

RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE: INDIGENOUS AGENCY OF HAWAI'IAN INDIGENE IN LYNN KALAMA NAKKIM'S MAHELE O MAUI

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the emergence of indigenous literature contextualizes the historicity of colonialism and the ensuing resistance. This present study articulates how the Native Hawai'ians articulate their resistance against American domination through the resilience of their cultural heritage and advocates for political changes, as is reflected in Lynn Kalama Nakkim's Mahele o Maui. The study applied an econarratological perspective which foregrounds the reader's active role in reimagining a different socio-cultural perspective of the natural environment from Mahele's perspective and engaging with other (non-Western) environmental imagination. The theory of resilience and resistance, as stated by Adamson and Molina, underlines how indigenous Hawai'ian tradition manages to persevere and transform through the Western model of narration, a novel. The study explores how Nakkim's fiction articulates the indigenous epistemology of Aloha Aina to actively resist American domination with the eventual goal of achieving sovereignty and independence. The finding concludes how Native Hawai'ians' literature has a similar concern with other indigenous struggles in the world, advocative and politically oriented in outlook, echoing their struggle for the right of self-determination and eventual sovereignty.

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A. Introduction

The memory of imperialism has been perpetuated in the form of a discourse in which the knowledge of indigenous.¹

people were collected and represented in the West and then reproduced through colonial discourse, which denies the agency of the colonized. The colonial

¹ Indigenous people are a generic term referring to the ethnic people who are regarded as first in a particular territory or region before the arrival of settlers who out-populated, exploited, and marginalized them. P. Jane Hafen, "Indigenous

Peoples and Place," in *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 16, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999080.ch11>.

discourse of the Other is then internalized through “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, even colonial bureaucracy and colonial styles.”² Colonial authority inscribes a hegemony of thought based on Western conception of being. One example is the ensuring instrumentalization of the more-than-human world as mere automata, devoid of their intrinsic values. Huggan and Tiffin identify how the destructive changes of the environment “were premised on *ontological* and *epistemological* differences between Western and non-Western ideas of human and animal being-in-the world.”³ This hegemonic way of thinking marginalizes the non-Western perspective concerning the more-than-the human world.

Though interest in indigenous art and imagination have been explored, particularly in North America, it was only in recent years that the indigenous discourse on the natural world entered wider academic discussions concerning the notion of environment and nature. In line with their interaction and negotiation with the environment, indigenous peoples have developed a detailed system of knowledge about the local environment and its dynamics, as well as the customs, beliefs, institutions and traditions that arose from it.⁴ Even so, indigenous knowledge does

not exist in timeless space, relegating the indigene into the bygone past without any relevance in the contemporary period, but is closely linked with the trauma and legacy of colonialism.

The historicity of indigenous people is intertwined within the socio-historical contexts of past and present colonialism, echoing the traumatic experiences of dispossession and marginalization of their homeland. Although formal and overseas colonialism have ended in the post-World War II period, colonial relations and attitudes remain prevalent, in ways such as the Othering of decriminalized ethnic groups and newer form of colonialism, 'neo-colonialism' based on economic and military dependencies between the formerly colonizing and colonized people. Adamson explores how indigenous people have been expelled from their original place of inhabitation for centuries, in which their removal was intended to ensure the region as a blank spot on the map to be exploited and developed.⁵ Land, and ownership of land is therefore contested based upon the settler/native binarism of who had the rightful claim to the land. As aptly summarized by Said, “the main battle of imperialism is over land....and these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.”⁶

² Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910802195745>.

³ Graham Huggan, “‘Greening’ Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 50, no. 3 (2004): 701–33, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2004.0067>.

⁴ Kristiawan Indriyanto, “An Ecolinguistics Analysis of the Wind Gourd of La’amaomao,” *International*

Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS) 5, no. 1 (2021): 97–108, <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v5i1.3717>.

⁵ Joni Adamson, *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*, Stated First Printing edition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 16.

⁶ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xii.

The inclusion of the voices and struggles of marginalized minorities and in particular, the global indigenous communities through their literature underlines an alternative way of contextualizing the world from the dominant Euro-American discourse. Their literature emerges as a form of reaction and resistance to colonial representation and discourse, which limits their agency. Indigenous literature is then positioned in contrast with colonial ideology, an ideology that seeks to permeate and invalidate all-white authored representation of native people.⁷ Lawson considers indigenous literature as part of resistance literature, “an established category of writing that is political in its very nature.”⁸ A theory of resistance, then attempt to explore how Western ideology tries to impose its way of thinking while systematically erasing the presence of non-Western culture. Even within this hegemonic structure, the emergence of indigenous literature highlights the resilience of native cultures in which aesthetics and ethics within songs, stories, chants, and prayers are adapted through the contemporary model of novel. Lawson, in her study of Native American writers argues how

“Resilience literature privileges Native American ethics such as one’s responsibility to the community and to the land. Native writers accomplish

these goals through their reliance of the aesthetics and ethics embedded in the oral tradition.”⁹

Positioning this study within a wider framework of indigenous study, this study focuses upon the contested space between settler colony and indigene in a colonial context, the state of Hawai’i. The opening of this isolated island chain from an expedition from James Cook in 1778 irrevocably altered both the natural and political landscape of Hawai’i through the arrival of White (*haole*) settlers. The eventual arrival of American missionaries and later capitalist plantation owners marginalized Hawai’ian indigenous people (*Kanaka Maoli*) and forbidding culturally significant sites and cultural traditions based on reverence toward their natural environment.

Maile perceives the existence of a dynamic system of power that intends to subjugate, marginalize and dispose of the Hawai’ian ethnic group. Within the socio-political arena that disenfranchised native agency, Indigenous Hawai’ians struggle to assert their existence and distinctive identity as an ethnic group.¹⁰ The present state of Native Hawai’ians’ domination under U.S settler hegemony is aptly summarized by the subsequent quote from Haunani-Kay Trask, a Native Hawai’ian nationalist:

⁷ Katherine Durnin, “Indigenous Literature and Comparability,” *CLCWeb - Comparative Literature and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2011): 2, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1740>.

⁸ Angelica Marie Lawson, “Resistance and Resilience in the Work of Four Native American Authors” (Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2006), 10.

⁹ Lawson, 31.

¹⁰ David Uahikeaikalei’ohu Maile, “Going Native: South Park Satire, Settler Colonialism, and Hawaiian Indigeneity,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 60–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616640562>.

“Hawai’ians became a conquered people, their land and culture subordinated to another nation. Made to feel and survive as inferiors when their sovereignty as a nation was forcibly ended by American military power, we Hawai’ians were rendered politically and economically powerless by the turn of the century. Today, our people continue to suffer the effects of American colonialism even after the alleged democratization of statehood.”¹¹

Within Western discourse which marginalizes the agency of Hawai’ian indigene and deprives themselves of their rightful sovereignty, Native Hawai’ian literature functions as a political agency to convey their resistance. In line with Harlow’s concept of resistance literature, Native Hawai’ian literature is a genre of writing that was inseparable from political movements due to the historical backdrop of colonialism.¹² The emergence of Native Hawai’ian voices challenges how literature written by White authors mainly abides by the stereotypical depiction of Hawai’i as a tropical paradise in the Pacific Ocean and fails to address the existing problems faced by indigenous peoples. Spencer articulates how the depiction of the Pacific in White literature mainly delegates the archipelago as mere backdrops or setting for the White’s fantasies and romances, while the real drama about indigenous survival

remains unexplored in the foreground.¹³ The revival of indigenous Hawai’ian cultures and the increasing number of their literary production began in the late 1950s and peaked during an era called *Hawai’ian Renaissance*, which mainly corresponds with the wider Civil Right Movements in the U.S during the mid-1960s. Starting from their cultural Renaissance, writers of Hawai’ian descend manages to reclaim their cultural heritage and began publishing themes related to their struggle as a marginalized ethnic group.¹⁴ The increasing number of native Hawai’ian writers highlight the cultural resilience in which they address theme related to the intertwined aspect of nature and culture in Hawai’ian consciousness.

One example of indigenous literature which explores the Native Hawai’ians’ marginalization under American domination and the struggle to maintain their distinctive cultural heritage and the right to land ownership is *Mahele O Maui*, a novel written by Lynn Kalama Nakkim in 1984. Nakkim foregrounds the struggle of a *Kanaka Maoli* family, the Piilani, to preserve their land inheritance on the east side of Maui Island from the encroaching gaze of American corporations and sugar plantation owners. The story spans several decades in which the landscape around Maui is slowly altered and transformed

¹¹ Haunani-Kay Trask, “Lovely Hula Lands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture,” *Border/Lines*, no. 23 (1991): 22–34.

¹² Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen Press, 1987), 15.

¹³ Robert Spencer, “Ecocriticism in the Colonial Present: The Politics of Dwelling in Raja Shehadeh’s *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing*

Landscape,” *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 1 (2010): 33–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790903490843>.

¹⁴ Ku’ualoha Ho’omanawanui, “Hawaiian Literature,” in *Ethnic American Literature: An Encyclopedia for Students*, ed. Emmanuel S Nelson (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2015), 32.

under Western plantation, industry and later tourist resort. Mahele, the matriarch of Piilani family, is the protagonist of this narration, in which she advocates a lifestyle in accordance with the traditional Hawai'ian ways of cultivating the land and treats their surrounding with care and respect in a reciprocal relationship. Her way of perceiving and living with the land is based upon *Aloha Aina* (love and care for the land and the people of the land), the *Kanaka Maoli's* epistemology that posits cultural health and ecological sustainability as equal priorities.¹⁵ This epistemology becomes the central tenet of the narration, which is inherited from generation to generation. Mahele was later arrested for assaulting a lawyer who came to her ancestral inheritance and forced her family to abandon all their land claim. It was later revealed that all the Piilani lands around Kipahulu were bought by the Western corporation under the system of quiet title. Unwilling to be put on trial for assaulting lawyers, Mahele commits suicide by hanging. The perspective later shifts toward Abraham/Akamai Kakai, Mahele's grandson, who tries to cope with the loss of both his grandmother and his ancestral *ahupu'a* land. Kakai later unites the Native Hawai'ians in Maui Island and conceptualizes a renewal or Renaissance of Hawai'ian tradition and advocates for their right of land ownership through the return of stolen land.

¹⁵ Dina El Dessouky, "Activating Voice, Body, and Place," in *Postcolonial Ecologies*, ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254,

This paper reads Nakkim's *Mahele O Maui* as an articulation of Native Hawai'ian agency to resist American domination in the post-Renaissance era through politically oriented themes that echoes their struggle for sovereignty. By turning toward pre-Western contact epistemologies of place, this study explores how the epistemology of *Aloha Aina* endures and are transformed through narrative, appropriating the Western genre of novel to illustrate the resilience of Hawai'ian culture. Heinen explores how a narrative text imbued with colonial or neocolonial resistance that correlates with the oppression of native populations manages to undermine the very Eurocentric ideology.¹⁶ The interrelated concept of resistance and resilience contextualizes the manifestation of indigenous agency both in the cultural and political spheres. This resilience of indigenous culture and heritage posits their continuing survival under Western paradigm and how it is possible to be reclaimed in the contemporary period. Moreover, narration and the stories contained within provide readers with an avenue to access *qualia*, or what it is like, and retrospectively provide a subjective perception of the environment filtered through an indigenous perspective.

In line with the indigenous struggle of land ownership and sovereignty, the issue represented through Nakkim's fiction also reflects the present circumstances of

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780195394429.003.0013>.

¹⁶ "On Postcolonial Narratology and Reading Postcolonial Literature Narratologically," *DIEGESIS* 10, no. 1 (2021): 29.

Native Hawai'ian marginalization. Literature, as a cultural representation conveys the *zeitgeist* of its author, which is intertwined within the Native Hawai'ian history of loss and dispossession. As a resistance literature, Nakkim articulates these themes in her narration to contribute toward public discourse and debate concerning sovereignty, as addressed by Rooney.¹⁷ It is hoped that literature possesses the potential for a transformative impact both on the real world it inhabits and in the imaginative spaces as a contemplation of how the real world could be transformed. As stated by Huggan and Tiffin,

“The continuing centrality of the imagination and, more specifically, imaginative literature in its mediating function of social and environmental advocacy, which might turn imaginative literature into a catalyst for social action and exploratory literary analysis into a full-fledged form of engaged cultural critique.”¹⁸

Although not focusing on Nakkim's *Mahele O Maui*, prior analysis has been conducted on several Native Hawai'ian literatures. Indriyanto in 2020 foregrounds the *Aloha Aina* epistemology, based on love and reverence for the environment as a criticism toward Western paradigm that commodify nature through his reading on

O.A Bushnell's *Ka'a'awa*. His analysis traces Bushnell's usage of two protagonists, Hiram Nihoa as a Hawai'ian native and Saul Bristol as an American settler, to posit the necessity of cross-cultural understanding in finding an alternative way of perceiving the human and non-human relationship. This is achieved through the creation of a novel culture, "which embraces both indigenous and white settler culture as an avenue to achieve sustainable ecological condition."¹⁹ In addition, Toyosato explores the possibility of a Hawai'ian conception of identity based on love toward their environment instead of being solely defined by race/ethnicities. Her analysis of Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* articulates how the future of Hawai'ians is hybrid, or *hapa-haole* (half-breed), as seen in how Pono's descendants each marry people of different ethnic groups. She argues how respect and reverence toward the land provide a shared concern for various ethnicities that inhabit Hawai'i today.²⁰

The issue of resilience and resistance had also been a central concern for indigenous literature, mainly the Native Americans and the First Nations of Canada. Lawson (2006)'s analysis explores four Native American authors on how they foreground the issue of

¹⁷ Brigid Rooney, *Literary Activists: Writer-Intellectuals and Australian Public Life* (Queensland: Queensland University Press, 2009), xvii.

¹⁸ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 12,

¹⁹ Kristiawan Indriyanto, "Aloha Aina: Native Hawai'ians' Environmental Perspective in O.A Bushnell's *Ka'a'awa*," *Rupkatha Journal on*

Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities 12, no. 1 (2020): 123–33, <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n1.04>.

²⁰ Mayumi Toyosato, "Land and Hawaiian Identity: Literary Activism in Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues*," in *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Glynis Can (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), 78.

resistance and resilience. She identifies how these authors adopt concepts from their tribal cultures and articulate those concepts in their literature. Differently, Gaard underlines how Hogan's *Solar Storms* depicts indigenous women's resilience and survival through their connections with the land and the animals and the retelling of history and memory.²¹ She further illustrates how this novel addresses the lingering nature of neo-colonialism through hydropower development and its impact toward the native population.

Unlike prior studies on Native Hawaiians in particular and indigenous literature in general, this study exemplifies the Native Hawaiians' resistance toward their marginalization and dispossession of sovereignty and how literature functions as an avenue for advocating their resistance. Their resistance manifests through cultural resilience, the preservation of their culture, and the symbolic act of reclaiming naming patterns and, on the political scene, advocating for the return of stolen land to live according to their belief. This view echoes Huggan's line of argumentation of how the primary concern of postcolonial text is "to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to make meaningful interventions into the social world."²² It is hoped that both the cultural and political aspect of native resistance can empower

their struggle for greater self-determination and eventual sovereignty. Moreover, the focus of this study is how readers, through the construction of a virtual story world, can simulate a different environmental imagination based on the subjective experience of both people and place.

B. Method

The study is a literary analysis, qualitative in nature which employs the data in the form of quotations, excerpts, sentences, dialogues, and monologues taken from the novel *Mahele O Maui* written by Lynn Kalama Nakkim. The aim of a qualitative study is "to explore and understand individuals/groups ascribe to a social or human problem."²³ The analysis is conducted through underlying quotations from the text, which is analyzed through an econarratological perspective and the theory of resilience and resistance. The focus of the analysis is underlying quotations which highlights the close interconnection between nature and culture in Hawai'ian tradition and dialogues criticizing American domination. Secondary data in the form of academic articles, essays, journals, or books are provided to contextualize better the present situation of the Native Hawai'ian ethnic group under white American socio-political domination.

²¹ Gaard Greta, "Indigenous Women, Feminism, and the Environmental Humanities," *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 3 (2014): 89, <https://doi.org/10.5250/resilience.1.3.007>.

²² "Afterword," in *Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodology, Scholarly Activism*, ed. David D. Kim (London: Palg, 2021), 268.

²³ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 2016), 77.

The approach of this literary analysis is ecological/environmental in outlook, in which the underlying principle is the interconnection between nature and culture manifested through the cultural artifact of literature.²⁴ The development of ecologically oriented literary criticism is intertwined with an environmental turn of the humanities in the 1990s, similar to other "green" development among other disciplines, such as history, philosophy, and sociology. The ecocritical approach underlines how literature, the arts of imagination, and the story/narrative contained within significantly contribute to understanding the issue of environmental problems. While originally emphasizing an Anglo-American environmental discourse, focusing on issues such as conservation, preservation, and celebrating the untamed wilderness, contemporary issues on environmentally oriented literary criticism began to explore the diverse voices coming from non-Western writers. As seen in the following quotation.

"Multi-ethnic groups from around the world are increasingly entering the conversation about ecocriticism on their own terms by producing artistic expressions of their responses to the natural world."²⁵

Literary expressions on the environments by the ethnic minority writers

tend to be more political and advocative in tone, exploring issues such as indigenous land ownership, exposure toward toxic waste, and the legacy of colonialism mainly unexplored by Western writers. Their writings challenge the Western culture/nature dichotomy, as the indigenous' representation of the natural world is intertwined with their socio-historical circumstances of oppression and their limited agency of land ownership and sovereignty. Adamson and Molani exemplify resilience and resistance toward Western domination as a central tenet of indigenous ecocriticism, as seen in the preceding passage,

"Specifically, resilience articulates ongoing Indigenous responses to centuries of politically enforced extermination, assimilation, and marginalization; resistance highlights active struggles for self-determination and sovereignty against cultural and eco-genocide; and multispecies relations illuminate the philosophies that undergird Indigenous ecological literacies often applied in the practice of resilience and resistance."²⁶

The narration of resistance within indigenous ecocriticism's framework also implores the reader's active role in reimagining a different socio-cultural perspective of how people perceive and engage with the natural environment.

²⁴ Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in An Age of Environmental Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xii, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203426982-7>.

²⁵ Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic, "Guest Editors' Introduction: The Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism," *MELUS*:

Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. 34, no. 2 (2009): 5–24, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.0.0019>.

²⁶ "Introduction: Indigenous Insights," in *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversation from Earth to Cosmos*, ed. Joni Adamson and Salma Monani (New York: Routledge, 2017), 10, <https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754x-3322846>.

James foregrounds how narrative comprehension help readers understand the more-than-human world from the perspective of others and thus experience the natural world according to alternative environmental imagination.²⁷ Her model of reading, econarratology, emphasizes readers' active role and participation during the act of reading by simulating the fictional world of narrative, known as the storyworld.

Moreover, narratives never provide an exact copy or *mimesis* of the reality constituting its subject matter but are always mediated from a subjective consciousness. These sensory appeals, or *qualia*, provides an account filtered through a different socio-historical, material, and cultural context than the readers might possess. *Qualia*, as stated by Von Mossner, "tends to give readers a good deal of insight into the felt properties of a character's mental state, on how they feel about people, things, events, and other entities they encountered during the story."²⁸ This insight can foster readers' awareness of understanding of the indigenous people's struggle to maintain their sense of environmental responsibility and steward their ancestral land inherited from centuries within the dominant Western anthropocentric outlook. By ensuring the continuation of an ancestral tradition that is represented in the novel, readers can contextualize a different way

of perceiving the environment from the non-Western lens.

C. Results

Mahele O Maui is an epic story chronicling the generations of Piilani family, once a noble family of chieftains who holds vast tract of inheritance around the island of Maui but was later marginalized after Western corporation, real estate and sugar plantations usurps their familial land. While the main perspective of this novel is told from the perspective of Mahele, the matriarch of Piilani family, the island of Maui itself plays a significant role in the story, as it was developed and transformed through the existence of various settlers that shape its landscape.

The novel's title, *Mahele O Maui*, itself has two meanings when it is translated into English, the division of land (*Mahele* in Hawai'ian) in the island of Maui, or the story of a character named Mahele, a descendant of chiefly lineage (*ali'i*) of Kipahulu in Maui Island. These two possible meaning for the title articulates the intertwined nature between people and place, an integral part of *Kanaka Maoli's* epistemology as a central tenet in Nakkim's fiction. Kana'iaupuni explores the symbolic connection of place to the ancestry and cultural values of the Hawai'ian indigene through various cultural practices, which includes naming practices

²⁷ Erin James, *The Storyworld Accords: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1d9898m>.

²⁸ Weik von Mossner Alexa, "Feeling Nature: Narrative Environment and Character Empathy," in *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, ed. Erin James and Eric Morel (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021), 93.

of place.²⁹ Mahele, whose name literally means the division of land, echoes the historical events of *Great Mahele* in 1850-53 in which the lands of the Kingdom of Hawai'i were parceled in accordance with the Western model of land ownership and private property rights.³⁰ In the novel, Mahele remarks how, "I was born in the year of the land division, 1853."³¹ The novel vividly problematizes the changing paradigm enforced by this Western model of land ownership that considers land anthropocentrically as a commodity, in contrast with the reverence and familial ties Hawai'ians possess toward their land, inherited across generations. As a subservience society, living off the natural resources of the land, the Hawai'ians practice a system of collective ownership, where, compared to Western model of private ownership, right to land/sea was negotiated by generation and family lineage as well as personal, family, and community need.³²

Mahele's subjective perspective as a character-focalizer illustrates this deep-seated love and reverence toward the environment in Hawai'ian tradition and how it was reflected through cultural productions such as chants and songs, which delineates the resilience of their native culture. A passage in the novel describes the event concerning the

discussion of land inheritance of the Piilani branch of Kipahulu and Kahai branch of Hana is celebrated through chant praising the rich bounty of land around Maui Island. The event, viewed from Mahele's perspective, is described within the following excerpt,

"The chant praised the rich fertile soil of Kipahulu, the gentle afternoon rains, the *opihī* covered shore, and the fish leaping sea. She listened to the words of the chant, telling of a long journey on rough sea, bucking the currents, battering against the waves, finding a harbor circled with a land of plenty."³³

Through emotive textual cues, readers are invited to experience Mahele's *qualia* as she listened and imaginatively immersed herself within the description of Maui's natural environment narrated through a chant. As previously stated by von Mossner, reading literature enables readers to experience 'qualia,' simulating a conscious experience from a different point of view, which in this case is perceived from Mahele's perspective. Although the event recounted in the text took place during nighttime. Within the immediate surrounding of Piilani *kaupahu* (village) inland, her perception simulates both visual cues (viewing rich fertile soil and the *opihī* covered shore) and auditory aspect (gentle afternoon rains, battering against

²⁹ Shawn Malia Kana'iaupuni and Nolan Malone, "This Land Is My Land: The Role of Place in Native Hawaiian Identity," *Hulili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being* 3, no. 1 (2006): 290.

³⁰ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1, 1778-1854, Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1938), 178-79.

³¹ Lynn Kalama Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui* (Honolulu: the Seahorse Press, 1984), 8.

³² Moshe Rapaport, *The Pacific Islands: Environment and Society* (Honolulu: Bess Press, 1999).

³³ Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui*, 2-3.

the waves). Moreover, various feature of the landscape as it is represented in the chant is imbued with affective value, as seen in how the afternoon rain is loaded with positive emotion, described as 'gentle.' Stibbe explores his idea regarding the appraisal pattern, how positive or negative description of a particular place/situation highlights the perception of feeling toward a particular area of living.³⁴ In *Mahele O Maui*, the deep reverence and connection a Hawai'ian indigene possesses toward their natural environment is represented through the textual cues embodies a positive pattern, a value which is then transmitted toward the reader during the reading process.

The importance of nature in Hawai'ian customs is interwoven with cultural significance based on familial ties and shared lineage. This belief derives from a shared genealogical descent that asserts both the Hawai'ian natives (*Kanaka Maoli*) and the land (aina) around them as the descendant of two deities, Papa (earth mother) and Wakea (sky father). Inglis argues how "*Kanaka Maoli* are connected to the land and each other through the parentage of *Wakea* -from whom all Hawai'ian genealogies stem as the ancestors of the Hawai'ian people."³⁵ Viewed from this perspective, Hawai'ians' interaction with their natural environment is

in the form of a reciprocal relationship. The land sustained them and nurtured the indigenous people like a family member, and as such, *Kanaka Maoli* should properly care for the land as a family member. The cosmos, the natural world, is contextualized as a universe consisting of familial relations and human beings are only a constituent part of the larger extended family. A Hawai'ian proverb, "*He Ali'i ka 'Aina. He Kauwa ke Kanaka*" (the Land is a chief, Man is Its Servant)³⁶ establishes interrelations between the human and more-than-human world in Hawai'ian tradition. In the novel, *Mahele* emphasizes that although she is the chieftain and in accordance with the Western model of private land ownership, she has the rightful claim of her land, she belongs to the land instead:

"You are the one to decide; you are the Piilani," said Kimo. "These are your lands."

"It is the other way around. I belong to this land, and so do you and our children, and all the aunties and uncles," answered Mahele."³⁷

In *Mahele o Maui*, as Mahele grows older and embraces her role as the matriarch of the Piilani clan, she advocates a lifestyle based on ecological sustainability in line with the traditional way

³⁴ Arran Stibbe, "Ecolinguistics and Globalization," in *The Handbook of Language and Globalization*, ed. Nicolas Couplan (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 87, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444324068.ch18>.

³⁵ *Ma'i Lepera: A History of Leprosy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 13.

³⁶ Ku'uialoha Ho'omanawanui, "Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of Aina in Contemporary

Literature of Hawai'i," in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*, ed. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 125, <https://doi.org/10.1021/cen-v077n022.p035>.

³⁷ Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui*, 53–54.

of living their *ahupua'a*.³⁸ The affirmation of the traditional way of living, narrated through the contemporary genre of novel underlines how Hawai'ian culture manages to adapt and appropriate Western mode of production to construe their resilience. In accordance with the Hawai'ian conception of land cultivation, people should take care of the land that nourishes them, and in turn the land will provide the necessity to sustain a living. By loving and taking care of their ancestral land, "the Hawai'ians function as steward of their culture, promoting a strong and healthy foundation for its growth and perpetuation."³⁹ Mahele emphasizes that, "everything goes to hell when people don't stay home on the land that owns them"⁴⁰ as a criticism toward the younger generation of Hawai'ians who abandoned their ancestral land to find work as a laborer on a White man's plantation, enriching their new master while themselves remained in poverty.

Furthermore, although in the 1850s, the area around Kipahulu, on the East coast of Maui Island, remained isolated from the outside world, the building of a nearby sugar mill, ranch, and eventual plantation resulted in the shifting of how nature is conceptualized and cultivated. She criticizes the changes brought by the White people (*haole*) that altered the

human and non-human relationship based on material value and capitalist outlook instead of honoring the land as their ancestor. The arrival of Western values changes the value of nature as a commodity which is perceived by its potential in economic capital, a criticism addressed by Mahele's husband, Kimo in the following excerpt:

"With the coming of the haole hordes what is left of our traditional ways? Who worships still the gods of our ancestors Kane, Kanaloa, and Lono? And while taro patches fall in disrepair, growing rocks and mud instead of food for man, we lend our weight to the planting of the useless cane for the white man's sugar. Red dirt runs off our fields and poisons our fish in the very sea."⁴¹

Mahele O Maui dramatizes the issue of indigenous struggle of land ownership, in which their ownership of land, inherited across generations is increasingly threatened by the desire of acquisition by Western corporations and how their legal standing remains vulnerable. Conflict in the novel revolves around the inheritance of Piilani *ahupua'a*, one thousand thirty-two acres in the area around Kipahulu which is coveted by Western plantation owner, Heino Mittelman. Piilani family strongly rejected any notion of selling their ancestral land, as in Hawai'ian tradition

³⁸ Ahupua'a refers to land division in pre-modern Hawai'i in which the land was parceled from the chief to the common people (*maka'ainana*). This system ensured all people living within its boundaries had access to all the crucial resources from both the land and the sea. This ancient system extended elements of Hawai'ian spirituality into the natural landscape through a belief system that emphasizes the interrelationship of beings and natural elements. Donald D Kilolani. Mitchell, *Resource Units in*

Hawai'ian Culture: Revised Edition (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, 1982), 256.

³⁹ Dina El Dessouky, "Activating Voice, Body, and Place Kanaka Maoli and Ma 'Ohi Writings for Kaho ' Olawe and Moruroa," in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 255.

⁴⁰ Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui*, 159.

⁴¹ Nakkim, 92.

land (*aina*) is loaded with socio-cultural significance based on shared kinship and lineage. Hawai'ian considers how the value of the *aina* is not monetary but familial. For years they managed to keep their share of the land, two hundred acres while nine hundred acres were only leased by a Chinaman for his plantation, not sold altogether. It was only in the 1925s that a Honolulu corporation, David Thayer Corporation managed to acquire the whole one thousand thirty-two acres through the legal claim of quiet title. The event is narrated in the novel as follows,

"All the legal steps have been taken," said the blond man. "We are the attorneys for the buyers and you are trespassing on their land. They bought the interests of Joseph Piilani and the heirs of Kane Piilani Kakai, Keokeo Piilani Junio~ and others. Notices have been in the paper. The court awarded Thayer the property when no one came forward, no one responded to the legal notices."⁴²

Huggan and Tiffin conceptualize the term entitlement to recognize the indigenous right for land ownership based on "a legislative mechanism for recognition of affective ties to land and place that are confirmed by historical continuity of association."⁴³ Although the Hawai'ian natives, as represented by Piilani family has a rooted socio-cultural and historical association with their land, inherited from generation to generation, their position is tenuous in legal term. Not only disadvantaged in terms of economic capital acquisition, but indigenous people

also have a limited understanding in grasping legal terminologies, which the Whites managed to manipulate for their benefit. In the end, all the Piilani family has to abandon their inheritance, as they are no longer the rightful owner in the Western legal system but are merely "trespassing on the Whites' land." This event dramatizes how the cultural notion of land as family members in line with Native Hawai'ian tradition is transformed through capitalist mindset that commodified land as natural resources.

The dispossession of indigenous land and their subsequent marginalization under the White majority leads into the rallying call for cultural Renaissance and reform. This perspective echoes the post-Renaissance spirit of reclaiming ethnic identity and cultural heritage to illustrate the resilience of Hawai'ian culture. As previously explored, Western perspective managed to alienate the Hawai'ians from their ancestral tradition, especially in how the land is contextualized. Land is reduced to a simple commodity in accordance with Western anthropocentrism. In the novel, one descendant of Piilani family, the grandson of Mahele, Abraham Kakai, pioneers a movement for native Hawai'ians renaissance through the rediscovery of their ancestral tradition. Abraham symbolically refuses to use his biblical name, forcibly enforced through the arrival of Christianity, and returned to his Hawai'ian name, Akamai which means learned. The act of renaming is seen as an avenue to recontextualize the Kanaka

⁴² Nakkim, 162.

⁴³ Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 82.

Maoli's closeness toward their environment and ancestors, as naming has an important role in Hawai'ian culture. Furthermore, the reclaiming of traditional names highlights the resilience of indigenous survival within dominant Western discourse, as Western naming pattern does not reflect a close bond between place and people in Hawai'ian culture. Kimura articulates how Hawai'ian place names demonstrates the intimate relationship between people and the environment, the evocative power of place derived from *Aloha Aina*, love of the land.⁴⁴ Therefore, reclaiming the naming pattern is an integral part of the resilience of Native Hawai'ian culture, as this process affirm to act of their natural surrounding and their ancestors, as seen in the subsequent passage,

"We must fight back, now, and to fight back we must reconnect our ties to our ancestors, we must relearn the names of our grandfathers and grandmothers, and the name of their grandparents, and teach those names to our own children."⁴⁵

Within the dominant socio-cultural sphere of Anglo-American culture, the continuation of Hawai'ian naming highlights the preservation of indigenous

cultural discourse. Following this reclaiming of cultural heritage, the issue of land ownership becomes more pivotal than ever to ensure the continuation of the indigenous way of living based on environmental sustainability. This resilience of indigenous culture articulates their response toward legacies of politically enforced marginalization and oppression under White settler domination.

On his study of post-colonial society, Fanon remarks how "land has the most essential value, the land that will bring them bread and dignity"⁴⁶ and the struggle for ownership of land has become the defining theme for Native Hawai'ians' struggle under United States domination. Ownership of land is seen as the beginning for an eventual goal of gaining full sovereignty, proposed by several indigenous scholars such as Haunani-Kay Trask, Hoo'manawanui and Noenoe Silva. Trask articulates how "the issues before Hawai'ians are those of indigenous land, cultural rights, and survival as a people."⁴⁷ Similarly, Ho'omanawanui argues how "*Kanaka Maoli* have always maintained a position of *ma hope o ka 'aina*, standing firm behind the land and our right to manage it."⁴⁸ Having their own claim for land ownership enables the indigenous

⁴⁴ Larry Kimura, "The Hawaiian Language," in *The Association of American Geographers on the Culture, Needs, and Concerns of Native Hawaiians* (Washington: Native Hawaiian Study Commission, 1983), 178.

⁴⁵ Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui*, 172.

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 155.

⁴⁷ Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 1–26,

<https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.26.2.b31642r221215k7k>.

⁴⁸ Ku'Ualoha Ho'Omanawanui, "'This Land Is Your Land, This Land Was My Land'. Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of 'Aina in Contemporary Literature of Hawai'i," in *Asian Settler Colonialism*, ed. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 123, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824861513-011>.

Hawai'ians to live in accordance with what nature has provided, a self-sufficient lifestyle based on reciprocity which is familial in outlook. This view underlines how the survival of the indigenous culture is not only linked with the resilience of their cultural heritage and also the necessity of greater political agency to live in accordance with their traditional way of living. The necessity to reclaim prior dispossessed land is narration as follows,

"I think that whatever they not using they should let us have back. To use. Not to divide into tiny houselots, haole style," said Akamai. "Just let a guy go live on the beach at Honomanu or Makena and fish, if he wants to. Give us back Kahoolawe. Anything." "Not to sell again, but in the old style, just to live on, build a house on, use the land, you mean?"⁴⁹

Native Hawai'ians' rights to sovereignty and self-governance have been recognized through the implementation of Public Law 103-105, also known as the Apology Law, by the government of the United States in 1993. This apology law formally acknowledges that the Kingdom of Hawai'i (1795-1893) was an independent and sovereign nation seized by the United States through direct intervention and in violation of treaties between the two nations. This law also recognizes the illegality of the overthrow of Hawai'ian monarchy as well as its subsequent consequences for Native Hawai'ians. Despite the existence of this Public Law, Native Hawai'ians remain the

only indigenous groups in the U.S that had not received and presented any options for compensation and restitution for land seized and historical injustices, compared to other ethnicities such as Native Americans.⁵⁰ Up until the present day, lands formerly controlled by the independent Hawai'ian government remained under the jurisdiction of the United States Federal Government and the State of Hawai'i Legislature.

To summarize the current state of the indigenous Hawai'ian ethnic group, the eventual goal of gaining full sovereignty or self-governance remained a contested issue. Native Hawai'ian literature, as exemplified by *Mahele O Maui* articulates this traumatic legacy of loss and dispossession as well as the resilience of Hawai'ian cultural heritage under Western domination to articulate their agency and function as a catalyst for social change. This line of argumentation echoes McDougall's argumentation that "*ue* and *ku'e*, or grief and resistance, are themes that pervade much of contemporary *Kanaka Maoli's* literature, as these themes punctuate our history as a nation occupied."⁵¹ The tragic tale of dispossession as the Piilani family lost all their inheritance and belonging evokes the necessity of indigenous resistance both on the cultural level through reclaiming their heritage and on political level by achieving greater degree of self-determination and eventual sovereignty.

⁴⁹ Nakkim, *Mahele O Maui*, 281.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 88–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009430610903800126>.

⁵¹ Brandy Nalani McDougall, "From Uē to Kū 'ē: Loss and Resistance in Haunani-Kay Trask's *Night Is a Shark Skin Drum* and Matthew Kaopio's *Written in the Sky*," *Anglistica* 4, no. 2 (2010): 51–62.

D. Conclusion

The present study articulates Native Hawaiians' resistance toward American domination in which the resilience of their cultural heritage and issue concerning land ownership is seen as the avenue of resistance. Nakkim contextualizes the Hawaiian epistemology of human and more-than-human relationship as an integral part of their distinctive identity, a central tenet in her narration. Through Mahele's subjective perspective, readers are invited to experience a site-specific environmental perspective in which the natural world is perceived in familial ties and kinship. This resilience of indigenous worldview posits the Native Hawaiians' continuous survival under American domination. The legacy of loss and dispossession features prominently in Nakkim's fiction and the awareness of the necessity for *Kanaka Maoli* to acquire land ownership. Land ownership is seen as the beginning for the eventual goal of achieving sovereignty from the United States.

Mahele O Maui, in line with the general theme of indigenous literature, is advocative and political in outlook, in which the theme addressed through imaginative literary works functions as a catalyst for social change in their struggle to resist marginalization and oppression. As this study limits the analysis only to one particular ethnicity, the Native Hawaiians, further insights into other indigenous groups, such as the Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians or the Māori in New Zealand, is a promising avenue of analysis. Moreover, intertextual or comparative

ways of analyzing indigenous literature can help compare and contrast their struggle for self-determination and eventual sovereignty.

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