

STAGING IDENTITY: THE INTRACULTURAL THEATER OF HAWAI'I

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DEDICATION

For Elsie Kimiko Toyama Choy
and in memory of Samuel Choy

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Abstract

Staging Identity: The Intercultural Theater of Hawai'i

by Sammie L. Choy

The theater of contemporary Hawai'i has never had an extensive study, nor have its characteristics been separated out from under the all-inclusive term, "Asian American." The term is neither precise nor accurate when applied to Hawai'i or its theater.

This study was prompted by the incongruity of a Hawaiian-themed play by a Native Hawaiian playwright published in an Asian American theater anthology. Oddly, there was no acknowledgement in the collection's introduction of the dissonance between *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* and the Asian American plays. It is only in the brief explanatory text directly pertaining to Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's play that the indigenous is addressed at all – most of the introduction is concerned with political and cultural issues specifically concerning Asian Americans in the United States (Hawai'i is not separated out). This inclusion suggested several conclusions – that indigeneity is considered either subordinate or equivalent to immigrant status; that the "Asian American experience" is the same nationwide; that cultural coherence may be imposed by the demographically dominant; and that the theatrical output of Pacific and Oceania may be arbitrarily subsumed by Asian America. Challenging these assumptions required that theater in Hawai'i be analyzed as a discrete category. I use Rustom Bharucha's nomenclature of

“intracultural theater” to characterize Hawai‘i’s theater in order to account for the proximity of both the Local and the Hawaiian, and Stuart Hall’s identity theorizing to account for Hawai‘i’s combination of the fluid and the immutable. In order to theorize the Hawaiian separately, I use Manulani Aluli Meyer’s system of Hawaiian epistemology, as well as Native American literary theory. I explore the use of languages – Hawaiian, Hawai‘i Creole English, and Standard English – and situate the plays in their historical, political, and cultural specificity. The Local plays are analyzed for commonalities in the social imaginary they represent: that of people mainly of color – many times of Asian ancestry, sometimes Hawaiian, sometimes Caucasian – whose history of conflict, accommodation, colonialism, and immigration is reflected in a unique body of theatrical work.

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Figure 1. Comparison of Census 2000 demographics: Hawai'i and the
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Introduction – Chapter One

I. Statement of Problem

In 1997, Temple University Press published a new anthology of plays. Edited by playwright Velina Hasu Houston, the collection was entitled But Still, Like Air, I'll Rise: New Asian American Plays. The book is one of the first Asian American theater anthologies and, according to Roberta Uno's foreword, the title¹ itself "interrupts the thought that Asian American theater exists in a bipolar relationship exclusively to a Eurocentric, mainstream theater (xi)."² To that end, the anthology contains previously unpublished plays by American authors of Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, mixed race, Vietnamese, Korean . . . and Hawaiian ancestry. Hawaiian? The Hawaiian playwright here is Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, and the play is *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*. Editor Houston, in her introduction states that, "We are fortunate to have these unique playwrights of Asian descent – and often Asian dissent – residing here in the United States. They lift stereotypes to the wind, broaden the perspectives of ethnic identities of color, and flood people's understanding, in the hope of greater ethnic tolerance (xvi)." And so they do. But Hawaiian?

Reading through the eleven plays in this volume, I was struck by the breadth of experience revealed and the acuity with which these writers describe their communities to themselves and their audiences. Houston did the field of Asian American theater a great service by collecting these works and, by publishing them, gave previous marginalized voices a place at the table of American theater. She has

¹ The phrase, "But still, like air, I'll rise," quotes a Maya Angelou poem. The following verse serves as the collection's epigraph: "Just like moons and like suns,/With the certainty of tides,/Just like hopes springing high.../But still, like air, I'll rise." From "Still I Rise."

² That the titular poem is by an African American poet apparently disrupts the imprecise bipolarity.

also, by including Kneubuhl's play, casually subsumed two distinct groups of people, both of which reside in Hawai'i – Locals and Hawaiians – neither of which are categorically Asian American.

This dissertation looks at the theater of Hawai'i, specifically the plays written in Hawai'i about Hawai'i, to discern how the works of the playwrights of Hawai'i are distinctly *of* Hawai'i. The investigation also challenges the inclusion of plays of Hawai'i under the general rubric of Asian America by investigating the knowledge and assumptions that support the plays written in Hawai'i about Hawai'i, as well as the languages in which they choose to voice their concerns. I recognize that Asian American theater and the theater of Hawai'i may have superficial similarities, but, following Stuart Hall, "there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (225).

Susan Koshy, in "The Fiction of Asian American Literature", comments on the policies of inclusion and pluralism that have come to dominate the field:

...much of the scholarship in the field has either continued to rely on paradigms of ethnicity produced in the inaugural moment of the field, or has sought to incorporate the changes through the fashionable but derivative vocabulary of post-modernism, post-colonialism or post-structuralism; formulaic invocations of "multiculturalism," "hybridity," "plural identities," or "border-crossing" are used promiscuously without any effort to link them to the material, cultural

or historical specificities of the various Asian American experiences.

(316)

In commentary that enlarges on Koshy's thesis, Singh and Schmidt address South Asians' role in Asian American studies. Taking South Asia as an example, they note the dilemma of accounting for vastly different cultural backgrounds, waves of immigration from nations of East, Southeast, South, Middle (and West?) Asia, and the problem of reckoning with the many nations of Oceania whose peoples have both remained at home and immigrated to the United States. They quote Sucheta Mazumdar when they observe that "it would be thoroughly ironic...if Asian American studies 'should become the vehicle for a process of homogenization of immigrants which strips away multiple layers of ethnic identity in favor of a single census category'" (43). Their point is applicable not only to defining Asian America, but to the challenge of acknowledging the differences between Hawai'i and the continent, an admission that might destabilize the underpinnings of the Asian American political narrative.

While Singh and Schmidt focus on Asian Americans, and Koshy is referring specifically to Asian American literature produced by Asian Americans on the continental United States, their arguments may be simultaneously enlarged and narrowed to contest the inclusion of the theater of Hawai'i and Oceania, or the Pacific, within the rubric of a pan-ethnic Asian America. It is the material, cultural, and historical specificities of Hawai'i and the Pacific as expressed in Hawai'i's theater that this study investigates, in other words, to a social imaginary. "The way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings . . . is often not expressed in

theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories, and legends” (Taylor “Modern” 106). Charles Taylor is referring to a set of commonly held beliefs, or “the common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (“Modern” 106).³ This proposition will be the lens through which Hawai‘i’s theater will be scrutinized. And I argue that these works reveal multiple identities that, recognized and observed in context, provide a social imaginary peculiar to Hawai‘i.

I suggest that the construction of a social imaginary depends upon what Stuart Hall has called “positions of enunciation” (“Cultural Identity” 222). While Hall was speaking of a black cinema, the concept is equally applicable to other specific ethnic and pan-ethnic groups’ theatrical expression. From what point of view is a story expressed? What are the historical and material assumptions and knowledge that support this point of view? What shared memories are implicit in the work? Are the same historical events viewed differently by constituent groups? How does the awareness of history affect the characters? What does a “period” piece have to do with the current social imaginary?

Karen Shimakawa, in her work on abject Asian America, points out thematic similarities between Asian American theater on the continent and in Hawai‘i:

³ Dilip Paraweshmar Gaonkar’s description of social imaginaries as “. . . ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life” (4) implies an intuitive understanding of the term that does not rely merely upon the theoretical. Here, lived experience is equally critical. For Goankar (building upon the work of Benedict Anderson and Charles Taylor), “They are first-person subjectivities that build upon implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices. They are embedded in the habitus of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols, and the like. They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are the means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world” (4)

“generational conflict, racism, cultural assimilation, hardships faced by immigrants including mistreatment by and in the dominant culture” (63), all themes clearly represented in the Asian American theatrical canon. Velina Hasu Houston’s autobiographical family plays *Asa Ga Kimashita*, *American Dreams*, and *Tea* deal with “picture brides” from Japan and their struggle to raise American families and survive in an often-hostile alien home. *Carry the Tiger to the Mountain* by Cherylene Lee retells the story of the murder of Vincent Chin through his mother’s efforts to bring his white killers to justice.⁴ A defining historical event for Japanese American men was their enlistment in the United States Army’s 100th Battalion and the 442nd Infantry during World War II, inspiring a number of plays and providing a backdrop for the championing of Asian American identity.

Briefly commenting on how theatrical works from Hawai’i and the continent differ, Shimakawa states that “Asian American theater companies emerged in response to the abjection of Asian Americanness in dominant cultural performance venues, through erasure and/or orientalized objectification” (National Abjection, 62). There is no theater in Hawai’i that produces a discrete program of Asian American plays; Kumu Kahua Theater’s mission of producing plays for the people of Hawai’i would come closest to that intent. While Shimakawa observes that Asian American plays from the continent and “local Asian American” plays originating in Hawai’i are thematically similar, she also acknowledges an underlying difference. In Hawai’i,

⁴ Vincent Chin, a Chinese American engineer, was beaten to death in 1982 by two Detroit autoworkers who blamed Japan and its auto industry for domestic economic difficulties. Though the attack was clearly a hate crime, the instigators received very lenient sentences; the murder became a focal point for Asian American activists.

... where Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up a majority of the population (outnumbering whites by more than two to one), the process of abjection that gives rise to mainland Asian American abjection does not operate in the same manner. Economic, political, and social power operate according to different racialized and ethnic divisions. (62-63)

Shimakawa's observations are well taken. Given the difference in demographics, unique cultural mix, and the divergent immigrant histories, particularly that of Asians in the continental United States and in Hawai'i, it is highly unlikely that the perspectives from which art might arise would follow identical developmental lines. In other words, playwrights of Asian descent raised in Hawai'i will presumably perceive their place in American society and culture quite differently from those raised on the continent. And any analysis of Hawai'i's theater must include those Native Hawaiian works that spring from an indigenous positioning that is incongruent with Asian American immigrant theorizing.

The Hawai'i plays cited in this study were all produced within an eight-year period – 2000 through 2008 – at Kumu Kahua Theater in Honolulu. These five-production seasons were almost entirely composed of plays written by Hawai'i-resident playwrights. The works met Kumu Kahua's stated purpose of producing plays "by, about, and for the people of Hawai'i."⁵ The plays' themes, focus on ethnicity, settings, and genres vary widely. When combined, they provide an

⁵ Kumu Kahua Theatre will occasionally produce a play by a writer from outside Hawai'i. Examples are *Tea* by Velina Hasu Houston (2005), *A Language of Their Own* by Chay Yew (2001), and *The Songmaker's Chair* by Albert Wendt (2006).

accretion of culture that offers a thick background against which to understand the norms that govern them. I have chosen to use this set of plays as examples, at least partially, because I was a member of Kumu Kahua's board of directors and its play development committee during the eight-year period and am familiar with the texts and their productions. While this study does not specifically address issues surrounding on-stage theatrical representation and performance, it will incorporate the experience of having seen the productions to support the textual analysis.

II. Background

Hawai'i as a state and a conflated people is often included under the rubric of "Asian American," or "Asian Pacific American," or "Asian Pacific Islander." The term Asian Pacific American (APA)⁶ has become a convenient and comprehensive shorthand designation that embraces wholesale all Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. While no longer in use by the United States Census Bureau, which first coined the term, it has proved to have a longer shelf-life in literary, cultural, and ethnic studies fields. APA, however, has a particularly fraught history for an appellation so relatively recent. Maxine Hong Kingston, in her book, Hawai'i One Summer, refers to an Asian Pacific American writers conference in the late 1970s where "The name *Asian Pacific American* had barely been thought, and many people denied every term in it" (xii). Regardless of the term's unwieldiness, it has entered common usage.

⁶ The United States Census Bureau used the term "Asian-Pacific American" as an officially categorized "race" in its 1990 census form. That designation has since been abandoned, and different Asian American and Pacific Islander choices, as well as a write-in section, were separately available on the 2000 census form. Respondents could check one or more selections, providing for mixed-race specification. Additionally, South Asians now may self-identify as "Asian" on the US census, a radical change from the previous "Other White," formerly their official racial designation.

The addition of “Pacific,” to “Asian American,” however, is not universally accepted. The 14th Biennial Asian/Pacific American Midwest Student Conference in 2006 contained within its online mission statement the declaration: “We will analyze the troublesome nomenclature of “Asian/Pacific American,” specifically the political ramifications of including Pacific Islanders within the category of “Asian American.” The participants in this conference “challenged the arbitrary categorization of Pacific Islanders within Asian America by the United States government in 1990.” The Kent Ono-edited Asian American Studies After Critical Mass devotes a chapter by J. Kehaulani Kauanui to “Asian American Studies and the ‘Pacific Question’,” in which she extricates Pacific Islanders from a smothering and sometimes obscuring inclusion in Asian America. She urges “scholars to engage areas of inquiry concerning Pacific Islanders on a *comparative* basis in relation to Asian Americans, just as they might do with African American studies, Latino studies, and Native American studies” (125-6, emphasis in original text). Amy Stillman, in her paper “Pacific-ing Asian Pacific American History,” mentions the “ongoing negotiations around the positioning of Pacific Islands Studies scholars and scholarship, and the Pacific Islander communities on whom the scholarship focuses” (241). Stillman challenges the perception of an empty Pacific, conceptualized as such because it has no “major” landmasses. Her thesis is that the Pacific, far from being a void, is actually a “highway over which islanders travel between and among islands and island groups” (245). She utilizes a traditional Pacific Islander worldview to suggest the one-sidedness and myopia of Western mappings of population, travel, and cultural and political relationships. And Vincente M. Diaz, in

his article “To ‘P’ or Not to ‘P’? Marking the Territory Between Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies,” states unequivocally that “under no circumstances should Pacific Islanders, or Pacific Islands Studies, be subsumed under the institutional framework of Asian American history and experiences. Though I’m sure no one wishes this to be the case, the question of just how Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies are articulated together will always raise the specter of unequal power relations” (184).

On the federal front, however, there has been no such disturbance in the force, with May legally appointed Asian Pacific Heritage Month by President George H. W. Bush in 1992 (preceded in 1978 by a Joint Resolution signed by President Jimmy Carter proclaiming the first ten days in May as Asian/Pacific Week). These designations still stand.

The label APA has always seemed strained to me: while the Pacific (presumably including the entire multiethnic population of the Pacific) is given mention, it seems that the concerns and topics subsequently addressed are most often of critical and essential interest to Asian Americans living on the continental United States. In other words, it appears that the experiences and concerns of the people of Pacific Islander ancestry are simply given lip service. For example, Lingyan Yang’s “Theorizing Asian America: On Asian American and Postcolonial Asian Diasporic Women Intellectuals”, in a section on “the firmly historicized and intensely diverse diasporic, transnational, global or postcolonial perspectives (164)” includes a list of major contributors to the discourse. But when she cites Haunani

Kay Trask⁷, a Native Hawaiian scholar/activist between Filipina American Jessica Hagedorn and Japanese American Stephen Sumida⁸, the incongruity is disconcerting. It is as though the APA has been assumed to be so all encompassing as to identify the diverse peoples of the Pacific with Asian immigrant populations, thereby ignoring the existence and claims of indigenous peoples – a surprising thesis in a post-colonial academic world.

The question of including Hawai'i residents of Asian descent as Asian American is a separate question, and one that is more difficult to articulate in the face of the predominantly Pacific Islander-based objections to inclusion under Asian American. However, in introducing a special Pacific Islander issue of the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Davianna Pomaika'i McGregor said

We note that the dynamics of race, class, and gender in Hawai'i constitute another project in and of itself . . . Hawai'i also provides interesting contrasts between the experiences of Asian Americans in the U.S. as compared to Hawai'i—in regard to the phenomenon of the 'local'; the high rate of intermarriage by Native Hawaiians with Chinese and Filipinos; and the issue of why Japanese Americans from the West Coast but not from Hawai'i were interned during World War II. (ix)

⁷ Yang's text reads thusly: "Haunani Kay Trask's *From a Native Daughter* is a Fanonian Hawaiian indigenous feminist insurgent rewriting of the Euro-American colonial history of Hawaii as well as decolonizing historical and cultural self-representation of the indigenous Hawaiian nation and women" (165).

⁸ In Yang's comments on Stephen Sumida, she notes that his scholarship consistently addresses "Hawaiian literary history (165)." I would suggest that Sumida has a history of critically examining *Local* literary history, and that Yang has fallen into the trap of eliding the Native Hawaiian and the State.

It is the notion of the 'local' – or Local, as it shall be termed in this study to identify its use as a name for a particular group of Hawai'i residents – as understood and lived in Hawai'i that disrupts the Asian American construct.

In the interests of full disclosure . . .

The inconsistencies and contrasts in nomenclature, literature, and lived experience are what led me to this study. I write from the perspective of a woman born into a Hawai'i-based, non-Native family. My Okinawan maternal grandmother was born on Maui, and my Korean father was born in Wahiawa on the island of O'ahu. My family participates in at least some aspects of what is generally considered Local.⁹

After I was born in Dallas, Texas, the family moved back to the islands, where we stayed, living on Maui and O'ahu, until moving to Korea when I was ten. The years in English language foreign schools were probably what initially prompted an awareness of the differences between Hawai'i and the rest of the world, but it was not until much later when I was living in San Francisco during the 1990s and working as an actor that I learned to be Asian American. I attribute this to several factors: 1) the Bay Area's justifiable reputation for being a hotbed of radical and liberal thought and action, and 2) the Asian American plays in which I was cast and the Asian American actors with whom I associated. I was thus educated both actively and subliminally as to the actual lived experience of being a member of a minority working in a repressive, albeit usually benign, dominant culture

⁹ Four categories of "being local" are cited in Chris Sun Leong's 1997 dissertation, " 'You Local or What?' An Exploration of Identity in Hawaii [sic]." They include "1) born and raised in Hawaii, 2) race/identity, 3) lower socio-economic strata, and 4) attitudes" (211). My family would identify with the first and second criteria most closely, with the fourth also having significant weight.

environment. This state of being was distinctly different from what I had experienced in Hawai'i.

III. Aims and Fundamentals

A. Principal Questions

The dissertation is organized around particular issues that arise when the theater of Hawai'i is examined on an equal basis with Asian American plays, rather than being organized around individual plays, themes, or chronology. The principal question that guides this investigation is: what shared knowledge as assumed in a Hawai'i play is unmistakably unique to Hawai'i? To answer that question, I address the following areas: what theories might aid in the articulation of Hawai'i's theater; how does Hawai'i theater reflect the ways in which the Local and Hawaiian are produced, historically and materially; how do language choices reflect the Hawai'i imaginary; how are the plays racialized from within and without (that is, how is race awareness expressed in the plays); and what is the nature of belonging in Hawai'i for the indigenous people of Hawai'i and for the descendents of immigrants?

B. Theoretical Foundations

I find that Karen Shimakawa's positioning of Asian Americans in *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* underscores the difference between Asian American and Local sensibilities, at the least in terms of self-perception. It is tremendously useful as a springboard from which to distinguish Hawai'i sensibilities both historically and materially. Here is Shimakawa's thesis:

I want to suggest that Asian Americanness functions as *abject* in relation to Americanness. Julia Kristiva defines *abjection* as both a

state and a process – the condition/position of that which is deemed loathsome and the process by which that appraisal is made . . . It is, for her, the means by which the subject/“I” is produced: by establishing perceptual and conceptual borders around the self and “jettison[ing]” that which is deemed objectionable, the subject comes into (and maintains) self-consciousness. (3)

In other words, the “I” in her analysis is the ideal United States citizen that is defined and maintained by identifying the Asian as abject, as other, and loathsome. Lisa Lowe concurs, saying “In the last century and a half, the American *citizen* has been defined over against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally” (4, emphasis in the original). For Shimakawa, the founding of Asian American theaters on the continent was in direct reaction and opposition to this definition, making Asian American theater a defiant space in which to redefine oneself.

But can Native Hawaiians be theorized in this way? What about the Chinese, Japanese, Korea, Filipino, and other descendents of Asian immigrants to Hawai‘i? Are the Hawai‘i residents of color positioned as abject to white American citizens also residing in the state? Using Shimakawa’s thesis of minority abjection, can the demographic and political majority of Hawai‘i be considered abject? I propose the opposite, because “In the islands, whiteness is not the normative transparent center, and never was” (Roher 4). This difference is revealed in its strong contrast with the demographics of the continental United States. I suggest that the cultural self-positioning of Asian American citizens of Hawai‘i has diverged from that of Asian Americans whose frame of reference is restricted to the abjection of their minority

status on the continent. While modern Hawai'i theater has some commonality with Asian American theater in that it too was first created in response to a perceived lack or need, the subject matter and perspectives embodied in the theatrical works to be examined in this dissertation present, far from a sense of abjection, a confidence and sense of belonging that is unique to Hawai'i culture.

It is difficult to find a metanarrative that adequately takes into account the various narratives that contribute to contemporary Hawai'i. These narratives may stand alone, and often do, depending on the writer's ethnicity and political bent. When so abstracted, the narratives may serve a worthy polemical purpose that has little to do with the whole. However, if the critique wishes to understand how the disparate parts co-exist and interrelate, I suggest that what is needed to discuss Hawai'i's theater is an *intracultural* approach. This is one proposed by Rustom Bharucha not only for its ability to mediate across ethnic, regional, and class lines, but because of its potential for generating a sense of identity – national, in his case (India), and for Hawai'i the state, an articulated demonstration of internal diversity that aggregates into a multifaceted whole.

Another school of thought – the borders school – offers a narrative of frontiers instead of assimilation. This narrative suggests that rather than breaking down differences among communities and creating an America of “different (and plural) cultural space,” a preferable model may be “the border or *la frontera*, that is neither the site of assimilation nor the marking of an alien Other” (Singh, Schmidt 13). Such a model stresses the importance of, among other elements, a “pan-ethnicity – the importance of making alliances among Native American tribes, Asian

American or Latino/a ethnicities, etc., as well as the strategies for using new understandings of shared cultural history for 'bonding in difference,' for making ties across cultural boundaries (Singh, Schmidt 14)." I suggest that this understanding of borders and a pluralistic cultural space is critical in comprehending and defining Hawai'i's theater, especially as it is differentiated against the Asian American theater of the continental United States.

The Asian American narrative I absorbed while living in California was essentially

... a convenient designation that can be used to identify those persons of Asian descent in the United States who are interested in maintaining their diverse ethnic heritages and willing to struggle to shape their boundaries and directions. (Lane Ryo Hirabayashi and Marilyn Caballero, quoted in Kauanui, "Asian American Studies and the 'Pacific Question'" 137)

According to Esther Kim Lee, "Historian Yuji Ichioka coined the term 'Asian American' in the second half of the 1960s as he and others of the Asian American movement rejected 'oriental' as racist and imperialistic" (7) and this movement, post-dating the African American and Chicano movements, was one of the last "ethnic-consciousness movements" (93). These definitions reflect the political origins of the term Asian American, one that, like other ethnic designations (African American, for instance), at once defies assimilation into the American whole and claims membership in the body politic.

Shimakawa's definition parallels Hirabayashi's and Caballero's: " 'Asian American-ness' as a pan-ethnic, *self*-identified political and social coalition/identity is a mid-to late-twentieth century creation, an antiracist coalitional strategy . . ." (2). I understand this to denominate Asian American as a political and cultural designation that encompasses both current immigrants and descendants of immigrants from anywhere in Asia: from India to Indonesia to Japan.

If Asian American is such a broadly defined term, it may follow that Asian Pacific American is even more encompassing. It would need to be, if it embraces *all* Pacific Islanders, from Polynesia (including Hawai'i, New Zealand, Samoa, American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tahiti, the Society Islands, the Marquesas, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotu Archipelago), Melanesia (including New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, Bougainville Island, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Norfolk Island and others), and Micronesia (including Kiribati, Guam, Nauru, the Northern Marianas, the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia, among others). The Pacific is full, indeed, and its inclusion packs Asian America to the point of congestion.

The literature cited previously is concerned with uncoupling the Pacific from Asian America and sees Hawai'i as only one part of an overstuffed Asian Pacific America. This study focuses on Hawai'i, autonomous and independent of the Asian Pacific America designation. Additionally, were these two areas – Asian America and the Pacific – to be separated the potential remains for Hawai'i to be claimed as a subject of both Pacific Island Studies *and* Asian American Studies, given the various national origins and ethnic self-identifications of its people. This division is further

complicated by the self-identification of its residents, which further disrupts an easy classification.

Hawai'i residents of Native Hawaiian descent are, correctly, Hawaiian, but that identification is distorted by the fact that, outside the state, the term "Hawaiian" is commonly used by nonresidents of the state to denote *all* residents of Hawai'i, regardless of ethnic or racial heritage, much as the term "Californian" does for residents of that state. Residents of Hawai'i, if they are not of Native Hawaiian ancestry, know that they are not Hawaiian. Nomenclature must be clarified, not only for ostensible meaning, but also for the context within which the term is used.

Adding another layer of complexity is the fact that, since 1898, Hawai'i has participated in the political organization of the United States, designates standard English as one of its state languages (the other is Hawaiian), its educational system conforms to national norms, and commerce follows American procedures and conventions. With all the attendant complications of identity in Hawai'i, I suggest that cultural identity here, then, amounts to what Stuart Hall identifies as a fluid positioning, "differential points along a sliding scale" (228, 1993). For him, identity does not originate nor remain in a fixed position and, even though his context was the Caribbean and its *mélange*, this theory of contingency is applicable to Hawai'i and its people.

Common references to a "melting pot" when speaking of Hawai'i's mix of cultures imply that the state's essential character has, over the years of mixing, intermarrying, and integration, become homogeneous. This assumption masks the complications of diversity and the stresses of cultural heterogeneity while, I

contend, glossing over the reality of quotidian complexity that is life in Hawai'i. With different waves of immigration and varying levels of education and class, not even single immigrant ethnic groups always have commonality. Complicating all this is the fact that Hawai'i is also a part of the United States since 1959, a fully-fledged state after years as a territory, with the myths of unity and equality that statehood brings. This "state" is further destabilized by a Native Hawaiian activism that has is bringing awareness of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, sovereignty, and ceded land issues to the (relative) forefront of local consciousness, while also promoting these issues on the national stage. Further, the notion of Hawai'i as home to all residents, both Asian and haole as well as Native Hawaiian, is contested by scholars who deride the claiming of the land as home by those who are perceived as "settlers," i.e., the descendents of Asian and other immigrant peoples. This theory of Asian Settler Colonialism contends that settlers can never be "home" without displacing indigenous peoples, thereby disallowing all claims to belonging to the land by any but Native Hawaiians.¹⁰

Clearly, the notion of identity is the question at the heart of these conflicting narratives. Stuart Hall's often-quoted view of cultural identity being "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 225) is critical to an understanding of how history and diverging relationships to place and power have shaped the identities of Asian Americans, Locals, and Hawaiians.

In terms of how the Asian American self is expressed theatrically, I again reference Karen Shimakawa when she states that "Read as abject, Asian

¹⁰ For writing on the settler colonialism issue in Hawai'i, see Seri Luangphinit, Jonathan Okamura, Candace Fujikane, Haunani-Kay Trask, Mahmood Madani, and Eric Chock.

Americanness thus occupies a role both necessary to and mutually constitutive of national subject formation – *but it does not result in the formation of an Asian American subject or even an Asian American object* (emphasis in text)” (3). In other words, as alien and “other,” Asian America assists in the definition of the United States by providing what the nation is not. Moreover, the condition of Asian Americanness is conflated with that of the Asian, ensuring that neither can ever be authentically American. For Shimakawa, Asian American theater engages and challenges this model

either by portraying that exclusionary process and the suffering of Asian Americans so excluded or by ‘disproving’ the ‘false’ stereotypes that are produced as a result of abjection, refuting them with the portrayal of ‘real’ Asian Americans who do not conform to those types.
(77)

This defiance of the dominant culture assumptions is entirely defensible for Asian Americans who are a minority living on the continent as quotidian other in relation to the dominant culture. However, Asian Americans (taking the term to denote a panethnicity that includes both immigrants and descendents of immigrants from East, Southeast, and South Asia) in Hawai’i are not a “minority” group. While this category is no longer in the majority, demographic records continue to underscore their position as the largest ethnic identification in the islands.¹¹ The

¹¹ The categories and corresponding charted here are not differentiated by specific nationality, e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean. These identities are later separated out in the United States Census Bureau’s report.

United States 2000 Census figures underscore this rather starkly when population demographics are compared.

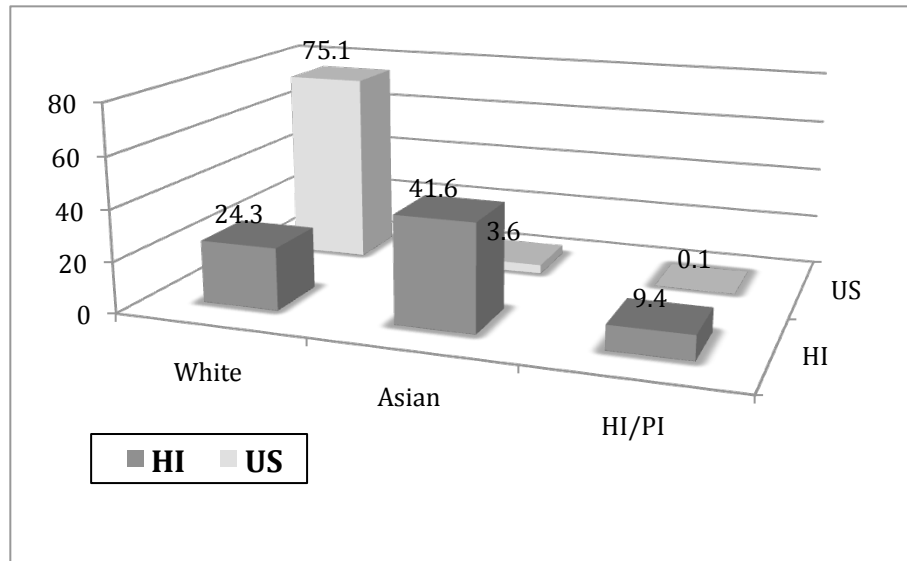


Fig. 1 Comparison of Census 2000 demographics: Hawai'i and the United States (data from US Census Bureau). Only the three categories are charted; therefore, figures will not add up to one hundred percent.

Seen graphically, the group self-identifying as Asian is demographically dominant in Hawai'i, with the ratio being a little below two to one with those self-identifying as White. For the United States as a whole, however, Asians constitute a mere 3.6 percent, a miniscule fraction of the dominant 75 percent identifying as White. And while those identifying as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander are so few as to be statistically irrelevant on the continent, in Hawai'i their proportions are significantly higher.¹²

An apologetic for Hawai'i demographic development, Jonathan Okamura's article "Why There Are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i" points up the integral

¹² "Asians" here refers to all residents of Asian ancestry regardless of birth or length of time lived in the United States.

differences between the residents of Asian descent in Hawai'i and those on the continental United States. He indicates the "Local" as Hawai'i's pan-ethnic self-identity, in contrast to Asian American. This version of pan-ethnicity varies from the Asian American model in a critical way: Local is not solely Asian. Chris Sun Leong's dissertation, "You Local or What?" An Exploration of Identity in Hawai'i," cites a number of sources in his investigation of what constitutes the Local in Hawai'i (7-39). The consensus was that the Local contains all the groups – including Hawaiians and those of Asian, Portuguese, and other immigrant descent – living in the islands, and many times includes the haole, or Caucasian (this group sometimes designated as "local haole.")

C. Commonalities Between Hawai'i and Asian American Theater

Some similarities are straightforward: 1) like most Asian American plays written on the continent, the Hawai'i written plays may be penned by playwrights of Asian descent; 2) the plays may feature protagonists who were either born in Asia or are of Asian descent. Themes that deal with cultural and individual consequences of immigration are common to both, especially in the plays that examine the early days of Asian immigration in Hawai'i and the United States. However it is in how the plays deal with the theme of identity that they diverge.

Juliana Chang observes that, in contrast with other ethnic studies, "the central concern of Asian American studies courses is assumed to be identity" (867). That is, while Native American, African American, and Chicano/a literature may focus on political concerns, for example, the Asian American dilemma is perceived to be the struggle to reconcile the "Asian" and "American:" "American-born-and-raised

Asian American subjects are assumed to embody an identity crisis, pulled between Asian cultural tradition and American cultural modernity” (868). Perhaps by virtue of their “alien” appearance¹³, Asian Americans are considered perpetually foreign in the United States. This is the space Asian Americans on the continent inhabit. It is no wonder, then, that their literature explicitly and emphatically demands full participation in the American imaginary. The resistance that, according to this thesis, provokes Asian American literature is not, however, simply a reaction to outsiders’ perception of Asian Americans as “other,” but is also internal, where the subjects themselves are torn between conflicting and (perhaps) equally desirable identities. The Asian American, then, is assumed to embody a state of lifelong alterity imposed by the dominant culture majority and an internalized racism.

This inherent awareness of ethnic alterity may not apply to the situation of the peoples of Hawai‘i. Certainly, for Native Hawaiians, their status as indigenous people substantiates a claim that they are the only ones who “belong.” However, this status is complicated by a long history of oppression and the loss of a kingdom; certainly Hawaiians as a group are not perceived as the dominant culture today. It is difficult to equate their circumstances with that of Asian Americans on the continental United States or with the differentiated lives of the descendents of immigrants to Hawai‘i. Where there is a meeting place, I suggest, is in the Local, a space in which commonalities have been constructed, and where the participants have created each other.

¹³ Alien, that is, against the “norm” of the dominant Caucasian culture.

D. Hawaiian Theater

Hawaiian theater, for the purposes of this study, includes a distinct body of theatrical works that explore pre-contact Hawaiian history and legend, as well as those that consider post-contact life. It incorporates traditional practices such as song and chant or addresses the lived experience of modern Hawaiians (here I refer to Nā Kānaka Maoli, Native Hawaiian, themes, not those having to do with the state as a (il)legally constructed political entity). These works do not contribute to the Asian American stage but are, rather, unmistakably *Hawaiian* theater. These distinctly Hawaiian plays might also include the incorporation of Hawaiian language, traditional dance, and chant. Their primary motifs will likely be Hawai'i's fraught and contested history of imperialism and colonization, and an examination of the lives and struggles of modern Kānaka Maoli. These characteristics are in marked contrast to Asian American experience in Hawai'i, which cannot partake in claims of indigeneity.

The original impetus of this study was the imprecise categorization of Kneubuhl's *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*. As it was produced during the 2002-2003 Kumu Kahua season, it is one of the plays cited here as an example of Hawaiian theater. Initially I had intended to allude to it in the chapters exploring Hawai'i's history and, possibly, racialization. Instead, I found this play relevant in every chapter. As this inquiry proceeds, *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* will contribute paradigms for each of the areas under investigation: history, language, racialization, and belonging. It is ironic that this play, originally published under the rubric of Asian America, should prove to be such an exemplar of Hawaiian theater.

IV. Theatrical history: in Hawai‘i and the continental United States

A. Previous Research

Little research exists in this very specifically defined area: late twentieth century and twenty-first century stage productions written by Locals and Hawaiians, and addressing Local and Hawaiian concerns and themes. Dennis Carroll’s 2000 article “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local’ Theatre” and Justina Mattos’ 2002 dissertation, “The Development of Hawai‘i’s Kumu Kahua Theatre and its Core Repertory: The ‘Local’ plays of Sakamoto, Lum and Kneubuhl” are the salient examples. Both these scholars examine theatrical writing by playwrights of Hawai‘i, not only Native Hawaiian writers, and their works, as the titles indicate, focus on the “local” aspect of the plays.

Mattos’ text tends to conflate the Hawaiian and descendents of immigrant plantation workers as “local.” The common denominator appears to be that these groups shared a subordinate status to the Caucasian “plantation owners, managers and merchants who essentially controlled the government and economy of the islands” (9). Her definition correctly traces the beginnings of the group identity of the “local,” but her mostly unqualified inclusion of Hawaiians (as the indigenous people of the islands) in this grouping is troubling in light of recent scholarship that uncouples the Hawaiian from the local for political and cultural purposes.¹⁴ Carroll’s article, on the other hand, considers the theater in Hawai‘i to be divided into the local Asian American and the local Hawaiian (125).

¹⁴ Mattos’ dissertation, while providing an overview of Kumu Kahua production between 1971 and 1999, focuses on playwrights Edward Sakamoto, Darrell H.Y. Lum, and Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl (Japanese, Chinese, and Hawaiian/Samoan/German, respectively, and all from Hawai‘i).

Certainly the native Hawaiian participates in the Local – as Jonathan Okamura has stated, “they can claim both identities without contradiction” (171). Lisa Kahaleole Hall supports this dual participation when she lists the various immigrant groups who worked on the plantations, sharing similar abuse and subjugation with Native Hawaiians.¹⁵ But she also notes the occasional individual who makes unfounded claims to having Hawaiian ancestors, noting “Those who do not claim to be literally Hawaiian often make a symbolic claim. ‘Hawaiians at heart’ assume that knowing and appreciating Hawaiian culture is enough to transform them into being Hawaiian” (409). Hawaiians stand alone by virtue of their indigenous status, a position that is not transferrable to the islands’ settler population.

One is either Hawaiian or one is not – as Hall and others point out (Hall 405, Trask 169, Kauanui 150). Genealogy is the determinant, regardless of the desire to be “Hawaiian at heart.” Add this ethnic appropriation by the “Hawaiian at heart” to the deracination caused by the tourist industry’s ongoing commodification of Hawaiian culture and the relative invisibility of Hawaiians within the Local construct,¹⁶ and supplanted indigeneity is the result – a result that both distorts and arrogates Hawaiian-ness. Carroll has observed that “The rise of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement exacerbates the division between two groups [descendants of Asian immigrants and Hawaiians] within local theatre” (124). I agree that the

¹⁵ These groups include immigrants from “Japan, Puerto Rico, Scotland, China, Germany, Portugal, and more (406).”

¹⁶ This is also true of the Pacific Islanders supposedly embraced by the term “Asian Pacific Islander.” More often than not, attention to the Pacific and its peoples are given initial attention in scholarly work, with the bulk of the consideration then devoted to Asian American issues, of concern mainly on the continent.

distinctions have been both magnified and fine-tuned by the movement that calls for sovereignty and indigenous rights from a hegemonic United States.

What then would an anticolonial, or decolonizing, research position entail?¹⁷ An attention to methodology, for one: as L. T. Smith points out, “Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analysis” (143). Another critical point is the operative and persistent awareness that “non-Western/indigenous voices and epistemologies are silenced and subjects lack agency within such representations” and analyses of indigenous work (Swadener, Mutua 33). In other words, using only Western methods of representation and intelligence in an indigenous research environment reinforces a colonial, parochial mindset that perpetuates the effacing of indigenous wisdom (38).

For the purposes for analyzing Hawaiian theater, then, I use a methodology that draws from indigenous knowledge. In other words, theatrical works of Hawaiian playwrights will be interpreted, insofar as possible by a non-Hawaiian scholar, within the context of indigenous knowledge and history. This proposition, especially as it applies to the analysis of modern works, is in line with those advanced by indigenous scholars who are developing, in Smith’s words, “theories ... which attempt to explain our existence in contemporary society” (38). While Smith’s advocacy seems to focus on social science research, I suggest that the processes utilized by Western literary analysts also need to be scrutinized and decolonized. I do not mean to advocate for a “Go-It-Alone” option, in which dominant culture

¹⁷ The terms *decolonizing* and *anticolonizing* are used as equivalents here, though Graham Smith has argued that the former “still foregrounds colonization” (Swadener, Mutua 33).

techniques and methodologies are anathema (West 21-22). Rather, I follow Smith's model that proposes a more holistic orientation for indigenous research.

Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (39)

The labeling of Pacific Islanders as Asian American is jarring, if only because of the disparity of origins. While relying solely on originary status to define a people is perhaps gratuitously essentialist, deploying that status as one of many contributory factors is not. In order to map out the territory to be explored in this dissertation, I will use Gayatri Spivak's strategy of using essentialism as a tool of a minority or oppressed group against a hegemonic or dominant majority in my response to the eliding of difference and divergence in the definitions of Asian American and Local as they seem to be assumed by academics and theater practitioners on the continent, and particularly as they apply to the theater of Hawai'i. It will also be the mechanism by which I construct Asian American, Hawaiian, and Local as discrete entities under the rubric of Hawai'i theater, demonstrating the disparities among the three areas. In this context, specifically defined, I see the greater Asian American theater community (again, on the continent) as outsiders viewing Hawai'i theater through the prism of their own history and experience, and thus failing to recognize differences arising from an idiosyncratic past.

The themes arising from Hawaiian and Pacific origins and the goals that develop from subsequent historical events – colonization, the overthrow of the Hawaiian throne, material and spiritual exploitation – are distinctly different from those of Asian America. In fact, if Hawaiians are distinct by virtue of their status as an indigenous people, then Native American theorizing may be more correlative.

Here I must note that the Native American model does not precisely parallel the Native Hawaiian. The circumstances of their historical relationship vis-à-vis the United States are not correlative, especially regarding the Hawaiian Kingdom's status as an independent nation, Native American treaties, the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom, etc. However, there is much in current Native American thought that may provide a springboard for theorizing Hawaiian performance literature, particularly as it reflects the social imaginary perceived by Hawaiian writers.

In the study of indigenous literature, Native American scholars have been instrumental in the quest to decolonize the study and analysis of works by indigenous writers. Penelope Myrtle Kelsey in *Tribal Theory in Native American Literature: Dakota and Haudenosaunee Writing and Indigenous Worldviews* says

What I would like to suggest is that Native American epistemology and worldviews might be used for the purposes of reading Native texts in culturally appropriate ways *and* that a sophisticated reading of this sort that explores the contours and minutiae of key cultural concepts constitutes a legitimate theoretical practice that has hitherto remained unrecognized. (2)

She goes on to express her concern that “using Western-derived theory has been a concern for re-colonizing Native texts” (3). Dee Horne concurs, saying “When non-Natives construct the category of American Indian literature, they are often perceived by American Indians and others as creating a false homogeneity (xiv).” Moreover, interpretation of an indigenous work within the bounds of a European worldview runs the risk of excising the relationship to place that is at the heart of indigeneity. To Lisa Brooks, when Native stories have been “translated, simplified, slaughtered, stripped of context and meaning, to be reshaped into a recognizable artifact” (234) by European critical theories, it amounts to a “recolonization, an allotment and redistribution, a process of ordering and containment” (236). Frantz Fanon’s analysis in *The Wretched of the Earth* also supports the statement of the problem when he observed that “Indigenous writing has suffered many of the general historical problems of post-colonial writing, being incorporated into the national literatures of the settler colonies as an ‘extension’ rather than as a separate discourse” (29). And Lee Schweninger and Cara Ciano quote Donna Kay Maeda when they write, “liberal neutrality, objectivity, and universal individualism actually project and hide privileged group positionings” (42), revealing the effacing effect of Western solipsism. Stephen Pritchard concurs, saying

The representation of indigenous cultures as forms or types of culture, like the translation of terms between cultures, requires an assumed common ground, shared context, or set of concepts...the possibility of translation implies a commonality, and yet, in the

colonial context, it has tended to result in the reduction of one (language, term, perspective, and so forth) to the other. (89)

So how is one to proceed in analyzing the indigenous theater of Hawai'i without incorporating it into Asian American theater with its attendant paradigms and analytical models? Chadwick Allen in *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* observes that "orthodox postcolonial critics often fail to understand how discourses that intersect with the controversial blood/land/memory complex, including the discourse of treaties, might appear cogent for indigenous activists and writers" (30-1). He is offering a hint as to what such analysis might include, i.e., a theoretical approach oriented to native knowledge and connection with location. Craig Womack echoes Allen when he notes that "one means (not the only means but an important one) of evaluating literary theory is scrutinizing how accurately it describes the social world it references" (94). In other words, rather than relying on a historical essentialism that assumes unchanging, universal qualities, the need, for Womack, is for "a critical space where Indians can imagine forms of Indianism," a historicizing and flexible theory (123). These Native theorists claim "experience as a way of both generating and evaluating theory" (Womack 122) using both insider knowledge and an assertion of Native American adaptation (over hybridity) to interpret and analyze indigenous literature.¹⁸

¹⁸ See *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1989; Vizenor's *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

In Native American theorizing, there has been a proposal for an approach that employs the notion of “peoplehood” to manifest sovereignty in native studies. This approach incorporates four areas of native thought – language, sacred history, place/territory, and ceremonial cycle – that comprise four constituent elements of a matrix that “make up a complete system that accounts for particular social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological behaviors exhibited by groups of people indigenous to particular territories” (Holm et al, 12). These elements are inextricably interrelated, serving as a matrix that may supplant, or at least supplement, an exclusive reliance upon Western models when analyzing literary works created by native peoples.

This last phrase, “literary works created by native peoples,” contains an element fundamental to this study. While Kumu Kahua Theatre has produced plays about Hawai‘i written by other ethnicities, the Hawaiian plays cited in this investigation are works by Native Hawaiians examining their own culture and history, not works by non-Native Hawaiians “set” in a native environment. One need make only a cursory search to find numerous examples of stories ostensibly about people of color that, in actuality, focus on more complex Caucasian protagonists¹⁹, or more commonly, works with “magical negroes”²⁰ or some such other window-dressing. While there are some haole characters in these Hawaiian plays, they are not central: the plays are not *about* them. Rather, the plays depict challenges facing

¹⁹ The films *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Come See the Paradise*, and *Dances With Wolves* were only superficially about Asian Americans and Native Americans; each story was actually focused on the fortunes of Caucasian male protagonists, with the people of color as peripheral ornamentation.

²⁰ For instance, see Stephen King’s Black characters in *The Shining*, *The Stand*, and *The Green Mile*, where these characters exist to help the white, usually male protagonist. In film, this character was played by Lawrence Fishburne in *The Matrix*, Chris Rock in *Dogma*, and Will Smith in *The Legend of Bagger Vance*.

Hawaiian characters and emerge from a vital and dynamic people living within a historical and cultural specificity. This is not to say that only Native Hawaiians can or may write about indigenous Hawaiian issues. But this study focuses on what a people say about themselves, and the selection of plays is delimited accordingly.

The literary application of a people's history must also take into consideration how that group contextualizes history and how they see it influencing the future. For Hawaiians, that relationship is found in the way the language frames time, as explained by Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, professor at the University of Hawai'i's Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge.

Ka wā mamua and ka wā mahope are the Hawaiian terms for the past and future, respectively. But note that ka wā mamua (past) means the time before, in front, or forward. Ka wā mahope (future) means the time after or behind. These terms do not merely describe time, but the Hawaiians' orientation to it. We face the past, confidently interpreting the present, cautiously backing into the future, guided by what our ancestors knew and did. (7)

Osorio's explanation introduces the uniquely Hawaiian view of history, namely, that it is so important to Hawaiians that they face it, face backwards, as they move into the future. This is not Walter Benjamin's angel of history being blown helplessly into the future as he yearns fruitlessly to change the past, nor is it a primitive's inversion of a Westerner striding boldly into the future. Rather, the belief underlines how critical the past and their history are to Hawaiians, and how much

they depend upon it for comprehending the present and negotiating the future. It is a positive aspect, not a retrogressive one.

Manulani Aluli Meyer explores the Hawaiian *ways* of knowing in her theorizing of Hawaiian epistemology. Her research is organized under a broad heading of *Māka'a o ka Na'auao*, or *The Vistas of Knowledge*. Under this, she names seven categories “developed to give a philosophical structure in which to demonstrate the clarity and coherence of Hawaiian ideas relevant to epistemology”

(92). These categories are:

- Spirituality and knowing – Cultural contexts of knowledge
- That which feels – Physical place and knowing
- Cultural nature of the senses – Expanding notions of empiricism
- Relationship and knowledge – Notions of self through other
- Utility and knowledge – Ideas of wealth and usefulness
- Words and knowledge - Causality in language
- The body/mind question – Alternatives to the illusion of separation

(92)

These areas of perception are drawn from traditional Hawaiian philosophy and learning. Like the spheres of the Native American Peoplehood Matrix, they are interrelated, and none is to be understood without the others. Spirituality, especially, is deeply imbued in each of the areas, as well as within a cosmology that perceives an “understanding of their world from their ancestors, both alive and dead, and from elements of the natural world” (93). There, elements were constant influences in an environment in which the concepts of the mundane and the numinous were inextricable. Meyer combines spirituality and knowing, notions sometimes separated in Western thinking, to designate the Hawaiian cultural contexts of knowledge, thereby opening the door to even more complexity.

Knowledge is commonly translated as “ike” in Hawaiian. However, according to Pukui, the Hawaiian word has multiple and layered meanings: “To see, know, feel, greet, recognize, perceive, experience, be aware, understand; to know sexually; to receive revelations from the gods; knowledge, awareness, understanding, recognition, comprehension and hence learning; sense, as of hearing or sight; sensory, perceptive, vision,” (96) and on and on for several inches of dictionary definition. Given the Hawaiian practice of kaona, or layered, hidden meaning, ‘ike may have a dense interpretation.

Meyer is using a very traditional Hawaiian context and frame of knowledge and knowing. Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa’s writing supports this use of tradition when she says that in “In traditional times, the telling of any Hawaiian history²¹ began properly with traditional beginnings” (1). This use of the past as a frame for the present (and future) is consistent with how the Hawaiian language itself perceives history and how it affects the present. Complementing Osorio’s comments, she says

It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown, whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge. (22)

I suggest that plays that are rooted in Hawaiian knowledge are completely outside the realm of Asian American theater, given the former’s reference to a past

²¹ History translates in Hawaiian as “mo’olelo.” However, depending on context, mo’olelo can also mean “story, tale, myth, history, tradition, literature, legend, journal, log, yarn, fable, essay, chronicle ...” (Pukui 254).

distinctly different and separate from immigrant history. These plays are situated in an unstable present, connected to a turbulent and sometimes veiled past, and backing into an uncertain future. Their history is not that of Asian Americans, either culturally or historically. In Hawai'i theater has intersections with Local development and material history, but analyzing the plays according to indigenous rather than Western-based standards reveals their fundamental incompatibility with Asian America.

B. Historical Background – Asian American Theater

Until the advent of the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, there were no theaters devoted to presenting the lives and experiences of Asian immigrants and their descendants theatrically. This is in contrast to an earlier-developing Asian American history of immigrant poetry and prose. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s prompted not only the Asian American movement, but also other ethnic-consciousness movements.

Not coincidentally, the period's energy and activism paralleled the establishment of the first major theaters dedicated to producing Asian American plays by Asian American playwrights performed by Asian American actors. These theaters were founded for different reasons, but each of their varying motivations had the same result: an organization dedicated to theatrical production by Americans of Asian descent.

Modern Asian American theater history is generally considered to start with the establishment of four theater companies: East West Players in Los Angeles, established in 1965; San Francisco's Asian American Theater Company, started in

1973; Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York, founded in 1978; and Seattle's Northwest Asian American Theatre, founded in 1974, and the only one of the four that has since ceased to produce (J. Lee 15).

Though the motivating factors in the establishment of these theaters were not explicitly related to the nation's African American and Chicano Civil Rights movements, a brief overview of the founders reveals the relationship to such activism. First, in Los Angeles, a group of Asian American theater and film workers – actors, primarily – banded together to establish a theater in order to afford themselves roles that both showcased their skills and provided them performance opportunities that had been denied them in the predominantly Caucasian world of Hollywood. In San Francisco, the Asian American Theater Workshop, later Company, was started by writer/playwright Frank Chin in 1973 after a playwrights' workshop sponsored by the American Conservatory Theatre. For this theater, the focus was to be on new Asian American plays. In New York, a 1970 project called La Mama Chinatown spawned the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in 1978. Opportunities for Asian American playwrights and performers were among Pan Asian's goals. Finally, Seattle's Northwest Asian American Theatre (first known as the Theatrical Ensemble of Asians, TEA, then as the Asian Exclusion Act) was founded in 1974 by a group of community activists and drama students (Kim Lee, *History*, xiv-xvi). While these initial groups were created out of professional frustration and other reasons, i.e., to create opportunities for performance both for playwrights and actors, their actions were activist in that they all employed "transformation of personal issues into political activism through coalitions" (Kim Lee, *History* 25).

“What makes the category ‘Asian American’ so complex is that it has undergone reconfiguration more rapidly and to an extent that none of the other ethnic categories have” (Koshy, 318-319). The various waves of immigration date from the mid-nineteenth century when Chinese and Japanese first began immigrating to the United States (and Hawai’i). The 1965 changes in United States immigration law have brought an unprecedented number of the aforementioned immigrant groups as well as Filipinos, Koreans, South Asians, Southeast Asians, and others to the United States. The radical changes effected by the influx of new immigrants makes the grouping difficult to pin down in terms of its characteristics and its political and social interests. Indeed, according to Koshy, 65% of Asian Americans are foreign-born (322)²², making Chin’s definition of Asian American obsolete, and thus foregrounding the question of who is American.

Given Asian American theater’s mission of presenting plays that not only cast Asian American actors but tell their stories, the cast lists of its theater canon are comprised almost exclusively of Asian or Asian American characters. Misha Berson’s landmark anthology of Asian American plays includes Philip Kan Gotanda’s *The Wash*, Wakako Yamauchi’s *And The Soul Shall Dance*, and Laurence Yep’s *Pay the Chinaman*, all of which have solely Asian or Asian American characters. Yep’s cast lists only “Con Man” and “Young Man,” with no ethnic designation. However, from the play’s text – the Con Man enters the play carrying baskets of fish on a bamboo

²² Koshy is referencing the *Statistical Record of Asian Americans* of Gale Research, Inc., 1993. She adds that “Among many of the groups, the percentage of foreign-born is even higher, 81.9% for Koreans, 90.4% for Vietnamese, and 93.9% for Laotians” (Notes).

pole, wears a queue²³, and beats a gong; the Young Man says he came into the United States as a paper son²⁴ – it is apparent that both characters are Chinese. Japanese characters also populate a more recent play, Gotanda’s Hawai’i-based historical *Ballad of Yachiyo*.

In other instances, Velina Hasu Houston’s *Tea* considers the experience of Japanese “war brides” in the American Midwest, Genny Lim’s *Paper Angels* is about Chinese immigrants at the Angel Island Immigration Detention Center, and Sung J. Rno’s *Cleveland Raining* is a modern nonrealistic play about a Korean brother and sister in Ohio. A notable exception is Diana Son’s *R.A.W. (‘Cause I’m a Woman)*²⁵, which has a cast of four women, all designated as Asian American, though their specific ethnicity is not named or referred to in the cast list. *R.A.W.* is a polemic that deconstructs popular cultural stereotypes. In this ensemble piece, Western popular culture stereotypes – the submissive child-woman, the masseuse, the exotically beautiful woman, the Dragon Lady – are presented as usually eliding Asian and Asian American women into . . . Asian American women of no given ethnicity. The play does, however, manage to celebrate Asian and Asian American women by providing glimpses of their individuality that includes their participation in a specific ethnic grouping.

This does not, of course, mean that an Asian American play must be populated solely by Asian American characters, whatever their particular ethnicity.

²³ A long usually braided ponytail of hair worn by Chinese men of a certain era.

²⁴ A process by which Chinese men could enter the United States. Paper sons used new names, were coached to recite details from their new “home villages,” and claimed to be sons of Chinese men who had immigrated to the U.S. They were then allowed into the country on the strength of this relationship.

²⁵ *R.A.W.* stands for Raunchy Asian Women, and the play is an ensemble piece for four women protesting and denouncing common stereotypes and expectations of Asian American women.

However, as a means of achieving certain goals – providing Asian Americans roles with significant stage time and putting stories from Asian American history on stage – it follows that names on cast lists of most Asian American plays are predominantly Asian. These plays do sometimes include white characters. But, in a mirroring of the position in which most Asian and Asian American actors in mainstream white plays find themselves, these white characters may be defined primarily by *their* ethnicity and may often be placed either in adversarial or supporting roles to the main characters, who are Asian or Asian American. In *Paper Angels*, for instance, there are several white characters. One is named Henderson and is described as “a working-class redneck who hates his job. He takes the immigrants’ hostility personally because of blind patriotism and abuses his power” (Unbroken Thread, 18). In counterpoint, however, is Miss Gregory in the same play, “a Methodist missionary who has devoted her life to the saving of Chinese women’s lives. She is fearless of the authorities because of the latitude they give her on the Island and fanatically determined to eradicate heathenism and prostitution” (19). These two characters exist because of their ethnicity and the contrasting attitudes they personify.

Sometimes a white character, while also being integral to the plot, may symbolize the oppression experienced by the Asian American protagonists. Gotanda’s *The Sisters Matsumoto* contains such an example. After three Japanese American sisters return to their family farm in Stockton, California from an internment camp, a white friend of their deceased father’s is revealed to have stolen the farm from them, forcing them off their land.

C. Historical background – Theater in Hawai‘i

Theatrical production in Hawai‘i has had a history of several hundred years and has been documented in four unpublished University of Hawai‘i masters’ theses. They describe aspects of Hawai‘i’s nineteenth and early twentieth century theatrical history, and provide documentation of the visiting performers and amateur local productions. All four were written during the territorial period: Margaret M. Frowe’s 1937 study on “The History of the Theatre During the Reign of King Kalakaua, 1874–1891,” Thelma C. Brown’s 1942 thesis on “A History of the Theater in Honolulu During the Reign of Kamehameha V, 1863– 1872,” Helen A. Topham’s 1950 thesis, “A History of the Theater in Honolulu, 1891–1900,” and Kathleen S. Scott’s 1953 thesis on “The Professional Legitimate Theatre in Honolulu: 1900–1910.” All are focused on Western theater stage performances, however, with the occasional mention of a Japanese or Chinese language production, usually spoken of in a markedly condescending tone. The bulk of Hawai‘i’s twentieth century theater history has not been academically chronicled. However, ample documentation exists in journal and newspaper accounts of the predominantly community-based theater that has flourished, mostly on O‘ahu, although the neighbor islands have had a fairly consistent history of production, again community-based.

The University of Hawai‘i has been also instrumental in the development of modern theater in the state. While no formal study of theatrical production at the University of Hawai‘i has been completed to date, an online exhibit on “Drama at the University of Hawai‘i: the Early Years,” created by the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa library hints at the activity of the past century. According to this document,

the first student-presented play was produced at the College of Hawai'i in 1912: *The Revolving Wedge*. A Dramatic Club was organized in 1919 and thereafter presented plays yearly, except during World War Two. During the 1920s, some student-written plays were produced and, "Also during this decade, the Dramatic Club began the practice of presenting plays each year from the Chinese and Japanese traditions as well as a third play from the western world. Most of these years, the Dramatic Club also sponsored a play on a Hawaiian theme" (Drama at the University of Hawai'i). The 1930s saw the construction of Farrington Hall on the Mānoa campus, a building that finally provided a theater and a stage for the newly organized Theatre Guild of Hawaii.²⁶ A major casting policy was instituted during this time: "They [the Theatre Guild] decided that the cast membership of any play would be open to anyone regardless of ethnic background. Hence, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and haole students could try out and act in anyone [sic] of the various dramas, not just in the dramas of their own ethnic groups" (Drama). Whether this decision resulted in students of color participating in "white" plays as well as haole students acting in the Asian plays is unknown.

Western playwriting in Hawai'i, other than isolated attempts, commences with the Dramatic Club, but it really gets started with University of Hawai'i English professor Willard Wilson and his playwriting class of 1936. Altogether, there are ten volumes of student-written plays collected by Dr. Wilson, spanning the years 1937-1955. These plays were mostly written for academic credit. However, in 1946, staged readings or, as Wilson says, plays done in an " 'animated reading' style"

²⁶ Farrington Hall was in use from 1930 to 1963. In 1963, the John F. Kennedy Theatre, originally the East-West Theatre, replaced Farrington Hall as the theatre department's main production venue.

(Wilson, *College Plays, Forward*) were presented with simple staging, props, sound effects, and costumes. These readings were followed by audience discussion, presumably with the playwright present. Some of the plays were subsequently given full productions.

For the purposes of this dissertation, what is most interesting about these early college plays is that students of Asian American ancestry born and raised in the territory were writing some of them. The students appear to have followed Dr. Wilson's injunction to "look around him, and without intense concentration upon the variations of Hawaiian life from that in other places – variations which to a student without travel are not always apparent anyhow – to attempt to present life as it has impinged upon him and as he sees it" (*Forward*). The Hawai'i-born students were encouraged to write about their multi-ethnic community, in its vernacular, and with characters based on its history. As noted by Josephine Lee, these volumes assembled by Dr. Wilson may constitute the first Asian American theater, predating by decades the plays that are usually cited as the earliest Asian American theatrical writing.

More recently, Dennis Carroll identified two categories: the "local Asian American" and the "local Hawaiian" theater in a 2000 article on Hawai'i's theater (124). The plays of the "local Asian American" (primarily descendants of immigrant plantation workers) dealt "primarily with gain and aggregation – the challenges to immigrant groups of finding a place to call home and evolving through various adaptations a transformed sense of their culture and an identity in consonance" (124-5). Carroll's "local Hawaiian" theater deals with "Hawaiian culture and the

world of the emergent missionary and commercial-American class that suborned it,” plays that may be “dominated by a painful sense of cultural loss and dispossession. They sometimes make considerable use of the Hawaiian language, including sections of chant and hula, though those set in contemporary times use much pidgin as well” (125).

Dr. Carroll’s article cites Okamura and others in defining local, but he is careful to say that

In some contexts, residents perceive “local” and “Hawaiian indigenous” identities as discrete. . . . The rise of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement exacerbates the division between two groups within local theatre, which might be called, for the purposes of this essay, “local Asian American” and “local Hawaiian.” (123-124)

As noted previously, Native Hawaiians may choose in some circumstances to self-identify as Local, while in others, their identity as Native Hawaiian will be paramount. This notion is supported in the Kumu Kahua plays that are classed as Local: while there are Native Hawaiian characters in the Local plays, their identity as Hawaiian is not the foundation for their participation in the plot nor for their interaction with the other characters. In the Hawaiian plays, however, the characters’ Hawaiian identity is either clearly stated or strongly implied in the text, and their relationship to that identity generally proves to be their critical motivating force. These characters, in a way, mirror the relatively recent Hawaiian cultural resurgence. The proliferation of Hawaiian language study, political activism, and the

legal decisions of the past ten years²⁷ have to some degree galvanized the Hawaiian community. In some circumstances, Hawaiian identity will supersede the Local identity for a Hawaiian individual who may claim both. For this reason, I reserve the term “Local” for those plays that foreground the panethnic identity known in Hawai’i vernacular as “local,” and “Hawaiian” for those works whose narratives center on the indigenous people of the state. And I shall refer to the aggregate as “Hawai’i” plays.

For Carroll, place was the paramount influence on Hawai’i-written theater, explaining the appellation of “local” to both Hawaiian and Asian American. More recently, however, Hawaiian sovereignty and culture scholarship, settler/colonial studies (Chock, Fujikane, Luangphinit, Trask), and the discussions consequently initiated have contributed to sometimes contentious discussions of what precisely is meant by Local. I build on Carroll’s definition and on the current cultural context when I identify three different theatrical territories: Asian American, Hawaiian, and Local. These territories occupy the same geographical space – the Hawaiian islands – but intersect in ways that rely on situated context to comprehend and tease apart.

V. Chapters

Chapter Two describes the historical foundations of Hawai’i theater, placing it materially within the contexts of Hawai’i’s colonization, immigration to the United States and Hawai’i, and the formulation of the pertinent narratives: Asian American, Local, and Hawaiian. Differences arising from origins – indigenous and immigrant –

²⁷ These include state, federal, and Supreme Court judgments both for and against Native Hawaiian claims and institutions.

are discussed, with attention to how history may intervene with the present and the future.

Chapter Three investigates the languages that are utilized in Hawai'i plays. Hawaiian Creole English, standard English, and Hawaiian are the primary languages, although Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Chinese usage is also cited. The chapter also includes what commonalities and differences may be indicated by the language choices, identifying the construction of Hawai'i narratives – Hawaiian and Local – as revealed by the languages the playwrights elect to use.

Chapter Four considers how the plays of Hawai'i establish identity within the contexts of specific ethnic groups, Hawai'i as a whole, and the United States, with special attention to assumed racialization as it plays out in Hawai'i as opposed to the continental United States. Hawai'i communities are examined as imagined by Hawai'i plays, with attention to how ethnicity and pan-ethnicity are expressed.

Chapter Five addresses the issue of “belonging” in the context of the settler/colonizer narrative that currently pervades Asian American Studies. It examines notions of place and belonging, probing the Hawaiian connection to the 'āina, the sense of Asian American un/rootedness, and the construction of the Local Imaginary and its relationship to the islands. The notion of “home” reflected in the plays is also explored within the narratives of the Local and Native Hawaiian.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes the study, citing ramifications for the ethnic and national definition and identification. Appendices provide a complete listing of plays produced at Honolulu's Kumu Kahua Theatre during the 2000-2001 through 2007-2008 seasons.

Chapter Two – History in Hawai‘i Theater

I. Constructing the Hawai‘i Imaginary

History is a construct, not so much an objectively considered impregnable series of facts as a “directed project of reconstruction pressured by the impulses, desires and agendas of the present” (J. Lee 137). Numerous theatrical projects deconstruct historical assumptions to uncover hitherto hidden histories and subverted agency. Among these projects are history plays, the theatrical imaginings of the past grounded firmly in the present. For Asian America, whose history encompasses at the most a few centuries, the history play addresses the experiences of the first immigrants to the United States and their encounters with oppression, racism, and exclusion.

Asian American history plays, as do other “ethnic” plays, also make visible the presence of Asian Americans in U.S. history by placing members of Asian American ethnic groups in plays²⁸ telling their own American stories.²⁹ Chinese workers’ presence on the Transcontinental Railway is undiluted in *The Dance and the Railroad* because the only two characters are Chinese immigrants, two Japanese families work on dust-bowl farms in *And the Soul Shall Dance*, and *Talk-Story* features Filipino characters in 1930s rural California and present day San Francisco. Uncovering hitherto buried histories also defies the institutionalized racism as

²⁸ Casting in Asian American plays rarely follows ethnicity; that is, a Chinese character may or may not be cast with an ethnically Chinese actor. This is generally not considered an issue. However, for this reason, I say “in plays” rather than “on stage.”

²⁹ The assumption of Asian Americans as Americans is apparently still novel; a 2003 [Thematic Guide to Modern Drama](#) separates out Asian-, African, Latin-American, and American Indian as themes, while under “Historical Heritage” listing *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *The American Clock*, and *The Lion in Winter*.

historically deployed in U.S. law and policy, subverting the notion that history as taught in schools is incontrovertible fact.

For Asian America, the historical images that populate the origin stories are derived mostly from Chinese and Japanese immigrant experience, perhaps because these groups were the first to immigrate to the United States. Asian American literature and theater has developed along immigration lines, with Chinese and Japanese American writing dominating the field, perhaps because of their relatively long tenure in this country.³⁰ The themes of Asian American literature are, much like those of other immigrant groups' literatures, fairly consistent, usually involving at least one of the following: "identity struggles, racial history, cultural tensions, and the pain of discrimination" (Motooka 23). Koshy amplifies this with her understanding of Elaine Kim's analysis of "the Asian American experience understood as sociologically distinct, separate from the mainstream, and shaped by settlement in the United States and the effects of American racism" (Fiction, 326).

The struggles of the first Asian American generations are explored: Genny Lim's *Paper Angels* takes place entirely in the San Francisco Bay's Angel Island Immigration Detention Center in 1915. It dramatizes the efforts of Chinese immigrants to enter the United States, sometimes by claiming to be sons³¹ of a Chinese man already resident there. Chay Yew's play, *A Beautiful Country*, interrogates more recent practices and uses the central figure of Miss Visa Denied, a

³⁰ However, writing from other Asian groups is proliferating, and these groups are beginning to have an effect both theoretically and aesthetically.

³¹ These men were called "paper sons." In order to "pass," they had to memorize a great deal of information about their "father" and his home in China. The paper sons were quizzed by US immigration officials to ensure that they were who they said they were.

Malaysian drag queen, to comment on the “ways in which racial and national identities are historically constructed” (xiv). Here, Miss Visa Denied recounts an immigration entrance scenario.

VISA: A verbal barrage begins

A geography lesson

where in Asia I’m from

A history lesson

what country I’m from

A grilling

An interrogation

A torrent of words questions answers

A flutter of visa papers

landing cards

A studied glance

from the immigration officer

A sudden reprieve

A sapphire blue

His eyes

This officer

A look of an angel

A welcome mat to the country beautiful. (197)

Early labor experiences are also explored in plays having to do with Chinese immigrants. While Chinese men came to the western United States as part of the gold rush, they were also employed in the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, a part of history from which several playwrights have drawn inspiration. David Henry Hwang's *The Dance and Railroad* has two characters, both of whom are Chinese railroad workers in 1867 Colorado. The off-stage action centers on a strike by the Chinese workers for better wages and safer working conditions. Hwang thus is able to address the individual struggles of the two men and their attitudes towards their lives in the United States while contextualizing those struggles within the activities of the larger social group. A character in Lim's play also worked on the railroad and recounts his memories:

CHIN GUNG: . . . Oh we laid that railroad track from sun up to sun down. The white boss said, "If they'd had you Chinaboys, they could've built Rome in a day!" It was the kind of work that made you strong as an ox. By the end of the day, you could pass out and drop ten thousand feet and never even wake up! There was this fella – Tong, that was his name. He laid the dynamite. We called him Spider cause he was so thin and wiry. All the other boys yelled and signaled with the rope like crazy when they lit the fuse. But not Spider. He wanted to beat that mountain. . . . I was the anchor on the pulley. Spider didn't signal. By the time I realized something was wrong, it was too late. I screamed, "Pull, pull!" The gunpowder exploded. I fell. I never let go. I saw Spider's body shoot up through the blast of flying rocks and smoke like a puppet. . . . his straw

hat chasing his head. (*A sobering revelation*) I believe the son-of-a-gun never meant to signal. (31-2 Uno)

The life these men have in the new country is entirely dependent upon their labor in an industry that ultimately benefits the Caucasian owners. By completing the railroad connecting the continent, the Chinese men will only perpetuate a dominant culture that excludes, and ultimately erases, the Chinese laborers who did so much to build it.³² The theatrical representation, then, at once reinforces the exclusion by staging it, and confronts and denies it.

Immigration is also a concern for Asian American plays that feature Japanese American characters. Velina Hasu Houston's *Tea* is iconic. This play does not address the nineteenth century Japanese immigrants to the United States, but rather women who married American servicemen stationed in Japan directly following World War II and thereafter immigrated to the United States with their husbands. While the American husbands and daughters of the Japanese "war brides," played by the same actors as present the mourning women, are given several important scenes, their function is to highlight the difference embodied by the Japanese women. Acculturated to varying degrees, these women, by dwelling on and reviewing their pasts, are able to reconcile their differences and bond over the suicide of one of their own.

World War II is a particularly significant time in Asian American theater, especially for Japanese Americans. While the playwrights, like Philip Kan Gotanda,

³² It is a rare photo of the period that includes the Chinese men as railroad laborers. In preparing to teach *The Dance and the Railroad*, I found it difficult to locate any at all. The official documentation usually only includes pictures of Caucasian men.

are too young to have been interned, their parents were not. The memories and scars that remain for an entire generation of West Coast Japanese Americans have provided the foundation for several plays. Stephen Sumida calls this “the most public narrative in Japanese American history” (x, *No More Cherry Blossoms*), and indeed, Gotanda’s story of three sisters, *The Sisters Matsumoto*, who return home to Stockton, California after being interned in Arkansas is emblematic of what actually transpired after the war was over. After being released from internment camps, Japanese Americans were either unwilling or unable to reconstruct their earlier lives.³³ The other salient aspect of World War II, as far as Japanese Americans are concerned, was the formation and exploits of the United States Army’s 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team.³⁴ Playwright Edward Sakamoto has addressed the circumstances of these soldiers and their families back home in earlier work as well as in *Their Hearts Were Touched With Fire*. Another play, *The Gate of Heaven*, is the result of collaboration between Japanese American playwright/director/actor Lane Nishikawa and Jewish playwright/director/actor Victor Talmadge. In this two-man play, the actors perform, respectively, a Japanese American soldier and a Polish/Jewish survivor of the concentration camp at Dachau. The play opens in 1945 and follows their relationship to 1996, elucidating the many ways in which racism, bigotry, and their shared experiences have marked them.

³³ When the sisters return to their home, they find that their father has sold the family farm very cheaply, with the help of a Caucasian neighbor, who has prospered after the deal.

³⁴ Altogether there were eventually 3,000 JA volunteers from Hawai’i and 800 JA volunteers from the mainland United States originally inducted into the 442nd, and the 100th Battalion was initially comprised completely of JA soldiers from Hawai’i.

Historical theater of Hawai'i functions similarly to Asian American theater in some respects: it claims subjectivity for its characters by placing them center-stage, instead of relegating them to the periphery as local color. It also recovers their place in history by retelling their "originary" stories. And like Asian American theater, the theater of Hawai'i also looks at the past to contextualize the present. One of the ways this happens is by reminding Local audiences of where they came from, and in Hawai'i, that means, for many, the sugar and pineapple plantations that employed Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and other immigrants during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the Asian American plays cited above, Hawai'i's plays also address the memories of first generation immigration and labor.

For Native Hawaiians, those originary stories reach back thousands of years, contrasting with Hawai'i's immigrant history, which begins in the eighteenth century. And critically, in Hawai'i theater as for "ethnic" theater, the plays present images of cultural identity and experience that construct the present social imaginary of the various groups.

Josephine Lee marks a parallel between Asian American history plays and Ron Takaki's From a Distant Shore when she identifies a mutual impulse towards "an imagined community that is pan-ethnic and transcends time, either in moments of collective action or in ties that connect characters" (138). She goes on to claim that both history writing and dramatic writing "are part of the strategic formation of a larger Asian community from otherwise disparate groups" (145). I agree that Takaki's "history of Asian Americans promotes a pan-ethnic vision of an Asian American community" (145). In this work, the different ethnicities are linked by

similar experiences in the United States, their origins in the same hemisphere, and by the commonality of their labeling as “other” in the United States. Takaki’s work assembles the experiences of different groups in a single volume, thereby bracketing them physically and ontologically.

Similarly, plays relating stories of single ethnicities have been collected in volumes that claim the classification of Asian American. Certainly, if images and stories of an oppressed group play out on stage, and an audience comprises members of similarly oppressed groups, then there is the possibility of solidarity deriving from recognition: “I’ve experienced that, I know how that is.” This is a commonality based upon contiguous national origins and common experience. Not that this is a negative aspect – on the contrary, it is what made labor movements so successful. In Asian American theater’s case, it is sometimes opposition to a white dominant culture that is the unifying element.

It is in the foundational images where Hawai‘i’s theater seems to diverge from Asian American theater. There are still similarities which link them, one of which is the attitude towards a white dominant culture which keeps immigrants of color as a perpetual “other” in white America. Immigrant struggle for economic success is also a common theme, given the motivation that spurred much Asian immigration to the U.S. And Hawai‘i plays that address early Asian immigration also usually feature monoethnic characters. It is the evolving acculturation to Hawai‘i, however, that is reflected in the plays, which reveals a divergence from the typical Asian American play whose thematic underpinning is the insistence upon belonging as an American.

The following section addresses the similarities and disparities that exist in Hawai'i plays about Asian immigrants to Hawai'i.

II. Historical Foundations

A. Coming To . . .

Ed Sakamoto's *Obake*, set in 1925, is set in the residential areas surrounding a sugar cane plantation. This is the past of a Territorial Hawai'i still dependent upon sugar as a primary economic driver and upon immigrant labor to support that industry. The play utilizes the theme of the difficulties of early immigration and is specific to Hawai'i in terms of its historical and cultural circumstances. The challenges these immigrants meet are peculiar to the very distinct environmental, economic, and political conditions that determine their lives.

The given circumstances of the play establish the environment: the characters are first generation Japanese laborers working on cattle ranches and sugar plantations on the island of Hawai'i in the 1920s. While the first wave of workers from Japan specifically recruited to work the sugarcane fields arrived in 1885, the laborers in *Obake* are from a later group.³⁵ Thus, the play depicts married couples, not only single men, as was more common earlier in the immigration history. Two Japanese couples – Tamotsu and Kazue, and Hitoshi and Toshi – figure in the play, with a single woman whose husband has deserted her for America providing the third to a love triangle involving Tamotsu and Kazue.

Sakamoto has drawn upon a Japanese cultural icon, the *obake-neko*, or ghost cat, for his revenge tragedy. The conventions of Japanese ghost movies are familiar

³⁵ "Between 1885 and 1924, 200,000 Japanese went to Hawaii and 180,000 to the U.S. mainland" (Takaki 45).

to Hawai'i audiences, at least to older generations who would have seen these movies in Honolulu, and perhaps now to a younger generation conditioned by imported anime. James Nakamoto, director of Kumu Kahua's production, described the conventions thus.

In pre-war Japan, there was a genre of ghost stories based on a cat transforming into a beautiful ghostly woman. It usually went something like this. A lord would treat a woman in an abusive and demeaning manner, and finally have her killed when he couldn't get his way. The woman was always kind to a cat (usually a black cat), who then licked the blood of a victim and transformed into a ghostly figure, pale with long hair covering part of her face, to exact revenge on those who wronged the slain woman and her loved ones. The transformation usually took place behind a shoji screen in silhouette. It was quite frightening. (Kumu Kahua Presents *Obake*, 2)

The story is transposed to Hawai'i as if brought there by the Japanese immigrants, a sign of their first generation status. By also using other cultural signifiers such as food (sake, rice) and language (the characters occasionally use Japanese words), Sakamoto contextualizes the past: that is, he offers up a past with cues (Denning 42) that link the play's characters and events to the lived experience of the people who contributed to the development of the Local. Because "What happened in the past inevitably leaves sign-bearing relics: in personal memories first of all, but, more importantly, in memory translated into its public social forms – gossip, legend,

story, myth, anecdote, parable, sermon, speech” (Denning 42), a Local audience may immediately connect the present social imaginary with its origins.

Sakamoto also uses the lies of braggart Tamotsu, a married philanderer and failed plantation worker, to bridge Japanese history and Hawai‘i immigrant history. Tamotsu claims to be of samurai family and to have killed a luna (overseer) on an O‘ahu plantation before traveling to the Big Island. Hawai‘i is not only an economic opportunity for him but also a chance to escape retaliation (if his boasts are true) and reinvent himself in a new environment.

In a sort of ethnohistory of Japanese-ness brought to Hawai‘i, Sakamoto provides regional particularization in his almost casual acknowledgement of the supernatural. The Japanese laborers have brought over the superstition of the *obake*, the ghost cat. In this respect, they retain beliefs from the home country; ghosts are very real to the characters. Critically, in a small step towards the Local, at least one *Obake* character joins the social imaginary of the islands by incorporating the spiritual life of Hawai‘i into her own belief structure. Toshi believes that she sees night marchers, “Kanaka warriors marching in the night” (12).³⁶ This classic Hawaiian element inserts itself seamlessly, perhaps integrating her into the new country in a way different from any of the other characters.

This is really the only gesture towards an intracultural view of plantation life in the Hawai‘i of the time. In 1925, while the different ethnicities working on the

³⁶ Helen Hoyt cites Mary Wiggin Pukui on the Night Marchers, *huka‘i pō*. “Those who took part in the march were the chiefs and warriors who had died, the *aumakua*, [family or personal gods, deified ancestors (Pukui 32)] and the gods, each of whom had their own march...If a living person met these marchers, it behooved him to get out of the way as quickly as possible, otherwise he might be killed unless he had an ancestor or an *aumakua* in the procession to plead for his life” (77-78).

plantations or ranches would usually have lived in segregated camps, there certainly would have been contact during the workday, and, at the least, awareness of the other ethnicities and communities. Although the Japanese immigrant community is presented here as insular and closed, with no characters of other ethnicities,³⁷ Hawaiian beliefs are represented in what is, essentially, a transplanted Japanese ghost story. That Toshi can so effortlessly imagine seeing Hawaiian spirits is consonant with how much better she seems to adapt to living in Hawai'i, a hint of the ethnic identity development that would result in the formation of the Local. Toshi does not appropriate a Hawaiian identity for herself. Rather, she accepts without question the indigenous spirits of the land as addition to her own pantheon. This new epistemology does not replace her own. Toshi also feels haunted by her dead Japanese mother-in-law, fearing her presence when she hears mysterious thuds, squeaking, and footsteps in her home. But she is certain that the dead woman's spirit is hovering when she smells *natto*, a pungent dish of fermented soybeans of which her husband is particularly fond. At those times, she is careful to be especially gracious and subservient to Hitoshi, thus proving herself a worthy daughter-in-law and wife. However much she clings to her homeland's beliefs, Toshi's relative submission to Hawai'i and its conditions may insulate her from injury. Kobialka speaks of realizing "that border crossings can have their victims and bodies marking the site of transgression" (12). The other couple and single woman all perish, leaving Toshi and, by proximity, Hitoshi, as literally the only survivors of this particular crossing.

³⁷ Other ethnicities are mentioned: the hakujin, or Caucasians (32) and a Hawaiian police officer(24).

At this point, the characters, all Japanese nationals, are still marked *as* Japanese by their first generation immigrant status and their preserved cultural practices. Like Japanese immigrants in Asian American plays, they are strange to this country and will likely retain characteristics ingrained by their early environments. One, however, has taken the first steps towards acculturation in her acceptance of Hawaiian cultural beliefs and by virtue of her presence in Hawai'i. This thriller about Japanese immigrants to Hawai'i serves to remind the Local audience of their cultural background, as well as of the working class origins of many of their families.

In centering on a specific incident in a narrowly focused immigration story, *Obake* can provide only a hint of the shift towards the Local. It gives stronger indications of the yearning for home and strangeness of the foreign, both characteristics of Asian American first generation immigration plays. Another play dealing with immigration to Hawai'i, *Ricepaper Airplane*, adapted by Keith Kashiwada and John H.Y. Wat from Gary Pak's novel for Kumu Kahua's 2001-2002 season, goes further in overtly connecting Hawai'i's plantation history to the formation of the present-day social imaginary. Framed by the narrative of an old man recalling his youth and adulthood to a younger relative, *Ricepaper Airplane* uses a throughline of unresolved nostalgia to relate the story of a Korean man who immigrated to Hawai'i in the 1920s. Structurally non-linear, the play introduces lengthy flashbacks as the main character reminisces before his death.

That the story addresses *Korean* issues of marginalization, both in Korea and in Hawai'i is a stratagem of what Brenda Kwon calls "historicizing Local literature"

(4). Since Koreans in Hawai'i are not the dominant group, numerically, that the Japanese and Chinese have been, she considers both the history of Koreans in Hawai'i and their attendant literature to be marginalized in Hawai'i, compared to the prominence of other ethnic groups. Kwon says "these immigrants are perceived as non-Local 'outsiders' or 'FOBs' with no plantation history" (5). Certainly Korean laborers constituted a comparatively small part of the plantation laborer population, which was dominated by Japanese and Chinese immigrants.

Some Korean immigrants traveled to Hawai'i in small numbers before the 1900s, but they came to the islands en masse after the nineteenth century. Ronald Takaki writes that "some 8,000 Koreans sailed to the United States between 1903 and 1920. Leaving the kingdom of *Chosun* ('Morning Calm'), most of them migrated to the territory of Hawai'i. Like the Chinese and Japanese, the Korean migrants were young: over 90 percent of adults were between the ages of sixteen and forty-four" (53). And like the other ethnic groups who came to the islands before them, the Koreans were lured by the promise of riches to be made. "From newspaper advertisements and posters, Koreans learned that plantation laborers in Hawaii received free housing, medical care, and sixteen dollars a week for a sixty-hour work week. . . . Lured by fantasy and hope, Koreans borrowed money from a bank in Korea financed by the Hawaiian sugar planters" (Takaki 55-6). The Korean population in Hawai'i is still small, although the post-1965 immigrant boom has made Koreans more visible in Hawai'i – *A Ricepaper Airplane* situates Hawai'i's Korean immigrants historically and culturally.

Though the play's main character, Kim Sung Wha³⁸ comes to Hawai'i looking for economic opportunity, he is also fleeing political unrest. The exposition revealing his and Korea's turbulent twentieth century history unfolds over the course of the play. The first page of the play lays out the past to be revealed and made narrative – personal, political, and cultural – by Sung Wha and his nephew.

YONG GIL: I can't believe that Uncle was all of these things: the revolutionary in China, the Korean patriot, the communist, the aviator. What else is he? What more is there to tell? But I look forward to coming to his hospital room and listening to these fantastic stories. (1)

The prologue signals the uncovering of buried treasure, the wonders of hitherto unreported Korean adventure. Using the device of an old man reminiscing about his life, the play skips back and forth in time as Uncle Sung Wha revisits the major events of his life. Finally, tired and mortally ill, old, and longing for home, which is still Korea, Uncle is confronted by his younger self and accepts the life that his choices have determined for him.

In Sung Wha, we see a man whose life is externally determined, primarily by historical events out of his control: the Japanese colonization of Korea; Korean, Japanese, and Chinese revolutionary movements; early twentieth-century Hawai'i plantation politics; and near the end of his life, urban development in Honolulu's Chinatown. This device of historical telescoping – that is, viewing the events of over 60 years from one, personal point of view – gives the impression that events move the characters and implies a lack of agency. Indeed, Sung Wha's actions are

³⁸ In keeping with Korean convention, the family name is listed first, then the given name.

primarily reactive, with the notable exception of the one action he initiates: that of building an airplane out of rice paper. This attempt to return to Korea is, ultimately, futile.³⁹ However, its symbolism is apt, particularly as seen in the context of immigration.

A member of the first generation born in Hawai'i, Yong Gil, the nephew whose existence and character underscores how firmly embedded Koreans became in Hawai'i, is a World War Two veteran and functions as the narrator of the story. Throughout the play, his underlying concern is Uncle's health, but his fascination – which directs audience focus – is with Uncle's stories.

These accounts of a life's – and a people's – high points are populated with figures that, while fairly undeveloped types, are representative of specific movements and events. In the play, a Korean Christian minister in Wahiawa embodies the influence of Western Christianity in Korea and its role in supporting Korean liberation movements both in Korea and Hawai'i. Kwon comments on how, for instance, "Christianity allowed Koreans to resist the Japanese in the homeland" and that "Christianity functions as a stabilizing force in the movement between nations" (33). While the *moksa*, or minister, serves mostly as an empathetic sounding board, eliciting stories of resistance and rebellion from Sung Wha, he is also a historically-based representation of twentieth century Korean political resistance.

³⁹ While immigrants may have yearned to return home, the fact is that many of them remained in the United States. This immigrant disappointment was, however, necessary for subsequent generations to call the "new" country home.

Sung Wha encounters two influential characters in Korea, Lim Tong Il and his daughter, Lim Hae Soon – both also emblematic of Korean resistance – who provide Sung Wha’s political education. Hae Soon is also the love interest and, when Sung Wha must flee the country, a symbol of separation from both family and country. The only female character in the play, Hae Soon is given an astonishing degree of agency. She is the purposeful and indefatigable partner who not only schools Sung Wha in reading and writing Japanese, but essentially determines the course of his life by radicalizing his views and nurturing a revolutionary resolve that he carries with him to Hawai‘i.

YONG: . . . holding the book gave him a shiver: there was knowledge, a power that would be gotten by just understanding what the characters mean.

Then Hae Soon spoke about

HAE SOON: the Japanese imperialists and the Chinese comprador bourgeoisie

YONG: and about the revolution as benefitting everyone in the world, especially Koreans

HAE SOON: we must fight the imperialists on all fronts, and once the Chinese Communists are successful, the Japanese imperialists will be weakened and Koreans will be able to defeat them once and for all. (29-30)

Sung Wha will believe for the rest of his life that regardless of the ethnicity of the ruler, it is the fact that a person has control over others that makes for injustice and inequity. In a conversation with his nephew, Sung Wha delivers a heart-felt lecture that is informed by Hae Soon’s long-ago tutorage.

UNCLE [Sung Wha]: . . . No get fool by how something look on the outside. I talking all dis kine bad things 'bout da Japanee, li' dat. But I tell you something: I come Hawai'i, I meet plenny Japanee, and dey no all think da same-same. Get good and bad in ev'ry kine race, youknowwhatI mean? Try look at any country right now. Same-same. Still get da kine rulers ovah everybody. You see? Jus' like in Korea. Get dis Korean dictator. Everybody think, eh, at least one Korean ruling Korea. But I tell you something. No mattah if one Korean ruling Korea, or one Japanee, or one haole, or one Filipino. What mattah is da buggah is ruling. You see? (23)

Unlike in *Obake* and many Asian American plays, workers of other ethnicities are very much present and interact with the protagonist. Sung Wha's encounters with Filipino immigrants are benign: in one scene, after drinking pineapple swipe⁴⁰ and commiserating over labor woes with Filipino caneworkers in Wahiawa, a Filipino taxi driver takes a drunk Sung Wha back to the Korean camp. Then, in pity for the homesick Korean man, he leaves him with five dollars instead of charging him for the ride (15-18). And much later, near the end of his life, an incident between Sung Wha and his long-time friend Eddie indicates that lasting alliances between Koreans and Hawaiians are possible. These encounters, examples of "bonding in difference" (Singh and Schmidt 14), foreshadow the development of the Local, the panethnic Hawai'i identity that had its genesis on the plantations.

Race relations are not idealized, however. The play does not ignore the history of Korean plantation workers as scabs replacing Japanese and Filipino

⁴⁰ Swipe was a bootleg alcohol made and consumed on the plantations.

workers. In 1920, Filipino plantation laborers went on strike to protest harsh working conditions. They were eventually joined on the picket line by Japanese laborers. As Ron Takaki relates, “To break the strike directly, planters enlisted Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Koreans as strikebreakers. They knew that Koreans had a particular enmity for the Japanese, and the planters had consistently used Koreans to break strikes” (153-154).⁴¹ Sung Wha is part of this group of young Korean scabs.

That Sung Wha’s life has spanned years of cultural and political change is emphasized by the play structure that allows events separated by decades to play out side by side. Ultimately, however, Uncle never really escapes the border space of immigration to become truly part of Hawai’i, much less the United States his U.S. Army veteran nephew has as his country. At the end of Sung Wha’s life, he still yearns for what he lost in Korea, a loss epitomized by his yearning for his wife and children. This sense of separation is constantly emphasized, not only in present-day scenes, but also by Sung Wha’s longing for Hae Soon, both in Korea and Hawai’i. As briefly mentioned earlier, the unresolved nostalgia of the immigrant who can never return home is personified in Uncle’s life and reinforced by the literal separation that continues to divide North and South Korea.⁴² That his dream will never be fulfilled is made clear by the quixotic nature of the airplane he builds: it has wings made of bamboo and ricepaper. This activity sustains his dream of returning to

⁴¹ Brenda Kwon points out that Takaki paints the Koreans as the “leading adversaries” in the strikebreaking, deemphasizing the participation of Hawaiians and Portuguese. Nor does he contextualize the Koreans’ actions as aggrieved members of a colonized population. The fact does remain, however, that many of the strikebreakers were in fact Korean immigrants. (13-14)

⁴² This yearning for unity is an ongoing condition. In the 1980s, a Korean television broadcast commemorating the families who had been separated by the Korean War spurred a national campaign to reunite such families. The Korea Broadcast System building was eventually surrounded by posters listing names and photographs of missing family members, and hours of broadcast time were devoted to interviews and the drama of potential and actual reunions.

Korea, but it is a fantasy that is ultimately and inevitably crushed when the shed holding the airplane burns.

Paralleling this thematic focus on the Korean immigrant is the depiction of the inter-ethnic relationships amongst the Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Koreans, Filipinos, and others, whether antagonistic or congenial. Notably, there are no haole characters in this play, although they are occasionally referred to, usually in the context of plantation management. *A Ricepaper Airplane* makes the point that working on the sugar plantations was difficult for all immigrants, regardless of ethnicity. It also clearly underscores their abjection by the hegemonic Caucasian owners and overseers in a gesture to the intracultural identity of the Local. In this example, Sung Wha refers to the sugar and pineapple plantation owners. As he tells his nephew,

SUNG WHA: I tell you, Yong Gil, you heard people say dey work so hard dey drop dead. Das no joke. No forget what I telling you, Yong Gil. Dis is history. Da haoles trying brainwash everybody, tell us how us lucky live here, lucky come Hawai'i, lucky live in America, all dat bullshit. Life worth nothing back den, plantation days. If one man ma-ke,⁴³ can be replace. Das how dem think, dose days, dose sonavabitch haole capitalists. (7)

Generational relationships are also addressed in the play, with Uncle and Yong Gil's relationship apparently affectionate and unshakable. The conflict

⁴³ make. 1. nvs. To die, perish (Pukui, 228).

between generations, a relatively common theme in Asian American theater⁴⁴, is seen most clearly in Uncle's impatience with the naïveté of Troy Nishimura, the community activist/graduate student, and the University of Hawai'i class Uncle addresses. Yong Gil is also placed generationally in Hawai'i by his apparent military service in World War II, possibly the 100th Battalion.

YONG: I've seen blood too, Uncle. And death. I was in the war. We were fighting for democracy, for the free world, the Japanese were our enemy too, and the Italians and Germans, fascists, all of them. If it wasn't for the American forces, these crazy things would still be going on in Korea. And the rest of the world. (23)

However much he may rail at the perceived ineffectiveness of the young activists, Uncle has become acclimatized to Hawai'i. Though his identity is ultimately Korean, his life has been lived primarily in the United States. In his activism on behalf of labor and civil rights movements, he has become a stakeholder in Hawai'i, a committed and informed member of society: is he, or does he ever identify as, an American? The play does not say whether Sung Wha has ever changed his citizenship nor does it ever really indicate that he self-identifies as anything other than Korean. It does, however, embed him in the state's political history, portraying him as a Zelig-like character, witness to great events and even a participant in some. He is introduced to a University of Hawai'i at Mānoa class as having

TROY: ...worked on sugar and pineapple plantations, and as a stevedore on the Honolulu docks, he was a leader in numerous ILWU-led strikes. More

⁴⁴ See Phillip Kan Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die*, *Fish Head Soup*, and *The Wash*, Frank Chin's *The Year of the Dragon*, and Velina Hasu Houston's *Tea*, among others.

recently, after his retirement as a controversial shop steward, he has become one of the leaders of a group of angry tenants at the Kekaulike Hotel in Chinatown, a struggle against eviction that we talked about last week. Mr. Kim himself resides in the hotel. (41)

The play uses the Chamber Theatre technique of splitting the protagonist into narrator/character and observed character, thereby preserving much of the literary exposition. A benefit of this technique is that the audience may historicize Sung Wha's life as the characters simultaneously live and comment on their lives. "Uncle" is the older Sung Wha, confined to a hospital room and sharing memories with Yong Gil. As the story-teller within the story (of the play), introducing and observing enacted past events, Uncle experiences Chamber Theatre's effect of "an aesthetic enjoyment of one's own experiences,"(18) as Breen puts it, and the audience participates as it views the action framed by commentary from Uncle and Yong Gil. This Brechtian technique is a constant reminder to the audience that they are witnessing "re-enactments" from the past. And with the audience' knowledge of the past, the texted past, with its memories and legends, allows them to read the transcribed history to inform and reinforce their understanding of the present.

Another technique of both Epic and Chamber Theatre is the use of the narrator who interacts with the audience. The seemingly objective narrative guides the audience in how they are to evaluate those events. Yong Gil is allowed to break the fourth wall and speak directly to the viewers. His first line of the play, "Uncle is daydreaming again. Probably he's thinking about River Street in Chinatown" (1.1), is in present tense, presumably to bring the audience into a sense of intimacy and

immediacy. Much of the narration assigned to him in the rest of the play, however, is in the past tense, creating a sense of detachment from the action, while it is either subsequently or simultaneously performed on stage. In his last speech of the play, Yong Gil relates his actions after Uncle's death, essentially voicing and performing stage directions while simultaneously addressing the audience. The emotional content of the moment is still quite prominent, but it is modified as Brecht suggested: "transposing it into the past gives the speaker a standpoint from which he can look back on his sentence" (138), thereby alienating the speech and allowing the audience to reflect on past events.

YONG GIL: That night, I flew the kite that I had made weeks before out of ricepaper and ribs of bamboo and mashed rice for paste, just the way Uncle had taught me, in preparation for this time. On the kite, I drew a tiger, the one I saw entering and leaving my mind those times of story. I went to a park on the top of dark Tantalus and let the kite feed off the rising wind, and I let yards and yards of line spool off the spindle, the one Uncle had made for me years and years ago. And when I could not see by the city's lights the white kite against the night anymore, because of distance and blurriness from tears; when I could not hold on to this dream anymore, I took out my pocket knife and release [sic] it to its windy journey. And I prayed. And I prayed. (53)

A Ricepaper Airplane uses a man's involvement in events both epic and mundane to shine a spotlight on a relatively unknown history, putting Korean Americans on the map by making their lives and experiences specific and individual.

The themes are those of Asian America: recovering lost histories, honoring the struggles of immigrant lives, and historicizing events.

It is primarily in the historicizing, however, that this Local play departs from Asian American plays. The material conditions of Sung Wha's immigration to Hawai'i are very specific – sugar and pineapple plantation labor – and involve the other ethnic groups who are also in Hawai'i as laborers. These particular circumstances, with their attendant historical ramifications – labor strikes, pan-ethnic bonding, second generation assimilation, and self-identification as other than one's ethnic parent's group – describe both discretely and overtly the story's necessary siting in Hawai'i. Dennings' statement that "History is always the past and the present bound together in the sparse and selected symbols that time throws up" (46) underscores the relatedness of time and historical consciousness. If the linkages are to have any significance, these circumstances cannot be taken in generic terms of labor, nostalgia, and immigration. Sans detail of place and time, they lose the meaning they hold for the present.

B. Already Here . . .

The previous section examined plays that recall the Asian immigrant experience in Hawai'i and addressed the ways in which they differ from Asian American theater. This section investigates plays of Hawai'i that thematically and dramatically address indigeneity in Hawai'i. This is theatrical work that is critically different from Asian American plays and the Hawai'i plays that reflect the settler/immigrant past. It is also not Asian Pacific American or Asian Pacific Islander work. By incorporating all Pacific Islanders under their already crowded political

rubric, Asian America does Hawai'i and all other Pacific Islanders the disservice of obliterating their status as indigenous, colonized peoples, replacing it with a generic positioning that revives the outmoded trope of the melting pot.⁴⁵

The four plays cited in this section all contain an assumption of Hawaiian knowledge and being that is distinctly Hawaiian, not Pacific Islander, and not Asian American. That is, they all take as given a certain level of familiarity with traditional Hawaiian practices and attitudes. This familiarity is one that goes bone-deep: whether one is alienated from it as a consequence of exposure to Western ways, or whether one is living it, the plays assume a "Hawaiianness" to their indigenous characters. In this section, I employ the definition of 'ike as a noun/verb, according to Pukui (96). 'Ike may, for example, mean both "see" and "to see," an "experience" and "to experience." Thus, the intellectual acknowledgment of a thing is combined with the experience of it, making "knowledge" actively participate in "knowing."⁴⁶

And this "knowing" is close kin to being. Speaking momentarily from an ontological frame, I would posit that it is common in Hawai'i for people who have some Hawaiian blood (very, very few can claim full Hawaiian descent) to self-identify as Hawaiian regardless of what other ethnicities they may claim with validity. Similarly, Craig Womack, when speaking of Indian mixed-blood people in Oklahoma, comments on their "viewing themselves in the center, rather than at the periphery, of Indian worlds" (136), and concludes that, regardless of the close

⁴⁵ I would also suggest that the inclusion of Pacific Islander and Hawaiian as Asian American, particularly for Hawai'i, would validate Locals as "authentic" residents of Hawai'i, a belonging that settler theory would abhor. More about this in chapter four.

⁴⁶ It must also be noted that being Hawaiian is not related to whether one knows about Hawaiian things or is conversant with the language. It is about bloodlines and genealogy.

attention paid to blood quantum by outsiders, Native Americans' self-image does not correlate with hybridity or border theory: they do not become something other than Indian after outsider contact. Indians are Indians, not some new amalgamation, regardless of how much adaptation takes place. I suggest that this notion is also applicable to how Hawaiians are situated in these plays. While it is not stated, it is a safe assumption that, within the Hawaiian plays set in modern times, the characters are not of full Hawaiian descent. However, they do *all* identify as Hawaiian.

Returning to the notion of 'ike, what then does the loss of knowledge do to a people? These plays have all been written by Hawaiians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Their experiences have been shaped by the struggle to retain what is left of an interrupted heritage. How do the plays depict the effort to survive as a people?

In Kimo Armitage's *Ola Ka Lau*, Meyer's notion of the Cultural Contexts of Knowledge (92) is pertinent in considering a plot that centers on the knowledge and use of lā'au lapa'au, or, in other words, the utility of Hawaiian herbs and plants as medicine. As with Meyer's positioning of taro cultivation as "a spiritual/environmental facet of epistemology" (98), a thorough knowledge of the function of lā'au lapa'au and an understanding of the appropriate relationship Hawaiians have to it here embodies a connection to the past that informs the present. Spirituality is closely tied to this knowledge, as seen in an early scene in which a young woman picks some leaves to help heal a light sprain.

JANELLE. No worry Tūtū [grandmother], I'm fine.

TŪTŪ. I not worried. I just like know if you had pule [prayed] before you
when [sic] pick that lau [plant].

JANELLE. Pray?

TŪTŪ. Yeah, 'cause you never ask me and nobody take anything without
asking. So I figure, if you never ask me, maybe you when pule and ask the
akua [god] for that lau in your hand. (18)

Actually, Janelle's cousin Keola has picked the plant for her use, but Tūtū goes on to
deplore Janelle's neglect of the knowledge of Hawaiian healing.

TŪTŪ. Auē, pohō this kine [Oh, you are useless!]

JANELLE. Aunt, I not pohō. What, you not happy that I remember some of
the stuff you taught me.

TŪTŪ. 'A'ole i lawa [It's not enough].

JANELLE. I'm sorry that I couldn't continue, but, I ... I explained this to you a
long time ago, I don't know why we gotta dredge up the past. Besides,
you get Keola now.

TŪTŪ. 'Oia nō, Keola [Yes, there's Keola].

JANELLE. Yeah, Keola. Anyways, he's your grandson that's your punahele
[favorite]. (19)⁴⁷

In this scene, we see some common understanding between the older woman
and the younger relative regarding an appreciation of the knowledge of
historical/cultural fundamentals, but it is a shallow commonality; there is
dissonance in the relative importance the two women place upon those elements.

⁴⁷ In quotes from this play, English translations set in brackets are mine.

Janelle has earlier acquired a familiarity with the fact of the existence of this healing knowledge but, having abandoned the older woman's tutelage, does not know it in the sense of incorporating it into her daily life or even believing in its efficacy. Tūtū's knowledge has authority by virtue of both practice and knowing its historical and genealogical lineage. This knowledge of traditional medicines is clearly connected with Meyer's notion of the utility of knowledge. For Native Hawaiians, a "knowing" meant that the element or thing had utility, was useful in some way. This concept is not limited to, say, items that one used by hand or that fed the population.

Usefulness extended to the spiritual realm, so that

Utility with regard to knowledge made everything learned something of value. Knowledge for knowledge's sake was a foreign belief, a waste of time (Sahlins, 1995; Handy and Pukui, 1972). This does not suggest that utility did not have some sense of aesthetic or psychic relevance – Kamakau's chant of the rains of Nu'uanu suggest otherwise with regard to aesthetic usefulness. . . . It was a world that required significance to be remembered, and significance was tied to the many faces of usefulness. (113)

Later, Keola's illness worsens, and Tūtū and Janelle disagree on the efficacy of traditional Hawaiian treatment.

JANELLE. Let me see you cure cancer. In fact, what kind of medicines you give for brain tumors? AIDS? You don't know anything about Leukemia?

TŪTŪ. What Haole [sic] doctors know about those things? None of those have cure. Haoles [sic] been futtin' around for long time with those things. For nothing!

JANELLE. He believe you like Uncle Kahiapo, and look what happened to him!

TŪTŪ. You goin' tell me, I don't know lā'au lapa'au? We come from eight generations of healers! Our family healed thousands of people, and you going come and tell me I don't know what I doing. E hele aku 'oe [get out of here]!

The knowledge of healing and the many plants that were involved is clearly intended, in *Ola Ka Lau*, as a vital area of knowing that is in danger of being lost. By the end of the play, when both Tūtū and Keola have died, Janelle is left aware of her ignorance. But she is also aware of their spirits supporting her and, slowly, she begins to feel her way back into the past by tasting the leaves to know them and what they can do. Janelle's circumstances speak to both the loss of history and Womack's "adaptation" as a mechanism by which an indigenous people may survive.⁴⁸ The characters' goals here have nothing to do with staking a claim to recognition by right of citizenship. Rather, they are a people in recovery, learning on the fly how to negotiate a path that will keep them strong and Hawaiian in an environment that constantly threatens their existence as a knowledgeable people.

⁴⁸ Although the legal and historical circumstances of Native Hawaiians and Native Americans are substantively different, I use Native American theory here as analogous in terms of its indigenous derivation.

C. When History is Not Enough . . .

The opening speech of the main character in Alani Apio's *Kāmau* begins with a hearty "Alooooha!" The character waits for a response from the audience, then a larger "Aloooohaa!" encourages the audience to respond back with an amplified "Aloha!" The character, Alike, is a tour guide launching into the opening spiel of a "Historical Sights Tour." The litany includes: the Arizona Memorial, 'Iolani Palace grounds, and Punchbowl Memorial Cemetery. Later, Alike will offer a truncated history to a group of tourists.

ALIKA. 'Iolani Palace sits right on the outskirts of downtown. It's the only royal palace within the boundaries of the U.S. In 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani, the last reigning monarch of Hawai'i, gave up her throne to become part of the United States. First a Provisional Government was set up to convince Congress that we were really ready to be a state. Then in 1889 we became an official Territory and in 1959 we were finally admitted as the Fiftieth State . . . Before Kamehameha, most of Hawai'i was ruled by feudal chiefs in constant battle with one another for dominance over the islands. With the help of American merchants . . .

(24-5)

Ironies and inaccuracies abound: of the three locations initially named, the only one with a connection to *Hawaiian* history is the Palace; the other two are related to United States military events; the Queen yielded her authority only until the United States government could review the actions of the American minister John L. Stevens and the American Marines; and the social structure of Hawaiian

society was not actually feudal. Alika is voicing a memorized script required by his job as a tour guide. He is also articulating a revisionist history that erases pre-contact Hawaiians and stipulates American involvement as the criterion for history that matters. The conflicting narratives, then, that are established by the play epitomize the struggle that Alika must undergo: the desire to honor a way of living that is inextricably connected to and nurtured by the land, versus the need to survive in a world that respects only material capital.

In Native Hawaiian epistemology, Meyer points out that “Knowledge, for Native Hawaiians, is grounded in the natural environment and in the ancestral line of family . . . Hawaiians valued and solicited understanding of their world from their ancestors, both alive and dead, and from elements of the natural world” (93). In *Kāmau*, Alika is visited by his deceased mother. She is not a remote, oracular, sibylline presence, but a mother frustrated and impatient with her recalcitrant child – she is depicted as a real person. In one exchange, she tries to guide him.

ALIKA. And I’m tired of losing everybody I love. Mom, please, leave me for a while. I miss you and Dad so much. But I’m working now and I can’t cry in front of all these people.

MOM. Just like your father.

ALIKA. Oh, come on. Here? On the bus? Gimme a break.

MOM. You’ve always got an excuse – any excuse to hide.

ALIKA. Mom, why?

MOM. Why what?

ALIKA. Why everything. Why you an' Dad had to die. Why I gotta take care
my cousin's daughter. Why I cannot get one good job – why everything.

MOM. You notice there's only haole birds here now?

ALIKA. What's that gotta do with anything?

MOM. Alika, you're my only bright light left. Stop drinking. It's making you so
lōlō. He mau kaona kēia. I wish I had taught you so many things – but
your father and I, we just let it all die with us. They made us so ashamed
of who we are. E ho'opiha i ka mākālua i hakahaka – fill the hole from
which the plant has been removed.

ALIKA. What? That doesn't help me. What do you mean? Why you always talk
to me in riddles. (7-8)

I see Mom's use of stories and 'ōlelo no'eau, or proverbs, as a way of teaching that employs both historical knowledge and methods. That Alika does not grasp their meaning underscores his estrangement from a traditional social imaginary. Even as recently as his parents' generation, a proverb with its attendant context and signification would have been instantly understood. His parents' inability to teach Alika how to live in Hawai'i and still be Hawaiian stems, in part, from an internalized racism. The resultant shame, and the lack of knowledge that would allow him to contextualize her 'ōlelo no'eau, has ruptured any sense of historical continuity for Alika. It replicates the series of fractures begun with first contact, including, as regards land tenure in Hawai'i, the rupture known as the Mahele.⁴⁹ The Mahele and

⁴⁹ mahele. 1. nvt. Portion, division, section, zone, lot, pieces. . .land division of 1848 (Pukui 219).

the notion of how land was and is currently owned in Hawai'i are particularly significant for the modern Hawaiian family of this play.

The Mahele, as a series of legal actions that took place over five years, has been extensively covered by scholars such as Jonathan Osorio and Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, among others, and will not be detailed here. Suffice it to say that the Mahele effectively privatized land ownership in the kingdom of Hawai'i, and was, according to Osorio, "the single most critical dismemberment of Hawaiian society" (44). Land was, prior to Western contact, divided into sectors called ahupua'a, "a land division usually extending from the uplands to the sea" (Pukui 9). The ahupua'a encompassed uplands, lowlands, the beach, and the sea, and thus provided a varied sustenance for all those who lived in it. The Mahele, by making land available for purchase by foreigners, made Hawaiians who had previously relied on the ahupua'a for all their needs now either tenants on land they'd previously considered their home, or evicted and detached from the land altogether.

The life of Alika's cousin Michael is an echo, not a replica, of the way a part of the ahupua'a would have worked pre-contact. The reality of current, modern life in Hawai'i precludes any romantic reproduction of a holistic way of living. That system would have demonstrated a responsibility to support all inhabitants of a given ahupua'a, as well as a commitment to sustainability. Certainly the play makes clear the difficulty, if not outright impossibility, of living in a traditional way. Regardless, Michael fishes, living on his beach, relatively isolated from modern life except for the relatives who love him.

But Michael's fishing is not just a leisure activity or even merely a subsistence activity, as the hotel developer perceives it: he is practicing a husbandry of the bay – kuleana, or responsibility, handed down to him by his grandfather – that would, in earlier days, have ensured an ongoing supply of food for his family and the others living on the land. In one scene, he teaches niece Stevie how to throw a fishing net, an action that perpetuates the family connection to the 'āina by teaching the next generation. That he is interrupted by a security guard who asks them to leave the beach is metonymic of his inability to live in the old manner. And not only is his teaching and fishing interrupted by the guard, but the bay itself has lost the riches that it once held. In a somber monologue, Michael tells Alika how the bay and the family's stewardship of it has changed.

MICHAEL. Tūtū Man (grandfather) tol' me ouwa family been here fo'

generations, we wen take care deese fish from da time of La'amaikahiki.

He tol' me, I was da next keepa of dis' ko'a. He tol' me, "Nāu e mālama i

kēia kai a me kēia 'āina, i ola ku'u 'ohana. Take care dis place and my

family goin' live. Tūtū was a smart man, but he neva unnastan' what was

coming. (50)

In a graphic and bitter recounting, Michael reveals that four boats found out about the twice yearly 'ahi mating that took place in the bay. Most of the school of fish was annihilated in one encounter by people "had speas, baseball bats, machetes, shotgun – everyting. Was one frickin' slaughta! Peopo wen crazy, hacking an' shooting jus' fo' da fun of it. By da time was ova, mos' a' da' fish was wasted" (50). After that, few fish return to the bay, making a mockery of Michael's stewardship.

Meyer observes that, in addition to the historical and genealogical link with the land, “Hawaiians also lived with the Pacific ocean as their back yard. . . . They derived their sources of food, shelter, clothing, medicine, tools, inspiration, values, relationships, their sense of balance and aesthetics – all from land and sea” (101). By the end of the play, Michael will be physically separated from the ocean, estranged from the natural world that sustains him, and Alika will be back at his tour guide job, marketing a history that commodifies Hawaiians. Severed from the source of all things nurturing and generative, the two men are culturally withering. History, in the form of Mom’s concern and their own memories, cannot help either of them in the face of all that contests their existence as Hawaiians.

D. When History Intervenes . . .

Initially, the environment in which Hawaiians find themselves in Kneubuhl’s play, *Ola Nā Iwi*, is as bleak, in its way, as is the one in which *Kāmau* is set. Kneubuhl takes as her contextualizing circumstances the recent movement towards restoring museum-collected human remains to their particular indigenous peoples. By centering the play on the covert repatriation of Hawaiian human remains to Hawai‘i, Kneubuhl implicitly refers to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), an American federal law which protects newly discovered human remains and also provides for the return of museum-“owned” remains to their homeland. NAGPRA was passed in 1990 and continues in effect today.

In this play, a young Hawaiian woman takes a set of human remains – the skeleton of a nineteenth century Hawaiian woman – from a Berlin museum and

smuggles it back to Honolulu. The story of the bones' final disposition is interspersed with speeches by nineteenth century grave robbers, professors, museum collectors, a phrenologist, and a physician. These digressions provide a stark historical frame of reference that is in strong contrast with modern attitudes.

Kawehi, the young woman in *Ola Nā Iwi* who "liberates" the bones, is immersed in Hawaiian culture. She works at a Honolulu museum (modeled on Honolulu's Bishop Museum), she knows to use ancient chants in her research of Hawaiian locations, and appears to have a keen sense of herself as a Hawaiian, as well as of the injustices that have filled Hawaiian history. Her location of enunciation is clearly demonstrated, therefore, in her knowledge and her work. However, her bold gesture is not completely thought out – she does not seem to have specific plans as to what she will actually do with the bones, although she is familiar with traditional practice. Kawehi equivocates, temporizes, and agonizes over the bones, her indecision revealing her disconnect with past and its practices.

It is at this point that history actively intervenes. A strange woman appears at Kawehi's door and a disconcertingly manifest Hawaiian spirituality enters Kawehi's life. The strange woman is named Nanea, and she has no memory of who she is. She is, of course, the woman whose bones Kawehi took, and she is actually Liliha, a royal chief who clashed with Queen Ka'ahumanu. Everything that Kawehi does, from her sojourn in Germany on, is influenced and mediated by Nanea, the ghost of Liliha. The spirit literally embodies Denning's historical double entendre, a term postulating that "Histories, transformations of the past into expressions, clothed, constitute, *are* a present social reality" (37, italics in text).

But the play makes it clear that not *all* Hawaiians, simply by virtue of their genealogy, are endowed with an inherent appreciation of their ancestors' spirituality. This belief might tend to essentialize Native Hawaiians, boxing them into a requisite spiritualism that is as impossibly stereotypical as the "happy Hawaiian tour guide" in *Kāmau*. Kneubuhl takes a more layered and complex approach by providing a Hawaiian character named Pua Ho'olale, formerly known as Kelly Brooks, a powerful museum manager who wears her Hawaiian-ness like armor and prides herself on her position as "a leader in the Hawaiian movement from the very beginning" (169). As I have said in an earlier work, Pua justifies her proprietary attitude by her sense of ownership of all things Hawaiian, and her editing of cultural memory is entirely self-serving. Pua's selective activism extends to her curatorial choices.

PUA. To tell you the truth, I didn't like your exhibit on the Waialele site. In fact, I'm taking it down from the gallery.

KAWEHI. I did an exhibit based on archeological evidence and oral history.

PUA. *Flimsy* oral history.

KAWEHI. Oral history is valid evidence.

PUA. And you have absolutely no proof that there was a heiau (temple) there.

KAWEHI. That history was meticulously handed down for hundreds of years.

More than one chant names that place as the site of a luakini heiau.⁵⁰

PUA. And you drew too much attention to human sacrifice. (168)

⁵⁰ luakini. nvi. Temple, church, cathedral, tabernacle; large heiau where ruling chiefs prayed and human sacrifices were offered (Pukui 213).

The introduction of Pua's character rounds out a quartet of female characters who, taken together, paint a multi-faceted and intricate portrait of modern Hawaiian perception and belief:

one character who came late to an acknowledgement of her roots [Pua], an activist operating under the radar of legality in the name of cultural preservation [Mina], a young colonized part-Hawaiian scholar [Kawehi], and an ali'i content to accept the diminution of status for the sake of repose and tranquility [Nanea/Liliha]. (Choy 213)

While Kawehi has previously assumed her belief structure to be firmly grounded in Hawaiian practice, the *fact* of Nanea's presence takes her aback. Despite her knowledge and knowing, Kawehi is still focused on temporal issues. Nanea's appearance forces a reconciliation with the spiritual. It is not as though Kawehi does not know, intellectually, the consequences of what is essentially a diaspora of human remains *and* spirit. Nanea's appearance is a natural outcome, as she explains to Gustav, who has come from Germany to retrieve the bones for the museum.

NANEA. We believe that the spirit, the essence, the mana (*spiritual power*) resides in the bones. If not properly hidden or cared for in the old way, the spirit of the departed one is forced to wander, unhappy and restless, never finding its way to the ao 'aumākua, the realm of the ancestors, never finding home. No peace. (175)

Though Kawehi has been more inclined to honor the past than Pua, its physical incursion into her life is a shock, and after finding out who Nanea really is, she says "I think I've crossed the line where what I think doesn't count for much" (204).

History, in the form of Liliha's spirit, has intervened to shake Kawehi loose from a Western reliance on the intellect and, in the process, change her assumptions of how the Hawaiian world can really operate. Kawehi, a Hawaiian woman, is learning from a Hawaiian spirit who, as Hawaiian ancestors may do, transcends time to make the past of consequence in the present.

As Hawaiian theater demonstrates, links to the land (going far beyond legal ownership) and ancestors are of paramount importance and are of significance and influence today. Whether or not these links have efficacy in the modern world, they remain part of the history and therefore the legacy supporting Hawaiian thought. And if this difference is a part of the infrastructure supporting Hawaiian theater, as I believe it is, then the Hawaiian sense of self goes, as Kneubuhl implies, to the bone.

To foreground this and differentiate indigenous thought, the play provides examples that challenge such beliefs by inserting vignettes that offer a nineteenth century Western positionality. Amusing as some of the speeches are (e.g., the phrenologist is presented as a sort of carnival sideshow barker), they illustrate the enormous variance between Western and Hawaiian knowledge. For collector Warren K. Moorehead, the excitement is in the pursuit of the unknown, with a seemingly complete disregard for a culturally contextualized significance attached to human remains.

MOOREHEAD. My greatest rewards are in the field – the strange lure and promise of it all – my joy and drive always boundlessly aroused by what might lie underground. What I might dig up, discover, unbury and expose

to the shining light of day – what ancient secrets the earth might yield to me! (193)

Kneubuhl juxtaposes the nineteenth century men with Nanea's talks given as, ironically, a living history tour guide in downtown Honolulu. In one speech, given in front of Kawaiaha'o Church in Honolulu, she relates the story of Queen Ka'ahumanu, a Christian convert, burning some of the chief's bones, previously resting in a place called Hale o Keawe. She also recounts the reaction to the desecration by a chief named Boki.

NANEA. Many people heaped her name with abuse for this supreme insult to the bones of departed chiefs. "The bones of our chiefs should be well cared for," shouted Boki. "Instead, she breaks down Hale o Keawe, shows the hidden bones of the chiefs in public, and burns the others. Perhaps," he cried, "if she knew where Kamehameha's bones lay, she would show them in public too." (174)

The story Nanea relates is her own, since Liliha was alive during these events, and Boki was Liliha's husband. The history of an indigenous people, then, is embodied in a living person and challenges the dehumanization of museum nomenclature: "archeological specimens" (150), "bone brokerage" and "our collection" (208), and "antiquities" (192). History is not relegated to the past but does, indeed, live.

Nanea relates the story of her own interment, describing how her loyal servant prepared her body in the old way.

NANEA. Off he went in his canoe with his beloved ali'i (*chief*) to a lonely place, where the only voices are in the sea and the birds and the owl at night. There he performed his loving task, cleaning the bones of mortal flesh and oiling them carefully, always in silence but – Auē! Aloha piha 'o 'ia (*Oh, he was full of love*). He hid them in a cave and left. (211)

Contrast this treatment with a nineteenth century physician presenting the skull of a Hawaiian to a fellow scholar.

PHYSICIAN. . . . I told you I would send you a present. Well, here it is! A skull, a genuine skull of a Sandwich Islander. It has served my purpose, and now I turn it over to you for, I hope, a place in your upcoming work on crania – a work which I believe will be on the shelf of every man of science for years to come . . . he [the Hawaiian man] fell ill, entered the hospital, and as providence would have it, was placed in my care. He died of nervous exhaustion, and nostalgia. . . . as he had no means of payment, I made his head responsible for his medical bill. I now place it, a native offering, as they say, on the altar of science . . . (119)

The first approach assumes a belief in a life, of both body and spirit, that extends after death. The narrative is also redolent of the duty, love, and respect due to ali'i. The second approach considers the body to be the mere husk of the spirit, therefore expendable after death, and the body, especially the *native* body, merely an object for scientific study.

The Western nineteenth century approach to knowledge is investigatory and based on scientific rationalism. For Hawaiians, however, knowledge was irrevocably

tied to spirituality, and this is the system that Nanea teaches Kawehi. What Nanea offers is the notion of kumupa'a. Of this term, Meyer says it

embodies the notion of ancestral guardians and the act of knowledge (kumu) firm and strong (pa'a). Kumupa'a, the "guardian spirit"/"firm foundation" is both form and idea, person and belief, inspiration and knowledge base. The fluidity of such an image challenges current notions of what it is to know something and how one is given this knowledge. (94)

Nanea/Liliha is Kawehi's kumupa'a; she is guiding the younger woman to knowledge by gently expanding her understanding of what is possible and what is real. Unlike Pua, Kawehi has not appropriated her spiritual authority. Rather, she has been granted it by Nanea: first, by the appearance of the spirit in the German museum storage room and her mute appeal for succor. Later, though Nanea is manipulating events, it is finally up to Kawehi to reciprocate Nanea's trust and guidance by ensuring a return to her home. And it is the physical joining with the land and the past that finally heals Nanea.

E. History as Foreshadowing . . .

Another play by Kneubuhl, *The Conversion of Ka'ahumau*, focuses on that pivotal era of Hawaiian history: the early years of Western contact. In *Ola Nā Iwi*, Nanea speaks of the Queen who converted to Christianity and tore down Hawaiian temples. Here, in *The Conversion of Ka'ahumau*, that Queen's life and decision-making is explored in a play about power and its attendant responsibility. Queen Ka'ahumanu, a character only mentioned – and vilified – in *Ola Nā Iwi*, is here one of

a cast of five women whose combined stories provide an apologetic for the period and an expanded, fact-based imaginary of the past. Craig Howes' introduction to Kneubuhl's play collection cites Ka'ahumanu's two significant political choices, both of which were decisive moments in Hawaiian history.

First, by eating publically in 1819 with Liholiho, she brought to an end the kapu system – that system of privileges, restrictions, and obligations that had ordered Hawai'i. Second, by converting in 1825 to Christianity, she essentially mandated what system should replace the one she had declared over. Set in the time between these events, Kneubuhl's play explores the consequences of this eventual shift for Ka'ahumanu, for her Hawaiian subjects, for the recently-arrived missionaries, and for the subsequent history of Hawai'i. (xvi)

In this critical period – roughly 1819 to 1820 – Kneubuhl presents the five women as dealing with massive personal and political changes: two missionary women make the then arduous journey from New England to minister to a “swarming mass of dark savages” (15); a young kauā⁵¹ yearns for acceptance and status; a hapa haole⁵² woman tries to make life decisions guided by too many influences; and the kuhina nui⁵³ makes choices that have political and cultural consequences.

Kneubuhl's play, in which each of the five stories is given equal weight, provides Craig Womack's critical space wherein the encounters amongst the women

⁵¹ kauā. n. Outcast, pariah, slave, untouchable, menial; a caste which lived apart and was drawn on for human sacrifices (Pukui 134).

⁵² hapa haole. nvs. Part-white person; of part-white blood; part white and part Hawaiian (Pukui 58).

⁵³ kuhina nui. n. Powerful officer in the days of the monarchy. Ka'ahumanu was the first to have this title; the position is usually translated as “prime minister” or “premier,” but according to Kuykendall . . . carried greater power; the kuhina nui shared executive power with the king (Pukui 173).

allows the playwright to imagine forms of Hawaiian-ness, different ways of being Hawaiian, and the ways in which outsiders may encounter Hawaiians.⁵⁴ Rather than static, essentializing portraits, the characters are moving targets, struggling to adapt to the new, and, most importantly, capable of independent and individual thought and action.

On what knowledge is their agency based? Ka'ahumanu's use of metaphor throughout the play demonstrates a deep-rooted connection with the natural world. The "organic and cultural mediation of experience, and hence knowledge" (Meyer 93) she employs ranges from the serious, "The big wave comes and how will I steer the canoe? (*Ka'ahumanu* 69), to the comic, "It will be good for you to go with a younger man, Hannah. The canoe will fit the hālau⁵⁵" (23). Even the notion of a Christian hell, as explained by the missionaries, is translated into her own life experience: in a feverish dream, she sees "my people burning. It was so hot. Great rivers of lava" (51). These references to both the natural world and the world of Hawaiian practice form the linchpins of her knowledge and praxis.

However, for Sybil Bingham and Lucy Thurston, the points of reference slowly change. For these haole women, it is a fight to keep their lives as close to their New England practices as possible. They keep both their heavy layers of body-covering clothing (at which the more comfortably clad Hannah and Pali marvel) and their formidable work ethic, but they are gradually altered by contact with the new.

⁵⁴ Womack is evaluating native literature depending on "how accurately it describes the social world it references." He cites "Indian characters in literature who are not 'real enough,' where the critic assumes that Native characters act like essays about Indians rather than individuals with the capacity to surprise and delight" (94).

⁵⁵ hālau. 1.n. Long house, as for canoes or hula instruction; meeting house (Pukui 52). Ka'ahumanu is here making a sexually suggestive joke.

It is strongly implied that the change is for the good, especially for Lucy Thurston, whose antipathy for Hawaiians is momentarily overcome by Pali's kindness during the haole woman's convalescence. In another scene, Sybil unbends enough to accept the honor of lomi lomi, or massage, from the Queen. In so doing, the relaxation of her body releases cherished but ultimately painful memories that confuse and frighten her.

The Hawaiian women are perhaps more altered by the encounter. Certainly Pali, the young kāua woman, benefits by the haole's women's acceptance of her, despite her low cultural status, and this results in her restoration into Ka'ahumanu's favor and a new sense of her own worth. But for Hannah, the hapa haole woman initially attracted to Christianity ("Their talk is of a kind god, Jesus. A god to whom women may speak and a god who will let us in his temple" (28)), the new beliefs are ultimately inadequate, and she eventually turns from the new way.

HANNAH. I thought this new god, this new way of being, would fill me full of happiness and purpose as I thought it did the mikanele.⁵⁶ And for a time, it did. But the happiness went farther and farther away, something to wait for after death, and I remembered what you once said to me. That happiness was a thing we need while we're alive. Come away from them. Don't join them in their thought that everything that gives pleasure is bad. Come back to the way things were before. (75)

Hannah is speaking to Ka'ahumanu, but clearly, it will be impossible to go back to a time when they did not see with a foreign-inflected awareness. This is not entirely

⁵⁶ mikanele. nvs. Missionary (Pukui 246).

negative, as Ka'ahumanu perceives benefit in some of the new knowledge brought by the missionaries, particularly in how some aspects of it might be used as tools and weapons.

The utility of knowledge is a theme that runs throughout the play, particularly with regard to Ka'ahumanu's choices. Meyer notes that "Things, ideas, people and places became meaningful because of their utility. If they had none of these characteristics, they were generally not considered important and were ignored" (113). Even the destruction of the kapu system was a discarding of a method of organization no longer practical or useful.

KA'AHUMANU. For many years now we have seen these haole, these foreign men among us. We know that they break the kapu (*taboo*) laws. Do the gods come to punish them? No! Some of the women have gone to the ships and have eaten with these haole men. Do the gods come to punish them? No! So why should it be that they will come to punish us at all? I think these beliefs are nothing, false. (7)

Later, she dwells on her choice.

KA'AHUMANU. Now the old gods have lost their power and will go. (*Pause*)
Have I done right? Or have I done great evil? I took down what I knew to be false, but will I, Ka'ahumanu, be able to guide these islands, be able to guide the people? The people now have no gods, only the ali'i. How will I steer the canoe? (12)

Ka'ahumanu's discarding of now-useless beliefs is not the only example of keeping only what may be utilized. Up to this time, Hawaiian had been an orally

transmitted language, without a written component. When Sybil and Lucy want to teach her reading and writing, Ka'ahumanu first asks, "It is the palapala (*reading and writing*) that haole men know?" (26). Upon hearing the affirmative, her dialogue for the rest of the scene is peremptory and imperative.

KA'AHUMANU. Show me.

SYBIL. (*Writing*) We will start with your name. Ka'ahumanu. And yours,

Hannah. (*She gives them the pens and paper*) Now try to copy every mark.

KA'AHUMANU. Help me.

SYBIL. (*Guides her hand*) There, that is your name.

KA'AHUMANU. Again.

LUCY. Hannah, that is very quick of you.

KA'AHUMANU. (*Looking at HANNAH'S*) Hers is better. Guide my hand again.

SYBIL. K A A H A M A N U.

KA'AHUMANU. Hannah, put away the cards, we will do this now.

SYBIL. Perhaps I could come tomorrow and begin a lesson.

KA'AHUMANU. Not tomorrow. NOW! (26-7)

The Queen has immediately perceived the political significance and advantages of literacy, and she wastes no time in acquiring this "technology that would allow them new ways to communicate with each other" (Silva 32). This new knowledge was a double-edged sword that, on the one hand did perform as an agent of community and collaboration in the many Hawaiian language newspapers that were published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but on the other hand also "acted as

a major agent in the colonizing activities, especially of the Protestant mission” (Silva 35).

In any event, Kneubuhl effectively communicates the excitement and allure of the strange and exotic, not from the point of view of the colonial gaze, but from that of Hawaiian subjectivity. Hannah’s enthusiasm for new knowledge may have a more personal basis than does Ka’ahumanu’s but is no less imperative:

HANNAH. They make new thoughts in my head which weren’t there before, and now I may think of many new and wonderful things. I have knowledge and I will have more of it. Before I was just a pretty thing that men wanted, but now I have a new world of thoughts that is kapu to everyone but myself. (40)

While the utility of Hannah’s new knowledge is perhaps not as immediately evident or well defined as that of reading and writing, her subsequent disillusionment brings me to a consideration of how this play reflects contemporary Hawai’i and Hawaiians. As a modern play treating a historical subject, the work functions both as a historical imagining and as a commentary on the outcomes of the history it explores. In an exchange near the end of the play, Ka’ahumanu and Hannah realize their choices are diametrically opposed.

KA’AHUMANU. You know things will never be as they were! The world changes before our eyes every day and we must change or be lost. Besides, we cannot go back to the way things were before. I will put aside those old ways because the people need a new way for the new world which comes to us. We will have laws. We will be Christian people.

HANNAH. This can never be my way. I will believe there is another way.

KA'AHUMANU. What way is that?

HANNAH. I don't know. I only know that I can't follow the ways of their god, although I know many of their ways to be good. It is something inside that will not be closed off, and this is what will happen to me if I listened to them.

KA'AHUMANU. Our lives take us on different journeys, then, Hannah.

HANNAH. 'Ae.⁵⁷

KA'AHUMANU. (*Embracing HANNAH*) Aloha, my pua.⁵⁸

...

KA'AHUMANU. (*Alone*) Aloha, my pua, and may the old gods watch over your life. (75)

The Queen is determined to meet the new world with its own tools, but Hannah is unable to reconcile her Hawaiian sense of self with what she perceives as the totalizing Western religion; she sees no middle ground or possibility of adaptation other than surrendering completely to the new.

If, as Hall suggests, there is “no simple ‘return’ or ‘recovery’ of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and identities of the present” (New Ethnicities 448), then the two characters also present a twenty-first century exploration of the

⁵⁷ 'ae. 1.vt., interj. Yes; to say yes, consent, conform, grant, agree (Pukui 4).

⁵⁸ pua. 1. nvi. Flower. 3. nvi. Progeny, child, descendent, offspring (Pukui 344). Here, Ka'ahumanu is referring affectionately to Hannah as a precious child.

difficult-to-maintain balance of valuing and preserving traditional ways while adapting to the new. The Hawaiian ali'i were facing difficult choices in the early nineteenth century and, whether or not one agrees with Ka'ahumanu's actions, her dilemma – historicized with all its attendant complications – is as complex as any existing today. Howes quotes Kneubuhl as noting that “ ‘being there at that time and having to make those decisions was really difficult . . . barely forty years after Western contact, ‘half the people were dead already’ ” (xix). She is referring to the decimation of much of the Hawaiian population due to sicknesses such as smallpox and sexually-transmitted diseases against which the native population had no defenses.

Kneubuhl ends the play with her Queen facing the past and moving resolutely into the future.

KA'AHUMANU. . . . The foreigners are among us. Many more will come.

Beware, some will come like the hoards of caterpillars, hiding their hunger to devastate the land as we know it, until the time when all the Hawaiian people may be trodden underfoot. We have seen this greed already with the sandalwood trade. We must fight now with our quick thoughts and our grasp of foreign ways. To think too long on the ways of the past is to ignore the hungry sharks that swim among us. I do not look to the past with contempt, but seek to preserve the ways that were good, uniting them with what is good of this new world, that comes to us, *now*.

(76)

F. History as Provocation...

NAVY WIFE. [to Grace Fortescue] It's not just you and Lieutenant Massie who are on trial. The whole navy is involved. You owe it to the navy to do everything in your power to prove to the world and most particularly to the people in Honolulu that there is something involved besides the freedom of you four.

[ADMIRAL] STIRLING. It's bigger than the navy, Mrs. Fortescue. It's a question of America. (Massie/Kahahawai, Carroll, 51)

The Massie case, involving an alleged gang rape, two trials, and a murder, was a cause célèbre in the Territory of Hawai'i of 1931-2. Exciting comment from around the country and the world, it is significant in Hawai'i for the political and social upheaval for which it was, at least in part, responsible, and remarkable also for the notion of the Local which resulted. It is a distinctly Hawai'i event by virtue not only of its subject matter but, more importantly, for the indelible and lasting sense of alterity it instilled in an entire community.

Hawai'i in 1931 was an idyllic paradise for the elite haole minority who effectively ruled it, though life was not so equitable for the people of color – of Asian and Hawaiian ancestry – who mostly formed the working class and comprised eighty percent of the population. Racially restricted neighborhoods, shantytowns and tenements, and an “openly white supremacist oligarchy” maintained a stable if inequitable status quo (Stannard 1-3). What the Massie case is said to have prompted, at least in part, is the alliance of people of color in Hawai'i against the

perceived injustice and racism of the Massie accusations and subsequent murder of one of the alleged rapists. The international, national, and local hysteria spurred by the image of a young white woman abused by bestial natives was a graphic exhibition that stimulated the panethnic alliance that in Hawai'i is called the Local.

Briefly: late one night in 1931, a young Navy wife, Thalia Massie, left a Waikiki nightclub and was later found walking by the side of a road. She claimed to have been raped by a group of "Hawaiian" boys. A group of young men – Hawaiian, Hawaiian-Chinese, Chinese, and Japanese – were arrested and tried, resulting in a mistrial after the jury was unable to come to a verdict. While a new trial was pending in 1932, one of the young men, Horace Ida, was kidnapped, beaten, and threatened in an attempt to force a confession. Soon after, another of the young men, Joseph Kahahawai, was also kidnapped. He was found murdered in a car with Grace Fortescue, Thomas Massie – Thalia Massie's mother and husband – and two Navy men. The four were arrested, tried, and, despite a lengthy defense by Clarence Darrow, convicted of manslaughter, with recommendations for lenient sentences, though the sentence was for ten years at hard labor for each. The sentences were commuted by then Governor Lawrence Judd to one hour for each of the convicted murderers, the duration of which was spent in his office. The four, along with Thalia Massie, were immediately allowed to leave the islands (Rosa 209-11).

John Patrick Rosa's dissertation, "The Massie Case and the Politics of Local Identity in Hawai'i," makes the argument that "the Massie Case and the stories it generated enabled the formation of local identity in Hawai'i . . . Ever since the case, non-white groups of various ancestry in Hawai'i have used the term "local" in order

to articulate a common history” (4). Rosa notes the ethnic components of Local identity, saying that “The creation of this panethnic local identity was made possible, in part, by the structural antagonisms of oppositional population groups” (63). The “oppositional” groups in Hawai‘i of the 1930s were the Caucasian, or haole, descendents of missionaries and planters, but also included the growing number of American (white) servicemen stationed in Hawai‘i. Local identity, then, was an identity composed of many groups banding together for political *and* cultural unity, without losing the strands of their own ethnic identities.⁵⁹

It is important to note that these groups – Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, etc. – were all groups that were defined by class as well as race; they were all marginalized by the dominant white culture. In the early plantation days, the haole management had usually set up segregated “camps” defined by ethnicity. This partitioning effectively separated them, e.g., Japanese from Chinese, Filipino from Korean. Of course, the different ethnic groups, including Hawaiians, had work day contact with each other, and their status as oppressed workers may have been the same, but the haole management’s divisive policies ensured that early alliance was minimized. By the time of the Massie trials, however, the different ethnic groups were living in proximity in cities and towns, and were well acquainted with each other.

Presenting the Massie case as a precipitating event may seem, given the multi- and pan-ethnic political and social structure of twenty-first century Hawai‘i,

⁵⁹ It would be interesting to see the results of a study of how Asian Americans and Locals define themselves. Does one point someone out saying, “Oh, she’s Asian American” on the continent the same way one says in Hawai‘i, “Oh, she’s local?”

irrelevant. In order to understand the evolution of the Local and to fully comprehend its theatrical implementation, it is critical to understand the culture of the 1920s Hawai'i and how the event was able to galvanize the different communities. It is not unique for a specific nomenclature to evolve from racism and cultural opposition. It may be useful to look to Stuart Hall's comments on the origination of post-war black culture in England – there are significant parallels.

Politically, this is the moment when the term 'black' was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain, and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities. In this moment, politically speaking. 'The black experience,' as a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural differences between the different communities, became 'hegemonic' over other ethnic/racial identities – though the latter did not, of course, disappear.

... This analysis was predicated on the marginalization of the black experience in British culture; not fortuitously occurring at the margins, but placed, positioned at the margins, as the consequence of a set of quite specific political and cultural practices which regulated, governed and 'normalized' the representational and discursive spaces of English society" (New Ethnicities 441-2).

The “organizing category of a new politics of resistance” in Hawai‘i was the Local, and the normalizing political and cultural practices were those of the haole elite. Like Hall’s black culture, the Local comprised groups of different historical and cultural backgrounds. Unlike Asian America’s specific demarcations, however, the Local includes more than just those of Asian ancestry: it consists of all those who had history in the islands, usually as laborers and usually with a plantation background. This identity has, in certain cases, also become “hegemonic over other ethnic/racial identities” and in Hawai‘i, it is usual to keep both the pan-ethnic *and* mono-ethnic identities in play.

The “quite specific political and cultural practices” of 1930s Hawai‘i are well delineated in Dennis Carroll’s compilation. Rather than attempting a fictionalized universality that would reach for an audience’ empathy, the text historicizes the event by using trial records and other contemporary sources such as a Pinkerton report, numerous newspaper stories and headlines, and memoirs of some of the principals. As Carroll says, “none of the dialogue is invented” (preface, *Massie/Kahahawai*).

Additionally, the Brechtian technique of projections provide, as applicable, times and locations: “Slide: 12.10 pm”; “Slide: 12.35 am. King and Liliha Streets” (10); Slide: 1 am. Ala Moana Road” (11). Not only do these slides allow the audience to locate themselves spatially in Honolulu, they also provide an opportunity for viewers to consider for themselves the veracity of the accusation. In the above sequence, the first slide marks Thalia Massie’s account of her alleged assault in Waikīkī. The second title marks the time of a near accident that places the five

alleged rapists at a location relatively far away from Waikīkī. The third slide identifies the time when Thalia Massie is observed walking by side of a Waikīkī road post-assault. The disparity that clearly exists between the facts as testified to and the claims of the accuser are thus mutely presented to the viewers, prompting them to draw their own conclusions. That the testimony is, for the most part, delivered in the third person is a distancing effect precluding empathy, allowing the audience to keep the events at arm's length and thereby prompting rational consideration of what they are seeing. As with Brecht's epic theater spectator, they may say, "I'd never have thought it – That's not the way – That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The sufferings of this man appal [sic] me, because they are unnecessary . . ." (71).

And what are they seeing? They are seeing the moment in Hawai'i history when the majority of Hawai'i residents – people of color – were forced to acknowledge, as a class, the deep-rooted enmity felt for them, not only by the haole oligarchy of Hawai'i but by the dominant culture of the United States as a whole.

John Rosa argues

that local formation in Hawai'i took place because of antagonisms that emerged simultaneously along lines of class, race, and gender.

Furthermore, as a category that involves a direct reference to geography, 'local' necessarily requires discussing the category of place – a category that is sometimes overlooked in the historical profession because of a primary concern with issues of temporality. (7)

The specificity that historicizes *Massie/Kahahawai* gives it a position of particular enunciation. The narratives are well defined: white woman threatened by dark men – “Many White Women Attacked in Hawai’i” (48); working class versus upper class – Thalia’s father was related to Theodore Roosevelt and her mother to Alexander Graham Bell, and she and her husband live in then-elitist Mānoa Valley – the accused men live in Kalihi, a working class neighborhood; foreigner versus American – “Down in Washington, in Congress, certain of our lawmakers have already introduced bills aimed at cancelling the verdict that five little men of Pacific races imposed on seven full-sized white Americans” (63); and political maneuvering for material gain – “At a time when the territory is asking for statehood, and is otherwise largely in the public eye, it is imperative that the criminals be brought to justice” (38). These citations – historicizing because Carroll has culled them from the public record – enable the audience to come “to conclusions about the entire structure of a society at a particular (transient) time” (Brecht 98). And while this play will be cited later, particularly in chapter three regarding racialization, it is in presenting history as provocation, both in the 1930s and in the modern theater, that *Massie/Kahahawai* makes a bold case for the specific differentiation of Local identity.

There is nothing in the Asian American theatrical canon that corresponds with it, either temporally or influentially. No events in Asian American history⁶⁰ have galvanized an entire community (not a single ethnic community) whose

⁶⁰ Rosa cites the Scottsboro case, a well-known interracial rape case of the same year in which two young white women accused nine black men of rape. The parallels are clear, but Rosa believes the two cases were seldom compared “in part due to the inability of most continental Americans to imagine Hawai’i, a territory of the United States, as an integral part of the union” (10).

commonality was reflected in their non-white status into a permanent bonding that transformed the social imaginary in a way that influenced its political and cultural development over the next half-century. While a case certainly exists for the interning of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II traumatizing several generations of Japanese Americans, the criminal injustices of internment resulted, for the most part, in the internees' desire to prove themselves true Americans. This does not appear to have happened in Hawai'i, even though most of the 442nd and 100th Battalions were comprised of Hawai'i residents. It is not that Locals and Hawaiians are *not* Americans or do not feel a loyalty to the nation. It is that they share another identity that is equally as valued and equally as culturally influential – the Local.

This play presents a time of particular volatility in Hawai'i's history. In depicting the moment just before Local people articulated their identity, it reflects an uneasy stability based on the subjugation of an entire class. A cursory similarity to Asian American plays, especially with regard to the development of identity as a reaction to dominant culture discrimination and prejudice, is clear. However, the commonalities amongst ethnicities not solely Asian that emerged from this event, as well as the subsequent, and successful, leverage of the Local in politics, took the narrative in a different direction. It remains that the *performance* of Local identity is unique to Hawai'i.

This chapter has appraised both Local and Hawaiian plays not only for what they reveal of events in Hawai'i's history but also for their interpretation of how history has influenced the development of Hawai'i's social and cultural imaginary.

The playwrights both reveal and withhold knowledge from their characters and their audiences, until viewers discover just how historical occurrences have constructed their milieu. This contextualization frames a unique body of theatrical work.

The most conspicuous mode of speech in Hawai'i – Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) or Pidgin – is similarly unique. While its general pattern of development follows that of most creoles, HCE's specificity to Hawai'i and its usage pattern is a certain marker of a Hawai'i play. But it is not the only language in theatrical use. Standard English, Hawaiian, and a smattering of other tongues are also in play. In order to further determine the distinguishing characteristics of Hawai'i's theater, the next chapter examines language, its utility and praxis, in the context of Hawaiian and Local plays.

Chapter 3 – Language: Choices and Functions

I. Introduction

In this chapter, my intention is primarily to investigate how the language(s) utilized by Hawai'i playwrights distinguish their plays as being of Hawai'i and how the speech performs in support of this definition. There are three main languages employed in these plays: standard English, Hawaiian, and Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), sometimes known simply as Pidgin.⁶¹ How and when these languages occur within the plays, who speaks them and why, what the characters say, and how the choices of language and translation (or non-translation) code the plays all clearly identify them as works specific to Hawai'i.

This heteroglossia does not assume a trilingual audience. Nor is it a postmodern assemblage of disparate elements. Juliana Spahr notes that the use of English and “other languages that might be known only to some portion of the readership” in Hawai'i literature is not a gesture to multiculturalism. Rather, it calls attention to the fraught political history of the islands and to “the always present relationships of power between languages and cultures” (Spahr 75-6). This acknowledgement of disparate power positions, especially as applied to Hawai'i with its history of colonialism, multi-ethnic population, and attendant power positioning, tends to reject a binary oppositional mode, e.g., Asian American vs white America. Instead, it opts for one that incorporates both vociferously and sotto voce the cacophony of indigeneity and foreign influence that has contributed to the languages spoken in Hawai'i. This complicated history of sovereignty and

⁶¹ Other languages are used also, for instance, when Japanese terms and idioms are spoken in *Obake*.

interconnectedness makes a simplistic binary template impossible when studying Hawai'i's theater. Incorporating the observation that language is "the medium in which ideology is generated and construed" (Hall, *Critical Dialogues* 36), integrated with the common hypothesis of the body as readable text, allows this chapter to combine both notions as a foundation from which to analyze theater texts.

While I am not aware of any Hawaiian analysis of language in Western theatrical performance, there are Hawaiian sources that comment on the efficacy of language. Meyer notes that the utility of language is reflected in the potency of words: to kill or to heal.⁶² This standpoint also speaks to the function of language, which we might consequently infer was, for Hawaiians, purposeful, of consequence, and firmly located in specific locations – this last situates the use of Hawaiian language firmly in both physical and cultural location. Stuart Hall asserts that "there will always be specificities – of voice, of positioning, of identity, of cultural traditions, of histories, and these are the conditions of enunciation which enable us to speak" (*Critical Dialogues* 407). He recognizes that utterance is meaningless without a grounding in a precisely enunciated place. Moreover, Meyer notes as critical to understanding the Hawaiian use of language an acknowledgement of the practice of *ho'opāpā*, a Hawaiian word or language contest which "interwove imagery with the many characteristics words themselves held (not just meaning), i.e., historical, sound, ability to group, etc. *Ho'opāpā* shows just how valuable and powerful understanding context, place and history was to the display of intellect" (118).

⁶² "I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo no ka make. Life is in speech, death is in speech. Words can heal, words can destroy" (Pukui, 1983 129).

Marvin Carlson uses the term “heteroglossic drama,” borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin’s “heteroglossia,” to refer to dramatic works containing several languages. Carlson suggests not a hybridity that draws from discrete components to create a new substance, but a location “in which discrete voices continue to operate within a single discourse” (Critical Dialogues 110). An example of this is Taiwanese theater that may use multiple languages within a single performance. John B. Weinstein notes that Taiwanese, Mandarin, Hakka, Cantonese, Japanese, and English may all be spoken by characters in the same play. Far from being a totally alienating device, “if people miss words here and there, it is all the more natural, since people in multilingual Taiwan are accustomed to hearing things they do not understand” (271). I suggest that Hawai‘i theater, when it uses different languages, similarly reflects its own social imaginary, one in which it is possible, and sometimes normal, to hear standard English, Hawaiian, and HCE, as well as other languages, spoken on a daily basis.

How then does language function in these plays? Hawai‘i heteroglossia represents a sort of thick description, if you will, of the islands’ history. English stands for the over-200-year history of Western domination; Hawaiian as spoken now embodies the cultural and spiritual recuperation of the indigenous people; and HCE resulted from the mediation that was necessary for different populations and agendas to coexist. The plays operate theatrically as conveyers of a sort of “local semiosis,” “shar[ing] particular local conventions and codes for the creation and experiencing of works of art which are not solely ‘artistic’ conventions, but all manner of life-structuring assumptions operative in that culture” (Carlson, 1990,

111). Carlson refers to theatrical works of cultures that no longer exist (i.e., plays from the Elizabethan and Greek eras). Here, however, we examine texts that are embedded in a living culture, operating within a social imaginary that incorporates both contested and shared memories of a recent past.

These general parameters are not, of course, exclusive of Asian American theater. Many Asian American plays are also embedded in a modern culture, and they share linguistic conventions with Hawai'i theater, particularly those used to enable accessibility. For instance, in Velina Hasu Houston's plays about Japanese women who have immigrated to the United States, the women's dialogue is sometimes represented with the convention of English standing in for the Japanese we know they must be speaking amongst themselves. This seems to hold true for most of the dialogue in her play *Tea*, in which four Japanese women gather to clean the house of a deceased member of their group.

David Henry Hwang's *Golden Child* also uses this convention for his Chinese characters who speak fluent standard English to represent a foreign (to Westerners) language for an English-speaking audience. In this play, the Caucasian missionary utilizes a very simple, almost child-like English to denote his imperfect grasp of Mandarin. The Chinese characters are therefore coded by eloquence with intelligence and agency, a strong contrast to the stereotype of the enigmatic and unfathomable Oriental.

The convention also operates in the play *Kimchee and Chitlins* by Elizabeth Wong, a play about the fraught relationship between African Americans and Asian Americans, but the playwright also uses Korean language and Haitian Creole

dialogue when incomprehension and opacity function as partial catalyst for antagonistic race relations. In one scene, a grocer's statements in Korean are roughly translated by a Korean-speaking reporter, but his last line to her is spoken in English standing in for Korean: "But, now, Miss Seeto, I think those people can starve. I say, let them shop in *hell*" (446). Later, another Korean character sings a famous love song (also used as a song of resistance during the Korean War) which, not translated, simply symbolizes his Otherness.

II. Coding the Plays via Language

A. Language Choices – Representation and Accessibility

Hawai'i plays also employ the convention of using English to stand in for another language. For example, Uncle and the other characters in Gary Pak's *Ricepaper Airplane* are assumed to be speaking Korean in the scenes that take place in Korea. Ed Sakamoto's *Obake* has the Japanese immigrants speaking standard English amongst themselves.⁶³

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu may also be included in the group of plays that use this convention, but with significant differences. As with the examples above, the characters that would normally speak their native language, Hawaiian, speak English; that is, the Hawaiian characters – Ka'ahumanu and the two young women, Pali and Hannah, speak English when they are together, though the audience may assume that they are speaking Hawaiian. The two missionary women also speak their lines in English, their native language. Each group – New Englander and

⁶³ Sakamoto's characters occasionally drop words, making them sound like immigrants who have an imperfect grasp of the language or are beginning to speak plantation pidgin: Tamotsu: "I'm not helpless old man" (3); "Who you to tell me what to do?" (14); "Not good son" (26).

Hawaiian – is early established as being fluent in their own language, with complex sentences expressing multi-layered and sophisticated life experiences. However, during the first meeting between Sybil Bingham, Lucy Thurston, and Queen Ka‘ahumanu, the missionary women’s sentence structure becomes less complex and the concepts expressed less abstract. Compare the dialogue from that first meeting scene with a monologue spoken by Sybil Bingham.

SYBIL. (*Offering her hand*) Aloha, your majesty.

(*Ka‘ahumanu haughtily extends her baby finger.*)

LUCY. (*Stepping back, afraid*) Aloha...

SYBIL. (*Haltingly*) Your, um, majesty, we bring a message of hope.

KA‘AHUMANU. Oh?

LUCY. Of Jesus.

SYBIL. The one true God, the blessed Jehovah–

KA‘AHUMANU. (*Insistent*) We don’t need a new god. Why do you wear so much clothes?

SYBIL. This is the way ladies of America dress.

LUCY. Proper ladies.

KA‘AHUMANU. (*Fingering their clothes*) I wish to try such clothes. You will make one for me.

SYBIL. Yes, I think we could. (16-17)

Here, Sybil writes a letter home about the difficult sea voyage to Hawai‘i.

SYBIL. What can I say to you my sisters this morning? I can tell you. Could your eye glance across the great water and catch this little bark

ascending and descending the mountainous waves which contain your dear sister, your hands would be involuntarily extended for her relief, and your cry would be to save her. The sea runs very high, while the wind runs through the naked riggings as you may have heard it on a November's day, through the leafless trees of a majestic forest... (8)

The dialogue above represents the first meeting between a Hawaiian queen and white women. It is written in English and performed in English. Given the missionaries' recent arrival, it is logical that they would not yet have been fluent in Hawaiian. Since the queen would most likely not have spoken fluent English at this point, it is safe to assume that the conversation takes place in Hawaiian. And the queen may plausibly be simplifying her Hawaiian speech to accommodate the missionaries' limited knowledge of her language. Supporting their status as language learners, the two missionary women are seen in a scene directly after this one practicing a set dialogue in Hawaiian while they do household chores. As new speakers of the language, therefore, they must speak simply, and the queen seems to accommodate their limited ability by responding accordingly. However, the syntax is significantly more complex in Sybil's letter, which she speaks in monologue. The switching of languages is signaled, then, not only by the speaker's ethnicity but also by the complexity of the spoken language.

These assumptions may work the other way, too; that is, during scenes in which Hawaiian and haole characters interact, we may be able to discern when a Hawaiian character is speaking English. Pali, a young woman in the play, is quite eloquent in a monologue describing a rescue of a baby left to die in the woods. As

she is a Hawaiian character speaking alone, it may be assumed that she is speaking Hawaiian.

PALI. ...Comfort washed over me, and I was quiet. And in the quiet, I heard the voice, the voice of a baby clear and strong, crying in the night. I stood and walked straight to it. I gathered up the small life I was meant to save. I had made a new life – not from my body, but from a thrown away life that no one wanted. I took the baby far away to a kind woman I knew would care for a child. I had given a new life. And now, that is what the mikanele have given to me: a new life from one that was unwanted, thrown away and treated like so much rubbish. (64-5).

Later, when Pali has come to live in the missionary house, she offers to change Lucy Thurston's surgical dressing. The brevity and simplicity of the dialogue, again, consistent with that of one speaking a newly learned language, combined with her choice to align herself with the American missionaries, suggests that Pali may be speaking English with Lucy.

PALI. I wish to do this for you, Mrs. Thurston.

LUCY. Pali?

PALI. Yes, I wish to help you.

LUCY. You may feel sickened.

PALI. No. Tell me what to do.

(Silence.)

PALI. *(Firmly)* You will tell me what to do, and I will do it.

LUCY. First, you must remove the old dressings.

PALI. Yes.

LUCY. Then, you must wash the wound with ... Pali?

PALI. 'Ae?

LUCY. (*Taking her hand*) I will remember this kindness all my days. (72-3)

Dialogue in theater is conditioned by a myriad of constraints other than language, and often what is unsaid may be as eloquent as what is openly stated. When monologues and soliloquys are included in the text, however, a character may have the opportunity to express herself more thoroughly than in realistic dialogue, and, consequently, the language employed in that monologue may well be more complex. Pali is certainly more eloquent in her soliloquy than in the exchange with Lucy.

Even given the freedom of a soliloquy, there is no reason that the topics under discussion be necessarily less involved, nor that the sentence structure need be consistently simple, and this is borne out in the following dialogue, assumed to be in Hawaiian, between the queen and Hannah.

KA'AHUMANU. I watched Kamehameha. I watched all the women bow down to him like a god. Do you know why he loved me? Because he knew I was powerful and did not fear him. (*She laughs.*) My own father, Ke'eaumoku, told him "You have only one person to truly fear in your kingdom. Only one person to take away your rule – your own woman, Ka'ahumanu. For if she chose to rise up against you, the people love her so much, they would follow." So you see, I stood on the same mountain, looked into the same valley, and when I looked at him, I saw a man, not a god.

HANNAH. And what did he see?

KA'HUMANU. (*After a pause.*) That would be for him to say, Hannah.

HANNAH. You don't like this idea of Christian marriage?

KA'AHUMANU. I don't care about it. In the old days, if women and men desired each other, they joined. If that left, they parted.

HANNAH. But the old days go.

KA'AHUMANU. Yes, and tomorrow comes with more foreigners, and their ideas and their ships and their desires.

HANNAH. Desire. Is that what rules us? I hardly know my own. But the mikanele, they have given me a new kind of desire. A longing to know the things in books and the world outside of here and the ways of God. (36)

This play takes place in the early 1820s, so the languages are English and Hawaiian. There is no HCE or even pidgin yet, since the plantations that imported indentured labor have not yet been established. The language choices in the plays cited here then are, at least partially, historically determined (in terms of their chronological setting): *Ka'ahumanu* is the earliest of the three cited here, with Hawaiian and English. *Obake*, set in the early twentieth century, has only Japanese immigrant characters, so there is no reason for languages other than Japanese, represented in standard English, to be spoken. The speech in *Ricepaper Airplane*, with a timeline that spans most of the twentieth century, includes varieties of pidgin; the play also features characters who are able to speak HCE and standard English, *and* also employs the convention of using English to stand in for another language.

In *Ricepaper Airplane*, the characters, including Uncle, speak colloquial English in Korea, though Uncle speaks HCE when he talks to his nephew in the present. When Sung Wha first comes to Hawai'i, he is barely able to communicate with the Filipino workers he encounters, and their dialog is in a true pidgin, not the creole it would eventually become. The pidgin English (not HCE) in the following exchange is an example of the unique lexical accommodation reached by the multi-ethnic population of the Hawai'i plantations in the early twentieth century (Sakoda 6-7).

UNCLE. I wen stagger to one cab. I thought I take one taxi home, at least as close to home. Why not. So I go to da taxi. Had one Filipino driva inside, but da cab's domelight stay off. [These lines are spoken in HCE. The rest of the dialogue is in Pidgin English.]

SUNG [Uncle's name]. You...okay?

EDDIE. No-no, phrend. Me pau hana today. [I'm finished work for today.]

SUNG. You takey me home, den.

EDDIE. No-no. *(The driver shakes his head with finality, waving off the potential fare).* Me pau hana. Pau.

SUNG. *(offers him the dime.)* Nuff kala? [Enough money?]

(The Cabby scrutinizes him.)

SUNG. Nuff? No nuff?

EDDIE. *(Sighs).* Twenty-phive cents, den I take you.

(Sung Wha fishes in his empty pockets, then offers an honest look of despair).

SUNG. No mo kala. Ten cents no nuff?

(The driver studies the anguish on Sung Wha's face, then nods his head regretfully).

EDDIE. Okay, den. We go. *(Takes the coin from Sung Wha and motioning him in.)*

SUNG. Nice-nice *(pointing to the dashboard.)* (16)

We hear Uncle's speech change as he ages in Hawai'i – by the time he is an old man, he has a fluent command of HCE.

UNCLE. I dunno, but dis River Street no look like da River Street I used to know. . . . You know, Yong Gil, befo' time, nevah had all dese rundown kine buildings. All dese buildings ovah here, all brand new. Dey wen burn down Chinatown long-long time ago cause dey think had bubonic plague Dis long-long time befo' you bon. Den aftah dat, dey rebuild da town, 'round 'A'ala Park side. (1)

The characters in *Ricepaper Airplane* do a certain amount of code-switching,⁶⁴ accommodating their speech to the social or cultural situation in which they find themselves (Carlson, 2006, 115). By the languages and dialects they use, they indicate implicitly what might need further explication were only standard English used.

For instance, language is used to great effect as an indicator of location in this play. In act 1, scene 9, of *A Ricepaper Airplane*, the differences in usage within the first 6 speeches site the speakers' in time and place, as well as underscore the Epic theater techniques (see Chapter 2). The scene starts with Sung Wha in Korea, just

⁶⁴ Carlson identifies code-switching as "alteration of 'voice' within the discourse of a single speaker (2006, 115).

after he and his cousin flee Japanese soldiers, relating in standard English (assumed to be Korean) a dream of a tiger on Kumgangsan, Diamond Mountain, in the now-North Korea. It is spoken in the third person, but interjected is the standard-English-for-Korean voice of the tiger, threatening Sung Wha in the first person. Yong Gil speaks next, in a light⁶⁵ pidgin, to ask Uncle a question about the dream, shifting the scene to the present-day hospital room, after which Yong Gil switches to a first person narration that is couched in standard English. Uncle replies to Yong Gil in his heavier pidgin, and then the *moksa* (minister) speaks in standard-English-for-Korean to relocate the characters in the 1920s. These linguistic markers are immediate signifiers of identity and place.

The language and degree of HCE may also be an indicator of time period and generation. In an address to his nephew, Sung Wha relates a plantation incident:

UNCLE: Dat friggin' luna, I wen raise my machete right to his *maka*,⁶⁶ dat friggin' luna. And in front all dem crappy lunas. Yeah, right in front all dem. I tol' dat no-good sonavabitch where to go! (6)

In this speech, Uncle, or Sung Wha, is speaking the pidgin he has acquired during his life in Hawai'i. Though it will evolve over the decades he spends in Hawai'i, this is the language he will use for the rest of his life. His nephew, on the other hand, while also speaking pidgin, speaks a version that is noticeably closer to standard English.

The community activist, Troy Nishimura, a young Japanese American man with

⁶⁵ A creole speech furthest from the foundation language is called the basilect, with the speech closest to it the acrolect. Carlson (2006, 114-5) and Sakoda (19-20) both make the point that most speakers of a creole or pidgin will speak a variety of mesolect, or speech that falls somewhere between the basilect and acrolect.

⁶⁶ While "maka" can also mean "eye," Uncle is here using it in another equally common interpretation: "face." (Pukui 224).

whom Sung Wha fights against the city zoning commission toward the end of his life, does not use HCE (perhaps a reflection of his status as a University of Hawai'i graduate student, or of his upbringing on the continent). This linguistic progression marks the generations as well as the cultural evolution of immigrants and their descendents by their use or non-use of the creole.

Carlson points out that when a creole languages are used on stage, they “might operate like more conventional ‘standard’ languages, especially when they have become the ‘native’ language for at least the majority of the audience” (113). That is, a monolingual audience may presumably comprehend all speech in a play employing their own language. So when HCE is used in a Hawai'i play, I suggest that this may be the case, albeit to varying degrees: HCE is either a native language for many Hawai'i residents or at the least, it will be extremely familiar. Code-switching in a Hawai'i play, then, will sometimes involve moving from speaking in HCE, the native language of the characters as well as some of the audience members, and then registering a linguistic adjustment to standard English when speaking to someone of another community.

For an example of this in a Hawaiian play, we may look to the main character, Alika, in Alani Apio's *Kāmau*. Alika speaks standard English when he's giving his tour guide spiel to a bus load of tourists, but he shifts effortlessly into HCE when speaking with the bus driver.

ALIKA. Mahalo and welcome to your Aloha Tours' "Guide to O'ahu." My name is Alika and I'll be your host for today. At the helm is Big Al – best darn bus driver this side of Hollywood. This is our Historical Sights Tour and

the first place we'll be going to is the Arizona Memorial. From there we'll head on over to 'Iolani Palace Grounds for lunch and end up at Punchbowl Cemetery, National Memorial of the Pacific. We at Aloha Tours are here to serve you, so if you have any questions at all, just ask!
(Pause.)

So what, Al, whatchoo going do about youa girlfriend?

(Nods his head, agrees with the imaginary bus driver.)

Yeah, I tink maybe you should move in wit' her...Me? Nah, I no more time. Plus, wahines. . . too much trouble – I mean for me. Eh, Al, I had one real strange dream last night. What Filipinos tink about dreams? (5-6)

In this example, Alika speaks standard English to communicate with a group of people presumed to be from places other than Hawai'i, then code-switches to speak to the Local Filipino bus driver. Later in the play, a woman on the tour approaches Alika with a question. She is from the southern United States, and Alika uses standard English with her. Alika does the same with his employer, a haole man.

The code-switch to standard English, in this play, usually occurs with people not from Hawai'i or in the business environment. It's interesting to note a scene in which a building inspector arrives at Alika's home unexpectedly.⁶⁷ The inspector initially speaks standard English in this business encounter, but as the scene progresses and the two men converse, the inspector's speech gradually shifts over to HCE. Finally, towards the end of the scene, he apologizes for his intrusion in HCE, adding that his family also used to have one of these well-built old houses, thus

⁶⁷ The family is about to be evicted because the land has been sold to the company for which Alika works for hotel development.

finally revealing himself as “one of us” (27-9). His code-switching while speaking to only one person signifies his sympathy, if not alliance, with Local man, Alika, against the economic and business conditions that will disrupt his life.

So, in this instance, at least, HCE is the language one uses at home, in one’s comfort zone, with people like oneself. The building inspector, who code switches to HCE, then to Hawaiian, to stake his claim to being Hawaiian, thereby “deprivileges standard English as the normative code of language” (Gilbert, 1998, 23). By code-switching, he claims membership in a community which is, by virtue of its historicized language, distinct from that of the dominant culture of the United States.

B. Translation vs Non-translation

“The decision not to translate illustrates as much a way of being and acting in the world as the decision to translate . . . To refuse the necessity of translating oneself across the cultural divide is also an epistemological choice (Versényi 443).

This discussion of language in Hawai’i theater has so far focused on the theatrical use of standard English and HCE. The inclusion of Hawaiian words and dialogue is also a major element in some Hawai’i plays, as are various methods used to accommodate understanding for a non-Hawaiian or non-HCE speaking audience.

There is said to be a continuum of translation, ranging from a complete transposition of a particular piece from one language to another, to a play presented in one language with no accommodation made for an audience ignorant of the language in use. An example of the first case might be a Jingju play translated from the Mandarin into English for a Western audience. And at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* was translated into HCE, becoming *Twelf*

Nite or Wateva! in a University of Hawai'i 1974-1975 season production. I do not know of any standard English play that has been translated into Hawaiian, though the complete Bible has been published in Hawaiian and the New Testament in HCE. And although multilingual playwright Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker writes in Hawaiian and in HCE, she has not translated her plays into other languages. Between the two poles are various combinations of language and interpretation, but regardless of the degree or extent of translation, audience reception is always a deciding issue.

Given Hawai'i's heteroglossic culture, I believe it may be assumed that almost any given audience will be linguistically mixed.⁶⁸ The legitimizing assertion of using either Hawaiian and/or HCE on stage – a powerful gesture of resistance to the dominant culture's standard English – will be received differently by different audiences, but the question here is whether and how these languages are translated for audience comprising a range of linguistic competence.

This is generally not an issue for Asian American theater. Certainly Asian words and concepts are used and discussed in those plays, but since the driving motivation in Asian American plays appears to be the claim to *be* American, standard English as the native language is the norm. When another language is used, the purpose may sometimes be to define the American against the Other. Velina Hasu Houston's play *Kokoro (True Heart)* has as a main character a young Japanese woman living in California. In the play's prologue, we see Yasako's mother bidding her farewell in Japanese, with Yasako translating. The two women alternate lines in

⁶⁸ It is probable that a linguistically mixed Hawai'i audience may choose to attend a Hawai'i play particularly if the play itself is perceived and/or marketed as such, perhaps as a Pidgin or Local play, or as a Hawaiian play in English.

a poetically composed scene. Next, Yakaso is shown playing with her little daughter in San Diego. She speaks English except when she sings a Japanese song to the little girl, who responds with an English-language folk song. Yasako's song is not translated, but its content is evidently not critical; its function is to establish her as foreign, especially in contrast to her Americanized daughter.

Philip Kan Gotanda's *Sisters Matsumoto* uses Japanese words as an indication of the characters' ethnic background, though their native language is English. The few Japanese terms are used casually, with translation in context: oldest sister Grace tells her husband that his proposed Japanese-language newspaper will only be comprehensible to the Issei and Kibei (first generation Japanese immigrants and American-born people of Japanese descent who were generally educated in Japan and then returned to the United States, respectively). And the youngest sister exclaims "Oh – the obutsudan . . ." when it's carried into the room. The stage directions identify it parenthetically as a Buddhist shrine, but the audience can see it and probably can infer its function (13). Later in the play, a Hawai'i-born character mentions the words "lilikoi" and "manapua" (29) without translating either.⁶⁹ The terms are there solely to authenticate his heritage.

In this discussion of language choices in theater, it is important to remember that when speaking of theater, it is inadvisable to separate text from embodiment. That is, theater language

opens up a totally different set of propositions and possibilities, in so far as 'the world' in theatre is never entirely literary, but mediated

⁶⁹ Lilikoi is a tart fruit used for juices and desserts; manapua is a Hawai'i variation of the Chinese steamed meat bun.

through the bodies and voices of actors in a specific *mise en scene*, wherein the meaning of a particular theatrical presentation is shaped, enunciated, and embodied. (Bharucha 2000, 68)

In other words, performances of text as delivered by an actor may contain physical and emotional resonance that are not conveyed solely by the speaking of the lines. Regardless, a playwright's utterances offer a critical entry point into her uniquely inflected world, and in the case of the Hawai'i playwrights cited here, may contain layers of political and cultural meaning. The translation choices, then, provide a place from which to continue the exploration.

The translative impulse is realized to different degrees by different Hawai'i playwrights. In Kneubuhl's *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, English translations, usually in italics, sometimes appear in parenthesis following the Hawaiian terms. In other cases, a character will use a Hawaiian word, then translate it herself. The following passage contains examples of both techniques.

KA'AHUMANU. Here is why I, Ka'ahumanu, Kuhina Nui (*co-ruler*) and widow of Kamehameha, have done these things. For many years now we have seen these haole, these foreign men among us. We know that they break the kapu (*taboo*) laws . . . (7)

Kneubuhl chooses to have Ka'ahumanu translate the word "haole," perhaps finding it necessary, early in the play, to foreground the concept of foreign-ness for the audience. Alani Apio also provides translations to be spoken by the characters, and Juliana Spahr observes that such translations "confront readers with the unfamiliar while at the same time providing an entry point in the format of a glossary. They

force readers to step back and then invite them in” (95). While Spahr is speaking of plays as literature, the analysis may well also apply to the reception of the works as live theater. If characters have been speaking one language long enough for an audience to acclimate to that mode of communication, any change, whether one understands the second (or third) language or not, will be momentarily alienating. A mental shift needs to occur – a changing of gears – and there is a split-second awareness of difference. Our knowledgeable audience might be reminded of the tension, political and cultural, that is inherent in the use of the Hawaiian language, simply by this assertion of proprietary right, of ownership of a language.

Not that Hawaiian speech is always translated in the plays. For instance, Queen Ka’ahumanu has a fairly long kanikau, a mourning chant, which she performs in Hawaiian. The translation is, as before, italicized and in parentheses following the text to be chanted in the play script. The translation is not spoken in performance. Since it is preceded by these lines, however – “Ae, the chiefs pass. All the old ones, my counselors and friends. Keōpūolani, gone. My own Kaumuali’i, gone! Kalanimoku grows so old. His strength fades. Our people die. I feel as if I am surrounded by darkness” (47) – it may be that a non-Hawaiian-speaking audience may glean some notion of the general mood of her chant, if not its specific meaning. Certainly, with the casting of an actor who is able to chant as well as act, this is a powerfully evocative moment. The kanikau’s status as a ritual chant may also have something to do with its non-translation – it may simply be there to provide a cultural marker without explication that would perhaps interfere with the progression of the play. The kanikau does not advance the play as does the conventional dialogue. Its

function is more emotional, more ceremonial, and therefore for those reasons may not need to be translated to an English-speaking audience. For them, it may operate as a cultural signifier rather than a plot device and so stand somehow outside literary text, exemplifying difference rather than promoting identification.

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu uses mostly standard English, whether spoken by native English speakers or used to represent native Hawaiian speakers talking amongst themselves. In Kimo Armitage's *Ola Ka Lau*, however, the text incorporates HCE, Hawaiian, and some standard English, and Armitage resolves the issue of how and when to translate differently: Hawaiian words and lines are rarely directly translated into standard English.

Armitage's designation of who speaks Hawaiian most often is a historicizing choice, as the character Tūtū (usually understood as "grandmother") is also the one who is the kahuna lā'au lapa'au, the medical priest or practitioner of (Hawaiian) medicine (Pukui 194). Tūtū's knowledge has come down over eight generations of practitioners and, in the play, it is uncertain whether it will continue to the next generation. In this family, Tūtū drops Hawaiian words into casual conversation. The other members of the family, while understanding, respond using various degrees of HCE. I have added English translations of the Hawaiian dialogue.

UNCLE ROBERT. . . . Where's Keola and Janelle?

Keola and Janelle enter living room.

TŪTŪ. Eia a'e lāua. E hele mai 'olua! [Here they are. Come here, you two!]

KEOLA. Yes, Tūtū, we coming.

MOM. Where were you guys?

KEOLA. Wrapping Janelle's finger.

TŪTŪ. He aha ka pilikia? [What's the trouble?]

JANELLE. We was jus' talking story.

KEOLA. Uncle, beer?

UNCLE ROBERT. 'Ae. [Yes.]

AUNT DIXIE. Everybody come, we going eat. That means you, Daddy.

MOM. Tūtū, you do the prayer?

AUNTY DIXIE. Look at all this food?

TŪTŪ. E pule kākou.

E ko mākou Akua i loko o ka lani.

Noi ha'aha'a aku mākou iā 'oe.

E ho'omaika'i i nā ola kino o mākou me kēia mea 'ai.

E hele pū nō 'oe me mākou.

E mau ka ho'onaninani 'ana i kou inoa.

Amene.

[Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven

We humbly ask of you that you

Bless our bodies with this food

Be with us

We praise your name now and forever

Amen.]

ALL. Amene. (22)

The other characters in the scene clearly understand Tūtū when she speaks Hawaiian in conversation, and Armitage does not provide translation in the text – the intent must be gathered via context or not at all. There is no guarantee that the audience will understand, though the actions of the characters will most likely convey the intent of the speech. It is unclear as to how much of the language of the prayer is comprehended by any given family member, but as the phrases are ritualized language, it may be that they are so familiar as to be understood. An audience certainly will know by the ritualized behavior that the family is offering a Christian prayer before the meal, as they were alerted previously by Mom’s request that Tūtū pray.

In a later scene, Tūtū treats her ailing nephew and protégé, Keola, with Hawaiian plant medicines, simultaneously quizzing him on what she’s taught him so far. Each speaks in both Hawaiian and HCE, and the conversation proceeds with no overt translation. Context and performance choices will sometimes provide meaning, as when Keola hands Tūtū a urine sample in a cup, and she says, “Akahale ‘oe!” or “You be careful!” The inference is that he may be carelessly passing the cup to her, supported by his reply, “‘Ae. E kala mai ia‘u” or “Yes, excuse me.” (29) Other portions of the dialogue will be fairly opaque to at least some of the audience. Using a language without accommodating audience members or, for that matter, readers, is clearly a deliberate choice. However, the choice is a logical one, given the sentiments in Armitage’s standard English program notes accompanying the Kumu Kahua production.

Learning the language opened up an entirely new perspective for me. I read Hawaiian language newspapers published in the 1800s and early 1900s and am overwhelmed by the complexity and brilliance of my Hawaiian ancestors. My most profound discovery is the contrast between the content of the newspaper articles and the inaccurate history of Hawai'i taught to me through textbooks in school. In essence, a pit of deception had been dug. There are times when I feel as if I am still climbing out of that pit. (production program)

The recuperation of the Hawaiian language has clearly influenced the playwright's personal history. When the Hawaiian stands alone without translation, it is performed as unmediated by a dominant culture imperative, i.e., that equal access be accorded to all, perhaps especially to English-only speakers. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has cautioned that, "In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest" (Spivak 1992, 180). She is commenting on translation of works into English when the majority of interested readers need access in English, in this case, Western feminists needing access to works written in Arabic or Vietnamese. She calls this the "language of decorum" used in the circumstances of a non-English speaking minority offered the opportunity to speak to the English-speaking majority, and questions whether such translations are truly efficacious. I reference this to speculate that the impulse for equality that is, after all, at the heart of American ideals, may in this case erase Hawaiian and Local differences to the detriment of the speakers of those languages, whether on stage or off. By translating the Hawaiian

into standard English or even HCE, the text conforms to a norm that reflects an artificial accommodation of outsider needs rather than what might be the specific imaginary in which the playwright operates. As far as Hawai'i political, educational, and popular cultural mechanisms have been concerned, standard English has been the dominant language of Hawai'i for years. And since it has only in the second half of the last century that Hawaiian and HCE have experienced a popular and literary resurgence, it is important to remember that "The status of a language in the world is what one must consider when teasing out the politics of translation" (Spivak 1992, 189).

The social imaginary of *Ola Ka Lau* is one that is, metaphorically, on the verge of Armitage's pit. The Hawaiian language is spoken mostly by the older generation, and healing knowledge is at risk of being lost when the main practitioner dies. The playwright's choice to allow the Hawaiian language to stand alone without translation is both a refusal to pander and a desire to reflect a certain reality in which HCE and Hawaiian are used alternately as a matter of course in a Hawaiian household. The funeral near the end of the end of the play is a telling mixture of languages: Tūtū chants a ho'ouēuē, or mourning chant⁷⁰ in Hawaiian, which is not translated. The function may be similar to that of the kanikau that Ka'ahumanu chants in *The Conversion of Ka'ahuauu*: a ritualized performative gesture that contains enough signification to stand alone without translation.⁷¹ Uncle Robert then thanks the audience for coming to the funeral, using standard English, when

⁷⁰ Defined as "to imitate wailing; wailing dirge" in Pukui, 363.

⁷¹ It may also be the case that the kaona, or hidden meaning, of the chant would require too lengthy an explanation to warrant the translation.

previously in the play he has spoken HCE or Hawaiian. Finally, with the reading of a Bible passage, another mode of language accommodation⁷² emerges: alternating line by line translation. Janelle reads the Hawaiian and Aunty Dixie translates line by line after her.

JANELLE. Eia ho'i, 'o nā mea 'oia 'i'o,

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are true

JANELLE. Nā mea maika'i

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are honest

JANELLE. Nā mea pono

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are just

JANELLE. Nā mea hala 'ole

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are pure

JANELLE. Nā mea lokomaika'i

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are lovely

JANELLE. Nā mea lono maika'i 'ia

AUNTY DIXIE. Whatsoever things are of good report... (52)

⁷² It is important to underscore the use of the word "accommodation" in reference to translation in general. Noenoe Silva points out the inadequacies of translation when she says "the translation of words alone cannot adequately convey meaning because of the many aspects of the two cultures that are not shared" (67). See Brian Kamaoli Kuwada's *Biography* article for current approaches to Hawaiian to English translation, and for commentary on the debate surrounding the choice of whether or not Hawaiian language documents *should* be translated.

The choice to translate the Hawaiian seems appropriate for the formal setting of a Hawai'i funeral attended by people who may or may not understand Hawaiian, and the same condition of formality applies to Uncle Robert's standard English.⁷³

While the play concerns the struggle to preserve indigenous values and cultural practice, the focus is not so much upon an oppressive exterior environment that interferes with the transmission of culture as upon the effects of that environment. Unlike the characters in an Asian American play, in which the language of immigrant ancestors has only nostalgic value, the living language that native Hawaiians in this play are recovering carries with it a cultural connection with the essentials of land and spirit. Earlier in the play, Janelle has derided both language – “Oh right on, bust the ‘ōlelo Hawai'i so I cannot understand what you telling” (19) – and *lā'au lapa'au* – “I know that one real doctor not going give you weeds and tell you that you're healed. How supposed to fix stuff that never have in the old days . . .” (42). By the end, she is starting the slow, stumbling journey of finding the knowledge of *lā'au lapa'au* that was lost when Tūtū died. In the last moments of the play, Uncle Robert hands her a leaf to taste, now the only way to relearn what Tūtū knew. Her response – “It's bitter” (4 [additional page])– speaks to the pain of losing both Tūtū and Keola (though she can feel both of them with her, and the play has them on stage with the living characters), to the struggle she faces in reclaiming her heritage, and finally to the grief of Armitage's pit of deception. She

⁷³ In the case of Uncle Robert, the choice of language may have additional resonance – in this case, the code-switch to standard English may be an unfortunate remnant of a past that confers higher status to standard English over Hawaiian and HCE.

will attempt to rediscover the uses of lā‘au lapa‘au without the benefit of language and history that would have supported and affirmed her labors.

So far, this chapter has addressed translation as it applies to the use of Hawaiian and standard English in theatrical works. However, if standard English is the “norm” of American theater, then should HCE be considered a candidate for translation? Based upon its status as a creole that evolved out of the pidgin different ethnicities of sugar and pineapple plantation employees and management developed to communicate with each other, HCE is a native language of many Hawai‘i residents. And if it is the native language or at least very familiar to a majority of an audience, why should it be translated? For whom? The playwrights’ choice, when it is to refrain from translating HCE, is a gesture that speaks directly to the writers’ and audiences’ perception of their community’s dominant modes of communication and resistance to the dominant *culture* and its notions of appropriate speech. When one watches or reads these plays, the “staging of language as the production of agency” (Spivak, 1992, 188) reinforces the very particular imaginary that is specific to Hawai‘i.

There is an uneasy relationship between standard English and HCE, politically and culturally. Kent Sakoda and Jeff Siegel have observed that the use of HCE has a fraught history, with HCE’s status as a genuine language *and* as a part of local culture set against standard English’s primacy as “the official language of the schools, government, and big business” (18). In Hawai‘i, HCE occupies a comfortable site that encompasses a pan-ethnicity that is not precisely reflected by Asian America. The differences include the participation, in Hawai‘i, of the haole, or

Caucasian, whether as discrete individuals or as “mixed-blood” components; the assumption that many members of the community will be of different ethnicities; and the inclusion of the indigenous population.

This last is an important point, as regards distinguishing language usage in Hawai‘i theater from that of Asian American theater. Certainly Hawaiian is specific to the indigenous people, but the Hawaiian community is not universally literate in the native language.⁷⁴ Since teaching the Hawaiian language has only been widespread since the so-called Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s, it might be fair to assume that there is a whole generation of Hawaiians defined by age and geographical location whose first language is either standard English or HCE, or both, and whose fluency in Hawaiian varies wildly. Hawaiian plays may be written in Hawaiian and/or HCE – each is indigenous to Hawai‘i.

The use, then, of HCE in Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker’s *Kupua* is of interest here. Baker is Hawaiian and also writes plays in Hawaiian for her company, Ka Hālau Hanakeeka, to perform. The two short plays that comprise *Kupua*, however, are traditional Hawaiian tales: mo‘olelo, which Baker translates as “story or tradition” (play program), but she deliberately notes that the plays are written in HCE. Not only is *Kupua* written in the basilect variety, it is contemporary HCE, as well, with colloquialisms used within the dialogue that might be uttered now in everyday conversation. For instance, in the following dialogue, Waipuna questions her husband, Kumuhea.

⁷⁴ Currently, however, some families are raising bi-lingual children (or tri-lingual, if standard English and HCE are both also assumed), and Hawaiian language immersion schools exist. There are also those individuals from the island of Ni‘ihau who have been raised bilingually.

WAIPUNA takes some of the food out. She offers it to KUMUHEA who isn't interested.

WAIPUNA. You sure?

KUMUHEA. Yeah, yeah, yeah I no like, I no like.

A long pause. WAIPUNA munches on the sweet potato.

WAIPUNA. So what you did today?

KUMUHEA. Me?

WAIPUNA. No, the man in the lo'i. [A lo'i is a taro or rice paddy.]

KUMUHEA. Gee! No catch a rash.

WAIPUNA. So what you did?

KUMUHEA. Cruz. [A variation of "cruise," or to be at ease, whether moving around or just idling in one place.]

WAIPUNA. So you had sleep all day?

KUMUHEA. *he takes a deep breath* No, why?

WAIPUNA. *irritated* Just checking.

KUMUHEA. Eh, no act like that! [Sakoda and Siegel define "act" as showing off (110); here it may just mean to pretend or to behave in an objectionable manner.]

The two plays are not translated and do not genuflect to standard English at all.⁷⁵

Their language lays claim to identification with both the Hawaiian and Local.

Who the Fil Am I?, however, is differently inflected. There is a playfulness in the writing that includes word play deriving from several different sources: HCE,

⁷⁵ The playwright's program notes are written in Hawaiian, standard English, and HCE.

standard English, Tagalog (a Filipino dialect), Hawaiian, and African American speech, referred to in the play as Ebonics. Language is used here as a dramatic device in a way that it is not in *Kupua*. Here, the different languages simultaneously epitomize the characters as being from Hawai'i and illustrate the foundational sources of the play's conflict. It is not necessary to understand all the references in order to grasp the main theme, which has to do with the search for personal and group identity, but without a working knowledge of all the languages in play, the details that locate the characters solidly in Hawai'i *and* their chosen sub-identification (in addition to their identification as Filipino males raised in Hawai'i) would be lost. Here, HCE-speaking Roland and Ebonics-speaking Malcolm anticipate their trip to the motherland.

MALCOM. Nigga, as long as it gets me outta school, that's all I care about.

ROLAND. I don't know Malcom, dis going be my firs time off-island, kinda scade [scared] but exciting too, yeah? Ey, you even stahted packing yet?

MALCOM. Heck yeah I started packing . . . packing yo mama in the ass!

ROLAND. (*With Filipino accent*) Ey, pack you!

MALCOM. No, pack you modder packer! (*They laugh.*) Naw, fo' real, it's gone be the shit! I mean think about it. Girls there go crazy for guys like us, all English speaking and shit. See, that's the key, dude. Just tell 'em you're an American citizen. They eat that shit up. (6)

This early scene helps establish the two characters and their identification via speech choices. In later scenes, the characters' linguistic frame of reference continues to contextualize their points of view. For instance, when the men are in the

Philippines, Roland accuses Malcom of hypocrisy for condemning another friend for allegedly trying to behave like a Caucasian. "You love fo' rag on Tomas fo' being all haole, but look at you: Trying fo' shake it like one Popoloroid pictchah?" (24). A monolingual audience member would most likely understand, contextually, that Roland finds Malcom to be hypocritical and his African American posturing to be affectation. But to really enjoy the word play, it would be helpful to understand that haole is the term applied to a white person, while pōpolo is the Local vernacular term for an African American person. And earlier, Roland is talking to his cousin, Tomas, on the plane to Manila.

ROLAND. No do dis, Tomas.

TOMAS. Do what?

ROLAND. Everytime time we get togeddah you always bug me 'bout dis kine stuff.

TOMAS. I'm just trying to help. I keep telling you cousin, you have to get off this fucking rock. There's a whole world out there [you] can't even begin to imagine. Different places, different cultures, and you can't get anywhere unless you learn about them.

ROLAND. Brah, you tink jus' cuz my family not rich like yours, or because I nevah travel like you, you tink I stupid or something. Brah, some tings stay more important dan one tantaran edumacation.

TOMAS. Look, I know you're not . . . ignorant. That's not what I'm trying to say at all. What I'm trying to say is that you could use a little exposure to the outside world. Believe you me, it does one a lot of good.

ROLAND. I don't know brah. I no remembah you being so haole. (9)

Again, while knowing that “tantaran” means “Crazy; grandstanding; putting on airs (Western Japanese *taran* ‘not enough,’ reinforced by Filipino *tarantá*)” (Sakoda 115), the explication is not necessary – the inference is obvious. It is also clear that Tomas, for all his mainland education and standard English speech, understands Roland’s HCE, as Roland does Tomas’ speech. An insider audience would understand both characters. That Roland calls Tomas “haole” is telling and possibly refers to Tomas’ persistent use of standard English, when he obviously understands HCE and may speak it. The term also speaks to his apparent identification with dominant culture values. HCE’s origin as a plantation language have given it a definite class denotation, and that Tomas, a young man from Hawai‘i of immigrant background, does not use it marks him, in this play, as someone who is trying to leave his social stratum of birth behind.

III. Negotiating Identity via Language

The HCE, Hawaiian, and Tagalog in *Who the Fil Am I?* are not translated, though basic intent may be transmitted via the playwright, the actors, and the context they establish. Meaning may thus be received fairly accurately, if not precisely, by a monolingual audience. In other words, somehow “decoding” will be enabled to varying degrees. And if overt translation is not provided, then other measures may be taken (Hall, 2000, 53). This may be particularly true when a “foreign” audience is viewing the play, meaning anyone for whom HCE and Hawaiian are not either native or acquired languages. So if there is no translation, the staging of the production claims autonomy for itself, distinct from may be the

expectations of the audience. It also claims such autonomy for the imaginary it represents, delimiting it by what is excluded as much as by what is foregrounded (i.e., traditionally dominant culture characters of American plays – white characters – do not hold central positions in these plays, nor does their language). Truncated translations inserted to keep the plot moving along, were the receiving audience in need of such assistance, might constrict connotation and erase layers of meaning that an informed audience would easily apprehend.

Anyone who understands the importance of language knows that meaning cannot be finally fixed because language is by its very nature multi-accentual, and meaning is always on the slide. It is the right which wishes to intervene ideologically in the infinite multi-accentuality of language and tries to fix it in relation to the world so that it can mean only one thing. (Hall 1994, 180)

Translation, then, can be a regulating choice, one that restricts meaning to what an outsider may easily and quickly comprehend.

The choice, then, of Hawai'i playwrights to refrain from translation of HCE and Hawaiian is one that allows the experience of the play to depend upon the past history and knowledge of the individual audience members. The extent to which one understands HCE, for instance, may reflect both one's interaction with HCE speakers in "real" life and also determine the degree of comprehension of an HCE play. That the two experiences – life and stage – correlate is a part of the impulse towards realism that marks a great deal of mainstream theater. Here is where Asian American and Hawai'i theater may parallel each other, in terms of their mutual

status as a minority theater.⁷⁶ “For Asian Americans, dramatic realism is particularly potent, for it imagines the self as real and authentic and the audience as homogeneous and unified” (Lo 1997, 28). While some aspects of the plays cited here may not precisely fit the conventional definition of realism, the fact remains that the agency and subjectivity of the characters provides an affirming imaginary for the audience, while also, in Lo’s terms, envisioning an audience whose lives are legitimized by the on-stage spectacle.

I also argue that the usage of these languages on stage may present the “struggles between distinctive cultural traditions and values” (Spahr 79) as coded innuendo that an insider audience may take pleasure in inferring. Specific cultural markers may be as mundane as references to Local food or jokes, and are appreciated when recognized. Conversely, those in the audience who are not au courant may find the incomprehensibility of some of the dialogue an analog to their lived experience of Hawai‘i, i.e., that communication is not always accessible to them. The use of different languages on a single stage, then, could be interpreted as part of a political agenda wherein “multilingualism creates an area of freedom in which revenge can be exacted and satirical attacks leveled at white society” (Balme, “The Performance Aesthetics of Township Theatre: Frames and Codes,” 78-9). At Kumu Kahua Theatre, where most of these plays premiered and where a Local audience is usually assumed, there will be spectators of different ethnicities from Hawai‘i, with different degrees of linguistic ability as regards Hawaiian, HCE, and

⁷⁶ Plays in Hawai‘i that are about Hawaiian and local culture are in the minority, as compared to the number of plays and musicals from the modern and contemporary oeuvre that are produced every year in the islands.

standard English. A unified audience does exist here, but it is not Lo's unified audience. The multi-ethnic cultural and political environment of Hawai'i, so unlike that of the rest of the United States (meaning the dominant culture's imaginary as well as Asian America's), is reflected on stage and in the audience.

In considering how Hawaiian theater negotiates identity via language, it is useful to look to Australian Aboriginal drama. Marvin Carlson refers to playwright Jack Davis whose work, he says, initially combined "Aboriginal and Western language and aesthetic features," though primarily using English. He traces the subsequent linguistic evolution of Davis' work as "he and other heteroglossic Australian playwrights shifted to linguistic mixtures to suggest the complex ongoing linguistic negotiations in that region . . . academic, professional, and legal English, passages in Nyungar, and local pidgin variants of English" (138-9). This progression, from a relatively straightforward binary linguistic dynamic to the representation of a community reflecting a more complex continuum of language and dialect, seems to roughly parallel Hawai'i's theater. And like the contemporary Aboriginal plays, instead of indulging in a simplistic representation of nostalgia, the contemporary Hawaiian plays cited here demonstrate an acknowledgement of the past while addressing the problems of the present.

There can, therefore, be no simple 'return' or 'recovery' of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and identities of the present. (Hall, *New Ethnicities*, 448)

Kupua, traditional mo‘olelo told in HCE, exemplifies this process of adaptation, rather than acculturation. The playwright does not write the play in Hawaiian. Rather she chooses to use a language that developed as a survival tactic, as Creole languages often do. And in this play, Baker uses a language Hawaiians were at least partially responsible for developing.⁷⁷ Her use of this language is not precisely recuperation or recovery⁷⁸ because HCE is a language still commonly spoken in Hawai‘i.⁷⁹ However, the energetic use of HCE does contain traces of resistance since, though it is an expression of a living culture, within the larger community (the state of Hawai‘i) it is still sometimes considered *déclassé*. Sakoda and Siegel comment on this status:

Attitudes towards the language have always been ambivalent. While recognized as being important to local culture, it has at the same time been denigrated as corrupted or “broken” English, and seen as an obstacle to learning standard English, the official language of the schools, government, and big business. (18)

Illustrating this notion, in *Who the Fil-Am I?*, Roland questions Tomas’ use of standard English, after Tomas scorns Malcom’s Ebonics.

ROLAND. Uh . . . kay . . . so if I undastahn wat you saying, so wat about you who talk like one haole?

⁷⁷ See Sakoda and Siegel for an account of the Pidgin Hawaiian that preceded Pidgin English.

⁷⁸ Baker’s work in Hawaiian is certainly recuperation *and* resistance.

⁷⁹ It is, however, a gesture to recuperation in terms of its use in Hawai‘i theater, which is dominated by standard English plays.

TOMAS. I might talk like one “haole,” but at least I know some of the language [Tagalog]. I just choose to speak this way because, well, the world looks down on you if you don’t.

ROLAND. Cuz, no take dis da wrong way, but sometimes, I feel really, really shame fo’ you.

TOMAS. Cousin, sometimes in a weird way, so do I . . . for you. (19-20)

In this brief passage, two positions are made very clear: local pride expressed in HCE speech versus an internalized racism implanted by humiliation and pain.

This is not to say that the use of standard English is always a bowing to the colonists’ language or a manifestation of abject assimilation. This oversimplified stance fails to account for “the many and complex ways that on the one hand the colonized voices modified and adapted the colonial language and on the other how indigenous languages survived . . .” (Carlson 2006, 106-7). Samoan author Albert Wendt and co-editors Reina Whaitini and Robert Sullivan state very bluntly that “English has become a Pacific language. In fact, it has become many Englishes in Polynesia, with each Polynesian country indigenizing it for its own use” (2-3). This position is endorsed by Native American writer Craig Womack, when he asserts that “English is an Indian language” (120). To elaborate, standard English is only the colonizer’s language if one assumes “assimilation a one-way street where only Indians are assimilated by non-Indian culture” (121) and refuses to acknowledge a culture’s ability to transform itself in the face of new stimuli. Wendt, Whaitini, Sullivan, and Womack’s stance requires that the culture own a certain subjectivity, a positioning that presumes agency rather than abjection.

The use of inflected languages and Western theatrical technique illustrates the fluidity of identification that marks the bodies on stage. To a continental United States audience, the Hawaiian and the Local might represent the Other, an undifferentiated mass as abject as Asian America. But within the material and historical context of Hawai'i itself, the plays endow their characters with a significance that places the Hawaiian and the Local center stage, rather than on the periphery. This is not, however, a positioning that elides difference. Far from ignoring the past, the languages reveal "a common history...that has been profoundly formative" (Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, 228). Hall is careful to separate "history" from "origin" in his description of Caribbean commonalities and, for this study, the differentiation is critical in understanding both the siting and resiting of Hawai'i indigenous and settler identities.

Word play is a method of resiting identity, and the fluidity in Darrell Lum's play makes his characters moving targets – they elude a narrow, restrictive categorization. Lum's *David Carradine Not Chinese* is marked by exuberant word play employing puns and homonyms combined with Local and immigrant appreciation of dialect and accent. The family name – Wat – and the Chinese society name – Wat-Chu⁸⁰ – are nimbly manipulated in this visual and aural orthographic performance. The children's cultural fluency is demonstrated when Link and Tru incorporate the name play and HCE with a Three Stooges-inspired routine.

LINK: Where are we gonna find horses? (*shadows TRU closely*)

⁸⁰ Cowboy explains the function of Chinese societies: "Da name society help everybody from the village adjust to Hawai'i. Somebody to help dem out, like family. Help make party when someday get married, help make funeral when somebody die. Collect money to send back home cause get drought or famine. Even read and write letters cause some nevah go school, eh?" (8)

TRU: (*irritated*) What?

LINK: Wat chu doing?

TRU: Looking for horses.

LINK: Why? (*peers into audience*)

TRU: They're not Wais, they're Wats. Wat-chu looking at? (*turns and pokes Link in the eyes*) Numbskull.

LINK: Aw, that hoits! Wat chu did that for?

TRU: And now you're gonna get it!

LINK: Hey, watch Wat-Chu doing!

TRU: Oh, a wise guy, huh? (30)

There is a history in Hawai'i of using Pidgin for comic effect, with stand-up careers built upon it, and chuckles of recognition often greet a play's HCE characters when they first begin to speak. *David Carradine Not Chinese*, *Kupua*, and *Who the Fil-Am I!*, among others, play to this convention. As class is generally factored in when defining Pidgin speakers, Pidgin characters are sometimes stereotyped as lower class, uneducated buffoons. That is one facet of the Pidgin stage identity and, I would venture to speculate, the most common one in Hawai'i popular culture. Some of the Pidgin speakers in these plays are indeed comic ones, and the language is used to great effect.

However, the Hawai'i plays cited here use Pidgin for more than comic relief, although that is almost always a component. That Pidgin, in these plays, is used to express aspects of life outside the comedic establishes Local people as "individuals with the capacity to surprise and delight" (Womack 94), with possibilities of identity

beyond the clownish.⁸¹ Lee Cataluna's series of monologues in *Folks You Meet in Longs* features mostly Pidgin-speaking characters who discuss all manner of topics and incidents, in perspectives ranging from the comic to the dramatic. "Curt Lum (True Story)" features a character recounting an episode of severe intestinal distress while driving from one side of O'ahu to another. This paragraph is excerpted from the middle of the monologue.

I think it was that big dip in Kahekili Highway by the H-3 on ramp. That set it off good.

First I'm pretty sure I can make it. Then I not so sure. Then, nah, make 'em.

Then I thinking, ho, I gotta sacrifice my car upholstery. It's life or death.

Pretty soon, the "nah, I can make it" phase is pretty much gone and it's all

"I going die. I going die. I going die." (90)

In one short paragraph, Cataluna neatly and rapidly builds the tension of a comic situation. What's striking about it in terms of negotiating identity is that the situation is simultaneously universal (the imperatives of the bowel are not peculiar to any one people or group) and particular (the Pidgin places the character culturally and, for those who recognize the place names in the monologue, temporally and spatially, since Local audiences will know the locations mentioned and when they were built).

Another monologue from the same play, "Tsukebe Uncle Richard," telegraphs its topic to a Local audience via the title. "Tsukebe" or "skebei" as Sakoda

⁸¹ Womack is referring to literary works in which "Native characters act like essays about Indians..." (94). In other words, the behavior of Native characters in such a context is predicated upon assumptions of stereotyped and predictable behavior.

and Siegel spell it, is commonly understood as “dirty old man” (115).⁸² An insider audience would understand immediately what they should anticipate, though not whether they should laugh. The monologue begins harmlessly enough, with Uncle Richard saying, “Come, bebe,/come over here./Come talk to uncle./Uncle never see you long time./Here, come more close./Uncle’s eyes no can see too good already” (96). The situation builds, still without explicit or graphic language, to

Come sit over here.

Sit on uncle’s lap.

Come, just like when you was small kid time, yeah?

Ho, uncle miss you so much I tell you.

Come sit on uncle’s lap.

That’s it. That’s the way.

Wait, move little bit this side.

There you go.

There you go.

You so pretty. You coming so pretty, I tell you girl. (97-8)

By this time, it’s clear that Uncle Richard is a pedophile and that we’re witnessing his abuse of a child. And by now, no one is laughing. Because Cataluna’s work insists that HCE is an appropriate language for any story, she normalizes it for the Local audience, providing a dimensionality lacking in a Pidgin imaginary confined only to comedy.

⁸² Sakoda and Siegle note that it derives from the Japanese *sukebei* (115).

Baker's *Kupua*, like *Folks You Meet in Longs*, alternates between serious and comedic takes on various circumstances. As stories with "a lesson embedded in the story, a deeper layer of the story to be understood – often depicting the socialization of our people" (production program), these teaching stories depict incorrect actions and the subsequent correction of those actions. Like early Western fairy stories or folk tales, they are didactic and cautionary narratives, containing graphic representations of the inappropriate behavior. The two stories Baker dramatizes are traditional mo'olelo. Written as they are in Pidgin, the familiarity of the language bridges the distance between the long-ago practice and modernity – Hawaiian tradition is received as having application to the present-day community.

Certainly there is a great deal of comedy in these two plays. In "Ka Puhī a me ka Loli," two sisters go out to meet lovers under the guise of night fishing. Much of the humor derives from the girls' efforts to hide their illicit activities from their father.

KA'UPENA. Aloha e nā kaikamāhine. [Hello, daughters.]

KILIPUE. Aloha nō e Pāpā. [Hi, Daddy.] What you doing?

'ANAPAU *overlapping* How are you Daddy? You feeling good?

'ANAPAU looks at KILIPUE, as if her question wasn't wise.

KA'UPENA. 'Ae, maika'i. [Yes, I'm fine.] So how was tonight?

KILIPUE. Daddy, tonight no was the best.

'ANAPAU. Yeah, was real rough tonight.

KILIPUE. 'Ae, kaiko'o. [Yeah, rough (as in strong seas)]

'ANAPAU. Tell me about it, the waves was crashing and pounding one after another, just hitting so hard and so intense, sometimes you no could see where was coming from, I couldn't even –

KILIPUE. *interrupting* 'Anapau, Daddy knows what kaiko'o is.

'ANAPAU. Sorry heh! I was just trying to explain how was, and what I felt, I mean **saw** tonight. (14-15, bold in original)

Concerned about his daughters, who are becoming drained of energy by their lovers, Ka'upena watches them one night as they go off to the beach. He sees their kupua, shape-changer, boyfriends in their real forms of eel and sea cucumber. Netting the two kupua after a tryst with the girls, Ka'upena clubs the sea creatures, cooks them in an imu,⁸³ and feeds them to his daughters. After they eat their lovers and start to feel sick, Ka'upena explains what he's done.

KA'UPENA. I hope you when enjoy 'um, because well I when hand pick 'um for you girls. I think you know them already. You know, the handsome mens you girls been visiting with every night, the ones who been distract you from fishing and who made you girls lie to me, your Daddy. Yep, you know your guys lovers from the nightly rendezvous on the beach they kupua, the kind I been warn you about, but no, you guys no like listen, you think you guys know everything heh? You think you guys big already, can fool your Daddy . . . NO! I no think so! No can, no way, no how, cause I know I'm your guys Daddy. I know this kine stuffs! (26-7)

⁸³ A pit lined with heated rocks used for cooking.

The girls vomit up the sea cucumber and eel, which are then clubbed to death by their father. He ceremoniously burns the kupua and scatters their ashes inland so they may never bother his daughters again. Parental guidance, centrality of family, adolescent experimentation, tangible interaction between nature and human, and the application of the past to the present and the future are all elements in Baker's two plays; these are paths of identification that, taken together, combine with Pidgin to form an imaginary that is distinctly Hawaiian.⁸⁴

Pidgin is clearly not always about nostalgia, in the sense of capturing a sweeter, more gentle past or painting a sentimental gloss on the present. Lee Tonouchi's *Living Pidgin*, a series of short vignettes written in HCE, uses the Creole to deconstruct Hawai'i cultural relations, especially those defined by the languages we speak. In "Pidgin Wawrz," the narrator relates events set sometime in the future, discussing the imprisonment of Bruddah Bully, a Hawaiian super-lobbyist.

NARRATOR. . . . Wen looked like Bruddah Bully wuz gaining too much support and da rallies wuz getting too radical fo' da state, dey wen go trow Bruddah Bully in one place dat nevah give him mana⁸⁵, one place dat nevah get da kalo⁸⁶, one place day ony had wall to wall of lifeless concrete. Bruddah Bully came da first political prisoner of da rebellion. das wen Big Ben⁸⁷ wen den go decide fo' go ship most of da indigenous people to Molokai . . . (22)

⁸⁴ Aside from the normalization of Pidgin and the linkage to the past, the play also introduces both graphic sexual and violent images that are reminiscent of Western fairy tales in which grandmothers are really killed, and people are really baked and eaten.

⁸⁵ mana. 1.nvs. Supernatural or divine power . . . authority (Pukui 235).

⁸⁶ kalo. 1.n. Taro (Pukui 123).

⁸⁷ This is a reference to then-Hawai'i Governor Ben Cayatano.

“Pidgin Wawrz” also comments on the Pidgin and standard English.

NARRATOR. Dis wuz at one time wen da debates wuz on whether or not had such one ting as standard english. Da Pidgin Guerrilla’s⁸⁸ contention wuz dat standard english wuz one oxymoron, english by nature wuzn’t standard. If you travel to diff’reent parts of da country, everybody’s english going be li’lo bit diff’reent, he wen tell. And if you compare english thru time, go compare Beowulf, Shakespeare and John Grisham III, all da englishes wuz supposedly da standard of da time, but dey all so diff’reent. Dis standard ting is just artificial construck invented by man. In Pidgin we can look beyond correck-incorreck in terms of grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and focus on da content. Pidgin breaks down da hierarchies and instead of dismissing based on superficialities, you take da time to undahstand and get to know wea da person is coming from.

(22)

Tonouchi is arguing for a perception of HCE more sophisticated than one which labels the HCE speaker as uneducated, blue-collar, and vulgar. Here, he constructs a thoughtful and informed analysis of the constructed nature of language and claims parity with standard English for HCE. Class consciousness is still integral – HCE is presented as a leveler of hierarchy with an emphasis on community and authenticity.

Whether or not this notion of Local identity can be substantiated solely via language, that Tonouchi and other Hawai’i playwrights, both Local and Hawaiian,

⁸⁸ Lee Tonouchi is known as the (self-styled) Pidgin Guerrilla for his advocacy of the use of pidgin in everyday life and in Hawai’i literature.

choose to write in what is often only one of their native languages is significant. As products of standard English schools, with a number of advanced degrees amongst them, they are all fluent in standard English. Rather than using that language, however, as do many Asian American playwrights, the Hawai'i playwrights shape characters who code-switch depending on the image of themselves they want or need to display.

I had initially thought that Asian American playwrights use standard English as a means of reaching a wider audience. Upon reflection, however, I realized that since the Asian American playwright wishes to be seen as American, standard English, therefore, is the language they would logically choose. Using Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, or any other ancestral language as their norm would invalidate their status as Americans, coding them as alien and other: the very image they contest. For them, using standard English is not a matter of choice, given their ultimate goal of identification as Americans. For Hawai'i playwrights, however, the choice of whether to use standard English, Hawaiian, and HCE does not carry that burden, since I suggest that their self-image as people of Hawai'i either takes precedence over their nationality as American citizens or at the very least has parity with that identification.⁸⁹

In these plays, accommodation is most often the underlying motivation, whether a Local person is speaking standard English to someone newly arrived in Hawai'i, speaking HCE to a friend (e.g., Alika's separate conversations with Mrs.

⁸⁹ This may be a reason that the term "Asian American" is not widely used in Hawai'i. And usage of a term such as "Hawaiian American" is highly improbable, given both Native Hawaiian's self-identification as Hawaiian and a lack of concern as to whether one is or is not considered a US citizen by the dominant culture.

Clements and the Local bus driver in *Kāmau*), or Hawaiian to a family member. Both the ability to use the language and the knowledge of when it is appropriate to use it marks the character, the playwright, and the audience member who can appreciate the representation as insiders. Conversely, standard English used in an HCE environment may be interpreted as putting on airs, mockery, or even a label of outsider status, depending on the context. Whatever the deliberate choices, they allow the speaker the flexibility to simultaneously perform and comment on her sometimes tripartite identity.

The different aspects of an individual's identity have here been explored primarily in terms of the language she chooses to use. As one of the languages is Hawaiian, it may be seen as a matter of course that the plays that employ it are raced as Hawaiian. It is difficult, however, to extrapolate further when considering the use of HCE and standard English in Hawai'i plays. HCE does not automatically confer a particular racial or ethnic status, nor does standard English mean, as in Asian American plays, that a playwright is declaring herself a stakeholder in the great American experiment. These are perfunctory assumptions that interpret superficial resemblances as commonalities without delving into the processes by which Hawai'i has become racialized. The next chapter will explore theatrical demonstrations of race, ethnicity, and racialization in Hawai'i plays.

Chapter 4 – Race, Ethnicity, and Racialization

*One ting I wen' notice 'bout dis place
All us guys we tease da odda race
It's amazing we can live in da same place.
"Mr. San Cho Lee" by Keola and Kapono Beamer*

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which Hawai'i's theater reflects how Local and Hawaiian playwrights consider racial identity in Hawai'i. Hawai'i's theater, inclusive of all the "human physical characteristics" that currently comprise the population of the islands, offers a practice of racialization that is complex and open to change. The fluidity of identity has been discussed earlier; in this chapter, race and individual positioning vis-à-vis race is an equally unstable condition.

Omi and Winant have pointed out the fluidity of race as a constituent of identity. They observe that race is not a biological but a social construct "which is neither objective nor static. It is a multidimensional complex of social meanings, subjectivities, practices, and institutions organized around the question of human physical characteristics. Race is constantly being reinterpreted and recreated" (47).

The state of Hawai'i has sometimes been held up as an example of how different groups of people can all get along, a precursor of what the rest of the country may eventually become. Certainly one of the most salient characteristics of the islands' population is its diversity of peoples, demonstrated in skin color, place of birth, cultural practice, native language, ancestry, and the range and mixtures thereof. This racial variety, unique in the United States, destabilizes the main categorizations that dominate the country's social imaginary, one which usually

tries to ignore race (Basson 1-2). On the one hand, the United States might want to be considered basically monocultural, i.e., we are all Americans, thereby emphasizing the homogeneity of the “state.”⁹⁰ On the other hand, if race is addressed, then usually only the relationships amongst the dominant Caucasian-African American-Latino trifecta are salient. Neither circumstance accommodates the cultural and ethnic diversity of Hawai‘i, nor do they allow for the historicity of changing relationships and alliances amongst ethnicities.⁹¹

I would agree that “In certain broader or less technical senses, RACE is sometimes used interchangeably with PEOPLE. PEOPLE refers to a body of persons united usually by common interests, ideals, or culture but sometimes by a common history, language, or ethnic character” (Random House 1590). The Random House definition of race goes on to point out that, for some scientists, the use of “race” as a determinant of biological purity is no longer valid, that it is an arbitrary classification, as mentioned above. While this perspective on race may be scientifically accurate, it is in practice still somewhat esoteric, and the historical

⁹⁰ Basson defines state perquisites as “a guarantee of formal equality based on a general set of legal rights and responsibilities” (12). A nation is a “collectivity whose members share a commitment to political sovereignty linked to a particular territory . . .” (13). As Hawai‘i is not a part of the contiguous United States, nor do its ethnicities match the American ideal of whiteness, it therefore unsettles the United States’ ideal image of itself.

⁹¹ The definitions are quoted at length (though not in their entirety) to point out their inherent complexity; the definition of “ethnic” is particularly broad.
race², *n.* 1. a group of persons related by common descent or heredity. 2. a population so related. 3. *Anthropol.* a. any of the traditional divisions of human-kind, the commonest being the Caucasian, Mongoloid, and Negro, characterized by supposedly distinctive and universal physical characteristics; no longer in technical use. b. an arbitrary classification of modern humans, sometimes, esp. formerly, based on any or a combination of various physical characteristics, as skin color, facial form, or eye shape, and now frequently based on such genetic markers as blood groups. (Random House 1590)

ethnic, *adj.* 1. pertaining to or characteristic of a people, esp. a group sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like. 2. referring to the origin, classification, characteristics, etc., of such a group. 3. being a minority of an ethnic group esp. of a group that is a minority within a larger society: *ethnic Chinese in San Francisco.* (Random House 665)

definitions and consequent social applications maintain viability. The colloquial understanding of the term is more consistent with actual practice. For the purposes of this chapter, “race” will be used primarily when referencing the abstract rather than the specific. And, if a particular group is under discussion, then the term “ethnic” or “ethnicity” will be used.

For racialization, I begin with Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s denotation of the term: “. . . to signify the extension of a racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (51). Racialization also involves taking the visible markers of ethnicity – both physical and cultural – and assigning a socially-approved meaning to them (Fenton 66). Categories arise from this practice and become ossified in the popular culture.⁹² But it is important to observe that racialization commonly happens at times of liminal confluence: when different peoples encounter each other. Both groups are racialized at that time. And racialization is institutionalized when such classifications are made the rationale for economic and political choices, as happened in Hawai‘i and other sites of imperial conquest and colonization (Webster 50).

In Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians would have become racialized upon first contact with Europeans, as would the foreigners themselves, setting up a binary relationship that depended upon an assumption of homogeneity on both sides. Further racialization occurred when immigrants were brought to work the plantations. These workers were racialized not only by their physical and cultural

⁹² One of the most benign sort of racialization might involve the identification of particular foods with individual ethnicities, e.g., kim chee with Koreans, baklava with Turks, sushi with Japanese, pinakbet with Filipinos, and dog with both Koreans and Filipinos.

differences, but also in a material context by the plantation practice of separating workers' living quarters by national origin. This application of "divide and conquer" created a divisive and divided environment in which different ethnic groups were pitted against each other in terms of the work assigned and the pay allocated for that work (Fenton 155). A fairly rigid stratification resulted that placed the haole (American, English, Scots, et al) owners and managers at the top; followed by the Portuguese, considered lesser Europeans when politically convenient; and at the bottom were the fieldworkers: Filipino, Japanese, Korean, etc. (Kelly 105). Wage differentials applied, and the different groups, kept apart in camps, were also played off against one another during the various strikes that occurred (Puette 298).

Bearing the legacy of over two hundred years of racially-inflected conflict, Hawai'i is an overtly racialized state, and both the awareness of difference and acknowledgement of conflicting discourses are salient aspects of its society. Homogeneity is not the norm in a locale in which simultaneous identities are easily held: one can be a Pacific Islander and also Tongan/Samoan; Local and also of Japanese ancestry; haole and Scots/Irish. Which identity takes precedence depends, like the choice of which language to use, upon situational influences.

Whiteness in Hawai'i must also be addressed, since it has been a formative element in Hawai'i's modern development. First, it must be noted that this whiteness is an American whiteness. The history of American influence in Hawai'i, whether one starts with New England whalers or Protestant missionaries, must be seen in the context of how the United States views itself racially. S.E. Wilmer and others have pointed out that the accepted national identity developed as an artificial

construct: an ideal in a brave new world. This identity was Anglo-Saxon Protestant, English-speaking, and white. Even the notion of the melting pot supported this self-image, since diverse ethnic groups were assumed to aspire to the norm, therefore “emulating the white Protestant archetype” (Wilmer 10).

Race as a scientifically-based classification has included in its history definitions that codify cultures by “skin color, civilization, and continental location” (Webster 38). These “scientific” theories were predicated upon the notion of white European superiority, with physical characteristics linked to cultural, moral, and intellectual qualities. So far did these theories permeate that they became the justification for some of the major racially-motivated events of nineteenth and twentieth century world history – e.g., slavery, notably of African blacks in the United States, and the genocide practiced by Nazi Germany on Jews in Europe – that utilized race differences and theories of white superiority as justifications for atrocity.

Ethnicity, as a definition or label depending upon cultural practice predicated upon group commonalities and physical location (or descent from those from a common physical location), greatly complicates the issue. Regardless of its original meaning of being neither Jewish or Christian, it has been argued that today everyone has an ethnicity. This interpretation could have the happy result of erasing privilege and equalizing all peoples. This, however, is not the case, particularly in an environment that privileges whiteness as the norm, as Ward Churchill points out in his critique of Werner Sollor’s *Beyond Ethnicity*. Churchill takes issue with Sollor’s dismissal of race as a major determining factor of ethnicity in Sollor’s vision of an

American ideal around which various ethnicities revolve until they are absorbed into the norm. According to Churchill, this scenario still privileges an American image that is based upon a New England-originated belief in a Eurocentric norm and that, given the myths of the American dream and the melting pot, is a norm to which all ethnicities devoutly aspire.

This attitude, mixed with the Christian evangelist conviction, is very similar to that of the first missionaries to Hawai'i. Characterized as heathens and pagans in need of direction and salvation, Hawaiians were assumed to be savages without civilization. The American missionaries were motivated not only to save souls but also to guide the Hawaiians to an understanding of the correct way to live. Hence, firm beliefs in the Bible and its precepts, clothing to cover shameful nakedness, and an American conception of laws and government were all conveyed to the Hawaiian rulers and the population in general. An ethnically (culturally and geographically cohesive) and racially (distinguished as such by skin color and physical features) distinct group, as viewed by the haole, Hawaiians were racialized in a way that was antithetical to how they assessed themselves. That some missionaries and their descendents, as well as business people, persisted in their imposition of American norms in the face of ultimately futile opposition from Hawaiians and other supporters of the monarchy, speaks to the perpetuation of the notion of Manifest Destiny and the racial domination by one group that considered itself superior and entitled to supremacy.

Given its normally negative implementation, it should be noted that in Hawai'i, racialization is not necessarily a negative application. It does, however,

become a racist practice when a people or group is so classified or pigeon-holed in the service of the political or financial gain of others. The use of a smiling, happy, coconut bra-wearing hula dancer to stand in as a representative for all Hawaiians in a tourist brochure would be an example. Racialization occurs when there is an other against which to be defined. That is a reasonable reaction to difference, since outsiders are usually automatically “other.” The degree of otherness they are assigned is determined when new data they provide is processed and reconciled with one’s previous world view. It is not only the other that is categorized, however; one’s own group also becomes categorized in the process; if there is a “them,” then we become “us.” For precontact Hawaiians, difference might have meant strangers from another island or another ahupua’a. Or it could also mean what might be perceived from the outside as a class difference: in *The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu*, the Kuhina Nui refers to Pali as coming from “a filthy race” since the younger woman has been revealed as being kauā (58).

The plays cited in this chapter, written and performed in Hawai’i, insist that their unequivocally raced characters be accepted as individuals with autonomy and agency. They also, by performing their people’s heterogeneity, resist easy categorization in the white American context. They are varied and contentious characters, presented in their own service, not as foils for dominant culture protagonists.

II. Theatrical - and Raced – Visions of Hawai’i

In order to contextualize the racialization of the plays under discussion, I will first offer several examples of theatrical works that are outside the sample group of

Kumu Kahua plays. Two were written in pre-overthrow Hawai'i, and the third was a New York Broadway hit in the early twentieth century. Each, whether in subject matter or point of view, illuminates certain critical factors that help frame the analysis. And their individual historical and cultural positioning provide a critical perspective into the treatment of race in theatrical representations of Hawai'i.

Touristic images of swaying, smiling hula dancers and coconut palms, sounds of ukulele strumming and beating of the pahu (drum), and visions of awe-inspiring volcanic eruptions are standard today, as the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau continues the effort to lure tourist dollars to the state. These images, along with others promoting Hawai'i as a paradise of blue seas and friendly people, are cemented in popular culture via print, film, music, and literature. But these are fetishized representations intended for commercial consumption. It is revealing to historicize how the islands and its people have been characterized in theatrical literature. It is equally significant to observe which characterizations or tropes still survive.

One of the first theatrical representations of Hawai'i, and one that depicts other than an idealized version of a tropical paradise, is a short play entitled *Vacuum*, by Sanford B. Dole.⁹³ While there is no record that this play was ever performed, it was published in pamphlet form, probably in 1887-1889, and includes the characters Skyhigh, "The Emperor of the Coral Reefs and Sand Banks of the Deep Blue Sea," and Palaver, Cockade, Calabash, and Picnic: "Their Extravagances the

⁹³ Notes on the back of the copy in the University of Hawai'i's Hawai'i Collection at Hamilton Library read, "Among papers given to the Historical Commission by Judge Dole is a copy of "Vacuum," on cover of which is written in Dole's handwriting: Anonymously published by S.B. Dole in the latter days of the Gibson regime."

Incompetents.” The play takes place in the Palace of the Flying Fish. According to notes on the pamphlet, “Skyhigh” is a pseudonym for then King David Kalākaua and “Palaver” is a stand-in for Walter Murray Gibson.⁹⁴ As Gibson was at one time a legislator and chair of the finance committee before his appointment as prime minister, the lines given him are cynical and clearly meant to paint him as a racist opportunist and the king and his people as unenlightened dupes.

PALAVER. I am the real ruler: our Emperor over yonder thinks that he is sovereign and that I am his devoted servant, but he is mistaken without knowing it, and he will never find it out; as long as he is humored with money, state ceremony, salutes, flags, royal orders, and other fol de rol, he is happy and imagines that he is governing the empire. A simple and ignorant people are also easily managed; a little patronage intelligently distributed, their heredity, vanity, and prejudices judiciously managed, and the thing is done. (15)

Since Sanford B. Dole went on to play a major role in the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893 and then to positions as president of both the Provisional Government and the Republic of Hawai‘i, it is plausible that he was projecting his own attitudes upon Gibson, whatever his opinions of Gibson’s influence on the King.

This unproduced play and another also thought to have been written by Dole – *The Grand Duke of Gynbergdrinkenstein*, which also depicts the king as an careless

⁹⁴ Walter Murray Gibson was a haole foreigner with great influence on the king and known as an advocate for the Hawaiian people and the monarchy. He lost influence and power in 1887 when the Bayonet Constitution was forced upon the king.

spendthrift⁹⁵ – reflect opinions of Hawai‘i from a haole man who had been born and raised in Hawai‘i. His satire lampoons Caucasians as well as Hawaiians, but it is clear from the quote above and from Dole’s subsequent actions that he believed it better for the islands and for the Hawaiian people as a whole to be under the control of the haole aristocracy. The two plays, both written around 1887, are first and foremost political. Perhaps because they are written by an “insider” (and Dole, as a missionary scion, would have regarded Hawai‘i as a home), regardless of his attitudes towards the indigenous people of the islands, they do not exoticize either Hawaiian people or the Pacific, at least as the islands are commercially promoted today. These two works, on the other hand, do mark a perspective that is both perceived and played upon in later theatrical work.

It was actually a Broadway play that initially popularized the romantic image of the Hawaiian islands and its people with images and themes comparable to popular contemporary tropes of paradise. In its plot and character list, it encompasses all the hackneyed stereotypes of the Pacific and Hawai‘i still resonant today.

The play, *The Bird of Paradise*, was written by a man named Richard Walton Tully and saw its New York premiere in 1912. Tully, who produced the play with Oliver Morosco, wrote what amounted to a Pacific version of *Madame Butterfly*, in which a young white man comes to Hawai‘i and falls in love with a Hawaiian woman,

⁹⁵ The play has the Grand Duke singing a song to the tune of Jingle Bells: “Dashing at expense like a one horse little State, Making duck and drakes of all that’s good and great. Bring the bob-tailed nag, the beggar’s going to ride. Frivolity and jobbery must travel side by side. [All put hands in pockets, jingle coins and join chorus] CHORUS Jingle-em, jingle-em, jingle all the day. It’s nice to spend the public cash in a free and easy way. Jingle-em, jingle-em, jingle all the day. Never mind the piper or the man who has to pay” (10).

Luana, in Kona. They move to a Honolulu that, ironically, is seen as a Western city (at least in comparison to Kona on the Big Island of Hawai'i), but the couple and their marriage fail to flourish. Upon hearing that her town is in danger of being overrun by a lava flow, Luana returns to the Big Island and throws herself into the volcano to appease the goddess Pele (Balme 4).

The play, a musical with Hawaiian musicians imported for the show, was a major success and ran in touring shows and stock company productions for twelve years (8).⁹⁶ A 1916 Edison Phonography Monthly article ascribed the nation-wide rage for Hawaiian music, ukulele, and "hula hula dances" to *The Bird of Paradise* and "its wonderful setting of exotic music," and sheet music was sold with images of Luana the hula dancer on the cover (13). The play was never published and has been largely forgotten, but as an influence upon mass-market taste and image-formation, it popularized Hawaiian music and a narrowly-defined profile that holds sway even in the twenty-first century.

In this play, Hawaiian people were as commodified as exotic subjects of voyeurism then as they are today in tourist publications. For a 1926 film version of *The Bird of Paradise*, the characters were described thus:

Aloma of the South Seas: An enchanting and picturesque drama of the tropics, with weird and entrancing music, bewitching and shapely native maidens with hibiscus in their black tresses, and stalwart brown-skinned Apollo-like men who though natives have all the chivalry and noble pride of their race. It is the story of the primitive

⁹⁶ The show also launched the career of Laurette Taylor who went on immediately after to appear in a major success, *Peg 'o My Heart* (16).

passion and coquetry of a native girl, and the gallantry of a white man.
(15)

The play's plot, while ostensibly a doomed love story, actually deals with the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the politics of annexation, with stock characters such as a missionary and a sugar planter (co-conspirators in the overthrow), a white American woman studying Hawaiian witchcraft, the young white hero who initially intends to work with lepers on Moloka'i, and "a college-educated beachcomber critical of missionary interference in indigenous culture" (6). While the play is apparently remarkably sympathetic to the plight of the poor Hawaiians, it nevertheless subscribes to the contemporary eugenics movement's belief in the superiority of the white race. Tully himself commented upon

The disappearance of the so-called inferior races before the advancement of the Anglo-Saxon race. Degeneracy and death is the penalty that has always been paid by the higher race that seeks to raise the lower by amalgamating with it. The play thoroughly dramatizes the well-known fact that though we dress, educate and polish the members of a lower race to the superficial religious and social equality with the Caucasian, at heart he is still the fetish-worshipping savage who will become atavistic in every moment of stress. The play is only a tragedy in one sense—that is for the girl who represents the weaker race and the man who mates with her. Hope and salvation are working out for the dissolute beach-comber who climbs from degradation to the highest honor among men through his

having kept himself racially pure and his mating with the clear-eyed intelligent girl of his own kind. (10-11)

The joining of a white man with a Hawaiian woman was seen as degradation for the white man, as was the case in the 1949 musical *South Pacific*. Does that joining mean a rise in status for the Hawaiian partner? Perhaps so, since a character states in *Massie/Kahahawai*, “The Hawaiians and those who have married into white families are very proud people. But the Oriental element who spend so much time on the water or on the beach are sort of half-baked (LAUGH)” (49). And in *The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu*, a hapa woman’s relationship with a haole man is seen as perfectly acceptable, at least to Hawaiians.

The (im)positioning of Hawai’i as a alien land peopled by foreigners (foreign, that is, to white Americans on the continental United States) is addressed in Carroll’s compilation *Massie/Kahahawai*. Carroll’s quotations of primary and secondary source material offer a vivid impression of both official and private perspectives on Hawai’i which, at the time of the Massie trials, was already a territory of the United States.

ADMIRAL STIRLING. Governor, I don’t like the way people of other races are beginning to run things in a group of islands that is part of the United States. [...] This community isn’t broadly cosmopolitan as some of its apologists like to say. It’s a mix up of races, a babble of tongues. It’s polyglot in the worst sense. As a senior military officer, I’m disturbed at the prospect. If these people close ranks against us to protect their own

criminals, what will they do when an Asiatic nation declares war on us
(20)?

...

CLARENCE DARROW. I could see that the greater part of the jury had closed their minds to any thought but conviction. When I gazed into those dark faces, I could see the deep mysteries of the Orient were there. My ideas and words were not registering (63).

...

STAGEHAND 1. By the Almighty, are we going to stand by and let such things happen? Are we no longer Americans? No longer free and white? Are all the mainland millions of us in a class with those seven white men of the Massie jury who let five yellow and brown men swing a verdict directly against the sympathies of the whole civilized world (64)?

...

STAGEHAND 4. Down in Washington, in Congress, certain of our lawmakers have already introduced bills aimed at cancelling the verdict that five little men of Pacific races imposed on seven full-sized white Americans (64).

The explicit racism of the white characters in *Massie/Kahahawai* is expressed openly, as was politically and culturally acceptable in the 1930s United States. While white citizens of Hawai'i were assumed to be Americans, those of different races were apparently not, even though Hawai'i was at the time a territory of the United States. Classifying residents of Hawai'i as foreigners does one of two things, or both:

1) identifies *all* residents of Hawai'i as non-American, even though citizenship was granted with territorial status; and 2) disavows Hawai'i's territorial status, as well as any attendant rights and privileges, altogether.

Both nineteenth and twentieth century attitudes towards the islands and its people are explicitly expressed in several plays that focus on modern Hawaiians and issues involving them. Kneubuhl's *Ola Nā Iwi* comments on both the early days of anthropology and present-day ramifications by providing an array of nineteenth century scholars and scientists commenting on issues of race. In one scene, two Americans, described as a Professor and a Southerner, argue their stances on racial differences. The Professor believes that it is only the environment that holds back the savage, that exposed to "Our own advanced civilization [. . .] it is possible to mold the savage into an acceptable civilized form" (153). Interestingly, it appears that the changes may be manifested both physically *and* culturally, the logical extension of which might be erasing differences of skin color as well (keeping the purity of the nation by making everyone white in fact as well as in ideology?). The Southerner also bases his belief in the immutable disparity between the races at least partially on the fact of physical differences. He goes further, however, by firmly arguing that nature does not change, that "they [the barbarians of the world] were born into a low mental state, and they will die that way." His basic thesis is that "non-white races are inferior in every way, and will never advance" (154).

The Brechtian vignettes, interspersed among scenes set in the twentieth century, continue throughout the play, with characters such as a sideshow craniologist and a robber of Indian graves providing examples of the dehumanizing

attitudes held towards people raced as “other” and lesser than white. It is not until the end of the play that a vignette specifically refers to Hawaiians. In one of the last scenes of the play, a nineteenth-century physician writes to another doctor, offering the skull of a deceased Hawaiian patient. The physician relates the history of the Hawaiian man, at least as far as he knows it, allowing him a semblance of humanity. However, it is clear that the patient presently has value primarily as a *specimen*, and as a present to a fellow scientist, “a native offering, as they say, on the altar of science” (218-9). This “race science” strongly supports the historical use of racial differentiation to reinforce the dominance of white ethnicity. The play subverts this by assuming equal status for Hawaiian beliefs. Nanea explains that “We believe that the spirit, the essence, the mana (*spiritual power*) resides in the bones. If not properly hidden or cared for in the old way, the spirit of the departed one is forced to wander, unhappy and restless, never finding its way to the ao ‘aumākua, the realm of the ancestors, never finding home. No peace” (175).

Thus, Kneubuhl provides the foundation for the premise of the play: that the practice of collecting human remains is no longer acceptable in a milieu in which races are supposedly accorded equality. By applying knowledge specific to Native Hawaiians, revealing that human artifacts – skeletons and bones – are more than simply inert scientific relics, Kneubuhl sets up a scenario in which Native Hawaiians themselves may right ongoing wrongs. She suggests that a race can heal itself of the injuries done to it by others. This imagining is in contrast to representations of the commodified culture of *Bird of Paradise* and the debased version of *Vacuum* and *The Grand Duke of Gynbergdrinkenstein*.

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu takes place in the 1820s and, even more explicitly than does *Ola Nā Iwi*, presents the modern audience with a meditation on the consequences of races meeting. The New England missionary women hold views common to their day: mission work is to be done “among the heathen peoples of this earth” by “bring[ing] the word of the gospel to a land of darkness” (6).⁹⁷ These statements, made at the beginning of the play, link Hawaiians with all other nonwhite, non-Christian societies in need of Euro-American enlightenment.

While the horrors of miscegenation may no longer be so openly expressed in public discourse, as is the case in *The Bird of Paradise*, and eugenics and craniology no longer are the determinants of intelligence, as in *Ola Nā Iwi*, Hawai'i is still seen through the prism of otherness. While a state for fifty years, it somehow lacks authenticity when compared to the other forty-nine.⁹⁸

This notion that Hawai'i is somehow, though a state, nevertheless not a real part of the union, is held by character Buck Buyer, a cable television executive from

⁹⁷ In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mrs. Merriweather speaks to her missionary circle about “those poor Mrunas . . . Living in that jungle with nobody but J. Grimes Everett [. . .] Not a white person'll go near 'em but that saintly J. Grimes Everett [...] The poverty . . . the darkness . . . the immorality—nobody but J. Grimes Everett knows” (243).

⁹⁸ Television journalist Cokie Roberts famously criticized then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama's vacation in Hawai'i on national television in 2008, saying that “going off this week to a vacation in Hawaii does not make any sense whatsoever. I know his grandmother lives in Hawaii and I know Hawaii is a state, but it has the look of him going off to some sort of foreign, exotic place. He should be in Myrtle Beach, and, you know, if he's going to take a vacation at this time.” Presumably Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, is familiar to Americans as an *American* place. A year later, Kevin Madden, a former Mitt Romney spokesperson said of President Obama's lack of political capital: “You have to also remember the fact that the president being on vacation in Hawaii, it's much different than being in Texas. Hawaii to many Americans seems like a foreign place. And I think those images, the optics, hurt President Obama very badly” (“Huh, waii”). Madden makes the point that it is the visuals, the pictures, that are supposedly hurting the president's image. Presumably the impression conjured by his statements contain the familiar touristic images of sun, sparkling sand, palm trees, brown hula girls as backdrop for a Black American president. Un-American imagery, to be sure, if both a North Carolina seascape and a sere Texas landscape, each peopled by white vacationers, are to be considered quintessentially American. I would also speculate that President Obama's race/position as a man of color with a Kenyan father, combined with his birth and childhood in Honolulu, make for a “double whammy,” as it were, of foreignness.

the continent in Lee Cataluna's *Aloha Friday*, a play that takes place in modern times. Buyer announces that he and his company are purchasing a Kaua'i cable company, and that it will join a "vast network of sister stations back in the states." He assures the staff that "We understand the leisurely lifestyle, the importance of relaxation and play, and the ancient Hawaiian traditions, like wearing floral moo-moos on aloha [sic] Friday" (32). The staff is also given a new dress code: "big splashy prints, little tiki patterns, those great silky shirts like Magnum used to wear . . . all authentic Hawaiian attire." And to make clear that the new ownership will not tolerate any deviance, he jokingly threatens to "toss you all into the volcano"⁹⁹ if they don't conform. "Just kidding! We won't do that. We'll just fire you the good old fashioned American way!" (47).

Buck's notion of Hawaiian authenticity derives entirely from consumerist imagery. The state is seen only as a vacation destination, and modern tourist promotional images are flippantly elided with indigenous iconography. And the reference to "back in the states" clearly excludes Hawai'i from the United States, although being fired in the "American" manner could be read as a way of educating staff as to how real Americans operate: a temporal version of missionary zeal. However humorously, and extremely broadly, the character may be, Buck Buyers can only conceive of Hawai'i and all its people as "other." And, as in Sarah Palin's 2010 appeal for "Hawaiians" to vote for a Big Island Republican congressional candidate, there is no differentiation between the indigenous people and the settler groups of numerous ethnicities currently resident in the islands.

⁹⁹ The trope of dying after falling into a volcano also appears in *Bird of Paradise*, although Luana willingly sacrifices herself in that play.

III. Hawai'i Looks at the Outside World

So when the mainland United States looks at Hawai'i, it sometimes sees only a homogenized whole, an ensemble of discrete parts that is labeled "Hawaiian" regardless of an individual's actual race or ethnicity. This label disregards the reality of the situationally-dependent categorization that is clearly understood by local insiders. When Hawai'i looks back, the characterization of the outsider is not predicated upon a white American ideal or dominant culture assumption of superiority.

In Cataluna's *Aloha Friday*, Buck Buyer is clearly not from Hawai'i. While his perspective provides some insight into how Hawai'i is (mis)interpreted from the outside, the actual depiction of the character is so lampooned as to be almost burlesque – he is clearly a send-up of a clueless haole. The plot establishes him as literal threat to the Kaua'i cable company employees' way of life, but the broad comedic representation reassures the audience that he's no real menace. In the end, Buyer is fooled by the locals' machinations. However, rather than being sent back to the mainland, it's discovered that he's a long-lost relative of the Moniz brothers¹⁰⁰ (who have a cable show about hunting goat). This play generously assimilates its mainland haole, revealing him to be a misguided "one of us," not an "other" at all.

Another comedy, Lee Tonouchi's *Living Pidgin*, contains a monologue, "Significant Moments in Da Life of Oriental Faddah and Son," in which a young local man talks about his Asian American girlfriend. The woman is characterized as "katonk" or "Japanese person from the mainland" (Sakoda 113). The narrator offers

¹⁰⁰ The Moniz brothers' ethnicity is not identified in the play. However, by their name, one might assume them to be of Portuguese descent.

other terms: “banana” and “Twinkie,” fairly derogatory terms, both of which refer to being yellow on the outside and white on the inside. He brings her home to Hawai‘i and takes her to a Frank Delima comedy show.¹⁰¹

But she nevah laugh,
not even one chuckle
for wot she called
“the blatant
stereotyping
and racist
ethnic portrayals.” (10)

An appreciation of Delima’s sensibilities depends upon knowing and accepting the familiar stereotypes understood in Local society. While there is local disagreement as to whether Delima’s humor is acceptable in a multicultural world, Tonouchi is pointing out a difference between local and mainland Asian American practice: in Hawai‘i, race is much more casually discussed than on the mainland. The narrator’s girlfriend is reacting predictably as a member of a racial minority whose struggle for parity in a white society is hampered by the dominant culture’s racism. In Tonouchi’s world, however, the narrator is reacting to the humor from the point of view of a person of color who has grown up in an environment that does not privilege whiteness, resulting in sensibilities a world away from those of the mainland United States.

¹⁰¹ Frank Delima is a popular local stand-up comedian whose work explicitly targets all the ethnic groups in Hawai‘i.

Lee Cataluna's *Folks You Meet in Longs and Other Stories* and *The Super Secret Squad* provide modern observations of incomers to Hawai'i. In *Super Secret Squad*, a group of college students aim to correct what they perceive as the current wrongs in Hawai'i. One of these is based upon the Hawai'i law that ensures public right of way on all Hawaiian beaches up to the vegetation line. A Lanikai¹⁰² home owner has allowed his plant line to extend close to the water, leaving very little actual beach. To persuade his compatriots to move the vegetation line (thereby righting a wrong and striking a blow for the Local), one student describes the home owner.

WANGA. The guy is a Wendell. A Wendell from the mainland. And his whole house is full motion-detectors, alarms, Dobermans, Robin Masters¹⁰³ action what not. And when people get too close to his place, he busts out a shotgun. Better? (14)

The home owner's race is not mentioned, but the fact that he is from the mainland is critical to the description. The point is that he's not from here, he's not local. Earlier, another character, Togo, proposes "Let's go Diamond Head and beat up those eco-tour guys. I hate those bastards" (11). The implication is that the tour guides are not of us, not local.

In addition to demarcating land, outsiders also appropriate native beliefs for their own use. This practice ranges from the basic (though not simple) use of the term "aloha spirit" to gloss over valid disagreements and conflict, to poaching on indigenous practice. Cataluna spoofs a fawning "New Age" fascination for indigenous

¹⁰² Lanikai is an exclusive suburb of Honolulu located on the east side of O'ahu.

¹⁰³ Robin Masters was a character in the television show "Magnum, PI" which was shot in Hawai'i. Masters' face was never seen, but he owned a beachfront estate where the detective Thomas Magnum lived.

peoples' beliefs in a monologue called *Kahuna Dave*.¹⁰⁴ Here alleged ancient Hawaiian cultural beliefs are employed as a tourist attraction, with the added draw of dolphins as spiritual healers.

KAHUNA DAVE. If you're looking for the ultimate experience in relaxation and harmony in your Hawaiian vacation, look no further. The ancient Hawaiians knew the secret to health, longevity, and peace. They turned to the ocean and to what they referred to as the "physicians of the sea" – the dolphins. Hawaiians would swim out to the ocean and call to their dolphin friends: "A hana laka laka zulu!" whenever they were feeling tired or sick or stressed or whatever. And the dolphins would hear them and come. (112)

In this monologue, Hawaiians are racialized as a relaxed and harmonious group, with esoteric knowledge that they will gladly share with visitors. They are homogenous, and there is only one aspect of interest presented: their exoticism. Such essentialism rests upon a model that equates the ancient with authenticity. This is racialization as immobilization: the race is characterized by one narrow definition and may not change or be "complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege" (Tuhiwai Smith 74). While the monologue incorporates this outsider's view of indigenous Hawai'i, it also, by lampooning this clearly ridiculous character, demonstrates what local people might think of such cultural opportunists: outsiders, carpetbaggers who cynically twist or fabricate cultural beliefs to make a profit. Again, race is not mentioned, but it is

¹⁰⁴ kahuna. nvi. 1 Priest, sorcerer, magician, wizard, minister, expert in any profession (whether male or female); in the 1845 laws, doctors, surgeons, and dentists were called *kahuna* (Pukui 114).

doubtful that Dave is actually a kahuna (in either the historical sense or the Hollywood primitive sense), or that dolphins are eager to heal humans. Whether a local person would make up nonsense words to simulate Hawaiian is debatable, but the lack of authenticity is clear nonetheless. Dave is not Local.

So far, residents of the continental United States have been depicted as alien in Hawai'i. But simply living on the mainland is not entirely negative. Ed Sakamoto's *Aloha Las Vegas* has its protagonist, a retired local Japanese man, deciding whether or not to move to Las Vegas. Wally Fukuda is a recently widowed retired baker, and an old friend comes home to Hawai'i extolling the virtues of living in Las Vegas.

HARRY. Las Vegas is always jumping. Can't believe that city. About six thousand people move to Vegas every month. Fastest growing city in the country. [. . .] to be a winner, in Vegas, you don't have to come home with jackpot money. All you gotta do is have a good time with friends or family. It's sharing a common purpose: to hit the jackpot. But it's still fun and you can forget your troubles at least for the time being. (171)

Harry is making a living as a professional gambler, and he thinks Wally would enjoy himself there. An unstated assumption underlying the premise of the play is that Local Hawai'i people travel to Las Vegas often, whether to visit or to live. The widespread joke about Las Vegas being Hawai'i's "ninth island" isn't too far off the mark, with an estimated fifty thousand former island residents now relocated there (Dawrs). Wally's son, Butch, jokes that "I going see my friends mo' often 'cause dey always visiting Vegas. Daddy's house going be one busy place wit' his friends stopping by and my friends coming" (172). He is referring to Las Vegas' popularity

as a vacation destination for Hawai'i residents. Butch raises other reasons to move to Las Vegas, including the difficulty of finding jobs in Hawai'i and the high cost of living. Las Vegas is his land of opportunity. June, Wally's daughter, has a different perspective. She initially objects to her father's proposed move on the basis of Las Vegas' "gambling, prostitution, crooks" (158) but later gives in, albeit grudgingly.

Race doesn't enter into the *Aloha Las Vegas* discussion at all. In fact, the argument as to whether or not Wally should move is centered entirely upon the advantages of the move: lower property costs, fun, better jobs for his son and daughter-in-law. There's no apprehension about their reception on the mainland, no concern about racism or prejudice. Given the number of former Hawai'i residents who live in Las Vegas, it is possible that the Fukuda family might spend most of their time there with Local folks. There is no hint of an awareness of anticipated isolation as people of color in a predominantly white environment. They are comfortable as residents of Hawai'i, and that they might not be welcome or accepted in Las Vegas never enters their minds. The benefits and disadvantages of the move are considered in the context of how the move affects the internal workings of the extended family, not how the move will catapult them into a white community – because in Vegas, with its large expatriate Hawai'i population, it won't.

IV. Whiteness in Hawai'i plays

How is it that the Fukudas of *Aloha Las Vegas* don't have the Asian American awareness of their minority status? Why aren't they more aware of whiteness as the dominant culture as they debate the move to Nevada? A partial answer is that, in Hawai'i, whiteness, or haole-ness, isn't the dominant paradigm. As pointed out in the

introduction of this work, the population of the state of Hawai'i is not and has never been majority haole. While haole may have comprised an elite portion of the population historically – given the missionary and planter communities whose progeny, along with incomers from the United States mainland, have had enormous economic influence and control over the years – they have not had the acceptance into the Local that other ethnicities have had. Judy Rohrer points out that “in the islands, whiteness is not the normative transparent center, and it never was” (4). Indeed, the narratives of indigeneity, immigration, and colonization that are unique to Hawai'i have ensured that the center – politically, economically, and culturally – moves and is vulnerable to disruption, primarily by outside influences.

Laurie L. Basson points out that “the official notion of the [American] state offered visions of a territory occupied exclusively by a homogenous, racially pure, white citizenry” (5). This is born out in the many myths of white settlement (e.g., that white leadership and culture were necessary to save the indigenous culture from itself) and the supporting reality of genocide that enabled the myths. In the United States, whiteness is the norm, as witness the common usage of “white” and “non-white” as conveniently general and all-encompassing categories. If the American norm is white, then it should follow that, in order to aspire to Americanization, a non-white is both immigrant and white-aspirant (Fenton 183). Hawai'i, with its status as a state of the American union and home to both a vocal indigenous population and a majority non-white contingent, contests this syllogism by refusing the clear political and cultural delineations common to the mainland United States.

In practice, this difference can have unsettling results for the uninitiated. Roher recounts a story in which a recently arrived University of Hawai'i graduate student complained about being "deterritorialized" when being labeled as haole.

After a few weeks of listening to this student, our professor spoke from her fifty-some years in Hawai'i. She instructed, "You have three choices. You can be a haole, a dumb haole, or a dumb f - -king haole. It's up to you." [. . .] at the first level, haole is simply a descriptor, used as any racial descriptor is used in Hawai'i. The level of "dumb haole" involves a socio-cultural "not noticing," such as not bringing food to a gathering, or kicking sand on someone as you run past (Turnbull 2004). Locals will tolerate a certain amount of this behavior, especially in newcomers ("haole, 'as why'), but "dumb f - - king haoles" are never allowed to go unchallenged. They cross the line from relatively benign ignorance to belligerent disrespect for people and place. (93)

Buck Buyer, the mainland haole charged with the Kaua'i cable station takeover in *Aloha Friday* typifies the "dumb f - - king haole." This character type is one-dimensional, with no interest in learning anything about Hawai'i and, indeed, is convinced of the accuracy of his simplistic constructions of the islands and its people. The playscript offers no real indications of the cable station employees' ethnicities, but Buyer elides them all as Hawaiian (as in Native Hawaiian).

The tourist couple in *Kāmau* is allowed more depth, particularly Mrs. Clements. She is an American History teacher and is depicted as relatively ignorant

of Hawai'i, although she is generally aware of the islands' fraught political history, especially regarding the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. It may be inferred that, since there are references to their being Southern Baptists from the South, and to Mr. Clements' life-long employment in a mine, that the couple are perhaps from West Virginia and that he has worked in a coal mine – both are assumed to be white. So Mabel Clements is a haole outsider, someone with no first-hand knowledge of Hawaiians. However, when she witnesses Alike's outburst during one of his tours, she has enough compassion and empathy to attempt to understand why, as well as the perspective and intelligence to appreciate multiple points of view. Unlike one-dimensional Buck Buyer, Mabel is allowed personhood, as revealed in her intelligence and compassion.

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu racializes its white characters in an unusual way for a Western play. These characters do not have the centrality of the protagonist, nor does the outcome of the story rely solely on their actions. This is fairly normal for much of the theatrical output of the islands, where the central, pivotal roles tend to be Hawaiian and/or Local. The two haole women are alien to both the geography and to the dominant culture: again, not uncommon for plays written in and about Hawai'i. The play goes further in one scene, however, by literally objectifying the haole women. In a comic moment that reverses the usual racialization of people of color by physical attributes, two young Hawaiian women examine the missionary women, in this scene frozen in place as though they were mannequins.

HANNAH. Look how they cover up their bodies so!

PALI. Auē! (*Oh dear!*)

HANNAH. Look at this white hand.

PALI. What puny bodies! What sickly pink skin!

HANNAH. (*Lifting up a dress*) Their legs are like sticks.

PALI. They look all pinched up in the middle.

HANNAH. And wide at the top.

PALI. Their eyes are so small.

HANNAH. They have no smiles.

PALI. I'm sure it's because they are so thin and sickly.

HANNAH. Maybe they would improve with bathing in the sea, and lying

about in the sun. (*She takes Pali aside*) Now we have learned something.

This is just why many haole men who come to these islands go so crazy over our women. It is because haole women are so revoltingly ugly. How can a man find any desire for such a creature? Auē! It must be so hard for them to get children. I pity them, poor things. I will send them some food.

(15-16)

Far from being viewed as an ideal or even a norm, the white women are considered unfortunate and just as physically distasteful as they believe the Hawaiian women to be. In this play, each group of women initially ascribes negative qualities to the other, characteristics that they attribute to women of the entire race.

But fluidity of identity marks the characters and how they come to view each other. At the outset, Lucy cannot abide Hawaiians and cannot even bear for them to touch her. She shudders at “those eyes, that stare at me like some animal. I even

sometimes feel sickened if there are too many of them in here” (39). The loss of a breast to surgery and her subsequent illness, however, provide Lucy the grace to accept physical aid from Pali, a recent convert to Christianity who is the only one who can bear to dress her wounds.

Ka’ahumanu, who at first resists the missionary proselytizing and cautiously explores the Western world, eventually accepts Christianity. Why she does this is not spelled out, although her last speech detailing her view of the malihini¹⁰⁵ gives some hints.

KA’AHUMANU. The foreigners are among us. Many more will come. Beware, some will come like the hoards of caterpillars, hiding their hunger to devastate the land as we know it, until the time when all the Hawaiian people may be trodden underfoot. We have seen this greed already with the sandalwood trade. We must fight now with our quick thoughts and our grasp of foreign ways. (76)

Ka’ahumanu is liberal enough to qualify her judgment of foreigners, allowing that not all of them are like hungry caterpillars. However, her determination of the wisest action is astute, taking into consideration all that she has learned of the foreigners over her lifetime. The queen is resolved to fight with the foreigners’ weapons. The diversity and intelligence of these Hawaiian women reveals a society that, while fearing that it is overmatched, nevertheless holds a strong belief in its own abilities and intelligence – a far cry from the ignorant savages that the missionaries first see from the deck of their ship. Both sides racialize the other, but in this play,

¹⁰⁵ malihini. nvs. Stranger, foreigner, newcomer, tourist, guest, company (Pukui 233).

individuals have the sagacity to begin to look beyond stereotypes to see individuals as discrete aspects, rather than simple reflections, of their societies.

V. How Does Hawai'i Racialize Itself Onstage?

The epigraph which begins this chapter is taken from a song that disparages a number of the ethnicities that occupy Hawai'i: Mr. San Cho Lee is a "mean old Pake (Chinese) man;" Mr. Kazuo Tanaka is a "mean old Kepani (Japanese) man;" Mr. Concepcion is a "mean old Filipino man;" Miss Momi Lomilomi is a "mean old cocktail waitress;" and Mr. Kamakawiwa'ole is a "mean old Hawaiian man." This is a comic song that criticizes the different men (and woman) for not sharing what they have with the narrator, and in his resentment, he uses their ethnic backgrounds as slurs. This song is a popular one that still gets a fair amount of airplay on local radio stations – the race references are meant jokingly.

An essential and particularly Local element of the song, however, is that the issue with the "mean" people of the song is not necessarily solely with their race but also with their perceived miserly behavior. So why mention their race at all? Wouldn't it be "nicer" not to refer to race? A perfunctory response might note that Hawai'i stereotypes its different ethnicities/races, and that these perspectives are reflected in the lyrics. Mr. San Cho Lee has "plenty lychee," lychee being fruit originating in China. Mr. Kazuo Tanaka has "plenty camera supply," perhaps an allusion to Japanese tourists carrying cameras. Mr. Concepcion, a Filipino man, has fighting chickens, a reference to cock fighting. Mr. Conrad Jones, the haole, has "plenty swimming pools" because he's a rich man, and Mr. Kamakawiwo'ole, the Hawaiian, has "not too much of nothing." Is lychee solely a Chinese fruit? Do

Japanese tourists all own multiple cameras? Do all Filipinos practice cock-fighting? Are all haole rich? Are all Hawaiians poor? I would propose the following answers: not any more, sometimes, not all of them, not all of them, and not all of them. While the caveats may seem to mitigate the clichés, especially the last two, it is true that Native Hawaiians rank at the bottom with regard to income levels in Hawai‘i. And while whites as a group may not have the highest median income (according to Okamura, Japanese and Chinese had higher incomes (8)), the legacy of the missionaries and plantations, and the dominance of white-controlled corporations in Hawai‘i’s economy continues to influence how haole are perceived.

The American ideal advances the notions that all citizens have parity under the law, have the same economic opportunities, and possess the same unalienable rights. However, as a result of this effort to equalize playing fields, a corresponding erasure of ethnic differences arises, the upshot of which is an ostensible colorblindness that masks the reality: a extreme awareness of color and ethnic difference. I suggest that the racial references are accepted in Hawai‘i because, as Rohrer pointed out, race is commonly and casually used as a descriptor and, while prejudice and bigotry certainly exist here, verbal constructions of race may be casually used as simple identification as often as vilification.

Rohrer comments on the discomfort that people from the continental United States feel when exposed to this casual usage of racial categorization. She ascribes this to a dominant culture that prefers to pretend that colorblindness is the norm, thus allowing members to evade any discussion of race at all (91-2). Similarly, in theater, placing actors of color in roles that, particularly those of the European

canon, are traditionally cast as white is color-blind casting, sometimes called “American” casting. This nomenclature is a reference to the notion that American culture is colorblind, dispelling the necessity of any mention of race. I would contend, however, that United States culture is so far from colorblind that race sometimes becomes the 500-pound gorilla in the room: ever-present but never mentioned.

In American theater, characters of color are often racialized as they are because of some unique status in the context of the play that differentiates them from the norm; essentially, they are perpetual “others” excluded from the norm of whiteness. Establishing the characters of color as “them” from the very beginning maintains a status quo of whiteness in the theater.¹⁰⁶

In the plays that originate in Hawai‘i, however, the “us” is often a group that is usually “them” in Western theater. Given centrality in the story, the Hawai‘i characters may have a depth that is not usually granted them when they are tokens representing their entire ethnicity or race in a white environment. Like the white casts of many American plays, the “us” of Hawai‘i plays includes representations of Hawaiians and Local people allowed internal contradictions and inconsistencies that

¹⁰⁶ The term “colorblind casting” camouflages other aspects of theatrical racialization. It is one thing to cast, say, a doctor or a lawyer or the wait help (if they are characters without a specified ethnicity) with actors of any color. That practice ideally results in a stage picture that is representative of the general population. However, there are times when characters of color are deliberately written into a play. In this case, their ethnicity is specified in the cast list. Those characters may be there simply to be representatives of their ethnicity rather than individuals whose defining characteristic is something other than race. In contrast, if characters are assumed to be white, it is rare that their whiteness is part of the character description (unless a stereotypical background is deemed relevant to the play, i.e. a fiery, voluble Irish character). Just as a character in an American play is assumed to be of United States citizenship if not otherwise specified, it is assumed that a character without an ethnic designation is white.

exist without negating any of the assumptions that support their identity as a people.

Colorblindness is not the rule in Hawai'i, nor is it in Hawai'i's theater.¹⁰⁷ In many instances, characters in the plays clearly identify others by race. Sometimes this identification goes hand-in-hand with racial slurs. *Kāmau* contains some emphatic and heated epithets: "Fuck you, Jap (15)," "she's just one fuckin' haole bitch (26)," and "You stupid kanaka" (56). In the first instance, the "Jap" is the boys' Local Japanese teacher, Mrs. Yamamoto, and Michael is frustrated by her inability to reach him and his inability to understand why he needs to learn what she's teaching. The "fuckin' haole bitch" is uttered by Alika's cousin George when his haole girlfriend refuses to get an abortion. And Alika's haole boss labels him a "stupid kanaka" when Alika wants to quit his tour company job, accusing his boss of not caring about Hawaiians.

Racially stamped labels are also delivered in anger in other Hawai'i plays. Korean characters on a Hawai'i plantation in *Ricepaper Airplane* condemn the "Japanese dogs (5);" they are referring to Japanese plantation workers out on strike in 1928. The Korean resentment towards the Local Japanese is a consequence of the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula, which the Korean immigrants of the time would have experienced first-hand. The Korean workers are also negatively racialized. In one of the strike-breaker scenes, Sung Wha is called "friggin' yellow bastard (6)" by the Portuguese luna Souza, who later isolates him ethnically with

¹⁰⁷ I refer here to the plays that originate in Hawai'i about Hawai'i. Plays from outside this canon are cast in a way that seems to correspond with the colorblind casting sometimes advocated on the mainland. This is especially obvious in local productions of popular American musicals, where the sisters in *Little Women* or the orphans of *Oliver!* may be of different ethnicities.

“You friggin’ dumb yobo (18).”¹⁰⁸ Sung Wha leaves no doubt of what he thinks of the owners when he calls them “dose sonavabitch haole capitalists” (7) and “Dese damn haole plantation owners! (15)” Unlike the other epithets, however, where there is no logical relationship between expletive and ethnicity, there is some historical correlation when “haole” is paired with “capitalist” and “plantation owners.” It is questionable whether Sung Wha is merely following the Hawai‘i practice of specifying ethnicity when referring to another person, or whether he is openly identifying the haole population with economic and political villainy.

Sung Wha himself uses “yobo,” although in a non-derogatory sense, however, when he tries to explain his basic philosophy of power to his Local Korean nephew: “No mattah if one Korean ruling Korea, or one Japanee, or one haole, or one Filipino. What mattah is da buggah is ruling. You see? No...you no see. Ho! You real hardhead yobo” (23). Here, with “yobo,” he is simply affirming his nephew as Korean. In this case, the reference to race is simple identification, as in “that good-looking Filipino boy” from *Folks You Meet in Longs* (14).

“Yobo” is used in yet another context late in *Ricepaper Airplane*.

EDDIE: I wen stand up fo’ you. So no make me look like one old, good-fo’-
nothin’ damn fool, Sung Wha.

UNCLE: You sonavabitch old kanaka.¹⁰⁹

EDDIE: Eh, no call me dat if you know whas good fo’ you. You dirty yobo you,
I kick you in yo’ ‘ōkole.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ A “yobo” is “a Korean term of endearment; also means “Korean person” in Local slang (Kwon 135).
¹⁰⁹ kanaka. 1. nvs. Human being, man, person...mankind...Hawaiian (Pukui 127). In this case, Uncle is referring to Eddie as a Hawaiian man.

[Stern faces, turning to old-time smiles. Then laughter]

EDDIE: So, you sonavabitch yobo, whas yo' an'sah befo' I break yo' 'ōkole?

(50)

In this scene, Uncle is an old man, and Eddie a Hawaiian man he has known for years. Their disagreement dissolves with the epithets, and they reconcile their differences. “Kanaka” and “yobo” are both used in anger, at first. Then, with the realization of the ridiculousness of the situation, the two men find their old friendship again. Eddie again calls Uncle a “yobo,” but this time, the term is an affectionate one, as is the “sonavabitch” that modifies it.

On the other hand, when a character in *Who the Fil-Am I* casually uses “Stupid fucking haole” and “dumb fuckin’ popolo” to make a point about haole and Black military men, respectively, in Local clubs, the expletives are deliberately coupled with the ethnicities in an expression of resentment. Similarly, in the same play, Tomas calls his cousin and friend “stupid Amerikanos” when they first land in the Philippines (10, 12). Here, however, as they are Filipinos from the United States, he has categorized the other men as *American* rather than racialized them (and, in the process, racialized Filipinos *in* the Philippines).

How Hawaiians are raced in Hawai‘i plays allows as much diversity and complexity as, again, an all-white cast of an American play. In *Ola Nā Iwi*, Hawai‘i’s racially identified groups are presented as nuanced and varied rather than completely homogenous. Two Native Hawaiian women are at odds with each other over the disposition and political utility of a set of human bones. A third Hawaiian

¹¹⁰ ‘ōkole. n. 1. anus, buttocks (less polite than *lemu*) (Pukui 282).

woman, this one a nineteenth century member of a chiefly line, possesses cultural knowledge that the modern characters do not have and shares it selectively with a young Hawaiian woman and a German man. Two other characters, both of partial Samoan ancestry, have a great deal in common but differ in their belief in the efficacy of cultural practices. All these characters challenge one-dimensional portrayals by insisting upon presenting complexity and ambiguity in their opinions and actions.

In *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, Kneubuhl presents an uncommon reversal of a Western viewpoint: the Hawaiian characters, also female, are presented as members of a complex society with a long established history of ingrained cultural and religious practices. These Hawaiian women are not relegated to being caricatures or to being seen solely through the lens of an outsider's focus. They have agency, they can make choices about their lives, and their observations and comments regarding the foreigners are given equal weight with those of the haole westerners.

Another Hawaiian play, Kimo Armitage's *Ola Ka Lau*, presents a family that disagrees on fundamental cultural issues. They are a group of individuals, with their own opinions and varying attitudes towards cultural practice, ranging from the earthy and practical to the skeptical and cynical. They are presented as a Hawaiian family, although it is clear that there are different ethnicities represented in the group. The characters in *Ola Ka Lau* accept and practice an ancient Hawaiian tradition of medicine. This play, however, references a genuine, living practice of healing, in contrast to Lee Cataluna's imaginary one of dolphin healing as a cynical

money-maker. Tūtū, a middle-aged woman, is a respected practitioner of Hawaiian herbal healing arts. Most of the other members of the family accept this casually. Healing is treated as an everyday event: going into the garden for healing herbs is as mundane as reaching into the bathroom cabinet for a bandage, and the references to healing are, at least in one conversation, as casual as the discussion of one man's overeating. The continuity and immediacy that Tūtū's modern healing implies racialize the family in a way that reflects indigenous knowledge that is not necessarily accessible or perhaps even of interest to outsiders. Certainly it is not for sale, nor is it freely dispersed.

MOM. You know Tūtū, at my work there was this lady who said I wasn't using the plants correctly. She even looked it up in some book.

TŪTŪ. Tsā! People who think they can learn everything from books test us? I have 'ike. Why would I give all what I know to a Haole [sic] so he can put it in a book and tell everyone? Especially secrets – like potent herbs? Why would I tell him how to kill me? (43)

In an earlier scene, the issue of sharing knowledge is raised in the context of the traditional and correct manner of transmission. Tūtū speaks to Janelle, the one who should be learning from her: "But who's the one with the gift, 'Alohilani? Who's the one that is ignoring the calling? Who's the senior line? You tell me, 'Alohilani. Who's the one pretending not to hear anything . . . not following her na'au?" (19).¹¹¹ While not stated explicitly, it would be understood by a Local/Hawaiian audience

¹¹¹ For Meyer, na'au is "the place where intelligence thrives" (Ho'oulu 9).

that Tūtū is talking about a specifically Hawaiian method of handing down knowledge.

A parallel is offered when Mom talks about her grandparents owning a manapua store in Chinatown. “Year after year, making manapua to give their sons a chance. Then the worst thing is both my dad and my uncle don’t know how to make manapua. In one generation it had been lost . . .” Tūtū’s reply is succinct: “As why hard when the younger generation no respect tradition” (23).

VI. How Can You Tell When You Maybe Cannot Tell?

The plays that are overtly Hawaiian or Filipino or Korean or Japanese – that is, the plays whose themes are dependent upon their specific ethnic and racial foundations – are explicitly racialized, as are those plays which examine the processes and consequences of ethnic difference and discord. There are instances, however, in Hawai‘i plays, when characters are not specifically labeled as to race or ethnicity. At such times, the audience or reader is required to infer the ethnicity of the characters, and to decide for themselves whether such a distinction matters to a comprehension and appreciation of the play.

In most of the Hawaiian plays, those that pertain directly to issues that concern Native Hawaiians, characters are overtly racialized as Hawaiian. A non-Hawaiian will comment on physical characteristics of Hawaiians, as in the beginning of *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu* when the two haole missionary women first encounter Hawaiian men and women. Or a Hawaiian character will self-identify, as Janelle does in *Ola Ka Lau* when she tells her cousin that they “need you for our

Hawaiian nation . . . We need to find a pretty Hawaiian girl for you” (10). And in *Ola Nā Iwi*, a couple argues about the disposition of Hawaiian human remains.

ERIK. . . . I’m trying to understand, but I just don’t.

KAWEHI. Maybe you can’t because –

ERIK. Because? Because? Go ahead and say it. Because I’m not Hawaiian?

(177)

Alika voices the same sentiment in *Kāmau* when he tells his cousin’s widow, “Lisa, you’re a haole, you don’t unnerstan” (58).

Both *Obake* and *Ricepaper Airplane* unequivocally racialize their characters; ethnicity is what has shaped their lives. Their ethnic designations historicize their experience in Hawai‘i as early twentieth century immigrants and shape the parameters of the stories. The offspring of immigrants in *Who the Fil-Am I?* and *David Carradine Not Chinese* explore what their ethnicity means to them after their families have lived several generations in Hawai‘i. In these plays, regardless of what other issues confront them, ethnicity is always in the forefront for these characters.

This straightforward and explicit labeling by ethnicity allows for a relatively uncomplicated identification of characters. But when examining other play scripts’ dialogue, it is clear that there is not always as direct a categorization. For instance, *Kupua* has stage directions that are explicit about its traditional Hawaiian source material and locating the play in space and time. However, starting from the character list, the words “Hawaiian” and “Hawai‘i” never appear. What do appear are Hawaiian character names, Hawaiian language included in character descriptions, and Hawaiian Creole English (HCE or Pidgin) in casual usage. One of

the first clues that this is a Hawai'i play is in the predominantly standard English stage directions of "Ka 'Enuhe," scene two: "His personality is similar to a modern moke" (4). Knowing that a moke is a "Tough local man" (Sakoda, Siegel 114) is necessary if one is to understand, cast, or play the character. The dialogue is entirely HCE, as is the dialogue of "Ka Puhi a me ka Loli." Here, the cultural identity markers are even more overt, as playwright Baker indicates that Kapuhi and Kaloli are to dance a hula at the beginning of the play. Baker also includes the Hawaiian language chant that is to be performed. While this play's stage directions are in standard English, all the dialogue is in HCE and Hawaiian. Deducing from the language used and the activities of the characters (fishing, repairing a fishing net, sleeping on a mat, wearing traditional Hawaiian clothing, and cooking food in an imu, or underground oven), the Local and Hawaiian audience will immediately understand that this is a Hawaiian play.

In contrast, characters in Lee Cataluna's *Folks You Meet In Longs* are rarely explicitly racialized. The names are an amalgamation of every ethnicity in the islands: Nadine Tam Sing, Curt Lum, Granpa Joji, Marlene Kahikina, John Tafua, Bill Thompson, Ginny Dias, and Harvey Carvalho. The only monologue that deals specifically with race is called "Josephine Lei Peralta – Waiting to Catch Bus." In it a seventy-three year old woman complains about being expected to be everyone's spiritual leader.

JOSEPHINE LEI PERALTA. Your cousin came my house last week and told me, "Grandma, I like do this but I think maybe so I should do that. What would da old Hawaiians do?" I told him, "Da fuck I know!" Yeah, I old and

yeah, I Hawaiian, but when I was growing up, I neva work taro patch. I worked pineapple cannery. But you don't understand, yeah? Old is old to you. Old is wise. I tell you, good you get respect for your elders and all that, but no make me one fucking leader of your tribe. (130-1)

The identification of Hawaiian characters is less clear in Cataluna's *Super Secret Squad*. The character list offers only two names that are Hawaiian: Liko and Kaleo. The other names – Togo, Duck, Wanga, and Boy – are ethnically ambiguous. In the first scene of the play, however, Wanga tells the audience the characters' full names, thereby providing clues as to their ethnicity. Togo is Vance Toguchi (Japanese?), Liko is Hoalike Padilla (could be part Hawaiian, part Portuguese), Duck is Duck Kaneakua (Hawaiian), Boy is Boy Ka'ilipoini (Hawaiian), and Wanga is Curtis Wang (Chinese?) (4). Later in the scene, Duck tells Wanga about the vast conspiracy of the "Wendalls" of the world, saying "That's why your grandmother can't get her homelands, Boy." He's referring to Hawaiian Homelands land that is to be distributed to Native Hawaiians but in reality has a long list of people awaiting their allocation. So Boy's Hawaiian ethnicity is confirmed. Wanga, whose name implies that he might be Chinese, has a conversation with Liko in the second scene in which Liko teases him about his sexual prowess.

WANGA. I so totally don't deserve the reputation.

LIKO. Culturally speaking, the Hawaiians thought it was very cool.

WANGA. Not this Hawaiian.

In this brief digression, Wanga is casually revealed as being Hawaiian – names in Hawai'i plays are not always certain indicators of race.

I would suggest that, when ethnicity or race is not explicit in Hawai'i plays, that it is because the play is not about lives whose concerns are necessarily dictated solely by the color of their skins. That, given their positioning as part of the dominant culture – Local – sometimes characters may be preoccupied with issues more critical than defining themselves against an oppressive majority.

The themes in *Heads by Harry*, an adaptation of Lois Ann Yamanaka's novel by Keith K. Kashiwada and John H.Y. Wat, include: father-daughter relationships, coming-of-age, and sexual orientation and behavior. Only rarely is ethnicity brought up. It is used as a fond descriptor, as when Mr. Santos teases his wife:

MR. SANTOS. Come here, my babe. My little Chineese babe. [Mei Ling sits on his lap]

HARRY O. Yeah, the little Pa-ke babe with the Portagee mouth. [chuckles] (7)

Toni, the protagonist, is racialized matter-of-factly when she's urged to apply for a job: "Mr. Harper said Toni get good chance if she apply. 'Cause it's big-time federal regulations to hire minorities. And Toni's minority, first 'cause she one girl, and second, 'cause you guys Japanee. So what, Toni?" (50). Toni also talks about her family's haole friend's ethnicity casually: "Billy was part of the family, the kind of haole that wasn't a condescending mainland haole. He was a local haole who took no offense to the word, was easy, and laid-back with his body" (29).

Racial epithets are also used in anger in *Heads by Harry*. A high school girl believes her boyfriend has been having sex with another girl and blasts out: "Was just you and him up there the day I came, right? You ungrateful little Japanese slut. I going kick your ass" (26). Lynette Vasconcellos is furious and uses the ethnic

designation. Does that qualify as an ethnic slur? Probably. Does it mean that, in so doing, Lynette has revealed what she thinks about all Local Japanese or that she blames Toni's actions on her ethnicity? That, I doubt. A logical question might be: Are racial or ethnic references in Hawai'i plays symptomatic of racism?

It may be that, for Hawai'i plays, racism is not always the overt or even latent motivation for the racialization of characters within the contexts of the plays. In these works, it is not racist to simply name someone's ethnic background. Granted, the example of the haole boss in *Kāmau* calling his Hawaiian employee a "stupid kanaka" (56), as noted before, may indeed reveal an underlying prejudice. This estimation is certainly influenced by a prior knowledge of historical attitudes held by haole towards Hawaiians – I believe that a fair percentage of a Hawai'i audience would assume the same. However, Hawaiians are not the only ones so singled out.

How one interprets racial language in Hawai'i plays might be contextualized within an analysis of how the various characters themselves react to the epithets. Certainly the Korean plantation employees in *Ricepaper Airplane* react negatively to the luna's racial slurs; they are part of what prompt Sung Wha's protest, though the luna's physical violence is also key to Sung Wha's equally violent response. Does Lynette's reference to "Japanese slut" prompt an equally racialized retort? No, the heated discussion regarding who gets credit for a science project as well as who has the right to sleep with whom continues – on those topics. And even though in *Kāmau*, Lisa is haole and perhaps does not understand everything Alika is enduring, they continue to engage with each other.

ALIKA. You don't have a history, you ran away from yours. Besides, your family hasn't been on their land for generations.

LISA. No. And I don't know who anybody past my grandparents were. And even though I never met your kūpuna, I loved them through the stories George told me. But I'm haole – and so is my daughter. . . Alika, you think your pain is special, it's not. You think your history's the ugliest – it's not! It's your love, it's your aloha that's special! That's why the world keeps coming in on you! (58)

These examples are not cited to say that racialization in Hawai'i plays is never racist – that would be a vast overstatement. But, given the contexts, I suspect that racial epithets may sometimes be slurs, sometimes identification, and sometimes both. And it is important to know that there is a difference.

VII. When the Lines are Drawn, and Where.

When is race mentioned? When is it assumed to be part of the conversation although not stated? Certainly race is in the picture when Native Hawaiian issues and concerns are under discussion. And the oppositional groups are not just Hawaiian and haole; as *Kāmau* hints, there is an adversarial relationship between Hawaiians and Japanese and, by extension, descendents of other immigrant groups.

As Okamura points out, the economic and social stratification of Hawai'i's society is influenced and derived primarily from the performance of ethnicity in the islands (1). His analysis of occupational status and educational attainment by ethnicity placed Chinese and Whites at the upper status levels, with Filipinos, Native Hawaiians, and Samoans at the bottom. The same three groups were at the bottom

when educational levels were compared. That race matters in terms of economics and education is borne out in the plays with, again, *Kāmau* as an example. In that play, the Native Hawaiian characters are academic under-achievers from elementary school days, nor do they hold high status jobs as adults. In the context of a traditional indigenous lifestyle, these may not be detrimental. However, situated as the characters are in a modern world, these conditions have become disadvantages.

If race and racialization are central themes in Hawaiian plays, are they as pivotal in Hawai'i plays that are not about Native Hawaiians? And what about plays whose characters are Native Hawaiian, but whose themes are not, e.g., *The Super Secret Squad*? Or other works by Lee Cataluna? In these cases, I would suggest that these are instances when the Native Hawaiian is included in the Local. Several characters in *The Super Secret Squad* are casually identified as Native Hawaiian, but their race is not their *raison d'être*. The characters are differentiated as Hawaiian, but not foregrounded as such; other ethnicities are also represented and, in any case, the play itself is not necessarily concerned about race. The plays acknowledge the indigenous as a matter of fact without needing to BE about the indigenous.

If the Local may sometimes include Native Hawaiians, then how is the Local racialized? For *Aloha Friday*, the Local is raced in opposition to haole, especially mainland haole. This is also true in *Massie/Kahahawai*, where clear lines are drawn between Local (people of color, specifically those of Hawaiian families and those whose forebears immigrated during the plantation years) and haole (mainland *and* local haole).

In the plays cited in this chapter, lines are drawn in terms of ethnicity, whether between Hawaiians and everyone else, or between Locals and outsiders. A question underlying partitioning of community is the one that asks who, precisely, belongs in Hawai'i. Certainly Native Hawaiians, as the indigenous people of the islands, are the only ones who may call Hawai'i "home." But what of the claims of others? Do Locals belong or not belong in Hawai'i? These questions are part of the underlying ethnic tension and unspoken hierarchy that Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, among others, have pointed as endemic in contemporary Hawai'i society. How Hawai'i's theater addresses the issue of who actually might belong in Hawai'i will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – (Do) I Belong Here?

"I'm staying because Hawai'i is our home. We belong here, not on da Mainland. The Fukuda family has been in Hawai'i a hundred years." June in Aloha Las Vegas (180).

"Tūtū Man tol' me ouwa family been here fo' generations, we wen take care deese fish from da time of La'amaikahiki." Michael in Kāmau (50).

I. Introduction

In Chapter Three's analysis, ethnic partitioning was observed when, for example, issues of land and political power arose, when Native Hawaiian rights were asserted, and when whiteness was posed in opposition to everything else. This chapter looks at how Hawai'i's playwrights – Hawaiian and Local – stake a claim to Hawai'i as home. In the most literal interpretation, Native Hawaiians, or those people whose ancestors lived in the archipelago before European contact, are the only ones who truly belong here. This is a regional stance, one that claims privilege by virtue of birth and a long-standing (longest-standing?) physical and spiritual connection to place.

The question is whether descendants of Asian immigrants may characterize themselves as belonging in Hawai'i. I address it primarily because of the intersection of two circumstances: 1) that Asian American theater has subsumed Hawaiian and Local theater as part of itself without a critical consideration of whether the different genres' foundational narratives are entirely congruent; and 2) how Asian American Studies has, relatively recently, positioned itself in colonial settler studies, specifically regarding the history of Asian immigration to Hawai'i. The first instance

has been referred to in previous chapters. In the second case, an inflexible polarity is established that places Native Hawaiians against all others on opposite ends of a political spectrum. It also appears to reject the possibility of any alliance or coalition building on the part of the Local with Native Hawaiians, representing all Local initiative as collaborative with the haole oligarchy and destructive to the indigenous population.

It is here that Rustom Barucha's use of the intracultural is again useful as it points up lines of demarcation that are sometimes ignored in other contexts. In refuting Patrice Pavis' statement that a "single nation" may be examined in order to analyze its various cultures, Barucha counters that "While it is convenient to focus on the site of a 'single nation' to explore the intracultural dynamics of the cultures existing within its boundaries, the singularity of the nation cannot be so readily assumed" (Politics of Cultural Practice 62). Consolidating the theatrical literature of Hawai'i with that of Asian America on the basis of membership in the United States is a case in point: the action assumes similarities and singleness of purpose amongst all Americans of Asian descent, assumptions that are unexamined and therefore susceptible to imprecision at best and cultural effacement at worst.

I believe that the intracultural approach may allow for the most comprehensive and fair scrutiny of the notion of belonging as expressed, overtly and obliquely, in Hawai'i's theater. The "intra" allows for discrete entities that need not merge into the "multi" as well as recognizing the contradictions that may arise when the interests of those entities conflict. The question of who belongs in Hawai'i is fraught with such contradictions and, although such complexities may not be

explicit in the plays, they are nevertheless inherent in the bodies and circumstances they represent. In previous chapters, I have examined plays in terms of language, history, and race. Plays have been categorized as Local and Hawaiian, with some of the former participating in the Asian American. In addressing the question of what the plays say about who belongs in Hawai'i, I use the same categories. In the context of belonging, just as in earlier chapters, considerations other than the theatrical come into play.

Barucha's intracultural theorizing involves different groups that are historically and culturally situated as indigenous; all are native to the subcontinent of India, and they all have ties to the land as what Canada terms "first nations." If Hawai'i were a multicultural society of different ethnicities, all of whom were indigenous to the location, then all would be on an equal footing. However, this is not the case. Like Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, Hawai'i has an indigenous population that has been subjected to colonization by outside populations. In Hawai'i's case, the economic and political domination by white planters of the Hawaiian nation culminated in an illegal overthrow, resulting in a permanently colonized state.

In this particular discussion, there are three terms in play: "indigenous," which includes only those considered native to the land; "settler," meaning all the peoples who immigrate from a home country to another with the intention of permanent residence; and "colonialist," a term that applies to the possession by foreign entities, for their own benefit, of land and resources formerly owned and controlled by indigenous people.

In Hawai'i, the typical face of the colonist has historically been white. This trope appears in histories that detail the actions of people including Captain James Cook, Congregational missionaries, sugar planters, and the Committee for Public Safety that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893. As Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, Noenoe Silva, and others have written, Hawai'i, given the illegality of the overthrow, remains to this day a colony of the United States.

A relatively recent interpretation of settler colonialism complicates the simple polarity of haole versus people of color. In this scenario, the settler colonial population comprises every individual and group that is not Hawaiian, whether or not those non-Hawaiian individuals and groups support Hawaiian self-determination. The perspective is incompatible with the conventional image of Hawai'i as the "multicultural paradise." Not only are the natives restless, they also stand alone as the sole group with a claim to the islands as home. They are the only ones who belong.

In the settler colonial context, Asians in Hawai'i – that is, primarily the descendents of the Asian workers imported to work sugar and pineapple by haole plantation owners – are clearly settlers. They are indigenous to another land and have come to Hawai'i with the intent to stay. According to what is currently designated Asian settler colonialism, these residents of Hawai'i have no claim to belonging in the islands. This is not only because the indigenous people are the only ones with such a claim, but also because Asian immigrants and their descendents have participated in the political and economic structures that maintain the colonial edifice that currently controls Hawai'i. They are overwhelmingly represented (in

comparison with Native Hawaiians, at least) in the state legislature and public school system, In this way, they are complicit in the oppression of the Hawaiian people (Fujikane, Introduction 12). The incident in *Kāmau* cited before, in which a modern Hawaiian schoolboy, frustrated with a teaching system that seems to have no relevance to him, tells his Japanese elementary teacher, “Fuck you, Jap” (15) is entirely congruent with this reality. This reference may be read as an indictment of local Japanese prominence in the state department of education, both as teachers and administrators, from which positions they support the United States political apparatus that continues to colonize Hawai‘i.

In the previous paragraph, I deliberately refrained from referring to Hawai‘i residents of Asian descent – the Asian settlers – as Local. If the term is not used, the demarcation between indigenous and settler is simply and clearly drawn. Indigenous and settler identities in New Zealand and Australia appear to be delimited in this fashion. In those countries, there is no group corresponding to Hawai‘i’s Local; Asian immigration to these two countries is comparatively recent (at least, more recent than that to Hawai‘i). New immigrants, whether settler or sojourner and regardless of their “settler” nation, have a homeland to which they look, and identities that were not initialized, as it were, in the new country. And being in the numerical minority, as is the case with Asian residents of both the above nations as well as the United States as a whole, contributes to the defensiveness and isolation that are demonstrated in Asian American plays and literature.

However, as was pointed out in the introduction, Hawai'i's demographics and history have contributed to a very different classification – the Local. And from this Local population has emerged an identifiable literature comprising poetry, fiction, essays, and other forms of creative writing, including theatrical works. This literature has been criticized for an assumption of belonging in Hawai'i that is based upon a belief in roots: a combination of geography and genealogy. Bamboo Ridge, a small Hawai'i publishing house that supports and promotes Local and Hawai'i literature has also been censured for an emphasis on literature written by Asians in Hawai'i, and for essentially effacing the existence of Native Hawaiians by not publishing their work.¹¹² For this particular population – the Local – belonging is predicated upon several generations living in Hawai'i, and often upon a family history of plantation employment. Criticism of this appraisal maintains that this group is “trying to stake a settler claim by distancing a ‘Local Nation’ of Asians in Hawai'i from Asian Americans on the U.S. continent as well as from whites in the colony of Hawai'i” (Fujikane 29).

This thesis is clearly relevant to how I have structured this study of modern theater in Hawai'i. In my analyses of plays, I have identified Local and Asian American plays, as well as those that are Hawaiian – the demarcation amongst the categories appears to be compatible with the limitations of Asian settler colonialism. The plays themselves, however, erode the settler colonialist thesis. As indicated in

¹¹² Here, I refer specifically to Bamboo Ridge Press. This small house publishes a literary journal and several books by single authors per year. The founders are all of Asian descent, and their claims to roots in Hawai'i have been severely criticized. See Rodney Morales' essay in *Multicultural Hawai'i: The Fabric of a Multiethnic Society*, and Eric Chock's 1996 comments in *Bamboo Ridge: A Hawai'i Writers Journal* (Volume 69).

the previous chapter, Native Hawaiians appear to have membership in both camps: Hawaiian and Local. That both descendants of Asian American immigrants to Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians may participate in the Local complicates its relationship to the thesis of Asian Settler Colonialism, as well as to Asian America. And the differences between the Local and Asian American plays stem at least partially from a sense of belonging in Hawai'i that is expressed by the Local playwrights writing from their own community.

The poems, short stories, and novels of Local literature have been intensely scrutinized and deconstructed. One would think, then, that Local plays would have been equally appraised. That has not happened. The interrogation so far has addressed several areas: the over-representation of Asian writers in Bamboo Ridge publications; the effacing of a Native Hawaiian presence, also in Bamboo Ridge; and racist/partisan representations of Asian settler groups less powerful (e.g., Filipinos and Samoans) or, at least, fewer in population than the more dominant groups. This last example is also related to criticism of Bamboo Ridge. Theater, however has escaped such inquiry, perhaps because theater and plays, by their ephemeral nature are comparatively less conspicuous than other forms of literature. And in Hawai'i, as well as the continental United States, plays are less frequently published than in, say, the United Kingdom. Perhaps Asian American and Hawai'i theater and film are simply not as prominent and therefore less significant than the same groups' literature. For whatever reason, theater calling itself Local has not come under the same attack as published literature.

While I obviously do not seek to draw such attack, this chapter seeks to determine who believes they may claim to belong in Hawai'i, given the social imaginary reflected in Hawai'i plays. I begin with Local plays.

II. A Local Sense of Home

A scholarly investigation of Asian American theater by Josephine Lee mentioned some little known Hawaiian plays as evidence that those works' conflicts and themes are "inextricably linked to the dynamics of race" (21). She went on to link them to Asian American plays written by playwrights on the continental United States, such as those by Frank Chin. According to Lee, these plays, whether written and set in Hawai'i or on the continental United States, all interrogate the question of performing race and ethnicity. That is their central realm of inquiry.

Two of the early Hawai'i plays are worth noting in terms of Lee's hypothesis that Hawai'i plays from the "first half of the twentieth century have affinities with mainland plays written after the Asian American movement, illustrating how Asian American identities might be both differently and similarly construed in particular times and places" (20). Her examples of Hawai'i works include Bessie Toshigawa's *Reunion* and Edward Sakamoto's *In the Alley*, each a one act play that takes place in Hawai'i very soon after World War II. Lee's brief analysis strongly implies that there is no cultural differentiation between Asian American theater and Local theater. But as I have implied before, Asian American theater is one of alterity that claims the right of belonging in the United States in the face of a dominant culture's denial. The Asian American sense of home is thus unsettled and fragile.

In order to examine how the Local theater of Hawai'i treats the question of home and belonging, I will begin where Lee does and then indicate where Hawai'i theater departs. The two Hawai'i plays cited above do explore their environments in terms of the central characters' specific race and relationship to those environments. As Lee later observes, "Asian American history is a history that knows itself as revisionist, and is explicitly in dialogue with already existing view of American history" (137). The revisionism is congruent with Karen Shimakawa's positioning of Asian American theater as challenging its abjection in direct dialogue with the dominant culture. The white American environments of Asian American theater, specific as to their historicity, are sometimes presented as adverse and inimical to development and maturation. Although the two Hawai'i plays take place in Honolulu, *In the Alley* especially presents characters in opposition to a white dominant culture.

In Asian American theater, Velina Hasu Houston's *Tea* is typical of first generation depictions: a group of Japanese women, all married to American GIs after World War II, end up living near a small military base in Kansas. It's a fish-out-of-water story, with the women bewildered both by the men they love and their offspring who are more American than Japanese. Shimakawa's analysis of this play considers the women "in relation to each *other* rather than to *dominant culture*, critically miming them in order to consider *how* those 'types' develop within a cultural context" (*Abjection* 105). Her investigation gives prominence to the development of these Japanese characters as they struggle to enable each other's survival. While the focus of the play is upon these first generation Japanese

immigrant/settlers, their cultural context is both Japanese and American, and is therefore still sited in an Asian American context. I would suggest that this model holds true for any story of immigration wherein first generation individuals, whether settler or sojourner, must function within a foreign cultural modality

Of the Hawai'i plays in this study, several share some of the characteristics of this template. Edward Sakamoto's *Obake* recounts a ghost story that takes place on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Even though it takes place in Hawai'i, that the characters are all recent Japanese immigrants (they all seem to have left Japan as adults) places it squarely in the Asian American camp. Here are first generation settlers who yearn for the old country, have brought their customs and beliefs with them, and are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to a new life. They report experiencing racism from above – from the plantation management, possibly from the Hawaiian sheriff – and literally and figuratively inhabit an immigrant's nostalgia as they manage a subsistence survival in Hawai'i. Sakamoto's characters are first generation immigrants who, in the play, do not apparently speak any language but their own, and interact only with their own kind. It is as insular as *Tea*, which is not necessarily a negative construction – it can be advantageous to explore change and adaptation from within the process. But while the immigrant story fits within the Asian American modality of active nostalgia co-existing within a troubled present, the characters are not Asian American. That is, they do not consider the United States, or Hawai'i, their home.

If plays about settler communities in Hawai'i were to be set on a generational continuum, then adjacent to *Obake* would be *Rice Paper Airplane*. This work also

takes a first generation immigrant as its central character. However, the story expands the immigrant's sphere of experience, allowing Sung Wha to interact with Japanese, Filipinos, Portuguese, and Hawaiian characters. Where *Obake* presents its characters as insular to an extreme, alternatively mocking and fearing the more powerful figures of other ethnicities, *Rice Paper Airplane* allows its characters to discover common cause. In this play, the commonalities revolve around political and labor activism, whether in Hawai'i, Korea, or Manchuria.

And regardless of the country, the political and labor issues permit alliances that do not negate or obliterate an ethnic singularity. It is rare that an Asian American play will focus on more than one ethnicity at a time, but *Rice Paper Airplane* recognizes the lived experience of those various ethnicities upon which the various characters are based and allows them proximity. The first evidence of this occurs when Sung Wha allies himself with a Japanese teacher who is smuggling political literature into Manchuria even though most Koreans of the time despised their Japanese colonizers. Later, Sung Wha encounters Filipino plantation workers in Hawai'i and, towards the end of his life, is involved in a protest against the razing of an old Chinatown hotel in which he and his friends live. When his resolve wavers, a Hawaiian resident rebukes him.

EDDIE: But whas did, Sung Wha? What you call dis? You no call dis home? Eh,
dis is yo' home and my home too. No?

UNCLE: Yeah-yeah, dis my home, but you dunno what I mean.

EDDIE: Yeah, das right. I dunno what you mean. If dis yo' home, den why?

UNCLE: Den why what?

EDDIE: Den why all dis humbug? Why you not staying in wit' us? You know we put plenny years inside dis place. Yo' life, my life, everybody's life, is in da wood of dis building, you know what I mean? And all dis time we fightin' against dat damn friggin' Pākē fo' us stay here and now da boy say you like get out. Sung What, no leave us life dat. Dis is where yo' heart stay. Where my heart stay. Where everybody heart stay. You our spokesman.

With this passage, *Rice Paper Airplane* makes an unmistakable claim for the immigrant coming to belong in Hawai'i. While Eddie is speaking explicitly of the Chinatown structure when he refers to their lives being in the very wood of the building, the hotel signifies a modern Hawai'i constructed on the 'āina of the Kanaka Maoli to shelter both of them. Though neither gives up his individual identity, neither seems to espouse separatism. They may ally themselves for a cause as well as for friendship.

Further along the continuum are the plays *Who the Fil-Am I?* and *David Carradine Not Chinese*. Both plays deal with families of a single ethnicity and primarily with members of the second generation: the grown and almost-grown offspring of immigrants to Hawai'i from the Philippines and China, respectively. In one respect, at least, these characters are classically Asian American: in their search for an identity that embraces both their immigrant heritage and their understanding that they are developmentally different from their parents.

In the case of *David Carradine Not Chinese*, certain members of the Wat family are struggling against the strictures of a narrow definition of Chinese American. In

an interview, playwright Darrell Lum asked “How do local kids figure out their identity as Chinese Americans if TV’s depiction (of Chinese people are) only of laundrymen and workers? . . . The protagonist is never played by a Chinese person . . . He’s never the hero” (Ka Leo interview). So the three Chinese brothers (two fewer than the classic Chinese story, which they mock), explore both Chinese and American cultural referents to determine which, if any, they may truly embrace. Although the play is set in Honolulu, oddly, there’s never any real question of whether or not this family is at home in Hawai‘i. It is almost as though their belonging is assumed and so assured as to be invisible. For this play’s characters, it is their cultural participation as Americans that is tenuous.

The Local markers are there: for one, the characters, especially the three older men, speak Pidgin.¹¹³ The sons of one of the men speak Pidgin, but a lighter version than their father and uncles, so regardless of various colloquial expressions – “Kapu the TV!” (22) and “Nuff awready!” – their speech is closest to Standard English. And since the identity concerns include one character’s ongoing fascination with cowboys and Westerns, various television shows from the 1950s to the 1980s (*Kung Fu*, *The Lawrence Welk Show*, *Roy Rogers and Dale Evans*, *Bonanza*, *Sesame Street*, and *Hawaii Five-O*) are included in the role-playing. Each of the Local Chinese characters play others, including such roles as Lawrence Welk and David Carradine. Accordingly, all the family members code-switch between Pidgin, Standard English, and imitations of Lawrence Welk and the Three Stooges with ease.

¹¹³ I do not mean to say that Pidgin is a necessary marker of the Local; one can be Local without speaking Pidgin. It is, however, definitive when present and spoken by individuals born and raised in the islands.

Another Local marker is the play's primary setting. The family has a carport instead of a garage, and that the carport is furnished with folding chairs, coolers, a television set, and clothesline paint a picture of a Local home's outside extension where folks sit around, drink beer, and talk story. Here is where the men gather to drink and talk, where laundry is hung, and where children play alongside the "play" of their elders. The description of a "Middle-class tract home in Hawaii [sic] in the 70s" (3) calls to mind a one-story, single-wall construction home still seen in the islands today.

The Wat family is exploring their identity as Chinese in America, not as Chinese in Hawai'i, a distinction that might signal a certain comfort with some of their multiple identities. They are Americans with a clear desire to be considered as full participants, but they are also Local with no expressed or hidden discomfort with their place in Hawai'i. So while this play may concern characters of only one ethnicity, as Asian American plays often do, it also contains the Local assumption of belonging in Hawai'i, of Hawai'i as home.

Troy Apostol's *Who the Fil-Am I?*, as another play devoted primarily to second generation settlers in Hawai'i, is also about defining identity, but it takes a visit to the old country to clarify who these men are within the context of their diverse allegiances. Despite its Asian American title, this play more explicitly than *David Carradine* incorporates Hawai'i as home for its characters, at least in terms of direct references to Hawai'i. There is a voiced spiritual awareness and a sense of identification, both of which are directly connected to the islands.

This affinity is expressed primarily through one character, Roland. He is introduced as a surfer who finds being on and in the ocean a mystical experience.

ROLAND: Wave aftah wave, surfing all day, until I see da sunset sparkling ova da crystal cleah ocean. I tink dat stay da bes' part of da day, wen God shines his rays of light on me, saying he's always been right dea wit me da whole time. (6)

Roland also speaks exclusively in Pidgin, and for him, Hawai'i gives him his points of reference when he first visits the Philippines. "Looking out ovah da city, you could see dis brown Mauna Kea kine fog hanging ovah everyting . . ." (10). "I can see my neighbahs in da faces of da villigahs. And dis place, Sagada, reminds me of Moloka'i . . ." (22). A clan fight over water reminds him of Hawai'i and the fight to preserve farmers' water rights to Waiāhole Stream.¹¹⁴

While Roland is the one who is most closely tied to the islands, Malcom, the character who identifies most with African American hip hop culture, code-switches to Local when needed. He reveals himself as Local when in proximity to military personnel at Pipeline, a Honolulu club. Though he has adopted Black speech, he comments disparagingly on "some crew-cut havin' black or white dude" trying to pick up a Local girl. When she sees that he's neither a "Stupid fuckin' haole" or a "Dumb fuckin' popolo," he's assured of a partner (6). For Malcom, Jonathan Okamura's assessment of Local as a "relative category" (165) is on the mark. He is able to slip into being Local as into a comfortable, well-worn set of clothing – when it suits him. In the Philippines, there is a moment when Malcom draws on his

¹¹⁴ Roland refers to a long-standing dispute on O'ahu over water rights.

Hawai'i background to contextualize what he sees: rice terraces in the countryside remind him of lo'i¹¹⁵ in Hawai'i (22). Otherwise, his self-definition is an amalgam of Black and Filipino. During a heated argument with Roland, Malcom explodes. "You sound like a nigga can't be Filipino and do they own thing. What the fuck am I supposed to be, a goddam stereotype?" (24). Consistent with the trope of a second generation struggling to reconcile competing narratives, Malcom has compounded his "ethnicity" with a different, self-designated tradition – in his case, an affinity for African-American speech patterns and references. Underlying all this is his sense of being Local, although it surfaces only when it is advantageous for him or in unguarded moments. Does Malcom then assume he belongs to Hawai'i, that he is at home there? Regardless of rather calculated comments about "South Central," and other "hood" references, Malcom's Local reversion occurs when he marvels at new sights and experiences. Hawai'i is his frame of reference, and it might very well prove to be his home.

This assumption of belonging and home is much more apparent in Local plays such as Lee Cataluna's *Folks You Meet In Longs* and *Super Secret Squad*. Neither of these plays treat ethnicity with antagonism or partisanship, nor do they approach it with an activist agenda. As suggested before, Cataluna's characters may be labeled in an ethnic sense by their names. However, it is the Local community as a *mélange* of peoples that she clearly intends to represent. Naming a character "Cheryl Moana Marie Sakata" (29) implies both Hawaiian and Japanese influence, if not ancestry. However, once a character is named, her or his ethnicity is rarely at issue or even

¹¹⁵ Lo'i are irrigated farming terraces used for taro and rice (Pukui 209).

mentioned. Cataluna is mainly having fun with the characters, as well as establishing their Local credentials. Nadine Tam Sing, the Longs cashier who functions as occasional narrator, talks about the nice old man who brings flowers to the girls at the cash registers. Sometimes when the man doesn't have pīkake, he substitutes another flower and "He put the plumeria on toothpick," a very Local visual.¹¹⁶

NADINE: Come to find out, get one at every Longs. Every store get their own old man who bring flowers from his yard. Sometimes they still get the wife, but she real quiet or she don't leave the house. Mostly, the wife is gone already and they just get their yard. And us. (28)

In this simple monologue, Cataluna contemplates an invisible population of old men living quietly in lonely homes bringing flowers to put in the hair of the women who work at Longs. Then there's the aforementioned Cheryl Moana Marie Sakata who realizes one day that her life is an endless round of "Zippy's, Foodland, Longs" (29).¹¹⁷ In another monologue, Cataluna refers to the relatively large proportion of Local Japanese employed in education; here, Marcus L. Morikawa is an elementary school principal. In the same monologue, Ms. Kimata is a teacher, and Mrs. Ishikawa is a janitor (60). Cataluna knows her Local conventions.

Folks You Meet In Longs contains a host of references to familiar Hawai'i locations. But the allusions are not mere name-dropping. Places, people, foods, and local conventions are in the stories because they are all part of the characters' lived

¹¹⁶ The plumeria stem is relatively short, so inserting a toothpick into it helps it to stay in place when tucked behind the ear.

¹¹⁷ Zippy's is a locally-owned fast-food chain (although some Zippy's locations have sit-down dining, occasionally referred to as "Zippy's fine dining"); Foodland is a locally-owned chain of grocery stores; and Longs is a long-time chain of drugstores based in California but of sufficient long-standing in Hawai'i as to be considered Local. Since the publication of this play, Longs has been purchased by a nation-wide chain, CVS. It's still called Longs in Hawai'i.

experience. And because the characters are like us, or like our aunties or our uncles' cousin's best friend, the references feel inevitable rather than efforts to insert local color. When Tommy Pinto complains about having to go to every Longs on the island to get coffee filters so his mother can make kähili¹¹⁸ for his nephew's church play, a Local resident will instantly visualize the makeshift chickenwire oblong shapes stuffed with those coffee filters (20-1). Then there's Linda Hamamoto, the bank worker who goes to the McKinley Car Wash on Kapi'olani Boulevard to ogle the men who work there (41-2). This popular company's activities are visible from the street – one can see the male employees sloshing water and soap over waiting cars. And “Verna: Waipahu's Answer to Martha Stewart” gives advice on making over a garage to a “nice place for make party” (92-3). Like the Wats and their carport, the garage here (which I suspect is actually a carport) can be remodeled as a place of entertainment. Doreen and Dottie have a running feud over a Foxmoor Casuals dress (94-5), and Officer Wolverton Kahaunaele's official arrest report contains references to the Honolulu City and County, H-1, SHOPO, a woman tied up with manapua wrappers, and the fountain at Honolulu Hale (108-9).¹¹⁹

These characters are Local people who talk about quotidian matters, with all the minutiae of personal life – so deep-seated is Cataluna's understanding of what characterizes the “Local” that no character ever needs to spell out her Local status.

¹¹⁸ Kähili are large feather standards used to signify the presence of Hawaiian royalty (Pukui 112).

¹¹⁹ Foxmoor Casuals is a youth-oriented clothing store with a branch in Ala Moana Shopping Center; H-1 is the main freeway running along the south side of O'ahu; SHOPO is an acronym for State of Hawai'i Police Officers Union; manapua are steamed pork buns; and Honolulu Hale is Honolulu's city hall.

The assumptions that ground her characters in Hawai'i are unspoken, though transparent, especially to a Local audience.

This is also the case in her *Super Secret Squad*. The sense of belonging is expressed in the characters' active defense of what they believe important to Hawai'i (and within their admittedly limited capabilities). Their first exploit involves the Waikiki seaside statue of Duke Kahanamoku, a revered Hawaiian waterman who medaled for the United States in the Olympics. The statue currently faces the mountains. He has his arms spread wide in welcome, presumably to tourists visiting the beach. The problem, as the students in the play see it, is that the statue is facing the wrong way. Placing Duke Kahanamoku with his back to the sea effaces his history and life-long love of the water, thereby demoting him to the status of an anonymous ethnic avatar. The orientation also violates a cardinal safety rule: you don't turn your back on the ocean. His positioning is a blatant embodiment of touristic hospitality and an effacement of local knowledge, making him merely an emblem of an appropriated "Aloha Spirit." After the students correct this perceived wrong by turning the statue to face the ocean, a newspaper article reports:

LIKO: A crowd gathered in front of the statute when rumors started circulating that a smile had appeared upon the statue's face in response to the move. Said one woman, "He look happy now that he can spock¹²⁰ da ocean, As' how, das why. (12)

Local here goes deeper than simply belonging to the islands in a "born and raised" sense. These examples from *Super Secret Squad* take as given the "structural

¹²⁰ Spock means "see."

dimension of local identity.” That is, they originate from an ideology that is “based on the categorical opposition between groups considered local and those considered nonlocal, including haole, immigrants, the military, tourists, and foreign investors” (Okamura 165). Indeed, the goal of the first of their activities – turning the statue – is to “right the biggest wrong that had been done in Hawai‘i in our lifetime. I mean, the biggest wrong that could be fixed by five guys with duct tape, some damp gun powder and a clip board” (10).

In this play, Cataluna challenges the status quo of Hawai‘i affairs by taking on such Hawai‘i symbols of power and authority as tourism, ostentatious displays of wealth that infringe upon Local rights and customs¹²¹, artistic bloopers¹²², state politics¹²³, and in a perhaps their most public manifestation of Local sensibilities, take on the revered University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa football team. In this last case, which uses real-life events, it is not the fact of football itself or the players that is the point of contention. Rather it is the symbology expressed by the radical change in team uniform instituted by a new, highly regarded, and highly paid head football coach from the continental United States. The UH football team had for years been known as the Rainbow Warriors; the logo was a multi-colored arch of colors. The new coach renamed the team the Warriors, and replaced the rainbow on the green and white of the old uniforms (did he consider this too effeminate a presentation?)

¹²¹ See the example cited in the previous chapter, in which a wealthy Lanikai landowner from the continental United States claims more beach area than he is legally entitled to.

¹²² An enormous mural depicting a whale breaching near Diamond Head has the sun setting in the wrong direction. The Super Secret Squad correct this error.

¹²³ Here the Super Squad liberate food from the lavish spreads commonly available at the State Capitol on the legislature’s opening day and deliver their plunder to the Institute for Human Services, a Honolulu organization that aids homeless people.

with a masculine, jagged, stylized “H” on black and white uniforms.¹²⁴ The Super Secret Squad, towards the end of the play squatting in the athletic complex after having been evicted from the dormitory, retaliate by using heat/light-sensitive nail polish to paint rainbows on the new uniforms. The illicit rainbows reveal themselves as the players run onto the field at Aloha Stadium for a game.

TOGO: Run into the sun, you frickas. Run into the sun!

DUCK: Five, four, three, two, one –

ALL: RAINBOWS!

They start to chant along with the crowd.

ALL: Rain! Bows! Rain! Bows! Rain! Bows!¹²⁵

WANGA: Check it out! The fans are going nuts!

LIKO: The players are tripping out!

TOGO: The coaching staff looks pissed.

DUCK: I love us. (21)

In the above dialogue, the fans apparently approve of the uniform defacing – they are plausibly Locals recalling the old uniforms. The “tripping out” by the players could be either a positive or negative reaction: Local players might have grown up exposed to the institutional history surrounding the rainbow logo, whereas players from elsewhere would only know it by hearsay. As a Local symbol, then, it might have nostalgic value or indicate a firm connection to place (rainbows

¹²⁴ University of Hawai‘i men’s basketball, swimming and diving, and tennis teams have retained the name “Rainbow Warriors.” Men’s baseball is known simply as the “Rainbows.” And football, men’s golf, and men’s volleyball are now “Warriors.”

¹²⁵ This chant was usually performed by fans, with one side of the stadium yelling “Rain,” answered by the other side yelling “Bows.” While it is still in use for sports such as womens’ volleyball (the team is called the Rainbow Wāhine, or Rainbow Women), there is no “Warrior” analog to the Rain-Bow chant.

are often visible in the valley of Mānoa). Non-Local players (and Local ones, too) might, on the other hand, support the coach's practices and policies and so be dismayed by the vandalism. The coaching staff is presented as disapproving. While their ethnicity is not specified, nor their origins, it is possible that whether or not they are haole or Local, they identify with the then-coach, haole June Jones.

The Local allusions and unspoken assumptions have a strong connection not only to ethnic alliances but also to an awareness of class differences. Cataluna's monologues in *Longs* are voiced by working or middle class people. They are drugstore clerks, debt collectors, shop stewards, bank workers, car wash employees, educators, teenage toughs, convicted felons, police officers, office workers, and retirees. None of them appear to be wealthy or to work in moneyed professions. Most of them speak some degree of Pidgin, coupling that speech directly to their social stratum.

The correlation of Pidgin to working and middle class applies to other Local plays. Characters in *Aloha Friday*, also by Lee Cataluna, speak Standard English or degrees of Pidgin, the assignment of which appears to correspond with their socio-economic status. The three customer representatives tend to use Pidgin most often, but the program manager, who uses Standard English when recording public service announcements, code-switches to Pidgin when off the air.

Only two characters' educational background is specified. They are both described as Local, but Mahela speaks Standard English only, unlike Clayton, the cable installer, who comments on his educational background.

CLAYTON: . . . I went three months cable installers school before I got this job.
Was hard work, but my mother always told me education pays off.

MAHELA: That's why I went to Harvard.

CLAYTON: My father, he wasn't too happy with the choices I made in my life.
He wanted me to go into refrigeration. But you know, I had to follow my
dream. Juss' about broke my old man's heart. (14)

The station owner, the sales manager, and the mainland buyers all speak Standard English, consistent with their relatively high social and economic status.

Throughout the play, the audience is treated to video vignettes of some of the station's local programming. These shows are voiced completely in Pidgin, and it is made very clear that the hosts are not bourgeois characters. The first vignette is a promotional advertisement for "Shooting Goat with the Two Monizes." This is a show dedicated solely to goat shooting.

MILTON: . . . In this edition of Shooting Goat with the Two Monizes, us guys going be taking you to Hanakapiai, where we will shoot goat, clean gun and smoke meat. We'll visit with kupuna Uncle Choochie Nawai, who will reminisce about the good old days when he used to shoot goat and all kind endangered stuff you no can shoot anymore. Legally, I mean. Later, we going Koke'e, where we will look da scenery and shoot goat. And also a special segment: Shooting Goat with the Two Monizes goes on the road. We'll head out to the beautiful island of Molokai [sic] where we will, you guessed it, shoot goat. (19).

The next vignette belongs to Auntie Evangeline Pavao.

AUNTY: Okay. I ready now. Ay ke Jesus! What you mean you was already rolling? Ay meedersh, you going edit this part out later, no? Okay. You betta'. Aunty gotta look good for her public. Okay, I going start now. Gotta make my own theme song.

(Aunty starts to whistle a tune. She holds up a cardboard slate on which she has hand-written, in very curly script, Aunty Evangeline Pavao's cooking show: Use up the milk before he spoil. The next card says, Starring Aunty Evangeline Pavao. Produced by Uncle Wyclef Daddy Pavao. The third card says, Today's cooking lesson: Bugs in your flour is natural) (27)

Another locally produced show is mentioned but not seen. It is a “gripping real-life drama of Kauai [sic] Police Department’s weekly reality-based crime-fighting show Shoot first, go eat Hamura’s after” (8).¹²⁶

These mostly on-screen characters and the Pidgin-speakers onstage are played principally for laughs, but Cataluna’s correlation of their speech to their status substantiates what the Local is popularly considered to be: a category of working class people of color who call Hawai’i their home.

Aloha Las Vegas is also comedic, and it too reinforces the working class character of the Local. Wally Fukuda is a 65-year-old retired baker who has worked for someone else all his life. His friends and relatives are all working relatively low-level jobs; one exception, his friend Harry, has moved to Las Vegas to gamble professionally. Of all of them, it is June, Wally’s daughter, whose speech is closest to Standard English, and she is an elementary schoolteacher. Her brother Butch says of

¹²⁶ Hamura’s is a popular saimin (Japanese noodle) restaurant in Lihue, Kaua’i.

her, “You know June, eh, she get education so she tink she know all da answers” (169), revealing resentment stemming from June’s perceived bossiness. But it may also derive from her speech – with higher education has come a “higher” way of speech. June may strike her brother as being “high maka maka,” or stuck-up and snooty. However, in an emotional scene between father and daughter, June’s speech veers closer to Pidgin than at any other time during the play. She says “da Mainland” for “the Mainland,” and “What you mean?” for “What do you mean?” (180). While she has altered one Local marker of her heritage, thereby delineating the boundaries of her higher social stratum, June reverts to her first language, the tongue her family speaks, when stressed.

II. Native Hawaiian – Theatrical Perceptions of Belonging and Home

These Hawaiian plays offer a broad overview of Native Hawaiians and their culture in terms of: an element of its traditional philosophical structure (*Kupua*), moments of critical encounter (*The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu*), and the destructive consequences of colonization (*Ola Nā Iwi*, *Ola Ka Lau*, *Kāmau*). Regardless of their time period, all these works contain elements that identify them as Native Hawaiian literature, constituent pieces that emerge from an indigenous viewpoint. Another aspect, however, that identifies particularly *Kupua* and *Kāmau*, as well as *Ola Ka Lau*, as being specifically of modern Hawai’i is their use of Pidgin as a native language. This attribute, while indisputably *of* Hawai’i, is not *Hawaiian* according to some Asian Settler Colonialist literature, which specifically identifies Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), or Pidgin, as a language (with English) of the Asian settler colonizer.

Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui enlarges upon this distinction when she decouples Pidgin from the indigenous on the basis of HCE’s birth as a pidgin language facilitating communication amongst the different ethnicities of plantation laborers. Its evolution to a Creole, a language that has “a full range of functions, a complex grammar, and a community of native speakers” (Sakoda 2), has geographical variations and, probably attributable to its working class origins, a distinct aura of class awareness. Ho‘omanawanui points out quite correctly that “the Kanaka Maoli worldview, as espoused in our ‘ōlelo makuahine (mother tongue) and our cultural traditions, is based on a very different relationship to Hawai‘i than that of settlers who speak English or HCE” (117). Her main point is furthered in a quote from D. Māhealani Dudoit:

“So, as the local community here wishes to distinguish itself as culturally different from the non-local and from the continent, it is not involved in nation-building with all the political and identity issues which are brought into play. Thus the objectives and the stakes are worlds apart.” (quoted in Ho‘omanawanui 119)

Ho‘omanawanui goes on to state that Local literature (that written by Asian settlers) is considered “culturally based because it incorporates HCE, or an HCE-derived vernacular” (118).

That Pidgin is of plantation origin is not here in dispute, nor is it incorrect to state that its birth is linked to the colonization of Hawai‘i. It is also accurate to maintain that the traditions that shaped oral transmission of knowledge for generations of Native Hawaiians are at variance with Western literary conventions.

There are, however, several ways of considering the question of Pidgin use in Hawaiian literature. First, Pidgin may be employed on a daily, and plausibly, first language basis by Native Hawaiians. It is therefore possible for Pidgin to be a language owned by Native Hawaiians. This distinction differs from a claim that the use of Pidgin confers upon the non-Hawaiian user Native Hawaiian status. The first hypothesis acknowledges Native Hawaiian culture as discrete and autonomous, competent to pick and choose what it acquires as it adapts to change; Pidgin may *become* a Native Hawaiian language if used by Native Hawaiians. The second effaces the historicity of indigeneity by effectively superseding the indigenous place narrative with that of the current dominant culture, leaving Hawaiian history as a quaint, though irrelevant, cultural artifact. In other words, the term Hawaiian would incorporate anyone who now lives in Hawai'i in an irrevocable adulteration of the indigenous. It deploys the notion of postmodern hybridity, which says a thing becomes something other and entirely different as it alters itself in response to outside influences.

Certainly the Pidgin used in *Kupua*, *Kāmau*, and *Ola ka Lau* is presented as a native language for its speakers. Whether they are bi- or tri-lingual (Hawaiian, Pidgin, Standard English), they are fluent as they code-switch with ease.¹²⁷ In the two plays that comprise *Kupua*, the characters' language confirms playwright Baker's statement that "This is a Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) play" (3). While I

¹²⁷ Logically, Pidgin is not used in *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* since it takes place pre-plantations. However, Kneubuhl's *Ola Nā Iwi* Hawaiian characters do not use Pidgin either. I suggest that class distinctions are in play, with Kawehi, Mina, and Pua belonging to an educated class who are, in many cases here speaking in the presence of haole or foreign characters. In these situations, Pidgin may not be considered appropriate. That Kawehi and Pua do not speak Pidgin to each other, however, may be attributable to their status as women working in a certain professional milieu.

have noted this in Chapter Three when commenting on language usage, I cite it here to point out that it is coupled with the statement that follows it in the script: the source material is derived from mo'olelo handed down over generations. In this case, then, a Native Hawaiian playwright is adapting traditional teaching stories for the stage and using Pidgin exclusively to do so. One interpretation might be that the playwright is clearly a product of a colonized educational system as well as working within a Western tradition, thereby explaining her choice of language.¹²⁸ Or there might be no contradiction between her use of Pidgin, since, as a Native Hawaiian, she may take the prerogative of using any language she chooses to express Native Hawaiian precepts and beliefs.

In support of the second argument, I offer some thoughts from Native American advocates of literary nationalism who address the issue. Jace Weaver quotes W.H. New when he states “the politics is in the voice” (34). I take this to mean that political ideology may have validity regardless of which language is used to express it. He goes on.

Contrary to what some critics, whether Native or non-Native, may believe, nationalism or separatism and the use of Western forms or theories (depending, of course, on which ones) are not antithetical or contradictory. As Mohawk Robbie Robertson's *Virgil Caine* says, “Ya take what ya need and ya leave the rest.” To say otherwise is to once again attempt to trap the fly in amber, to set up a hierarchical distinction between “pure” and “impure” Native expression. (35)

¹²⁸ Baker is tri-lingual and has written plays in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

Native American and Pacific Islanders have claimed English as their own language. From the theatrical evidence at hand, I suggest that Hawaiian playwrights may consider both Pidgin and English to be viable Hawaiian languages.

Once the question of language ownership has been resolved, other components of Hawaiian plays may be investigated. First, there is a common theme linked with the notion of integration with a place. Closely following is that all the Hawaiian plays analyzed here share a common motivator: the desire to be, or for, pono. Pono has a great many meanings – its definition fills almost an entire column in Pukui’s Hawaiian Dictionary. Its use may encompass “goodness, uprightness, morality, moral qualities, correct or proper procedure, excellence, well-being, prosperity, welfare, benefit . . .,” and the list goes on (Pukui 340). A variation, ho’oponopono, carries the intention of “put to rights; to put in order or shape, correct, revise, adjust, amend, regulate . . .” (Pukui 341). All these definitions and many others apply to the plays and their characters. They also fall under the rubric of a very specific cultural context of knowledge, one that is unambiguously Native Hawaiian.

The two one-act plays in *Kupua* are based on Hawaiian teaching stories and focus upon correcting various kinds of imbalance within the family and, by extension, the community. Playwright Tammy Haili’ōpua Baker says in the program notes “there’s always a lesson embedded in the story, a deeper layer of the story to be understood – often depicting the socialization of our people.” The principles inculcated by the stories are distinctly Hawaiian. On the surface, they may seem to be quotidian, conventional values, ones that any culture might impart to its children.

On further investigation, however, these principles and their implementation have a connection to the survival of Hawai'i's indigenous people.

Hana pono, or right behavior, is at the heart of *Ka Puhi a me Ka Loli* (The Eel and the Sea Cucumber). The two young women, whose job it is to gather edible seafood and vegetation at the seashore at night, instead indulge in sex with their lovers. Not only do they neglect their kuleana, their responsibility, depriving their family of needed food, but they also lie to their father when he wonders why they return with empty baskets. They are not hewing to the principle of 'oia'i'o, or truthfulness.

Kumuhea, the lazy husband in *Ka 'Enuhe*, is actually the son of the god Ku, and is the 'aumakua¹²⁹ of the cutworm. The character's shapeshifting to a large caterpillar who gorges himself on crops needed for the family's survival and back to a sleepy, indolent man is adapted directly from a traditional Hawaiian story. The eel and sea cucumber shapeshifters who can turn into men are also specific to the Hawaiian pantheon. Like Kumuhea, they appear completely human and may have sexual relations with human female partners. Unlike the Christian deity, however, they may be vanquished by human ingenuity.

In each of these teaching stories, it is a parent who corrects a child's wrong behavior. This is consistent with the principle of mālama: "To take care of, tend, attend, care for, preserve, protect. . ." (Pukui 232). Here, parents protect and take care of their offspring when they perceive a menace their daughters are too young and inexperienced to comprehend. Kawai guides her daughter in her need to

¹²⁹ "Family or personal gods, deified ancestors who might assume the shape of sharks" or other animals (Pukui 32).

understand her husband's peculiar behavior. And Ka'upena knows very well that his daughters are in "deep water."

KA'UPENA: Ho my girls . . . growing up so fast. Pau swimming in the little tide pool. They ready for the big ocean, beyond the reef. Break all the rules. *shakes his head* They only think they ready for the big ocean. They don't even know what it's really like out there., when you start for go outside the reef. As how when you young, you don't know that the reef is there for protect us, and keep us in check. *pause* Pretty soon they going learn why get reef, and why we gotta respect that reef. (*Ka Puhi a me ka Loli* 16)

In *Ka 'Enuhe*, whenever Waipuna goes to her mother's home, she is always treated with ho'okipa: hospitality. Mother Kawai greets her, invites her in, and offers her food directly upon Waipuna's arrival each time she returns home for help. This is a distinctly Hawaiian practice and, while common to other cultures, of course, is nevertheless a widely understood practiced convention in Hawaiian culture.

In each of the stories, the parent is represented as na'auao: "Learned, enlightened, intelligent . . ." (Pukui 257). The two parents strive to share their knowledge with their children, both for their edification and protection. Sustenance – food – and the providing of such for the family is key in both stories. The daughters in *Ka Puhi a me Ka Loli* are to gather seafood while the father mends nets to catch fish. That they don't fulfill their obligation is a dereliction of duty and puts their family's continued well-being at risk. In *Ka 'Enuhe*, the shapeshifter husband devours sweet potato leaves in a garden. When he is caught, his thrashing destroys

the patch. Kawai admonishes her daughter when Waipuna feels sorry for Kumuhea's pain, "An look, he wen bus' up all the sweet potato patch. Not going have food for eat" (12). In a subsistence society, such destruction could be catastrophic.

In *Kāmau*, the Hawaiian characters occupy a very different environment from those in *Kupua*, but an intense connection to the physical environment persists. Both plays assume a relationship and interdependence with the land, the 'āina.¹³⁰ The Hawaiians in *Kāmau* are struggling to maintain their status as a distinct people in a milieu that respects them only for their material value, e.g. as an advertising brand marketing Hawai'i as a tourist destination. The first scene, in which tour guide Alike alternates addressing his tourist audience, the Filipino bus driver, and his deceased mother, places this Hawaiian man in the sterile confines of a tour bus barreling down the freeway, a prefiguring of his eventual removal from the land to containment in a city apartment.

The text offers instances of how the young Hawaiian men in the play maintained their relationships with the 'āina. In scenes depicting them as youths, they paddle a canoe to a fishing ground, voicing a paddling chant as they go. The chant refers to their heritage as a sea-going people.

Hoe aku i kou wa'a

Hoe, hoe

Nānā i ka Hōkūpa'a

Hahai i ka Hōkūle'a

Auwē! 'O Hawai'i kēia!

¹³⁰ This is consistent with claims made by Native Americans, First Nations in Canada, Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Aborigines in Australia, etc.

Paddle your canoe

Paddle, paddle

Look to the North Star

Follow the [star Arcturus]¹³¹

Oh! Here is Hawai'i! (18)¹³²

After getting to their fishing spot, they throw nets from the beach, one of the traditional Hawaiian ways of fishing. The characters continue to fish when they are grown men, hoping to make it their livelihood. As children, they exchange fish for nets. As young men, they use the insurance money awarded after Alika's mother dies to buy a fishing boat. Tradition is transmitted to the younger generation when Michael teaches his niece, Stevie, to "throw net." And earlier we've seen Michael tell his brother and cousin to hō'ihi, respect, the ocean and god when fishing. "Lika Boy, 'memba, you always chrow da firs' one back. Oddawise, ke Akua going be mad" (20).

In a traditional Hawaiian context, Michael the fisherman would be esteemed for his knowledge and skill – his ability would literally ensure his family's survival. He would also be respected as the keeper of the family ko'a, or shrine. This ko'a marked the bay that the family knew to mālama in order for all to prosper, fish included, and Michael's grandfather gave the kuleana¹³³ to him.

¹³¹ Pukui says that the Hōkūle'a is "A navigational star, probably Arcturus; a zenith star above Hawai'i. *Lit.*, clear (or happy) star" (76).

¹³² The translation is mine.

¹³³ Kuleana may translate to both privilege and responsibility, among other meanings (Pukui 179).

MICHAEL: He tol' me, I was da next keepa of dis' ko'a. He tol' me, "Nāu e mālama i kēia kai a me kēia 'āina, i ola ku'u 'ohana. Take care dis place¹³⁴ and my family goin' live." (50)

But the values and principles that sustained Hawaiians for generations are an uneasy fit in a colonized Hawai'i. Even Alika's mom, speaking to him from the grave, recognizes the perils of believing that the old ways are enough.

MOM: So you have your own net now? Good, now you can fish for money, Alika.

ALIKA: Whatchoo mean, Mom? We jus' got da fish.

MOM: And then you give the fish to Mister Lee and he gives you a net of your own. And then . . .

(Pause)

Oh, my boy, what's Mama gonna do? If I teach you to fish it won't feed you for a lifetime – We don't live in that world anymore. You need to know how to live in this world. (20)

Mom's warning is well-taken when the boys grow up and buy a boat, starting their own fishing business. While fishing for money may be realistic and feasible in a context that includes bank loans and families for which to provide, just knowing how to fish is not enough any more. The business fails, and the boat is lost. Alika points out his cousin's lack of modern business acumen.

¹³⁴ The "place" referred to is in the Hawaiian literally "this sea and this earth," "kēia kai a me kēia 'āina." Michael's abridgement to a singular "place" might suggest his understanding that Hawaiian husbandry included both land and sea.

ALIKA: You guys was da bes' fishermen aroun'.

...

But you neva know how fo' run one business. You everytime giving da fish away – yeah, you guys had plenny friends, but da bank, dey neva take fish. (42)

The alienation from traditional practices and the estrangement from the land that has hitherto sustained Native Hawaiians are key throughout the play, particularly in Alika's tour speeches. As noted before, his Historical Sights Tour, while visiting the 'Iolani Palace grounds, seem to focus on sites that reinforce a colonial perspective, one that places twentieth-century events and places related to the Territory and State on an equal footing with the earlier history of the monarchy and nation of Hawai'i. On the way to the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor, Alika points out, from the freeway, the Kamehameha Schools for Hawaiian children. Later, on a bus to Waikīkī, Alika's memorized spiel endorses the commodification of Hawaiian culture.

ALIKA: Waikīkī has become the largest, most sophisticated destination in our lovely islands. And there you'll find many hula shows, and Hawaiian feasts, called lū'aus, that you can visit. There's a reproduction of an ancient Hawaiian village, complete with grass shacks, in the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center. (23)

Unlike the characters in *Kupua*, Alika and Michael cannot seem to find their way as Hawaiians in a modern Hawai'i. By the end of the play, Michael has been arrested for assault, and Alika knows he must leave the land his family has occupied

for generations. Pressures mount, and he finally breaks, unable to bear the stress of being caught in what the play presents as inevitable change. Mom's advice takes on aspects of tough love as she urges him to adapt, not give up.

MOM: No, my boy, you just don't understand. America's been doing this to our people for how many years now. You've just ignored it because it hasn't hit home. Well now it has. And now you want to become Mister Activist? It's not that simple. Michael don't like America – and he don't take any of the benefits that come from it. Simple. He knows why he's angry and he knows who he hates. But not too many Hawaiians can live like that nowadays.

ALIKA: So whatchoo saying? Take da job? Shut up and move out of the only place I have left? Sell out my cousin, my brudda, my 'ohana? Huh? Is dat what you like me do?

MOM: You don't have another job waiting for you. You have a sickly niece who needs you, a woman with no one but her daughter, and a cousin so full of anger an' hurt it's just a matter of time. It's about responsibility. E kāmāu 'oe. Pono 'oe e ho'okāmāu. You have to carry the burden, and to do that you have to keep your aloha for life. I know it sounds stupid, our aloha's been sold and used, but for us Hawaiians, it's all we got. (47-8)

Aloha and kuleana. And ho'okāmāu: to keep on, to persevere. *Kāmāu's* last scene has Alika putting on his uniform and giving a big, warm "Aloooohaa!" to the audience as he once again welcomes tourists to his Historical Sights Tour. Alika has accepted his kuleana and will kāmāu. But his "Aloooohaa!" has become at once ironic

and emblematic of the compromises he must make to survive. The old ways don't work any more, but the new ones destroy the soul; and no matter how pono one wishes to be, sometimes nothing one does is enough. This play presents a despairing, dying culture that is hanging on by its fingernails. And their literal disconnection from the land, whether by arrest or eviction, implies that these Hawaiians may no longer belong in their own country.

Of the Hawaiian plays cited in this study, another set in modern times presents a radical contrast to *Kāmau's* pessimism by demonstrating that the past can be relevant and potent in the present. *Ola Nā Iwi* certainly deals with tragedy and heartbreak rooted in loss, as do *Kāmau* and *Ola Ka Lau*. And as in *Ola Ka Lau*, one of *Ola Nā Iwi's* themes centers on the loss of traditional knowledge. Its tone, however, is more similar to that of *Kupua's*, in that there is a hopefulness and light-hearted belief in the efficacy of ancient principles, even when, in this play's case, they are applied to modern circumstances.

Of the four Hawaiian plays above, *Ola Nā Iwi* makes the most explicit case for Hawaiians belonging in, and to, Hawai'i. In fact, the play is grounded in the necessity to reconnect with the 'āina, especially after a long separation. In this play, Native Hawaiians have literally lost one another. In the nineteenth century enthusiasm for the developing field of anthropology, Hawaiian bodies were among the "specimens" collected for study and research. Removing the bones of Hawaiians from their homeland meant that not only were those individuals isolated from the people but also severed from the spiritual nurture of the 'āina. *Ola Nā Iwi* believes in the reality of mana, or spiritual power, as embodied in iwi – bones. As Liliha tells Kawehi, "The

ones who were taken keep crying out for home and find no rest. In turn, the islands themselves weep for their return” (215). That bones are alive is the title and the premise of the play. And that Nanea has any subjectivity at all and can manifest corporally has to do with the mana contained in the bones. It is also circumstantially suggested that this literal subjectivity has to do with being *home*. For although Kawehi sees her in a vision in the Berlin museum, Nanea does not have a tangible, corporeal body until the night her bones are brought back to Hawai‘i.

Loss also figures in the ignorance of modern Hawaiians regarding the practices of their ancestors. The traditional container for the most honored human iwi was a kā‘ai, a roughly cylindrical receptacle woven of sennit, a plaited cord made from grasses. Not only has the technique been lost, there are very few such artifacts extant in collections.¹³⁵ Kawehi has no real plan beyond returning the bones to Hawai‘i, though she had vague ideas of placing them in “a quiet place – a cave, cool and dry, hidden away” (179). Nanea insists that they weave a kā‘ai and that she knows how from watching her kūpuna, or elders. After sharing ‘awa, she shows Kawehi the physical technique, simultaneously empowering the younger woman to make previously nebulous spiritual connections.

KAWEHI: How does it start?

NANEA: Here, at the very beginning, at the bottom of things, at the piko, at the center, the vertical strands radiate out while the horizontal thread makes a continuous spiral, turning over and under, over and under. Can you see? Can you see the center?

¹³⁵ As kā‘ai are essentially caskets for bones that are meant to stay hidden, it is understandable that there are only a few known to exist.

KAWAHI: (*Slowly remembering*) You, I saw you. You were in Berlin
somewhere. I saw you there.

NANEA: (*Helping herself to 'awa*) It's amazing how 'awa clears the mind, isn't
it? (180)

In this and other examples, the play alludes to a Hawaiian cultural context of knowledge that informs a spiritual infrastructure. In one particularly lyrical passage, Nanea's explanation of how she knows that the pelvic bones belonged to a woman is not a prosaic anatomy lecture but an illustration that suggests the interconnection of the body with the cosmos. She points out that "If you held the pelvic bones of a woman up to the sky, you would see more blue encircled by a softer whiteness, or more stars framed by their curving arch" (179). This image of the fecund and nurturing body of a woman encircling the world elegantly prefigures Kawehi's later reference to reinterring the bones and thereby protecting "that which should be hidden and concealed in the womb of the 'āina" (226). The body metaphorically embraces a world that, in turn, cradles it when rest finally comes.

Kawehi delves into the past to anchor her sense of who her people are, as in the exhibit she curated around a heiau, or temple, where human sacrifice took place. Though she may be frustrated by certain areas of ignorance, her trajectory is guided by what she does know to be consistent with traditional practice. When Kawehi frets that she may not have the cultural kuleana because she is not related to the bones, Nanea tells her "Maybe you have the highest authority" (198), a statement that implies that Kawehi's mandate is from Nanea – from the living past. Kawehi is learning hana pono from that past, consistent with the fundamental Hawaiian

understanding that one must look backward to what has gone before in order to be prepared for what is to come.

Pua, on the other hand, represents the flawed coping strategies that may result from losing a connection to one's heritage. Even though she is a museum's¹³⁶ assistant director, this Hawaiian woman appears to discount ancestral ways of knowing. She rejects Kawehi's use of oral history as confirmation of the heiau's existence, and her choices are based upon modern pragmatism rather than ancestral knowledge. At a party, Mina comments on Pua's perspective.

MINA: Poor Pua, all she knows is how to attack or defend.

GUSTAV: Listening to those history talks – I can understand why many of you are angry.

MINA: Yes, a healthy anger can help us to make changes, but . . .

GUSTAV: But?

MINA: But somewhere along the way Pua started to . . . love the taste of her own anger, and it's poisoning her. (203)

Pua cannot see the benefits of *lōkahi* – acting in unity. She has not learned to handle her *kuleana* with *ha'aha'a* – humility (Pukui 44) – or *laulima* – literally, many hands, meaning cooperation and joint action (Pukui 196).

Interestingly, Kneubuhl's thesis postulating the motive power of human remains may not be limited to Hawaiian *iwi*. In a cryptic conversation, Mina tells Fatu that there is a complication in the investigation.

FATU: Someone else has shown up?

¹³⁶ The museum appears to be a stand-in for the Bishop Museum, a museum founded by Hawaiian royalty to preserve Hawaiian artifacts and culture.

MINA: I think so. Your mother said something like this might happen. (163)

Fatu's haole mother, Deidre, is a Scotswoman who has been an anthropologist for years. The faxes she sends Mina and Fatu allude to "bones, chiefess, high rank" (172) and instruct the two in protecting themselves spiritually, although they don't know from what. Later, Deidre's assertion of academic authority – "Your mother was an anthropologist in the field for over thirty years. I've worked with bones from New Guinea to China the long way round and back . . ." (223) – combined with an understanding of the metaphysical suggests that the bonds linking an indigenous people to a specific location are not characteristic only of Hawaiians and Hawai'i.

In a slightly surreal encounter, the past and present, as embodied in the two very different women, converge.

DEIDRE: I'll do everything I can for her [Mina]. That's why we're here. To help her, and you.

NANEA: And the others? There are so many others?

DEIDRE: We're doing everything we can.

NANEA: Tell me, why do you do this?

DEIDRE: I was an anthropologist for a long time. I don't know. I married an islander. My son is Samoan. After a good many years, I just began to see things in a different way. It helps me to sleep at night. (210)

From this exchange, it is plausible that Deidre's vast experience of different cultures may be of use in her subversive work on behalf of other indigenous peoples, as well as Hawaiians.

Deidre's involvement brings up a critical point, as regards the question of settler participation in Hawaiian affairs. She is a woman from the United Kingdom who married a Samoan man. Her role in the play is to provide information and support to the indigenous characters, as when she sends critical historical and literary references to Mina and Fatu that reveal to them who Nanea must be. Deidre supplies assistance only; she does not dominate the action nor do her choices carry the plot. This last authority is held by the primary indigenous characters: Kawehi and Nanea/Liliha.¹³⁷ Candace Fujikane quotes from 'Imaikalani Kalāhele's poem, "Huli."

If to help us is your wish then stand behind us.

Not to the side

And not in front. (*Asian Settler Colonialism* 30)

Deidre's positioning is consistent with this notion: as an outsider, she offers succor and reinforcement, not command. Control and volition are the domains of the indigenous characters.

This power alignment is also discernable in Kneubuhl's *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*. While the five women in the play all have their own story arcs and each has her own choices to make, the story's core action is carried by the Hawaiian characters, particularly Queen Ka'ahumanu. Her choices, and those of the two other Hawaiian characters in the play, are the most life-changing. And in the Queen's case, nation-changing.

¹³⁷ Hawaiian/Samoan Mina and Samoa/Caucasian Fatu are also given plot agency, but to a lesser extent than Kawehi and Nanea. However, their relative primacy in the story is consistent with the notion of indigenous peoples successfully controlling and advancing their own interests. This play also places people of color in the center rather than the periphery of stories about themselves.

More so than any of the others, this play, by virtue of being set in the 1820s, explicitly positions Native Hawaiian people as the original inhabitants of the islands. We are shown the first missionaries arriving in an established nation foreign to them. The Hawaiian monarchy has not yet been overthrown, nor have constitutions based upon Western values subverted Hawaiian political and cultural life. And although there had been nonnative residents for some years previously, the advent of Christian proselytization introduced radical viewpoints that coincided with a tumultuous period of irreversable cultural change.¹³⁸ This change, while incited from without, is only possible given an initial grounding in the indigenous.

In contrast to the grounded Hawaiian women, the haole women missionaries are always aware of their alien status as they acclimate to the islands, possibly permanently. Even before arriving, Lucy Thurston expresses her fears to Sybil Bingham when she says, "Suppose they don't want us in their islands? Suppose they aren't friendly? The sailors say . . ." (9). As the first generation immigrants that they are, neither of the haole women express any attachment to Hawai'i as home, (although they both learn, in their ways, to respect Native Hawaiians).

Ka'ahumanu is presented as a ruler of a beleaguered homeland. Her kuleana or responsibility is to guide her people, and she takes bold steps, including ordering her warriors into battle, effectively waging civil war. But the play allows the audience insight into her doubts and fears.

¹³⁸ Ka'ahumanu had by this time "destroyed many images, burned many heiau. [I have] forbidden the worship in the old temples" (18). Additionally, she and King Liholiho had broken the 'ai kapu that forbade men and women to eat together, effectively removing the threat of the gods' punishment for transgressing kapu laws (7-8).

KA'AHUMANU: From Kamehameha, I learned to strike swiftly and with strength. But my heart weeps for the death of Kekuaokalani and his faithful woman Manono, who fought by his side. Now the old gods have lost their power and will go. *(Pause)* Have I done right? Or have I done great evil? I took down what I knew to be false, but will I, Ka'ahumanu, be able to guide these islands, be able to guide the people? The people now have no gods, only the ali'i. How will I steer the canoe?¹³⁹ (12)

Over the course of the play, the obstacles and complications resulting from the foreign presence become clear. Exploitation on the material, monetary basis has already occurred. The China market's demand for sandalwood prompts the neglect of subsistence crops and the subsequent death of commoners for the benefit of certain chiefs in whose ahupua'a¹⁴⁰ the precious trees grew. Whaling ships will soon swarm to Hawai'i's ports. And diseases to which Hawaiians had no natural resistance – venereal diseases, small pox – kill thousands. Ka'ahumanu is a realist and understands the odds she faces.

KA'AHUMANU: But everything is changed with the coming of foreigners.

Their wealth, ships, guns – these things change everything. They have made the power of the chiefs weak. I make a law against the sale of rum. A ship comes full of men eager for drink. If the captain does not like the kapu, he says "Sell us rum, or we'll fire our cannon on your town!" Or perhaps he sends an angry mob to fight and make trouble. What am I do to? Keep the law and have destruction? If we engage him in battle, more

¹³⁹ I believe that question here is what she will do, not whether she has the ability to manage.

¹⁴⁰ "Land division usually extending from the uplands to the sea . . ." (Pukui 9).

and more ships with guns will come from his country. Should I relent and give him rum, this makes the chiefs look weak. (46-7)

Like the other works cited in this section, the search in this play is for hana pono – the right thing to do. Ka‘ahumanu bemoans the loss of her counselors and friends (47). She is left alone to make the difficult choices that will preserve her people in the face of death and extinction. In the old days, there were rules and practices stipulating the behavior of every member of the Hawaiian nation. Mālama was one of the paramount precepts: its application incorporated kuleana so as to assign everyone particular and interconnected realms of responsibility; laulima and lōkahi that stressed cooperation and harmonious accord; and the necessity for behavior that was kūpono: upright, honest, just, and fair (Pukui 185). As Mrs. Clements tells Alika in *Kāmau*, “God taught your ancestors how to live on this Earth better than any people I’ve ever studied. I guess he had to ‘cause you folks are so far away from everything else”(54).

Ka‘ahumanu’s closing speech (she is given the last word in the play) is unflinching in the face of what she recognizes as huge odds; she is also prescient in her characterization of foreigners as “hoards of hungry caterpillars, hiding their hunger to devastate the land as we know it, until the time when all the Hawaiian people may be trodden underfoot.” The queen is unsentimental in her assessment of the potential for disaster that looms in the future, but she appears determined to face the past while engaging with the future “that comes to us, *now*” (76). The “us” is a critical indication of her people’s status as the indigenous people who belong to the land.

IV. **Belonging: Hawaiian and Local**

As noted in chapter two, this study identifies the Local as analogous with Stuart Hall's "organizing category of a new politics of resistance." Regardless of their combined superior numbers, the population of color that comprised Native Hawaiians and Asian settlers historically occupied primarily the lower strata of Hawai'i society. They were the laborers who supported the material well-being of the haole oligarchy and, regardless of changes in twenty-first century political coalitions and economic circumstances, this majority underclass evolved under the stresses of alterity related to place. Again, that Native Hawaiians are the only people indigenous to the islands is not in question, nor is their right to self-determination challenged. What is at issue in this inquiry, especially with reference to current Asian American Studies as well as other disciplines, is how, within the context of theatrical representation, settlers may be regarded in Hawai'i: do they belong here or not?

According to the social imaginary defined by these plays, it appears that the characters considered Local, both Hawaiian and settler, do believe they belong in Hawai'i. Hawai'i is their home – the assumption is so deep-rooted as to be unshakable. It is only newcomers who express unease and rootlessness. The Japanese laborers in *Obake* are either nostalgic for what was left behind, or happy to have left unpleasant circumstances but not yet certain how to fit in the new environment. The New England missionaries must cope with extreme alienation in Hawai'i, both from the land and the people in *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*. And *Rice Paper Airplane's* Sung Wha never really loses his desire to return to Korea,

leaving his Local nephew to symbolically release him from his Hawai'i bonds after his death. These characters are understood as people who had already started to construct their understanding of belonging and home before arriving in Hawai'i. Their patterns of acculturation were determined before they absorbed anything of the islands.

Late in *Aloha Las Vegas*, June reminds her father "The Fukuda family has been in Hawai'i a hundred years" (180). Taking the long view, this is a short time. But subjectively it is a very long time, particularly with regard to individual life spans and the emotional and personal attachments that accrue when one place is all one knows. June is trying to persuade her father to stay in Honolulu – this is all she has ever known, and she assumes that he feels the same.¹⁴¹

The use of the word "aloha" is somewhat problematic, not least because it has too many definitions for a comfortable mono-meaning. Regardless of accusations that the use of "aloha" by non-Hawaiians undermines the indigenous status of Native Hawaiians, for the most part, Local does not seem to be a metonym for aloha or Hawaiian in these plays. *Aloha Las Vegas* may appear to be an exception within the context of the Local, but certainly none of its characters claim to be Hawaiian. They are very clear about who they are, from their casual offering of incense at the home's butsudan¹⁴² to the fond recollections of crab feasts on the living room floor: they are descendents of Japanese immigrants who have lived a

¹⁴¹ Hawai'i is what Wally has known, but his reasons for wanting to move have nothing to do with feeling alienated from Hawai'i itself and everything to do with escaping memories of his dead wife and the role he might have played in her illness.

¹⁴² The butsudan is a Buddhist shrine; in this case, it is for Wally's wife. The family and friends of the deceased person light candles and incense, perhaps ring a small bell, to pay respects to the loved one.

lower class reality in mid-twentieth century Honolulu. As with most of Cataluna's Local characters, their concerns revolve around their quotidian lives, the lived experience of events that pertain directly to them. Aloha is a broad and multifaceted term, and even *Kāmau's* tour guide Alika has some difficulty defining the term when asked to give a non-touristic interpretation.

ALIKA: Well thank you for asking, ma'am. As a Hawaiian, I'd like to say that aloha is . . . Aloha . . . I donno, ma'am it's really hard to explain. It's like, it's like if you got lost here and you needed my help, then I'd take you home, feed you, offer my house to you. It's other things too, but you really have to see it. (*Kāmau* 23)

Immersed as he is in the commercial implementation of the concept, Alika cannot articulate what should be an integral part of him. Later Mom tells Alika that he must keep on – *kāmau* – and “you have to keep your aloha for life. I know it sounds stupid, our aloha's been sold and used, but for us Hawaiians it's all we got” (*Kāmau* 47-8). It may be all Alika has left, but he has no clear notion of what to do with it or how it may support and nourish him. The irony of the passage's clear analogy to Hawaiian history is difficult to avoid: Alika is speaking to a haole tourist about generosity and hospitality just before he learns that the company that employs him is going to (gently) evict him from his home.

It has been noted before that when Local people are not Native Hawaiian, they know it. But that does not mean that there may not be a shared degree of history, carefully delineated by time and experience. A claim to being Local does not mean that a Local Korean/Okinawan/Portuguese person thinks she is Native

Hawaiian. Rather, it may mean that she is participating in the ongoing creation of a community whose different narratives are surviving in (recent) rough proximity.

David E. Stannard notes that it was during the Massie trial of the early 1930s that “people of color in Hawai‘i took to describing the accused young men – who individually were Hawaiian, Japanese, and Chinese – by the collective term ‘local’ to distinguish them from their haole accuser and her supporters” (413). The nonwhite solidarity that the term expressed was employed in labor disputes and later strikes.¹⁴³ While those movements were certainly not without their interethnic conflicts, the notion of Local as having insider status against the outsider haole persists. The Local sense of itself has developed in opposition to dominant culture oppression and, in that, has some characteristics of the abject. However, this is only within the theoretical context of a consolidated United States, as it was in the period surrounding the Massie trial. Within the context of Hawai‘i’s particular modality, its plays indicate that the Local, side by side with the Native Hawaiian, is one of the dominant paradigms. And within the Local plays, Local people belong.

¹⁴³ Stannard also cites an interesting study by John Reinecke who observed in the 1930s “among the younger generation of Hawaiians and Asians the rapid evolution of their diverse ethnic creoles into a single dialect” (414). A concern was that this linguistic commonality would forge a bond amongst the non-white population to the detriment of their relationship to whites.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

I. Summary

This dissertation has evaluated plays written in Hawai'i by Hawai'i residents by using three general areas – history, language, and racialization – to identify characteristics of Hawai'i's theater. The central question guiding this inquiry is whose identity shapes the characters and themes of Hawai'i's plays. While some of this analysis, especially of Local plays that explore the Asian immigrant experience, might serve to augment the Asian American oeuvre, most reflect a unique Hawai'i imaginary in that the social structure revealed comprises both the Local and the Native Hawaiian.

Like their use of languages that are various combinations of Creole, indigenous, and immigrant – assimilated, reclaimed, and hereditary – these plays have hand-picked what they need from Western theatrical conventions and, in using them, have made them serve the playwrights' purposes. Victoria Kneubuhl's *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* uses Western feminist theater conventions in her treatment of Hawaiian and haole missionary women. A female ensemble, the episodic structure that gives each character her own arc, the equal weight given to different social classes, and the visible effects of gender bias, colonialism, racism, and religion are all structural elements of this play that in theme and material effect is both distinctly Hawaiian and, in its treatment of the haole missionaries, of Hawai'i and its history (Howes xvii-xviii).

Also drawing from the Western theatrical tradition is the use of a conventional structure of inciting event, rising action, climax, and resolution. With

few exceptions – *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu*, *Folks You Meet in Longs*, *Living Pidgin*, *A Ricepaper Airplane*, and *Massie/Kahahawai* – the plays usually follow a linear plot structure to tell Hawaiian or Local stories. The first three exceptions above are episodic, and the fourth is a Brechtian play that utilizes episodes, interludes, and songs. Another technique is used in *A Ricepaper Airplane*. The adaptors have used the Chamber Theatre method to transpose the novel, using that style’s tenet of keeping as much of the original text as possible. Therefore a significant amount of the play text consists of narrative, much of which is spoken by Yong Gil, a Local Korean man, as he describes his uncle’s various experiences. That the action is non-linear, following the structure of the novel, makes the plot line a series of complications and climaxes, each contained in a single episode as it is lived by the younger Sung Wha, and narrated and commented on by Uncle and Yong Gil.

I have said that there appears to be no convenient analytical template or metanarrative addressing all the ethnic, racial, and cultural elements that contribute to Hawai‘i’s theater. However, a combination of Rustom Barucha’s intraculturalism and some aspects of Border theory seems to apply, especially as the blend allows for retention of identity while still acknowledging the potential for change and adaptation. It is this potential that is most critical, as it incorporates the notion of cultural change without the loss of cultural singularity.

The plays cited in this study emerge from a living community, whether they reflect Local or Hawaiian sensibilities. Often, there are elements of both in a single play. Perhaps it is this quality that confounds Asian America. To a casual observer, it may seem that all the peoples currently residing in Hawai‘i have truly blended, so

understated are the boundaries. Perhaps the ostensible merging of indigenous and settler populations that seems to have occurred in Hawai'i is what Asian America sees. Eyes are drawn to what appears to be their mirror image, and the superficial likeness may be enough to permit the co-opting of the islands' cultures and identities. This is a possible explanation for the odd amalgamations of "Asian Pacific Islander" and "Asian Pacific American." But these labels did not originate in Hawai'i nor, as I point out in the introduction, do some Pacific Islanders particularly care for the inclusion.

This study historicizes the Hawaiian works so as to make very clear that their foundational concepts have nothing to do with Asian America and everything to do with the struggles of a colonized indigenous population. It examines the plays for what they say about Hawai'i in terms of how the islands' past has influenced the native people's development. Native Hawaiians' relationship with the United States, as depicted in the plays, is devoid of surrender or supplication. Rather, the primary note is one of resistance, not assimilation. The historical narratives of indigeneity and settler, Native Hawaiian and Asian immigrant, are easily decoupled.

The plays that address Hawai'i's history provide some insight into the complex relationships that have developed in the islands. Native Hawaiians, haole, descendents of Asian immigrants: the sometimes forced interaction of all of these groups in cultural and political arenas can be traced in these plays. And those works that refer to post-contact history, whether their focus is on the Hawaiian or on the Local, clearly refer to a shared history. This is evident in the obvious interaction amongst racial and cultural groups in Local plays. And while conflict exists, it is not

always underlined; it surfaces from time to time, just often enough to mark boundaries that are situationally malleable.

Chapter Three's discussion of the plays' languages notes the three in common use in the islands: Hawaiian, standard English, and Pidgin. The use of either Hawaiian or Pidgin, when used as a theatrical vernacular by native speakers who understand when its application is political, playful, or casual, marks the works as unique to Hawai'i, not Asian America. Certainly, the use of the indigenous language disengages Hawaiian plays from all others; chanting and informal, casual use of the language occur in several of the Hawaiian plays.

However, in this area of investigation, boundaries extend and overlap. In language, Pidgin is the place where new boundaries are constructed out of change and interaction. HCE, Pidgin, is indigenous to Hawai'i. The plays demonstrate that Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike may speak Pidgin as a native language. While this may again appear to conflate the indigenous with the settler, it actually signifies the reality of another classification: the Local. The evidential value of this chapter lies in its clarification of language usage in Hawai'i plays: how Pidgin, standard English, and Hawaiian are used, when, and by whom; what the absence of any of the three signifies; and how identity is affirmed via the language a character chooses to use. That code-switching is in play does not in itself categorize any of these plays as being of Hawai'i. Asian American plays may also feature characters who employ different languages strategically, as may characters in any other "ethnic" work. It is in the use of these specific languages to negotiate identity that distinguishes the Local and Hawaiian plays.

Any study involving indigenous people or ethnic minorities must, whether blatantly or not, address the issue of race. The theater of Hawai'i, if truly reflective of a local social imaginary, is at once both hyper-aware and extraordinarily casual in its manipulation of language. It is at least equally aware of and equally casual in its use of race and racialization. In some plays, the topic is as contentious an issue as it might be anywhere else, with clear lines of interest (economic, cultural, and social) corresponding to racial divides. In other plays, race is simply not mentioned. This does not mean that it is ignored. Rather, I interpret the seeming omission to imply an unspoken understanding, one that requires some proficiency in Local culture to navigate.

This unspoken understanding carries a certain insularity, to be sure. It defines itself by the confines of Hawai'i history and experience, and would be parochial were it not that the boundaries change depending on the situation. For instance, whiteness in Alani Apio's *Kāmau* is not definitively alien – a young white woman marries a Hawaiian man, and she and her daughter are embraced by the Hawaiian family. Other white characters in the same play are clearly defined as outsiders who can experience Hawai'i only as a foreign, exotic place, though one is in sympathy with the main Hawaiian character. And a haole resident employed in the Hawai'i tourist industry is complicit with the dispossession of Hawaiian from the land.

The insularity of Local and Hawaiian residents of the islands, however, is mitigated by the contact with “foreign” influences. Troy Apostol's character Malcom has acquired an Ebonics-influenced speech pattern; Lee Cataluna's Mahealani has

returned home after graduating from Harvard; and Darrell Lum's young Local teens insert Three Stooges routines into their Chinese family's comedy performance. Are these characters' identities diluted by their acquisition of new knowledge? I argue that they are not. Asserting that their identities are somehow tainted by the incursion of new elements proposes the pre-existence of a "pure" form. If organisms constantly evolve and adapt, then staying in a form from the past suggests death – and these cultures are not dead. The urge to protect what is valued from the past is most clearly manifested in the Hawaiian plays, but never, at least in the plays cited in this study, is the present dismissed as without value. The pragmatism shown by Queen Ka'ahumanu when she warns of the continuing invasion of foreigners and speaks of learning the new to preserve Hawaiian identity is also demonstrated by her spiritual descendents in plays set far into her future.

The most salient characteristic of Hawai'i's Local plays in terms of racialization is how mundane it can be. That is, the most interesting aspect is not the degree of consequence the characters appear to place upon their own or others' race. In these plays, race is an attribute whose various dimensions and significance the community understands and may highlight or downplay when it chooses. This is in stark contrast to Asian American theater for which, as Shimakawa's study suggests, the need to claim territory in a hostile environment derives from a construct that depends upon and restates a foundational, and narrow, racialization of itself. In this model, Asian Americans are forever both abject and alien, caught in an endless loop of marginalization. Local characters, in contrast, assume their own centrality, at least in terms of Hawai'i. And faced with outside powers, they defy

subordination. This is not to deny the historical abjection of Asian immigration in Hawai'i¹⁴⁴. But Local is a site that does not need to be abject. It is at once a safe haven from which to repudiate attempts to reinstate haole hegemony and an enclave within which a group identity may be nurtured.

The assumption that the outsider does not belong and may be vanquished is particularly Local. It also allows the Local character a system with which to resolve conflict, whether it be internal or external, racialized or not. This stance, while perhaps symptomatic of an island, isolationist mentality, reveals a confidence in one's own stature and significance. The inherent self-assurance of the Local character permits a casual perspective on race, making racialization a component of the plays, not always the *raison d'être*.

The notion that Native Hawaiian and Asian American theater share common cause may be grounded in perceived stakes in how the groups are, separately, theatrically racialized. This assumption is, however, based solely on a common denominator of racial variance in a predominantly Caucasian cultural environment. After that nominal commonality, the disparities are significant. At the heart of the differences is indigeneity: Native Hawaiians have it, and Asian Americans do not.

This disparity is at the heart of the Asian Settler Colonialism thesis, and the contradistinction would seem to substantiate the imputation of colonialist behavior that it assigns to Hawai'i residents of Asian descent. But this simplistic interpretation is complicated when racial labels are used not only as epithets but also as common descriptors or acknowledgements of race. For instance, Apio's tour

¹⁴⁴ I refer to the immigration history of sugar and pineapple plantation workers to Hawai'i.

guide asks his driver what Filipinos think about dream interpretation (6). The question is not intended to be a racist one, nor is it condescending. It is merely a recognition that the driver's ethnic group may assign meanings to dreams that Hawaiians do not. The question is performed casually by the speaker and, apparently, received equally casually.¹⁴⁵ And in *Ricepaper Airplane*, the term "yobo" is spoken first in anger, then almost immediately with affection, by a Hawaiian man to a Korean man (50).

The final chapter explores the notion of belonging. To belong somewhere may mean to be rightfully classified, to be a member of a group, to be the property of someone or something, or to be appropriately placed in a particular position. As stated in the penultimate chapter, the claim to belong to and in the United States is of paramount significance in Asian American studies and literature. Using Shimakawa's notion of the persistence of Asian American abjection, it follows that Asian Americans are constantly proving themselves worthy of belonging in America. The sense of alienation that accrues to a visible minority laboring under the oppression of a hegemonic and racist majority is apparent in many Asian American plays by playwrights from the continental United States. This study does not, however, reveal such an estrangement in Local plays. Instead, so assured of affiliation with and acceptance in Hawai'i are the plays' Local characters that they have the space to explore what they may yet become. Unlike Asian American

¹⁴⁵ The tour guide, Alike, is speaking to a character that is not visible to the audience. It may be inferred from Alike's monologue that the driver does not take offence.

characters, they are not constrained by the perpetual need to authenticate their American selves.¹⁴⁶

Asian Settler Colonialism challenges the Local sense of belonging by stating categorically that only Hawaiians may claim Hawai'i as home. This analysis does not intend to negate the entire Asian Settler Colonialism thesis. Race and ethnic relations in Hawai'i are too complex for such a simplistic dismissal, but equally, for such a rigid contention. Certainly, if the lines are drawn such that only an indigenous/non-indigenous binary is conceivable, then yes, non-Hawaiians do not belong to Hawai'i. And some of the plays under discussion in this study, particularly those that explore early Asian immigration to the islands, substantiate the sense of alienation and estrangement that derives from a connection to another home, forever lost and forever desired. These immigrants do not have a connection to the islands – they do not belong. Those plays correspond to Asian American plays whose depictions of immigrant life honor progenitors whose lives made the present possible.

The plays that deal with the descendants of those immigrants, however, have a different perspective. Even the Wat family of Lum's *David Carradine Not Chinese* claims the right to be whomever they choose in the context of Chinese Americans in the United States, *not* in Hawai'i. In this play and others, the conviction that their home is in Hawai'i is so taken for granted as to be transparent. And it may be that, as

¹⁴⁶ An interesting investigation might explore to what degree Hawai'i residents consider themselves Americans or Locals first. Another avenue of inquiry might explore how Native Hawaiians view their citizenship and membership in the United States.

the play was initially written and performed for a Local audience, the assumption of being at home in Hawai'i is also taken for granted by the viewers.

II. *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* as Intracultural Exemplar

Kneubuhl's *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* and the circumstances of its initial publication – a Native Hawaiian play written by a Native Hawaiian woman published in an Asian American theater anthology – were the initial stimuli for this study. I began with the dissonance of the publication and progressed to an investigation of how theater of Hawai'i is differentiated from that of Asian America. In the process of using a discrete set of plays from which to extrapolate these distinctions, I found *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* to provide patterns and models in every area of investigation.

More so than any other play cited in this study, however, this work reflects the intracultural imaginary of the islands, while carefully limning the disparate lives and motivators of its characters. The five women of this play follow their own trajectories and, by the end of the play, have committed themselves to paths with uncertain futures. The two missionary women will spend the rest of their difficult lives laboring in what they regard as a foreign land, regardless of their private desires or distastes. Pali has tied her fate to the haole missionaries, trusting for more compassion and opportunity than her low status affords her in Hawaiian culture. Hannah also chooses to ally herself with the haole, but not to the Christian faction – hers is a romantic choice, in every sense. The Queen chooses to align herself with the haole, but her decision, as written, is pragmatic. Whatever the significance of her conversion may be to the missionaries, Ka'ahumanu is motivated

by the responsibility of ensuring survival for her people. Kneubuhl acknowledges that these women's lives, motivations, and choices are vastly different and, by allowing the range of possibilities, sanctions their autonomy.

In speculating on the various standpoints possible in Hawai'i of the early nineteenth century, the play offers itself as a paradigm¹⁴⁷ of a diversified community. The characters' political and cultural stances are contradictory and sometimes mutually exclusive, making an untroubled future dubious. The early nineteenth century was already fraught, but a modern audience would carry the knowledge of the tremendous upheaval to come, and the complications presented by the various waves of immigration. But, as noted in *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, the social imaginary of Hawai'i's plays seems to maintain "ties across cultural boundaries" (Singh, Schmidt 14) that are rooted in the shared cultural history of the islands.

The constant jostling together of the rough and smooth edges of divergent subjectivities gives Hawai'i's theater the unique attributes these chapters have investigated. At this writing, the results of the 2000 United States Census for Hawai'i have been released, with its findings based upon new categories. There are now classifications that include mixed blood (two or more races), Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander only, and Asian only. These categories reinforce the unique nature of the islands' population and culture.

Local and Hawaiian playwrights continue to produce new works that further the performance of Hawai'i on stage. With this study, the intracultural fluidity of this

¹⁴⁷ Here I use "paradigm" in its grammatical sense, as "a table of all the inflected forms of a particular verb, noun, or adjective, serving as a model for other words of the same conjugation or declension."

theater claims autonomy from Asian American hegemony. That there are commonalities is not in dispute. The differences, however, have hitherto been ignored, and it is those differences that comprise the social and political imaginary of Hawai'i's plays. This imaginary draws from the Hawaiian and the Local, indigenous and settler, retaining a measure of the past for *all* its peoples while continually evolving to contend with the future.

Appendix 1

Opportunities for Further Research

This study focuses on a specifically delimited set of plays chosen from those produced during eight seasons of Honolulu's Kumu Kahua Theatre. Inclusion was predicated upon the playwright writing from his or her own community, with the additional assumption that the playwright was born and raised in Hawai'i. This circumscribed classification was coupled with Gayatri Spivak's use of essentialism as a tool by which a minority group may both define itself against a larger, hegemonic group and clarify its own nature. Establishing this benchmark, however, meant that a number of plays were omitted. Examination of these plays, many of them original and written by residents of Hawai'i, would provide another perspective on Hawai'i's theatrical production.

The output of the more prolific playwrights might be critically investigated, offering the opportunity to trace and analyze the individual playwright's development. A number of these Hawai'i playwrights have produced an oeuvre of sufficient quantity and variety to warrant further analysis. Ed Sakamoto's plays,¹⁴⁸ especially, might bear scrutiny in this regard, as his work has spanned the greatest amount of time from *In the Alley* to the 2011 production of his latest play, *It's All Relative*.

¹⁴⁸ Sakamoto's plays during this period include: *Dead of Night*, *Aloha Las Vegas*, and *In the Alley*.

Three of Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's plays¹⁴⁹ have been anthologized and published in a University of Hawai'i Press collection. However, there is relatively little critical analysis or deconstruction of her work. Too, the examination they undergo in this study addresses only the plays that fell within the eight-season period. Comparing her other works, both before and after this time, would provide further insights into her themes and perspectives. This playwright's output also presents the opportunity to evaluate plays not set in Hawai'i. For example, her play, *The Story of Susannah*, is not about Hawai'i but, of all her plays, has been the most produced outside the islands. Kneubuhl's most recent work, *A Holiday of Rain*, is set in American Samoa, as are sections of her *Fanny and Belle*. Comparing and contrasting local and other productions of the same play might provide further insights into the differences between Hawai'i and continental United States theater.

The most prolific playwright of the eight years covered by this study is Lee Cataluna.¹⁵⁰ She, like Kneubuhl, had other plays produced at Kumu Kahua outside the eight years. In Cataluna's case, a revival of her 1998 satirical political play, *Da Mayah*, was produced during Kumu Kahua Theatre's 2008-2009 season, and the theater's 2010-2011 season included her newest play, *The Great Kaua'i Train Robbery*. She has also had commissions for plays that were subsequently produced by Honolulu Theatre for Youth and Diamond Head Theatre.

¹⁴⁹ Kneubuhl had three plays produced at Kumu Kahua Theatre during this time: *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, *Fanny and Belle*, and *Ola Nā Iwi*. Only the second was a premier production; the other two were revivals.

¹⁵⁰ Cataluna's productions at Kumu Kahua Theatre during the eight seasons include: *Aloha Friday*, *Super Secret Squad*, *Folks You Meet In Longs*, *Half Dozen Long Stem*, and *Ulua: The Musical*.

Another Hawai'i playwright, Darrell H. Y. Lum, also has a body of work that has been produced at Kumu Kahua Theatre. And during the eight seasons, playwright Bryan Hiroshi Wake had three plays produced: *Eddie Would Go*, *Queen of Makaha*, and *Ala Wai*.¹⁵¹ Wake's inclusion brings up another factor for consideration: *Eddie Would Go* and *Queen of Makaha* were co-productions with Honolulu Theatre for Youth, though performed at Kumu Kahua Theatre's venue. The two theatres also co-produced Yokonaan Kearns' *Pidg Latin* during the 2000-2001 season. While there have been no co-productions since, a study of the collaboration would be of interest, perhaps especially given the spate of such practices amongst other nonprofit theaters.

There are eleven playwrights who are represented by only one production during the eight-season time period.¹⁵² The list includes: Yokonaan Kearns, Vilsoni Hereniko, Kimo Armitage, Sean T.C. O'Malley, Alan Sutterfield, Kathryn S. Bond, Lisa Toishigawa, Mark Tjarks, Eric Anderson, Anthony Michael Oliver, and Nancy Moss. Since there has been no substantive scholarly exploration of Kumu Kahua Theatre's operations since Justina Mattos' 2002 dissertation, such an analysis would provide insight into the selections of the playwrights listed above and how their works contributed to the theater's mission. A study might also evaluate the theater's development over its entire forty-year history.

An exploration of Kumu Kahua's programming choices would offer other avenues of research, such as the rationale for producing Asian American plays

¹⁵¹ The first two plays listed were one-acts performed as one production.

¹⁵² Some of these playwrights are also represented in seasons outside the time period considered in this study.

previously performed in the continental United States. Between 2000 and 2008, Kumu Kahua produced Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own*, Velina Hasu Houston's *Tea*, and *The Romance of Magno Rubio* by Lonnie Carter with Loy Arcenas. An inquiry into why these plays were chosen as appropriate for a Hawai'i audience over other Asian American plays may add to a broader understanding of the social imaginary reflected in Hawai'i's theater.

Returning to the original assumption by which the selection of plays was delimited, namely, that the playwright was writing about her or his own culture, suggests another avenue of research: playwrights writing about cultures with which they do not have an immediately evident relationship.¹⁵³ An analysis of these works would be intriguing in terms of their consonance or dissonance with plays written by "native" playwrights and could lead to a candid discussion of cultural and racial politics in Hawai'i.

An eight-year sampling of Hawai'i theater does not begin to encompass all the perspectives, themes, and issues that comprise the islands' theatrical output. What this study does maintain is that Hawai'i's theatrical literature, as historically and racially demarcated as it is, is worthy of detailed investigation, and that thesis should extend to the entire corpus.

¹⁵³ These plays include: *Pidg Latin* by Yokonaan Kearns; Sean T.C. O'Malley's *To the Last Hawaiian Soldier*; Alan Sutterfield's *King Kalākaua's Poker Game*; Bryan Wake's *Queen of Makaha (Rell Sunn)* and *Eddie Would Go*; Dennis Carroll's *Age, Sex, Location*; Eric Anderson's *Another Heaven*; *Pele Mā*, adapted by John H.Y. Wat, Kennly T. Asato, and Laurel Nakanishi from Frederick Wichman's novel and Nancy Moss' *Hostage Wife*.

Appendix 2

Kumu Kahua Seasons 2000 - 2008

| Season | Play | Playwright |
|---------------|--|--|
| 2000-2001 | Aloha Friday | Lee Cataluna |
| | Dead of Night | Edward Sakamoto |
| | Pidg Latin | Yoanaan Kearns |
| | Kupua | Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker |
| | Love 3 Times | Vilsoni Hereniko |
| | | |
| 2001-2002 | A Language of Their Own | Chay Yew |
| | Ola Ka Lau | Kimo Armitage |
| | To the Last Hawaiian Soldier | Sean T. C. O'Malley |
| | A Ricepaper Airplane | Adapted from the Gary Pak novel by John Wat and Keith Kashiwada |
| | Super Secret Squad | Lee Cataluna |
| | | |
| 2002-2003 | Aloha Las Vegas | Edward Sakamoto |
| | The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu | Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl |
| | A Little Bit Like You | Darrell H.Y. Lum |
| | Heads by Harry | Adapted from the Lois-Ann Yamanaka novel by Keith K. Kashiwada and John H.Y. Wat |
| | King Kalākaua's Poker Game | Alan Sutterfield |
| 2003-2004 | Folks You Meet in Longs | Lee Cataluna |
| | Obake | Edward Sakamoto |
| | Massie/Kahahawai | Compiled by Dennis Carroll |
| | Fanny and Belle | Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl |
| | Gone Feeshing | Lee Tonouchi |
| 2004-2005 | <u>Territorial Plays</u> Cane Fire Reunion In the Alley | Kathryn S. Bond Lisa Toishigawa Inouye Edward Sakamoto |
| | Half Dozen Long Stem | Lee Cataluna |
| | David Carradine Not Chinese | Darryl H. Y. Lum |
| | Eddie Would Go & Queen of Makaha (Rell Sunn) | Bryan Wake |
| | Ventriloquist | Mark D. Tjarks |
| | | |
| 2005-2006 | Tea | Velina Hasu Houston |
| | Age Sex Location | Dennis Carroll |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|
| | Ulua: The Musical | Book & lyrics by Lee Cataluna, music by Sean T. C. O'Malley |
| | The Songmaker's Chair | Albert Wendt |
| | Another Heaven | Eric Anderson |
| 2006-2007 | Mahalo Las Vegas | Edward Sakamoto |
| | Who the Fil-Am I? | Troy Apostol |
| | Living Pidgin | Lee Tonouchi |
| | Kāmau | Alani Apio |
| | Teacher, Teacher | Anthony Michael Oliver |
| 2007-2008 | Ala Wai | Bryan Hiroshi Wake |
| | Ola Nā Iwi | Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl |
| | Pele Mā | Adapted by John H.Y. Wat, Kennly T. Asato, and Laurel Nakanishi from Frederick Wichman's novel |
| | The Romance of Magno Rubio | Lonnie Carter with Loy Arcenas for the Ma-Yi Theatre Company |
| | Hostage Wife | Nancy Moss |

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