

MANIFESTATION OF COLONIAL DISCOURSE AND ANTHROPOCENTRIC OUTLOOK IN JAMES MICHENER'S HAWAI'I

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ABSTRACT

One of the foremost developments in literary criticism is the awareness that colonialism results in ecological devastation of the colonies through exploitation of nature. This phenomenon is legitimized through Western anthropocentric paradigm that considers nature merely as commodity to be utilized for humankind's benefit. This paper analyses the underlying Western colonial discourse that rationalizes ecological exploitation in Hawai'i based on the reading on James Michener's Hawai'i. With postcolonial ecocriticism as the framework, the present study focuses on the conflicts that arise between the islanders and the white settlers concerning human and non-human relationships. Western discourse promotes the superiority of their culture based on the privileged position in a binary opposition which is contrasted with the backwardness of the natives. The labelling of certain Hawai'ian traditions as pagan and heathen practice plays a pivotal role in articulating the Western anthropocentric paradigm in which the missionaries function as agent of colonialism. The culmination of Western colonial discourse manifests in the transformation of Hawai'ian landscape for capitalistic enterprise of agriculture and sugar plantation. This event also signifies the commodification in the landscape and centre-periphery relationship which underlines the economical exploitation of the colony.

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A. Introduction

Recent development in humanities in general and literary study in specific can be traced with the increasing awareness on environmental issues, especially within the scope of present-day environmental crisis. The seminal work of environmental/ eco-criticism begins with reading on Romantic literature, based on

the Anglo-American discourse of Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Some writers such as Thoreau, Emerson and Abbey with their representation of nature especially untamed ones are several examples of the canonical works of environmental literature.¹

¹ Matthew Griffiths, *The New Poetics of Climate*

Ecocriticism seeks to reconceptualize human and non-human relationships through reading of canonical Romantic works. Newman summarizes the trope of 'sacred wilderness' which is contrasted with the degraded civilization occupied by profane humanities.² The alternative view in perceiving the land such as illustrated through the celebratory tone of Romanticism is seen as one avenue to counter the impact of technology and modernity towards the world.

Ecocriticism' strong adherence towards Anglo-American environmental discourse leads to several criticisms. Buell considers that the first-wave ecocriticism began as a nation-focused and Anglo-American romanticism.³ One notable critique is the belief towards apolitical tone of Romanticism, due to its personal focus of individual's reorientation with the surrounding world.⁴ Moreover, Heise criticizes the seemingly universalities of Anglo-American discourse, in which "the environmentalist and ecocritical thoughts in the United States cannot simply be

presumed to shape ecological orientations elsewhere."⁵

Similarly, Feldman and Hsu argue that the inequality of environmental burdens and risks faced by ethnic minorities is inseparable with the legacies of racialization and colonialism.⁶ In response towards such criticism, ecocriticism has delved in foregrounding the more political issues. One such example is exploring the interconnection between colonialism and devastation of the environment.

Postcolonial ecocriticism arises from the realization that colonialism, besides altering the socio-historical condition of the colonized world also results in vast changes upon the landscape and the shifting paradigm concerning human and non-human relationships. Chronicling the development of postcolonial ecocriticism approach, Huggan recognizes that over the past thirty years, empire and environment have become closely entangled concepts.⁷ Another important seminal work of postcolonial ecocriticism, Crosby in his book articulates the concept of ecological imperialism to underline how imperialism not only altered cultural, political, and social structures of colonized societies but also devastated colonial

Change (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017), 14; 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>.

² Lance Newman, *The Literary Heritage of the Environmental Justice Movement Landscapes of Revolution in Transatlantic Romanticism* (Palgrave: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). 94.

³ Lawrence Buell, "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends," *Qui Parle* 19, no. 2 (2011): 87, <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.19.2.0087>.

⁴ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). 234.

⁵ Ursula K. Heise, "Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies," *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2 (2008): 381–404, <https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajm055>.

⁶ Mark B. Feldman and Hsuan L. Hsu, "Introduction: Race, Environment, and Representation," *Discourse* 29, no. 2/3 (2007): 199–214, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41389776>.

⁷ Graham Huggan, "'Greening' Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives," *MFS - Modern Fiction Studies* 50, no. 3 (2004): 701–33, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2004.0067>.

ecologies and traditional subsistence patterns.⁸ It can be traced how colonialism also possesses an ecological and biological component through the intertwined nature of empire and environment.

“As opportunity and resource, the environment is mobilized to explain the political logistics of empire and the expanding of commodity frontiers. It is equally used to critique the inherent violence of empire, its territorial appropriation, and its subordination, marginalization, or elimination of nonwhite populations.”⁹

One lingering impact of colonialism is the displacement of local indigenous beliefs and the assertion of Western colonial discourse. In Huggan and Tiffin’s words, colonialism results in vast changes ontological and epistemological differences between human and non-human beings in the world.¹⁰ The spread of anthropocentric (human-centered) discourse that displaces the indigenous epistemology of the natives can be traced from this historical event of colonialism. Estok recognizes how the “Joint colonialist exploitations of people and land is fueled by the globality of capitalism and unsustainability of capitalist ideals of

acquisition.”¹¹ Western anthropocentrism replaces indigenous epistemology of human and non-human relationship which is based on respect and reverence.

This present study contextualizes how colonialism results in the displacement of native environmental discourse through the situation in Hawai’i. Said’s quotation, “A changed ecology also introduced a changed political system that, in the eyes of the nationalist poet or visionary, seemed retrospectively to have alienated the people from their authentic traditions,”¹² aptly summarizes the situation faced by the Hawai’ian islanders (*Kanaka Maoli*). The American military and economic expansionist ambitions in Hawai’i are hidden beneath the seemingly harmless surface of leisure and tourist culture.¹³ With the vast changes of their homeland by the advent of Western colonialism, their local wisdom also born the impact of implementation of Western discourse.

Years of marginalization under the yoke of American imperialism results in the loss of native Hawai’ian culture and heritage. As echoed by Worster “Imperialism does not only plunder the resources of the colony, but also happened in the form of ‘material and

⁸ Alfred W Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism The Biological Expansion of Europe: 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). 13.

⁹ David Arnold, “Narrativizing Nature: India, Empire and Environment,” in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities Postcolonial Approaches*, ed. Anthony Deloughrey, Elizabeth M. Didur, Jill Carrigan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 35–50.

¹⁰ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010). 6.

¹¹ Simon C. Estok, “Afterword: Reckoning with Irreversibilities in Biotic and Political Ecologies,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 44, no. 4 (2013): 219–32, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2013.0029>.

¹² Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). 77.

¹³ Emma Scanlan, “Decolonizing the Light: Reading Resistance in Native Hawaiian Poetry,” *Interventions* 19, no. 7 (October 3, 2017): 976–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2017.1401950>.

ideological imposition.”¹⁴ This implementation of Western ideology, such as the discourse that nature exists to serve men (human-centered) has originated ever since the first contact between Hawai’i and the West. The arrival of American missionaries was later followed by establishment of missionary schools, intending to Christianize the ‘pagan’ Hawai’ians and forbidding culturally significant sites and rites.¹⁵ The establishment of Western way of cultivation the land such as sugarcane plantation and sugar industry further underline the shifting of human and non-human relationship.

This study seeks to underline how a novel written by James Michener, *Hawai’i* foregrounds underlying colonial discourse based on the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. This novel parallels the historical circumstances of Hawai’ian oppression under America through the manifestation of colonial discourse. As previously explored by Masairoh, literary work is a social phenomenon because it is basically a social product. Which to say, the situation represented in fictional literature also parallels reality.¹⁶ *Hawai’i* contextualizes that while the arrival of

Western powers is conceptualized to bring civilization and progress, the local traditions are denigrated as an example of paganism and heathen belief.

This present study focuses on the contrasting conception of human and non-human relationships between the Hawai’ian natives (*Kanaka Maoli*) and the Western settlers through the framework of postcolonial ecocriticism. The love and respect towards the islanders’ surrounding which is based on sustainability and preservation are viewed with scorn and disgust by the Western missionaries and plantation owner. The colonial discourse of the West that stigmatizes Hawai’ians’ respect to the lands as a sign of their backwardness and superstitious nature helps to establish the anthropocentric paradigm of the white people. The manifestation of anthropocentrism becomes the underlying ideology behind the economic exploitation of Hawai’ian island chain.

Compared to the discussion of other ethnic minorities literature within the United States such as Mexican-Americans, Chinese-Americans, or Native Americans, prior studies on Hawai’ian literature remain scarce. One study by Murphy argues how Kiana Davenport’s *Shark Dialogues* parallels the resistance of the Native Hawai’ians against the domination of White people. Focusing on the character of Pono as one shaman (*kahuna*) of the *Kanaka Maoli* ethnic group, Murphy chronicles Pono’s lifelong journey as the Hawai’ian people’s struggle

¹⁴ Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50.

¹⁵ Julie Kaomea, “A Curriculum of Aloha? Colonialism and Tourism in Hawai’i’s Elementary Textbooks,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (July 1, 2000): 319–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0362-6784.00168>.

¹⁶ Siti Maisaroh, “Reading Literature, Taking Philosophical Ideas, and Obtaining Characters,” *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 11, no. 1 (2017): 141–60, <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v11i1>.

to retain and reclaim their cultural identity and to reinhabit their land.¹⁷

Similarly, Indriyanto on his analysis on O.A Bushnell's *Ka'a'awa* contextualizes the existence of *aloha aina* epistemology.¹⁸ This philosophy of *aloha aina*, which is based on love and respect toward nature is seen as one avenue to reorient humanity with their surroundings. Indriyanto explores how the protagonist, Hiram Nihoa is forced to adapt to the rapid changes in society in which the arrival of Western powers caused the local islanders no longer respecting their land (*aina*). The ongoing devastation and plague that ravages the island of O'ahu are considered to result from this societal shift.

Research on Michener's *Hawai'i* has also been undertaken by several scholars. Newman positions the publication of *Hawai'i* with the historical circumstances of Hawai'i being included as the United States' 50th state. Newman praises the historical setting of the novel, the fictional treatment of a social scene which spans thousands of years since the formulation of the islands itself until the previously mentioned incorporation as the 50th state.¹⁹ It can be seen how Newman's analysis focuses on the parallelism

between novel *Hawai'i* and the historicity of Hawai'ian islands.

On the contrary to Newman's positive reception, Kay-Trask considers that *Hawai'i* is not an exact representation of the current condition of Hawai'i as it is written by a white person (*haole*). She states that "the Hawai'i novel has yet to be written. It won't cover anything, as his (Michener) tried to do, but it will more genuine Hawai'ian."²⁰ The two divisive receptions on *Hawai'i* mainly problematizes whether Hawai'ian literature should only be written by an islander or a *haole* can be included.

This present study differs from the prior findings on Michener, by extrapolating on the changes in perceiving the land due to the successful indoctrination of colonial discourse. This study seeks to explore the changes through contextualizing the Hawai'ians *aloha aina* epistemology, how the arrival of the Western missionaries as agent of colonialism problematizes this paradigm, promoting their own discourse, and foregrounding the success of Western anthropocentrism. This anthropocentric view, in which land is treated only as commodity to support the capitalist industry significantly changes the pendulum of human and non-human relationships. Michener dramatizes this issue by narrating the transformation of Hawai'ian landscape for the purpose of agriculture and industry, or in another word, the commodification of nature.

¹⁷ Patrick D Murphy, "Women Writers: Spiritual Realism, Ecological Responsibility, and Inhabitation," *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 5–11.

¹⁸ 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), <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n1.04>.

¹⁹ Newman, "Hawaiian-American Literature Today."

²⁰ Haunani Kay-Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, Revised Ed (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993). 60.

B. Method

This study is qualitative research that employs a novel written by James Michener, *Hawai'i* (1959) as primary data. Besides positioning the novel *Hawai'i* as primary data, the present study also provides secondary data from journals, articles, and essays that contextualizes the situation of Hawai'i due to the ongoing American imperialism.

As the novel *Hawai'i* parallels the circumstances concerning the marginalization of *Kanaka Maoli*, it is hoped that contextualization of the present situation in Hawai'i will be able to shed more insight. As Indriyanto has argued, reading on Hawai'ian literature chronicles the various phases of ecological devastation in Hawai'i.²¹

The analysis is conducted through discourse analysis in which the quotations from the novel are positioned as discourse. This paper employs discourse as it is theorized by Norman Fairclough in his book *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. Fairclough considers discourse as "ways of representing aspects of the world – the process, relations and structures of the material worlds,' the 'mental world' of thoughts and the social worlds."²² Viewed from Fairclough's perspective, discourse is the way an individual constructs reality, or the world, which is varied among

individuals. Within the scope of this study, the emphasis is on underlying quotations, phrases, utterances, and other verbal tics from the novel, or the micro forms of analysis.²³ The present study particularly focuses on colonial discourse, which is the discourse used by Western colonizers to disparages the local islanders.

The concept of colonial discourse is important to underline the condescending attitude Westerners have towards the local islanders. Colonial discourse, as defined by Ashcroft, Griffin and Tiffin refer to the 'complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction."²⁴ This discourse promotes the superiority of Western civilization through its rational, scientific and pragmatic way of thinking, which in the similar way, denigrates the non-West people as superstitious, emotional, and believing in non-scientific way.

The concept of Orientalism, as theorized by Said provides a framework in underlining how the West (Occident) conceptualizes the East (Orient) based on a stereotypical bias and prejudice. This demarcation leads to the desire of the colonizers to 'raise up and educate' the colonized through colonial contact. Said purposes how the West establishes opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their

²¹ Kristiawan Indriyanto, "Hawaii's Ecological Imperialism: Postcolonial Ecocriticism Reading on Kiana Davenport's Shark Dialogues," *International Journal of Humanity Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 123–33, <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.2019.020202>.

²² Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003). 124.

²³ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2010). 13.

²⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2007). 50.

differences from "us". Each age and society re-create its "Others."²⁵

C. Results

This section contextualizes the changing paradigm between love and respect towards nature-based on *aloha aina* paradigm and the Western commodification of the landscape. The present study employs Serpil Oppermann's concept of ecological imperialism with Ashcroft, Griffin and Tiffin elaboration of colonial discourse to underline the manifestation of Western outlook that changes the perception towards nature. The argumentation primarily concerns underlying the quotations from the novel which is analyzed through the concept of ecological colonialism which is legitimized through western colonial discourse.

In her article, *Ecological Imperialism in British Colonial Fictions*, Oppermann theorizes her concept of ecological imperialism to underline the ideological justification behind colonizers' exploitation of the colonies. Oppermann underlines that the altering of the landscape, in which the resources of the frontiers are mobilized for the benefit of the metropolitan center is based on the Western ideology of anthropocentrism (human-centered). In Oppermann's assertion, the term ecological imperialism does not only reflect the devastation on surface level, but is motivated on an ideological level. She defines ecological imperialism as:

"Intentional destruction through exploitation, extraction, and transfer of natural resources of the colonized lands in the interest of scientific and economic progress."²⁶

Oppermann's usage of the term ecological imperialism foregrounds the notion of anthropocentric ideological reasoning behind colonialism especially concerning the plundering of natural resources. She further asserts that this anthropocentric bias is naturalized by the employment of colonial discourse based on the binary opposition between the Western colonizer and the indigenous people. This demarcation which differentiates between the West and the Other plays a pivotal role in designated non-Western culture as inferior.

Michener's *Hawai'i* chronicles the historicity of Hawai'ian islands in its various phases. The narration starts millions of years with the formulation of the multitude of islands within its island chain. This archipelago lies uninhabited for unrecorded years, until the earliest settlers, Polynesians from the nearby region of Tahiti begin their inhabitation in Hawai'i. The Hawai'ians and their society are left undisturbed from the outside world until the arrival of the White people. Starting from the coming of American missionaries, the West begins to shape Hawai'ian ethnic group (*Kanaka Maoli*) into adopting their world view, belief, and paradigm. Being dominated culturally and socially, the transformation of Hawai'ian landscape to support the growing

²⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 332.

²⁶ Serpil Oppermann, "Ecological Imperialism in British Colonial Fiction," *Journal of Faculty of Letters Cilt* 24, no. 1 (2007): 179-94.

plantation and sugar industry symbolizes this changing paradigm of human and non-human relationships.

To better illustrate how colonial discourse functions to change the Hawai'ian people's perception towards nature, this present study conceptualizes three phases based on reading of the novel. In the first phase, the quotation mainly concerns with the respect, reverence and humility the *Kanaka Maoli* exemplifies towards their surrounding nature. Second phase underlines the arrival of the Western powers, mainly missionaries that designate the Hawai'ians closeness towards nature as proof of their primitiveness. The emphasis on this section is problematizing the conflicts that arise between the American missionary and Hawai'ian natives. The last phase posits the culmination of colonial discourse and the changing paradigm of human and non-human relationships.

The first phase of *Hawai'i* narrates the arrival of Polynesian settlers from the nearby islands of Tahiti. In this part, Michener illustrates the deep reverence Hawai'ian people have towards nature. One passage from *Hawai'i* depicts how the character of Tupuna, disregarding his high social standing and prestige as the chief of his tribe remains subservient nearby the presence of a sacred rock.

“At the head of his nervous column marched Tupuna, and whenever he came to a large rock, he begged the god of that rock to let him pass. When he came to a grove of trees he cried,

"God of these trees, we come in friendship."²⁷

Through Tupuna's acclamation that *Kanaka Maoli* will only take as necessary from the land, Michener highlights that the Hawai'ian people are only the caretaker, not the owner of *aina*. Hence, the human and non-human relationship in this part is based on respects and recognition of sustainability. This paradigm can be underlined in the following excerpt.

"Oh, secret god of this sweet fern, we are hungry. Allow us to borrow your trunk, and we will leave the roots so that you will grow again."²⁸

As exemplified in the prior section, the first phase in the novel *Hawai'i* is the articulation of *aloha aina* paradigm. Native Hawaiian concept of *aloha aina* is synonymous with people–environment kinship and an organic relationship that bonds humans to the land. This *aloha aina* paradigm is particularly underlined by the dialogues between the earliest settlers and their environment. Hawai'ians conception of human and non-human's relationship arise from the Polynesian belief that every entity possesses power, which is called *mana*. Mitchell conceptualizes how “the Polynesians believed that nature was pervaded by super-normal powers.”²⁹

Moreover, Buell, Heise and Thornber based on their research on indigenous epistemology conclude that

²⁷ James A Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959). 118.

²⁸ Michener. 122.

²⁹ Mitchell Donald D Kilolani, *Revised Units in Hawaiian Culture*, 4th ed. (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, 1982). 46

there exists "non-dualistic recognition within native people's collective imagination of non-human entities as fellow beings."³⁰ By contextualizing the non-human as fellow beings, the relationship between Hawai'ian people and their environment is based on love, preservation and sustainability.

This personification of nature, in which the non-human is considered as fellow human with the ability to comprehend conversation underlined the deep reverence Hawai'ian people had toward their surroundings. Their respect is exemplified in the following passage.

"At the head of his nervous column marched Tupuna, and whenever he came to a large rock, he begged the god of that rock to let him pass. When he came to a grove of trees he cried, "God of these trees, we come in friendship."³¹

By showing Tupuna's humility beneath the grandeur of nature, Michener foregrounds that human should be the indebted party toward nature, not the other way around. *Kanaka Maoli* recognizes that nature provides them with sustenance, and it is their job to preserve the sustainability of nature for future generations. The Hawai'ian people consider themselves merely as 'the caretaker of the land that maintains his life and nourishes his soul."³²

³⁰ Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, "Literature and Environment," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, No. 36 (2011): 417–40, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-111109-144855>.

³¹ Michener, *Hawaii*. 118.

³² Clare Gupta, "Sustainability, Self-Reliance and Aloha Aina: The Case of Molokai, Hawaii," *International Journal of Sustainable Development*

The arrival of Western people, especially the missionaries as agent of colonial discourse problematizes human and non-human relationships. Tension arises due to contrasting worldviews between the West, as underlined through the depiction of American missionaries and the local islanders. The binary opposition of Occident and Orient particularly positions Western epistemology as the universal truth and disregarding the accumulated wisdom of the Hawai'ians native. Plumwood conceptualizes the term of hyper-separation to mark out the Other for separate and inferior treatment.³³ Throughout the interaction between the Western colonizers and colonized natives, Michener's narration reflects Western condescending attitude towards the supposedly paganistic and superstition Hawai'ian traditions.

In the second phase, the interaction between Hawai'i and the West in a colonial context, this paper compiles the dialogue of Abner Hale. Hale is characterized for his dogmatic adherence for Presbyterian Christianity, in which the mission to Hawai'i is considered as a salvation mission for the savage islanders. Michener narrates the arrival of the missionaries in Hawai'i in the following excerpt.

and World Ecology 21, no. 5 (September 20, 2014): 389–97,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2014.880163>.

³³ Val Plumwood, "Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics," *Source: Ethics and the Environment* 1, no. 2 (1996): 119–52.

"You are to aim at nothing less than the complete regeneration and salvation of society. If children now die, they are to be saved. If minds are now ignorant, they are to be enlightened."³⁴

Through the passage "aim at nothing less than the complete regeneration and salvation of a society" Michener foregrounds the civilizing mission as the primary goal of American missionaries. Denying the fact that Hawaiians already have their own civilization and socio-cultural tradition which emphasizes respect toward nature, Western discourse positions this Hawaiians epistemology as heathen, contrary to Christian belief. This underlying ideology becomes the basis behind the eventual Christianization of the Hawaiian islands.

The stigma of paganism, heathen practices, and irrational superstition is foregrounded throughout Abner Hale's interaction with the Hawaiian islanders. Two events can be underlined as illustrations that reflect the binary opposition between the East and the West. The first example is Hale's intention to remove Hawaiians' small temple (*heiau*) which he believed as a site of the old belief.

"We shall have to remove the stone platform. In this world there is room either for God or for heathen idols. There cannot be room for both."³⁵

Hale's statement foregrounds Western discourse that places their belief as universal truth and rejection of the local wisdom of the natives. While Hale

considers the stone platform as a place to conduct heathen rites, *heiau*, especially the family temple is intended to honor the ancestors (*kupuna*). In Hawai'ian epistemology, deceased family members are believed to still exist in mortal realm as spirit animals (*aumakua*).³⁶ By asserting that their ancestors remain in their proximity, Hawai'ian islanders contextualize the act of taking care of their environment is a way of them to "acknowledge the presence of their spiritual ancestors in the surrounding lands."³⁷ *Heiau*, in light of this context, can be interpreted as a place for the Hawai'ian people to express their gratitude for the land that allows them to sustain their living.

Another noteworthy event in *Hawai'i* is how Hale forbids the traditional Hawai'ian dance of *hula* under the belief that it is a lewd practice and celebrate sexuality. This episode further exemplifies the Western people's disregard toward the natives' cultural performances which is considered as a heathen practice. Silva conceptualizes that the missionaries' objection of *hula* is based on two assumptions, it threatens the Christianizing of the people or that it was licentious and therefore evil.³⁸ It is feared that the articulation of traditional belief can hinder the acceptance of Christian way of

³⁴ Michener, *Hawaii*. 166.

³⁵ Michener. 260.

³⁶ Leonard James Barrow, "Aumakua (Guardian Ancestors)," *Rapa Nui* 13, no. 2 (1999): 49–56.

³⁷ Davianna Pomaika'i McGregor, *Na Kua'aina Living Hawaiian Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). 14.

³⁸ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (London: Duke University Press, 2004). 52.

living, therefore the stigma of paganism is associated toward *hula*.

“Abner both despised and feared this word, for it conjured up forbidden rites and heathen sex orgies, so he asked tentatively, “You mean . . . pagan ceremonies?”³⁹

From the prior assertion, it can be underlined how the connotation of *hula* with paganism and expression of sexuality is employed in a binarism that designates natives' discourse as inferior. On the contrary with western perception of *hula*, *Kanaka Maoli* conceptualizes *hula* as a “religious service 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.”⁴⁰ Similar to how the purpose of *heiau* is to honor and revere nature, *hula* is a celebration for nature's blessing towards the local islanders.

Through his narration, Michener emphasizes the changing paradigm in Hawai'i in which the discourse of the missionaries slowly overtakes the natives' own epistemology. The missionaries as one agent of colonialism and extension of Western colonial discourse successfully codifies the new set of laws for Hawai'ian people, based on Judeo-Christian principle.

“Abner closed his eyes, raised his head toward the grass roof, and cried in the voice that Ezekiel must have used when addressing the Jewish elders: “The islands of Hawaii will live under

these laws, for they are the will of the Lord God Jehovah.”⁴¹

By the reconceptualization of Hawai'ian society in line with Western discourse, the West signifies the necessity of civilizing the pagan Hawai'ian. The Hawai'ians' closeness of nature, in which nature is perceived as a holistic ecology that humanity is only one part in the spectrum is denigrated by the West. Instead of a celebratory nature, Western anthropocentric discourse considers Hawai'ian's epistemology as a sign of the superstitious nature and backwardness. In Said's words,

“The supposed deficit of rationality of these groups invites rational conquest and reordering by those taken to best exemplify reason.”⁴²

In the last part, this study explores the utterances of the West plantation owners. The success of colonial discourse can be seen in how the Hawai'ian landscape is considered as commodity to benefit the Western settlers. The dialogue of the plantation owners always emphasizes the necessity of getting profit from the colony.

“At the very point on a hillside where it's no longer profitable to irrigate for sugar, that's where pineapple grows best. And if you have sugar growing down here and pineapple up there, when the fruit gets ripe you drench it in sugar, can it, and sell both at a huge profit.”⁴³

Regarding the commodification of nature, an important point to underline is the transformation of Hawai'ian landscape

³⁹ Michener, *Hawaii*. 398.

⁴⁰ Nathaniel Bright Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii* (The Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2007). 15.

⁴¹ Michener, *Hawaii*. 333.

⁴² Said, *Orientalism*, 182.

⁴³ Michener, *Hawaii*. 733.

to support the capitalistic enterprise. Michener narrates how the plantation owner creates tunnel underneath the mountain in order to bring fresh water for his plantation.

“When he had control of six thousand acres of barren soil, he hired two hundred men and many teams of mules and with his own money launched the venture that was to transform his part of Oahu from a desert into a lush, succulent sugar plantation.”⁴⁴

Within the scope of the postcolonial ecocriticism approach, colonial discourse operates in the denigration of the indigenous people's concept of human and non-human relationships and the assertion of Western anthropocentrism. The West looks down on closeness between the natives and the land around them as proof of their backwardness and thus desiring to transform the untamed landscape for economic purposes.

“The very ideology of colonization is thus one where anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism are inseparable, with the anthropocentrism underlying Eurocentrism being used to justify those forms of European colonialism that see ‘indigenous cultures as “primitive”, less rational, and closer to children, animals, and nature’.”⁴⁵

The success of Western colonial discourse culminates in the transformation of landscape around Hawai'i for the purpose of American sugarcane plantation

and industry. This event marks the shifting of human and non-human relationships in which the enthralling power of Western epistemology considers nature to be treated merely as commodity. As Marzec notes,

“The land was transformed into an entity in need of improvement – a key term that serves to rationalize, in capitalist terms, the privatization of lands.”⁴⁶

Disregarding the ethos of sustainability and preservation of the local islanders, Western plantation owners, in which the majority is the descendant of the missionaries shapes the ecology of Hawai'i for their businesses. On his study of the socio-cultural situation of Hawai'i, Haley conceptualizes that

“By the 1890s the sugar industry had changed Hawai'i in fundamental ways—not just the economy but the ecology of the land, the makeup of the population, and the solidification of a social class system.”⁴⁷

In *Hawai'i*, Michener dramatizes the vast changes in Hawai'ian land tenure by the establishment of various plantations. After the earliest encounters between the missionaries and the *Kanaka Maoli*, the formation of plantations symbolizes the introduction of Western ways of living especially how land is perceived. Western epistemology as underlined by Cartesian view considers nature existed solely to

⁴⁴ Michener. 544.

⁴⁵ Val Plumwood, “Decolonizing Relationships with Nature,” in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, ed. W. M. (William Mark) Adams and Martin. Mulligan (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003), 51–78, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849770927-9.53>.

⁴⁶ Robert P. Marzec, “Speaking Before the Environment: Modern Fiction and the Ecological,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 55, no. 3 (2009): 419–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.0.1632>.

⁴⁷ James L Haley, *Captive Paradise- A History of Hawaii* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2016). 90.

serve human's interest.⁴⁸ Moreover, the ecology in Hawai'i from colonizer perspective is conceptualized.

"By negation –the absence of history, development, civilization, and so forth – before the arrival of Western powers."⁴⁹

In other words, the West rejects the notion that Hawai'ian people are capable of cultivating the land and considers the introduction of a plantation to bring civilization to the primitive islanders. Through Western eyes, Hawai'ian closeness with nature, and their sustainable outlook in only taking as necessary to preserve living as another proof of their inability to conquer the land.

The representation of plantation owners in *Hawai'i* foregrounds the utilitarianism of nature, in which the vast landscape around Hawai'i is only viewed from their ability to sustain sugarcane. One event from *Hawai'i*, in which the land nearby Honolulu is considered insufficient to establish a plantation, due to the aridity symbolizes the desire of the colonizer to conquer and tame nature for their own benefit. Adams summarizes the existence of a distinctive pattern of engagement with nature: a destructive, utilitarian and cornucopian view of the feasibility of yoking nature to economic gain.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Pippa Marland, "Ecocriticism," *Literature Compass* 10, no. 11 (2013): 846–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12105>.

⁴⁹ Byron Caminero-Santangelo, "Shifting the Center: A Tradition of Environmental Literary Discourse from Africa," in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stephanie Le Menager, Teresa Shewry, and Ken Hiltner (New York: Routledge, 2011), 148–62, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203814918.149>.

⁵⁰ William M. Adams, "Nature and the Colonial Mind," in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for*

Furthermore, capitalistic ideology behind the plantation venture causes the necessity of their business to be profitable in terms of capital. As the plantation owners already invest vast capital to finance their business, it is in their intention that their plantation is able to reap the benefit from their investment. Viewed from the centre-periphery concept in which "the center's economic growth and material progress became increasingly dependent on a massive exploitation of the people and the ecosystems of the periphery", it can be stated that the success of American colonialism lies in their economic exploitation of Hawai'ian islands.

The establishment of a capitalistic enterprise as is represented in *Hawai'i* symbolizes the successful colonial discourse in terms of perceiving the land. Under the eyes of Western pragmatism, the land itself has no intrinsic values until it is cultivated for the benefit of humanity, mainly the modern-looking white people. This discourse results in the desire to

"to manipulate it technologically and exploit it economically, and thereby ultimately to create a human sphere apart from it in a historical process that is usually labeled progress."⁵¹

To reiterate Heise's assertion, the existence of plantation, instead of being a symbol of civilization and progress as the West intended, actually highlights a

Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era, ed. W. M. (William Mark) Adams and Martin. Mulligan (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003), 16–50, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849770927-8.22>

⁵¹ Ursula K Heise, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism," *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006): 503–16, <https://doi.org/10.1632/003081206x129684>.

demarcation between human and the non-human. Human being is positioned in a different domain, no longer being in a part of a holistic ecology but an outside force which seeks to control nature for their own benefit. The desire of Western colonizers to exploit nature in the colonies is linked with the capitalistic enterprise and racist ideology.

D. Conclusion

Viewed from Oppermann's concept of ecological imperialism, this paper concurs that Michener's *Hawai'i* contextualizes the underlying Western colonial discourse that rationalizes ecological exploitation in Hawai'i. The arrival of Western powers disturbs the socio-cultural situation in Hawai'i in which sustainability and preservation of the environment is their local wisdom. The colonial discourse that is promoted by the missionaries as the agent of colonialism denigrates the Hawai'ians' human and non-human relationships through binary opposition of superiority and inferiority. The labelling of certain Hawai'ian traditions as pagan and heathen practice plays a pivotal role in articulating the Western anthropocentric paradigm.

The culmination of Western colonial discourse manifests in the transformation of Hawai'ian landscape for capitalistic enterprise of agriculture and sugar plantation. This event marks the shifting from the holistic ecology of the Native Hawai'ians that emphasizes equity of all entities into anthropocentrism of Western discourse. Land in Hawai'i is positioned merely as commodity to advantage the

White settlers. The resources of Hawai'ian islands, as is positioned in the periphery is exploited for the benefit of the metropolitan centre.

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