after the same tropes used in nearly every other movie made on the Pacific. It is a film that continues the legacy of Hollywood by following the same framework of tropes that present a biased and false narrative of Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians, Native Hawaiian culture, and the relationship between the United States Armed Forces and Hawai‘i. This refusal to admit to being a flawed institution is a deliberate ploy to keep power and authority over Hawai‘i as owning up to anything else would only weaken those who benefit from the Armed Forces presence in the islands.

The origins of how Hawai‘i came to be seen as such started long before the creation of filmmaking. The notion of the islands as a place of fantasy and romanticism began when European and American explorers first set eyes on the islands. These impressions stemmed from ignorance as they had never before seen such places, and it captured the imagination of these men. In time, the literature and paintings based on the Hawaiian Islands spread this fascination to more and more individuals. With the creation of photography and films, the fixation grew more substantial, and soon movies based on Hawai‘i were being produced. Unfortunately, in these movies, little attention was given to realism or authenticity, but rather to drawing in viewers and entertaining them by giving them the exotic paradise they expected. When this formula proved successful, they reused it repeatedly; producing movies with the same themes, further spreading these false images.

The tropes did not stop merely with the islands either. They extended to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, who were always seen and presented by outsiders looking

in. This gave a skewed view of the native people, for these outsiders were not neutral parties but were influenced by their own biases and racist views. This created a series of incorrect tropes of the native people, such as the men being savage brutes and the women exotic beauties who are sexual succubus. These tropes are not only demeaning to Kānaka but can have real life consequences on the Native Hawaiians who watch these movies and believe them to be true. Take, for example, the film *Reel Injun*,¹⁸⁷ a Canadian documentary film directed by Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, and Jeremiah Hayes that explores the portrayal of Native Americans in film. In one scene, the filmmakers tackle the heavy truth that when they were children and would play Cowboys and Indians, they all wanted to be the ‘good guys’ who were the Cowboys. They did not want to play the ‘bad guys’ who were always the Indians even though they themselves are Native American. This self-hate is taught through the consumption of media and it is not only Native Americans who are influenced by it. It reaches all indigenous people and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are no different.

But worse than the belittling productions are the pieces that completely erase the presence of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi in Hawai‘i, and replace them with Caucasian or white-passing actors. While these actions may not seem harmful initially, they can have long-lasting effects on the Native Hawaiians who watch these movies, especially younger generations, who risk growing up believing that the only acceptable Kānaka are fair-skinned or invisible. Growing up with only negative role models in the media, these children and teens may consider themselves inherently bad simply for being native children. Furthermore, outsiders who do not know anything about

¹⁸⁷ *Reel Injun*, directed by Neil Diamond (Rezolution Pictures, 2009), 1:25:00, [https:// www.amazon.com/Reel-Injun-Catherine-Bainbridge/dp/B09H212DZH](https://www.amazon.com/Reel-Injun-Catherine-Bainbridge/dp/B09H212DZH).

Kānaka ʻŌiwi may take away only negative impressions as they have no other sources to compare with.

Finally, there is the matter of the United States Armed Forces, who always play a role in these productions. Whether as an omniscience figure in the background or front and center in the leading role, the U.S. Armed Forces remain linked in tangent with Hawaiʻi. This would not initially be a problem if the relationship were shown realistically as the unbalanced bond it is, but that is not so. Instead, film productions go out of their way to portray the U.S. Armed Forces in only the best of light and as a positive and accepted force in Hawaiʻi that the people of the islands respect. There is never any form of criticism or negativity directed at the United States Armed Forces in any manner, nor is there any hint of acknowledgment to the crimes performed under them. Naturally, it is unsurprising that the rest of the United States and the world would be under the impression that the military-industrial complex is a wanted force in Hawaiʻi and is significantly supported by the native and local people, especially with movies like *From Here to Eternity* as evidence to call on.

Thus, knowing all of this, the question remains of how to change this narrative from falsehood to the truth. The most obvious and best recourse is to support the productions of Kānaka ʻŌiwi who know the islands and the history best. Not only will this open up the possibility for new and more accurate representations, but it will also lead to a new genre of film that has not been significantly explored in the last century. A great example of other indigenous groups doing so is the Māori from Aotearoa. They have developed *Kia Manawanui: Kaupapa*

Māori Film Theoretical Framework,¹⁸⁸ which can be a starting point for Māori filmmakers looking to make an indigenous film. As explained by the creator, scholar Angela Moewaka Barnes, in her article: “Kia Manawanui film theory is informed by diverse expressions of Kaupapa Māori, Indigenous and critical media studies, discussions with Māori filmmakers, theorists, and film texts, particularly *Ngati* (1987), *Mauri* (1988) and *Te Tangata Whai Rawa o Wēniti—The Māori Merchant of Venice* (2002). Six key thematic categories emerge: (1) Māori voices, (2) Māori worldviews and concepts, (3) collectivity and relationships, (4) responsibility and accountability, (5) challenge and resistance, and (6) transformation.”¹⁸⁹ Barnes’s work is proof that Kānaka ‘Ōiwi can develop a Hawaiian field of film studies that use an indigenous lens to tell the stories that show the true story of Hawai‘i, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, and the real history behind the military-industrial complex.

An example of a possible theoretical framework at work could consist of the following: 1) Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Voices, 2) Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Concepts, 3) Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Responsibility, and 4) Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Growth. The first, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Voices, is a category that allows Kānaka ‘Ōiwi the freedom to speak and express themselves in film through any means they feel comfortable with. This includes the traditional means of storytelling such as speaking, singing, chanting, and dancing to the more Western styles of filmmaking. No matter the style or type of story though, what matters is that the person creating the tale is a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi. The second category is Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Concepts which recognize the values and cultural practices of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi such

¹⁸⁸ Angela Barnes, “Kia Manawanui: Kaupapa Māori Film Theoretical Framework,” *Mai Journal* 07, no.01 (January 2018): 03, DOI: 10.20507/MAIJournal.2018.7.1.1.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

as the Kumulipo¹⁹⁰ and mo‘okū‘auhau¹⁹¹ to cultural practices such as canoe making, diving, lo‘i¹⁹² and many more. The third, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Responsibility, is recognizing our history from the very first Native Hawaiian to draw breath to present day Hawai‘i and all the stories of our kūpuna that exists between it. Whether it be good or bad, we must acknowledge our history in all its glory for it is the foundation that holds our people up. The fourth and final category is Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Growth which looks to the future and offers us possibilities of what we could accomplish if the opportunity is only taken. After all, storytelling is an art practiced in Hawaiian culture since time immemorial. Whether the means be through oral storytelling to hula to singing to artwork, we have expressed our mo‘olelo in some form. Filmmaking is just a new means of expressing our stories from our point of view.

In conclusion, *From Here to Eternity* is, visually, a fairly decent movie with talented performances by the actors and a decent storyline. But it is a movie based on lies, misconceptions, and ignorance. That it remains synonymous with the identity of Hawai‘i is a travesty that must be corrected. Hawai‘i and her people are so much more than a mere background for a Hollywood tale and deserve to be shown as such. The narrative of the islands, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, and the relationship with the U.S. Armed Forces should be portrayed honestly by those who know it best. Ultimately, there are better options available and people better equipped to tell the story of Hawai‘i than people who have never set foot on its sandy beaches.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 182: origin, genesis, source of life, mystery; name of the Hawaiian creation chant.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 254: genealogical succession, pedigree.

¹⁹² Ibid., 209: irrigated terrace, especially for taro, but also for rice; paddy.

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