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As a local Japanese woman, I ask myself, why do we claim a local identity?

What purpose does that identity serve?

I keep coming back to the position that to claim an identity involves responsibility. In my own work, I locate local narrative strategies that I think can help mobilize support for the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, narrative strategies that teach us about Hawaii's struggles in progress.

-Candace Fujikane



# Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre Candace Fujikane

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A reflection on "development" has to take into account those things which have stood in opposition to it, those irreducible differences which in the final analysis may be the only way out of the present development bind. In examining historiography, criminality, epidemics and popular movements, one has only begun to reflect upon those crucial moments when the state, or the historian, or whoever occupies the site of the dominant centres, performs a cutting operation; remembering/furthering that which it deems meaningful for its concept of development, and forgetting/suppressing the dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive.

-Reynaldo Ileto, "Outlines of a Non-Linear Emplotment of Philippine History"

I'd like to open up this essay by evoking ambivalent memories of growing up local Japanese on Maui. In 1976, I was in the third grade at Kahului Elementary School. It was the year of the bicentennial, and our teachers tried to instill within us a pride in the fact that we were all Americans and could claim and celebrate as our own the American revolution for freedom from British tyranny. Yet this land upon which we based our identities as "Americans" was inscribed with Hawaiian heiau and burial sites, as well as with the Hawaiian stories generated by these and other sacred sites-stories about the Night Marchers, the White Lady of Makamaka'ole, the mo'o of Mā'alaea and Mākena. Even the new subdivision in Pukalani my family had just moved into was haunted by Hawaiian ghosts, Kalialinui Gulch rumored as a site for Hawaiian burials. Looking back, I can map out other traces of contradictions that shaped my own understanding of land and local identity at that time-stories I had heard about Hawaiian struggles in the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO), conflicts between Wayne Nishiki's anti-development politics and the construction and tourism industries, and the resistance to development that later had more direct effects on my family when my stepfather, a construction worker for Associated Steel, was laid off during lulls in the construction industry. These stories of Hawaiian spirits, however, reached back further into the past than the ghost stories of obake told in my Japanese / Filipino family, and they were compelling reminders that there was a longer Hawaiian history to the land than the claims made by my own immigrant-descended family. Native Hawaiians were also engaged in efforts to reclaim that land, as evidenced by the persistent struggles of the PKO against the U. S. Navy's bombing of the island of Kaho'olawe, which had been used for target practice since WWII. These stories of indigenous and immigrant place and displacement, woven together

by narratives of development, brought me to an uneasy understanding of what it means to be a non-Hawaiian local in Hawai'i.

I want to unravel some of these contradictory impressions that speak to us about the complexities of local identity. For many people in Hawai'i, local identity is based on having a history on this land and a commitment to the peoples and cultures of this place. With the important gains made by the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, however,

locals who claim Hawai'i as home often do not understand Native Hawaiian nationalists who claim Hawai'i as homeland, and as non-Hawaiian locals, we need to ask ourselves what our commitment to Hawai'i and its peoples really means. While many people support the state's plans for continued economic development

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based on tourism and foreign investment, others share concerns regarding overdevelopment and its devastating effects. Opposition to the state's definition of "development," then, forms common ground upon which non-Hawaiians can support Hawaiian struggles for self-determination.

Ideologies of development—whether in the form of blueprints for state economic development, colonial accounts of "underdeveloped" nations or political movements, or definitions of the aesthetic "maturity" or "immaturity" of art produced in different cultures—play an important role in the ways we imagine and construct local identity, and we need to reexamine the narratives undergirding these ideas of development. Narratives, the verbal forms we use to explain abstract ideas, are stories we tell to explain our understanding of the world, and as such stories, narratives of development can tell us much about the investments we have in recording events in a particular way.2 In the quote I take as my epigraph, Reynaldo Ileto explains that narratives of development can be made to serve different purposes, depending on the motives of those who construct these narratives: they can be used either to maintain existing structures of power or to help us to envision alternative forms of political organization. For example, these narratives can support "economic" development that benefits a few at the expense of large segments of the population, or "community" development that improves economic and living conditions for a broader range of peoples, particularly those who are most in need. We need to reexamine these narratives of development if we are to reassess the continuing significance of local identity in relation to Hawaiian struggles to regain control over the economic future of Hawai'i.

Accounts of development have proved to be particularly dangerous for minority or colonized peoples, who are often assigned to the infantilized, "immature" end of a developmental narrative that privileges the "maturity" of the dominant or colonizing group. Such narratives of development have often been utilized in "civilizing" missions serving colonial purposes, and colonized peoples are expected to forsake their own cultures and histories in order to conform to the colonizer's definition of "maturity." Consequently, peoples familiar with histories of imperialism are often skeptical of developmental narratives. Ileto writes,

Most sensitive thinkers today regard the concept of "development" not as universal but as historically conditioned, arising from social, economic, and ideological trends in eighteenth-century Europe. The idea of progress—the belief that growth of knowledge, capabilities and material production make human existence better—placed science at the summit of knowledge. It gave birth to high imperialism, as the West identified progress with civilization and set out to dominate the rest of the world (1988:130).

Although Ileto's work is specifically focused on developmental narratives that underlie Philippine historiography, we can see how his arguments can help us to analyze historical representations of Hawai'i as "underdeveloped" that were used to justify American intervention into Hawaiian governance. In 1898, the year Hawai'i was "annexed" as an American territory, Spain signed the Treaty of Paris and ceded other nation-territories to the United States without the consent of those governed, and in political cartoons of that period, a paternalistic Uncle Sam scolds the recalcitrant "children" under his tutelage: Queen Lili'uokalani from Hawai'i, Emilio Aguinaldo from the Philippines, and two little boys representative of Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>3</sup> These cartoons illustrate the belief that Hawaii's "infantile" monarchy and other "underdeveloped" nations required the political guardianship of the United States in order to "grow into" the "maturity" of American democracy.

A hundred years later, Hawai'i continues to be feminized as an object of foreign desire, or infantilized in postcards as a playground for illustrations of Hawaiian children known as the "Dole Kids," evocative, not ironically for those familiar with the history of Hawai'i, of American businessman Sanford Dole's role as president of the provisional government that seized control of Hawai'i after illegally overthrowing Queen Lili'uokalani. These infantilizing representations are tactically used to justify continued U. S. military

"Must narratives of development occur at such a high price, or are there other ways of imagining development?

Who produces these narratives of development, and to what ends?"

occupation of this "strategic" site in the Pacific, even as economic development dependent on tourism yields disastrous results for many residents of Hawai'i. In 1992, the state's economy ranked by some accounts as the worst in the nation (Okamura 1994a:168). Must narratives of development occur at such a high price, or are there other ways of imagining development? Who produces

these narratives of development, and to what ends?

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Given these problems of economic development that people in Hawai'i

continue to face, we need to reexamine conceptualizations of "the local"—which encompasses peoples, communities, histories, cultures, places—the ways ideas of the local function in changing historical and economic conditions, as well as the ways they have the potential to mobilize changes in those conditions. I do not mean to suggest that the local is in any way homogeneous or monolithic since "local" means different things to different people, and this essay is necessarily my own exploration of what local means to me.<sup>5</sup>

As a part of this analysis, I'd like to turn to Eric Yamamoto's analysis of the significance the term acquired in relationship to development in Hawai'i so that we can link the emergence of local identity in community control struggles of the 1970s with its potential for supporting current struggles in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. In his article, "The Significance of Local" (1979), Yamamoto prefaces his arguments by pointing out that sociologist Andrew W. Lind locates the emergence of the term "local" in the Massie trial

of 1931, when Hawai'i-born residents of Hawai'i were allied in opposition to continental power represented by military servicemen. Yamamoto's own analysis, however, focuses on the way the term gained a particular force after 1965, when many people in Hawai'i came to perceive the local as a "symbol of self-determination":

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Changes in social structure, the sense of loss of community, a decline in the quality of life, and the accompanying concern, worry, and desperation, have given rise to a movement by people self-defined as belonging to Hawai'i (local people) towards regaining control of Hawai'i and its economic, political, and cultural future" (142).

Community control struggles in the 1970s at Kalama Valley, Waiāhole-Waikāne Valleys, and Ota Camp were sites of resistance from which people in Hawai'i sought to challenge their forced eviction from lands slated for development. Newspaper photographs of locals in front of the Waiāhole Poi Factory with arms linked in a human blockade across Kamehameha Highway against policeenforced eviction provided people in Hawai'i with visually powerful images of local strength and unity.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, however, the idea of the local seems to have lost the cohesiveness and urgency generated by those struggles against development. Jonathan Okamura, who

has written extensively on local identity in Hawai'i, observes that although "Palaka Power" local advocacy at the 1978 State Constitutional Convention signified a desire to promote local interests, "it never developed into an organized social movement" (1994a:175), and we need to consider this argument in light of the ways that concerns for indigenous rights have, by contrast, led to a strong Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Increasingly, the local seems to serve less as a catalyst for change than as a device for maintaining racial hierarchies in Hawai'i. In his essay, "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai'i (1994b), Okamura writes, "As Haoles (whites), Chinese and Japanese continue to maintain their dominant positions in the social stratification order in Hawai'i, less viable avenues and means for both individual and group mobility are available for subordinate ethnic minorities," which include Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan groups (1994b:8). Thus, while people in Hawai'i involved in community struggles of the 1970s were successful in allying themselves on the basis of shared working-class interests, class and racial privilege have come to divide racial groups located at

"Given these problems of economic development that people in Hawai'i continue to face, we need to reexamine conceptualizations of 'the local'—which encompasses peoples, communities, histories, cultures, places—the ways ideas of the local function in changing historical and economic conditions, as well as the ways they have the potential to mobilize changes in those conditions."

different points in the stratification Okamura describes. Moreover, many locals have come to support the very interests of capital and urban development that those early community struggles opposed, while others perceive no alternatives to the tourism and development industries that employ them, and we need to confront our own differing degrees of complicity with current systems of economic power. Because of these and other historical changes, it would be difficult to return to the class-based strategies that were successful in the 1970s, particularly since we need to recognize the primacy of Hawaiian struggles and the important distinctions between indigenous and immigrant peoples. Many people in Hawaii'i, however, do share concerns over issues of economic control that are important to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, suggesting possibilities for increased local support for Hawaiian sovereignty.

In order for non-Hawaiian locals to envision alternatives to overdevelopment, we need to reimagine developmental narratives themselves, the forms they take and the functions they serve. In calling for a more self-critical look at our usage of developmental narratives, I am not arguing for a nostalgic return to a romanticized, preindustrial past. Instead, I want to question the ways in which developmental narratives are produced and reproduced. A critical approach to development should attend carefully to people or ideas excluded from narratives of development, to memories that evoke the forgotten, the suppressed, and in Ileto's words, the "dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive," in order to recuperate other sites of resistance, other conceptions of development that can offer us alternatives to exclusionary scripts of progress. Such an approach asks us to question our assumptions about developmental narratives and to devise strategies that will challenge those assumptions.

As a point of entry into these questions about development, I want to begin with an examination of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's collection of poetic novellas, Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre (1993), which has been phenomenal both for the critical acclaim it has received and the controversy it has generated in Hawai'i and on the continent. As a text widely taught at the University of Hawai'i, the collection demands our attention for the ways it can be used to bring about change in popular conceptions of local identity. In my own English courses, I ask students to analyze the collection's critique of the patriarchal and developmental ideologies that undergird local identity. The collection enables us to question the epistemological grounding for discourses of development; in other words, it asks us how we know what we know about being local and how narratives of development help to define the local. While we cannot escape from these developmental narratives that structure our perceptions of the world, we can be critical of the purposes for which these narratives are used, and we can strategically make use of the currents of movement inherent in developmental narratives to mobilize social change. Yamanaka's text, I argue, usefully deploys and simultaneously dismantles developmental versions of local and feminist narratives. In analyzing the usefulness of Yamanaka's text, however, my students and I also attend to the messy ambivalences of the local and the fact that Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre has also been highly controversial for its local Japanese representations of local Filipinos and Hawaiians. Since local Japanese in Hawai'i occupy a relatively privileged position in relation to those groups, interrogating the collection's representations of ethnic stereotypes can help us to locate power struggles often concealed by popular definitions of the local.

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narratives i irdividualism who do not To map out the consequences different developmental narratives have for various peoples in Hawai'i, I extend my analysis of *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* to consider how a reexamination of narratives of development can help non-Hawaiian locals to understand the current movement to establish a Native Hawaiian nation. Although *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* focuses on gendered narratives of development in local communities, the collection can help us to be more self-critical as we analyze other developmental narratives that shape local perceptions of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

"You Guys Ain't Developed Yet": Narrative "Development" in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's Poetic Novellas

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It is difficult to quote these poems partially. All are organized into a tight, coherent emotional pattern. Advice: Take two Advil, read from page one to 141 in that order and you will be taken on an inexplicable, but emotional journey.

-review of Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre in the International Examiner

Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre engages questions of development through a gendered exploration of the narratives we use to define local identity. In claiming that identity, we often find that we must contend with developmental narratives that seek to erase gender, race, and class differences between locals for the sake of cultural unity. Reclaiming local culture, then, is not liberatory in and of itself, and for women, such an act involves a struggle against masculine constructions of local identity. Ideas about development, for example, take on gendered dimensions for the adolescent speakers in the collection whose bodies and sexualities are regulated by narratives of what constitutes a "normative" local feminine body, patriarchal narratives that seek to contain and control unruly feminine bodies. Adolescent girls are enlisted in the disciplining of their own bodies through publicly circulated narratives of orderly physical development mapped out in such "guidebooks" as Judy Blume's novel, Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret (1970), a book in circulation during the time frame in which events in Yamanaka's collection occur.

Since developmental narratives have often been used in the service of colonial and patriarchal ideologies, what I find to be very peculiar about Yamanaka's text is the developmental narrative structure she uses to repudiate these gendered "lessons." The different voices in the collection are brought together in a way that can seem to suggest the maturation of a central character. It is possible to read the collection as achieving a resolution through a developmental narrative that unifies its different speakers by holding up the final speaker/writer Lucy as a model figure of local feminist resistance, the end product of a developmental narrative that privileges a local girl's reclamation of writing in Pidgin. The problem with such a reading, however, is that it challenges masculine narratives of local identity only to resurrect a developmental model of feminist individualism in its place, a model that diminishes the other speakers in the collection who do not find liberation in written self-representation. Instead, my own reading of

the text recognizes the importance of the various speakers and the multiple narrative strategies they use as Yamanaka negotiates the problems raised by ideas of "development."

I'd like to begin by tracing first the developmental narrative suggested by the collection. Divided into four sections, the collection begins in Part One with a series of gendered instructions passed on from adolescent girls to their friends. As this first section fleshes out narratives that construct "local woman," it also asks us to question the purposes served by these "lessons." In the opening poem, "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala," the speaker cites Kala's prohibitions: "No whistle in the dark / or you call the Filipino man / from the old folks home across your house.../ [H]e going drag you to his house, / tie you to the vinyl chair, / the one he sit on outside all day, / and smile at you with his yellow teeth / and cut off your bi-lot with the cane knife. / He going fry um in Crisco for dinner" (15). The specter of the Filipino man cutting off and eating a girl's vagina is a residual product of history: the fact that the Filipino man lives in "an old folks home" alludes to a history of bachelor camps of Filipino plantation laborers and the vilification of Filipino men as sexual threats. Kala tries to reconcile the image of a woman's body being eaten figured forth in metaphors of cunnilingus with stereotypes of Filipino men, and her advice exemplifies women's collusion with the racist stereotypes recycled in their "education."

Critics have argued that Yamanaka perpetuates racist stereotypes of Filipinos and Hawaiians, and this is a very important problem to which I will return. Here, I'd like to offer a reading of the first poem that unravels the poem's concern with collaborations between the patriarchal and racist systems of power. The threat the stereotype of the elderly Filipino man poses is strategically undermined by several details the naive speaker unknowingly buries in the poem. The fact that the Filipino man lives in a retirement home already ironizes the physical threat he poses, but what is more materially alarming are the two actual rapes that occur at the heart of the poem. The speaker continues: "And no wear tight jeans or / Felix going follow you home with his blue Valiant. . . . / Kala said he rape our classmate Abby already / and our classmate Nancy" (16). Here, the poem reveals that the stereotype of the old Filipino man is used to divert attention away from Felix and the real instances of rape that take place in the poem, and in light of this function the stereotype is made to serve, it becomes significant that Felix's father is a cop: Felix is further protected by the law. Although I will later discuss the implications of the ways audiences racially identify Felix as Filipino and Jimmyboy as Hawaiian, these characters are not racially marked by Yamanaka, and by the end of the Kala series, it is Jimmyboy, not Felix, who rapes Kala.

The rapes are further submerged in the text by the young speaker's preoccupation with the word, "cremation." She tells her listener: "[Kala told mel no tell nobody the words she tell me. / Nobody. Especially the word she told me today. / Okay. Okay. The word is *cremation*. / The graveyard man he sew all the holes / on your body shut with dental floss, Kala said; / your eyes, your nose, your mouth, / your belly button, your okole hole, / and yeah, even your bi-lot so the gas / cannot escape when he shove you in the brick oven" (16). To the child narrator, what is even more horrific than rape or the stereotype of the old Filipino man is the idea of being entombed in her own body; by sewing shut the orifices in her body, the patriarchal "graveyard man" silences her voice, her sexuality,

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If we try to locate a trajectory moving from Part One to Part Four, we can read the poem "Parts" in Part Two as marking a turning point at which the speaker tries to see for herself who she is. In contrast to the ways the mother's voice simultaneously cuts the girl's body into patterned pieces and attempts to sew shut her sexuality for her, the fourteen yearold friend who speaks at the end of this poem describes the girl's decision to use a needle to undo those seams, to "cut" herself open, to see what is inside of herself (75). The poems in Part Three can then be read as an extension of this moment of self-discovery as other girls figuratively cut themselves open and begin to look at themselves and each other in different ways. In "Glass," for example, the speaker, a young girl abused by her mother, finds a small glass floater, "light blue and cool in the shade of the naupaka bushes. / I hold um gentle in my hands. / I no can even see my fingers. / I see the clouds, the sky moving. / I see my eyes" (107). Here, the speaker discovers herself as a subject gazing before a shifting backdrop of limitless possibilities. Part Four then gains particular weight as the final section of the collection detailing a young girl's revisions of Pidgin's patriarchal idioms. It is in "Empty Heart" that Lucy tells her lover WillyJoe, "One day / I going write / about you" (130), and in the last poem, "Name Me Is," Lucy names herself in a language of her own as she concludes. "I IS. / Ain't nobody / tell me / otherwise" (140).

If a local or feminist reading seeks to find a resolution in writing as an act of local women's resistance, it can find that resolution in the illusion suggested by the text of linear movement toward a single writer/speaker, Lucy. One assumption my students make is that the first speaker in the collection *is* Lucy, and we can try to identify the investments that motivate such a reading. Although Lucy could be the first speaker in the collection,

we can ask the question, does she need to be? To argue that Kala's listener and Lucy are the same character bespeaks a problematic need to unify the text's multiple speakers to secure a convenient resolution at the end of the collection, and the multiple young women are conflated by a developmental narrative into a single protagonist who comes to writing. The collection, however, counters important identifications with critical moments of disidentification: familial details, names, events, and circumstances are repeated with a difference for each character.

"Instead of identifying speakers who do not represent themselves in writing as 'underdeveloped,' we can be attentive to the different forms narratives take, otherwise, we, too, can come to homogenize women's voices and experiences."

We see the disembodied voices refracted, kaleidoscoped, and generic names like "Tita" and "Girlie" call our attention to the ways in which many girls in the book share oppressive conditions and yet devise different strategies for surviving them.

Writing does not have to be the only form of self-representation we use to narrate ourselves and our histories. While many of the characters do write—blood writings on sidewalks, name carvings in the flesh, kiawe charcoal obituaries on garage walls—the

collection also presents us with characters who choose other modes of self-representation, and such narrative strategies map out for us the pressures each speaker faces and the narrative forms she sees available to her. A character like Kala, for example, can only close her eyes to signify her refusal (24, 27), and although this can seem like a futile act of resistance, it is important for the reader to know that she does not accept the conditions forced upon her. Instead of identifying speakers who do not represent themselves in writing as "underdeveloped," we can be attentive to the different forms narratives take, otherwise, we, too, can come to homogenize women's voices and experiences.

Developmental narratives do serve an important function: they often work as catalysts for change. In Hawai'i, Hawaiians have suffered from the genocidal devastation brought about by American colonization, and other examples of violence include the banning of the Hawaiian language from public schools (1896-1986) and the destruction of land and Hawaiian historical and ceremonial sites. Local experiences of marginalization do not compare with Hawaiian experiences of genocide, and this is a point that cannot be overemphasized; for locals, the devaluation of Hawai'i Creole English, or "Pidgin," through the state's establishment of English standard schools (1920-1949), urban development and its erasure of plantation camps, rural and low-income housing communities, and other blocks of history from local popular memory have resulted in different kinds of losses. Against these historical ruptures, we often use developmental narratives to

"Yamanaka's poetic novellas move us towards local women's reclamation of writing even as that single developmental movement is splintered to reveal the multiple strategies of self-representation used by the different speakers in the text."

construct linear histories that help to promote community solidarity and to consolidate and mobilize resistance to American colonialism and continental standards within our different communities. Given the political usefulness of developmental narratives, however, these narratives often become cemented in ways that cannot sustain the fluid movements of political struggle, and I find that Yamanaka is attentive to the multiplicity of women's voices and histories that exceed beyond the scope of local and feminist developmental narratives.

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What I'd like to emphasize here is that Yamanaka responds on multiple registers to various political pressures. I argue that Yamanaka's text implements a *doubled strategy*: while the ordering of the "parts"

of the collection provides the reader with a politically mobilizing developmental narrative moving toward local women's self-representation in a language of our own, the text's presentation of its multiple speakers refuses our desire for the promise of resolution held out at the end of developmental narratives. In other words, Yamanaka's poetic novellas move us towards local women's reclamation of writing even as that single developmental movement is splintered open to reveal the multiple strategies of self-representation used by the different speakers in the text. In rereading Yamanaka's seemingly linear narrative, my arguments here will consider two moments at which the poems offer us multiple sites of different kinds of movement. First, I consider the ways a speaker like Tita forestalls the linear movement in the collection through the powerful

excesses she produces, extravagant excesses that cannot be contained by narratives of unified progression. Second, I argue that Pidgin offers no easy resolution at the end of the collection, despite the power of Lucy's final assertion, "I IS."

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Tita, like many of the other speakers, is complicitous with the continental and patriarchal standards that oppress her. Her character is particularly compelling, however, for while she represents the desire for assimilation, emphasizing that her listener is a failed example of femininity because, as Tita tells her, "you just dunno how for please," her listener takes pleasure in listening to the transgressive power of Tita's voice. At different moments in her narrative, Tita demands, "You was there, eh? / Well, you seen this then? / Why you always gotta act dumb? / Eh, what's your trip? / Just like you like hear me talk" (32). While the lessons in the text seek to contain the local feminine body within the restraints of "standard" English, Pidgin enables Tita's voice to bring her bodily excesses back into that text. In "Tita: On Fat," these bodily excesses become the sign of a hungry body, a desiring body, and Tita's body proliferates uncontrollably beyond the thin bodily outline constructed to confine her. In order to recuperate her body within a developmental narrative, Tita tells her listener, "Eh, what you trying for say? / That I one fat cow? Well, fuck you. / I ain't fat. I just more mature than you guys. / You guys ain't developed yet. / I bet you never even get your rags yet. / All you guys a bunch of small shit Japs" (38), the kind of "Jap," Tita emphasizes, she is not (31). Ironically, Tita uses her own developmental narrative to infantilize her listener: "development" is a rhetorical device she uses to transform excess into "maturity." Yet "fat" resists development, and Tita's flesh refuses to be assimilated to standards that attempt to homogenize gendered and cultural identity. By the end of the poem, Tita tells her listener, "I dunno, I too fuckin' fat. / Eh, no say I not fat, / when I know you think I fat, / 'cause that only makes me mo / fuckin' mad" (40). And it is precisely Tita's excesses—her Pidgin, her rage, her "fat"—her irreducible differences that make her such a powerful character who colludes with and resists developmental narratives that demand assimilation.

Lucy's own reclamation of Pidgin does not present an easy answer to her struggle to define herself. She continues to push at the limits of a language that does not give her words to describe her own body, a language that gives her no immediately viable name for her vagina. Lucy's description of her vagina as "over there" (129) underscores the ways that she reclaims Pidgin only to find that in the world of the collection, Pidgin disfigures the vagina as a "crack" (72), a sign of lack or damage, or a "cho-cho" (82), a Japanese term for "butterfly" popularized by Puccini's "Cio-Cio-San" in his libretto Madama Butterfly and recirculated by American servicemen stationed in Hawai'i during WWII in reference to Asian prostitutes. That Lucy does not choose any of these words and refers to her vagina as an absence suggests the need for sustained struggle at the site of Pidgin itself.

To further that struggle, Lucy and WillyJoe work toward constructing a new language out of Pidgin. In "Name Me Is," Lucy describes her desire: "I touch his shoulder blades, light / fingers first. They broad and brownsmooth, / feeling good, good, see / him shiver when I heat / the sparkler tip red / and ribbon it in the black night, / (He know what I want to do) / bring it down on his skin, burn / the first line" (137). Lucy begins literally to construct a language of her own, the word "brownsmooth" being neither of Pidgin nor of "standard"

English. What is important here is that the collection ends with Lucy and WillyJoe's struggle against the conceptual limits of Pidgin, a language that registers political struggles that emerge along the divisive lines that cut across the local.

## **Multiple Sites of the Local and Questions of Power**

A desire to read *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* as a developmental narrative culminating in a resolution is further interrupted by the unresolved racial divisions evoked by the collection. Here, I want to split open my analysis to consider other assessments of the collection. While I have offered a reading of Yamanaka's powerful local feminist critique of the developmental narratives we use to claim certain identities, critics argue that her racially privileged local Japanese representations of Filipino and Hawaiian ethnic groups reinforce racist stereotypes of those groups. Rodney Morales, a professor in the University of Hawai'i English Department, argues in his article, "Literature in Hawai'i: A Contentious Multiculturalism," that "lal major concern is whether the author's strengths. ... are enough to counter her penchant to cast certain ethnic groups (again at-risk groups) one-dimensionally. While the jury may still be out on this one, one has to be wary of *patterns* of representations of an oppressed group by one that is more dominant" (forthcoming). Although the text presents stereotypes of different ethnic groups, some representations are more damaging than others, and Filipino/a and Hawaiian communities

"It is crucial that we give equal weight both to the collection's gendered critique and to the ways that the collection's critique occurs at the expense of racial groups.

To dismiss either framework invalidates important reader responses in ways that maintain existing conditions of oppression, whether they are gendered or racial."

are most vulnerable to stereotypes of violence because of discriminatory practices in Hawai'i that we cannot ignore.

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The collection has elicited powerful responses from different communities, and

these responses allow us to unravel these communities' concerns over the material effects that literature can have on peoples' lives. It is crucial that we give equal weight both to the collection's gendered critique and to the ways that the collection's critique occurs at the expense of racial groups. These gender-based and race-based analytical frameworks come to

compete with each other: as some narrative strategies work to expose certain operations of power, they sometimes conceal or reproduce others. These critical frameworks impinge upon each other, become inextricable, and our analyses must engage these multiple frameworks and concerns if we are to understand the complexity of the ways we live at the intersections racial, gendered, and class differences. To dismiss either framework invalidates important reader responses in ways that maintain existing conditions of oppression, whether they are gendered or racial. As I will illustrate here, the collection has become the focal point for issues of concern to different communities: the competing claims of literary ambiguity and social responsibility; the need to balance stereotypes

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I'd like to begin by looking at the criticisms that different communities have generated in response to the collection. On January 7, 1994, The Hawaii Herald: Hawaii's Japanese American Journal featured an article on Yamanaka's poetry and a reprinting of the poems "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala" and "Boss of the Food." The publication of the first poem offended many in the local Filipino/a and Japanese communities, and in March of that year, Bennette Evangelista responded with an article in The Fil-Am Courier evaluating the poem and the controversy surrounding it. Looking back at that article she had written, Evangelista later wrote, "the poem evoked racial tensions and perpetuated stereotypes about Hawaii's Filipinos that are better off buried. My article tried to be fair, even as I sought academic opinions on why artistic freedom should be treasured and held sacred. I personally thought this one crossed the boundary of decency. A lot of Fil-Am Courier readers agreed" (1994b:9). In the article, Evangelista interviewed Belinda Aquino, Director of the Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawai'i, and Nestor Garcia, a public relations executive, who both found the representations of Filipinos in the poem offensive, but they also agreed that art cannot and should not be censored. Garcia and Theresa Danao, a medical doctor, recast the question as one of editorial responsibility and whether or not the poems

should have appeared in a newspaper intended for general audiences. As Danao argues, "I have no problems with poems like this in the context of art. I think it was very well-written. But I think it was a mistake to print it in a publication like *The Hawaii Herald.*"

Other critics argue that the collection perpetuates racist stereotypes of Hawaiians. At the 1996 Association for Asian American Studies regional conference on "The Pacific Diaspora: Indigenous and Immigrant Communities" held in Honolulu, Leialoha Apo Perkins presented a paper entitled "The Presence and Non-Presence of Hawaiians in Asian American Narratives, Poetry, and Criticism—and the Non-Presence of Hawaiians in Publishing." Apo Perkins , a professor of Hawaiian and English Literature at the University of Hawai'i—West O'ahu, points out that the name "Kala" in the opening series in the collection suggests that it is a

provoked by the collection arises out of its ambiguity: since characters are not always racially identified, the collection can be read as both a perpetuation of stereotypes and a critique of those stereotypes."

"The controversy

Hawaiian girl who lives in a violent and abusive family and is the object of rape. She also cites textual evidence supporting a reading of Jimmyboy, the rapist, as a Hawaiian character. The actual violence that does occur in the collection, she argues, is inflicted on and by Hawaiian characters, and both Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, particularly local Asians, must be held accountable for their representations of Hawaiians.

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We can take an analysis of the ambiguity of the text even further by thinking about the ways the collection aims to deliver a social critique of the processes by which patriarchal and racist narratives are circulated in local communities: in the context of these concerns, what are the effects of narrative ambiguity? To map out these effects, we can return to the poem "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala." For many people, the poem is too successful in recreating the stereotype of the elderly Filipino man, and the stereotype itself takes on a life of its own that overpowers the critique. What is perhaps even more disturbing, however, is that the title of the poem makes it possible to identify the "real" rapist Felix as Filipino, and what ends up happening is that the stereotype of the old Filipino man is replaced by the "reality" of young Filipino rapist, which is itself a pervasive stereotype that has even more damaging consequences for Filipino communities. If we identify Felix as Filipino, the collection's affirmation of the young Filipino rapist as "the real" upholds the very mechanisms of power it seeks to critique. It is important that Felix and Jimmyboy are not racially identified, and this particular ambiguity can enable us to question our own construction of racial identities for the characters. But because readers can and do imagine racial identities for these characters, ambiguous representations can actually reinforce entrenched stereotypes. The price of the collection's narrative ambiguity is one that its particular social critique cannot afford at this time: identifications of Felix as Filipino and Jimmyboy as Hawaiian can have the devastating effect of exacerbating discriminatory conditions for Filipino/a and Hawaiian communities struggling against racism in Hawai'i.

Ironically, the collection's feminist critique also raises problems regarding its representations of Filipinas in the text. Darlene Ebanez, in "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice, Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala," whose Filipina identity is suggested by her surname, reclaims her body and her desires through masturbation but is disfigured in gossip as a sexually monstrous madwoman: "No sleep with your hair wet, / Kala said, or you going be like Darlene Ebanez / who run around her house nak-ed / and nobody can stop her when she like that. / She take her two fingers / and put um up her bi-lot. / That what you not supposed to do, Kala said, / the Bible said so that's why" (15-16). Masturbation gives women the power to control their own pleasure, which threatens a patriarchal privileging of the penis as a signifier for power, and Darlene Ebanez provokes

masculine anxieties about replacement and displacement. None of the speakers in the collection are clearly identified as Filipina, however, which reduces the complexity of this critique, and the significance of the fact that Darlene is Filipina is not clearly explained.

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The ambiguity of the collection's critique is further complicated by the way Yamanaka limits the perspectives presented in the collection to those of the naive twelve year-old speakers. Although readers can see what the young characters cannot, the Filipino/a characters do not effectively challenge the stereotype themselves. In the poem, "Kala: Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre," the Filipino men do speak, but they are not heard. Kala, preoccupied with her own position at the x-rated movie, imagines that she is the subject of their discussion: "All the old man sit in the last row. / I smell the tobacco they spit on the floor. / They laugh when I walk past / and say some words in Filipino. / I know they talking about me" (22). The poem reveals that although Filipino characters speak. Kala cannot understand what they are saying. Because of the inadequate structures of knowledge produced and reproduced in local communities, the Filipino/a characters are not heard. In criticizing racism in non-Filipino/a communities. Yamanaka does not to presume to speak "for" Filipinos, but because the Filipino/a characters are not presented with an interiority, the audience and the adolescent characters are not forced to confront the problem of racism that the text raises. While the characters do observe contradictions between their own lives and the gendered standards that oppress them as local girls, they do not see the contradictions between racist stereotypes of Filipino/as and "real" Filipino/a characters.

These are serious problems raised by Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre, and while this essay focuses on that text. Yamanaka's subsequent novels, Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers (1996) and Blu's Hanging (1997) have also been criticized for presenting increasingly disturbing representations of Filipinos. The problems posed by Yamanaka's texts are intensified by an interlocking problem involving the need for Hawai'i publications, which have been dominated by local Japanese and Chinese writers and editors, to provide more literary space for Filipino/a and Hawaiian writers. Criticisms have been most recently directed toward Bamboo Ridge Press, founded in 1978 by Eric Chock and Darrell Lum. While the press has played a foundational role in providing writers with a space to share their work, it has recently been the subject of criticism for publishing a disproportionately small number of writings by Filipino/as and Hawaiians. Although others address that controversy in greater detail elsewhere, 9 here we can reexamine the criteria that publishers in Hawai'i use to determine the aesthetic value of a work. In his account of the history of Bamboo Ridge Press, "The Neocolonialization of Bamboo Ridge: Repositioning Bamboo Ridge and Local Literature in the 1990s," Chock makes several highly problematic arguments about contemporary Hawaiian literature, but ends the essay with an important self-critical point: "It is the job of editors to select what they see fit; we want to be open to diversity, but we'd like to publish only the best of that diversity. We also want to be open to suggestions. Perhaps we need your essays to educate us on our aesthetics, because, ultimately, the aesthetics of the editors define a magazine" (1996:25). The category of the aesthetic—our conceptions of what is "beautiful" or "ugly," "good" or "bad"—is always political. As I've tried to illustrate in my arguments about Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre, we need to be attentive to narrative forms or voices that are not recognizable to us. It is our ignorance regarding other cultural

narrative traditions and forms—for example, Hawaiian mo'olelo—that makes it possible for us to misunderstand these narratives as examples of "underdeveloped" or "bad" writing. These problems remind us that we need to reexamine the developmental narratives we use to define aesthetic criteria if we are to learn from the narrative forms Hawai'i writers generate out of the historical and cultural specificities of this place.

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My exploration of community responses to *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* places more responsibility on artists and critics than was believed necessary in the past, and this is a result of changing historical conditions that have increased the responsibilities involved in claiming a local identity. It is crucial, however, for all of us to acknowledge ongoing gendered, racial and class struggles within local communities and the competing analytical frameworks that we use to assess these struggles. *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* offers us strategies for reimagining developmental narratives underpinning gendered definitions of the local at the same time the collection alerts us to the ways that even the usefulness of the local must be constantly interrogated, its operations of power carefully recorded and contested.

## The Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement: Redefining the Stakes for the Local

Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre does not directly address problems of economic development, but it does illustrate the ways we find the narrative structure of development to be very seductive. These narratives permeate our lives, and we can return to issues of economic development by considering the ways that developmental narratives are used to maintain existing political and economic structures. For example, opponents of Hawaiian sovereignty employ a developmental narrative in a common, ill-informed argument that there is too much "in-fighting" among Hawaiians, and Hawaiians will never achieve sovereignty because they can never agree. This demand for a single, unitary voice from Hawaiians, however, reproduces colonial ideologies that seek to homogenize Hawaiians as a peoples and criminalize the multiple voices that make up any strong political movement. As Kia'āina Mililani Trask, governor of the Native nation Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, has argued,

There's a negative stereotype that has always floated around...Hawaiians can't get together; Hawaiians are always bickering and fighting. That is in part the case because we believe in diversity of opinion in a democracy. In a democracy, you expect to have a lot of opinions. You expect to hear a great debate. Now in fascist nations, everyone is silent, and they all march to the beat of the same drummer. So when we reflect upon the disunity, remember that the other side of the coin is great diversity. The second thing is this: if we are going to come up with a solution, something that is realistic and practical in Hawai'i, it is going to be fashioned by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. It is going to be something that we're all going to have to participate in (1996).

Trask speaks to the problems inherent in the demand that Hawaiians march in unity down a linear path to nationhood; such a demand ignores the fact that different Hawaiian activists fight on several battle fronts at any one moment, whether they are educating people in Hawaiian communities about sovereignty, or negotiating with state or federal

governments or with the United Nations for recognition of a Hawaiian Nation, and such a process needs time for research and debate. Nationalist movements do not necessarily develop along a linear trajectory, but instead move according to peoples' needs and the strategies of resistance they generate, and we need to be aware of the ways developmental narratives are used to obstruct the work of the sovereignty movement.

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Trask also points to the need for non-Hawaiians to support the sovereignty movement. Assertions of local identity, however, often blatantly oppose Hawaiian struggles for self-determination. As Okamura argues,

Despite its liberal rhetoric of tolerance, acceptance, and equality of opportunity, multiculturalism in Hawai'i represents an argument for the stability and continuation of the status quo rather than for substantial change in the current structure of race and ethnic relations. This conservative orientation is quite evident in majoritarian responses to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement....that depict the sovereignty movement as a dangerous threat to ethnic harmony. A recent editorial on sovereignty in one of the Honolulu daily newspapers begins with a glowing tribute to the Hawai'i multicultural model: "Every person who lives in these Islands has experienced the 'aloha spirit', that warm feeling that comes from being part of a special place" (Honolulu Advertiser 1994:A3). The editorial then issues a warning that if not handled "wisely," the sovereignty issue "could destroy our spirit of aloha and divide Hawai'i along racial lines." (1994b:21)

In the developmental narrative operating in the editorial, the sovereignty movement is an outdated anachronism that threatens our "enlightened" "spirit of aloha." As Okamura argues, however, to ignore Hawaiian struggles for the sake of local unity only exacerbates racial divisions that already exist. Sovereignty leaders make it clear that what is at stake

for the sovereignty movement is self-determination for Hawaiians as a nation that will enable them to combat the genocidal effects of American imperialism, which include unemployment, poverty, homelessness, high rates of illiteracy and incarceration, and the poorest health conditions in the United States (Trask, M. 1993).

We can think about the ways that the term "local" emerged in order to account for peoples in Hawai'i who are not "Native," and that its roots lie in a recognition of that crucial distinction between immigrant and indigenous groups. We can ask the question, how can non-Hawaiians claim a local identity and a commitment to the peoples of this place without supporting indigenous struggles in Hawai'i? There are political responsibilities to claiming any identity, and although other locals may define the stakes behind claiming a local identity differently, my own personal position is that in the context of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, the only way the idea of the local can continue to be used responsibly and meaningfully

"We cannot ignore the injustices Hawaiians have suffered; to do so and to claim a local identity is to promote non-Hawaiian self-interests at the expense of Hawaiians in a way that empties the local of any meaning."

the local can continue to be used responsibly and meaningfully is if we educate ourselves about the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and support Hawaiian nationalist efforts to regain self-determination. I am not saying that whether or not one is local depends on

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In redefining the stakes behind claiming a local identity, I have focused on political conflicts in Hawai'i, but ultimately, an analysis that acknowledges antagonisms can lead to stronger political alliances. These narratives of conflict remind us that maintaining the usefulness of the local involves political responsibility and ongoing struggle. A reexamination of developmental narratives that undergird local identity, representations of the sovereignty movement, and the economic future of Hawai'i is crucial if people in Hawai'i are to envision a Hawaiian Nation that is an alternative to present structures of American governance, an alternative that just might challenge what Ileto refers to as the "present development bind."

### Glossary

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heiau	Pre-Christian place of worship
mo'o	Lizard, reptile of any kind, dragon, serpent; water spirit
moʻolelo	Story, tale, myth, history, tradition, literature, legend, journal, log, yarn,
	fable, essay, chronicle, record, article

Japanese noun or adjective. Ghost, spirit

(Source: Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, Hawaiian Dictionary. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.)

#### **Notes**

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In this essay, I use the terms "Hawaiian" and "Native Hawaiian" to refer to peoples of Hawaiian ancestry, regardless of federal definitions based on blood quantum.

- I. I am local Japanese; my stepfather and half-brothers are local Japanese/Filipino. I do not claim to understand what it means to be Filipino, but I want to point to the ways that there are important divisions between ethnic groups at the same time there are problematic stereotypes about the ways racial groups are segregated.
- 2. For discussions of developmental narratives, see Lloyd (1993), Wong (1994), and Lowe (1996).
- 3. See "School Begins" by Dalrymple (1899), Hamilton (1897) and Hamilton (n.d.).
- 4. For a discussion of the feminization of Hawai'i, see "Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture," in Trask (1994) and Kame'eleihiwa (1992). See also Turnbull and Ferguson (1997).
- 5. For definitions of "local," see Chang (1996) and Okamura (1994a).
- For a discussion of these community control struggles, see McGregor (1980), Trask (1987–88), and Geschwender (1980–81). For photographs, see *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* January 5, 1977:A1 and *The Honolulu Advertiser* January 4, 1977:A-4.
- I'd like to thank my mother, Eloise Yamashita Saranillio, for explaining to me her understanding of the etymology of the word, "cho-cho."
- 8. While the critiques are based on ethnic divisions, I refer to "raced-based" analytical frameworks to foreground the ways in which ethnic groups are racialized differently.
- 9. See Morales (forthcoming) and Chock (1996).

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