

## Abstract

Dramatic Historicizing of Hawai‘i: The Juxtaposition of Indigenous Culture,  
Colonization/Americanization, and 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Issues in the Island Plays and Writings of

Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl

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Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, a prolific playwright and novelist, has become quite well-known for her works in critical dramatization of Hawai‘i’s colonial past, most often representing the Hawaiian Islands’ cultural-socio-political changes through the thoughts and actions of doubly-marginalized female-indigenous Hawaiian characters. Four selected historiographical plays, clearly illustrating the crucial role of women in the formation of Hawai‘i’s past, present the juxtaposition of the indigenous culture with the onset and continuation of the effects of Americanization on the Hawaiian Islands—most notably excessive tourism and military use affecting the culture and the land. Kneubuhl’s texts, as well as the performance of her plays and works of living history, are both educational and provoke contemplation. Three of the four plays under consideration in this research are gathered in the anthology, *Hawai‘i Nei: Island Plays*. These include *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu* (set in the 1820’s), *Emmalehua* (set in 1951), and *Ola Nā Iwi* (1994). The fourth, a living history play, *January 1893*, was produced and performed in January of 1993 on historic sites in Honolulu as part of the 100<sup>th</sup> year commemoration of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy.

An informed analysis of these discourses—political, social, moral, religious and spiritual—adds a strong voice to the current conversation concerning Hawai‘i’s right to exercise self-determination. Kneubuhl’s four selected plays illustrate Hawai‘i’s resistance to colonization beginning with the arrival of the American Protestant missionaries in 1820, and portray highlights of the outcomes of the cultural clash between Native Hawaiians and the intruding foreigners who desire to claim the land and govern it.

The idea of *voice* runs as a strong thread through these four major plays—specifically the feminine voice as illustrated by the central female figure(s) in each. Kneubuhl’s use of dramatic performance constitutes an effective strategy in producing a wider range of enlightened understanding regarding Hawai‘i’s history, portraying Hawai‘i’s ruling class (*ali‘i*) as strong, wise, insightful leaders. By engaging viewers of her plays (and readers of her published works) in active emotional and intellectual participation, Kneubuhl creates an opportunity to rethink or reform opinions regarding Hawai‘i’s past. Her plays continue to promote a more open-minded discourse that acts to preserve and renew Hawai‘i’s unique indigenous culture, and to consider or reconsider Hawai‘i’s social-political future and place in the world. Kneubuhl’s works, a type of protest literature, tend to produce a sense of indignation concerning the greed, injustice, and illegality of many acts of the past that have had an adverse impact on the Islands and the Native Hawaiian people. Kneubuhl’s dramatic works support sovereignty through education, helping to increase understanding of Hawai‘i’s true history. The aim is to create more informed discussion and debates on the topic of sovereignty.



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by

Patti May Parsons

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## Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to those of Hawaiian ancestry, and to Queen Lili'uokalani in response to her timeless plea for her people:

Oh, honest Americans, as Christians hear me for my down-trodden people! Their form of government is as dear to them as yours is precious to you. Quite as warmly as you love your country, so they love theirs. ...do not covet the little vineyard of Naboth's, so far from your shores... It is for them that I would give the last drop of my blood; ... Will it be in vain? It is for the American people and their representatives in Congress to answer these questions. As they deal with me and my people, kindly, generously, and justly, so may the Great Ruler of all nations deal with the grand and glorious nation of the United States of America—*Hawai'i's Story* by *Hawai'i's Queen Liliuokalani* 406-7.

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Heartfelt thanks to all my professors in the Multicultural/Transnational Literature specialization of the English Department of East Carolina University who are enriching world thought through teaching the (inter)discipline of Multicultural-Transnational Literature.

Special thanks to Dr. Bardill who persevered through revisions of this work in my endeavors to respond to her astute commentaries and corrections. Also warm appreciation for my other Committee members, Dr. Richard Taylor, who graciously opened a space for me in my first class at East Carolina University, and Dr. Andrea Kitta whose course on Folklore piqued my interest in oral storytelling and ancient myths (thus adding high interest to my work on the history of Hawai‘i, preserved for centuries through chant and performance).

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## Chapter 1

### Indigenous Voice and Portrayal of Timeless Issues

#### Introduction

One of the main purposes of studying Multicultural-Transnational Literature is to increase understanding and awareness of the experiences of (marginalized) indigenous peoples through the windows provided by their own texts. The works of playwright, Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Caucasian descent, were first brought to my attention in a course on literature from the Pacific. I was intrigued not only by the excellence and creativity of these plays which feature powerful and important Hawaiian women of the past, but with how these women (historical or representative) helped shape the history of Hawai‘i in response to the foreigners who began arriving with increased numbers in the latter part of the 18th century. Thus began my quest to gain some understanding of what was occurring behind the vignettes in Kneubuhl’s plays, what discourses were in operation among the diverse groups associated with Hawai‘i’s history, and how these interchanges of thought have brought about the present conversation concerning self-determination among Hawaiians.

The current question regarding sovereignty (including why there is a question) is exceedingly complex and cannot be considered intelligently without some background knowledge of Hawai‘i’s beginnings (basic philosophy of the culture in its origin) and its history in relationship to foreign countries, especially the United States. Further, one must consider the Hawaiian worldview that all things originated from the creative-mother earth and therefore all aspects of the world are related. In contrast, the Cartesian Paradigm of humans as distinct, separate, and superior to the rest of creation constitutes a theory that promotes division and domination. These fundamental differences form the silent underpinnings of culture clashes and

colonization that cause reverberations deep within the collective psyche, a silent force ever operating in the formation of history.

Although Kneubuhl's plays are both historical and educational, they also comprise a body of protest literature meant to provoke readers and audiences into thoughtful debates about current issues, especially in the sovereignty movement. Therefore I have chosen to analyze Kneubuhl's works through New Historical literary criticism which interprets historical literature from a narratological perspective, as stories from varying groups with diverse viewpoints. New Historicism does not view history as a succession of linear facts, but as narrations in flux that disparate societies tell themselves and argue to others. While ordinary historical methods focus on what is considered fact, and hold texts up to past documentation to test accuracy, New Historicism seeks to understand the discourses behind the texts, and is especially sensitive to stories relating to the marginalized. According to Lois Tyson, author of *Critical Theory Today*, new historicists ask how an event has been interpreted, and "what do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" (282). New Historicists are not looking for facts; they are only interested in interpretation (283). Historical texts are treated as narratives to analyze according to the discourses, stories, or viewpoints they represent (at the time of writing, at the time of the setting, and at the time of performance or reading). Kneubuhl's historical plays dramatize past events with an aim to illustrate their relevance to the present. The playwright most often features marginalized historical female figures or fictional characters, thus providing a feminist viewpoint often lacking in historical texts or dramatic history.

This research focuses on various discourses that Kneubuhl highlights in the vignettes of her selected plays—such as that of the early missionaries from America versus the voice of the Native Hawaiian leaders, and issues regarding gender as perceived in the West in contrast to that

practiced on the Hawaiian Islands. Later we find the rhetoric of the political Missionary Party against the Monarchy, complicated with the discourse of the Congress of the United States. At the approach of statehood, we find the expressed hopes and desires of young Hawaiians anticipating security and success through pursuit of the American Dream in contradistinction to those desiring to hold to more traditional Hawaiian ways. Finally, we have the discourse of the rights of indigenous peoples to claim the remains of their ancestors from museums and bring them back to their homeland to reinter them ceremoniously and with dignity, versus the nearly universal resistance of curators and collectors.

The first of Kneubuhl's four works under consideration in this thesis is *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*. This play provides a dramatic portrayal of the impact and influence of Protestant American missionaries in Hawai'i beginning in 1820. The second, a living history play (or reenactment), *January, 1893*, ironically shows how the Protestants' descendants formed the "Missionary Party" that overthrew the Constitutional Monarchy in that year. The third play, *Emmalehua*, set in 1951, illustrates a fragile and threatening time for the preservation of Hawai'i's culture. Through a motif of sacred versus commercialized hula, Kneubuhl dramatizes the conflict between post World War II youth who are entranced with the "American Dream" and the schism this creates with those who yearn to preserve the ways of their ancestors. Lastly, *Ola Nā Iwi: The Bones Live*, set in 1994, presents a satire of 19<sup>th</sup> century phrenology and highlights the greedy rush in those days to unearth and collect ancient bones in the highly lucrative career of grave digging. Thus the present problem of countless indigenous remains residing as items in the collections of museums, of private collectors, and various other institutions that are reluctant to return them.

Kneubuhl's themes of resistance to colonization, reclamation and protection of Hawaiian culture, and hope of restoration of the rights of Native Hawaiians, bind these four plays into a coherent whole. While it is not possible to examine all aspects of this vast topic of colonization and injustice as suffered by the indigenous Hawaiian people since first contact with foreigners, a study of the moments in history dramatized in Kneubuhl's works can produce a clearer, broader understanding of Hawai'i's situation and current status.

The movement to educate Hawaiian people about their own history is the most common strategy employed by proponents of the Hawaiian people's right to self-determination. Awareness brings a level of protection, while ignorance of the facts or of the indigenous viewpoint, can lead to subjugation and loss. Kneubuhl's plays present Hawai'i's history in a most engaging way, involving the senses and emotions through theatrical presentation and published texts. Furthermore, the enactments keep alive Hawaiian traditions of oral history. Storytelling and reenactments align with Hawaiian tradition, thus creating a very natural way by which to disseminate pertinent historical information to educate and inform.

The Playwright: Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl

Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl (of Hawaiian, Samoan, and European heritage), an internationally acclaimed playwright and author, was born in Honolulu in 1949. Her career as a playwright was not her original intent, but the course of her life-work changed upon taking a playwriting course at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa. There she discovered her talent and love for this art form. Ultimately she obtained an MA in Drama and Theatre from that university.

Kneubuhl's work with the Judiciary History Center in the *Ali 'iōlani Hale* historic government building in Honolulu served as a springboard for ideas in writing living history plays

aimed at educating the public about Hawai‘i’s history. Her passion for portraying historical female figures from the islands’ past was fed at the museum by the availability of multitudinous items documenting such stories. The feminist, historical niche Kneubuhl has created for her work is seen in multiple and layered portrayals of the doubly-marginalized Native women who pushed past borders, beyond restrictions, and against the grain of colonialism.

In an interview with Tom Pearson in New York, Victoria Kneubuhl credited her uncle, John Kneubuhl (writer for *Hawai‘i-Five-O* and *The Fugitive*) as the biggest influence in her career, stating that he reinforced her values about the theater as “a place and a venue where we could use our voice to talk about our own culture and our own history, that it wasn’t just a place to be entertained, but could be a meaningful platform to look at cultural and social issues” (Pearson). Dramaturgy as an art form does not come under the strictures associated with most attempts of the marginalized to communicate their message. The classification, theatre history, as opposed to factual textbook accounts, allows for creativity in writing and in presentation, thus engaging audiences in thoughtful contemplation of the indigenous voice through drama.

Kneubuhl’s ability to use history in an imaginative manner allows her message of both protest and protection to reach a wider audience—to dramatically engage those who might not be moved or motivated by history texts, and to provide a Native Hawaiian viewpoint regarding past events. For example, in the *Conversion*, female co-ruler, Ka‘ahumanu experiences a dream in which voices of the ancient Hawaiian gods challenge her past actions and plead that she do something to save the people. Thus drama can give voice creatively to a probable inner psychological struggle to bring the audience into greater empathy with the historical figure, the issues faced, and the complexities involved. It is acceptable and expected that theatrical history as an art form may take such liberties.

Through the support and encouragement of Dennis Carroll (Kneubuhl's professor and chair of the Department of Theater and Dance at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa), Kneubuhl launched her playwriting career at the *Kumu Kahua Theater* in Honolulu. This theater, devoted to producing plays about local Hawaiian history written by local playwrights, was "very hungry for [her] work right away," she explains (Pearson). Her first full-length play was produced at this theater. It was an early rendition of *Emmalehua* that utilized traditional versus commercialized hula to convey the idea of the necessity to protect Hawaiian heritage, sacred practices, and language (through the hula chants). This production, however, under the direction of her uncle, John Kneubuhl, presented a different ending than she had provided, one that did not reflect her intentions. Contrary to Kneubuhl's purpose, this early version undermined the protagonist's devotion to the sacred hula while "far more sympathetically" presenting the opposite attraction towards Americanization (*Hawai'i Nei* xxiii). Kneubuhl's later re-write and production of *Emmalehua* shows a more experienced playwright dedicated to providing a voice for marginalized Native Hawaiians.

Kneubuhl notes that her work has been greatly influenced by early British feminist writers and playwrights, especially Caryl Churchill, Louise Page, and Pam Gems. She points out that "the *Conversion* really reflects some of those values that early feminist theater had, like a play with women ... from different social classes ... where everybody's part is integral and equal to each other's part" (Pearson). In the *Conversion*, Kneubuhl uses five 19<sup>th</sup>-century women of different cultures and classes to develop the story of Ka'ahumanu's resistance to colonization as co-ruler of Hawai'i. This resistance to foreign takeover is shown in her unlikely, but wise, conversion to Christianity and quest for bilingual literacy in an effort to preserve sovereignty—as any nation considered heathen and uneducated were prime targets for colonization. On behalf

of the controversial figure, Ka‘ahumanu, Kneubuhl emphasizes that her reign occurred at a most difficult time in Hawaiian history, and that it was Ka‘ahumanu’s intent to present a dignified, acceptable, and intelligent nation to the world as a protection against the designs of foreigners.

Through the interactions of the five women with one another in this play, the *otherness* or strange unfamiliarity of their different social and religious values, beliefs, and thought-processes, as well as their diametrically opposite outward appearance and dress, are thoughtfully and delightfully illustrated. The playwright portrays major communications among primary groups through these characters. Kneubuhl explains that there is a wealth of historical characters and scenarios from which to choose in the development of feminine roles in social, political, and religious systems in the history of Hawai‘i (Pearson). She explains: “I keep coming back to this theme of how the past collides and influences the present,” noting that “even though some of my pieces are categorized as a historical play, some of those issues that are in the play are still issues in our community today” (Pearson). Kneubuhl remains passionate about writing that involves Polynesian women in history, and employing the theater as a place where the voice of the oppressed can be heard, where ancestors can be honored, and where thought-provoking ideas can enrich the current conversation regarding culture, philosophy, politics and change in Hawai‘i.

Kneubuhl has received various awards for her work. In 1994, she was given the prestigious Hawai‘i Award for Literature, as well as the Hawai‘i Heritage Center ‘Keeper of the Past Award.’ She was named one of the *Extraordinary Women of Hawai‘i* in 2001 (Foundation for Hawai‘i’s Women’s History and the Native Hawaiian Library of Alu Like, Inc.). In 2006, she received the Eliot Cades Award for Literature, and the following year, the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa bestowed the honor of ‘Distinguished Writer in Residence’ upon her.

Theatre of Oceania: Dramatic Voice Preserving History, Tradition, and Culture

Dennis Carroll, Kneubuhl's past professor and mentor, explains in his article, "Hawai'i's 'Local' Theatre," that commercial lūaus and hula entertainment do not comprise the only performance opportunities in Hawai'i. One can find authentic presentations, rather than those that signal the commodification of Hawaiian culture. For example, there is the "local" theater that has eagerly promoted and produced Kneubuhl's works from the very start of her career as a playwright. The theater company, *Kumu Kahua* (Original Stage) stands alone in its stated commitment to "locally written, locally set plays" (125). This creative way of authentically preserving Hawai'i's history is in line with their traditional means of communicating and retaining important historical events—orally and through performance. As Miles Xian Liu notes, Kneubuhl "believes in the transformational power of the theatre" as the potency of drama about "social and political issues" provides a "communal experience ... that compels members of the audience to reexamine what they believe" (157). Theatre performance, and texts of the plays, afford opportunities for the Native Hawaiian voice to be heard in an unfamiliar, dramatic and impressive manner.

The tendency for Hawaiians to turn to the past to contemplate the present, to learn from the actions and outcomes of predecessors, suits theatre's performative time well. According to Tracy Davis ("Performative Time") the past's relationship to the present "is not just a historiographic issue of how the past is narrated but also an ideological and strategic one of how the past is experienced as present" (142). She explains that when theatre historians "collect and utilize...traces of what was," and bring these to the present in living reenactment, historical events are preserved. Life is "ridden with choices," Davis argues, and these "choices predicate events" which in turn affect our present situation (143). We have, for example, in *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, the decision of the American Board of Foreign Missions to send

missionaries to Hawai‘i in 1820, the choices of the missionaries themselves in accepting the call and in their interactions with the Native Hawaiians, and of course, Ka‘ahumanu’s significant choice to convert to Christianity. In performative time, a past event lives in the moment of now as an internal experience from which one leaves at least slightly different than before.

Carroll points to the popularity of local Hawaiian plays with their emphasis on the Islands’ history. He is especially enthusiastic about those works of Kneubuhl’s which are “dominated by a painful sense of cultural loss and dispossession” (125). Human nature generally tends to become indignant or even outraged when self-willed, greedy, prejudiced individuals perpetrate large-scale injustice and not only get away with it, but seem to be rewarded instead. Such is the case of the conspirators who overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy (*January 1893*), whose performance time brings the occurrences of 121 years past into the present moment (in the centennial performance as well as in present reading). The momentous injustice portrayed endlessly reverberates, seeking closure, and finding expression in the current Native Hawaiian Sovereignty movement. Kneubuhl’s work at the Hawai‘i Mission Houses Museum and the Judiciary History Center (1987 – 1993) provided great opportunities for deep research, discussion, and additional opportunities to write about Hawai‘i’s history. Kneubuhl’s submergence into Hawaiian history underlies her theatrical works. The clarity and fullness of her historical knowledge can be seen in her book, *Ali‘iōlani Hale: A Sentinel in Time*—a resource especially useful in clarifying background information essential to a deeper understanding of her plays.

## Chapter 2

### The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu:

#### The Missionaries (social and religious takeover)

The story of Ka‘ahumanu, widow of Kamehameha I, exemplifies the struggle of Hawai‘i’s *ali‘i* (ruling class) with foreign, invading powers in the decades following Captain Cook’s initial contact with the Islands on January 18, 1778. This powerful woman, Ka‘ahumanu, co-ruler with Kamehameha’s son, Liholiho (1820), followed her husband’s example of adopting Western ways for the purpose of presenting a nation acceptable to world powers as a strategy to ward off colonization. In varying degrees, and upon their own terms, 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawaiian leaders adopted Western weaponry, religion, education, and politics into their own unique culture. Kneubuhl leaves the question of Ka‘ahumanu’s conversion to Christianity open as to its authenticity—did she truly convert or was it a political decision to ensure the independence of the Islands? Perhaps Hawai‘i’s quick evolution into a Christian nation of literate people with a Constitution primarily illustrates a wise response to rightly perceived threats of colonization.

The first performance of the *Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu* took place September 1, 1988, at the Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu. It has since been performed in many parts of the world and is one of Kneubuhl’s most popular plays. Kneubuhl hopes that the portrayal of Ka‘ahumanu will help to persuade readers and audiences of the intelligence and strength of the Hawaiian leaders at that time (especially the female *ali‘i*) and offset the general misconception that Native Hawaiians were easily influenced by foreigners. In a public discussion held after the performance of the *Conversion* at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington D.C. in 2009, Kneubuhl explains: “I wanted to deconstruct this idea that Native

Peoples are children who need to be led around, that our chiefs didn't have the intelligence to have informed choices for themselves" (Pearson). She points out the complexities and difficulties faced by Hawaiians at that time—the great depletion of the Native population due to diseases brought by foreigners, and the intruding forces of major countries who harbored designs on possessing this island nation that had been recently unified as such by Kamehameha I.

Fascinated by this controversial historical figure who abolished the gods of Hawai'i's past and adopted Christianity, Kneubuhl found Ka'ahumanu's story to be rich material for her work. This play and its production align with the playwright's purpose of utilizing the stage (and her performance writings) as a forum to promote informed opinion and discussion of past and present social and political issues in Hawai'i. A primary goal is to reach and engage a larger audience. When this art form actively involves the audience member or reader with even one isolated moment in history, some level of learning has occurred, and perhaps intellectual curiosity is stirred. To understand the Hawai'i of today, thoughtful consideration of Hawai'i's past is required, and Kneubuhl utilizes dramaturgy, the art of theatre, to bolster this knowledge.

#### Cast and setting

The *Conversion* is set in the years 1820 to 1825—from the time the missionaries leave for Hawai'i until Ka'ahumanu's decision to officially become a Christian. The cast of five women and their intertwining stories provide the feminine voice that is central to the *Conversion*. The play opens with brief monologues by two historical figures, Sybil Bingham and Lucy Thurston, women caught up in the religious fervor of New England in 1815. It is the time of the Second Great Awakening. Each of these women feels a strong calling from God. Sybil (as she is referred to in the play) explains that she “felt the calling of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” and “confessed [her] faith before the congregation” (1.1). Lucy, likewise, states that her family

rejoiced in her “pious calling” (1.1). By 1819, each has suffered disappointments that emotionally contribute to their decision to marry missionary men who are complete strangers for the sake of the mission to Hawai‘i. The men are prohibited from going unless they have a wife, and the women can only participate if they are married to one of the appointed ministers. The other major female characters include two full-blooded Hawaiians, Ka‘ahumanu, in her 40’s, Pali, in her 20’s, and a mixed Hawaiian/Caucasian, Hannah Grimes, in her 20’s. Pali and Hannah are companions to Ka‘ahumanu. Ka‘ahumanu identifies herself to the audience as “*Kahina Nui* (co-ruler) and widow of Kamehameha”—indicating the magnitude of her ruling power (1.2).

The stage, reflecting Honolulu in the 1820’s, is divided into four areas: Hannah’s house, Ka‘ahumanu’s house, the Mission house, and an open area located front and center. These houses symbolize three major discourses, that of the *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians), the *ali‘i* or ruling class (along with those of other classes within the court), and the American missionaries’ with their Western ideals. The open space in front arguably represents the open-mindedness required to critically consider these various points of view.

### A Feminist Perspective

Kneubuhl’s passion for writing about Polynesian women gives an extra edge to her work as a playwright through creatively highlighting a feminine perspective in witness to historical events, providing a discourse that is rarely found in either dramatic or academic works on Hawaiian history. Even the towering figure of Ka‘ahumanu is dwarfed in Western writings that favor her male counterpart, the co-ruler of the Islands, Liholiho. For example, *Hawaii: A History*, by Ralph Kuykendall and A. Grove Day, refers to “the reign of Liholiho,” rather than the reign of Liholiho and Ka‘ahumanu (40). Almost apologetically, Kuykendall mentions that

Kamehameha I also appointed his favorite wife, Ka‘ahumanu, *Kuhina Nui* (co-ruler) in order to strengthen the throne.

Kuykendall explains that “Liholiho and his advisors” took steps to abolish the old system of *kapu* (forbidden things under the religious system of the old gods of Hawai‘i) with no mention of Ka‘ahumanu (40). However, historian Jennifer Thigpen argues in her book, *Island Queens and Mission Wives*, that it is Ka‘ahumanu herself who insists upon breaking the *kapu* (48). The particular *kapu* that forbade men and women to eat together is abolished as Ka‘ahumanu and Liholiho’s mother, Keōpūolani, urge Liholiho to dine with them publicly at a feast in Kailua (49). Ka‘ahumanu reasons that since the gods do not punish the foreigners who break the *kapu*, nor the Hawaiians who dare join them, the gods must be *false*. At the dining table, the terrified faces of the women become “as white as the full moon” when the male, Liholiho, sits down to eat with them—but nothing happens (2.2). In the absence of penalty and by the pronouncement of Liholiho (again, at Ka‘ahumanu’s urging), *kapu* is forever broken and the ancient religious system abolished.

In *The Conversion*, Ka‘ahumanu later muses over this event and questions herself. She affirms what she knows and wonders over what she does not: “I knew our lives would change forever. I knew that when I did this thing. . . . Have I done right? Or have I done great evil?” (1.5). There is uncertainty within her, as with many good leaders, concerning her personal ability to guide and govern the people. The doubt is very real and quite human, for she is the first to rule the people without the *kapu* and the control it wielded over the people. Kneubuhl is wise in asking if Ka‘ahumanu has done right, or if she has done a great evil—in that this question remains a controversial and divisive issue among Hawaiians, one that is subject to multiple and complex interpretations. In the “Introduction” to *Hawai‘i Nei*, Craig Howes notes that Kneubuhl

“asks hard questions” but does not “offer a final word” (xix). In the play, Ka‘ahumanu consoles herself: “I took down what I knew to be false,” then follows this statement with the recurring metaphoric inquiry, “How will I steer the canoe?” How will I rule the Islands and protect the people? (1.5).

### The American Foreign Mission to Hawai‘i

Thigpen recounts the well-known story of Opūkaha‘ia from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that motivated the American missionaries’ voyage to Hawai‘i. Opūkaha‘ia was a Native Hawaiian who went to New England and converted to Christianity. In 1808, he became acquainted with Edwin Dwight, a student at Yale who taught him to read and write. He lived for a time at Dwight’s cousin’s home (Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College). This Christian family taught Opūkaha‘ia the tenets of Protestant Christianity and converted him. His story became popular through its publication in *The Narrative of Five Youths*. It formed the basis of the discourse on foreign missions as it provided proof that the heathen (or savages) could be evangelized when properly educated, and that there was a place (Hawai‘i) in need of salvation and filled with people capable of receiving the Gospel. A group of young men in the seminary at Yale used the story of Opūkaha‘ia to approach the General Association of Congregational Clergy with the idea of organizing an American foreign mission. Two years later, The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed (ABCFM).

### Female Political Power

When the missionaries arrive and find that the *kapu* is broken—that idolatry has been abolished—they are absolutely certain that this is a miracle from God that has opened the way for them to Christianize the population. To the missionaries, Hawai‘i is truly ripe for conversion.

To Ka‘ahumanu and her people, Hawai‘i is finally free of unwanted restrictions. Little does Ka‘ahumanu realize that the small band of missionaries waiting onboard *The Thaddeus* for permission to come ashore are the ancestors of those who would overthrow the kingdom.

Liholiho and Ka‘ahumanu have little interest in the American missionaries waiting in the harbor. They are just one more of many incoming ships from countries around the world—one more group with religious, political, and economic designs on Hawai‘i. Although it will be a novelty to meet *haole* (white foreign) women for the first time, Ka‘ahumanu decides: “Perhaps I will come to see them—after I go fishing” (1.5). The delay in obtaining permission to land is misinterpreted by the missionaries as the Hawaiians’ “great indolence and total disregard to the worth of time” (Thigpen 51). The frustrated missionaries make continued attempts to gain permission to come ashore and establish a mission. In Bingham’s memoir, *A Residence*, he records the incident of their formal in-person request of Liholiho—the missionaries are astonished at the king’s reply that he “should wait till the return of Ka‘ahumanu [who has] gone on a fishing excursion” (52). Unable to grasp the fact that a female actually has such power, the report published by the male missionaries in the *Missionary Herald* states that the chiefs “‘pretended to be waiting’ for Ka‘ahumanu” (52). Kuykendall writes that “after much argument, the king agreed to the plan” for their mission, again leaving Ka‘ahumanu out of the text completely (44). Two weeks later, the missionaries received permission to come ashore for a one-year probationary period.

The American Protestant missionaries, devoted workers who arrive inflated with agendas of conversion and Manifest Destiny, are viewed as insignificant by the Native Hawaiians. The missionaries, however, are parasitic—once they enter the land, they and their descendants begin to take over everything—the religion, the economy, the land, and the government. In truth, the

missionaries are commissioned to do more than simply bring the Gospel to Hawai‘i. The missionaries are enjoined to “aim at nothing short of covering those islands with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches; of raising up the whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization” (Thigpen 43). In short, the ABCFM envisioned making Hawai‘i a replica of their Protestant American society, or rather, the *ideal* of it. The missionaries were charged with effecting a cultural transformation. In contrast, the missiology of today promotes a “cultural sensitivity ... of the church toward the world” (Thorsen 344). It views the past enculturation inflicted by early mission work upon foreign societies as oppressive and harmful. The more progressive mission teachings point to the danger of “unfairly imposing their world-view upon others” (345). This view is diametrically opposite the mandate of the ABCFM to the missionaries of 1820.

The male missionaries focus on the conversion of Liholiho, but he is more inclined toward strong drink than religion, and they find him a very difficult case. The male missionaries’ plan is to convert the *ali‘i*, especially the king, and let this conversion “trickle down” to the *maka‘āinana*—common people (Thigpen 62). While their endeavors are slow and difficult, the women missionaries’ interactions prove easy and natural, for they are the seamstresses filling requests from the *ali‘i* for Western clothes, thus affording opportunity for extended visits for fittings and conversion conversations.

Although *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu* is considered a historical play that attentively portrays characters and events in accord with primary sources, it is not a documentary or even a reenactment—it is a play. Tracy Davis, author of “Performative Time,” in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, argues that although “historians might quibble” over creative representations that artistically deviate from traditional straight-forward historical facts,

“they would have to concede that theatre operates by different principles than history, judged by its uniqueness as art not its salience—or efficacy—as instruction” (157). Kneubuhl’s background in museum history and education, however, brings greater accuracy and pedagogical value to her plays than may ordinarily be found in this type of production. The *Conversion* creatively parallels recorded history quite closely. Davis explains that while “theatre cannot truly show or reenact the past: it reminds us of the past by pointing, citationally, to markers associated as the past and may do so powerfully and persuasively” (157). Bits of dialogue and powerful soliloquys in the *Conversion* serve as markers to major discourses of that time, especially for Hawaiian female *ali‘i* and the missionary wives.

Kneubuhl’s intent to utilize the stage informatively in regard to Hawai‘i’s history has not gone unnoticed. Diana Looser, in her scholarly article, “‘Our Ancestors that We Carry on Our Backs:’ Restaging Hawai‘i’s History in the Plays of Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl,” points out that Kneubuhl, of all Pacific playwrights, “is the one who has developed the most sustained relationship between theatre and historiography” and has “experimented most consistently with historical drama as a political and pedagogical tool” (74). Looser argues that in the *Conversion*, Kneubuhl is “invested in examining the contradictions, adjustments, and equivocations that comprise the social relations of encounter and change” (75). Kneubuhl includes an ethnographic piece in the first act illustrating the first encounter of missionary wives Lucy Thurston and Sybil Bingham with the Native Hawaiians.

Watching as Native Hawaiians come out to their ship on small boats, Lucy and Sybil realize that the Natives have on very few clothes. Sybil instructs Lucy: “Lower your eyes and wave politely” (1.6). They observe that the Hawaiian women are “grotesquely large” (1.6). In contrast, the Hawaiian women see the missionary wives as having “puny bodies” with “sickly

pink skin,” and worse, they have “no smiles” (1.6). Ka‘ahumanu, upon meeting them, asks: “Why do you wear so much clothes?” (1.6). The private conversation that ensues between Pali and Hannah carries a pitying tone for the “revoltingly ugly” women, as well as an epiphany concerning *haole* (white foreign) men “who come to these island [and] go so crazy over our women” (1.6). They wonder how *haoles* ever manage to have children.

Moreover, there is the misinterpretation in regard to gift-exchange. Thigpen explains that the gifts of food the *ali‘i* lavish on the missionaries upon their arrival are meant to demonstrate their power. However, the gift inherently demands reciprocation. The missionaries, on the other hand, assume that they are being honored because of their God-appointed mission and that the Hawaiians are grateful to them. Thigpen argues that gift-giving “served as a primary means of communication between these culturally distinct peoples,” although the attached meanings were not clearly understood (65). Additionally, gift-giving infers reciprocation, thus tying the groups together in continual interaction.

Lucy and Sybil offer a “message of hope” about Jesus to which Ka‘ahumanu fairly explodes: “We don’t need a new god. .... We want no gods. .... The gods brought only sorrow and unhappiness to our people. .... We will not have that again” (1.6). What Ka‘ahumanu will have, however, are new clothes. The Western style clothing desired by the female ruling class, made only of luxurious fabrics in an array of bright hues and designs, was worn more as ornamentation than for any purposes of modesty, or it was worn to make a visual political statement to the world—Hawai‘i is a civilized nation.

The seeds of the later political Missionary Party in Hawai‘i, responsible for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, can be seen in the basic ideals of the ABCFM. The Board not only embodied great religious zeal, it also held strongly to “emergent American political ideas about

the place of the United States in the world and the legitimacy of U.S. expansion” (Thigpen 35). In the minutes of its First Annual Meeting, the ABCFM stated that Christ would take “the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession”—foreshadowing Hawai‘i’s annexation and statehood (35). The American Foreign Mission would Christianize the world and bring “the supremacy of American cultural values” to everyone (36).

The *Conversion* highlights the incredulity of the missionaries when confronted with the phenomena of feminine leadership and power. In E.J. Westlake’s, “Theoretical Foundations and Intercultural Performance: (Re)writing Nations on the Margins,” it is noted that women in most societies need to be empowered, that their role “as a creative force at the root of nation building” requires attention, and that it is fitting to “analyze the ways in which women (re)write the nation on the margins” (19). In contrast, female Hawaiians of the ruling class are a dynamic force at the heart of nation building, particularly Ka‘ahumanu who would not tolerate “a lowly place [under the men of the priesthood] any more” (*Conversion* 1.2). The missionary wives, on the other hand, never intended to rewrite a nation or even to actively participate in converting Hawaiians—a duty assigned to the men. However, their prescribed place as quiet ‘helpmeets’ for the evangelizing male missionaries was foiled by the female Hawaiian *ali‘i* who insisted on their full participation in gift-exchange, conversation, education, and audible prayer. The missionary wives were forced to step over boundaries written by the white male church leaders—a parallel to Ka‘ahumanu’s breaking of *kapu*—thus coming into greater freedom and engaging in more meaningful activity. In Kneubuhl’s play, women emerge as central to shaping the course of Hawai‘i’s development as a nation.

Thigpen argues that while missionary texts glory in their triumph of converting the Hawaiians during the early missionary period (approximately 1820 to 1840), “Hawai‘i’s royal

women used their considerable political capital to create important diplomatic alliances and to erect protective political structures” (9). So did the missionaries “triumphantly convert”

Ka‘ahumanu, or did she engage in an astute political strategy? This question is developed throughout the entire play, concluding with Ka‘ahumanu’s final soliloquy:

Beware, [the foreigners] will come like the hordes 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 must fight now with our quick thoughts and our grasp of foreign ways. ... 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 come to us, *now*. (2.8)

Kneubuhl is careful not to either exonerate or vilify Ka‘ahumanu, but rather stresses “the impossibility of the situation” (*Hawaii Nei* xix).

As the American Protestants began to convert the *ali‘i* and *Kanaka Maoli*, mission writers capitalize on these conversions—representing the Hawaiians as savages whom the missionaries have transformed to civilized Christians. These success stories prompt numerous financial donations, but the inflated and biased reporting taints the Foreign Mission activities with personal pride and hypocrisy.

## Social Issues

In the intertwining of the five female protagonists’ lives, Kneubuhl considers a particular sub-class within the Hawaiian culture—the *kauā*, or outcasts. Pali, a favorite of the Queen, secretly belongs to this hated group. In scene seven of the first Act, Hannah and Pali observe Lucy mending a tear in her dress. They inquire about it. Lucy explains that she became involved in a fight in the village as she endeavored to help a man who was being beaten. She remarks that the man had “funny marks on his forehead and around his eyes” (1.7). Pali explains that he is a *kauā*—one of the lower class prohibited from living among the other Hawaiians. Lucy sees no

difference between how that man looked and all other Hawaiians. Pali explains this as the very reason they are marked. Hannah expresses great contempt and hateful discrimination for the *kauā*. She cannot explain why they are “just no better than animals” and offers an anecdote of a girl who had a baby by a *kauā* once. “If that happened to me,” she hisses, “I would kill it!” (1.7). Later it is revealed that her friend, Pali, is the daughter of the *kauā* that Lucy saved.

The sexual practices and opinions on marriage found among the Hawaiians of the 1820’s constitute another source of alarm for the missionaries. The Native people, with their casual attitude about intimate encounters, attract sexually aggressive *haole* men. Conversations about sensual pleasures are common. For example, during a game of cards (an activity condemned by the missionary wives) Ka‘ahumanu, Hannah, and Pali are discussing Jones, the American counsel, and his obvious physical desire for Hannah. Suddenly Ka‘ahumanu asks Pali: “When will you find a man for such pleasure, Pali?” (1.8). In hindsight, one can see why her reply deflects the question: “Because I didn’t find one I wanted” (1.8). The real reason is her hidden *kauā* identity.

Once her lowly status is discovered, Pali is abruptly ejected from Ka‘ahumanu’s court by the displeased ruler. The missionary wives shelter Pali, and Ka‘ahumanu warns them that they now have a “filthy thing” in their house (1.7). Sybil and Lucy do not condemn Pali. They teach her to accept herself in the Lord. Pali agrees to study the Bible and prepare for baptism. She feels that Sybil and Lucy have offered her another chance at life.

Soon an epidemic of venereal disease annihilates even more indigenous people than previous foreign-brought viruses and germs. Lucy tells Sybil: “Some women came while you were gone” (1.9). They had “the venereal distemper...sores...running sores” (1.9). One of the women begs for medicine, but Lucy cries, “I told her to go away, there is no medicine” (1.9).

The missionaries brought the Bible and the Gospel, but not the healing power that Jesus, the one they preached about, said would accompany believers. In contrast to their Master's injunction to heal the sick and cleanse the lepers (a command that could be perceived to include cases of VD), Sybil laments: "But how will we, with so few doctors among us, ever be able to stay the hand of death which every day tightens its grip on the people?" (1.9). Thus Kneubuhl addresses this astonishing death-rate of the Hawaiian people, the problem of morality in Hawaiian society, and the missionaries' helplessness in the face of this epidemic.

When asked if this disease is common in America, Sybil explains to Ka'ahumanu that good Christian women do not have intimate relationships with men to whom they are not married. Astonished, Ka'ahumanu inquires, "Then how is it that they get children?" Sybil, in equal amazement states, "By getting married!" (1.9). Ka'ahumanu is "amused" and explains to Sybil that getting married is not what produces a child! The missionary wives circle back to their original intention—to have the royal woman make a decree in accord with Christianity's moral mandate in order to stop the disease from spreading. Ka'ahumanu immediately realizes the gravity of the situation and orders that "all women and men who have this sickness may only go with each other" and that those with the disease be marked (1.9). Horrified by Ka'ahumanu's interpretation of their recommendation for purity and morality, Sybil manages: "Perhaps it would be better to forbid people to do ... what they do" (1.9). Innocently, Ka'ahumanu asks why. Sybil explains that it is a sin, to which the Queen asks: "You don't like it? ... You don't do it for the great pleasure of it?" (1.9). The embarrassed missionary wives deny having any pleasure whatsoever in intimacy. Ka'ahumanu sympathetically sighs, "You poor ladies!" (1.9).

The relationship of Hannah and Pali to the Christianity urged on them by the mission wives ultimately move in two different directions. For a time, Hannah is devoted to Christianity,

but, as Dennis Carroll explains in “Hawai‘i’s Local Theatre,” its “circumscriptions on the expression of sexuality outside marriage” lead Hannah to finally reject it (135). Pali, on the other hand, “embraces the new religion as welcome deliverance from her outcast status in the old order” (136). While it is often difficult to break away from sensual pleasures, it is not difficult to flee from the pain of rejection and condemnation.

#### Lucy’s Disease and Ka‘ahumanu’s Sickness

The topic of healing reemerges when Lucy discovers a lump in her breast and Ka‘ahumanu becomes so ill that it is feared she might die. Lucy confides to Hannah that she has cancer (between statements confessing her malignant hatred for the Natives she has come to save). For example, Lucy confesses to Sybil: “I can control the way I look before them, but I can’t help the revulsion I feel. I can’t bear to be touched by them, by those dark, dirty hands. . . . It’s wicked, I know, but it’s true” (1.12). Those who tend toward mind-body theories might well believe that Lucy’s illness is connected to her prolonged animosity and intense guilt over these feelings.

Lucy turns to the doctor for surgery, and her breast is removed. Sybil cannot tolerate the nursing required; it is too nauseating. Pali, with whom Lucy has been most sharp, steps in to change the bandage. As these women bond in courage and kindness, it is perceivable that animosity, racism, and resentment also receive a healing touch. In a highly Christian act that precedes her ‘formal’ training in the Scriptures, Pali consistently administers the post-surgery care, thus illustrating simple goodwill and kindness binding wounds of clashing cultures (2.8).

Ka‘ahumanu’s sickness follows a soliloquy expressing extreme stress in dealing with the forces of foreigners pressing in on the kingdom, the deaths and decline of old chiefs and

counselors, and the loss of people to diseases. The grieving Ka‘ahumanu repeats a *kanikau* (“a mourning chant”) reprinted in the play by permission from the Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii (2.3). Dennis Carroll explains that in “local” theatre, “chant and/or hula transform otherwise realistic scenes into stylized episodes that transcend realism, and in which the *kaona* (hidden meanings) may add metaphorical significance to the play” (134). Ka‘ahumanu’s sickness is attended by darkness and strange voices in a dream sequence.

The royal woman is left alone, lying on a mat, covered with a quilt. The first Voice of the dream sequence inquires: “Why did you destroy the old ones?” followed by three voices echoing, “Why?” (2.3). Voice 1 charges: “Your people are dying!” followed by the other three pleading that she do something (2.3). It is noted that there are “too many *haole*” (2.3). The voices enjoin the Queen to take care of her own people. The issues are listed: warships, other governments, greed for sandalwood, women, rum, chiefs that cannot lead, not civilized, too much sickness, taking the land, too hot, not enough children anymore. The question is repeated: “Why did you leave the old gods?” (2.3). Everything is dying—can she not do something?

Ka‘ahumanu is grieving almost to death over the social, religious, and cultural changes that grow in magnitude every day, and her own diminishing power in guiding and governing the people. Looser argues that the “surreal fever sequence” illustrates “interior conflicts manifested by a series of voices from her subconscious” (78). The Queen Regent is condemning herself for the loss of so much life—the death of so many of her subjects. She is losing confidence in her ability to “steer the canoe,” to lead the people in the right path amidst the onslaught of foreign powers.

In the next scene, Sybil, Lucy, and Pali are in attendance. Ka‘ahumanu has a high fever. The frightened Pali blurts out: “Put her in the stream” (2.4). It is the Native remedy to bring a

fever down—the cold water. Sybil thinks it will make her worse and Lucy says, “Such a stupid belief!” causing Pali to leave quickly (2.4). Sybil reprimands Lucy for her sharp tongue and sends her to get the doctor. Meanwhile Ka‘ahumanu awakens and tells Sybil she has been to “the place of fires” (2.4). Sybil assures her that Jesus saves from such a place and Ka‘ahumanu decides to “try one of these prayers to Jesus” (2.4). The missionary wife feels inadequate to pray with the Queen and suggests she wait for Reverend Bingham. “No,” says Ka‘ahumanu, “it’s you I wish to share my first prayer with” and they continue to say the Lord’s Prayer as the lights dim (2.4). Kneubuhl uses this example to show how the missionary wives are forced to more active work than the ABCFM outlines or condones. It may also point to an event that touches Ka‘ahumanu’s heart in regard to Christianity.

Kneubuhl continues to trace Ka‘ahumanu’s struggle over her decision to abolish the gods. Near the conclusion, she explains to Sybil that the gods “ruled over us in ways [she] did not like,” and she “took them down” (2.7). Then she articulates her observation of the *haole* god who “has a strong hold” on the hearts of those “who choose him” (2.7). She knows that if she chooses this god, the people will follow her, but she is concerned because “he is the god of white men” (2.7). Her deepest fears are expressed in confidence to Sybil: “...it seems that the *haole* wish to be god over all. I will never be able to stop them here. There are too many ships, too many guns, too many diseases. If I take up this god perhaps there will be some good, some peace. Other nations will see that we believe in the same god and not think us ignorant savages” (2.7). The royal woman wonders if the foreigners will ever “lose their contempt” and “cease to feel that they must be lords over us” (2.8). In her closing remarks to Sybil, Ka‘ahumanu uses the recurring analogy of steering the canoe, a pattern Kneubuhl employs to emphasize the responsibility and role of this female *ali‘i*.

## A New Way for the New World

In a conversation with Hannah, Ka‘ahumanu explains, “The world changes before our eyes every day and we must change or be lost . . . the people need a new way for the new world which comes to us. We will have laws. We will be Christian people” (2.8). Diana Looser suggests that this decision actually harmed the future of the islands by consolidating “the missionaries’ status and that of their descendants and compatriots” (78). This scholar points out that the *Conversion* affords thoughtful audiences the opportunity “to evaluate the choices available” to Ka‘ahumanu and “understand her dilemma” (78). She feels that Kneubuhl has presented Ka‘ahumanu as “a complex person in an untenable situation, seeking a pragmatic compromise between Native and foreign, old and new ways, in the face of unbridled Western immigration” (80). Certainly the *Conversion* presents an intriguing production that allows for a clearer, more empathetic view of Hawai‘i’s past, and that promotes a more informed opinion regarding the islands’ present cultural, religious, and social concerns.

## *January 1893*

### One-hundred Year Commemoration

Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's living history play, *January 1893*, staged over a three-day period to reenact the overthrow of the kingdom of Hawai'i, constituted an important part of the 1993 centennial observance in Honolulu to memorialize the events through dramatization. It was performed on the Palace grounds and historical district where the events originally occurred. Kneubuhl considered the reenactment an educational project that would benefit and enlighten both Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians at the time of performance as well as into the future. The five-act, nineteen-scene play captures the essence of this dramatic event and alludes to the discourses behind these scenarios. Although Kneubuhl's positionality is on the side of the indigenous and their rights of self-determination (stolen by the takeover), one can utilize the dialogues and quoted historical passages to investigate the streams of thought within various and conflicting groups that interacted to shape the Hawai'i of today.

Not only was the reenactment on the historic sites attended by a huge audience (fluctuating from 500 to well over 20,000 at a time), the drama was also transmitted live by the Hawaiian National Broadcast Corporation. This recording has been preserved along with a Companion Booklet, *Three Days in January*, containing important primary documents, including President Cleveland's message to the Senate and House of Representatives. This same year (the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the takeover) the Hawaiian Legislature resolved to encourage "the promotion of debate revolving around the future of Hawai'i as a Pacific Island society, within or without the United States of America; ..." (*Three Days* 24). Kneubuhl was commissioned to write *January 1893* by the *Hui Na'auāo* (a community project made up of more than forty-five

Hawaiian organizations dedicated to educating people concerning historical issues concerning Hawaiian sovereignty<sup>1</sup>).

It is one thing to read about the events of January 1893, but quite another to witness them acted out in the very places where they occurred, and exactly one century later. Kneubuhl's talent for bringing the past into the present moment in performative time for her audience must have multiplied in intensity during these three days. Perhaps it is not coincidental that Hawai'i's sovereignty movement began in earnest following the Centennial Commemoration. The reenactment, along with many other activities, operated as a call to action for many.

In Dennis Carroll's, "Hawai'i's Local Theatre," he notes that Kneubuhl's play incorporates both dramatic embellishment and documentary exactitude, quoting liberally from primary source materials—particularly the abdication speech by Queen Lili'uokalani. Thus Kneubuhl's play, in its dramatic reenactment, not only alludes to the history of the Hawaiian Monarchy preceding its overthrow, but explicitly utilizes passages spoken by key figures. To emphasize the importance of this reenactment and the commemoration in 1993, the Royal flag of the Kalākaua dynasty replaced the American flags over government buildings, and Hawaiians favoring restoration of independence marched with the flag of the Hawaiian Kingdom upside down to illustrate a nation in distress (Carroll 144).

The reenactment, designed to educate its audience concerning the events of the overthrow explains the origin of this distress. The quotes, speeches, and creative dialogue in this living

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<sup>1</sup> A nation or state's supreme power within its borders. A government might respond, for example, to criticism from foreign governments of its treatment of its own citizens by citing its rights of sovereignty (The AmericanHeritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition).

history play convey a sense of the injustice inflicted on the Hawaiian Queen and her people during those three days of 1893, the illegality of the overthrow, and the subsequent and continuing right of the Hawaiian people to exercise self-determination. The lapse of time does not nullify the unjust actions or change the fact of Hawai‘i’s present legal status as an illegally occupied nation. Consequently, those present at the 1993 commemoration who were in favor of regaining sovereignty gave voice to their protest with the inverted Hawaiian Kingdom’s flag.

John Waihee III, former Governor of Hawai‘i (1986 – 1994) and Chairman of Hawaiian Affairs is a supporter of Hawaiian sovereignty. As a panelist on *Insights: PBS Hawai‘i*, in 2013, he argues: “I don’t think you can say 125 years is that long of a time for Hawaiians.” He speaks of his grandfather who cried when they lowered the Hawaiian flag, adding: “That intensity runs through our community.” Hawaiian self-governance is not just a theory to Waihee, he believes it will improve the quality of life for Native Hawaiians—and many agree. Kneubuhl’s living history play and the Centennial Commemoration in Honolulu contributed to the idea of Hawaiian sovereignty and aided in bringing this issue to its present high level of energy.

### Historical Background

To situate and more fully understand the three-day period of the overthrow and those directly involved, it is helpful to refer back to *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu*, set in 1820 to 1832 (see preceding chapter). The monarchy began with Kamehameha I and continued for decades beginning with his widow and son, co-rulers Ka‘ahumanu and Liholiho (1820). As discussed in the previous chapter, Ka‘ahumanu’s reign coincided with the arrival of the first Protestant American missionaries. One might ask if Ka‘ahumanu’s decision to convert (and “steer the canoe”—the nation—into Christianity) impacted the future generations of Hawaiians

adversely due to the resultant empowerment of the line of American missionaries in politics and land ownership.

Certainly the zealous proponents of the American Protestant Missions movement who wrote articles circulated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, capitalized on Ka‘ahumanu’s conversion as one of their major success stories. They took pride in their strategy to win converts through teaching literacy, and heralded this education as the key to reforming the heathen. Historian Jennifer Thigpen, however, argues that the Queen and other royal women were not “capitulating to the Westerners in their midst” but rather “deployed a kind of strategic accommodation as a means by which to articulate Hawai‘i’s political legitimacy to a foreign audience” (100). The goal for all of the *ali‘i* (ruling class of Hawai‘i) was to maintain Hawai‘i as an independent nation. Thigpen concludes that the royal women who converted to Christianity acted with political wisdom in efforts to benefit their people and protect the integrity of Hawai‘i. The *ali‘i* understood that to be perceived by the world as an ignorant and heathen nation invited colonization. Conversion and literacy in both English and Hawaiian were their wise means of resistance and defense. Additionally, Western culture was brought into their government, as seen in the creation of the first Constitution (1840) during the reign of Kamehameha III. These measures, evidence of a civilized and intelligent nation, were purposefully and carefully implemented to balance with Hawai‘i’s Native culture, language and identity.

In hindsight, one of these measures, the ongoing inclusion of missionary descendants assigned to major government posts, should have been avoided or at least lessened, as these men evolved into the powerful anti-royalist Missionary (or Reform) Party that eventually turned on its benefactors. Also, had Kamehameha III (1823-1854) heeded the vigorous protest of Hawaiians

against the sale of property to these individuals and families, their wealth and power would have been curbed. His successor, Kamehameha IV (1855-1863) attempted to decrease the power of the missionary descendants who were already discussing annexation to the United States.

In 1864, Kamehameha V provided a new Constitution for Hawai‘i, one that governed the kingdom harmoniously for 23 years. During his reign, pressure for annexation from Americans on the Islands (primarily, missionary descendants) rose. These missionary descendants seem to have lost the primary mission of Christianization, and to have magnified the secondary ideal instead—the stated purpose of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to promulgate American expansion in keeping with the idea of *manifest destiny*<sup>2</sup> (Thigpen 43). The missionary descendants became wealthy land and plantation owners, business men, lawyers and politicians. Their desire to make Hawai‘i part of the United States ultimately drove them to make bold moves against the Constitutional Monarchy in their push for annexation. Nor was their only motive so purely patriotic or noble—there was the realization of imminent and immense personal wealth and power just waiting for those in charge after the change.

#### King David Kalākaua

Kamehameha V died without naming a successor and without any children. William Lunalilo was elected by both popular vote and by the Hawaiian legislature, but ruled for only one year before his death (1873-1874). David Kalākaua was next elected to the throne. His sister, Lili‘uokalani, was his successor and ruling monarch during the takeover. In Kneubuhl’s book, *A Sentinel in Time*, she presents the favorable Hawaiian viewpoint concerning Kalākaua as a leader

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<sup>2</sup>The doctrine or belief that the expansion of the United States throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

who “saw an opportunity to promote an era of stability, continuity, prosperity, and peace” (38). He certainly established international recognition for his country as the first Hawaiian king to ever travel around the world, taking every opportunity for diplomacy.

In Niklaus Schweizer’s article on Kalākaua in *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, he notes that although Hawai‘i’s population during the reign of King Kalākaua was still predominantly *Kanaka Maoli*, “the mortality rate of the Native people exceeded the birth rate with depressing regularity” while the Caucasian population continued to increase (107). In a genuinely caring act, King Kalākaua mandated that the Board of Health increase its efforts to save the lives of Hawaiian babies. He also lifted all taxes from Hawaiians with large families as an extra incentive to increase the Hawaiian population. Kalākaua took many measures to preserve Hawaiian customs and traditions. For example, Kalākaua was responsible for the transcription of the epic poem of Hawaiian creation, lauded by German scholars as one of the finest pieces of literature in the world (*Three Days* 15). Another strong instance of unifying Native Hawaiians in their cultural identity was in the king’s revival of hula. Noenoe Silva notes in *Aloha Betrayed* that Kalākaua’s efforts “strengthened the identity of *Kanaka Maoli* as a people proud of their past and of their achievements” (90). This “legacy of national pride,” she continues, “has persisted to this day” (90). The public displays of the chants (*mele*) and dances of hula had not been seen for decades until this revival, although devoted groups had assiduously kept the sacred tradition. These performances naturally caused the missionary descendants to become outraged as they considered the hula obscene and anti-Christian.

Kalākaua was a student of law, an engineer, and a military strategist. He was the first king to travel around the world, and the first of a Christian country ever to visit Japan. He increased Hawai‘i’s diplomatic posts to nearly 100, and signed treaties with almost every major

nation in the world—each acknowledging the sovereignty of the Hawaiian kingdom (*Three Days* 15). Despite this world recognition, conspirators banded together to form the ‘Hawaiian League’ with the intent to take the government into their own hands.

These conspirators were primarily descendants of the Calvinist missionaries who owned much land and who had greatly benefited from the reciprocity treaty Kalākaua made with the United States concerning the sugar industry. Kneubuhl argues that “as the wealth of this class increased, so did its desire for political control” (*Sentinel* 38). Moreover, their Calvinist upbringing serve to instill self-righteousness in them, a repulsion toward “pomp and circumstance in general and monarchy in particular,” and a belief that wealth proved one to be chosen by God to be saved (Schweizer 107). These men represent generations of radical and severe religiosity of a strict and condemnatory type who reveled in relentless and fervent debates over theological issues, and who gripped their families (and converts) in a stern hand. For them, Manifest Destiny was simply a matter of time.

In 1887 “under force of arms and threat of death to himself, his supporters and his family, Kalākaua signed the [well-named] Bayonet Constitution, the name reflecting the method of its adoption” (*Three Days* 15). This tremendously disliked Bayonet Constitution transferred the power of the Monarch to a party-controlled Cabinet (American missionary descendants and wealthy sugar investors). It changed the criteria for voting in such a way as to preclude the Hawaiian people—a maneuver that gave political power to less than 5% of the population—all foreigners—mostly U.S., British, and German (*Three Days* 15). Article 59 of the Constitution lists four requirements to vote. First, one must have lived on the Islands for at least three years. Second, one must own taxable property of not less than \$3,000. The prospective voter must have

the ability to read a newspaper in English, Hawaiian, or a European language. And lastly, an oath must be taken to support the new Constitution (hawaii-nation.org).

As seen today in political campaigns, the “Hawaiian League” placed their opponent’s life under a microscope, gathering accusations and evidence of immoral or unwise acts to discredit and humiliate him and his kingdom (e.g., an opium scandal and personal debts). Their ultimate intent was to annex the Hawaiian Islands to the United States, but fueled by personal motivations to increase their own individual wealth and power of position.

The opposing discourse concerning this event can be found in the writings of the anti-royalists, conspirators, and subsequent Western historians who portray Kalākaua as an irresponsible leader who overspent on lavish, unnecessary entertainment, travel, and building projects. Kuykendall and Day argue that while the king began his reign wisely, he gradually allowed his government to fall into corruption. Most notably, this decline began with a bribe made to the king by Claus Spreckels for more water rights, an incident that resulted in the appointment of a new cabinet who immediately agreed to Spreckels’ request. Among the escalating scandals (harmful to the people but financially beneficial to the government) was the “Opium Bill” that “gave the government the right to sell an opium monopoly license for \$30,000” (167). Additionally, the king sold “exemptions to lepers, who might thereby escape being sent to Kalaupapa<sup>3</sup>” (167). The crowning point of this counter argument is Kalākaua’s “grandiose dream of heading a Pacific empire of nations” that ended unfavorably (168-9). For many in the Hawaiian League, however, the urgency behind the new Constitution lay in their

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<sup>3</sup> Kalaupapa was a leper colony.

desire to annex Hawai‘i to the United States, and perhaps more directly, to personally benefit financially from the business of running the islands.

King Kalākaua died four years after signing the new constitution (1891) leaving his sister, Lili‘uokalani to ascend the enfeebled throne. Two years after that, in January of 1893, the Queen was pressed upon by the Hawaiian people to restore their rights. Lili‘uokalani responded carefully, in accord with her limited power under the Bayonet Constitution, to produce a new governing document that would impact the Native Hawaiian people positively. The Queen wished to restore voting privileges to Native Hawaiians and to increase their voice in government in behalf of their own welfare, thus creating more balance and fairness (*Three Days* 17). As the people overwhelmingly requested, she would attempt to provide a new constitution.

It is at this point that Kneubuhl’s historical reenactment, *January 1893* begins.

### The Opening Scene

The opening scene of this living history play takes place at the old Burial Mound on the Palace grounds at 5:00 in the morning. A woman called *Kupunawahine* (female ancestor) played by 87-year-old Elizabeth Nalani Ellis declares the purpose of the gathering—“to hear a story of the past”—but quickly makes clear that “the past lives here in our *ha*” (1.1). To Hawaiians, “*ha*” means breath, and breath means life, even the energy of life and of healing given by the creator. The “breath of life” the speaker continues, is “from the *aumekua*”—ancestral guardian spirits (1.1). The point is that the past is a *living* past that cannot be lost in time but remains ever present. A chant invites the ancestors to be with them as the story of 1893 is retold.

*Kupunawahine* then speaks of the ancestor’s ancient journey to the islands, and the love between the people and the land—adding that the coming of foreigners changed everything.

“There were years of sorrow, years of many deaths, years of confusion,” the speaker laments, but encouragingly notes, “. . . we had pride in our country, our government, our homeland, and with this pride came hope. . . (1.1). Carroll explains that Kneubuhl uses this prologue and the concluding epilogue as a device to connect the drama “with the larger stream of Hawaiian history and myth” (145). *Kupunawahine* closes with the request that the assembly remember their Hawaiian roots and honor the ancestors. The life-giving relationship between the land and the Native Hawaiians is emphasized.

By beginning the performance of this living history play so dramatically—in the quietness and darkness of the early dawn, on burial grounds with a Hawaiian woman in her nineties portraying an ancestor—Kneubuhl sets a sacred and ancient tone to begin the reenactment. Land, life, and lineage are united. The attending Native Hawaiians may have more fully realized their place in this living and ongoing story. The non-Hawaiian spectators may have been brought into empathy and respect for the pure beginnings and continuation of this ancient culture. Further, this scene alludes to the generations of *ali‘i* to which Lili‘uokalani can be traced—accentuating the sacredness and genealogical right behind her appointment as Queen. The mandate to remember is impressed on the audience, as well as readers, although experiencing the drama of this scene with the senses and in the presence of hundreds of other spectators at that particular time and place would forge the highest impact.

Kneubuhl concludes this living history play with the same dramatic effect with another message to *remember*—to always know that Hawai‘i is a nation, a people united by bonds of loyalty and grounded in the sacred ‘āina (land). Both Queen Lili‘uokalani and Kupunawahine are present. The Queen pledges: “As long as one ounce of Hawaiian blood runs in our veins, we carry our ancestors with us. And through uniting, each and every one, we will give the breath of

life to our nation's spirit and one day regain our rightful heritage and rightful government" (5.1). Kupunawahine adds: "Do not forget this story, a true story of your people. You have seen and may you now remember, forever" (5.2). The reenactment begins and ends with scenes that aim to touch the soul, and create a protest of the heart against loss of country and culture. *Remember your origin, remember your nation, and hope for restoration*—these are the rights of Native Hawaiians. These dramatic bookends constitute a powerful prelude and postlude in the commemoration of the event of 1893, and in preserving a sense of ongoing identity and rights.

While the preponderance of people in the world would more likely feel that an occurrence of over 100 years ago is too far past, too far away to require serious implications for today, those with Hawaiian ancestry (like Kneubuhl) embracing the Native culture, feel that these past events have everything to do with current situations.

In the following scene, two Hawaiian women in their 20's are introduced, as are three young Hawaiian men, a Greek business man, and a Hawaiian family supportive of the Queen. To provide important background information Kneubuhl uses the character, Puna, a young Hawaiian man who works at a newspaper in Honolulu. Through the group's conversation the audience/reader knows that there are over 4,000 *haole* living in Honolulu, and that the literacy rate of Hawaiians is very high. The census of 1890 lists Native Hawaiians at 40,622 (down from the approximate 300,000 at the time of first contact with the West due to foreign diseases), and those of foreign ancestry at 7,495 ([hawaiiakingdom.org](http://hawaiiakingdom.org)).

The first fact provides a sense of the cultural setting, that Honolulu is infiltrated with a large amount of non-Hawaiian white residents. Secondly, Kneubuhl makes a point of the literacy rate to counter misconceptions of Hawaiians as ignorant or as savage—as this view was promulgated by the annexationists as a persuasive device. The missionaries, who arrived with the

printing press, started the first newspapers in Hawai‘i, but by 1893, Hawaiians had established their own papers and were writing prolifically in their own language—much to the distress of the *haole* missionary descendants and anti-royalists. Kneubuhl alludes to the protests found therein at this time. In this important scene, the young journalist, Puna, makes it known that a plethora of letters have been written and petitions signed to be given to the Queen requesting and supporting a new constitution: “Everyone wanted to sign, to make their thought *pa‘a*” (firm and secure)—the group agrees that “everyone...wants a new constitution” and that the queen “can’t ignore the thousands of petitions she’s received” (1.1). The dialogue makes it clear that the vast majority of Hawai‘i’s population desire this change.

In strong but peaceful protest, Queen Lili‘uokalani wrote and published her book, *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*, months before the illegal annexation of her homeland to the United States. In her book, Queen Lili‘uokalani defends herself against the charge of proposing to promulgate a new constitution, as if by her own self-will and determination—a slanderous charge trumped up by the conspirators. She explains that in 1892 “petitions poured in from every part of the Islands for a new constitution; these were addressed to myself as the reigning sovereign” (269). There were 6,500 names on the petitions. The Queen writes of her slow and careful steps in pursuing a response. She explains in her own defense, “I have already shown that two-thirds of my people declared their dissatisfaction with the old [constitution]” (278). Nonetheless, she stands charged with proposing to promulgate a new constitution. Historian, Ralph Kuykendall argues that “she had decided to do away with the hateful Constitution of 1887 (even though she had sworn to maintain it) and her attempt to do so led swiftly to the overthrow of the monarchy” (176). This fallacy, along with impressions of the Queen as tyrannical and self-willed as promoted in the history textbooks of the colonizing

culture, create a distorted picture of this magnanimous world leader—vilifying her in an effort to justify the conspirators’ illegal actions in the overthrow. History has literally been rewritten by the colonizers.<sup>4</sup>

*Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen* is a safeguard against attempts to expunge and distort important historical events. The Queen has given a draft of a new Constitution to the ministers of the cabinet—one that considers the rights of all. Lili‘uokalani explains: “I was to restore some of the ancient rights of my people” (278). The annexationists are displeased with the contents of the proposed constitution because if signed into law their power will be undermined, and the hope of uniting politically with the United States will be crushed. Lili‘uokalani is appalled that the Missionary Party has had “the impudence to announce to the world that [she] is unworthy longer to rule because on [her] sole will and wish [she] had proposed to overthrow ‘the [Bayonet] constitution’” (279-80). These underlying discourses illustrate the importance of Kneubuhl’s beginning scene in its portrayal of the fact that the majority of the people of Hawai‘i petitioned for a new constitution. It establishes the Queen’s position and moral/ethical character.

#### Chinese and Japanese in Hawai‘i

In this first scene, Ah Sing, a Chinese immigrant in his 50’s, joins the conversation of the friends on the street. He complains about the Bayonet Constitution. This character represents a very large percentage of the population of Hawai‘i. From Ah Sing we understand the sentiments of the general Chinese community:

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<sup>4</sup>History has literally been rewritten by the colonizers as in George Orwell’s, *1984*, where rewriting history was the job of the protagonist, Winston. Every day he modified past reports replacing unfavorable items with blatant lies that made the government of Big Brother appear favorable. The truth of the past was incinerated.

Certain *haole* (white foreigners) business men threatened the king, forced him to sign that constitution with guns. They were going to kill him . . . . To vote, you had to be wealthy, foreigners with money voted, They do not want Hawaiians to say anything. And they don't like us Chinese either; always calling us greedy, threatening. We respect the king, respect the queen. They [the *haole*] are the ones who threaten. (1.2)

Immigrant Chinese workers constitute nearly half the labor force in the sugar fields (at the time of the takeover). They are “competent field laborers, but many of them preferred independence” leaving the fields for their own small farms or to “set up stores” in Honolulu (Kuykendall 156). For this reason, the *haole* accuse them of being greedy, and in keeping with the “yellow peril” racist issue on the mainland, they regard the Chinese as a threat. Their influence is so strongly felt in Honolulu (1893) that it is feared the nature of the city may drastically change.

In 1900, Kuykendall notes that the population of Hawai'i was 154,000, and the largest racial group were Japanese (61,111) compared to Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian (39,656) and Chinese (25,767). After annexation, attempts are made to bring in more American and European people “to prevent the Orientalizing of Hawai'i” (Kuykendall 210). The Bayonet Constitution prohibits Chinese or Japanese people the right to vote. They have no voice concerning the government of the islands where they live, and have lived, sometimes for generations.

Furthermore, the Japanese people love the monarchy because it stepped in to protect them from the abuse of the wealthy sugar plantation owners who had promised good jobs and fair treatment. Near the end of the reenactment, when the United States Marines land, Kneubuhl provides a representative of this huge community so important for labor in Hawai'i, through a character named Suzuki. He rushes on the scene with five other Japanese men carrying cane knives and approach a young Hawaiian man. They are looking for the Queen. They want to fight for her. “We heard those no good American kine *haole* rich plantation *lunas* [foremen] like to

take the government,” he explains. “No good! No good!” (4.3). His speech continues in an explanation of how the plantation owners said “nice things” but then treated them “like dogs” (4.3). He complains that they were given “stink places to live, better for pigs, I tell you” (4.3). Then these Japanese workers and their families came under the protection of the Hawaiian government. Therefore, they are ready to fight for the Queen. “We will not be slaves again,” Suzuki exclaims (4.3).

Continuing with the reenactment in Act One, Kneubuhl includes comments by the well-known and respected Hawaiian legislator of that time, Mr. Joseph Nāwahī. He speaks in response to slander directed at Queen Lili‘uokalani as “stubborn, vicious, and determined to rule” (Allen 284). Conveying that there had been a “rough legislative session” in which vicious attacks were made “on the character of the queen” in relation to the newly proposed Constitution, he explains that he, Nāwahī, “helped her write this new Constitution” (1.5). He assures everyone that the document is “fair and regards the rights of all citizens of the kingdom,” and has been drafted in response to many ardent petitions of the people (1.5). Nāwahī speaks of the unhappiness of the Hawaiians since the Bayonet Constitution deprived them of the right to vote.

In scene four, a brief dialogue illustrates the discourse of the members of the Hawaiian League (Annexation Club) in their plot to overthrow the monarchy. Two of Queen Lili‘uokalani’s Cabinet members, Ministers Colburn and Peterson, betray her by leaving the Cabinet meeting and confiding in high ranking members of the Club. They reveal that the Queen wants the new Constitution signed “today” (1.4). Lorrin Thurston (missionary descendent of Lucy Goodale Thurston (*Conversion*) quips ironically: “Who does she think she is?” He enjoins the ministers to “stall” the signing. After the two leave, Thurston suggests: “I think it’s high time we did something about her,” initiating a quick dialogue with his law partner, William Owen

Smith (missionary descendant) thus illustrating the slick rhetoric of the conspirators (1.4). “She’s clearly attempting to violate the 1887 Constitution,” says Thurston. “Leaving herself open to accusations of treason,” Smith adds (1.4). They conclude their hype with the assertion that this instability would put American lives and property under threat. Then they smile at each other (1.4). Thurston was a central figure in the Missionary Party, and a key member of the Annexation Club responsible for the machinations behind the overthrow of the legitimate government of the Hawaiian nation (*Three Days* 12).

#### Minister John Leavitt Stevens

At this same meeting (as above) Alfred Stedman Hartwell, another annexationist, notes that the “USS Boston with the American Minister Stevens, just pulled into port ...carrying at least 160 Marines” (1.4). Picking up on the suggestion, Henry Waterhouse, a fourth conspirator, points out that the order to land marines would have to come from Minister Stevens himself, adding: “We’ve always been able to count on him” (1.4). As early as 1892, Stevens’ letters show zealous promotion of Hawai‘i’s annexation to the United States. He stated in an editorial for the *Kennebec Journal*, November 17, 1892, that the “ultimate possession” of Hawai‘i “is of the utmost importance to American commerce in the Pacific, which promises vast development...” (*Three Days* 13). Stevens assures the conspirators: “Gentlemen, you know I have long felt that it should be the responsibility of the U.S. to steer the government of these politically incompetent natives” (2.1). Stevens is biased and pompous, promising that if there were a real threat of violence or danger to Americans on the island, he would call in the troops. Furthermore, he offers to give his official recognition to Thurston’s group if they wish to proclaim a Provisional Government.

#### Delay and Twisting Words

Although everything was in place for the signing of the new Constitution that the Cabinet members had had in their possession for weeks, after Minister John F. Colburn and Attorney General Arthur P. Peterson return from their talk with Thurston and the other conspirators, they decline to sign. The influence and control of the conspirators is obvious. Their lame excuses to the Queen are that they did not know about this official signing, and that they had not yet read the document. Meanwhile, a crowd has gathered outside and the throne room is filled with guests who all knew about the occasion. Therefore, Lili‘uokalani commands that the proposed Constitution be read aloud. The Cabinet members find fault with it and refuse to sign (Allen 286). The Queen has no choice but to inform the people that there will be a delay in authenticating the document.

The Queen magnanimously tells her subjects: “I expected to proclaim a new Constitution today...but with regret, I say I have met with obstacles that prevented it” (4.5). She reassures her subjects that she will “grant the Constitution at some future date”—using the Hawaiian term, *ua keia mau la* (at some future time). Her intent is to give the people hope and help them to be patient. At the conclusion of her speech the Queen admonishes the people to go home “peacefully and quietly” (4.5). She dismisses them with love and sorrow.

Meanwhile, the vindictive Thurston, intent on destruction of the monarchy and unrelenting in his search for further accusations to build his unjust case, snatches up the phrase, *ua keia mau la*. His biased, legally educated eye seizes upon the ambiguity of the words. It may be interpreted in two ways: 1) *in the future*; 2) *in a few days*. Using the latter translation and distributing copies of the speech, Thurston makes it appear that the Queen plans to act quickly and obtrusively whereas her intent was to give the people reassurance and to help them be

patient. The annexationists continually refer to Lili‘uokalani as revolutionary and treasonous, placing her in the worst possible light (2.1).

Kneubuhl captures the main thrust of the anti-royalist discourse of propaganda concerning the Queen. They proclaim that she “will attempt the same treasonous act again in two to three days” (2.1). Waterhouse adds: “Maybe we should say *revolutionary act*” (2.1). Hartwell jumps in saying: “Which very well might cause an uprising, chaos, endangering lives and property of Americans” (2.1). Through this rhetoric they arrive at the ultimate statement needed for Stevens to land the Marines. The conspirators use words like “royal aggression,” “dangerous,” and “need of protection” to support the hoax (2.2). The hatred of monarchy, especially with a Native Hawaiian woman at the head, coupled with greed and the lust for power and ownership of the Islands, drives these men.

### Manifest Destiny

The discourse of the conspirators rests on the rationale (rhetoric) that it is their duty to dispense with the “useless, outdated, and oppressive” monarchy in favor of “the most enlightened form of government, democracy” (2.2). Smith’s argument reaches a crescendo of excitement in joining “with that great nation [the United States] in its manifest destiny” (2.2). This argument not only suits their Western, American ideals, it brings them direct personal benefit. Moreover, it illustrates their enmity toward the Queen—hatred based on their positionality as white males beneath her Majesty, the Hawaiian female monarch. Coupled with fear that she may actually get the new Constitution signed into law, the conspirators act quickly and decisively, knowing that they have but a short window of opportunity. Historian, Lydia Kualapai, commenting on the official Blount Report ordered by President Cleveland following the overthrow, affirms that Minister Stevens was responsible to the violation of Hawaiian

sovereignty and that every step taken between Stevens and the conspirators was planned in advance (36). Successfully engaging Stevens' cooperation, the revolutionary leaders were set in carrying their purpose through to the end.

Therefore, when Cabinet members Peterson and Colburn enter the conspirator's meeting and explain that Lili'uokalani has now written and signed a proclamation that she would uphold the 1887 Constitution, and has withdrawn the idea of a new document, the reaction is equivalent to watching a captured foe wriggle out of the net. There was no way they will allow it. The very idea of Lili'uokalani escaping extirpation only quickens their next moves in the plot.

Consequently, Smith tells the Cabinet members that they feel that their very lives and property are threatened. The Cabinet members are astonished—dumbfounded. Colburn manages two words: "By whom?" Smith informs him that they (the conspirators) have formed a Public Committee of Safety for protection from the Queen. Similarly when a group representing the general population hears that the Annexation Club has formed a Committee for Public Safety and are planning a big meeting, the leading question is: "What for?" The ludicrous answer, "Protection of life and property" is met by an amazed, "From what? From who?" (2.3). Clearly this slander against Lili'uokalani as a threatening, power-hungry tyrant is a manufactured lie concocted by the conspirators in order to justify the landing of U.S. troops.

The Queen's speech is distributed with Thurston's translation of (*ua keia mau la*) with warnings that her Majesty would soon resume her treasonous attempts (3.2). The discourse of this core of conspirators is comprised of treacherous lies, such as: "The town has been thrown in an uproar;" and "Mr. Kaunamano ... demanded the lives of the Cabinet members and declared he thirsted for blood" (3.2). In contrast, a crowd member remarks: "Really ... everything appears to be very quiet and peaceful" (3.2). Waterhouse reads the letter that is to be sent to Minister

Stevens requesting that troops be landed in Honolulu, relating that “the public safety is menaced and lives and property are in peril” (3.2). They beg for assistance. Further, it explains that the “Queen, with aid of armed force and accompanied by threats of violence and bloodshed... attempted to proclaim a new Constitution” which has caused general alarm and terror (3.2). No such thing has occurred. Conversely, the Queen’s Marshall enters and reads her official proclamation in appreciation for “the quiet and order which has prevailed ...since the events of Saturday” (3.2). Wilson asks that the meeting disband. Thurston pushes to continue taking action to overthrow the Queen.

In contrast to Kneubuhl’s discourse that is favorable to the Queen, Kuykendall describes her of “stronger will than Kalākaua” and of a “resolute purpose to regain for the throne some of the power and prestige that it had lost” (174). Kuykendall explains that the queen’s ministers refused to sign the constitution “knowing the temper of the community” and “warned her of the fatal consequences of her proposed action” (177). He writes that “there was a long and heated argument” and that reports of her proposed action for a new constitution “aroused a storm in the community” (177). In response, the Committee of Safety makes the decision to overthrow the monarchy and set up a Provisional Government, holding a meeting Monday morning “to test the sentiments of the people” and tell them that they would do whatever is necessary to protect the “life, liberty and property of Hawai‘i” (177). The true sentiments of the people are already known by the thousands of petitions for a change from the Bayonet Constitution. As well, there is absolutely no danger to anyone’s life, liberty or property.

In contrast, the Queen writes that when her cabinet ministers refuse to sign the new constitution (under instruction of the Missionary Party) she asks “what they saw injurious in the document” and receives a very feeble reply (*Hawai‘i’s Story* 410). Her ministers beg that she

wait two weeks and assure her that they will then be ready to sign the constitution. The Queen explains, “I yielded, and we adjourned to the throne-room” (410). Here she calmly told those waiting that there will be a delay (410). She asks them to return home peacefully. Kneubuhl’s living history play is obviously in favor of the Queen. Silva points out that a majority of histories on Hawai‘i are based on unfavorable English-language newspapers published in Hawai‘i in 1893 (ignoring the Hawaiian-language papers with opposite views), and the memoirs of Dole and Thurston (all of which are exceedingly biased).

For example, *Hawai‘i Pono*, by Lawrence Fuches, represents the overthrow of 1893 as a popular revolution dignified by the participation of Sanford Ballard Dole (Silva 165). It is difficult to see how Dole dignified the fiasco, especially when he denied the request [order] of President Cleveland to reinstate Queen Lili‘uokalani and restore the monarchy (once an official investigation proved the illegality of the overthrow). This biased historian barely mentions the Queen and is silent on the subject of protest or resistance to either the Provisional Government or the annexation. Silva’s, *Aloha Betrayed*, is the first academic study published that considers the Hawaiian point of view from original documents and newspaper written in the Hawaiian language, rather than relying on translations of the few items that were considered. She reexamines the events with the Queen and Native Hawaiian people from a “central, rather than marginalized” viewpoint (167). Her questions about indigenous protest are answered in the writings of the *Kanaka Maoli* in the Hawaiian language, and thus a powerful discourse (an undercurrent of resistance) is revealed.

### The *Kahunas*

Carroll specifically comments upon the next scene (3.5) as one of the most touching in the play. It is one of the ‘historical embellishments’ that he notes. Here, the discourse of

feminine spirituality and ancient religious tradition is displayed. Lili‘uokalani is visited by *kahunas*, Native Hawaiian spiritual women; conductors of religious ceremonies. Carroll explains that although the ceremony written in the reenactment did not actually occur, the visit did. Although a great deal of the play uses actual words or readings from original texts, there is no documentation as to what was said or done when the *kahunas* visited the Queen. However, Kneubuhl’s creative imagining of what may have transpired rests on reliable research and understanding. It is quite reasonable to believe that the *kahunas* would suggest the reason behind the tragic events are the result of “forsaking the old gods of Hawai‘i” (145). This discourse parallels the dream-sequence of Ka‘ahumanu when the voices implore her to save the people, and press her for repentance to turn back to the ancient gods. According to the time-frame of this play, the view of impending disaster as penalty for betraying the ancient gods has survived 73 years—since Ka‘ahumanu’s abolishment of *kapu* in 1820.

The dramatic intention of these women who “want to take the queen to her throne and lay their heads on her feet” is to then die—“be taken as sacrifices to the gods” (3.2). How many indigenous Hawaiians, as well as Chinese and Japanese, would have also given their lives to support the Queen and maintain independence and liberty? This scene brings to mind earlier days “when a battle grew too bloody, a truce was called, a *kahuna* intervened with prayer, and negotiations were begun” (Allen 288). Lili‘uokalani believes in the power of negotiation. These spiritual women (*kahunas*) implore her to attain forgiveness from the gods and to increase her spiritual power in leadership of the kingdom.

### Landing the Marines

Nonetheless, neither prayers nor negotiations would stop the handful of greedy men who hated the monarchy and wanted democracy, and to take control of the Islands themselves.

Although the Queen had signed an official document (under duress) whereby she withdrew her intent for a new Constitution, Thurston continues to act the part of a threatened victim—criteria for having the U.S. troops land and back their takeover. He brusquely declares that the annexationists shall “settle the matter once and for all” (Allen 289). There is nothing to settle but his own ambition.

In completely peaceful, non-threatening surroundings, Thurston has the audacity to write the following in this letter to Minister Stevens: “The queen with the aid of armed force and accompanied by threats of violence and bloodshed from those with whom she was acting, attempted to proclaim a new constitution . . . This conduct and action...have created general alarm and terror . . . We are unable to protect ourselves without aid, and therefore, pray for the protection of the United States forces” (Allen 289). Stevens has been waiting for just this kind of communication to justify landing the U.S. Marines. Act Three of the reenactment ends with the Marines marching to the palace.

Military resistance would be futile, impossible. According to Allen, the “handful of poorly equipped ‘royal guards’ and weaponless Natives had little chance in opposing the 162 U.S. Marines that landed, and Lili‘uokalani insisted on using peaceful means to settle the issue” (290). In the reenactment a character in the crowd loudly affirms: “[She] would be sending us to the slaughter if we had to fight U.S. troops” (4.1). The Queen sends trusted officers to Stevens requesting that the troops be withdrawn.

Stevens responds that Lili‘uokalani needs to put her request in writing. Meanwhile the conspirators set themselves up as the Provisional Government, Stevens recognizes them as such, and they immediately select their Cabinet and officers. Lili‘uokalani is advised to protest to this self-appointed body, but instead composes an official protest that was sent to the United States

government in Washington, D.C. This protest (found in Appendix C of *Hawai'i's Story*) says, “I yield to the superior force of the United States of America—until such time as the government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representatives, and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands” (410). This letter was taken aboard a steamer to Washington the next day, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Two precedents existed for Queen Lili‘uokalani to guide her response to this *coup*. In 1843, a British warship threatened to seize the Islands. The king, Kamehameha III, “believing in the ultimate fairness of the government these men represented” made a “provisional cession of the islands” (Kuykendall 66). The British flag flew over Hawai‘i from February 25 to the end of July when Admiral Thomas arrived from London to undo this unjust action and restore Hawai‘i’s official status as an independent nation. Again, a similar event transpired in 1848 when the French attempted to take over the Islands. When negotiations with the French government did not succeed, Hawai‘i turned to the United States for protection, thus causing France to relinquish its efforts of colonization.

Lili‘uokalani’s attached note to President Harrison explains her motive to avoid bloodshed, and expresses her confidence in the justice that will be served. As we have seen, Hawaiian culture historically depended upon reason, compromise, and treaties with foreign nations to resist colonization or foreign occupation. The Queen did not receive such justice from President Harrison, but an attempt is made by President Cleveland to restore the right. Albeit, the conspirators with which Lili‘uokalani deals are determined in their purpose and not amenable to these higher, fairer practices.

Sanford Dole

Sanford Dole was asked to take the presidency of the Provisional Government. Dole, born in Honolulu in 1844, was a child of missionaries who arrived a year earlier. He was sent to Williams College in Massachusetts and studied law in Washington D.C. Returning to Hawai‘i in 1868, he set up a law practice in Honolulu, and became active politically and in procedures concerning the Bayonet Constitution. He was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court (*Three Days 10*). At first Dole resists accepting the presidency and attempts to suggest ways to maintain the monarchy (3.2). Thurston angrily rebukes him saying, “...we’re tired of monarchs and their trappings of royalty,” and adds, “we mean to rid these islands of it once and for all” (3.2). Dole’s suggestions may have had to do with the fact that his adopted daughter, Elizabeth Napoleon, was of the ancestral line of King Lunalilo. He begs to give his answer in the morning. Thurston indicates that if Dole does not accept, he will take the position himself.

The next day, Dole accepts the presidency. When Smith says he is glad Dole “sees things his way,” Dole retorts that he does not, but he “considered the alternative candidate” (4.2). Kneubuhl adds a scene here between Dole and his adopted Lizzie who wants to speak to him alone. “Papa Dole,” she begins, and then goes on to speak of how her mother was close to the Queen, and how adoptions were commonly made in Hawai‘i for the purpose of “bringing everyone into one family” (4.2). Dole’s involvement in the takeover and Provisional Government means that Lizzie and her mother never want to see him again. “I thought you cared about us,” she cries. “I thought I could be proud that you were my father” (4.2). Lizzie moves to another island soon after this. Dole apparently pays a great price for the presidency. His position extends to the change to the Republic of Hawai‘i and after annexation he is appointed Governor of the Territory by President McKinley (*Three Days 10*). The overthrow of the monarchy means great

personal loss to Dole. He faces the dilemma of living under the new Provisional Government with Thurston in control, or taking control himself but losing his family in the process.

#### President Cleveland and the Blount Report

President Harrison, at the very end of his term, is unable to resolve the Hawai‘i issue and does not take time to consider both sides. In contrast, President Cleveland sends James Henderson Blount, a Congressman from Georgia, to investigate the occurrences. Kualapai writes that one of the primary things Blount uncovers concerning the origin of the trouble is a racial controversy accompanied by a dictum: “The native is unfit for government and his power must be curtailed” (36). A popular vote would show overwhelming favor for the Queen, dislike for the Provisional Government, and nearly everyone against annexation.

After four months of careful research and interviews, Blount completes his final report. Queen Lili‘uokalani writes that he “decided that I was the constitutional ruler of the Hawaiian Islands” and invites interested persons to view his report at the Library of Congress in the Capitol at Washington to see the testimonies of each side and reach their own decisions based on these facts (*Hawai‘i’s Story* 292). In his address to Congress, President Cleveland states that Hawai‘i was taken by the United States forces without the consent from the governments of either of Hawai‘i or of the United States. The President concludes that the troops landed only by consent of the U.S. Minister, John Leavitt Stevens. Cleveland relieves Stevens of his post immediately (*Three Days* 10). The President reaches the decision that the Queen should be reinstated and the government restored.

President Cleveland sends Minister Willis to Dole with the message to resign and reinstate the Queen and the constitutional monarchy. However, Dole refuses to comply.

President Cleveland's strong letter concludes: "In the name of and by the authority of the United States of America, I submit to you the question, 'Are you willing to abide by the decision of the president?'" (*Hawai'i's Story* 291). It seems to be a rhetorical question, more like an order.

However, the Provisional Government refuses to comply. Dole writes to President Cleveland: "We do not recognize the right of the President of the United States to interfere in our domestic affairs. Such right could be conferred upon him by the act of this government, and by that alone, or it could be acquired by conquest" (292). The United States, not willing to use combat, adopts a hands-off policy. The conspirators decide to wait until the next U.S. administration is in place to attempt annexation once more. The Queen writes that President Cleveland recognizes "the right of the Hawaiian people to choose their own form of government" (296). She complains that they have not had that right since the Provisional Government came to power. Today, over one hundred years later, Native Hawaiians are illustrating renewed energy in this direction of self-determination and the desire for sovereignty.

The discourse that the new Provisional Government initiates regarding the takeover circulates around the world quickly. Newspapers spread aspersions on the Queen as would be expected by yellow journalism running rampant—sensationalism being the key to higher sales and a sustained readership. The *New York Times* (January 28, 1893) runs the story of the Hawaiian overthrow without any investigation, quickly publishing an article entitled, "A Revolution in Hawai'i." The headline reads: "Queen Liliuokalani Deposed from the Throne: Grasping for More Power She Fell" (front page). The article explains that a Provisional Government is in place and that Mr. Thurston is en route to Washington D.C. to ask that the islands be annexed to the U.S. The article accuses Queen Lili'uokalani of "stubborn determination to ... secure the extension of royal prerogatives and the abridgement of popular

rights.” The Queen is described as angry, demanding, and threatening. Silva writes that one of Lili‘uokalani’s “many battles was over how she and her people were represented in the U.S. press” (14). Over the years, the Queen actively helps her people in their many attempts of exercising self-determination, supplying financial aid and advice.

#### Lili‘uokalani’s speech

At the conclusion of the living history reenactment, the Queen addresses the crowd. Ashley Checchini devoted her Dissertation to audience reaction to two of Kneubuhl’s plays, *January 1893* and *Ola Nā Iwi*, but in a unique way—observing when the “audience chose (consciously or subconsciously) to enter into [the] performance of the past,” evidenced in “performing an action” like “booing, cheering, kneeling, or any other movement or vocal response” (2). Checchini is looking for “actions that may reflect an immersion in the historical moment being performed” (2). Her interest is in the blurring of the past and present, “how time may be experienced as malleable,” and how the historical moment is lived in the present moment (2). Checchini is interested in the techniques Kneubuhl uses to create such moments. She notes examples of audience reaction to the performance of 1893 as “entwined with the political sovereignty movement” (2). This concluding scene when the Queen addresses the crowd (those gathered to see the reenactment) may have elicited the same response as upon the actress-Queen’s first appearance—audience members bowed and dropped on one knee—as if they were her subjects and one hundred years disappeared. The actress-Queen reads Lili‘uokalani’s Proclamation. The original crowd heard the same words in the same location one hundred years earlier. The present crowd was given opportunity to live those moments in the reenactment (5.1).

Carroll points out that the last portion of the Queen’s speech is a dramatic embellishment, an addition to Lili‘uokalani’s actual words. This creative augmentation is acceptable in the art of

theatre history, and represents Kneubuhl's sense of what more Lili'uokalani might have said to encourage her subjects. She reminds them of how fast they became educated and how quickly the Islands had been recognized by the great nations of the world (despite the fact that 4/5ths of the Native Hawaiian population had been wiped out from diseases and vices brought by the foreigners). Kneubuhl uses this opportunity to speak to the question of self-determination through the Queen's speech. She encourages them: "Now, my people, hear these words of mine that I say to you in our dark hour. Hold yourselves up high and be proud. ... Hold fast to the pride and love you have for your heritage and your country. Yes, your country! For your nation!" (5.1). Kneubuhl is reminding the 10,000 gathered for this portion of the reenactment, that Hawaii still belongs to the *Kanaka Maoli* today.

Continuing the theme of self-determination, Kupunawahine and the Queen implore: "We ask you all, to never give up—to seek through peaceful, political means to unite as one people. As long as one ounce of Hawaiian blood runs in our veins, we carry our ancestors with us. ... We will restore dignity to ourselves, our nation, our homeland, our one *hanau* (birthplace), Hawai'i Nei"—a term used to describe all that has to do with Hawai'i, not just one particular location (5.1).

The three-day centennial commemoration included "thousands [who] took part in protest marches and chanted, 'What do we want?' 'Sovereignty' 'When do we want it?' 'Now!'" (Carroll 144). The largest group, the *Ka Lāhui Hawai'i* (*nation of Hawai'i*), even proposed seizing or taking control of Hawaiian Home Lands. However, at the conclusion of the play, when Lili'uokalani's last address is reenacted in the legislature building (the Ali'i'iani Hale, now the State Building), people simply returned home peacefully. Inwardly, however, this dramatic reenactment impacted the audience to such a degree as to cause action. Kneubuhl's theatrical

protest helped awaken dormant thought regarding sovereignty. The Centennial Commemoration spurred on the sovereignty movement and Kneubuhl's living history play (or pageant) constituted a primary portion of the events. Here, the theatre was literally approachable, as the reenactment was performed out in public in downtown Honolulu. This very moving event, graphically uncovering the injustices of the 1893 overthrow, was reflected in political moves toward Native Hawaiian recognition and possible reclamation of Hawaiian sovereignty.

At the time of the dethronement of Queen Liliuokalani, Hawaiians protested America's colonization—its stealing of the land, resources, language, culture, traditions, and dignity. In contrast to the general misconception that Hawaiians quietly accepted the American takeover, Silva documents the magnitude of their resistance—especially in the petition she discovered and made widely known that was signed by 95% of Hawaiians in 1897 protesting annexation to the United States. This document remains as concrete proof of Hawai'i's desire to remain under its Queen. The petition was brought to Washington D.C. and it *did* stop the Annexation Treaty in 1897. However, when the United States declared war against Spain in 1898, it was decided that Hawai'i's location was crucial as a “coaling station” for warships (as the fighting took place in the Philippines as well as in Cuba). In the fervor of war, Hawai'i was made a Territory of the United States, against the will or self-determination of its people. There is no legality behind the United States' claim on Hawai'i, as there is no Treaty of Annexation but merely the 1898 Newlands Resolution that claimed Hawai'i by a simple majority vote of a Joint Resolution of Congress (Goodyear-ka'opua 58-62). This quick action resulted from the United States' need for Hawai'i as a strategic military position.

The United States declared war on Spain because of an explosion on the *USS Maine* in a Cuban harbor in 1898. Spanish warships were present as Cuba fought to gain their independence.

The assumption that the explosion came from purposeful firing at America's ship caused the declaration of the Spanish-American War by President McKinley. This declaration of war involved the U.S. with the Philippines as well, as they were also fighting Spain for independence. The truly ironic part of this scenario is that in 1976, after a review of the incident, Admiral Hyman Rickover asserts that the explosion "likely resulted from internal combustion in the boiler room" (Silva 160). Sadly, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, 1898, the Hawaiian flag was lowered and the flag of the United States raised over Hawai'i with troops on guard against the massive protest.

The failure of Hawai'i's united remonstrance is a shocking breach of the internationally-honored concept of self-determination—one that time does not make void. Moving ahead to the next major event in Hawaiian political history—statehood—Kneubuhl's next play, *Emmalehua*, takes place in 1951 (just 8 years prior to that change). This post-World War II setting is chosen to illustrate the effects of Americanization over the decades following the illegal annexation. It represents the divided national and cultural loyalties in the thoughts of young Hawaiians who have been deprived of their native language. Since all schools were required to use only English, as well as American textbooks, the next generation of Hawaiians lost the ability to read earlier documentations of protest and were mis-educated regarding the history of their own country. The strong undercurrent of those Kanaka Maoli who held fast to the indigenous traditions, values, practices and language of the ancestors—those heroes and heroines who courageously moved against the grain to ensure the continuation of Hawai'i's indigenous culture—are to be applauded. Kneubuhl's next play, *Emmalehua*, plays along this theme.

## Chapter 3: Americanization

### Emmalehua: New Generation Hawaiians (American Dream)

#### The American Dream

Kneubuhl's play, *Emmalehua*, transports us nearly 60 years from the January 1893 reenactment of the usurpation of Hawai'i's constitutional monarchy (under Queen Liliuokalani) to Post-World War II Hawai'i in 1951. President Eisenhower campaigns the following year, pressing for Hawai'i's statehood as a matter of national security. Hawaiians have fought as United States troops and many military bases are established on the islands. President Eisenhower meets with aggressive resistance to statehood from the Southern states because of Hawai'i's majority non-white population. Opponents of the 1957 Civil Rights Bill are also opposed to Hawai'i's statehood. In 1959 that opposition is finally overcome and Hawai'i is admitted (Yasukawa). A crescendo toward Americanization, accompanied by a massive tourist business as well as development to accommodate an increasing number of mainlanders as they change residence to the paradisiacal islands, characterize the time. The American Dream steers the ambitions of many young Hawaiians who look to the immediate future for a good life with rights equivalent to continental Americans. In this provocative play, Kneubuhl illustrates how the indigenous culture is threatened by modernization and assimilation characteristic of the American way.

While there are those Hawaiians for whom centuries of ancestral traditions and values remain viable and strong, who hold to the ancient way of facing the past to guide their present, another portion of the younger generation race forward with a perceived American model that

absorbs full attention with its promise of happiness and success; the majority, attempt to negotiate their way through the changes by making fluctuating compromises to meet new or unfamiliar demands. Kneubuhl addresses the struggle of young Native Hawaiians in making choices between their indigenous cultural identity and changes toward a more Americanized lifestyle—utilizing hula as the hook that weaves connections in time and intrapersonal relationships (individual and collective) and that conveys the cultural complexities people face. Kneubuhl illustrates this conflict through two major characters, Emma (Emmalehua) and her husband, Alika.

Emma is a descendent of a very old family line of thoroughly trained hula devotees entrusted with maintaining and teaching the ritualistic dance and chants associated with the hula goddess, Laka. Alika, on the other hand, represents the post-military Hawaiian men who fought as American troops in World War II—men who now anticipate acceptance as full Americans with the same rights and privileges as those on the mainland and who are out to prove themselves capable, profitable Americanized businessmen and professionals. These men feel Hawai‘i has earned the right to statehood. The relationship between Emma and Alika symbolizes the difficulties involved in coexisting harmoniously when the foreign element, the modern Americanization, refuses to tolerate the old (cultural values and practices from the Hawaiian past). The relationship is a metaphor for the incongruity between the indigenous and the infiltrating influence of the invading culture.

Noenoe Silva explains that the missionary presence that ultimately grew to overthrow the Monarchy served to accelerate the devastation of Hawaiian ways over the following decades “of nearly total U.S. hegemony” (202). The Hawaiian people become marginalized, prohibited from speaking Hawaiian in schools or in public, and raised without a proper knowledge of their own

culture, heritage, and history. *Emmalehua* is set in the midst of a time of increased danger of cultural loss. The surprising fact that hula remains through the decades as a powerful preserver of the Hawaiian language and culture is emphasized in this play.

The tenuous union of Emma and Alika includes in its symbolic imbalance Hawai‘i’s time-honored spiritual practices (represented in sacred hula) versus fast-paced American materialism and drive for expansion—hence the conflict between the Native Hawaiian sensitivity to the metaphysical in contradistinction to unbelief and ridicule of anything beyond the immediate physical senses. It represents the subjugation of the feminine to the dominating male supremacy in the hierarchical tendency approved of in marriages at this time. Emma attempts to take on the role of the 1950’s housewife and follow her husband’s lead, but a tenacious spiritual force from the past binds her.

#### The Chorus

In the first scene, Emma suffers a nightmare involving dark water, enlivened and communicated to the audience/readers by Kneubuhl’s use of a Chorus reminiscent of the Greek Chorus utilized in ancient plays. Celine Delcayre, playwright and winner of national title for student dramaturgy, explains the Chorus as a “storytelling device” that adds “depth and complexity” to the drama. The Chorus represents the collective consciousness of the Hawaiian ancestors. It functions as Emma’s inner consciousness and represents her receptivity to spiritual messages and the influences of the ancestors. It also gives “context to the actions and interactions of characters” and functions to “highlight certain moments and themes” (Delcayre). For example, the Chorus highlights the dream motif, chanting: “That was the first night. The first dream. The night of the first dream,” implying that she will have further psychic distress (1.1). At times the

Chorus provides dramatic irony. The use of the Chorus in *Emmalehua* brings the audience into a better understanding of the invisible and powerful influences active in Emma's psyche.

The *spiritual ancestors' influence* (as the Chorus) unexpectedly breaks out in the midst of the mundane. It chimes in for a second time: "Now it's every night, every night the same dream" (1.1) thereby intensifying the motif and its action on the protagonist. It chants the jarring lines: "You have no control," adding a mysterious message that she should "hide it" from Alika whose sleep is not disturbed (1.1). He is undisturbed because his spiritual and cultural sensitivities have been dulled. Thus he represents insensitivity to one's Hawaiian heritage or to consideration of the full implications of statehood. The recurring nightmare (darkness and water) seeps into Emma's day visions. The Chorus illustrates the energy of spiritual forces persistently directing her consciousness. The intense mental and emotional conflict is caused by her decision to leave the sacred way of hula taught by her grandmother for marriage to Alika.

#### Kaheka and Alika

Waking from the ordeal of the terrifying nightmare, Emma exchanges words with both her father and her husband. Emma is terrified and yelling: "No, no, make it stop!" (1.1). Both her father, Kaheka, and her husband tell her to wake up. Kaheka calls her name and commands her to awaken out of pure concern, to relieve her of the distress. Further, Kaheka is instrumental in helping to affect a higher awakening in Emma that enables her to remember and act upon her true spiritual calling.

While Emma's father, Kaheka, honors past Hawaiian traditions, values, and beliefs, her husband eschews such things and thinks only of himself and exigencies: "I'm on a tight schedule" (1.1). In contrast to Kaheka's concern, Alika is more interested in waking Emma

simply to find his black socks so that he can leave for his business meeting. There is no attempt to console his wife. He does not wonder what is bothering her—it is all about him. Kneubuhl illustrates the imposing stress and frenzy of American culture (especially in business) in this first scene, setting a pace and tone that are the antipode of Hawai‘i’s heritage and island culture.

Alika and thousands more like him are perfectly willing to abandon their Hawaiian history and culture (considered inferior and backward) to jump on the bandwagon with American developers who are decimating Hawaiian landscapes and sacred places. They are willing and ready to forget their Hawaiian past, its cultural practices, and sacred landmarks in exchange for this way of the future. For the sake of such progress, but especially to feed his own ego, recognition, and personal financial gain, Emma’s husband has no problem bulldozing and destroying an ancient Hawaiian fishpond—a sacred area that belonged to his wife’s ancestors—in order to construct a new building for a powerful American corporation.

### Sacred Hula

Emma gives Alika a present—gold cufflinks—to celebrate his promotion. He is “the youngest president of the Honolulu Association of Engineers” (1.1). Dressing the part of the professional business man with his black socks and cufflinks, Alika thinks of a final embellishment—the tie pin that his father had given him. He asks Emma to find it. The Chorus eagerly chimes in with a chant, “In the garage, in the closet, bottom shelf (1.1). This spiritual power of the ancestors pushes Emma to find the Lei Hoaka (her grandmother’s lei used in sacred hula) that is in a hole in the corner of the bottom shelf of the garage closet. This location is a graphic illustration of how hula has gone underground—hidden, forgotten, forbidden and unwanted. Nonetheless, these seemingly ephemeral ideas and symbolic items represent the

things that “grab tight and hold” (1.1). Although rejected and out of sight, the ancient culture, ways, and language resurface—demanding attention, requiring consideration.

Kneubuhl uses traditional hula and the Lei Hoaka to inform her audience (or readers) concerning this method of the survival of ancient ways and the Hawaiian language despite decades of foreign infiltration and blatant attempts at annihilation. Emma is representative of key Hawaiian women who (for generations) pass along the exactness of authentic hula that preserves the language and ancient stories that might otherwise be lost. Although Emma resists rededicating herself to her heritage of sacred hula, the presence of a spiritual force begins to break her resistance down.

To gain a deeper understanding of this play, one must gain some sense of the function, place, and meaning of the sacred hula. Without an informed sense of hula according to authentic Hawaiian history one might ponder the substantiality of *Emmalehua* in its postcolonial context and how it serves as a play of protest. Sharon Mahealani Rowe notes in her article, “We Dance for Knowledge,” that the overwhelming popularity of hotel hula performances, packaged into tourist activities at hefty prices, is far from authentic hula. In contrast to hula as entertainment, as a folkdance or fitness exercise, Rowe explains that true hula is actually a “moving encyclopedia inscribed into the sinews and postures of dancers’ bodies...that carries forward the social and natural history, the religious beliefs, the philosophy, the literature, and the scientific knowledge of the Hawaiian people” (31). There is much more to the hula theme than one might at first realize or anticipate.

As the Chorus directs Emma, she reaches into the hole on the bottom shelf and finds her grandmother’s Lei Hoaka, the primary object utilized in her family’s practice of authentic and sacred hula dedicated to the goddess, Laka. This object, used as a stage prop throughout

*Emmalehua*, triggers a highly charged emotional response within her. The Lei Hoaka is said to be filled with *mana* (spiritual power accrued through generations of sacramental use). Touching it is prohibited unless one has been thoroughly prepared and purified. Thus the *kapu*'s purpose is to protect the spiritually deficient and maintain the integrity of the symbol. Thus when Emma's husband, Alika, grabs the Lei Hoaka while making derogatory remarks concerning it, Emma wrests it back and shelters it. "It looks like a boar's tusk. Is that human hair?" he sneers. "From dead people?" he adds with derision (1.1). Thus Kneubuhl utilizes dialogue to illustrate the Americanized, modern Hawaiian's ignorance and repulsion in regard to such sacred objects.

The average young adult Hawaiian—Americanized at this post-war period—views things like the Lei Hoaka as abhorrent—an attitude that extends to nearly all the revered ways of ancient Hawai'i. According to Stefani Overman-Tsai, the Lei Hoaka functions as the symbol for the theme of "retaining one's heritage" as well as "for an almost lost cultural practice that honors an ancient goddess and perpetuates a historical lesson of what is valued or deemed important to this tradition" (83). Emma has grown up under the tutelage of her grandmother, as the *chosen* one for Laka. When her grandmother, the hula master who had drilled this sacred knowledge into Emma's soul through her formative years, dies, Emma decides on marriage in an attempt to fill the void and to forget—to expunge the hula teachings from her thought and flee from the pain of emotional loss. Consequently, Emma exemplifies the danger to indigenous people of forgetting (or forsaking) their true heritage. The urgency is to remember—remember the ancestors, the beginnings, traditions, values, language, and culture that is one's true birthright—to act in accord with the highest sense of justice and one's cultural identity. Kneubuhl's point is clear, Hawaiians must remember their true history, the teachings of the ancestors, and be mindful of the injustices of the foreigners.

The early missionaries jeopardized hula by demonizing it. Their intent was to bury this idolatry. Continued persecution forced the hula community into hiding. However, this only solidified the determination of the hula community to maintain their cultural roots and language and pass the knowledge and art along from one generation to the next. In *Emmalehua*, the responsibility has been handed down to Emma as the chosen one of the hula goddess, Laka.

Overman-Tsai devotes an entire article to the Lei Hoaka. In the Hawai‘i of 1951, it is a stigma, a mark of disgrace. While other flowery leis are most welcomed and sought after by tourists and the people in Hawai‘i in general, this authentic lei is shunned. It represents the old rather than the new and modern. Emotional reactions flare in its presence. Therefore, Overman-Tsai sees the Lei as “a significant cultural and postcolonial sign” (84). Catherine Karkov explains that “the postcolonial arise from its encounter of a colonizing culture or force with a range of indigenous social, political, or cultural practices” (149). The colonized mind cannot tolerate the Lei Hoaka. Consequently, this stage prop is employed consistently from beginning to end to convey complex relational issues between the characters. It illustrates the clash of mental states. For Emma, the Lei Hoaka has an irresistible attracting power, for Alika, it acts as a repellent. For Emma’s father it stirs fond memories and awe, while for Maelyn it incites envy and self-deprecation.

The Lei Hoaka is a concrete symbol or embodiment of the age-old Hawaiian chants that invisibly pervade its presence, sending out an antagonistic air to those spiritually unprepared. What can be learned from the preserved chants of authentic hula? Nathaniel Bright Emerson, in his collection of hula chants from 1909, argues that these ancient songs collectively represent “an anthology of Hawaiian unwritten literature” (2). Emerson declares that hula found a “mine of inexhaustible wealth in the epics and wonder-myths that celebrated the doings of the volcano

goddess, Pele, and her compeers .... a ready-made anthology that includes every species of composition in the whole range of Hawaiian poetry” (2). Hence the importance of hula in *Emmalehua*. Not only this range of rich poetry, but the emotions, sentiments, beliefs, values and religious practices of ancient Hawaiians are captured in the songs of hula. Unlike the commercialized form, “hula was a religious service, in which poetry, music, pantomime, and the dance lent themselves, under the forms of dramatic art, to the refreshment of men's minds” (6).

Emerson concludes:

The most telling record of a people's intimate life is the record which it unconsciously makes in its songs. This record which the Hawaiian people have left of themselves is full and specific. When, therefore, we ask what emotions stirred the heart of the old-time Hawaiian as he approached the great themes of life and death, of ambition and jealousy, of sexual passion, of romantic love, of conjugal love, and parental love, what his attitude toward nature and the dread forces of earthquake and storm, and the mysteries of spirit and the hereafter, we shall find our answer in the songs and prayers and recitations of the hula. (2)

Emerson’s stated hope and purpose in compiling his book of hula songs is that the reader discovers the humanity of the early Hawaiians in place of the savage stereotypes conveyed by the early missionaries and later Western historians. The goal is to prove a common human bond. Emma, as Laka’s chosen one, is to preserve a life-giving and life-preserving energy for the *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians). Emerson explains that Laka, the patron of hula, is symbolized by a block of wood from the sacred lapa tree used as an altar. The devotee and dancer embodies this life-force, which is believed to keep plants alive on the altar for long periods of time without sun or water.

This goddess, Laka, is the “sister, wife, of the god Lono” (23). The Chorus whispers: “Lono, lono, lono” (1.1). This mythological figure, Lono, is one of the four major gods of the ancient Hawaiians. He is associated with peace, fertility, rainfall, and music. Lono came to earth on a rainbow to marry Laka. One can easily see the common bond of humanity in this marriage

of qualities that nourish, calm, and impart rhythmic harmony. The metaphysical atmosphere of this marriage for Emma stands in stark contrast to her discordant relationship to Alika.

Emma has the responsibility as Laka's chosen one, to allow this goddess-spirit to infiltrate her mind, heart, and physicality. In this state she reflects the life-giving power noted by her father, Kaheka, as she keeps the greenery at the altar alive without water or sun. Emerson informs his readers that "in one of the prayers to Laka she is besought to come and take possession of the worshiper, to dwell in him [or her] as in a temple, to inspire him in all his parts and faculties--voice, hands, feet, the whole body" (23). The Lono-Laka ideal requires the devotee's entire being.

The extraordinarily strong spiritual background of Emma's family line has accrued immense *mana* (spiritual power) through centuries of commitment to maintaining, performing, and teaching the sacred hula. This secret knowledge has been taught to Emma throughout her formative years. To protect the spiritual power building in the child, to shelter those in her presence who possess insufficient *mana*, the grandmother places the usual safeguard upon the neophyte—a *kapu*—which forbids normal and free intermingling with society. Despite *kapu* being officially being lifted earlier by Ka'ahumanu, this tradition does not end every use of it for Native Hawaiians, especially those who remain actively devoted to the ancient sacred practices. The special protective *kapu* for the apprentice devotee of Laka remains for Emma. Therefore, she grows up isolated, aloof from society, and separate. Ordinarily this *kapu* is ceremoniously lifted when the devotee performs the ritualistic hula with perfection and demonstrates the necessary depth of understanding. However, Emma's grandmother dies before administering this ceremony. As an adult, Emma unsuccessfully attempts to forget everything that has been

stringently drilled into her soul. She turns to the acceptable and ordinary, the expected role of a young woman in the early 1950's, and marries.

For Emma, the past and future operate simultaneously in her consciousness and heart. The past has too strong of a hold to be shaken, and the promise of a happy and fulfilling future with a home and children is tantalizing. While the hula and the secret knowledge is alluring and special to Emma and bonds her to her grandmother, the contrary temptation of moving forward in marriage and forgetting the past exerts itself as reasonable and modern—the coveted American lifestyle. She would be the wife of a results-driven, successful business man and a devoted mother with a home of her own. After four years, however, this sought-after ideal proves empty and disappointing. Emma's desires for a home and children do not fit into her unfaithful husband's agenda. The turning point in Emma's marriage occurs when Alika brusquely reacts to her inquiry about their future: "Look, I don't want to be saddled with a mortgage now. I don't want to come home to a house full of kids" (2.7). Coupled with his dismissal and censure of Emma's soul-bound oneness with sacred hula—scoffing at and embarrassed by the Lei Hoaka and the altar of Laka when his friends see it—what is there for Emma in this relationship anymore? How difficult, how impossible, for her to be pledged to Alika as his wife.

After this collision of hopes and dreams, Emma cries to her father, lamenting over the loss of her grandmother, explaining that she had only wanted to forget everything. During this scene, one of the Chorus comes on stage carrying a section of wood—Laka's altar. Emma hears her grandmother call her "*precious child*," and responds: "Kupuna? Kupuna wahine (*grandmother*)? I've done something wrong" (2.9). This echoes the opening scene of *January 1893*, where the spirit of the ancestors is portrayed by Kupunawahine. The ancestors are invoked to be present to hear the story, to witness what went wrong. Thus the image of the land, the

ancestors calling their own children, and the Native Hawaiians' response to their ancient roots and origin are captured in drama and likely promote contemplation by the audience or readers of these plays.

In this heartrending scene, Kupuna prays for the image of Laka to come, and Emma desperately kneels for help to the altar that has mysteriously been transported into her presence through the spirit of her grandmother. She is shockingly interrupted by her drunken, loud husband and his friends. "What's that hunk of wood?" one taunts (2.9). Emma's sister, Maelyn, joins in disparagingly: "Oh-oh, it's—Laka, Laka, Laka! . . . A hula goddess in an old piece of wood come back to watch over her little dancer" (2.9). It is later discovered that Maelyn is envious because her sister received the training from *Kapuna* (the grandmother)—consequently she has felt rejected for many years and suffers despairingly. Maelyn has turned to commercialized hula as a substitute—but it is not satisfying. In *Emmalehua's* 1951 Hawai'i, the culture has suffered the Westernized appropriation of its sacred ways, seen not only in sensually performed hula to music for the pleasure of tourists, but in an industry of things such as plastic dashboard hula dances that move with every bump on the road.

Emma's decision to embrace the tradition of hula in its authenticity and teach it accurately with sincere devotion, represents a people's ability to appreciate and cling to their ancestral heritage against the pressure of modernization. To explain further, Mary Pukui, Hawaiian scholar, dancer, composer, and 1981 nominee for the Nobel Prize in literature remarked in 1941 that "the hula of ancient times was not like the modern performance," and she expresses fear that "many of the old are passing and will in time be lost" (Rowe 36). Descendants, like Emma, must carry on.

Hawaiians were lured into voting for statehood by promises of land reform that never developed into a real benefit for them. These were the promises of those who had stolen their Islands and who desired complete control. Additionally, the ballot gave only two choices, territory or state. At this time (1950's), the *Kanaka Maoli* did not generally understand what had happened in their historical relationship to the United States. Noelani Goodyear-ka'opua, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, explains: "Stories of Hawaiian resistance to American takeover were hidden and were overwritten by American historical narratives and fabricated to make people believe there was a legal merger between the Hawaiian Kingdom and the United States. In fact, no such treaty was ever ratified" (59). Referring to the post-World War II setting of *Emmalehua*, Goodyear-ka'opua notes that hotels, resorts, and luxury homes "displaced people who continued to live 'Hawaiian style,' relying on land-based subsistence practices" (59). Emma's father, Kaheka, discusses this subject with an important supporting character, Adrian Clearwater.

#### Clearwater

Clearwater is a Native American engineer for Alika's building project. Clearwater refers to Alika's building project positioned over an ancient fishpond. Kaheka is happy when Clearwater refers to its beauty, rather than labelling it as a mere "job site" (2.3). The fishpond and all the land from the shore to the mountain top used to belong to Kaheka and his family, but now it is lost to the *haole*. Kaheka explains that some of their family still live high in the mountains in very small places with almost nothing—representing geographically how the "cost of living is almost too steep these days" (2.3). They used to live off the land but are now almost completely displaced. Kaheka adds: "You know, the old folks used to say sometimes, when

somebody died, ‘Oh, he died of a broken heart’ (2.3). It broke the hearts of the people when they lost their land, and now they will suffer the desecration of their sacred fishpond.

The subject of loss of land reemerges in another conversation when Kaheka asks about the reservations: “You folks have plenty land yeah?” Clearwater laughs at that and answers: “Not as much as we used to” (1.4). This ironic understatement seems to awaken the Chorus who intermittently chime in with the same words as were earlier directed to Emma thus tying the two together in a parallel experience of their indigenous groups: “Without the womb, the child never grows. Without the gourd, water slips through your fingers. Without the lei aloha, no encircling love, without your body love fades away” (1.1 and 1.4). Without the land for food, without the lakes and ponds to drink, and without the reciprocal love and care between the *Kanaka Maoli* and the land, the culture will slowly die away.

#### The Mo‘o and the Mihn

The locals believe that a *mo‘o* lives in the pond (a mystical, old, powerful creature). Clearwater understands. He tells Kaheka that the American Indian tribe called the Cheyenne (Clearwater’s tribe) have a similar unseen water lizard inhabiting their waters called a *mihn*. Usually just one *mihn* lives in a lake. Good luck comes through prayer and sacrifice to the *mihn*. Disrespect for it brings bad luck (Grinnell 201). Clearwater dreams of water, the same as Emma. In Act 2, Scene 8, a very involved vision occurs between Clearwater and the Chorus, a warrior, a wise man and a wolf. Clearwater holds a gun to his chest and the vision begins. In the vision, a warrior has been shot and is bleeding. A way must be opened to get him to the water. A ritual involving “crying as a mother wolf cries” is described, and a four-fold lifting of wolf skin changes the warrior until he is in the water. This water is “the river that runs through our lives” (2.8). The warrior washes and is healed, archetypal of purification and baptism. This vision

prepares Clearwater to act on his discernment of being the chosen one for a special mission tied to his cultural heritage. In this way he parallels Emma as the chosen one for Laka. Clearwater realizes that he must begin to honor and act upon this special calling.

In a parallel vision, Emma's father, Kaheka, tells of "the women who dreamed – that you [Emma] were the one" (1.1). He insists: "You were the one who kept everything alive." The Chorus caresses Emma chanting: "Perfect. Perfect feet, perfect hands, face, eyes, and lips, hips swaying like the tail of the graceful *mo'o* (*water spirit*). Love, perfect love" (1.1). So Clearwater is the *mihn* and Emma is the *mo'o*. By the conclusion of the play a strong attachment has formed between the two. Clearwater offers that they should be together; they should "watch their children grow and their grandchildren," but Emma resists because they each "have an obligation." She continues: "We are their dreams, all of their dreams. Please don't make it harder" (2.11). Clearwater leaves with a promise that a wolf can never forget his mate. Emma and Clearwater are both chosen ones that must fulfil their missions of similar values, but in different geographies. They each have a life-purpose beyond the ordinary and they chose to fulfill it even at the expense of their personal separation.

### Preserving Traditions

Clearwater brings to the play, and to our consideration, two specific concepts: a kindred spirit for Emma's spirituality, shown in his sensitivity to the Chorus and in dialogue with both Emma and her father, and a symbol of the ultimate outcome of colonization by the United States' government and perhaps a warning to the Hawaiians who are leaning toward statehood for a better life. Emma's father, Kaheka, complains to Clearwater (in his laid-back Hawaiian register) that "everykind people get more than us," and that soon "the only place you going see one real Hawaiian is in the Bishop Museum all stuff up like on ebird. One exkink bird" (1.4). Clearwater

responds: “Extinct. Like wolves”—like the grey wolf he has tattooed on his arm (1.4). His calling, like Emma’s, is to provide continuation of an ancient culture, to prevent extinction.

The continuation of Hawaiian traditions and the Hawaiian language has finally come to the schools and universities on the Islands (where for decades this had been prohibited). For example, today Dr. Taupōuri Tangarō instructs a college course entitled UNUKUPUKUPU—a course focused on hula at the Hawai’i Community College, University of Hawai’i System. He explains the importance of maintaining authentic hula, especially for the preservation of the Hawaiian language. He notes that in “political occupation ... one of the first things that they do to disconnect the people from their origin, is to replace the language” (Tangarō). To be disconnected from one’s origin is equivalent to the death of a culture—an aim of the colonizers. Silva notes the year 1896 when the self-proclaimed oligarchy, the Republic of Hawai’i, “passed a law that decreed that the English language shall be the medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools” (144). Generations of Hawaiians consequently were taught (submerged) in English as well as the American whitewashing of what really happened in the overthrow of their nation in 1893, and annexation in 1898.

The 1896 report of the Republic of Hawai’i’s Board of Education coldly and triumphantly notes that schools teaching through the Hawaiian language had now ceased to exist, adding that all parents preferred their children to be taught in English, and the loss of a Polynesian language was regrettable only for sentimental reasons (144). The entire Board, as one might surmise, were comprised of men from the foreign government and the report reflects their certainty of the superiority of English and Western culture. Hawaiians were coerced into accepting this edict by the argument that if the children were educated in English they would prosper and be successful. However, Silva explains that “greater economic opportunity did not

come to the students of the common schools because they were still expected to become nothing more than laborers” and they would be easier to control if they could understand English (145).

There were select schools, however, with a different curriculum, better funding, and expectations of higher outcomes. In her endnotes, Silva includes the fact that this continues today, citing Kailua High School that “specializes in building trades” versus Kaiser High School “with its wealthier and whiter population [that] specializes in college prep classes” (229). It is shocking that the prejudice of the past, the intent to promote the *haole* and subjugate the Native Hawaiians and those of other races, continues and is reinforced by these unfair systems.

Despite the school situation and prohibition on teaching in the Hawaiian language, the hula community carried on its own teaching with its all-important chants. Emma is in the midst of a divided people who are losing knowledge and respect for such things. Rowe argues “that the psychological post-war condition of Hawai‘i illustrates Michel Foucault’s theory of *discontinuity* whereby a society ceases to think in a certain way (within a space of just a few years) and embraces a collective new thought in a different direction (33). “What was once counted as knowledge,” Rowe explains, “came to be perceived as falsehood, fantasy, or mere superstition” (33). Thus were the ancient and traditional practices of old Hawai‘i scorned at the time of the setting of *Emmalehua*.

Tangarō notes the fact that in 2008 only about 2,000 people remained literate in Hawaiian—the disastrous long-term effects of the prohibition on the use of the mother tongue. Fortunately, Hawaiian language courses have sprung up in many schools and universities since that tally, but we have hula to thank for sheltering and carrying the Hawaiian language through years of oppression and persecution (Tangarō). Thus, Emma, in Kneubuhl’s play, represents the critical role taken on by the hula community in post-war Hawai‘i. Rowe argues that hula is a

“vital, creative art form and lived experience ... continually forming and reforming identity in and through movement” (32). Not only through movement, but also through language and chant are the culture, traditions, values, and genealogy preserved.

Furthermore, Tangarō argues that the focus of early hula was on the chanter, but as Hawaiians began to lose their language, hula masters adapted by exaggerating movements to impart understanding, thus shifting the focal point from the chant to the choreographical form. He explains that hula “is the language of emotion, of metaphor, and myth,” and refers to it as the “glue that kept a lot of people together” (Tangarō). Rowe explains that hula had a “functional context that served not only recreational ends but religious, political, and social purposes as well, celebrating and integrating all facets of life” (36). Western influence and prohibitions have eroded the original use of hula. Rowe wonders if hula’s “older, indigenous form [is] irretrievably lost” (37). Without those courageous and selfless ones like Emma, this passing along and preserving of true hula knowledge would never have survived through the years.

#### Lessons of the Elders

Once Emma is reunited with the Laka image, and again feels the spiritual power of oneness at the altar of Laka, she realizes the significance of this spiritual power and the importance of traditional hula in maintaining Hawaiian identity. Overman-Tsai argues that once Emma “remembers the lessons” taught to her by her grandmother, she is “empowered to continue life as a Hawaiian woman rather than an Americanized Hawaiian woman who has forgotten her culture” (93). Clearwater, too, begins to remember the lessons and the ways of his grandfather, and the Chorus supports this revelation. Kaheka asks if his grandfather was a witch doctor. Clearwater explains: “He had many conversations with wolves...” (1.4). Clearwater remembers nights on the prairie with “a million stars ... [wrapped] around the world like a

blanket of fireflies,” and the Chorus responds: “Fire, fire, fly and fly, fire” (1.4). Then he speaks of lightning, burning, and everything dies—but the wolf is a survivor—hence, his tattoo. This vision is a colonization metaphor. The beautiful things of a Native culture, the stars, are cast down and made destructive by perversion or annihilation by the colonizing force. The fire flies around to destroy one thing after another—the religion, the governing system, the societal norms, the language – all caught in the consuming fire of the colonizers. In remembering and honoring one’s heritage, cultural identity survives.

### Maelyn and Commercialized Hula

While the practitioners of Hawai‘i’s authentic hula at the time of the setting of *Emmalehua*, 63 years ago, were generally scorned, the commercialized form of hula enjoyed great popularity. Emma’s half-sister, Maelyn, successfully danced the hula at clubs in Waikiki, but actually longed for the authentic, sacred, and serious form. Kneubuhl uses the *lei hoaka* in a scene between the two sisters to reveal their relationship and Maelyn’s chronic distress. She wakes Emma and shows her the *lei hoaka*: “When did you find this again, Emma?” Emma’s immediate reaction is to protect the lei, to put it away. Maelyn suggests that she could use it when she dances the hula in downtown Honolulu. She presses: “It’s a family thing, Emma.” Emma insists that it is hers alone, and that it is “not a decoration” (2.1). Maelyn retorts, “you don’t even dance anymore” (2.1). When Emma aggressively wrests it from her sister, Maelyn scoffs: “Sorry, I forgot—Laka club, members only” (2.2). Maelyn declares that their grandmother made a mistake. Nevertheless, the Chorus makes it obvious that Maelyn is not the one. The Chorus chants: “Only for Emma” (2.1). It adds: “Stay outside” (2.1). The spirit of sacred indigenous knowledge can only be received by those whose hearts are ready for it, who will handle it with respect and protect its integrity.

Near the conclusion of the play, Maelyn appears to have matured. She is approaching a state that might be honored with the Laka knowledge. In her final dialogue with Emma she admits the envy that has tortured her from childhood. She also gives a moving account of her recent experience when “looking out at the moonlight through the trees” suddenly “all the angry voices that yelled for years just stopped” and she could “breathe again” (2.10). Emma feels the sincerity of her sister’s words, and recognizing the reformation, gently offers (at a later time) to teach Maelyn everything their grandmother had imparted. Maelyn is surprised, and Emma reassures her: “‘Ae, ko‘u kaikaina u‘i loa (*Yes, my lovely sister*). I promise” (2.10). Diana Looser, in her article, “Our Ancestors that We Carry on Our Backs,” refers to Emma’s decision as staking “a claim in cultural maintenance based on openness and shared wisdom” (76). Just as Emma has been given the opportunity to begin again with a new life in the presence of Laka represented by bringing new greenery to the altar and the prayer of supplication, so she too, graciously extends this kindness to her sister. Both have had a change of heart and are released from restricting, debilitating situations and emotions.

Emma’s decision both to return to Laka and to pass the hula knowledge along to her sister marks the tenacity of certain elements of indigenous culture. Looser comments that Kneubuhl’s play “upholds the possibility of connecting to a more coherent sense of identity through a return to, and reclamation of, the values of a consistent indigenous culture—values that persist over time and space and sustain the displaced minority in an oppressive colonial milieu” (77). Consequently, Kneubuhl successfully “weaves an affirmative counter strand into the dominant discourse of Hawai‘i’s teleological progress toward U.S. nationalism” (78). It highlights the resistance to what seems a natural turn towards assimilation whereby a people begin to forget their past and blend into a present foreign element.

“I won’t erase the past and hand you the future”

The turning point for Emma is clearly seen when Alika gives her the ultimatum to get rid of the Lei Hoaka or their marriage is over. Emma is forced to make a choice. She must abandon her authentic Hawaiian-ness and conform to a more American lifestyle, or Alika will leave. Emma’s answer illustrates a heart in protest: “I won’t erase the past and hand you the future” (2.9). The *Kanaka Maoli* need not abandon their ancient roots and culture to hand themselves and their beloved ‘*āina* (land) to the United States.

Emma’s grandmother appears at the conclusion (representing the ancestors) to restore freedom, lift the *kapu*, and to fully breathe the spirit of the ancient ones into Emma’s psyche—a graphic representation of the gift of self-determination.

## ***Ola Nā Iwi (The Bones Live)***

### **Continuing Invasion and Appropriation (spiritual/cultural takeover)**

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 12<sup>5</sup>

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

United Nations. [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was enacted on November 16, 1990, to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The Act assigned implementation responsibilities to the Secretary of the Interior.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)

Kneubuhl's play *Ola Nā Iwi* (1994) focuses on the theme of honoring the spirits of Hawaiian ancestors by caring for their remains and securing them in their proper places. It also addresses the continuing obligation of Hawaiians to maintain their culture through knowledge of their own history, traditional stories, rituals, skills and values. The tendency of Hawaiian culture to face the past for wisdom in the present, and Kneubuhl's purpose to find relevance in the past and link it with current issues in order to protest injustices clearly emerge in this complex play.

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<sup>5</sup>The United States was one of four countries that initially voted against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The others were Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

The right to recover and re-inter displaced indigenous Hawaiian remains (held as items catalogued in museums world-wide) becomes an urgent issue for those anguishing over the distressed spirits of their ancestors who can never find peace until they are brought home to the Islands and placed in their sacred resting grounds. As well, remains that are uncovered on the Islands by developers must be re-interred properly, ceremoniously, and with dignity.

In the preface of *Footpaths & Bridges: Voices from the Native American Women Playwrights Archive*, which includes Kneubuhl's *Ola Nā Iwi*, Shirley Huston-Findley mentions the playwright's Keeper of the Past Award "which honored her for preserving and sharing Hawai'i's unique heritage through drama" (x). Kneubuhl explains that she "needed to write" *Ola Nā Iwi* "to express [her] personal feelings about the human right for all those peoples to be buried with decency and respect in their native land" (x). Thus this play functions as a type of protest literature as do the other Kneubuhl plays herein considered. It is a way of engaging with the past that promotes action in the present.

According to an article published in the *Star Bulletin*, Honolulu, the development of a luxury resort in Kapalua in 1988 uncovered over 1,000 Hawaiian remains. This distressful event likely served as a catalyst for the creation of Kneubuhl's play, *Ola Nā Iwi* in 1994. Following *The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* of 1990, museums and other institutions had five years to inventory and inform indigenous organizations of their holdings, and claims could be made by a direct lineal descendant or by the Native organization so long as they could supply proof of their claim (NAGPRA). While some museums, institutions and collectors have complied readily and willingly to this mandate, many more have been loath to release these valuable remains. Now, 25 years later, institutions are merely being slapped with fines and warnings.

The desire of Hawaiians to recover the bones of their ancestors to give their spirits peace, coupled with the unwillingness of institutions to give them up is the reason that the bones in *Ola Nā Iwi* are stolen from the Berlin Museum. Additionally, the spirit pleads for help—begs to be taken home. Once the bones are discovered missing, Mrs. Mahler, who represents the museum, cross-examines Erik, head of the Hawaiian theatre group that has just performed in the city, in an effort to locate the missing remains. When Eric asks whose bones they are, Mrs. Mahler informs him that they are Hawaiian: “Some native specimen. Well over 100 years old,” kept for “research and exhibit” (1.2). She does not want anyone to find out they are missing. She blurts out: “The museum holds things from many countries and cultures. What would we do if everyone wanted everything back?” (1.2). This sweeping generalization is weak rhetoric. What if the museums looked honestly on a case by case basis and acted morally and ethically? Mrs. Mahler echoes the complaint of museums that do not wish their collections to diminish or their prestige to decline. Many museums secretly return indigenous remains so as not to risk an increase of requests that they prefer not to grant. Mrs. Mahler wants no publicity. She has a suspect in mind, and covertly sends investigators to the Islands.

The suspect is a sensitive and bright young woman named Kawehi. She is part of the theatre group and has smuggled the bones back in to Hawai‘i. Convincing the customs officer that the bones are mere stage props, Kawehi succeeds in her purpose but has no idea how to properly re-inter them. She tells her closest friend, Erik, “I need to take it somewhere, give it a decent burial. That person was Hawaiian. ... They couldn’t even leave us alone after we were dead. Those kūpuna (elders) should all come home, every single one of them” (1.4). While considering this problem, she hides the bones under her bed. They are now in their Native land under the protection of one who cares for them and plans to put them to rest in the beloved *‘āina*

(land). Thus the recovery and repatriation of the remains rests on the courage, compassion and righteous indignation of Kawehi.

How to re-inter the remains of an ancestor properly is a challenge for indigenous communities. There is fear of repercussions to the departed by merely repeating the original ceremony, even if that could be accomplished in perfect accord with the requirements of earlier times. There are no formal guidelines passed along for the event. Indigenous people are tremulous when attempting to create a ritual for re-interment. Even if the spirit of the deceased was present to instruct on how to do this perfectly, one might worry, as Kawehi does, about executing the ceremony correctly. The fear is that if this reinterment is not done correctly, the spirit of the ancestor will not find rest and peace, and the faithful one doing this loving deed may suffer doubt, and possibly guilt, for the rest of his or her life.

Nanea

What if that individual whose bones are in question was present to speak? This query finds a creative answer in Kneubuhl's play. Once back in her homeland, the spirit of the bones springs into a human form of an endearing woman named Nanea. Seeking help, she befriends Kawehi and stays at her home (watching over her own bones). Imagine the scene on the stage. A likable woman sits by her own hundred-year-old bones, guarding them. Thus Kneubuhl fuses the past to the present in this graphic and moving manner. By personalizing the bones of this ancestor, Kneubuhl provides the dramatic edge that operates to awaken disinterested thought on the topic. Human remains are more than a mere item to be stored in institutions (however rare or priceless), to be listed in a museum's catalogue and either displayed or locked away in an inventory box in a storage room.

Nanea is the embodiment of the ancestral spirit of the bones around which the play revolves, a living link between past and present—a concept ingrained in Native Hawaiian culture. She serves to raise the issue of indigenous graves’ protection and recovery of Native remains as it affects Hawaiians (and many other peoples throughout the world) with great profundity. Her identity corresponds to an important time in Hawaiian history enabling Kneubuhl to add a pedagogical element to the play. Entertaining while informing, the playwright engages her audience/readers in a history lesson with clear implications for the present. Kneubuhl gives this character the job or position that she, the playwright, once had as a history tour guide.

The presence and participation of this well-developed character, Nanea, is reminiscent of the archetypal *Kupunawahine* (female ancestor) in the opening scene of Kneubuhl’s, *January 1893*. *Kupunawahine* invites the ancestors to be present as the story is being told. In *Ola Nā Iwi* Nanea is a Hawaiian *ali ‘i* ancestor present both as the object of the story and as an important storyteller herself. *Kupunawahine* says that the past is here “in our bones” (1893 1.1). Through the character, Nanea (whose true identity is Kuini Liliha, 1802 - 1839), the past and present reside in the concrete symbol of her bones. Her personal story gives rise to empathy towards the thousands of nameless, unidentified remains—all of whom had a life and a history, as well as some degree of influence on present Hawaiian identity and culture.

Once more Kneubuhl’s audiences have an opportunity to view the past from a creative, feminist perspective and to realize its relevance in present day issues. Looser argues that Nanea “brings the past and the present...into simultaneity onstage” and notes that in many respects she is like the “Kapuna figure in *Emmalehua*” (80). Both interact directly with younger female characters (Emma and Kawehi) who honor the ancestors, and the ancestors bring them help.

Both Nanea and Kapuna direct the young women in ancient ways that are nearly lost—Emma with the altar of Laka, and Kawehi in the weaving of the *sennit kā'ai*—the container for proper burial of the bones. Both ancestors leave the message that it is up to those living in the present to make right the past, make traditional ways their own, and to carry this heritage into the future.

### Ola Nā Iwi Group

In Hawai'i, a group formed in 1989 with the same name as this play, *Ola Nā Iwi*, (*The Bones Live*). They created what was thought to be a dignified, thoughtful, pragmatic way to handle the delicate issue of reinterment. Reporter, Jean Christensen, in reference to the return of indigenous remains to Hawai'i, explains: "Ola Na Iwi's reburial ceremonies are conducted by trained volunteers at secret locations. The remains are wrapped in Hawaiian tapa cloth and laid in hand-woven lauhala baskets, and are reburied as near to their original graves as possible" (*Los Angeles Times*, April 2000). While all this sounds very good, it has been revealed that this group has amassed huge amounts of money, and the leaders, their actions, the shuffling of valuable bones from museums to warehouses, leaves this group shrouded in mystery, suspect of greed and corrupt practices. Kneubuhl portrays this type of individual in her play through Kawehi's boss, Pua. When she finds out about the bones, she wants them for the museum, for the publicity.

### Nanea's True Identity

The playwright creates a dialogue between Nanea and a character named Deidre, a middle-aged Caucasian woman who is an anthropologist married to an Islander, to reveal Nanea's true identity to the audience/readers. As a result of her extraordinary spiritual receptivity, Deidre discerns Nanea's true identity through a vision in a dream. This character devotes herself to aiding the return of remains from museums to their rightful burial places.

Kneubuhl circles back to the time of Ka‘ahumanu (*The Conversion*) through the bones. The dialogue between Nanea and Deidre reveals that Nanea is, in fact, Ka‘ahumanu’s contemporary *ali‘i*, Kuini Liliha, wife of Boki, governor of Oahu (2.9).

Nanea thanks Deidre for her efforts, and laments that there are “so many others” (the other bones she was with in Berlin) waiting for this help—inferring that the present problem is immense (2.9). By the year 2000, more than 5,000 sets of Hawaiian ancestral remains were returned to their homeland from museums in the United States alone (Christensen). Kneubuhl alludes to the magnitude of this problem through an argument between the museum curators, historical figures, George Dorsey and Franz Boas. They are quarreling over who has the largest collection of indigenous bones in their museum. Boas reminds Dorsey that “one hundred and seventy specimens in your own collection are the result of my ingenuity” (2.8). Gravediggers followed epidemics or invaded sacred grounds to collect bones and sell them to museums around the world. In the 1800’s, supplying bones was a very lucrative business. No wonder so many people became grave-diggers, and no wonder indigenous remains are scattered all over the globe. Many museums in the 19<sup>th</sup> century transported these human remains illegally in order to add to their prestigious collections.

Nanea works in a Living History museum while waiting to have her bones laid to rest properly. She is in costume, acting the part of her real self, Liliha—telling her own story. As Tennessee Williams wrote: “I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion” (*Menagerie* 1.1) The spirit of Liliha, appearing as Nanea, provides spectators at the museum with detailed, first-hand facts concerning past events and traditional Hawaiian teachings. For example, she presents the “Kawaiaha’o church, symbol of the new religion of Christianity in nineteenth century Hawai‘i,” and adds that “some of the chiefs felt oppressed by the new laws, Christianity, and the

casting off of all that was sacred” (1.11). Thus Kneubuhl increases empathy for the ancestors and their struggles with foreign influences. It is ironic that Nanea chooses to spend time in another museum after desperately endeavoring to be released from the one that held her bones for so long in Berlin. Were one’s spirit held for over a century in captivity by a museum from which there was recent escape, why voluntarily seek out another museum to spend one’s precious time?

As she gives her walking history tour, Nanea (Liliha) engages her audience with charm and authenticity. She speaks of Boki, her past husband, governor of Oahu (whom spectators assume is simply the historical personage that accompanies her assigned role). Boki suffers a strained relationship to Ka‘ahumanu. Kneubuhl’s, *The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu*, sheds a favorable light on this historical character, however Ka‘ahumanu is an extremely complex historical figure. Even today, Hawaiians have a divided view regarding her. Kneubuhl’s reference to Ka‘ahumanu in *Ola Nā Iwi* throws this past ruler into a very negative light. In January 1829, Nanea explains to her living history audience, to prove loyalty to the Christian church, Ka‘ahumanu and some of the missionaries go to “Hale o Keawe, where the sacred bones of our chiefs lay” (1.11). Ka‘ahumanu uncovers the bones (an act of sacrilege), moves some to caves, and burns the rest of these sacred and loved *ali‘i* remains. Boki becomes irate and speaks out against Ka‘ahumanu. The benefit of the doubt might be given that Ka‘ahumanu was forced into this act under some sort of threat, or as the lesser of two evils—in which case the other evil must have been absolutely malignant. Thus the enmity between Ka‘ahumanu and Liliha’s husband, Boki.

To enable her audience (or readers) to understand the gravity of Ka‘ahumanu’s action and its significance to the theme of the play, Kneubuhl has Nanea explain the depth of this abuse to an interested spectator in the living history tour audience named Gustav (he has been sent

from the Berlin museum to investigate the theft of the bones). The premise is that the spirit “resides in the bones” and therefore if the bones are “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” (1.11). If accepted as true, would one not do everything possible to bring relief to the departed loved one? Would one not feel plagued with despair if a proper burial were made impossible? Gustav is clearly moved by Nanea’s explanation. When he later returns to Germany empty-handed, he remarks that if he had found the bones he would have given them to Nanea for safe-keeping.

Further, Nanea reminisces tenderly about her husband’s dream to cut “enough sandalwood to clear his debt ... to erase the entire debt of the nation” (1.11). Apparently, Ka‘ahumanu lifted the debts to foreigners from all chiefs except him. Nanea explains that Boki “placed his land and authority in the hands of his wife, Liliha, and to the laments and pleas of those who loved him, he sailed away with his dream” (1.11). Liliha never sees him again and his bones are lost forever. Thus Kneubuhl supplies a candid peek into the complexity of this historical figure, Ka‘ahumanu, through this incident related by Liliha. It is a clever way to bring a voice from the past to the present—the voice of a contemporary of Ka‘ahumanu with an anecdote that helps to explain the mixed responses to this past *ali‘i*.

Nanea explains that in 1831 one of the Christian *ali‘i* came to Oahu to purposefully insult Liliha in public. The people who love her and who are “tired of the tyrannical yoke of the Christian chiefs” prepare for war (2.9). She is betrayed by her father, Ulumaheihei Hoapili, a trusted friend of Kamehameha I, who is sent to stop her. Stripped of her land and power, Liliha suffers her first taste of forced separation from her land. Nanea sadly adds that Liliha is poisoned to death soon after this, probably by one of her own family. In contrast, she describes how the

people love her intensely and come in “throng” to “mourn her in the city” (2.9). In 1893, the people came in throngs to support Queen Lili’uokalani as well, showing the love and support the subjects often felt for the *ali‘i*. Kneubuhl’s creative linking of past to present in performance and use of pathos bridges a gap that might otherwise numb the sensibilities and create disinterest or apathy regarding the issue of repatriation.

### Bone Switching

Deidre has discerned Nanea’s true identity in a dream. She asks Nanea (Liliha) how her bones ended up in a museum in Berlin—it is so unlikely. Nanea explains that Liliha suspected that someone would try to kill her and “the one thing that was abhorrent to her was that her bones might lie on the grounds of those who caused her pain and suffering...and she could not bear to be on the ground of a Christian god who would never be hers” (2.9). One of Liliha’s devoted followers, secretly exchanged Liliha’s body with another before it was to be taken to Lahaina. This first exchange ironically mimicked the unscrupulous bone swapping that occurred often in the fervor of bone collecting and selling in the 1800’s. The more valuable type of skeleton would be taken to be sold, while either sand bags or a lesser valued body would replace the original. In Liliha’s case, the exchange was requested, and based on her fidelity to Hawaiian tradition that rejected the god of the *haole* who now claimed the land.

This first bone switching foreshadowed the many instances of Liliha’s bones being swapped for the stage prop set over a century later. Kneubuhl creates the mystery-novel-twist portion of the play in just this way. The dedicated individual who received Liliha’s original request, carried her remains away to a remote cave where they remained hidden until “foreign men” happened upon her bones and “exchanged them for so much money” (2.9). This invented portion of Liliha’s story enables Kneubuhl to treat the question of “repatriation and reburial of

Native Hawaiian remains” while still doing “justice to the past in the present” (Looser 87).

Kneubuhl’s added voice of protest in this respect becomes highly effective through performance because audiences become emotionally engaged, and thoughtful discussion regarding repatriation and indigenous rights is promoted. This protest carries with it an accompanying sense of the need for awareness in providing protection for Hawai‘i’s cultural heritage, artifacts, and present human rights.

Nanea’s character is endearing as well as intriguing by reason of simultaneity of this past *ali‘i* with the present personality. Kawehi laments over Liliha’s impending absence following the reinterment: “I just don’t want you to go now” (2.11). Liliha responds: “You see, the bond is already too strong. It’s dangerous” (2.11). Liliha implies that Kawehi must complete her self-appointed task and to remain mindful of the others who “keep crying out for home and find no rest” (2.11). In personification of the islands, she notes that they, too, “weep” for the return of the other bones being kept in institutions (2.11).

Kneubuhl makes an active call to those who are considering this issue by reason of engaging with her play through Liliha: “It’s up to you, the living. ... Bring us all together and bind us as one, just like we wove the threads together, you and I.” Liliha adds: Don’t cry, and don’t fail me,” softening that statement with, “Don’t cry, ku‘ulei (*my darling*). I’ll never be far away” (2.11). Kneubuhl’s protest in the form of this play is motivated by compassion and a sense of justice—an attitude and incentive hoped to be passed to her audiences and readers. This last dialogue between Kawehi and Liliha is augmented in a later scene by another important interaction between the two. In an effort to save the bones from repossession, several characters work together to put the stage set in a car that will explode. Kawehi believes that Liliha’s real bones are in the car and at the last moment runs to save them.

In a touching monologue, Kawehi explains her experience. As she ran for the car to save Liliha's bones, Liliha "came, like a fast blurry image out of nowhere" and grabbed her, turned her, and pushed her down. Then she felt "a second push" and "her body coming over me like a dark wave ... surrounding me curling and covering me like a deep warm blanket," thus saving Kawehi's life (2.14). In turn, Kawehi finally lays the bones to rest.

#### Final Words

In the final words by Liliha, Kneubuhl ingeniously speaks from the viewpoint of the ancestor during and after the re-interment. All the actions of the play lead to this finale of great pathos, a subtle but powerful call to action for the audience and readers. Liliha calmly and gratefully acknowledges the closing of the sennit net. She requests a small place far up on the hills with sweet air "clean and dry, inside the cool earth" (2.17). She longs for the "breathing, beating heart of [her] beloved 'āina (land)" (2.17). In joyful expectation, Liliha at last hears and feels the coming of those who have gone before her. One will see her and "bending over so softly" call back to the others: "Stop and wait, for here is one of our own, come home to us at last" (2.17). As Kneubuhl articulates: "It is still our individual committed action to do right for ourselves and our people that makes a difference" (Huston-Findley x).

## CHAPTER 4

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Issue of Sovereignty

*"Ua Mau Ke Ea O Ka `Aina I Ka Pono"*

The Life/Sovereignty of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness

#### Hawaiian Independence and Sovereignty

In the complex and ongoing sovereignty movement in Hawai‘i today, the common feature that all agree upon is the necessity for educating people regarding their past. Those in favor of some type of sovereignty began to take serious action in the 1990’s to “build a broad, popular movement of educated Hawaiians who can then exercise their right to informed self-determination,” a movement that has included “community-based educational workshops, dramatic reenactments of key moments in the history of Hawaiian sovereignty, documentary films, books, marches, music, and legal cases” (Goodyear-ka‘opua 60). Hence the importance of Kneubuhl’s plays and living history reenactments that actively engage people with past historical events that influence present discussions.

As more Hawaiians are accurately informed regarding past events and realize their rights, the sovereignty movement escalates and land is at the heart of the protest. While the movement involves various approaches, there is agreement on the fact of a “connection between the health of the people and [their] ability to connect to [their] land” (60). Kneubuhl’s plays consistently connect the action, the history, and the health of the Kanaka Maoli to the land. For example, in *Emmalehua*, the people had been forced off their land to small dwellings up high in the mountains and were “dying of broken hearts” for loss of the land (2.3). Moreover, we find in *Ola Nā Iwi* that the spirits of the ancestors remain with the bones and cannot rest on foreign soil.

Hawaiian remains have been sold to museums or private collectors, catalogued and locked in boxes in locations around the world. Descendants believe that these individuals have no peace until returned to their beloved land and reinterred. When Liliha's bones are finally at rest back in Hawai'i her spirit expresses great peace and relief: "Leave me in the breathing, beating heart of my beloved 'āina" (2.17). In Hawaiian culture there is a connection with the land both in life and afterlife.

John Waihee III, former Governor of Hawai'i (1986 – 1994) and Chairman of Hawaiian Affairs, is a supporter of Hawaiian *sovereignty*. He asks: "Why should our people be living on the beach when their Native lands are across the street?" (PBSHawai'i.org). He explains that for the past few decades there has been "a feeling that maybe it would be better for everybody if Native Hawaiians had the opportunity to control their own destiny, manage their own affairs," and that the growing concept of self-determination in Hawai'i has now risen to a high level of energy" (PBSHawai'i.org). The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) originated partly in response to the plight of Native Hawaiians who received eviction notices or ran into 'no trespassing' signs on land that had been their home and provided sustenance to their families for centuries. As the tourist industry expanded, the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) were pushed aside. OHA was created to help them fight for their rights. Its mandate is to "better the conditions of both Native Hawaiians and the Hawaiian community in general," and it is "funded with a pro rata share of revenues from state lands designated as "ceded" (oha.org). OHA has also compiled a list of Kanaka Maoli who have the right to exercise self-determination.

Hawaiians want Federal recognition, but not under restrictions (as with Native Americans). Recognition has already come from the International Court of Justice when it accepted a legal petition from Hawai'i, as it can only take petitions from an existing nation-

states. Waihee says that what the U.S. “needs to do, is to recognize our nationhood,” and Hawai‘i will then exercise its right of self-determination. However, leaders of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement insist that the Kanaka Maoli can exercise self-determination without that recognition.

Many believe it is too late to do anything about the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian government by the United States. However, the passing of time does not (in any way) negate the illegality of the takeover or affect the fact that the Kingdom of Hawai‘i as a nation has never been dissolved, but exists legally to this day. The United Nations charter rests upon the basis of a people’s right to choose their own political system and govern themselves economically, socially, and culturally in the way that the majority deems best. Due to the fact that Hawai‘i was never legally annexed to the United States, there remains opportunity to exercise self-determination to the extent of reinstating independent sovereignty.

#### Hawaiian Governance Symposium

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Hawaiian Governance Symposium on Independence, held November 1, 2014, featured a talk by Professor Francis A. Boyle, entitled, “Restore the Kingdom of Hawaii!” (Boyle). Dr. Boyle earned his Doctorate in Political Science from Harvard Law School in 1983 and currently teaches International Law, International Human Rights, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Law of US Foreign Affairs, at the University of Illinois campus. He begins with a simple message. He informs his audience that there will be a Convention coming soon and he asks all 135,000 Kanaka Maoli on the [eligibility] roll<sup>6</sup> to “go to this Convention and vote to restore the Kingdom of Hawai‘i” (Boyle). He urges them to do this

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<sup>6</sup>This eligibility roll of Kanaka Maoli came about when state legislators passed Act 195 in 2011.

because the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was illegally taken from them in 1893. The Kanaka Maoli are the only people in Hawai‘i that have the right of self-determination, but they must exercise this right in order to restore their independence.

However, viable questions on the other side of this issue remain. For example: Is it possible for a newly formed provisional government of national unity to have the wherewithal to provide for the needs of its people to an acceptable degree? What happens to those now on social security? What about health care? Is it possible to have an immediate and functioning infrastructure with sufficient finances? Will a vote for the re-establishment of the independent nation of Hawai‘i provide sufficient security for the Kanaka Maoli or make things worse?

Boyle explains that there are three major trusts that have been in place which can be utilized immediately. The trust for the education of Kanaka Maoli children is the basis of the Department of Education, while the Homestead Act provides for homes. There is a trust for the hospital already in place for health-care needs. Boyle’s response seems overly simplified. It is an immense proposition to step in a provisional government at this point in time. Nonetheless, there are leaders in the sovereignty movement that have been preparing for over 20 years.

Further, Boyle explains that the President of the United States has power to recognize the Kingdom of Hawai‘i “without any approval or authorization by the U.S. Congress or by any court.” He also reminds his audience that President Obama was born and raised in Hawai‘i (August 4, 1961). Surely the President has a more complete understanding and empathy for the people of Hawai‘i and their movement towards re-establishing sovereignty than any President before him, however it seems highly unlikely that President Obama will suddenly recognize Hawai‘i as an independent sovereign nation at this time.

Providing further direction and encouragement, Boyle informs his audience that there will be a motion made at the Convention to restore the Hawaiian sovereign government—a government independent of the United States—a restoration of what was taken in 1893. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs will set the date for this Convention sometime in the beginning of 2015, following the current November 2014 elections.

Activist Dennis “Bumpy” Kanahahele will make the motion at the Convention. In the July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, article, “Life of Resistance,” *The Star Advertiser* (Honolulu) recapped Kanahahele’s lifetime of efforts toward sovereignty and independence for Hawai‘i (Hurley). Kanahahele is CEO of the non-profit “Aloha First,” an organization that has been established for 20 years on 45 acres of Hawaiian Homestead land in Waimanalo. This area serves as headquarters for the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Former Governor John Waihee argues that Kanahahele will “go down as one of the great leaders of the contemporary Hawaiian movement” (Hurley). Kanahahele acts as “an elder statesman of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement” testifying at hearings by the U.S. Department of the Interior “over the question of whether the federal government should begin a process that could lead to a government-to-government relationship with a future Native Hawaiian government, which Kanahahele insists will be formed late this year or in early 2015” (Hurley).

Eight of Kanahahele’s direct ancestors (plus distant relatives) signed the petition against annexation to the United States in 1898. He feels he was “born into a life of resistance” (Hurley). True to the culture of Hawai‘i, he faces the past to inform his present. He is loyal and respectful to his ancestors. He explains: “It started over 100 years ago for me. I’m just an extension of that. For us, it’s a way of life” (Hurley). Boyle is Kanahahele’s legal advisor.

Nation-within-a-nation versus Independent Sovereignty

There are two main streams of thought regarding Hawaiian sovereignty today. One favors establishing a nation-within-a-nation, similar to that of Native American tribes on the mainland. Boyle warns that the Kanaka Maoli should guard against federal recognition that would turn them into an Indian tribe. That is not the kind of sovereignty sought. While the Federal government may acknowledge the sovereign power of a Native entity it can also act to usurp that power if it is in disagreement with its actions or policies. The nation-within-a-nation is not a concept that restores Hawai‘i’s freedom as an independent nation. It is a kind of half-way measure that parallels the compromises made between the U.S. Federal government and Native Americans. This model and its outcomes must be carefully considered before deciding to push for Federal recognition for Native Hawaiians.

Independent sovereignty, on the other hand, is the full restoration of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. Boyle asks the Kanaka Maoli to vote for independence and then to vote for a provisional government of Hawaiian unity. He explains that the Kingdom of Hawaii was never lawfully ended, and that the U.S. violated their own treaties of peace, therefore all that is needed is restoration. This restoration can be accomplished by the vote of the Kanaka Maoli at the Convention. There is no doubt as to Boyle’s position: “We want our Kingdom of Hawai‘i back, not an Indian reservation” (Boyle). The forceful and clear language reminds one of Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask’s speech at the 1993 Centennial Commemoration following the four and a half hour march of protest. “We are not Americans,” Trask shouted over and over. In an interview with Dr. Eiko Kosasa at the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, Trask explains that she and her sister began the Sovereignty movement, and has been a leader in this movement for over 30 years. Trask argues that what “drives independence” in Hawaiians is “resistance...to resist what they’re doing to our

islands and to us” (Kosasa). She emphatically adds that the Hawaiian culture must be at the core of the resistance.

A panel of experts interviewed on *Insight PBS Hawai‘i: Native Hawaiian Sovereignty*, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013, that included Dexter Kaiama, Native Hawaiian Rights Attorney, and John Waihee III, former Governor of Hawai‘i and Chairman of Hawaiian Affairs, held a debate over some of these sovereignty issues (PBSHawai‘i.org). Kaiama favors a de-occupation of Hawai‘i rather than forming a nation-within-a-nation. He feels that the more people know the truth of Hawai‘i’s history the closer they get to supporting de-occupation. Kaiama explains that “Hawai‘i was illegally occupied and it *continues* under illegal occupation,” and concludes that as a result the “state of Hawai‘i cannot exist” (*Insight PBS*). He insists that since there is no Treaty of Annexation, all political actions, laws, and decisions coming from the invading and occupying U.S. toward Hawai‘i are, in reality, invalid. He is currently arguing this case in international courts, and pressing for de-occupation (*Insight PBS*). Kaiama insists that the lawful status of Hawai‘i is a nation. It is a matter of letting more people become aware of this. Kaiama explains that this is what he is doing in the courts “not only here but also in the international courts” (*Insight PBS*).

Then there is the question of a military. Without its own military, how will the Kingdom of Hawaii defend itself from foreign entities who have for centuries desired to possess it? Additionally, if the United States loses full rights to military bases on the Hawaiian Islands could this change cause an imbalance that might disastrously affect not only the security of America, but of other nations, and perhaps aid the growing force of terrorist groups in the world? The United States will tenaciously hold to its military stronghold in the Pacific and its safe

paradisiacal vacation spot on these exquisitely beautiful islands. Had Hawai‘i sufficient military might in 1893 we might have seen a different outcome than the unfortunate illegal overthrow.

The most serious problems in Hawai‘i today include energy costs that are 300% above the national average, a 20% decline in the real medium income over the past seven years, almost the highest homeless rate in the nation, and the highest taxes in the country (Insights PBS Hawai‘i: Election 2014 Governor). No wonder there is a cry for change, but would a newly reorganized nation of Hawai‘i have the ability to provide for its people and address these chronic issues? Is it possible that a vote for reclaiming independent sovereignty could be successfully backed by the political power of a Native government that could reinstate a thriving and healthy Hawai‘i in the power of its own people?

If one takes the Hawaiian viewpoint and tradition of looking to the past for wisdom in the present, Kneubuhl’s plays show the Kanaka Maoli to be resilient, intelligent, and courageous. Kneubuhl presents past Hawaiian leaders as politically astute and able to blend Western ways and means into indigenous culture and traditions for defense and survival. Her plays represent people with a fierce love of their land and loyalty to their culture and leaders. These qualities are time-tested rocks required to reinstate, reclaim and raise up a strong and functioning independent sovereign nation.

### Kneubuhl’s Contribution

Part of the ongoing protest in the sovereignty movement occurs quietly, but forcefully, through the arts. In the case of Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl, her plays allow history to speak for itself. Through the engaging venue of drama Kneubuhl teaches the truth of Hawaiian history, challenging the whitewashing of American textbooks from which the children of Hawai‘i have

been taught for over a century. Her works force audiences and readers to reevaluate their thinking in respect to Hawaiian sovereignty by providing background information in an unforgettable manner that deeply impresses one's consciousness. If the primary need is to make people aware of the historical facts in order to demonstrate justice and some type of sovereignty, Kneubuhl is a valuable contributor. Certainly, as Kneubuhl's plays are performed in various parts of the world, and the texts of her plays circulate (as in the anthology, *Hawai'i Nei: Island Plays*), a growing number of people will become informed. Knowledge of what happened, and contemplation of the events lead to intelligent discussion and wise decision-making. Kneubuhl's plays have forwarded this goal and will continue to do so as her works multiply with further publishing and performances.

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