ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui

Mana Wahine: Feminism and Nationalism in Hawaiian Literature

‘Ōlelo Mua (Introduction)

Mana Wahine

She is your Grandmother
My mother’s Aunty
Your neighbor’s Tūtū lady
Our Kūpuna

Mana Wahine

Her eyes mirror
A lifetime of struggle
A language fading
A culture diminishing

Mana Wahine

She loves and shelters
Placing her hopes in her children
They will perpetuate a culture by learning
They will perpetuate a race by surviving.[1]

From the ancient past to the present, Native Hawaiian[2] literature has highlighted particular themes important to Hawaiian culture, such as aloha ‘āina (nationalism) and mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy).[3] This is not an arbitrary pairing in Hawaiian tradition, as land is female and all living things are born from her. Hawaiian nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask points out that, “Our mother is our land, *Papa-hānau-moku* – she who births the islands. This means that Hawaiian women leaders are genealogically empowered to lead the nation”.[4] Such an intrinsic relationship with the ‘āina was a goal of Hawaiian nationhood in the past that continues into the present. The integral role of mana wahine (female empowerment) is equally evident, demonstrated within contemporary Hawaiian struggles in multiple ways, including the fight for sovereignty and maintaining control of ancestral lands. Mana wahine is also a key focus of cultural practices, a vital aspect of indigenous drives for sustainability and environmental initiatives. Moreover, it is evident in our production of Hawaiian literature, some of which I explore in this essay.

Mana wahine is a concept that is found throughout Oceania;[5] it is fundamental to indigenous female identity, although it is difficult to translate into English. *Mana* is “power”, usually referring to the spirit or essence of something living; *wahine* is “female”. Thus, the concept of ‘mana wahine’ implies a female-based power, strength, and resilience. It embodies feminist ideas, although this term is problematic,

[1] Moana Kaho‘ohanohano, “Mana Wahine”, *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal,* 1 (Honolulu: Kuleana ‘Ōiwi Press, 1998), 110.

[2] The terms Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, Kanaka, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi and Kanaka Maoli are all synonymous and will be used interchangeably throughout this essay. Collectively they refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i.

[3] Mo‘okū‘auhau can include a genealogical connection to the land as well as to other people.

[4] Haunani-Kay Trask, “Women’s *Mana* and Hawaiian Sovereignty”, in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 121–122.

[5] ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “Pele’s Appeal: Mo‘olelo, Kaona, and Hulihia in ‘Pele and Hi‘iaka’ Literature (1860–1928)”, PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i, 2007), 392.

because mana wahine "predates western concepts of feminism".[6] Additionally, as Trask has argued, "western ideas of feminism react against, resist or seek equality with patriarchy. Mana wahine does neither", as native women's issues differ from haole (white) women's: our struggle is against colonialism as we fight for self-determination as a people, not a gender.[7]

Within Oceania, mana wahine describes an indigenous, culturally-based understanding of female em/power/ment that is rooted in traditional concepts such as moʻokūʻauhau, aloha ʻāina and kuleana (responsibility). It is the physical, intellectual and spiritual (or intuitive) power of women.[8] It is individually embodied, but often employs collaborative strategies with other women for the benefit of the ʻohana (family) or lāhui (nation) where women are the source of knowledge.[9] Trask explains that while Hawaiian women seek "collective self-determination ... through and with our own people ... including our men",[10] mana wahine "asserts that women have our own power that is unique to us [and] can't be shared with (or appropriated by) men".[11]

For over a century, the intersection of 'feminism' and nationalism as negotiated through mana wahine have been important themes in Kanaka ʻŌiwi political activism and the literary production that includes the foundational cultural concept of aloha ʻāina. Aloha ʻāina is "an old Kanaka concept based on the family relationship of the people to the land, and on the idea that people actually were born of the material of the land".[12] Early-twentieth-century scholar Mary Kawena Pukui wrote that there were "many sayings (perhaps thousands) illustrating [such] deep love of the land".[13] In the onslaught of colonialism, during the second half of the nineteenth-century Hawaiʻi, aloha ʻāina developed "as a discourse of resistance … a particularly Kanaka style of defensive nationalism" as Kānaka ʻŌiwi struggled against Hawaiʻi's annexation to the United States.[14]

From that time to this, a substantial number of ʻŌiwi Wahine (Hawaiian women) remain in the vanguard of Hawaiian politics and literature. Powerful voices for Hawaiian nationalism, from Queen Liliʻuokalani in the nineteenth century to Haunani-Kay Trask in this one, have kept issues of Hawaiian feminism and nationalism at the forefront of the Hawaiian quest to regain our political and cultural sovereignty, suggesting that it is not merely coincidental that these (as well as other) staunchly political and 'mana-full' Hawaiian women are also accomplished writers.

Mana Wahine in a Literary Context

In the modern struggle for Hawaiian self determination, the proliferation of Hawaiian literature by Wahine ʻŌiwi within the movement itself, writing about and as mana wahine, is just one manifestation of it, as these themes in our literature and the strength of our women go back mai ka pō mai, from the ancient past, to the present. Mana wahine is highly visible in traditional Hawaiian orature; moʻolelo (history, stories) of the strength, wisdom, and resilience of Hawaiian goddesses and chiefesses abound – Papahānaumoku, the Earth Mother who birthed land; Haumea, the red earth woman who reincarnated herself over and over, with gods and goddesses born from different

[6] Ibid., 392.

[7] Ibid., 392–393.

[8] Ibid., 358.

[9] Ibid., 385.

[10] Haunani-Kay Trask, "Pacific Island Women and White Feminism", in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993), 263, 264.

[11] Cit. in hoʻomanawanui, "Pele's Appeal", 392–393.

[12] Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 18.

[13] Samuel H. Elbert and Mary Kawena Pukui, *Hawaiian Dictionary, revised edition* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1986), 21.

[14] Silva, *Aloha Betrayed,* 18.

parts of her body; Kaʻahupāhau, the shark goddess of Puʻuloa who saved the kamaʻāina (natives) of ʻEwa, Oʻahu from the man-eating sharks of the other islands; Hinaʻaimalama, the goddess of the moon, who survived domestic abuse to become a powerful goddess of healing and patroness of women's art forms, such as kapa (cloth) production; and perhaps the epitome of mana wahine in our traditional literature, the fierce volcano goddess Pele and her beloved younger sister Hiʻiakaikapoliopele, goddess of hula (dance), who was also a powerful healer and representative of the regenerative forest. These are just a few of the myriad of revered mythic women of the past kept alive through the legendary moʻolelo, hula, oli (chant), and mele (song) composed, remembered, and retold in their honor.

Aside from centering on such powerful female figures who commanded the respect of even the highest male aliʻi (chiefs), a number of women (both chiefly and godly) throughout the moʻolelo were exceptionally skilled composers, chanters, singers, and hula practitioners.

The Early Literary Period – Moʻolelo in the Nineteenth Century

Ka Palapala (reading and writing) was formally introduced to Hawaiʻi by American missionaries who arrived in the islands in 1819. By many accounts, Hawaiians eagerly adopted this new technology, resulting in an almost completely literate population by mid-century. Hawaiians were not just eager pupils and readers, they became prolific writers as well. Kanaka ʻŌiwi writing blossomed in the period from the 1860s–1920s when independent Hawaiian newspapers—over 75 in total—flourished.[15] While the missionary-run papers preferred to publish news and stories from the 'civilized' western European-American world beyond Hawaiʻi's shores, the independent newspapers, run and staffed by Kānaka ʻŌiwi, made generous inclusions of traditional literary genres. Printing the moʻolelo also fostered intellectual discussions (and sometimes vigorous debates) amongst the native population about their literary heritage and practices, often between the pages of the same newspapers (or of their competitors).

Because Hawaiian names are not gender specific, is it unfortunate that a more accurate count of Wahine ʻŌiwi writers publishing at this time is not possible. Women, however, did write and publish, and a few were quite well known and respected for their work.

One known writer is Emma Nakuina (1847–1929), a prominent Hawaiian woman of aliʻi status who published several moʻolelo in English-language newspapers, as well as a collection of stories, *Hawai'i, Its people, Their Legends* (1904). In 1883, using part of her Hawaiian middle name, Kaili, she published the first English-language version of a Pele and Hiʻiaka moʻolelo, "Hiʻiaka: A Hawaiian Story by a Hawaiian Native".[16]

Because kaona (metaphor) is a crucial part of Hawaiian poetic composition, I argue in my own work that publishing the Pele and Hiʻiaka moʻolelo over and over again was a political act throughout the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth

[15] See Esther T. Mookini, *Hawaiian Newspapers* (Honolulu: Topgallant Press, 1974) and M. Puakea Nogelmeier, *Mai Pa'a i ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).

[16] *Pacific Commercial Daily Advertiser,* August 25–October 13, 1883.

centuries to sustain Hawaiian nationalism. Through Pele's role as a destroyer and re-creator of 'āina, the extensive literature devoted to her developed a canonized vocabulary, including the hulihia chants. Hulihia means 'overturned'. Within the context of Hawaiian understanding, the volcanic eruptions and lava flows would huli or overturn the established order upon the land: Kāne, Lono, Kū and Kanaloa, male gods of the land and sea, were overcome by the untamable, unstoppable force of nature Hawaiians called Pele, whose name also translates to 'lava'. In the moʻolelo, the hulihia chants are performed in a series near the end, as Pele, consumed by a jealous rage, orders the destruction of her chiefly and mortal lover Lohiʻau, and his body is consumed by lava from head to toe until only a pillar of stone remains.

Nakuina's moʻolelo was published a few months after King David Laʻamea Kalākaua's coronation on 12 February 1883. The king was very unpopular with Americans and other haole, in part because he revived traditional Hawaiian arts, such as hula (which had been banned in the 1830s under missionary influence, although it secretly continued underground); Kalākaua commissioned many hula performances at his coronation, including hula kahiko (ancient hula) dedicated to Pele and Hiʻiaka, much to the chagrin and outrage of the haole. Nakuina held appointed positions in Kalākaua's government as the curator of the National Museum and as the national librarian. As a highly educated, respected member of the Hawaiian government with deep knowledge of Hawaiian traditions, Nakuina possessed the cultural expertise to understand how the nationalist intent of publishing "Pele and Hiʻiaka" would speak to a Hawaiian audience.

Another notable composition demonstrating strong Hawaiian resistance to the 1893 U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy is Ellen Kekoaohiwaikalani Wright Prendergast's "Mele ʻAi Pōhaku" (Rock-Eating Song). This composition was alternately referred to as "Mele Aloha ʻĀina" (Patriotism Song), although it is more commonly recognized by its first line, "Kaulana nā Pua" (Famous are the Children). This well-known and beloved mele was composed in 1893 as a mele aloha ʻāina (patriotic song) demonstrating Kanaka ʻŌiwi sentiment strongly opposed to annexation of Hawaiʻi by the United States.[17]

The song was first published in 1893 in the Hawaiian newspaper *Ka Leo o ka Lahui* under the name "He ohu no ka poe aloha aina" and is signed by "Kekoaohiwaikalani", Ellen Wright Prendergast's Hawaiian name; it was a popular song of its time, published under several names eight times, including the *Buke Mele Lahui* (Hawaiian National Songbook).[18] Over a century since its composition, the mele is still sung, new renditions by Hawaiian artists are still recorded, and it is regularly incorporated into contemporary Hawaiian literature. Suffice it to say, it is an important touchstone for Kānaka ʻŌiwi, an anthem expressing aloha ʻāina and mana wahine, which are pointedly intertwined in the image of the overthrown sovereign, Queen Liliʻuokalani as demonstrated in the second line, "Kūpaʻa mākou ma hope o ka ʻāina" (we stand steadfast behind the land), which is reconfigured in the final stanza to "Ma hope mākou o Liliʻu[oka]lani" (We are behind Liliʻu, the

[17] For additional analysis of this mele, see kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui, "He Lei Hoʻoheno no nā Kau a Kau: Language, Performance and Form in Hawaiian Poetry", *The Contemporary Pacific,* 17 (2005), 29–82; Amy Stillman "'Aloha ʻĀina': New Perspectives on 'Kaulana nā Pua'", *Hawaiian Journal of History,* 33 (1999), 83–99.

[18] Leilani Basham, "He Puke Mele Lāhui: Nā Mele Kūpaʻa, Nā Mele Kūʻē, a me Nā Mele Aloha o Nā Kānaka Maoli", PhD thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawaiʻi, 2002), 4–5.

royal one). A hallmark of Hawaiian poetry, the kaona expressed in the mele is aloha ʻāina. Hawaiian ethnomusicologist Amy Kuʻuleialoha Stillman explains,

> Two points are worth underscoring. *Kūpaʻa* expresses a firm, steadfast *(kū-)* bonding *(paʻa); ʻāina* is the generic term for land and can be extended to embrace the society residing thereupon. The phrase "*Kūpaʻa ma hope o ka ʻāina"* and its frequent reiteration (and other like sentiments) is an appropriate epitome to explain the expression of defeat in terms of fame, pride, and victory. Such a summation is rooted in the value of *aloha ʻāina.*[19]

[19] Amy Kuʻuleialoha Stillman, "History Reinterpreted in Song: The Case of the Hawaiian Counterrevolution", *Hawaiian Journal of History,* 23 (1989), 1–30, 17.

The *Buke Mele Lāhui* contains other mele aloha ʻāina composed by women. Although none are as well-known today as Prendergast's "Mele ʻAi Pōhaku", they all exhibit the same high level of poetic composition, deep feeling of nationalism and pride, and unwavering support of Liliʻuokalani and Hawaiian sovereignty. "Ka Wohi Kū i ka Moku" (The Ruling Chief of the Island) and "He Inoa no Liliʻulani" (A name chant for Liliʻuokalani) were composed by Benecia Satana. "Kuʻu Ipo Pua Lalana" (My Sweetheart Flower) was signed only as "Katie", while "Kuʻu Pua Poni Mōʻī" (My Crown Flower) was signed only as "Ellen" (perhaps Prendergast?). Annie K. Kaanoiokalani composed "Hoʻoheno no Wilikoki" (Esteemed is Wilcox), a song praising Hawaiian patriot Robert Wilcox, a Hawaiian nationalist who led an armed attempt to restore Hawaiian sovereignty after Liliʻuokalani was overthrown in 1893. The mele begins –

Kaulana mai nei a o Wilikoki	Wilcox is famous
O ke koa wiwoole o ke ao nei	The fearless warrior of the world
Ua kohu anela ke ike aku	Who resembles an angel
I ke ku kilakila i Halealii	In the majesty of the royal palace
Aohe poka e ku ai	No bullets can penetrate
Aohe akamai e loaa aku	No one is smart enough to capture
Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu	The Hawaiian child who dodges the spray of bullets
I ka waha o ka pu e kani nei	Of the mouth of the gun sounding
Noho mai Waipa i ka uahoa	Waipā dwells in indifference
Opu loko ino he aloha ole	An evil heart with no compassion
No Hawaii oe, no Hawaii au	You [Wilcox] belong to Hawaiʻi, as do I
Hookahi ke kupuna o Kakuhihewa	Kakuhihewa [Oʻahu's chief] is an ancestor.[20]

[20] Annie K. Kaanoiokalani, "He Mele no Wilikoki", in F. J. Testa, ed., *Buke Mele Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2003), 92–93; mahalo to Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada for assistance with the translation and understanding key points of this mele.

Wilcox is described as a hero deserving of high praise: he is a fearless warrior (ke koa wiwoole), resembling an angel (kohu anela) who can evade even the dust of the bullets shot at him (alo ehuehu) and is too smart (akamai) for capture by the evil-hearted ones without compassion (Opu loko ino he aloha ole), possibly a reference to the Annexationists or even to Robert Waipa, who did not allow Wilcox into the Palace in 1889 during his first armed insurrection against Kalakaua's government. The phrase "Keiki Hawaii alo ehuehu" is found in other mele hoʻohanohano (songs of praise) of the time; it is also a reference to hardship in general, a line also found, for example, in mele for Kaluaikoʻolau.[21] The reference to the evil-hearted ones (opu loko ino) is also in Prendergast's "Mele ʻAi Pōhaku". The composer solidifies Wilcox's right to defend Hawaiʻi and places him in a genealogy that binds them to the ʻāina

[21] In 1893 Kaluaikoʻolau, diagnosed with leprosy, was ordered to Kalawao on the island of Molokaʻi. He refused to go, deciding instead to take his wife and child and live in the remote and rugged Nā Pali region on Kauaʻi. His wife Piʻilani eventually published her account of their life in exile.

when she writes, "No Hawai'i 'oe, no Hawai'i au/Ho'okahi ke kūpuna o Kakuhihewa" (You belong to Hawai'i as I do, the place of the ancestors of Kakuhihewa, O'ahu's famous chief). The chant concludes with this line, "He aloha lāhui ko Wilikoki" (Wilcox has love/respect/compassion for the nation).[22] The aloha expressed by Wilcox for the nation in the concluding line is not taken lightly, as aloha is a core philosophy of Kanaka 'Ōiwi culture and identity.

Queen Lili'uokalani herself is a writer most recognized for her autobiography, *Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen,* which provides a straightforward account of her fight to reestablish her authority and the Hawaiian government after the illegal overthrow and subsequent annexation of Hawai'i to the United States. Lili'uokalani, however, was also an accomplished composer of mele, with over 400 songs, many unpublished, attributed to her.[23] In 1867, she composed a new National Anthem for the Hawaiian kingdom, "Mele Lāhui Hawai'i" (Hawaiian National Anthem).

Lili'uokalani also translated the Kumulipo, an important Hawaiian chant detailing the creation of the Hawaiian universe. More than just an exercise in poetic translation, the Kumulipo had a great degree of political importance for Kānaka 'Ōiwi. Composed in the 1700s for the birth of the chief Kalaninui'īamamao (The great supreme chief from afar), the chant is a ko'ihonua, a genealogical connection of the chief's birth back to the beginning of time. Politically, the chant assured his genealogical right to rule over the entire Hawaiian universe. The political significance of the chant was invoked again in the 19th century by Lili'uokalani's brother, Kalākaua, who commissioned its first written text in 1891. Kalākaua revised the chant to connect his lineage back to Kalaninui'īamamao, and thus back to the creation of the Hawaiian universe beginning with Pō, night, chaos, darkness, the primordial female element necessary for all creation. Regarding Pō, Hawaiian poet and scholar Brandy Nālani McDougall argues that mana wahine represents "a force that men must never ignore, for in a world where genealogical ranking [means] everything, the first ancestor [Pō, the female night who gives birth to herself] is the most powerful".[24]

Lili'uokalani's translation of Kumulipo into eloquent, elegant English is perhaps, like Emma Nakuina's work before her, an attempt to educate haole on the exquisite nature of Hawaiian literature, while evoking highly political and nationalistic texts focused on themes of pono (justice). Such powerful, evocative literary expressions were woven by powerful women who were also powerful leaders.

[22] Ibid., 93.

[23] A selection of these has been compiled, edited, and translated with notes as *The Queen's Songbook* (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1999).

[24] ho'omanawanui, "Pele's Appeal", 392.

Mana Wahine Today: Kanaka 'Ōiwi Women's Writing from the Hawaiian Movement Forward, 1960s–2010

Over the past few decades, a number of 'Ōiwi Wahine writers have continued this genealogy of strong, eloquent female voices of our literary past, as we weave new songs, chants and stories of female empowerment and Hawaiian nationalism, strengthening the literary and political mana of the present by interweaving it with the similar expressions from the past.

These voices are particularly poignant, given the theft of Hawaiian sovereignty, the banning of Hawaiian language medium schools and courts of law at the end of the nineteenth century, and the folding of the Hawaiian language newspapers by 1948. A period of literary and artistic silence prevailed in the middle decades of the twentieth century, although our political commitment was never completely eradicated. Hawaiians had suffered a series of debilitating political, cultural, economic, social, and psychological blows, and recovery has been long and incomplete. A robust literary community active in the Hawaiian language for centuries had been effectively trampled upon. But like the hula, which had been banned earlier, Hawaiian literary production never ceased completely.

When Hawaiian writing re-emerged in the 1960s, it was in an altered, but still powerful form. The Hawaiian Movement of the 1960s–1970s dovetailed with the fight for civil and equal rights for women on the national level of U.S. politics. Consequently, the struggle to re-establish and re-invigorate Hawaiian culture and fight for political justice (especially in light of the 1959 vote for Hawai'i statehood and the bombing of Kaho'olawe since the 1940s) almost automatically assumed a position of support for women's rights. Inside the Hawaiian community, however, this aspect of the Hawaiian movement was not inspired by white women's feminism or their agendas, but by indigenous models of strong female roles and leadership in Hawaiian society from the goddesses of the ancient past to the political and community leadership of the modern era.

Since the 1970s, 'Ōiwi Wahine writers have established themselves with force, as with elsewhere in Oceania, overtaking the literary production of 'ōiwi men by a substantial margin. With the majority of at least two generations of our lāhui cut off from our ancestral language, Kanaka 'Ōiwi writers now compose primarily in English that is sometimes mixed with Hawai'i Creole English (more commonly known as "Pidgin") and Hawaiian. Since the re-establishment of Hawaiian-language immersion education in the mid-1980s, more Hawaiians compose exclusively in 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language). In all genres and languages used, themes of aloha 'āina, nationalism, and justice continue, now combined with memory – an evocation of the past. Hawaiian sovereignty may have been overthrown in 1893, but Kānaka 'Ōiwi of subsequent generations have made it clear that we still stand kūpa'a ma hope o ka 'āina – determined and steadfast behind the land; aloha 'āina and aloha lāhui, love for the land and the Hawaiian nation, is still ever present and at the forefront of our minds and actions, and still expressed in our literature.

An important 'Ōiwi Wahine writer is internationally recognized nationalist and poet Haunani-Kay Trask, who has published both academic essays (*From a Native Daughter,* 1993) and two collections of poetry (*Light in a Crevice Never Seen,* 1994, and *Night is a Sharkskin Drum,* 2002); both her scholarship and poetry have been included in a myriad of other publications in Hawai'i and internationally. Trask's work is forceful and unapologetically staunch in its message of mana wahine and aloha 'āina. There are far too many of Trask's poems that demonstrate these themes, and

her work is worthy of a separate study. However, I'd like to draw attention to a few selected poems that exemplify these themes.

Many of Trask's poems incorporate respected Hawaiian goddesses from whom Kanaka ʻŌiwi women draw inspiration. One example is "Nā Wāhine Noa" (Women Free from Kapu), which refers to "those released from the restrictive Hawaiian system of kapu".[25] The poem names Hina, a goddess of the moon associated with healing, and the primordial female element, Pō, while Pele, the volcano goddess is suggested through the images of "magma bodies" and "flowing volcanoes" –

> Rise up, women gods.
> Have Hina as your goddess
> virgin, volcanic
> unto herself.
>
> Without masters, marriages
> lying parasite men.
> Unto her self:
> a wise eroticism
>
> moon drawn by the tides
> culling love
> from great gestating Pō
> massive night
>
> birthing women's dreams:
> magma bodies
> flowing volcanoes
> toward moonred skies.[26]

[25] Haunani-Kay Trask, "Notes", *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1994), 53.

[26] Ibid., "Nā Wāhine Noa", 52.

The poem evokes mana wahine, encouraging modern Kanaka women to be empowered by our female godly ancestors and not be physically or emotionally enslaved by men. In traditional Hawaiian culture, these and other akua wahine were as powerful as the male gods or chiefs, and sometimes even more so. As goddess of the moon and creative arts, Hina breaks free from domestic abuse by her earthly husband to find eternal life and strength as an akua wahine.[27]

Part IV of the poem "Hawaiʻi" begins with a reference to Pele, "E Pele ē, fire-eater / from Kahiki". It mimics the traditional invocation to the fire goddess found in chants, "E Pele ē", asking for her attention and expressing reverence for the goddess. The poem shifts to referring to Papahānaumoku, the earth mother, and then Hiʻiaka, goddess of the forest,

[27] Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1970), 220–221.

> Breath of Papa's life
> miraculously becomes
> Energy, stink with
>
> sulfurous sores. Hiʻiaka
> wilting in her wild home:
> black *lehua*, shriveled
> *pūkiawe,* unborn *ʻaʻaliʻi.*

Far down her eastern flank
the gourd of Lono dries
broken on the temple wall.

Cracked lava stones
fresh with tears, sprout
thorny vines, thick
and foreign.[28]

[28] Trask, "Hawai'i", 35–36.

These stanzas describe the response of the 'āina to the desecration of geothermal development; what was once a flourishing native environment is now in decay due to the vulgar drilling and its effects on the 'āina, who embodies the gods. Pōhaku, or lava rocks, a kinolau (body form) of the goddess Pele, weep; the pain of the 'āina literally causes invasive vegetation, a metaphor for colonization, to prosper. That the pōhaku are a central metaphor of Hawaiian identity and connection to 'āina, so eloquently expressed by Prendergast and other 'Ōiwi writers of the past, makes the image of the broken lava that much more poignant a symbol of the destructive forces of colonialism and its effects on the 'āina and lāhui.

The second section of the poem is equally cloaked in kaona, this time referencing the haole invaders as kōlea (golden plover), an image for the Provisional Government (P.G.) also applicable to other foreigners who enriched themselves from Hawaiian resources, and then left, used by Prendergast and other Kanaka 'Ōiwi writers of her day. Trask writes,

The *kōlea* stilts its way
through drooping ironwoods
thickened by the fat
of our land. It will eat

ravenous, depart rich,
return magnificent
in blacks and golds.[29]

[29] Ibid., 33.

Kōlea are migratory birds that feast on the abundance of the 'āina in Hawai'i; their feathers are a mix of black and gold. Here, the allusion is metaphoric to the riches gained by haole kōlea who prosper off Hawaiian 'āina and Kānaka 'Ōiwi. To be "in the black" is a term used for financial success and health, and gold is also a symbol of wealth and political power.

The poem "Kaulana Nā Pua" directly recalls Prendergast's nationalist anthem, albeit in a modern, violent context. "Three dark children", presumably Hawaiian, are at the beach in a scene described in eloquent beauty,

Morning rains
wash
the damp sand cool
and grainy. Over
the cream of foam, young
surfers hover, tense
for the rising glory.

Beyond Ka‘ena, a horned moon
drifts, green chatter-chatter
of coconut leaves
expectant in the mist.

Into this idyll wanders “A passing tourist / florid in his prints” who “stoops for directions”. One of the children stabs the man in the eye in a rage. The scene is unexpectedly violent and shocking, and the conclusion of the poem confusing to those who don’t understand its metaphoric references or Hawai‘i’s violent, colonial history. The poem ends,

Running over old
rippled dunes, the children
sing-song a tune
out of time, time past

when their tribe
was a nation
and their nation, the great
lava mother, Hawai‘i.

Not yet do they know, not yet
the bitter pity
of the past, even as they sing it:

Kaulana nā pua
“Famous are the children”,

taking the far curve
of the beach
in the bright glare
of day.

Trask further celebrates the power of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi female voices in literature and activism in the poem “Sons”. In response to a grandmother’s pride in producing three sons, Trask writes,

I have no sons
to give, no line of
immortality.

I am slyly
reproductive: ideas
books, history
politics, reproducing

the rope of resistance
for unborn generations

But sons are not
so earthbound. They soar
beyond, somewhere

with a woman's trust
in their fists.

And I,
I stay behind
weaving fine baskets
of resilience

to carry our daughters in.[30]

[30] Ibid., "Sons", 56–57.

The basket metaphor alludes to community activism, which often carries familial ties and kuleana as well. This familial tie is demonstrated in the poem "Sisters", which Trask dedicates to her sister Mililani, a well-known sovereignty advocate and Hawaiian nationalist. The poem criticizes haole development and destruction of Hawaiian ʻāina and people, while uplifting the women who fight against it,

III.
destruction as a way
of life cleaver
haole culture
killing as it goes

"no stone
left unturned"
no people
left untouched

IV.
in every native
place a pair
of sisters
driven by the sound
of doves
the color of morning
defending life
with the spear of memory.[31]

[31] Ibid., "Sisters", 59.

These stanzas juxtapose the devastating, machine-like effects of colonialism with the *nearly* defenseless indigenous presence. The "pair of sisters" linked to the image of the doves evoke a sense of community and peace, while the vivid "color of morning" elicits hope in the image of the sun rising at dawn. While the "native places" may not have the same kind of destructive weaponry as the "*haole* culture" that separates the people from the land, simultaneously destroying both, there is a spirit of resistance in the power of memory and the words and stories of the ancestors.

Other ʻŌiwi Wahine writers of this period use their poetry to "defend life with the spear of memory", including Dana Naone Hall, Hoʻoipo DeCambra, Tamara Wong Morrison, Cecelia Kapua Lindo, Coochie Cayan, Mahealani Kamauʻu (now Perez Wendt) and Puanani Burgess. Most of these women began publishing in the 1970s and 1980s, and many are still vibrant community leaders today.

Burgess's poem "Choosing My Name" is another good example of ʻŌiwi Wahine poetry that uses the image of spear and memory to uphold and defend Hawaiian identity and connection to land. In this poem, Burgess juxtaposes her three names – Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani, each embodying a part of her ethnic identity that carries real world consequences. In the poem, she tells us that Christabelle is her "real" name provided on identifying documents, Yoshie is her "home name" used by her Japanese family to remind them she did, indeed, belong to that side of the family, while Puanani, her Hawaiian name, is the name she chooses to identify herself, because it is her "piko [centering] name" that connects her "to the ʻāina / and the kai [sea] and the poʻe kahiko [ancient Hawaiians] – / my blessing; my burden / my amulet; my spear".[32]

The balance of contrasting images (land and sea, present and past) of nature and time are a hallmark of Hawaiian identity and poetic expression. Moreover, the contrast between her chosen name being both a blessing and a burden, an amulet and a spear, speaks to the problematic split of contemporary ʻŌiwi identity: the poet is caught between the positive cultural identification of her choice (blessing, amulet), and the negative effects of colonialism, by which Hawaiian language and identity – expressed through the political act of choosing to identify as Hawaiian – are turned into a burden many Hawaiians are made to feel.[33] Yet despite the weight of colonialism, Burgess is resilient and encouraged by her choice to also connect to the ʻāina and the kūpuna, and she uses her name as a spear to defend her choice of identifying with her ethnic heritage. Symbolically, by exercising her right to choose, Burgess refuses to succumb to the pressures of colonialism that seek to homogenize Kānaka ʻŌiwi and transform them into multicultural Americans, effectively separating us from the lāhui and our ancestral lands. It is through remembering, reclaiming, and defending her cultural rights to self-identify as Hawaiian that Burgess asserts both mana wahine and aloha ʻāina.

As the founder of *ʻŌiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal,* award-winning poet and essayist D. Māhealani Dudoit holds a special distinction amongst our contemporary ʻŌiwi Wahine writers. The first and only journal dedicated to the publication of Native Hawaiian writers and artists and fully staffed by a Kanaka ʻŌiwi editorial and production team since its inception in 1998, *ʻŌiwi* has provided an important venue of literary and artistic expression for Kanaka ʻŌiwi writers and artists. Working in publishing, Māhealani was frustrated by the lack of access Hawaiian writers had to established literary publications; she knew that non-Hawaiian editors and publishers did not necessarily understand or value Kanaka ʻŌiwi cultural expression or literary aesthetics, resulting in Hawaiian writers being consistently shut out of publishing opportunities. Now in its tenth year and fourth issue, *ʻŌiwi* has showcased some established writers like Trask and Perez Wendt, but more often than not has enabled many new voices – a considerable number of them, female – to be heard. At this time, *ʻŌiwi* has published over 200 writers, 112 of whom are women; of these, only 30 had previously been published, significantly adding to the depth and breadth of Hawaiian women's literary and artistic voices being heard.[34]

[32] Puanani Burgess, "Choosing My Name", in Joe Balaz, ed., *Hoʻomānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kūpaʻa Press, 1989), 40.

[33] Larry Kauanoe Kimura's landmark essay on Hawaiian language and culture, "Native Hawaiian Culture", in *Native Hawaiian Study Commission Report* (Government Printing Office, 1985), provides an excellent analysis of this problem.

[34] For more information on the journal, visit their website: <http://www.hawaii.edu/oiwi>.

Since its founding, *ʻŌiwi* has featured poetry, prose, essays, artwork, and testimonies by ʻŌiwi Wahine writers from the nineteenth century to the present, many of whom strongly express mana wahine and aloha ʻāina in their work, including the youngest emerging writers, such as Sherri Keahi Lee and Jamaica Heolimele Osorio.

Lee's poem "Kūʻē/ʻĪlioʻulaokalani" (Resist/Red Dog of the Heavens) refers to a contemporary event, a 2009 protest march through the streets of Waikīkī – Hawaiʻi's premier tourist destination, symbol of U.S. oppression and capitalism, and former lands and home of many Hawaiian aliʻi – to protest Governor Linda Lingle's proposed sale of Ceded Lands. ʻĪlioʻulaokalani is a culturally-based political organization dedicated to raising the cultural and political consciousness of Kānaka ʻŌiwi and others.[35] It is named for a chant from Pele and Hiʻiaka, in which Hiʻiaka, facing dangerous opposition in her travels, chants to the guardian 'dog' clouds of the heavens, who are her ancestors. ʻĪlioʻulaokalani is the red guardian dog cloud; thus, the color red, a symbol of blood and Hawaiian royalty, is evoked in multiple ways throughout the poem.

[35] For more information on ʻĪlioʻulaokalani, visit their website: <http://www.ilioulaokalani.org>.

The poem references many important Hawaiian cultural traditions, stories, and historic figures and events. From an American point of view, the taking of Hawaiʻi was complete in 1898, but Lee begins, "Even now the kamaʻāina are assembling / Turning the streets blood red", indicating that Kānaka ʻŌiwi have never ceased our protest of this illegal action. While native unrest is clear, "The haoles / Sleep in their beach-front hotels, / the loʻi having been / Covered, with a blanket of little white lies". Waikīkī, once noted for its bubbling, fresh water streams and acres of lush loʻi (taro gardens) have been metaphorically covered by the lies perpetuated after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian government, while physically being drained and covered over by multinational hotels.

Yet despite such visible, purposeful destruction, "Hāloa, our kaikuaʻana / the kalo, remembers". Like Kanaka ʻŌiwi writers before her, Lee evokes the spear of memory to protest American colonization and reengage with the ʻāina by evoking our mythical ancestor, Hāloa ("Long Breath"), the first kalo (taro) plant. Moreover, the kalo, "like our spirits /…are bruised, / but not broken". Rather,

We stand strong together,
In the face
of legislation that intends to criminalize and "regulate" the practicing of our culture
in the face
of this foreign ideal of capitalism
In the face
of what the haole people are calling "progress"
And in the face
of U.S.
Occupation
militarization
and colonization

We stand STRONG and TOGETHER!

The collective self-determination expressed in this section of Lee's poem then calls upon the image of Hawaiian akua wahine through the symbol of the full Māhealani moon, and Hawaiian ali'i through the reference to the Queen (Lili'uokalani),

for a Māhealani moon
is rising:
This is the mana
Of a people oppressed
Of a Queen betrayed
Of a prophecy
soon to be fulfilled
And nā pua
Bold, many, chanting
I kū mau mau
I kū wā
A time of change is upon us:
The 'āweoweo have returned.[36]

[36] Sherri Keahi Lee, "Kū'ē/'Īlio'ulaokalani", *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal,* 4 (2009), 159, 162–163.

The poem is accompanied by a collage of images from Hawaiian history and the protest rally, set on the background image of a red fish, or 'āweoweo. Dreams of 'āweoweo or the sight of large schools of them are viewed by Kānaka 'Ōiwi as hō'ailona (signs/symbols) portending an important event. Marchers at this event were encouraged to wear red, to symbolize the color of blood; it is also a color that represents Hawaiian royalty, who were typically adorned in capes and other accessories made from scarce and thus precious red or yellow feathers of selected native forest birds.

A nationally-acclaimed spoken word poet, Osorio's poem "Kaulana nā Pua a'o Hawai'i" directly references Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku". In 2008, she presented the poem as part of a national slam-poetry event, performing this piece at the White House before an audience including President Barack Obama. In her introduction to the poem, Osorio eloquently discusses her thought process in composing it:

> Even though I have only been writing … for [a few] years, in my heart I have known these words for much longer – this protest, this 'eha [pain]. This pain is something we Hawaiians carry in our koko [blood]. My writing is a process of remembering that mana that we all carry. Those of us who write and sing are in many ways unconsciously re-membering what of our culture that has once been dismembered. These are the stories we carry in our iwi [bones]. As long as we keep singing, fighting, marching, chanting, Lili'uokalani will live with every word she carried in her mana. I write to keep my queen alive, I write to keep my father alive. I write, because I have been told so many times that I cannot, that my writing will not change the past because we must look forward; but in honoring our past we are looking forward, we are changing the world, one poem at a time …. There is much I still

> do not know, so much more I can learn from my father, and the people who have taught him, I look forward to that journey but in the meantime I will continue the journey that has already begun within me, hoping that somehow it leads me to justice. We are generations past nā poʻe ʻai pōhaku, and yet, here I stand with stones in my mouth, tears upon my cheeks, and a fight in my heart that will not and cannot die until I do.[37]

[37] Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, "Kaulana nā Pua aʻo Hawaiʻi", *ʻŌiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal,* 4 (2009), 301.

[38] Ibid.

The poem describes the events of the overthrow and Prendergast's composition as "a song to liberate a community".[38] Subsequent stanzas link this traumatizing event to those of annexation in 1898, describing the impact of the event on a "newly slaughtered country", and then to statehood in 1959, bluntly stating that at this time, "no one is singing". She reflects back on the overthrow of January 17, 1893, from January 17, 2008, commenting on the violent effects of American colonialism on Kānaka ʻŌiwi, beginning with the loss of historical memory, as "Hawaiians forgot to fight". As it points to generations of Hawaiians enduring suppression and abuse, the poem is dark in its realistic, unromanticized portrayal of the loss of Hawaiian sovereignty for Kānaka ʻŌiwi. Yet, like generations of Hawaiian writers before her, Osorio forcefully states that, "Mana cannot be created or destroyed by man / So that must mean we still stand a chance / But we need to honor what's been left …to fight back". The concluding stanzas of the poem express Osorio's resolute determination to honor the past and fight back, presenting a rousing, encouraging call to action for the lāhui today:

> So I may have lost sight in the tears my ancestors once cried
> But I'll show you my pride
> Tattoo my moʻokūʻauhau to my tongue to never forget where my voice game from
> Who my loyalty is tied to
> And what nation my heart sings to
> I'll sing to you
> I'll chant continuously to show you that I am Hawaiian
> I have the scars and tattoos to show my alliance
>
> Because the second I start worshiping the red white and blue
> Pledging allegiance to a nation that turn our eyes red
> People white
> And hearts blue
> Is the second I know the fight is through
>
> And in 1893 we stood and promised to back Liliʻulani
> Daring to call ourselves the famous flowers of the land we weren't even willing to protect
> We promised to stand hand in hand fighting
> And here I stand
> At the palace
> ʻIolani
> Screaming this song
> And no one is listening
> Here I stand holding the hands of ancestors trying to find voices
> But what's a voice when no one is listening
> What's a song worth
> That it can overthrow opinions
> When no one is singing?

You should be ashamed of yourself
Because We should be singing
And when you finally feel like joining me
I will be here
Waiting
But not idly
I will be singing

Ma hope mākou o Lili'ulani[39]

[39] Ibid., 301–302.

Osorio's poem is a fiery proclamation of aloha 'āina and mana wahine, a demonstration of the loyalty to 'āina, identity, and nationhood still felt by Kānaka 'Ōiwi today. The poem ends with a line from Prendergast's "Mele 'Ai Pōhaku", showing Hawaiian determination to continue our fight for our nation, and our loyal dedication to our beloved Queen, symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty. Like human mo'okū'auhau that genealogically tie kānaka today with our ancestors of the past, Kanaka 'Ōiwi writing demonstrates its own literary mo'okū'auhau, intentionally referencing, remembering, and evoking both the sentiments expressed in past writing, and the collective desire for self-determination spanning political and literary expressions of the lāhui.

Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana (Conclusion)

Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana is a common ending of Hawaiian mele that means, 'and thus the story is told'. Hawaiian literary expression has continued orally and in print for thousands of years, and it has always included female voices, singing songs of female empowerment and of love for our 'āina, our land, and our nation. In *Chanting the Universe,* Religion professor John Charlot writes that,

> The fact that poetry has been used frequently for important occasions and purposes suggests that it has a utility thus far overlooked by historians … Indeed … poetry was felt … to be the most congenial form for the expression of feelings and philosophy. Only by achieving some appreciation of that poetry … will we be able to understand the concerns and coherence of certain Hawaiian policies and tendencies.[40]

[40] John Charlot, *The Hawaiian Poetry of Religion and Politics: Some Religio-Political Concepts in Postcontact Literature* (Lā'ie: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1985), 29.

It is not surprising that the majority of 'Ōiwi Wahine writers today are also highly active political and cultural activists who are typically involved in a number and variety of groups, organizations and activities. While African American writer Toni Morrison tells us that "all art is political", it seems the extension of this thought is that all artists are politically active in the causes we passionately support. For 'Ōiwi Wahine, this typically revolves not around women's rights and issues, but around community activism, sovereignty, and our 'āina, utilizing mana wahine as a culturally and politically appropriate way of engaging these issues.

Furthermore, many themes in our traditional literature carry over into our contemporary writing. All reach back and connect us as Kānaka Hawai'i with Papahānaumoku, our Earth Mother and 'āina, solidifying our relationship with

her. Hawaiian literature is filled with images of powerful, mana-filled females who have the ability to destroy men, trample, traverse, or destroy their territories (and take their lives) without fear of retribution, and who command their respect. As literature reflects cultural values and social practice, the strong female characters and themes of mana wahine in our traditional and contemporary literature demonstrate a value of women and women's mana that the highly sexist white male-dominated colonizers of the nineteenth century found dangerous, difficult to control, and ultimately, worked hard to destroy. Today, ʻŌiwi Wahine lead the fight for sovereignty, to regain political control over our land base and self-determination for our people; lead the fight against crime, poverty, and drug abuse, for better housing and education; and lead us in our artistic and literary production. It is our kuleana, our responsibility as the carriers and bearers of our nation, our future generations, as the descendants of our ancestral earth mother to cherish and protect our rich cultural legacy – our ancestral home, our traditions, our heritage. In this way, we mālama (care for) our men – our grandfathers, fathers, uncles, cousins, sons, nephews, and grandsons, as well as our own mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, so that they may nurture us too, as ʻohana and lāhui.