Incoronata Inserra

Toward a Truly Sustainable Hawai'i: Sustaining the Native Hawaiian Sense of Place

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka ʻāina i ka Pono
(The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness)
(Hawai'i State motto)

A hot topic worldwide, sustainability represents one of the biggest issues at stake for Hawai'i today, given its continued state as an occupied nation and a highly militarized zone, as well as its island configuration and fragile ecosystem. The accelerated urban development spurred by corporate tourism in the past forty years has further raised the cost of housing and living, while also strongly impacting the local environment and destroying numerous Native cultural sites, including *heiau*, or religious temples, and ancient burial grounds.[1] Discussing sustainability in the Hawai'i context, therefore, means not only discussing the ecological future of the archipelago and its self-sustaining potential, but also acknowledging and evaluating the past and present exploitation of the indigenous natural and cultural resources through colonization, militarization, and globalization. More importantly, as scholar Davianna McGregor points out, it means promoting a notion of sustainability that is built on, and respectful of the "indigenous spiritual knowledge of the land, and for the Kānaka ʻŌiwi [Native Hawaiian] ancestors who provided stewardship for the land".[2] The Hawaiian expressions mālama ʻāina (To care for the land) and aloha ʻāina (Love of the land) illustrate the Native Hawaiian perspective on the relation between human and natural spheres, as it is based upon a relation of mutual understanding and caring. As scholar Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa explains:

> In traditional Hawaiian society … it is the duty of younger siblings and junior lineages to love, honor, and serve their elders. This is the pattern that defines the Hawaiian relationship to the *ʻāina* [land] and to the *kalo*[3] that together feed *Ka Lāhui Hawai'i* [Hawaiian Nation] …. The Hawaiian does not desire to conquer his elder female sibling, the *ʻāina*, but to take care of her, to cultivate her properly, and to make her beautiful with neat gardens and careful husbandry.[4]

Kame'eleihiwa's statement shows how intimate the relation to the land is within Native Hawaiian culture as well as within other indigenous cultures around the world. It also illustrates a striking difference with the Western and capitalist ideas of landscape and land, which assume an external subject in the act of observing, controlling, buying, and selling.[5] Moreover, the cultural, spiritual, and familial qualities of this relation set the indigenous perspective apart and beyond the international environmental movement and ecological thinking. Rather, Native Hawaiian culture offers a distinct, indigenous "sense of place".[6] Hawaiian scholar George Kanahele defines the Hawaiian sense of place as the Hawaiian people's

[1] Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). See also Noel Kent, *Hawaii: Islands under the Influence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

[2] Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, "Hawaiian Sustainability", in Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, eds., *The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 212.

[3] *Kalo*, or taro, is the staple of the Native Hawaiian diet and, according to Hawaiian cosmogony, it is also an ancestor of the Hawaiian people.

[4] Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 25.

[5] See Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1998); Gregory Cajete, "A Sense of Place", in *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).

[6] Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996).

ability to relate to, and to know their space environment through language, astronomy, oral narratives, dance, and place names.[7] Given the Hawaiians' relation to, and knowledge of Hawaiian land, respecting and learning from their indigenous sense of place is essential for Hawai'i's community at large to build an ethically sustainable future for Hawai'i. Supporting sustainability in Hawai'i therefore means sustaining Native Hawaiian access rights to their ancestral land and cultural values.

In the following pages, I will explore issues of sustainability, as they are being discussed within Hawai'i's political, cultural, and academic circles, and as they have been represented by its contemporary literary communities since the 1960s. Through a comparison of these two spheres, I hope to show how the different and conflicting senses of place at stake within Hawai'i's contemporary scenario – as they are "known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested and struggled over"[8] – have over time not only contributed to the silencing of Native Hawaiian rights, but also represented a major obstacle to creating a truly sustainable way of living in Hawai'i. Fortunately, this situation has slowly started to change in the last few years, especially thanks to a growing support for the Native Hawaiian culture and rights on the part of the local community. For Hawai'i to become truly sustainable, however, it is necessary that the local community continue on this route, and toward a stronger and more consistent affirmation of Native Hawaiians' culture and their relation to land. Once the Native Hawaiian idea of sustainability becomes a socio-political and cultural reality, it can serve as an example for other 'small places' in the world struggling in the current globalized economy.[9] The Hawai'i example shows the importance of indigenous and non-indigenous groups working together to preserve the land and a close connection to it. What follows is the result of my seven-year-long living experience in Honolulu and my research experience at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. While my insights into Hawai'i's culture remain those of an outsider, I have personally witnessed the everyday struggles of the local population to survive in a costly and unsustainable tourist island-society.

[7] George S. Kanahele, *Kū Kanaka: Stand Tall, A Search for Hawaiian Values* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 175.

[8] Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 11.

[9] Steven Firth, "Globalization and the Pacific Agenda", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12.1 (2000), 178–192.

Sustainability in Hawai'i: A Brief Overview

The drastic changes to Hawai'i's sustainability in the last forty years have certainly not gone without notice in the local community. In particular, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a strong response to the extremely negative effects of overdevelopment on Hawai'i's natural and cultural environment. The protest organized by the inhabitants of Kalama Valley, as well as Waiāhole and Waikāne Valleys, against corporate development of the areas and the threat of their eviction helped the local community fully understand the dangers behind the local politics of development and encouraged them to take action against these politics.[10] The tenacious activity of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) to stop the exploitation of the island of Kaho'olawe as a site for military bombing practice, as well as Hawaiian activists George Helm and Kimo Mitchell's deaths during one of the

[10] Guy Nakamoto, "Land and Environment", in Robert H. and Anne B. Mast, eds., *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 91–101.

PKO's landings on the island, contributed to enhancing local awareness of the ongoing military abuses of Hawaiian land.[11] This feeling of protest ultimately turned into a Native rights movement – the Hawaiian Renaissance – that asserted "Native forms of sovereignty based on indigenous birthrights to land and sea".[12]

The many accomplishments of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty and cultural movements in the last twenty years – the establishment of Hawaiian language immersion schools, the culturally-based Native Hawaiian charter school movement, and numerous other cultural education programs – have been accompanied by a growing interest in a sustainable future for Hawai'i on the part of the larger population of the islands. An attempt to "recover the Hawaiian sense of place",[13] that is, their way of knowing and caring for Hawai'i's natural environment, seems to characterize political and socio-cultural movements in recent years. The numerous appeals to 'Keep the Country, Country' appearing on bumper stickers and during protest marches clearly endorse this general concern over the current politics of development and its effects on the local environment. Such a concern has also led to the fostering of an ecotourist perspective that respects the Native cultural heritage. However, in practice, this call for redesigning Hawai'i according to a Native sense of place – from both a strictly urban planning perspective and a socio-cultural one – has often worked merely as a politically correct slogan employed at public talks and for election campaigns. As demonstrated in the Waikiki Master Plan (1992), the return to a 'Hawaiian sense of place' has often been applied to urban development projects that in fact contributed to perpetuate a colonial perception of the Native culture.[14] Even the use of Hawaiian names in renaming streets and buildings appeals to a sense of nostalgia for something that is disappearing,[15] thus turning ecotourism into a "tourism that fetishizes echoes of a supposed authenticity now available mostly to those with the ability to pay".[16] In other words, the appeal to sustainability, now widely circulating within global tourism discourse, seems to concentrate its focus on preserving the landscape and environment of Hawai'i, but not necessarily on the well-being of its people, and especially of the Native population.

While corporate-tourism discourse remains ambiguous when it comes to preserving and respecting the Native Hawaiian cultural heritage, both the negative post-9/11 impact on the tourist industry and the recent global economic crisis have shown, once again, the fragility of Hawai'i's socio-economic structure. Hawai'i continues to pour huge amounts of capital into the corporate tourist industry, which guarantees only low-paid, unstable jobs to the local population, while greatly benefiting global corporations.[17] At the same time, an increasing number of academic, cultural, and community projects are built on the notion of sustainability – a key word in a state with limited resources and a strong dependence on global ways of production and consumption. To name only a few, the University of Hawai'i Office of Sustainability now offers a wide range of cultural programs and community initiatives, while also fostering education on these matters among local residents.[18] Meanwhile, the compelling promotional campaign to 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local', co-

[11] Kyle Kajihiro, "The Militarizing of Hawai'i: Occupation, Accommodation and Resistance", in Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 170–194.

[12] Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 66.

[13] George S. Kanahele, *Restoring Hawaiianness to Waikiki* (Honolulu: G. S. Kanahele, 1993), 175.

[14] Serge A. Marek, "Waikiki Virtual Reality: Space, Place, and Representation in the Waikīkī Master Plan", MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1997).

[15] Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma, *Historic Waikiki* (Honolulu: DownWind Productions, 2001), <http://www.downwindproductions.com>, 10 August 2010.

[16] Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai'i* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 92.

[17] Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism", in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 31–38.

[18] For more information, see the UH Office of Sustainability website: *SustainableUH* (2009), <http://sustainable.hawaii.edu>, 13 March 2011.

designed by the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and UH College of Tropical Agriculture, has shown a "statewide effort to help increase demand for, consumption of, and familiarity with locally grown commodities".[19] However, in my experience as a conscious consumer living in Honolulu, the primary target audience of this growing sustainable food movement largely remains the politically-aware higher-educated who can afford to buy at these 'sustainable prices' and the organic movement hipsters (mostly foreigners), while the larger local population continues to support the giants of corporate food industry such as Wal-Mart and McDonald's primarily. That said, things are slowly moving, as can be noted in the growing number of sustainable farms owned by local farmers and featuring several staples of Native Hawaiian diet such as the *kalo*. Moving beyond the fancy organic food market toward locally-grown products is a first important step toward sustainability.

On the legislative front, the Hawai'i Sustainability Task Force, founded in 2005, represents not only the biggest step made by the government so far, but also one of the most controversial aspects of Hawai'i's sustainability movement today. The work of the office has been compiled into the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan, which sets five main goals for Hawai'i's sustainable future, ranging from economic self-sufficiency and environmental conservation to community and social well-being. It is particularly worth reporting here on one of the five steps towards Hawai'i's sustainability as described in the plan:

> To preserve our island values, we need to recognize the primacy of the Kanaka Maoli while cultivating the active participation of people of all ethnicities in their practices. Community and ethnic organizations must be supported to ensure that our traditions continue to live and thrive through dance, festivals, education and art.[20]

Interestingly enough, while explicitly promoting Native Hawaiian cultural heritage as crucial to a sustainable future for Hawai'i, the statement fails to mention the need to ensure more sustainable land development politics and support Native Hawaiian rights to their land. Maintaining this support is crucial, since control over the land is the base for sovereignty – "the ability of a people who share a common culture, religion, language, value system and land base, to exercise control over their land and lives, independent of other nations".[21] As I write, Native Hawaiian access rights to their land continue to be threatened by land politics favoring the interest of the larger land owners and international corporations.[22] While this confirms the still divergent senses of place emerging from the different groups that make up Hawai'i's society today – the Native community, and the tourist, military, settler, and environmentalist groups – it also raises a number of questions concerning the sustainability project as a whole. How can sustainability become a constructive project that improves the living conditions of the local community without excluding some of its groups, and, more importantly, without contributing to the silencing of Native Hawaiian voices?

[19] UH College of Tropical Agriculture website: *Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program* (17 September 2009), <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/>, 13 March 2011.

[20] *Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Task Force* (2007), <http://hawaii2050.org>, 13 March 2011.

[21] Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 71.

[22] Anne Keala Kelly, dir., *Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai'i* (2008); see also Gordon Y. K. Pang, "Groups Protest Ceded-Land Stance", *Honolulu Advertiser* (28 December 2008), B1.

Native Hawaiian lessons in literary ecology

Having emerged in the late 1960s along with the Hawaiian Renaissance and the Native Hawaiian Sovereignty movement, Hawai'i's contemporary literatures have constantly explored the relation between the natural and the cultural and, in particular, the local politics of place. This strongly ecological perspective on the part of Hawai'i-based writers and scholars is mainly informed by the still rich and thriving Native cultural tradition.

The literary anthology *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, edited by Native Hawaiian writer and activist Dana Naone Hall and published in 1985, explicitly addresses the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land. As a first conscious effort to publish Native Hawaiian literature in English, *Mālama* also employs this ecological perspective to illustrate a Native Hawaiian aesthetics that is strictly connected to the place. In the poem "Ka Mo'olelo o ke Alanui. The story of the road", for example, Hall narrates the history of an old road on the island of Maui, now in the process of being destroyed. "[T]hose who propose [this project]" Hall reminds readers, "don't know that the road is alive",[23] since it bears the imprint of the gods that have walked upon it and contains the stories linked to their passage. Here, Hall is referring to a specific, well-known episode: the disturbance of a large Native Hawaiian burial site in the late 1980s, during the building of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Kapalua, Maui. This episode is also particularly famous because Native Hawaiians created a unified front to protest this development and the displacement of Hawaiian burial sites authorized by Hawai'i's state laws.[24] Their successful effort did not only help recognize Honokahua as a sacred site, but it also spurred the amendment of Hawai'i's law on historic preservation, Chapter 6E, to include "the care and treatment of prehistoric and historic burials".[25]

According to local writer and scholar Richard Hamasaki, the anthology expresses a specific "sense of place", a distinct "rootedness", thanks to the constant references to places and situations distinctly local, as well as to the author's use of both Hawai'i Creole English and the Hawaiian language.[26] On the one hand, this place-specific and direct knowledge of the natural world permeates Native Hawaiian literature, both oral and written, in English and Hawaiian; on the other hand, the poem, as well as the anthology as a whole, serves as a direct political message, especially since it was published at the same time that the road was being closed. The continued relevance of a publication like *Mālama* today confirms how much is yet to be done to ensure a sustainable future for Hawai'i. But beside its strong response to the local politics of development and the persistent abuse of Hawaiian land, *Mālama* also offers an alternative perspective to non-native literary works through its focus on the land and the sea; this perspective, in turn, illustrates Native Hawaiian aesthetics, which is strictly connected to their intimate knowledge of places. As Hall declares in the preface to the volume, "it is this sense of belonging to the place, since the landing of the first canoes that we honor in this issue".[27] In this

[23] Dana Naone Hall, ed., *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 148.

[24] See Franco Salmoiraghi, "Honokahua", *Mānoa*, 19.2 (2007), 24–35.

[25] Sara L. Collins, "Historic Preservation", in Howes and Osorio, *The Value of Hawai'i*, 203.

[26] Richard Hamasaki, "Singing in their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English", MA thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1989), 70.

[27] Hall, *Mālama*, 7.

sense, I believe that *Mālama* represents a crucial reference point for any literary work focusing on sustainability in Hawai'i.

Published only four years later, *Ho'omānoa. An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* enters the debate over land issues by focusing on further Native Hawaiian responses to the local politics of land. Here, the natural world is pictured as a threat to Hawai'i's population; such a transformation is reflected in the sense of loss felt by Native Hawaiians now that they no longer have access to their land, as suggested by the opening lines: "Nature has taken everything out of our hands / and we do not know whether to swim or fly".[28] A particularly interesting piece is represented by Hall's poem, "HAWAI'I '89":

> The way it is now
> few streams still flow
> through lo'i kalo [taro fields]
> to the sea.
> Most of the water
> where we live
> runs in ditches alongside
> the graves of Chinese bones
> to the green central valley
> where the same crop
> has burned in the fields
> for the last one hundred years …. (4)

[28] Joseph P. Balaz, ed., *Ho'omānoa: An Anthology of Contemporary Hawaiian Literature* (Honolulu: Kū Pa'a Inc., 1989), 1.

Since the *taro* (kalo) is the staple of the Hawaiian diet and, more importantly, it is genealogically connected to the Native population, destroying *taro* means contributing to the death, both physical and spiritual, of Native Hawaiians. The semantic opposition between "streams" and "ditches" well indicates this passage from a dignified past to a degraded present.

Joe Balaz's poetry featured in the same anthology, on the other hand, seeks to move beyond this past/present opposition by focusing on the present of the poet and by showing his continuity with the past. This strategy is clearly at work in the poem "MOE'UHANE" (Dream):

> I dream of the ways of the past –
> I cannot go back.
> I hike the hills
> and valleys of Waiawa ….
> I play in the waves of Waimea, and spear fish
> from the reefs of Kawailoa.
> I grow bananas, 'ulu [breadfruit],
> and papayas, in the way of the 'āina ….
> I cannot go back –
> I never left. (7)

The final line, "I cannot go back – I never left", is particularly significant since it links, both culturally and linguistically, past and present in the name of one, living culture. Retrieving Native traditions, as suggested in the first line of the poem, "I

dream of / the ways of the past", is therefore essential to reclaim one's identity as a Native Hawaiian in the present. In the poem "SPEAR FISHER", Balaz seems to give in, instead, to the past/present opposition, but only to oppose foreigners and locals, consumerism and sustainability, 'us' and 'them'. "In Kona / A Midwest businessman / caught a marlin, / and hung it upside down / on a wharf – / At Haleʻiwa / I caught a kūmū, / and I ate it" (37). Interestingly enough, the Native way, as described in these lines, is also different from the ecologist perspective on the preservation of marine wildlife.

In a similar way, poet, scholar, and nationalist leader Haunani-Kay Trask's poetry does not only denounce today's condition of Hawaiʻi's land, but also presents a specific political message in response to the politics of development in Hawaiʻi, of which she brings in concrete examples and then counteracts them from an indigenous perspective on place. Trask's poetry, therefore, goes hand in hand with her work as a scholar and activist. In "Agony of Place", a poem that appeared in the *Hoʻomānoa* anthology, Trask employs the notion of place both literally and metaphorically to describe the drastic shift for Hawaiians from order to chaos, and from life to death, due to colonization, militarization, and globalization: "in a land of tears / where our people go blindly / servants of another / race, a culture of machines / grinding vision / from the eye, thought / from the hand / until a tight silence / descends / wildly in place" (9). And yet, it is not real death that Trask envisions, but a torturing agony; in fact, the land is still there, still alive and beautiful. Ironically, its beauty represents a threat: "and yet / our love suffers / with a heritage / of beauty" (9). The mission of Hawaiian poets, scholars, and activists today consists in giving back voice to the land, and, in turn, in regaining their own voice.

Trask's poem "BLOOD ON THE LAND", in the collection *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (1999), is shaped as a chant of lamentation for the sad condition of the *ʻāina*:

> Mourning floods the *ʻāina*
> quiet oil of green
> yellowing
> *lāʻī* leaves
> ʻawapuhi
> crumbling at the root
> lizard skeletons wildly
> strewn …
> below pesticidal
> waterlands lazily
> killing
> sinister glare
> off a smoking sea
> and black
> illuminations
> as trees.[29]

[29] Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1999), 9. ʻAwapuhi is a type of ginger.

This image of degradation and death is reiterated throughout the book, until the Hawaiian soil has transformed into a huge cemetery, a "missionary graveyard",

characterized by the "smell of death / smeared across the land / killing in the heart" (13). Even in this case, the poet's expression of grief toward the current condition of the *'āina* gives voice to an explicit critique of the specific aspects of this condition: "heiau stones lie crushed / beneath purple resort / toilets" and "two thousand bodies / [are] exhumed for Japanese / money, developers' dreams, / and the archaeology / of *haole* knowledge" (9). These lines recall the controversy surrounding the building of the H-3 that led to the destruction of Hawaiian burial sites, and the one concerning the traffic in Hawaiian remains for the benefit of museum exhibitions. At the same time, the resilience of the indigenous culture is played out through the use of images and themes that are part of the Native tradition.

The poem "The Broken Gourd" in Trask's latest collection (2002), reiterates the idea that the pre-colonial harmony between the people and the land is lost, since the land, a source of life, has transformed into an "aching earth".[30] Blood covers a cracked ipu, now incapable of producing clear sounds, perhaps a reference to the forced silence of the Native voices: "a cracked *ipu* / whispers, bloody water / on its broken lip" (11). Past and present are strongly contrasted here: the tranquil and peaceful life of traditional times gives way to "smelly shores / under spidery moons, / pockmarked maile vines, / rotting *'ulu* groves, the brittle clack / of broken lava stones", so much so that Hawai'i becomes "a poisoned *pae 'āina* /swarming with foreigners / and dying Hawaiians" (12–13). In Trask's view, corporate mass-tourism is responsible for completing a century-old process of destruction. In the poem "Lāhaina, 1995", for example, Trask describes the effects of tourist pollution on the small city of Lāhaina, on the island of Maui: "drifting trash /clogs the shores, coating / the lost minds / of burnt-red tourists /staining the sand / with acrid oils" (18).

The second part of the book, "Chants of Dawn", offers, however, a more hopeful vision of the future, represented by the image of the Hawaiian people that "arise and go, / sacred, into dawn" (39). Death and destruction here make space for a regenerated life, where Hawaiians can finally live a reciprocal and righteous life in their land: "out of the elegies / of love, let us enter / summer's last sun" (58). Through love, both in its sense of aloha and in its sexual aspect, the land and the people are ultimately regenerated. This point takes us back to the first poem of the collection, "Born in Fire", which introduces the reader to a Hawaiian sense of place through an invocation of the goddess Pele. By representing both the power of volcanic destruction, the "trembling breast of Pele" (3), and the power of regeneration that follows the eruption, Pele remains a crucial source of life and energy, also sexual energy, from which the poet-activist draws constant inspiration and courage. At the same time, Pele's "craterous womb" (3) seems to suggest her protective role. The continuous references to Pele throughout the book therefore function as a powerful source of *mana*[31] and hope both for the poet and for the Hawaiian people.

[30] Trask, *Night is a Sharkshin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 11.

[31] *Mana* stands for divine power that comes from the gods or *akua*. See 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 at Mānoa, 2007).

While the indigenous sense of place represents a major component of contemporary Hawaiian literature in English, it is also often reflected in the work of non-indigenous writers living in Hawai'i. Rodney Morales, who has written about Native Hawaiian cultural values and about the continued abuse of indigenous land, immediately comes to mind. An example of this type of work is the anthology *Ho'iho'i Hou*, edited by Morales in 1984 and entirely devoted to the history of Kaho'olawe and the abuses of its land and resources.[32]

[32] Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho'iho'i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

For the aim of this paper, however, it is important to look at Morales' novel *When the Shark Bites* (2002), in which the writer explores Hawai'i's land issues through the format of a family saga, since within the local literary scene it is the first notable example of a fictional work devoted to Hawaiian land issues. The novel focuses on two generations, that of Henry Rivera and his wife Kanani, who have directly participated in the Hawaiian Renaissance and the protests against the military exploitation of Kaho'olawe; and that of their older son, Mākena, still unaware of his own position in the world and of his genealogy. By the end of the novel, not only does Mākena fully understand his role within his family and community, but he also ends up continuing the cultural inheritance left to him by his parents and by his biological father, Keoni (a clear reference to George Helm). The acquisition of this spiritual inheritance therefore signals Mākena's coming of age.

The complex intersections between different characters and historical moments in the novel also link Mākena's individual moment of *Bildung* and a collective one on the part of the local community, including Henry and Kanani, who finally realize that they have given up Keoni's dream in exchange for the middle-class dream of a comfortable and safe family living. This reader is tempted to interpret this element as the author's direct criticism of the local community's general disinterest in Hawai'i's land issues, and as his effort to help foster the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture. While Part I of the novel is set in 1976, the time of the PKO's landing on Kaho'olawe, Part II brings the reader to 1991, and to UH student Alika's 'visitations' in search of oral-history information regarding Keoni's life. As the Riveras start bringing back memories of their past as activists during their interviews with Alika, a Japanese company buys the whole area of Waikīkī where they live, forcing them to move to the Wai'anae Coast. While their reaction is one of defeat, their neighbor Beth refuses to give up and is arrested. The episode gives Kanani the opportunity to express her hatred of the local developers,

> people who ... refused to give in to the beauty of the surf at sunrise, unless it was a painting they had bought, or unless they could charge others for a look; people who refused to see the effect their decisions and methods had on others, refused to know how the lives of so many were diminished by their insatiable wish for more more more.[33]

[33] Rodney Morales, *When the Shark Bites* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 55.

As the past vicissitudes of the Riveras intersect with the current political events, Mākena becomes involved with the repatriation of Native Hawaiian remains. In a

crucial scene, Mākena steals the remains of Keoni and returns them to the land, thus contributing to change the course of his life as a Hawaiian, and that of the Riveras' family life toward a more righteous destiny.

The importance of recuperating the Native Hawaiian way is also underlined throughout the novel by the use of Hawaiian moʻolelo, and in particular the story of the shark-man Kawelo. While Mākena's grandma facilitates his and his younger brother's encounters with the sharks through her stories – "'Dis is da time of da manō.' She wen' look at my brother 'Analu and said, 'Da time of da sharks"' (114) – the Riveras ultimately learn to deal with the many "land sharks" in their life, such as the Japanese investors that had bought their house in Waikīkī. The importance of sharks in the Native culture, as well as that of learning how to deal with them – reiterated by the continuous references to Louis Armstrong's song "Mack the Knife"[34] – ultimately become a way for the characters to learn to read the signs of life.

While Morales's novel has been criticized by several community members, concerned that his impersonation of Native Hawaiian voices ends up perpetuating the century-old colonial silencing of indigenous voices, if anything, this publication has hopefully inaugurated a more sincere concern over Hawaiian land issues on the part of non-native writers. However, for this to happen, it is necessary for non-indigenous writers and community members to recognize our own position within Hawaiʻi's socio-political scenario and help Hawaiians reach self-determination.

The publication of *The Best of Bamboo Ridge* (1986) – a selection of Hawaiʻi's writers (mostly of Asian descent) previously published by the local Bamboo Ridge Press – had much earlier posed questions regarding the role of non-indigenous writers within Hawaiʻi's literary scene. In particular, local writer Darrell Lum's definition of "local literature" in the preface to the volume had generated several debates, since it included "a distinct sensitivity to ... the environment (in particular that valuable commodity the land)".[35] This explicit, but ambiguous, reference to land as one of the defining elements of the 'localness' testifies to the circulation of the land-issues debate within Hawaiʻi's cultural scenario at the time; yet, it does not clarify the role, and responsibilities, of the non-native groups in this debate. In this sense, it has been read as a figurative example of "Asian settler colonialism".[36] According to Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, the settler is characterized by his/her "laying a claim, both through the literal possession of land and the physical occupation of disputed space"[37]; Trask contextualizes this definition by declaring Hawaiʻi a "settler society", in which "the indigenous culture and people have been murdered, suppressed, or marginalized for the benefit of settlers who now dominate our islands".[38] While the ongoing investment of settlers into Hawaiian land is testified by their connection with the dominant middle-class group that emerged after WWII and took power during the Democratic years,[39] the problematic position of Bamboo Ridge comes from its publishing few Native writers over the years and, at the same time, its ambiguous appeal to the land and environment of Hawaiʻi which fails to mention both the importance of land for the native population and their ongoing struggle for sovereignty.

[34] The song also contains the line "when the shark bites", which appears in the book's title.

[35] Eric Chock and Darrell H. Y. Lum, eds., *The Best of Bamboo Ridge: the Hawaii Writers' Quarterly* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1986), 4.

[36] Candace Lei Fujikane, "Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawaiʻi", in Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 1-42.

[37] Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies", in Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Boston: Blackwell, 2000), 361.

[38] Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 25.

[39] George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii: The Democratic Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1985).

A particularly controversial example of a non-native writer writing about Hawaiian land is the work of the local Japanese writer Lois-Ann Yamanaka, who has in fact attracted much attention both locally and nationally not only because of her artistic merits but also because of her problematic representation of Hawai'i's racial scenario.[40] The novels *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*, *Blu's Hanging*, and *Heads by Harry*, published from 1997 through 1999, work together as a trilogy centered around the *Bildung* of the main characters, all locals of Japanese ancestry. The final step of this growing process also coincides with a conscious, and yet problematic, rediscovery of Hawai'i's natural world.

The representation of Native land emerging from *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* is especially important to understand Yamanaka's ecological perspective as well as her larger project as a local Japanese writer.[41] While in *Blu's Hanging* the land "becomes a backdrop to human-centered drama, a place to escape the torments of one's life",[42] as is typical of much Euro-American literature and art, *Wild Meat* seems to show a deeper connection to Hawai'i's natural world by refusing to describe it solely as a landscape, that is, as a natural backdrop for the character's actions and feelings. Rather, the writer constructs a *land motif* that serves as a narrative strategy to help Lovey complete her *Bildung* process and forge a specifically 'local' identity for herself and her family. As the girl's father, Hubert, brings up his childhood memories connected to Kīpū plantation village, these images become alive in his daughter's eyes. So, while for Lovey's grandfather Japan represented both his place of origin and his final return after death, for Lovey and Hubert Hawai'i becomes the main reference point for their life, her home-land. At the same time, as ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui illustrates in her analysis of *Blu's Hanging*, the natural scenario described in this book is equally devoid of the spiritual and familial quality that characterizes a Native Hawaiian sense of place. Yamanaka's use of this *land motif* to claim a 'local' identity for her characters further contributes to constructing "colonial view[s] of 'āina".[43] What is more, by piecing together her family history, the protagonist-narrator reconstructs the larger history of Japanese migration to Hawai'i and through her vivid imagination recreates, on Hawaiian land, both Japan's and Hawai'i's plantation world, a world where Native voices have disappeared. Even as they build strong connections to Hawai'i's natural world, the characters in *Wild Meat* ultimately make clear political claims to Hawaiian land, thus testifying to their position as settlers within the local socio-political scenario. Since local Japanese occupy a privileged position within Hawai'i's society, these political claims end up perpetuating Native Hawaiian displacement through Yamanaka's erasure of Hawaiians from their ancestral land, as well as the silencing of Native Hawaiian access rights.

As these examples illustrate, both the local political discourse on sustainability and the ecological sentiment expressed by 'local literature' present numerous contradictions, while also echoing each other in terms of their ongoing exclusion of Native voices and their active ignorance[44] of the Native relation to land. Even when attention has been given to Native voices, it has often been done by

[40] Fujikane, "Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*", in Joyce N. Chinen, Kathleen O. Kane, and Ida M. Yoshinaga, eds., *Women in Hawai'i: Sites, Identities, Voices*, Special Issue, *Social Process in Hawai'i*, 38, 1997), 40–61.

[41] Lois-Ann Yamanaka, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1996).

[42] ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, "'This Land is Your Land, This Land Was My Land': Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of 'Āina in Contemporary Literature of Hawai'i", in Fujikane and Okamura eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 159.

[43] Ibid., 158.

[44] Paul Lyons, *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7–15.

appropriating indigenous values and in order to carry out personal or group politics and interests. I can see how, in the last few years, extensive work has been conducted to reach sustainability on a socio-political level, and the growing role of Native Hawaiian literary and scholarly voices within the local cultural scene is equally promising. But in both cases, the only way to be really sustainable is to respect, and learn from, the Native Hawaiian sense of place and relationship to the land, as it is brilliantly represented through its literature and as it is asserted by Hawaiians' struggle for sovereignty.