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The Depiction of Native Hawaiians in American Media

Lauren Lopez University of Windsor, lopez11f@uwindsor.ca

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Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which colonial ideologies influenced the presentation of Native Hawaiians in American media throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands as a U.S. territory in 1898, American cartoonists, advertisers, authors, filmmakers, and others have promoted racist, sexist, and oversexualized versions of Native Hawaiians to the American public because of their deeply ingrained, sometimes unconscious, colonial ways of thinking. Although Indigenous Studies is a growing area of interest in the academy, research on Native Hawaiian media representation and the impact of stereotypes on both Native Hawaiian identity and public views of Native Hawaiians is scarce. This paper uses political cartoons, travel ephemera, film footage, and various forms of print media to bring to light the most prominent stereotypes of Native Hawaiians and explore how the origins of these stereotypes can be traced back to American colonialism. Unlike pre-existing works, this paper scrutinizes various examples of Native Hawaiian media representations from an intersectional perspective, considering racial-, gender-, and sexuality-based approaches. It also critically examines the role of exoticization, instead of focusing on only one of the aforementioned approaches. By outlining the fallacious stereotypes of the Native Hawaiian community and explaining their origins, this paper can help arm the media industry with the necessary tools to create more culturally competent media content.

Hawai'i at the World's Fair

Imagine that you are a twelve-year-old child from St. Louis, Missouri living in 1904. You are excited because, for the first time, the Hawaiian Islands will be hosting a pavilion at the World's Fair near you at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Your knowledge of Hawai'i is little to none, so you are looking forward to learning more about the "Paradise of the Pacific." Your first exposure to Hawaiian political, cultural, and financial affairs comes from the *World's Fair Bulletin.* 3

Through reading the *World's Fair Bulletin*, you learn that Hawai'i is an idyllic environment bursting with previously under-utilized natural resources and inhabited by natives who were civilized through the American compulsory free school system.⁴ You also learn that, because of the natural riches of their homeland, indigenous Hawaiians are "tempted to live without work, as their forefathers did when the country swarmed with people." You are taught that without the business know-how of the American sugar planters, Hawai'i would not have become "one of the richest of Uncle Sam's territories." Furthermore, you read about how the Expo will help launch the Hawaiian tourist industry. Although you are only twelve years old, your views of Native Hawaiians and their place in American society have been formed by the pages of a 'harmless' event brochure.

Historical Background

The history of Hawaiian stereotypes and misrepresentation can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In 1778, British Naval Captain James Cook and his crew on the *H.M.S Resolution* became some of the first Europeans to interact with the Indigenous inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands, what were then named "The Sandwich Islands." This contact was well-documented in *A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, which was published in 1783 by John Ledyard, a member of Cook's crew. Due to the popularity of this document, Ledyard's accounts of his crew's encounters with Native Hawaiians have had a profound impact on Western perceptions of this group. The book's presentation of Cook's exploits focuses on the primitivity and sexual freedom of the Native Hawaiians he met.

¹ World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, (St. Louis: World's Fair Publishing Co., 1902-1903).

² World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, 149.

³ Appendix i.

⁴ World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, 149.

⁵ World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, 150.

⁶ World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, 150.

⁷ World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Volume 4, 149-150.

⁸ Walter L. Hixson, American Settler Colonialism: A History. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 154.

⁹ John Ledyard, A journal of Captain's Cook's last voyage to the Pacific Ocean, and in quest of a North-west passage between Asia and America, performed in the years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779: illustrated with a chart shewing the tracts of the ships employed in this expedition. (Hartford, Connecticut: Nathaniel Patten, 1783), Library of Congress, Jefferson Exhibit Collection, and Oliver Wolcott Pamphlet Collection.

¹⁰ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race*. (New York: Routledge), 2003, 186.

In the early nineteenth century, American Protestant missionaries began travelling to Hawai'i with the goal of "promoting the spread of the gospel in Heathen lands." During this era, these religious figures, specifically the missionary wives, imposed their beliefs about proper social behaviors and religious practices onto the 'pagan' and 'uncivilized' Hawaiian population. These missionaries perpetuated stereotypes about Hawaiians based on their white settler colonial ideals. For instance, their habit of infantilizing, trivializing their culture, and labelling them as lazy and primitive had a lasting impact on American views of Hawaiians. ¹²

The direct descendants of these American missionaries later became businessmen and lawyers who would profit from Hawai'i's natural riches. ¹³ The most lucrative industry was the production of sugar cane. Because they had been raised in an environment that preached white American Christian superiority, these men were emboldened to take the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Islands away from Native Hawaiians and place it in the 'more capable' hands of the U.S. government. ¹⁴ They implemented various plots to undermine and later overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy between 1887 and 1893. During the overthrow of the monarchy, Queen Liliuokalani, daughter of Hawaiian King Kalakaua, became an unpopular figure in the eyes of the white population because of her attempts to outwit her legal limitations to preserve her people's heritage and rights. ¹⁵ The annexation of Hawai'i to the United States, the desired outcome of the American elite, was made official in 1898. ¹⁶

From the perspective of the American government, one of the primary motives for the acquisition of this Pacific region was the establishment of a stronger economic connection with China. To American economists, China was an untapped market for American products. Without Hawai'i's coaling stations and ports, Pacific expansion would never have been established. As with the interest in the growth of the sugar cane business, much of American involvement in Hawai'i was commercially motivated.

After sixty years as a territory of the United States, Hawai'i became the 50th state in 1959. During the decade immediately following statehood, American media outlets rapidly increased their interest in Hawai'i and Hawaiian culture. According to Alison Powell's article on the influence of popular music on youth travel tendencies during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Hawaiian culture became synonymous with a "youth counterculture involving sun and surf" that emerged as a manifestation of youthful rebellion.¹⁹ The sudden commercial interest in catering to

¹¹ Jennifer Fish Kashay, "Agents of Imperialism: Missionaries and Merchants in Early-Nineteenth-Century Hawaii." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 80, no. 2 (June 2007), 280.

¹² Patricia Grimshaw. *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1989), 166; Craig Howes. "Hawaii Through Western Eyes: Orientalism and Historical Fiction for Children." *The Lion and the Unicorn* (April 1987): 71.

¹³ Tom Smith, "History, 'Unwritten Literature,' and U.S. Colonialism in Hawai'i, 1898–1915." *Diplomatic History* 43, no. 5 (November 2019), 813.

¹⁴ Smith, "Unwritten Literature," 813-814.

¹⁵ Smith, "Unwritten Literature," 813.

¹⁶ Smith, "Unwritten Literature," 813.

¹⁷ Smith, "Unwritten Literature," 815.

¹⁸ Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 154.

¹⁹ Alison Powel, "Like a Rolling Stone: Notions of Youth Travel and Tourism in Pop Music of the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties." *Anthropological Research on Contemporary Tourism: Student Papers from Berkeley*, nos.67-68 (1988), 28.

this youth market led to the production of a vast array of films, songs, and other tourism-inspired products like postcards that featured Hawaiian iconography, including images of Native Hawaiians.

This essay will examine the impact of U.S. colonial views on depictions of Native Hawaiians in American media from the period immediately prior to the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1898 to the decade following the establishment of Hawai'i statehood. It will examine American media sources such as political cartoons, film, advertisement, and other forms of representation. The work will also analyze these depictions through lenses influenced by gender, sexuality, race, and exoticism. By examining these past stereotypical and discriminatory depictions of Hawai'i's indigenous populations, changemakers in the media industry can make strides towards accurate, authentic, and culturally responsive representations in the future.

Theory

Masculinity & Femininity

Western societies define gender according to a binary system in which one is either male or female. According to this long-enduring mindset, one is assumed to fall only within one of these two specific categories. In gender binary is particularly significant when considering its impact on societal roles. Gender roles force members of a society to ponder which attitudes, behaviors, and responsibilities are inherently 'masculine' or 'feminine.' With this information, a person determines what role they must play to 'properly' belong to their assigned gender. In this respect, masculinity and femininity act as the distinction between how males and females look, think, and act.

These definitions of gender identity and gender roles are not identical across all global cultures. Many Indigenous cultures, such as those of Oceania, have differing views of gender. The most significant distinction between Western and Oceanic gender ideologies is the Western cultures' unwavering adherence to the gender binary. Native Hawaiians, on the other hand, have a more fluid definition of gender. This fluidity is demonstrated through the centuries of Native Hawaiian literature that acknowledge the existence of $m\bar{a}h\bar{u}$, transgender members of the community that adopt personal identities other than the gender that they were assigned at birth. This paper will endeavor to explain how these ideological differences, especially in terms of gender roles and gender expression, resulted in pejorative representations of Native Hawaiians in American media.

²⁰ Ashleigh Rushton et al., "Beyond Binary: (Re)Defining "Gender" for 21st Century Disaster Risk Reduction Research, Policy, and Practice," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 20 (2019), 2.

²¹ Rushton et al., "Beyond Binary," 2.

²² Anne Constantinople, "Masculinity-Femininity: An Exception to a Famous Dictum?" *Psychological Bulletin* 80, no. 5 (Nov. 1973), 390.

²³ Kate Bornstein, Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21, Internet Archive.

²⁴ Constantinople, "Masculinity-Femininity," 390.

²⁵ Dean Hamer and Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, "Kapaemahu: Toward Story Sovereignty of a Hawaiian Tradition of Healing and Gender Diversity," *The Contemporary Pacific* 34, no. 2 (2022), 262.

²⁶ Hamer and Wong-Kalu, "Kapaemahu," 264.

Racism & the Exotic Other

Race is a complex concept that permeates through discourses in modern culture and society. From a social science perspective, race is defined as a socially formed set of ideas about a person's ancestry, physical features, and behavioral characteristics based on ever-evolving racial categories.²⁷ Furthermore, racial discrimination can be defined as differential treatment based on race that places a racial group in an unfavorable position.²⁸ One example of racial discrimination against Native Hawaiians is their misrepresentation in visual media. Many of the current stereotypical depictions of Native Hawaiians are based on white supremacist ideologies about race. According to the racial hierarchy established by Eurocentric minds, such as Victorian-era evolutionists, all racial groups other than Caucasians remained at earlier stages of evolutionary development.²⁹ It is for this reason that Native Hawaiians, like other non-white populations, were considered primitive and under-developed physically, morally, and intellectually. Within literature, Native Hawaiians' skin color changes depending on Western authors' intentions. When described in a positive manner, as for tourism purposes, their skin is brown.³¹ When attempting to discredit Native Hawaiians, such as with the political overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani or when emphasizing their perceived primitivism and savagery, authors and illustrators depicted Native Hawaiians as being Black, akin to Africans or African Americans.³²

Depictions of Native Hawaiians have also been influenced by understandings of ethnic otherness. As explained in Edward Saïd's landmark work, *Orientalism*, westerners see "the Other," or people not of the Western world, as objects to be studied and analyzed. ³³ Native Hawaiians, for instance, were expected to passively accept the scientific scrutiny of European anthropologists, who established what became known as 'the ethnographic gaze,' a way of examining a culture that historically focused on exotica, poverty, primitivism, and other misinformed views of non-European groups. ³⁴ Knowledge of both racial theory and ethnic otherness are key to the analysis of the representation of Native Hawaiians in the American media.

Iconography & Aesthetics

Iconography, an established approach to visual analysis, involves scrutinizing images for what they represent and their hidden meanings.³⁵ This method also takes into consideration the

²⁷ National Research Council, *Measuring Racial Discrimination* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2004), 39.

²⁸ National Research Council, *Measuring Racial Discrimination*, 39.

²⁹ The term 'Caucasian' is an outdated racial term once used to describe individuals with European ancestry. The term is used above to reflect the vocabulary of anthropologists and evolutionists from the Victorian era. Jane C. Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i: The "Ideal" Native and the Origins of Tourism, 1880-1915," *positions* 7, no. 2 (1999), 464.

³⁰ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 461.

³¹ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 477.

³² Laura Lehua Yim, "Reading Hawaiian Shakespeare: Indigenous Residue Haunting Settler Colonial Racism," *Journal of American Studies* 54, no. 1 (2020), 38; Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 477.

³³ Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, Penguin Random House, 1979), 97.

³⁴ Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2019), 5, Sage Research Methods.

³⁵ Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, eds., *The Handbook of Visual Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2011), 2.

cultural and historical context in which an image is generated and disseminated.³⁶ To perform an iconographic analysis, one must have a sound understanding of aesthetics. Aesthetics describes a group's cultural and regional values that inform their perception of beauty.³⁷ Hawaiian aesthetic systems vary significantly from Western aesthetic systems. Many Indigenous aesthetic systems, including that of Native Hawaiians, are bound to their ancestral land.³⁸ Hawaiian language and oral histories also describe beauty through all five senses: smell, taste, touch, visual appearance, and sound, as a way to accentuate subjectivity and make connections with ancestral knowledge.³⁹

From an American perspective, rooted in colonial understandings, Native Hawaiians were perceived as appealing and exotic because of their skin tone. 40 Their 'brown' skin made them just primitive enough to be exoticized and fetishized. 41 Hawaiian women were often depicted as either partially nude or in European attire with accessories that demonstrated their 'otherness' such as flower leis. 42 Both depictions highlighted their eroticism and seductiveness. 43 Furthermore, Native Hawaiian men were not depicted as often as Native Hawaiian women. 44 Their physical attractiveness was not commercialized, nor was it used to bolster the Hawaiian tourism industry in the same way as their female counterparts. 45 When they were depicted, they were dressed in stereotypically 'primitive' clothing like loincloths. 46 It is through an iconographic lens that this paper will examine media representations of Native Hawaiians in such mediums as political cartoons, films, and advertisements.

Historiography

When positioned within the larger historiography, this essay will distinguish itself from other research projects because it will take an intersectional approach by analyzing gender, sexuality, and race. Various resources that examine these topics individually exist in the larger historiography, but few have the vast scope of this project. For instance, *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai`i and Oceania* by Maile Arvin explains Hawaiian views on their own race and how these views conflicted with those of their white counterparts. However, this essay incorporates research from this and other sources, such as Rizzo and Gerontakis's *Intimate Empires*, which explores the roles of sexuality and gender in colonization, to examine the ways in which the racial, sexual, and gender dimensions influence one another, strengthen one another, and create contradictions with one another. ⁴⁸

³⁶ Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, 2.

³⁷ Brandy Nālani McDougall, "Putting feathers on our words: Kaona as a decolonial aesthetic practice in Hawaiian literature," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014), 6.

³⁸ McDougall, "Putting feathers on our words," 6.

³⁹ McDougall, "Putting feathers on our words," 8.

⁴⁰ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 461.

⁴¹ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 461.

⁴² Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 480.

⁴³ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 480.

⁴⁴ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 480.

⁴⁵ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 461.

⁴⁶ Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i," 480.

⁴⁷ Arvin Maile, *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai`i and Oceania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁴⁸ Steven Gerontakis and Tracey Rizzo, *Intimate Empires: Body, Race, and Gender in the Modern World.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

In the chapter "Spaces of Denial: American Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i and Alaska" in Walter Hixson's *American Settler Colonialism*, Hixson's descriptions of key moments in Hawaiian history such as Queen Liliuokalani's overthrow provided necessary insight into the complex social and political histories of the region from the pre-annexation period to statehood. "Shifting Forms of Stigmatization and Discrimination" in *Prejudice, Stigma, Privilege, and Oppression: A Behavioral Health Handbook* provides an overview of some of the most pervasive stereotypes that are associated with Native Hawaiians in the twenty-first century. This handbook brings to light a number of questions such as: "How did these stereotypes originate?" and "Can they be seen in primary sources from the era of interest?" "Hawaii Through Western Eyes: Orientalism and Historical Fiction for Children" broadened the scope of the analysis of relevant primary source documents by acting as a window into the minds of nineteenth-century Americans. ⁵¹

Because most of the existing literature focuses on one type of media per source, such as the appearance of Hawaiian stereotypes in film alone, this research project relies more on general research on topics such as race, gender, sexuality, stereotypes, and colonialism to build a unique narrative that draws connections between the more specific, primary source-based resources.

This essay will begin with an overview of prevalent gender stereotypes and ideas about sexuality associated with Native Hawaiians, as well as a brief analysis of selected primary source documents that showcase these beliefs. This will introduce the ways in which colonists' religiously motivated actions impacted Native Hawaiian views on sex and gender. Next, it will explore racial stereotypes born out of cultural misconceptions and preconceived notions about race established in the colonial period. This will explain the ambivalent nature of racial identity in Hawai'i and make important connections between race and politics. Finally, it will consider how exoticism and militarism have colored depictions of Native Hawaiians. This section will tie in concepts like 'otherness,' fetishization of racialized communities, and U.S. military history. In concert with one another, these topics will provide a picture of the complex development of Hawaiian identity and Hawaiian stereotypes.

Gender and Sexuality

Gender is the portrayal of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' based on cultural and historical standards. ⁵² Sexuality is a broad term that encompasses sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, and other related notions. ⁵³ The construction and application of both these concepts can differ significantly depending on the type of society one is analyzing because they are

⁴⁹ Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 145-164.

⁵⁰ Keawe aimoku Kaholokula, Joseph, Robin E.S. Miyamoto, Andrea Hepuapo okela Hermosura, and Megan Inada. "Shifting Forms of Stigmatization and Discrimination," in *Prejudice, Stigma, Privilege, and Oppression: A Behavioral Health Handbook*, edited by Benuto, Lorraine T., Melanie P. Duckworth, Akihiko Masuda, and William O'Donohue, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

⁵¹ Howes, "Hawaii Through Western Eyes," 68.

⁵² Charlene L. Muehlenhard et al., "Gender and Sexuality: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *The Journal of Sex Research* 40, no. 1 (2003), 1.

⁵³ Ashley Macleod and Marita P. McCabe, "Defining sexuality in later life: A systematic review," *Special Issue: Sex and intimacy in later life: From understanding and acceptance to policy*, 39, no. 1, (June 2020), 6-7.

acquired through socialization. For instance, patriarchal societies have a different set of rules, roles, and expected behaviors than matriarchal societies. As such, understandings of masculinity, femininity, and sexual orientation can vary. Societal understandings of these concepts can also vary depending on the period in question. Throughout much of American history, religious values, for instance, have strongly impacted these social constructions and dictated the attitudes towards sexual intercourse.

Femininity

In nineteenth century Hawai'i, conflicting ideals of Western and Oceanic cultures resulted in the establishment of female gendered stereotypes. American Protestant missionaries arriving on the islands believed that by imposing their Christian values onto the pagan Native Hawaiians they would civilize them and rescue them from an eternity in hell.⁵⁴ These agents of empire forced their ideas about femininity, motherhood, and womanhood onto Native Hawaiian women.⁵⁵ In documents from the time period, these agents asserted that native women needed to be taught the basics of Western-style femininity, piety, chastity, and domesticity, in order to truly be considered feminine.⁵⁶ It is clear that the missionaries concluded that Native Hawaiian women's behavior did not adhere to 'proper femininity.'⁵⁷

These ideas about Native Hawaiian women were spread throughout the United States through published books. One such book, written for children, was *Our Little Hawaiian Cousin*, by Mary Hazelton Wade.⁵⁸ Published in 1902, this book contained less than flattering descriptions of the 'uncivilized' and 'non-western' Hawaiian lifestyle.⁵⁹ It specifically included critical opinions of Native Hawaiian mothers:

She, a grown woman, is idly making wreaths in company with her neighbors instead of cooking and sweeping, dusting and sewing for the family! ... The fact is, all days are like this to the Hawaiian mother, who lives the life of a grown-up child.⁶⁰

The quoted material, penned by an American writer, is an example of the Western influence infantilizing Hawaiian women and diminishing the significance of their cultural practices. By insinuating that Hawaiian women wasted their time with non-essential practices like wreath making instead of prioritizing the chores of the Western 'women's sphere,' Wade suggested that Hawaiian women were in desperate need of the tutelage by American women. She also suggested that the American definition of a 'good mother' was the one true definition. If the Hawaiian mothers lived the lives of grown-up children, then the colonial-minded American women must act as their mothers, providing them with social uplift. This ideology perpetuated the colonial ideals of American supremacy and suppression of Indigenous cultures.

⁵⁴ Grimshaw, Paths of Duty, 166.

⁵⁵ Grimshaw, Paths of Duty, 166.

⁵⁶ Grimshaw, Paths of Duty, 166.

⁵⁷ Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, 166.

⁵⁸ Howes, "Hawaii Through Western Eyes," 68.n

⁵⁹ Mary Hazelton Wade, Our Little Hawaiian Cousin, (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1902).

⁶⁰ Wade, Our Little Hawaiian Cousin, quoted in Howes, "Hawaii Through Western Eyes," 71.

⁶¹ Wade, Our Little Hawaiian Cousin, quoted in Howes, "Hawaii Through Western Eyes," 71.

⁶² Wade, Our Little Hawaiian Cousin, quoted in Howes, "Hawaii Through Western Eyes," 71.

Masculinity

One of the most enduring and pervasive stereotypes of Native Hawaiian men is that they are inherently lazy. Not surprisingly, this stereotype's origins are rooted in nineteenth century colonial discourse. Promoting the idea of Native sloth and indolence was a popular tactic to facilitate land and labor appropriation throughout the Pacific. Furthermore, American missionaries and lawmakers used these qualities of Native Hawaiians to levy for the privatization of landownership and the enforcement of capitalist work habits both of which would work in their favor. This pejorative view of male Hawaiians also materialized as a result of conflicting ideas about 'proper' work ethic. American settlers could not rationalize the Hawaiian *ukupau* labor system, which paid well, allowed for long periods of rest, and encouraged self-care practices. Although these traditions continued to exist after the introduction of Euro-American capitalism, this American mindset belittled *Kānaka Maoli* work habits and used them to advance ideas about the 'laziness' of the inhabitants of the region.

The image of Hawaiian men doing seaside work and taking long breaks turned into the caricature of the 'male Hawaiian beach bum,' a staple of 1960s Hawaiian-centered American media. Elvis Presley's film *Blue Hawaii* demonstrated this stereotype through its depiction of the main character's Hawaiian friends.⁶⁷ Certain songs such as "Ito Eats," painted the male Hawaiian characters as indolent, simple, unsophisticated figures who lazed around on the beach because they were biologically and culturally predisposed to do so.⁶⁸ In the film, Chad, a white American, distinguished himself from his unmotivated Hawaiian friends by leaving a life of beachside bliss to start his own business, thus feeding into the capitalist work ethic that the settlers of the nineteenth century so idolized.⁶⁹ By devaluing the Hawaiian male's role in the workforce, the colonial attitude was effectively emasculating these colonized people.⁷⁰ This stereotype endures to this day.

Sexuality and Sexual Habits

Sex and sexuality are two elements of pre-colonial Hawaiian culture that were upended by the Christianizing efforts of American colonists. Before the arrival of American missionaries, the 'pagan' belief systems of Hawaiian culture encouraged sexual relationships between men, expression of transgender identity, and other practices that contradicted Western values that were rooted in Christian beliefs. For example, ancient *Kānaka Maoli* believed that there were people

⁶³ Ty P Kāwika, Tengan, "Re-membering Panalā'au: Masculinities, Nation, and Empire in Hawai'i and the Pacific," *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008), 31.

⁶⁴ Tengan, "Re-membering Panalā'au," 31.

⁶⁵ Tengan, "Re-membering Panalā'au," 31.

⁶⁶ Kānaka Maoli, the plural form of Kanaka Maoli, means "true or real people" in Hawaiian language. These identity terms are used to identify Indigenous Hawaiians whose genealogical ancestry can be traced back to the Hawaiian Islands. Kānaka Maoli and other variations of this term have been adopted in an effort to move away from blood-quantum related terms of the past and support the Hawaiian language recovery movement. Tengan, "Remembering Panalā'au," 31.

⁶⁷ Joy T. Taylor, "'You Can't Spend Your Whole Life on a Surfboard': Elvis Presley, Exotic Whiteness, and Native Performance in *Blue Hawaii* and *Girls! Girls!*, "*Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 32, no. 1 (2015), 28.

⁶⁸ Taylor, "You Can't Spend Your Whole Life on a Surfboard," 28.

⁶⁹ Taylor, "You Can't Spend Your Whole Life on a Surfboard," 28.

⁷⁰ Ty Kwika Tengan, "(En)gendering Colonialism: Masculinities in Hawai'i and Aotearoa," *Cultural Values* 6, no. 3 (2002), 242-243.

who existed in the place between man and woman. 71 $M\bar{a}h\bar{u}$ as they called them, embodied both male and female energies. 72 There is also historical documentation, such as reports from Captain Cook's voyages, that describe $aik\bar{a}ne$, young men that served as sexual companions to men in positions of power, such as chiefs. 73 The Christian missionaries of the 1800s were eager to suppress and renounce these perceived immoral practices. 74 For this reason, there is little to no media representation of these ancient ideologies from the era of interest (1898–1969). The reclamation of Hawaiian cultural practices, like hula, did not occur until the 1970s and pre-Christian beliefs, such as the promotion of the concept of $m\bar{a}h\bar{u}$, did not occur until the 2010s. 75

Christianizing efforts also led to the vilification of sexual intercourse. In Hawaiian culture, sex was a sacred and revered practice. For instance, sex between two men was said to transfer power and virility from one person to the other. Sexual freedom was encouraged. However, for the Christian missionaries, even sexual encounters between men and women were reviled. For example, missionary women considered Hawaiians' culturally encouraged promiscuity as one of the main contributors to female infertility. Conflicting cultural values and the deep-rooted supremacy of white Americans led to the suppression and erasure of Native Hawaiian understandings of gender and sexuality.

Race

Emphasizing 'otherness' by highlighting racial differences was one of the most potent imperial tactics used in Hawai'i and in other colonized regions. In nineteenth century Hawai'i, white colonists and missionaries used racial discourse to their advantage and bent it to their will. Hawaiians were 'descendants of Aryans' when it was convenient for land seizure. Recording to white colonists, the two groups shared a relative heritage, allowing the white colonists to claim Native Hawaiian lands for themselves. On the other hand, they were considered racially similar to African Americans rather than white individuals in matters of 'Black Peril.' To the white settler ruling elite, Hawaiians existed on a continuum, constantly vacillating between Black and white.

⁷¹ Carol E. Robertson, "The Māhū of Hawai'i," Feminist Studies 15, no. 2 (1989), 313.

⁷² Robertson, "The Māhū of Hawai'i," 313.

⁷³ Gerontakis and Rizzo, *Intimate Empires*, 16-17.

⁷⁴ Will Roscoe, "Sexual and Gender Diversity in Native America and the Pacific Island," In *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*, ed. Megan E. Springate (Washington, DC: National Park Foundation, 2016), 9-10.

⁷⁵ Eleisha Lauria, "Gender Fluidity in Hawaiian Culture," in *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, January/February 2017.

⁷⁶ Gerontakis and Rizzo, *Intimate Empires*, 16.

⁷⁷ Grimshaw, Paths of Duty, 183.

⁷⁸ Maile, *Possessing Polynesians*, 44.

⁷⁹ Maile, *Possessing Polynesians*, 45.

⁸⁰ The 'Black Peril' was the widespread fear in the early twentieth century of white women being raped by Black men. This panic has been known to apply to Native Hawaiian and Asian men in certain colonial settings. Tengan, "Re-membering Panalā'au," 35; Gareth Cornwell, "George Webb Hardy's The Black Peril and the Social Meaning of 'Black Peril' in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 441.

⁸¹ Nitasha Tamar Sharma, "Over two centuries: Black people in nineteenth-century Hawai'i," *American Nineteenth Century History* 20, no. 2 (2019), 116.

No matter what their racial categorization, Hawaiians were still considered inferior to white Americans. This inferiority, a result of political doctrines, such as Manifest Destiny and the 'white man's burden,' as well as religious doctrine that associated people's unfamiliarity with Christian scripture with primitivism was integral to imperialism and colonization. ⁸² The aforementioned sets of ideals attempted to justify white American dominance over Hawaiian land, resources, and culture. In addition, social Darwinism and the 'Vanishing Native' theory further promoted this justification. ⁸³ These theories posited that Native Hawaiians would eventually cease to exist as a result of evolution. This was coined as a 'natural' process. ⁸⁴ Those promoting colonization used this idea to rationalize the annexation of Hawai'i to the United States and to rally white Americans together to bolster the annexation project. ⁸⁵

Political cartoons from the nineteenth century reflected the influence of these racist and imperialist motives on popular media. Similar to the African American community, Native Hawaiians were drawn with exaggerated features when illustrators wanted to portray them in a negative light. This is most evident in cartoons depicting Queen Liliuokalani. The Queen was often drawn in a style that emulated the 'pickaninny' character, which was usually reserved for Africans and African Americans. ⁸⁶ Pickaninnies, a dominant caricature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, were considered young Black buffoons. ⁸⁷ Cartoons drawn of the Queen usually included big lips, a curvy body type, kinky hair, bare feet, dark-skin, and skimpy clothing. ⁸⁸ By depicting her as a 'primitive' and 'ignorant' racialized individual, these cartoons bolstered the growing white settler sentiment that the Queen was unfit to rule the Hawaiian people. ⁸⁹

The white supremacy established during the nineteenth century can be seen in various media resources from the period under discussion in this work. For example, a Matson Line travel ad from 1937 subtly communicated perceived white superiority and Native Hawaiian inferiority through the positioning of its models and its messaging. In these images, the white woman is seated on a bench looking down at the Native Hawaiian boy. She is physically looking down at him from her place of white supremacy and moral superiority. Furthermore, the advertisement's tagline, "Hawaii will live in your heart forever," suggests that white American tourists would have interactions with Native Hawaiians that could positively affect them for the rest of their lives. This commodification of Hawaiian bodies echoed the human zoos or ethnographic exhibitions that existed at world's fairs throughout the United States and Europe during the late

⁸² Joseph Hearl, "Racial Politics and the U.S. Annexation of Hawaii," *Student Research Submissions: University of Mary Washington*. (2020), 16; Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 154.

⁸³ Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 154.

⁸⁴ Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 154.

⁸⁵ Hearl, "Racial Politics," 16.

⁸⁶ Sharma, "Over two centuries," p. 128.

⁸⁷ David Pilgrim, "The Picaninny Caricature," in *Jim Crowe Museum*, 2012.

⁸⁸ St. Paul daily globe. [volume], February 03, 1893, Image 1, Library of Congress (c. 1893) in

[&]quot;Historical Political Cartoons About Hawaii," Hawai'i Digital Newspaper Project, 2013. Appendix iii.

⁸⁹ Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 156.

⁹⁰ Matson Line Advertisement, Archive.org, (December 1937). Appendix iv.

⁹¹ Matson Line Advertisement, Archive.org.

⁹² Matson Line Advertisement, Archive.org.

nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century.⁹³ The boy's indigeneity was also highlighted through his criss-crossed seating position, often associated with stereotypical Native American drum circles, as well as his partial nudity.⁹⁴ Plainly, racial discrimination and caricature of Native Hawaiians emerged as a result of white supremacy and old ideas about 'the primitive native.'

Exoticism

Exoticism is a noun used to denote the foreign origins of a person, item, or behavior. ⁹⁵ The exotic nature of this person, item, or behavior is deemed as novel and fascinating. ⁹⁶ Through the process of exoticization, generations of Americans have emphasized the 'otherness' of Hawaiian people and their culture. This distinction between the 'visiting' population and the 'visited' population was a fundamental principle of the tourism industry and reflected colonial divisions between the colonists and the colonized. Tourism thrived on exoticization. ⁹⁷ The exploitation, hyper-sexualization, and commodification of Hawaiian bodies and Hawaiian culture are evident in travel advertisements, postcards, and other tourist ephemera produced throughout the period of interest.

Since annexation, the Hawaiian tourism industry has evolved into one of the state's foremost economic contributors. 98 It was born out of the imperial upheaval of Hawaiian economic systems. 99 Since colonial times, Hawaiians have been regarded as welcoming, generous, and friendly to their guests. These behaviors, rooted in the traditional practice of *ho'okipa* or expected hospitality, became the basis for the Hawaiian tourism industry. 100 Americans profited off these social practices both financially and morally. The perpetuated image of 'Hawaiian hospitality' allowed the invading Americans to infiltrate and exploit the Hawaiian Islands without feeling any sense of guilt or remorse. 101

Hawaiian hospitality manifests itself in various forms of American media. For instance, the imagery of foreigners disembarking a boat or a plane and being greeted by amicable Hawaiians wearing grass skirts and placing leis around the foreigners' necks is quite common. A Pan Am airlines advertisement from 1938 depicted this image and seems to communicate the idea that the sole purpose of the Hawaiian people was to wait on the rich white passengers on the Pan Am Clipper. ¹⁰² This imbalance of power comes from the American expectation that Hawaiian

⁹³ Katelyn E. Knox, *Race on Display in 20th- and 21st Century France*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016) 1

⁹⁴ Matson Line Advertisement, Archive.org.

⁹⁵ "Exoticism," in *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.)

⁹⁶ Cambridge University Press, "Exoticism."

⁹⁷ Christin J. Mamiya, "Greetings from Paradise: The Representation of Hawaiian Culture in Postcards," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 16, no. 2 (1992), 87.

⁹⁸ Randie Kamuela Fong, "Ho'Okipa: A History of Hawaiian Greetings Practices and Hospitality," *University of Hawaii at Manoa* (December 1994), 159.

⁹⁹ Tengan, "Re-membering Panalā'au," 30-31.

¹⁰⁰ Fong, "Ho'Okipa," 1.

¹⁰¹ RDK Herman, "Coin of the realm: The political economy of 'indolence'; in the Hawaiian Islands," *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3 (1999), 404.

¹⁰² Hawaii by flying clipper--Pan American Airways System, Library of Congress (c. 1938). Appendix v.

hospitality obeyed the same wealth and status-driven social structures that existed in Western culture. While Hawaiians welcomed their guests with open arms, Americans came to expect their servitude and kindness. ¹⁰³ This misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Hawaiian hospitality has existed for decades, and it continues to this day. For instance, in Hawaiian culture, the gifting of a lei is meant to symbolize love and appreciation. ¹⁰⁴ However, due to the tourist-driven media, like the Pan Am advertisement, its meaning is often omitted or forgotten.

The Native Hawaiians role as entertainer to the white tourist can also be seen in the commercialization of the female body and hula practices. The image of the 'sexy' hula girl remains one of the most popular icons of American-Hawaiian media and culture. Ironically, the descendants of the society who vilified sexual freedom in pre-colonial Hawaii turned Hawaiian women into sexualized and fetishized icons. Hula was a sacred knowledge-sharing practice before it became associated with 'scantily clad' luau dancers. Traditional hula is a spiritual ceremony used to honor divine beings and past rulers. The Americanization of the 'hula girl' symbol stripped hula of its cultural significance in mainstream media. The 1930s, materials found on trips and cruises such as menus, ticket stubs, event brochures, and other related ephemera featured highly sexualized images of Hawaiian hula girls. These figures were meant to be sexually enticing and sometimes even appeared topless.

Hula dancers also became a source of entertainment and sexual pleasure for American military personnel. Since World War II, the U.S. Department of Defense has marketed Hawai'i as the perfect destination for military men to 'rest and relax' during major conflicts including the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The objectification of Hawaiian women for the benefit of white military men is evidenced in military documentary films like, *Crossroads of the Pacific: A Hawaiian Cruise*. In this film, which used real footage of navy officers on shore-leave in Hawai'i, the narrator said the following lines over scenes of young sailors at a hula performance: "No shore-leave in Hawaii is complete without the hula-hula by the native [...] girls, so it's on with the dance. Great shakes for many a young sailor." In summation, the exotification and subsequent sexualization of Hawaiian bodies and Hawaiian cultural practices have significantly impacted the ways in which Native Hawaiians are perceived throughout the United States.

Hawaii at the Movies in the 21st Century

On May 16, 2015, author and pop culture expert, Janet Mock, went live on her MSNBC show *So POPular* to discuss the problems with Native Hawaiian representation in modern films such as

¹⁰³ Leigh Nicole Schuler, "Cultural Tourism and Post-Colonialism in Hawaii," *Anthropology Undergraduate Honors Theses* (2015), 51.

¹⁰⁴ Fong, "Ho'Okipa," 128.

¹⁰⁵ Stefani Overman-Tsai, "Hawaiian Culture Propped High with Meaning," Theatre Symposium 18, (2010), 85.

¹⁰⁶ Overman-Tsai, "Hawaiian Culture Propped High with Meaning," 85.

¹⁰⁷ Overman-Tsai, "Hawaiian Culture Propped High with Meaning," 85.

¹⁰⁸ [014] S.S. Malolo Breakfast Menu, UHM Library Digital Image Collections (c. 1935). Appendix vi.

¹⁰⁹ Adria L. Imada, "The army learns to luau: imperial hospitality and military photography in Hawai'i," *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 2 (2008), 2.

¹¹⁰ PeriscopeFilm, "CROSSROADS OF THE PACIFIC A HAWAIIAN CRUISE' 1930s U.S. NAVY IN HONOLULU HAWAII 44014e," YouTube video, 9:43, October 18, 2020.

¹¹¹ PeriscopeFilm, "CROSSROADS OF THE PACIFIC A HAWAIIAN CRUISE," (00:08:21-00:08:38).

Cameron Crowe's 2015 film, *Aloha*, and Alexander Payne's 2011 film, *The Descendants*. ¹¹² A Native Hawaiian herself, Mock's biggest contention with the aforementioned films, and the film industry as a whole, is their habit of 'whitewashing' Native Hawaiian characters and effectively erasing them from view in Hawai'i-centered narratives. ¹¹³ As Mock poignantly remarked, "[In these films] whiteness is centered, Hawai'i and Hawaiian culture is appropriated, and Native Hawaiians are nowhere to be seen." ¹¹⁴ The evolution of Hawaiian representation in American media has taken an interesting turn. In the past, like in Elvis's infamous Hawaiian films, Native Hawaiians embodied the stereotypes of the 'comedic surfer imbecile' and the 'sexy hula girl.' Nowadays, Native Hawaiians barely appear at all.

This essay has examined some of the most common stereotypical depictions of Native Hawaiians in American media and their connections to American imperialism. Recognizing the impact of colonial ideologies on Hawaiian media representation from the colonial period to the present is essential to breaking the negative cycle of creation and perpetuation of these stereotypes. To change the industry, non-Hawaiians need to step away and let Native Hawaiian directors, screenwriters, and creative directors take the lead in telling their own stories. Journalists like Janet Mock and directors like Christopher Kahunahana are making efforts to reclaim their precolonial heritage and re-establish their regional identity while still living under the constraints of American statehood. ¹¹⁵

Reclaiming Indigenous cultural practices plays an important role in many global decolonization movements of the twenty-first century. Decolonization is the process of Indigenous people and communities taking power back from colonizing forces through long-term evolutions in the cultural, linguistic, psychological, and governmental domains. ¹¹⁶ Social movements such as the Indigenous Peoples Movement and the #LandBack Movement aim to unify Indigenous communities around the globe to address and combat issues facing all of their communities such as police brutality, human trafficking, and the return of Indigenous lands to Indigenous communities. ¹¹⁷ Many Indigenous activists also prioritize the rediscovery of their ancestral traditions outside of the colonial culture that was forced upon them. In Hawai'i, decolonization and cultural revitalization appears in food culture, traditional language education, and the practice of long suppressed ancient forms of hula dance. ¹¹⁸ The ways in which decolonization

¹¹² MSNBC, "Hollywood's Appropriation Of Hawaiian Culture | shift | msnbc," YouTube video, 6:14, May 16, 2015.

¹¹³ MSNBC, "Hollywood's Appropriation Of Hawaiian Culture," (00:01:42-00:01:53).

¹¹⁴ MSNBC, "Hollywood's Appropriation Of Hawaiian Culture," (00:01:42-00:01:53).

¹¹⁵ MSNBC, "Hollywood's Appropriation Of Hawaiian Culture"; Chloe Shantz-Hikes and Sheena Goodyear, "Documentary Waikiki shows dark, colonial underbelly of Hawaii's tourism paradise," *CBC Radio*, October 28, 2020.

¹¹⁶ "A Brief Definition of Decolonization and Indigenization," *Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.*, March 29, 2017.

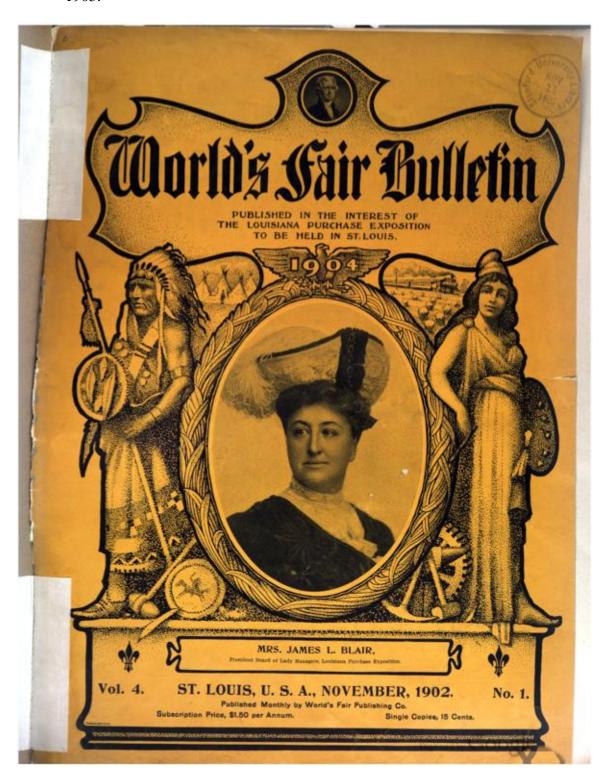
^{117 &}quot;Mission." Indigenous Peoples Movement. January 18, 2019; "Home," Landback.org, 2021.

¹¹⁸ Juliet McMullin, "The call to life: revitalizing a healthy Hawaiian identity," *Social Science & Medicine* 61, no. 4 (2005), 815; Sheena Shah and Matthias Brenzinger, "The Role of Teaching in Language Revival and Revitalization Movements," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 38 (September 2018), 204, 206; Mai Misaki, "Colonial Rupture and Native Continuity in Indigenous Cultural Representations: Through Hawaiian Ancient Dance Kahiko," *Dance Research Journal* 53, no. 1 (June 2021), 44-45.

and the reclamation of Indigenous cultural practices impact American media representation of $K\bar{a}naka\ Maoli$ remains to be seen and studied.

Appendix: Images

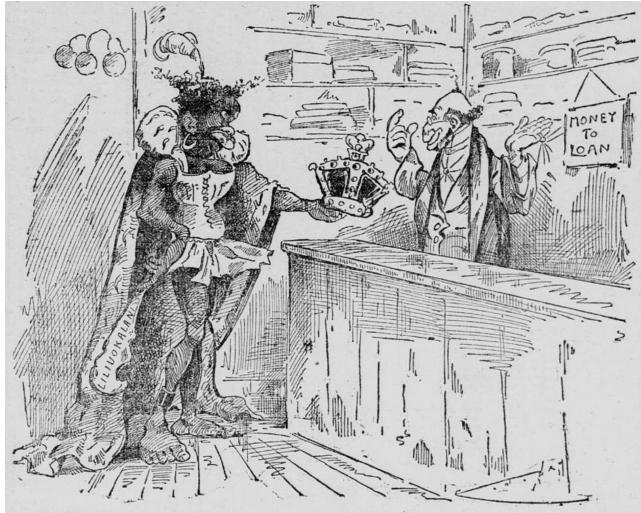
i) Cover of World's Fair Bulletin: Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Volume 4, 1902-1903.



ii) Book cover of Our Little Hawaiian Cousin by Mary Hazelton Wade, 1902.



iii) Political cartoon depicting Queen Liliuokalani – *St. Paul daily globe. [volume], February 03, 1893, Image 1.*



LILIOUKALINA---How much can you lend me on this Honolulu crown?

PAWNBROKER---I might have let you have a few sandwiches a month ago, but it isn't worth a wisp of hay now.

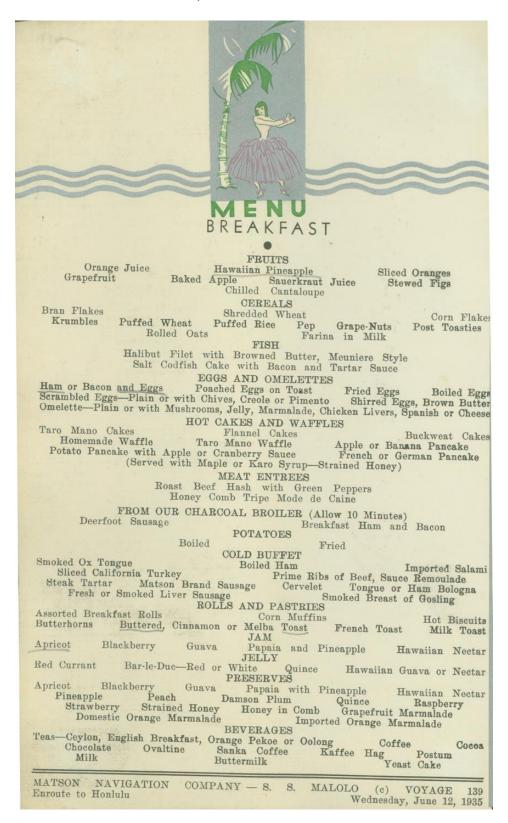
iv) Matson Line advertisement, 1937.



v) Pan American Airways advertisement, 1938.



vi) S.S. Malolo Breakfast Menu, 1935.



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