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# Being Blue in Hawai'i: Politics, Affect, and the Last Queen of Hawai'i

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**Abstract:**

For Hawaiian self-rule activists, who retain ties to the land and forms of sociality emerging out of the land, the US is regarded as an occupier force, and nonnative ownership, whether white or Japanese, a blighting catastrophe justifying resentment and rage. The demise of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, when an oligarchy of US white settler businessmen overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani (1838–1917) in 1893, reduced aloha 'āina (or land-cherishing) to a ghostly affect; to be blue in Hawai'i, today, is to be in a state of ongoing and implacable mourning. This essay explores several affective historical scenes of Hawaiian injury: from the early nineteenth century, when Protestant missionaries began their effort to transform Hawaiian sensibilities; onto the Queen's forced abdication via the McKinley 1898 annexation; and finally to the contemporary era of Hawaiian nationalist protest. The Queen's story, contextualized by brief case studies of native bereavement earlier in the century (David Malo and Henry Obookiah), leads in the final sections to a query of the relation of affect—whether melancholic or rageful—to political effect. The essay concludes with a critical coda on President Obama's declaration (in a speech given in Hawai'i, before elected) that the "Aloha spirit" is "what America is looking for right now." The problem with liberalism, as it is with certain versions of local/global studies, is that wounded, grievous affect cannot readily be translated (there is no efficacious transference) into specific political praxis.

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# Being Blue in Hawai'i: Politics, Affect, and the Last Queen of Hawai'i

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BRUCE A. HARVEY

The revolution that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and passed the government into the hands of the sugar planters was under way. In her palace, the wild-willed queen shuddered as she saw American troops file ashore to invade her territory. . . . [She] was left defenseless, a stubborn, anachronistic woman in her mid-fifties, regal in appearance but totally unaware that the nineteenth century was ebbing to a close.

—James A. Michener, *Hawaii*

No darker cloud can hang over a people than the prospect of being blotted out from the list of nations. No grief can equal that of a sovereign forcibly deprived of her throne.

—Queen Lili'uokalani

[We] have a deep wound, called the overthrow, when all-white American government took our sovereignty.

—Haunani-Kay Trask

Empathy to me is irrelevant.

—Haunani-Kay Trask

Each person must think and emote good feelings to others.

—"Aloha Spirit" Bill §5-7.5 of the  
Hawaii Revised Statutes, 1986

[It's that Aloha] spirit that I am absolutely convinced is what America is looking for right now.

—President Obama

Pop-singer Israel Kamakawiwo'ole, called Bruddah Iz by his fans during his lifetime (he died in 1997), distilled in his simple lyrics and his mellow voice the Hawaiian feeling of land-cherishing known natively as *aloha 'āina*:

Could you just imagine if [our king and queen] were around  
and saw highways on their sacred grounds . . . ?

Could you just imagine if they came back  
and saw traffic lights and railroad tracks,  
how would they feel about this modern city life?

Tears would come from each other's eyes as  
they would stop to realize  
that our land is in great, great danger now. ("Hawai'i '78")<sup>1</sup>

To be home and yet also to be exiled from home, to revere what the land once was so much that it aches: that is the fate of Hawaiians faced by what Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask, a leader among Hawai'i self-rule activists, decries as the ugly ubiquity of the "American way of life" as it rudely "carves its path towards destruction" across her beloved country (to her, not a US state).<sup>2</sup> For those Hawaiians who retain sacral ties to the land and forms of sociality emerging out of the land, the US is regarded as an occupier force, and non-native ownership, whether white or Japanese, a blighting disaster justifying resentment and rage. The demise of the Hawaiian kingdom, when an oligarchy of US white settler businessmen connived to dethrone Queen Lili'uokalani (1838–1917) in 1893, reduced *aloha 'āina* to a ghostly affect, for without the genealogical-state continuity of ruler-to-ruler (made bona fide, by blood) the populace is left a mere husk of its former communal self. The catastrophe is not only to lose a possession, in the sense of an alienated right to control a specific amount of territory (the islands that comprise Hawai'i), but also to be more primarily violated. To be blue in Hawai'i is to be in a state of on-going and implacable mourning. No court of law, as the legal phrase puts it, can make Hawaiians whole.

Few mainlanders have the urge or occasion to recollect Hawaii's once sovereign autonomy. Colonialist expansion has always relied upon historical amnesia and the use of history's debased forms—triumphal legends, quaint tales of the native past, patriotic bric-a-brac—to void temporality of authentic political content. Worse also, in Hawaii's case, kitsch exerts a narcotic force, numbing us to the real and rendering Hawai'i uncanny to itself. US outsiders, even those historically awake, tend

to envision it neither as a country *then*, nor quite as a full-fledged state now. Far offshore, exotic, and yet too familiar, it evokes a touristy blur of green-rimmed volcanoes, nubile Hula dancers, ocean-side hotels and soft moonlit nights, and Elvis or an Elvis-poseur, inevitably, crooning “Aloha ‘Oe.”

All locales or regions are transformed from the very beginning, not just eventually, with imposed development. No land, when it becomes even minimally political, can escape dispute from competing claimants. There is no first ownership, or at least we must believe so because of our modernist or poststructuralist distrust of autochthonous rootedness. And, in turn, without such a grounding of private and social being, grief over a usurped locale must be queried as a present perturbation that tactically reconstructs on-going lack as an affect and effect of original loss.<sup>3</sup> Anomie in Hawai'i, just as on the mainland, may be caused by all sorts of grim conditions—poverty, racism, drug use, among others—but the unique history of Hawai'i (no other US state has a name that signifies at once a previous whole *and* a contemporary part-of-a-whole: the Kingdom of Hawai'i/the State of Hawai'i) assures that resentment will fixate on recovery from loss, that is, separation from the US and self-rule, as much as amelioration. Indeed, to not hold some notion of ancestral land-belonging would be largely to concede an ethical objection to the *principle* (I do not speak of specific brutalities or genocide) of imperialism. It is the immanent concept of rootedness that warrants our judging invasion to be an intrinsic, not-to-be countenanced wrong.

This essay, however, demurs except in passing from a moralizing praxis.<sup>4</sup> It also leaves as an open question whether tactical-progressive politics can be usefully premised on any indigenous or racially-based (Hawaiians-by-blood) concept of citizenship that overly discounts the value of subsequent, more plural and historically contingent allegiances. Many present-day Hawaiians do not require the self-definition of blood genealogy to repudiate land desecration or the parasitic tourist industry that feeds on Hawaiian culture even as it destroys it. That said, to those that have ears to hear, or do not, little more needs to be or could be said to convincingly prove the ongoing criminality of the US's rule over the Hawaiian people, regardless of how autochthonous the latter is conceived to be. Consequently, what follows explores several affective scenes of Hawaiian injury *for their own sake*, as testimonials of politicized mourning: from the early nineteenth century, when Protestant missionaries began their effort to transform Hawaiian sensibilities; onto the Queen's forced abdication and the “blott[ing] out” of Hawai'i “from the list of nations” via the 1898 annexation; and finally to the contemporary era of separatist zeal and its detractors. The sundered rule of the maternal-spirited Queen Lili'uokalani, specifically the focus of the second section of this essay, I use as an exegetic trope throughout. Her story and the other stories below of negative parturition add up to one of mourning that is more than individual, but I make no pretense of offering a remedy to state grief. A wounded locale is always elsewhere to the outsider's gaze and, as Trask bluntly reminds us, outsider “empathy” by itself does not do very much at all.

There can be no transcoding of the psychoanalytic into the political that would be adequate to the task. The analyst/analysand relation, writ large on the political level, entails at best a hazy ethics of transference, whereby citizen-subjects on either side of the divide, both the offended and the offenders, might come to terms and a limited accord through critique or therapeutic proxy, which in the political arena could only be supervening forms of the law and its agents—a Congressional act, for instance—that repairs injury with mandated equity.

### 1. Exiles and Orphans: The Cases of David Malo and Henry Obookiah

The Great Seal of Hawaii features King Kamehameha I in royal native outfit on the left, and on the right a standard Liberty figure holding the Hawaiian flag, with a heraldic shield between them. Below the shield, from some sprigs of foliage, a phoenix with wings outstretched rises up. Originally designed for the Republic of Hawaii (led by Sanford Dole, before Hawai'i was annexed to the US in 1898), it was recast in 1959 when Hawai'i gained statehood, with that latter date boldly scripted at the top (see *Figure 1*). On the bottom rim is a quote attributed to King Kamehameha III, made when his throne was restored after a brief takeover by the British admiral, Lord Paulet, in 1843: “Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono,” translated as “The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.” The Great Seal seamlessly yokes the charismatic personage of Kamehameha I, Hawai'i's first strong monarch, to the Lady of Liberty, such that old Hawai'i comports perfectly with the US nation itself as “righteousness” echoes between the two. The static tableaux and the iconic date of 1959 commemorate continuity even as they eclipse the temporality of the sugar-growers' coup against the Queen, who is now known to us pictorially almost solely in photographs staging her personal regal dignity (see *Figure 2*). In the 1959 Great Seal's family-political romance, long lost legitimate royalty is not discovered, but sequestered, and instead Hawai'i learns that its inheritance is the future-directed, always-to-be “perpetuated” liberal modern state.

*Figure 1.*  
1959  
Great  
Seal of  
Hawaii  
(Courtesy  
of Hawai'i  
State  
Archives)



*Figure 2.*  
Queen  
Lili'uokalani;  
frontispiece to her  
autobiography,  
*Hawaii's Story by  
Hawaii's Queen*,  
1897.  
(Courtesy of  
Hawai'i State  
Archives)



Affective being, by virtue of its own privacy, invariably promotes its own elision. It is therefore all the more important to vouchsafe those instances—the vexed and amorphous nuances of being “Hawaiian at heart”—that might give us a less contrived history than what is reflected on the Great Seal of Hawaii.<sup>5</sup> At first glance, the case of David Malo (1793–1853), who strove to be an exemplary Protestant convert, will not be auspicious to my goal. He was an entrepreneur, praised in passing by Commander Charles Wilkes, of the famed United States Exploring Expedition, for his “example of industry, by farming with his own hands, and manufactur[ing] from his own sugar cane an excellent molasses.”<sup>6</sup> In about 1820 he came to Lahaina on the island of Maui, where he befriended the Reverend William Richards of the burgeoning American Mission there. He converted to Christianity in 1823, and after studying for the ministry at the Lahainaluna School oversaw a parish on East Maui until his death two decades later. He also pursued an ambitious literary project, albeit of ambiguous intent—the writing of *Hawaiian Antiquities*, a quasi-ethnographic text composed in the Hawaiian language and completed in 1838, but not translated and published until 1898, the same year that Hawai'i was annexed by President McKinley and five years after Queen Lili'uokalani was deposed.

*Hawaiian Antiquities* recollects the rituals, material practices, leisure habits, and mythic/genealogical lineages of the pre-Christianized Hawaiian nobility and people. Its ethnography has a good claim for being deemed authoritative. In his youth, Malo received tutelage from Kamehameha I's favorite genealogist, and later came into his own as a much solicited master of ceremonies at court entertainments. His conversion in his early thirties did not, apparently, require that he disavow all that he had formerly learned; indeed, his volume suggests less an accommodation to the usual missionary tactic of mastering native belief in order to better abolish it than an effort, in a time of maximum Hawaiian social upheaval, to maintain a personal and cultural legacy. Put less positively, though, *Hawaiian Antiquities* is a tellingly ambivalent artifact in the mixed story of cultural abnegation and transmission that informs the history of the Islands. Most notably, in the context of its composition in the 1830s in Hawaiian, it is unclear *who* its audience is. That it was not well-known outside of Lahainaluna until its English publication in 1898 indicates that Malo's original missionary sponsors may have been reluctant to circulate in public, as it were, those heathenish Hawaiian customs that they were trying by all means to eradicate. Just as, obversely, when it was published in the late 1890s, when the native ruling class had been fully westernized and modernized, it served to underscore how old the old Hawaiian ways had become. The work was translated into English in 1898, in short, because what was translated was not to be transmitted. The book in its 1898 guise marked, as if a memorial gravestone, the death of the Hawaiian, native-ruled body politic.

In psycho-historiographic terms, the time gap between its composition in Hawaiian (the late 1830s) and its English translation and printing (1898) recasts both political and private temporality and thereby the meaning of mourning's affect,

publicly for the Hawaiian nation, such as it had become, as well as for how we comprehend David Malo himself. Dr. Nathaniel B. Emerson, the translator, in a prefatory biographical sketch reviews the tumultuous events of the 1890s in a fashion that recreates the melancholic subject not only as the victim-of-history but also as the victim-of-historicity; Malo suffers, to coin a term, *after-affect*. That is, his melancholy exists less in the temporal span of *Hawaiian Antiquities*' original drafting than in that of its much later publication. To twist the knot of these private/public interactions into their most tight formulation: the text can only make Hawaiian-ness fully antique by making Malo's melancholy fully contemporary. Emerson (if it is not too anachronistic an image) puts Malo on the couch as a bereaved analysand who cannot finish the work of mourning so that it may be shown that the object of his sad affect, the Hawaiian nation, may truly be deemed a corpse. The paradox of course—and thus my term *after-affect*—is that the patient, in this case, was dead, and the lost object, the Hawaiian nation, actually was only just on the verge of being lost in 1898.

Emerson's life sketch of Malo includes a review of how unhappy he was in his marriages because two of his wives died young and another reverted to a non-Christian amative casualness. He depicts him in his later years as if he were a sort of morose Polynesian Wordsworthian rustic, retreating from the busyness of the world to a secluded locale in Maui. But by the end of the preface, this private morbidity expands to engage non-personal fates. The "prospect" of the Hawaiian Islands being overrun by whites, Emerson remarks, was "acutely painful" to Malo, for the latter had a despairing "prophetic vision of the oncoming tide of [US] invasion—peaceful though it was to be—that was destined to overflow his native land and supplant in a measure its indigenous population" (xiii). The last sentence's precise parsing of the 1898 situation ("in a measure") is at least more honest than the temporal lacuna of the Great Seal of Hawaii by which the Queen's resistance story was occluded altogether, and yet the drift, still, is to envision history as inexorable and thus agentless (only, perhaps, in the political unconscious does a "peaceful" "invasion" seem possible).

At this point we need to turn back to the 1830s when Malo conceived his volume and ask, directly, what affective role it served. It appears that Malo recreated the Hawaiian world of his younger Polynesian courtier days in order to expunge it from his older, wanting-to-be-westernized/Christianized psyche. Under the patronage of Kamehameha I's royal court, where there were "gathered the notable bards, poets, and those in whose minds were stored the traditional lore of the nation" (viii), Malo was brought up, we are told, "under circumstances well fitted to saturate his mind with the old forms of thoughts and feeling" (viii). That material, however, could not be directly conveyed into English nor reconciled with his new identity as a deracinated indigene preaching Christianity. Emerson in his preface observes that

as a writer David Malo was handicapped . . . by the character and limitations of the language which was his



organ of literary expression . . . . [Missionary] scholars . . .  
had [only] recently taken in hand his mother tongue and,  
after giving it such symbols of written expression as were  
deemed suitable to its needs, cloth[ed] its literary  
nakedness with a garb, which in homely simplicity and  
utility might be compared to the national *holoku* [a cotton-  
wrap skirt]—the gift of the white woman to her Polynesian  
sister. (xv)

For the avid Lacanian or Derridean cultural critic, almost too much is given here to contemplate: dichotomies between orality/the written word, male/female, a suborned/dominant culture, and the tutored/the tutor or editor, Emerson himself. The passage's apt convenience for being elaborated in a certain predictable direction (say, over the trope of embarrassment), however, should not diminish its raw purport of portraying a man who was, put simply, stuck between two worlds. After being converted, Malo tried to "acquire the English language" but failed due to "the rigidity of his vocal organs" (x). What seems to be blocked is the unhappy colonized subject's ability to speak of the source of deprivation or trauma (the decimation of Hawaiian culture by white invasion) even as fully colonized subjecthood is at the same time desired. Affect registers here as the insufficient incorporation of the new in place of the old.

We should pathologize neither Malo nor the oddities of Emerson's preface too much, yet exactly what goes unspoken, both in respect to Malo himself and in his first biographer's effort to understand him, is the process by which radical political rupture between the time of Kamehameha I and that of the country's overthrow becomes intimate. If on the Great Seal the political does not become personal, and all we get is wily statecraft, David Malo's story reveals the psychological mishap of overly investing the personal in the state, by which I mean old Hawai'i and an emergent Americanized Hawai'i. However, my construal of Malo's melancholy potentially fabricates after-affect just as much as Emerson does. That is, my version of Malo as being silenced between two disjunctive historical moments does not differ all that much from Emerson's version of him as being History's victim, except for the question of agency, the sense that, if nothing else, Hawai'i was not overthrown "peaceful[ly]."

Malo's somatic stress, if it was that, seems not to have afflicted Henry Obookiah (or, non-anglicized, Opukaha'ia), at least not on the surface, as the legend of his childhood conversion and a good Christian death in his own day publicly epitomized viable Hawaiian/Christian hybridity. He is still renowned in Hawai'i, although his story has yet to be well-integrated into the canon of exile or US immigrant literature.<sup>7</sup> In 1804, when he was about twelve, he saw his parents slain, the casualties of an inter-island power struggle, which ended with the Hawaiian monarch-soldier, Kamehameha I, dominating the Islands by 1810. An uncle who was a

prominent native priest adopted Henry and began to teach him Hawaiian lore and rituals, but habitually forlorn because of his parents' death, he decided to depart the kingdom. In 1809, he shipped aboard a New England-bound trading vessel with a Hawaiian friend, Thomas Hopu, and the two landed in New York the same year. He soon became a protégé of Edwin Dwight (a scholar at Yale College), converted to Christianity in 1810, and was among the first students at the Foreign Mission School in rural Cornwall, Connecticut, where young Hawaiians and American Indians were being groomed in Christian principles and doctrine.

With his new friends and family surrogates, came a new view of religion. As Obookiah began to practice his Christian faith, he contrasted it to Hawaiian worship of gods represented by wooden embodiments. He said "Owhyhee gods! They wood, burn; Me go home, put em in a fire, burn 'em up. They no see, no hear, no any thing. . . . We make them—Our God, . . . He make us."<sup>8</sup> His theology became more refined when he lived for a time in the household of the president of Yale College, who further inducted him into Christian ritual and its public avowal. During the latter half of 1812, Obookiah moved among several towns in rural Connecticut and New Hampshire, employed as a farmhand but devoting his evenings to studying geometry, English grammar, and Latin. The church communities of Litchfield embraced him, and by 1814, in addition to gaining oratorical confidence, he began to translate the Bible into Hawaiian and started to compile a dictionary/grammar book in the Hawaiian language. These projects ingratiated him with the leaders of the Congregationalist evangelical first-wave, who saw him and other native Hawaiians as a proselytizing wedge to be honed for a return to Hawai'i to fight against savage idolatry.

The *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*, from which I have previously quoted, was published in 1818, just a few months after Obookiah had died of typhoid fever at the age of twenty-six. The posthumous text was assembled from his own diary entries, an autobiographical manuscript, various letters to and from his mentors, and commentary by Dwight. It became an instant hit, going through multiple editions, and inspired fourteen volunteers from the First Company of Congregational Missionaries to embark to the Islands in 1819. Ostensibly, the volume elegizes the Protestant world's loss of the Christianized native who otherwise would have been destined to spread the salvific word to his yet benighted brethren. The narrative delivers piquant scenes, such as that of the newly-arrived Obookiah weeping on the doorsteps of a Yale college building in search of US Protestant tutelage. At the maximal moment of existential vulnerability as he lies dying, however, what appears to be Obookiah's sadness for not seeing more of his people converted comes across as sadness for not seeing his Hawaiian relations and friends. That is, he mourns his state of exile, not the loss of prospective souls turning to Christ. To detect this latent scene of frustrated desire for the homeland (not the homeland's conversion) requires that we hear counter-punctual nuance. It requires that we amplify, tonally,

the ambivalence of his deathbed words: “Oh! how I want to see Owhyee! But I think I never shall—God will do right—he knows what is best” (113).

We can, once again (as with Malo), overly fetishize what might be only a late interval of stoic regret; but with that caveat in mind, we should ask, indeed, what does Obookiah long for: a restored connection with his lost patrimony and the geonatal body of Hawai'i? Or does he desire, rather, to complete the arc of willed exile from a former heathenish self and homeland by returning to the latter, as it were, as a native son no longer native? A warrant for reading Obookiah's desire as issuing from a mournful attachment to a previous locale from which he has been prematurely torn may be found when we turn, textually, to his primary citation of bereavement in the *Memoirs*, when he witnessed his parents and a sibling being slaughtered and “cut in pieces”: “At the death of my parents . . . I was with them; I saw them killed with a bayonet and with them my little brother, not more than two or three months old. So that I was left alone without father and mother in this wilderness world. Poor boy, thought I within myself, after they were gone, are there any father or mother of mine at home, that I may go and find them at home? No, poor boy am I” (9). This passage, of course, comes to us filtered through the haze of memory and a Christianized sensibility that has learned, via the genre of Protestant conversion narratives, to hit key-note phrases such as “this wilderness world.” But what should we make of the halting syntax that foregrounds tumultuous interiority—the repeated, stammering “I”s—in the midst of absolute and abrupt loss? Aptly, Obookiah's name in its original spelling before being anglicized—“Opukahaia” (Oh'poo kah heye'ah)—meant “ripped belly,” and his story seems indeed one of an untimely, violent parturition.

Obookiah's response to his parents' death is not, however, to lapse into the helpless, obsessive grief that Freud speculates about in his essay “Mourning and Melancholia”; but rather to shift ego-identification elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> When Obookiah arrived in Connecticut, it was not long before his precocious adaptability integrated him into the families of the ministerial elite. He developed an uncanny “talent for imitation” and became noted for his “dexter[ity] as a mimic” (21). What began as a habit, ended in habituation. For what he turned out to be best at echoing and then instilling within was the Protestant work-ethic. He restlessly sought to improve himself and thereby acquired a new sense of Western temporality, which mostly manifested itself in a dread of squandering the moment. “So valuable was time in his estimation,” we are told, “that if he had passed a day or an hour unprofitably, he would speak of it with deep regret” (88). The profit is not, though, in merely gaining some new knowledge or skill, because either is merely the means to expediting a return to the natal locale to save it from its own lack of modernity, which for Obookiah went by the name of Christianity. To assimilate as a minority means to exert oneself in acts of indigenous self-denial; to do so in the context of a new Americanized temporality, however, is to attenuate, never catch-up with, and be estranged from time per se, insofar as the further ahead one gets, the further behind

former native co-patriots will seem, heightening the urgency to return to them before it is too late. Obookiah's plaintive hail—"Oh! how I want to see Owhyee!"—in that regard, not unlike what we witnessed earlier in the case of David Malo, signifies desire and lack not so much in terms of a particular *ethnic* content (his Hawaiian parents, siblings, childhood companions, and the homeland per se) but rather the mournful mystery of time itself.<sup>10</sup>

This raw existential dilemma—call it the trauma of learning about clock time—nonetheless can be worked through by restaging in the heart its familial contents. Obookiah's heathen parents were slain, making them available as introjected figures for mourning at once longed for and spurned. That is, his parents became lodged within as idols that must be removed. To pass a day "profitably" would be to hollow out his interior, creating a vacated selfhood insensitive to grief, even as the void within, inspired from without by the texts of a new theology, fills up with an anxiety about getting ahead and chasing time in his adopted alma mater. Exulting in the presence of Christ, he no longer needs, embodied within, the idols of his ancestors or his ancestors (his parents) themselves. These radical heart-movements demand a strong, pride-giving, and superseding temporal mythos if time's injury is to be fully overcome. Hiram Bingham, missionary extraordinaire with a bigoted contempt for native ways, had cannily noted that Obookiah, who had mastered Hebrew primers with the help of his Yale tutors, regarded himself a "natural descendant of Abraham."<sup>11</sup> Bingham smugly concurred, because it recast Obookiah in terms of a Christian genealogy or teleology that made him an adjunct to the former's desire to transform Hawai'i into a glorious antitype of prophetic Biblical event. Gazing down at the native terrain from atop a mountain rising above Honolulu, Bingham wrote in his missionary memoirs that the scene was "like that presented to Moses when he ascended to the top of Pisgah, and surveyed the land of promise, with the earnest desire, but forbidden hope of entering it, even to exterminate its insufferable idolatry, and to establish there the seed of Abraham."<sup>12</sup>

Obookiah's legacy has not been free of contestation. *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* for July 21, 2003, carried a story on his second burial, this time in Hawai'i, writing that "Henry Opukaha'ia has been home on the Big Island for 10 years now. It's what he wanted."<sup>13</sup> His remains were reinterred at Kahilolu Congregational Church near Napoopoo in 1993, and his new gravesite has become a memorial of missionary nostalgia and longing. He has become a poster-child for anti-sovereignty campaigners in contemporary Hawai'i who draw upon his Americanized Christian identity to rebuff self-rule radicalism. The neutrality in the latter news item in respect to exactly what he "wanted" is, for my antithetical purposes here, neatly usable. As a diasporic exile returning home, he also returns home voiceless (the dead do not speak their desire), allowing us to hear his unsayable affect from the grave, as evidence of the more subtle nuances of being blue in Hawai'i. Yet also in this case, to accord respect to the dead—or to the hidden corridors of sad affect—would be to not exercise a glib *theoretical* therapy. The more proper point of the newspaper

obituary is, then, that there can and should be no second-guessing words after “what he wanted”: which is to say, theory of affect at this juncture ought to remain politically obtuse.

## 2. The Queen's Maternal Lament and Presidential Apologies

Once heard, the song that seems, ever after, most quintessentially Hawaiian in mood is “Aloha ‘Oe”:

*Hui:*

Aloha ‘oe, aloha ‘oe,  
E ke onaona noho i ka lipo,  
One fond embrace,  
A ho'i a'e au,  
Until we meet again.

*Chorus:*

Farewell to thee, farewell to thee  
The charming one who dwells in the shaded bowers  
One fond embrace  
Ere I depart  
Until we meet again.

How “Aloha ‘Oe” aurally conveys affect, though, will differ according to whether you are local to the Islands or not. The most familiar rendition is sung by Elvis Presley in his film *Blue Hawaii* (released two years after Hawai'i became a US state), in which the star plays Chad, just back from military service and not quite ready to sacrifice beachside pleasures for business by helping to run the family pineapple plantation. When Elvis sings it, accompanied by his kanaka beach-bum buddies, it comes across as being a little goofy, for the character Chad knows that even as he hangs out on the beach its delights must eventually be forsaken. Soft, libidinal Hawai'i can only seduce the white scion of vast properties for so long, and so towards the end of his crooning Elvis-as-Chad hams-up the tune with repeated falsetto bass-notes (more apparent in the actual film, as the scene has a lot of slap-stick). The capitalist-compulsive trajectory of Chad's story keeps us in the context of the film from hearing “Aloha ‘Oe” as more than a leisurely indulgence, and the residual Elvis-effect renders the song for most non-native ears, in all later iterations, as being merely kitschy or sentimental.<sup>14</sup>

You might hear it with more political acuity if you come from Hawai'i, however. It would be instinct with a history, for the lyrics and melody were composed by Queen Lili'uokalani herself just as her rule and her country were being “blotted out.” Her misfortune was the lucrateness of the sugar crop. In 1890, the McKinley Tariff had curtailed protections ensuring a mainland market, and the sugar

growers viewed annexation of Hawai'i to the US as the only means to renew their trade. The plot against the monarchy succeeded, mainly because of the strong-armed aid of US Marines, who were invited by the US minister to Hawai'i, John L. Stevens, to take control of Iolani Palace and other key governmental Honolulu buildings. Although President Grover Cleveland quickly declared the overthrow illegal and fired Stevens, he handed the crisis over to the US Congress, whose drawn-out inaction and conceit that there should be no meddling in internal Hawaiian affairs made the revolution a *fait accompli*. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1894, Sanford B. Dole became president of the new Republic of Hawaii. The Queen continued to plead her cause, but in 1895 she was incarcerated in her own palace, and put on trial for counter-revolutionary support of Royalists (she was released after several months, and died, in exile in her own land, two decades later). In 1896, the rabidly imperialist William McKinley became president, and in 1898 Hawai'i was annexed, becoming a US territory in 1900, and then a state a half-century later.<sup>15</sup> The Queen does not appear on the Great Seal of Hawaii, but nearly all Hawaiians revere her for her dignity, her stalwart love for her people, and her resilience in standing up to the conspiratorial white business community. These are the qualities that make her, in the words of Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, the never-to-be-forgotten “maternal benefactress” of her country and an intimate iconographic “patron of [Hawaiian] sovereignty.”<sup>16</sup>

Although “Aloha ‘Oe” was first conceived during happier times—its immediate inspiration was the remembered sight of two lovers romantically departing at a mountain retreat—Lili'uokalani herself linked the song to the loss of her nation. She explicitly refers to it in a chapter entitled “Sentenced—My Prison Life” of her 1898 autobiography, where she relates how she transcribed the lyrics and melody from memory, and how the composition found its “way from my prison to the city of Chicago,” to be printed and eventually to become a “popular song.”<sup>17</sup> The original, pastoral scene of erotic bonding and separation becomes transferred to the Queen's exilic locale and then to stateside publication; and, over time, in the memory of Hawaiians, to their monarch's usurpation and the nation's now ghostly libidinal-spiritual tie to the ancient geo-gods of Hawai'i. The route from conception to transcription and onto publication should be read as one of parturition, in both a negative and positive sense. The maternal care of the Queen lives on in her poem as a sign of affect, and yet it is also an orphaned offspring, a simultaneous wound/birth that at once recalls and heralds the absence of the originary libidinal non-alienation of her nation: people, rulers, and the land united and whole. No wonder, then, that a 1957 patriotic biography of Sanford Dole—instigator and leader of the insurrection—insisted that the slips of paper that the Queen covertly transmitted out of her prison were affectively dangerous: the “ex-queen was at that time plotting dissension and ‘rebellion’ against the Republic and showing it through her music.”<sup>18</sup>

If we keep these historical facts steadily in mind, as most Hawaiians would, what was merely a sweet or kitschy tune will become more purely achingly sad because of the overlay of kitsch and faux sentimentality, the overlay of historical

forgetting performed by Elvis's singing in *Blue Hawaii* and later incarnations heard ad nauseam as a touristic anthem. Listening again, with ears aurally adjusted to the scene of historical rupture when the Queen drafted her song of remembrance, what we will thereby hear is not a song of Hollywood Hawai'i, but one of strong longing for the irrecoverable, eroticized geobody of Hawai'i. It is the ghostliness of indigeneity, the origin-that-cannot-be-returned-to, that becomes poignant to the ear. Unfortunately, as often is the case with things Hawaiian, that is Hawai'i-as-saturated-by-wall-to-wall-tourism, it will still be hard to fully distinguish what feels real from what feels bogus. Kitsch, even in a non-politicized context, works asymmetrically. It requires that somebody aesthetically cathects with what is perceived by somebody else as not-real. When politicized, the discord in taste evinces a more harmful affect, for the more outsiders bond with Hawai'i as packaged by the tourist industry, the more native Hawaiians will feel regret and resentment. All surface, kitsch is nonetheless insidious and durable; and thus listening as a non-Hawaiian to the song, even when done carefully, will potentially yet enact the obverse of care, which is to say, the appropriation of *an image*. The old idols are gone; replaced by Elvis, the idol of Hollywood Hawai'i.<sup>19</sup>

Doubtless there are forms of empathy both good and bad. One example of bad empathy is the popular volume on Hawaiian royalty, *The Golden Cloak: The Romantic Story of Hawaii's Monarchs*, which invokes the "true spirit of old Hawaii" and solicits us to get nostalgic over faded Hawaiian nobility and native monarchical pomp-and-circumstance. In particular, the affective power of the Queen's most well-known song is relegated to non-history: "It was at this time that Liliuokalani, in a carefree moment away from the affairs of state, achieved an immortal fame that would have lasted through the years throughout the world had she never become Queen at all: she wrote a song . . . her new song, 'Aloha Oe.'"<sup>20</sup> Such anecdotes of the state-become-personable are better than the biased and racist contemporary satires of the Hawaiian monarchy's court habits. The latter is epitomized by the cosmopolite Henry Adams when in 1890 he visited King Kalakaua (Lili'uokalani's brother; she ascended the throne when he died in 1891): "We went to the little palace . . . and Kalakaua received us informally in his ugly drawing room. His Majesty is half Hawaiian and half Negro. . . . [He] is really . . . amusing. I have listened by the hour to his varied weakness and especially his sympathy with ancient Hawaii and archaic faiths, such as black pigs and necromancy."<sup>21</sup>

Recent efforts to more judiciously tell the story of the Hawaiian nation's last days are still dubious, as instanced by the PBS "The American Experience" show on Lili'uokalani broadcasted in 2003 with an accompanying website, which comes replete with excellent lesson plans, a concise biography of her life and accomplishments (with a downloadable version of "Aloha 'Oe" by the Galliard String Quartet, no less), and a bullet-point timeline. The program honorably tries to get it right, but still there is something shifty about its historicizing. It brackets out US national error as a relic of the past, and focuses on the loss merely of the Queen's

sovereignty not her people's status as belonging to a sovereign nation.<sup>22</sup> It is equivalent to the Tuttle edition preface to her autobiography that announces that the nation was "inevitably and inexorably swept along toward democracy" and now that Hawai'i "is the fiftieth American state, Liliuokalani's story [has become] part of the American heritage" (xv and xvii). The Queen's memoir, written largely with the goal of keeping her country not American, here comes to mean the reverse. Her "story" in the Tuttle edition and the "The American Experience" program gets engulfed by the US's endless capacity to enlarge its "heritage" at whatever cost—here most significantly by cancelling out the dense, intricate series of historical acts, from Cook's landing to 1898, that left Hawai'i a casualty of the unappeasable juggernaut of US liberalism/plurality and modernity. It is through a national-time sleight-of-hand that pluralism (or more, a too-easy multiculturalism) helps the nation magically absolve itself of its sins; where once was ethnic-Hawaiian mourning and loss, there is, instead, the richly inclusive canon of national memory. Pluralism can indeed forge progressive change, and may even, through acts of political empathy, draw upon ethnic woundedness; but does not the all-absorbing positionality of an "American Experience" provide cover for the neglect of specific injury and violations?

Hawai'i so inhabits an imaginative topography oddly at once exotic and blandly regional, a far-away paradise and yet just another *state*, that we (if "we" are mainlanders and non-Hawaiian) cannot see it as a colonized or occupied once-sovereign *nation*. Even when resentment is granted documentary airtime—for instance, in Paul Theroux's December 2002 *National Geographic* article, "Hawaiians: Reclaiming Their Culture"—what is emphasized is not historical and on-going catastrophe, but a sort of bonus effect for the tourist. In addition to whatever else we might enjoy in Hawai'i—its splendid ocean-side resorts and beautiful flora and fauna—we can also muse over folksy Hawaiians fighting for their culture as an act of US national remembrance, although we, if we feel rapport with Theroux, are not likely ourselves to be very folksy at all.<sup>23</sup>

The previous examples are at least not ones of empathic double-speak. The case is otherwise with 1993 Congressional Joint Resolution 19, signed into public law by President Clinton. The Resolution formally "offer[s] an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii" on the "100<sup>th</sup> anniversary" of the act, but fecklessly concludes with a denial of remedy for the 1893 usurpation: "Nothing in this Joint Resolution is intended to serve as a settlement of any claims against the United States."<sup>24</sup> The document-of-state gazes directly at a political-cultural injury—the wound of lost sovereignty—but can conjure up only the balm of ceremony. It witnesses the wound, but stops short of extending its sense of care beyond itself. The Presidential apology, thereby, assumes an analogous relation to kitsch: it is an affectional genre drained of all *real* efficacy. The apology, in a phrase, is all affect and no effect.



### 3. Political Affect: The Blood Rage of a Native Daughter

In 1959 James A. Michener came out with his outsized novel *Hawaii* (it runs to well over a 1000 pages), an epic romance celebrating the entry of Hawai'i into the US as a state. Hawai'i achieves political maturity, becomes its best self, only by becoming no longer itself at all. It would be easy to mock Michener's capacious storytelling and his peripatetic ease with reporting the destinies of those elsewhere, were it not that his work tries to give some coherence to the fate of Hawai'i, from its emergence "millions upon millions of years ago" out of the Pacific to its, at the time of the novel's publication, then contemporary ascension into US statehood.<sup>25</sup> Here, paralleling the authenticity-and-absence paradox of kitsch, the genre of the epic in Michener's hands at once honors the Hawaiian people and disregards their past except insofar as such sets up a political teleology of statehood achieved. We should, therefore, give, if only briefly, a counter version. Consider Kiana Davenport's sprawling, intense 1994 novel, *Shark Dialogues*, a compelling (as a blurb on the front cover of the Plume-Penguin edition puts it) "epic feminine saga." It follows the stories of a Hawaiian matriarch/kahuna (wise-woman), who rules over a coffee farm in Kona, and her four grand-daughters, one of whom, Vanya, becomes embroiled in a separatist terrorist plot. The latter is implausibly conceived, but what is interesting is how Davenport envisions the coming-to-political consciousness of the otherwise pacifist Hawaiian masses. Late in the novel, sovereignty radicals stage a protest during a visit by the US President. As he passes by in a motorcade, they hold up banners memorializing the US's violent interventions elsewhere: "REMEMBER BAGHDAD . . . REMEMBER PANAMA . . . REMEMBER NICARAGUA . . . REMEMBER GUATEMALA. . . ." And the gory list continues, through Laos and Cambodia, to Hiroshima, on back to the dethroning of Queen Lili'uokalani herself. The pathos and rage of the blazoned protest escapes the US Commander-in-Chief as he stands "weeping on the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, hand across his heart like an opera tenor, asking the world to 'Remember Pearl Harbor.'" Set against this stagey nostalgia-melancholy, are the memory filaments of the Hawaiian lumpenproletariat as they ignite. These "unemployed" and "homeless" families "living in cardboard containers" become attuned to the reverberations of the word "HULI," "remembering the word from other centuries, memory chains linking back to warrior days [to] something sacred, ancestral, nearly forgotten: valor."<sup>26</sup>

It is necessary to question, however, whether the narrative aestheticization of militancy in a "saga" carries us much further, in terms of effective justice, than the sentimental radicalism of Bruddah Iz. It's hard not to like his songs, as they are so moving and sincere; Haunani-Kay Trask, whom I initially paired with Iz, likes his music, too.<sup>27</sup> What are we to make, however, of an oeuvre that can slide so quickly from critique, in the lyrics of "Hawai'i '78," which I began with, to a cosmopolitan-liberal-feel-good ethos in his most popular song, the medley "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World"? Do we say his resentment has been co-opted by

two musical incarnations of American liberal optimism at its cheesy best? Or do we say, in reverse, that these two songs' own kitschy-ness is purified by Bruddha Iz's genuine spirit of being "Hawaiian at heart"? I dare say to those familiar with the tune it will be an impossible choice. It is absolutely kitsch and authentic at the same time.

The affective disposition carries, it seems, two moods: the first, of being blue in Hawai'i, Bruddha Iz-style, and the second, of being rageful, resentful, and insurgent. Trask, a professor at the University of Hawai'i and a leading light in the Hawaiian anti-colonial movement, has devoted herself to an ethics of blood anger. Her poems are varied, but the main affective tonality is clear from this excerpt from her poem "Dispossessions of Empire" in her most recent volume, *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum* (2002):

... White-skinned  
hominids burning pink  
against indigenous brown,  
traveling the blessed  
  
isles in aimless journeys. . . .  
  
The Empire degrades  
through monetary exchange,  
leaving quaint Hawaiians  
dressing as "natives,"  
  
in drag for the 10 o'clock  
floor show, faking  
a singsong pidgin  
with the drunken crowd . . .  
  
... nothing amiss  
in the morass of Paradise.<sup>28</sup>

*Kirkus Reviews* denigrated Trask's poetry as "Polynesian agitprop," and much of it, when not lyrically-sensuously invoking the geo-mythical body of Hawai'i, amply illustrates what she calls in *Notes From a Native Daughter* the didactic strategy of "righteous anger."<sup>29</sup> At conference talks and political rallies, in newspaper editorials and interviews, in her essays in *Notes*, and of course in her verse itself, Trask has excoriated haole bigotry, irresponsibility, and exploitive greed. What Trask refuses to tolerate, ultimately, is the blues response, a sadness that does not convert into conflictual, contestatory politics.

Trask begins many of her essays or speeches by remembering her descent from royal Hawaiians. If such seems a sort of typical identity-politics gesture or

narcissistic, that is because Americans today have allowed so much of their exterior worlds to become alienable property, a possession to be purchased or disposed of; the “American way” is to take stock of those things that accumulate around us, but not to see our environs, our nation, as *home*. So writes Trask in a 2003 interview, highlighting her loyalty to Hawai'i as a uniquely precious enclave or locale: “What George Bush [senior] is doing is the same thing Americans have done since they got off the boat from England, which is to take, to conquer, to slaughter, to impose their view. . . . Hawaiians, like most native people, never had a proselytizing religion, because you can't be [converting others] if your beliefs are land-based, Mother-Earth based. Papahanamoku (Earth-mother) and Wakea (Sky-father) and all the rest of the gods do not exist anywhere else. She (Papa) doesn't exist in California.”<sup>30</sup> The ontology of Hawaiian geo-genealogy, through blood royalty, going back to the parental-cosmological gods of earth and sky, Papahanamoku and Wakea, animates the land, making it a personable geobody, which capitalistic development disastrously harms. To the Hawaiian, Trask writes, the “land is our mother and we are her children. . . . Who we are is determined by our connection to our lands and to our families. Therefore, our bloodlines and birthplace tell our identity.”<sup>31</sup> The social sphere is familial, containing “both eros and power” and “displaying a relatedness to the human and natural worlds that is tactile, sensual, and always metaphorical.”<sup>32</sup> The state officers and administrators that maintain or help spread capital in Hawai'i, which literally covers up the indigenous landscape with mega-resorts and services catering to US naval bases, wage a continuous war against radical separatist groups, who would face the future by returning the nation to an original eco-friendliness and to a citizenry comprised of Hawaiians by blood.

Hawaiian melting-pot enthusiasts dislike Trask for insisting that only indigenous Hawaiians—about 20% of the current total population—have a claim to Hawai'i. She retorts that the fact that only 20% of those living on the Islands are Hawaiian by blood is a scandal itself.<sup>33</sup> Post-contact epidemics, white and Japanese immigration, and the effects of penury including departure to the mainland for better paying jobs have separated the people from the land, which in her eyes is equivalent to ethnocide. Haole invasion devastated the social and land linkage that made Hawaiians a *whole* society. Not being native, nor Hawaiian, I can at best only awkwardly sense an affective, holistic or libidinal connection to Hawai'i via its decathected negation, the estranging world-picture and material damage of capitalist enterprise. Trask, though, is not especially interested in transferred affect; she preserves her anger, by and large, to regain Hawai'i for Hawaiians. In an interview, she celebrates that native Hawaiians “created a magnificent, mutually beneficial system between people and land; [a] wonderful social system that was minimum work, maximum pleasure. . . . The ali'i governed, managed. They were the konohiki, and their job was to keep the land fruitful and keep the people fed.”<sup>34</sup> She does not pretend, however, that such a recalled and longed-for utopia avoids entailing exclusive ownership by ethnic—in this case, full-blooded—Hawaiians.

There is ongoing ethnological debate about the precise nature of pre-contact land use and social relations based on land use—feudally despotic or, as in Trask’s opinion, one of munificent stewardship.<sup>35</sup> The history of Hawai’i in the nineteenth century is a history of the erosion of the power of the Hawaiian leader class, the *ali’i*, as the latter were obliged to adopt Euro-American legal systems that eventually severed reciprocally sustaining relations between *ali’i* and *maka’āninana*, the people, which had held Hawaiians together as a nation or *lahui*.<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio traces the societal deterioration caused by imposed law, and sees its conclusion in the notorious Bayonet Constitution of 1886 which limited monarchical power as well as the native franchise: “law had superseded the nation [as rooted in royalty] itself,” Ossorio writes.<sup>37</sup>

Were Trask’s oratorical, written, and poetic statements of the loss of a polymorphous paradise wrapped only in nostalgia, her message of ancient, ancestral Hawaiian sociality as fusing “eros and power” might seem little more than a return to the dated utopic-archaic ideas of Herbert Marcuse. The pre-contact era social system and understanding of the land may instead have approximated what Henri Lefebvre speaks of when he considers the carving up of natural space:

The cradle of absolute space—its origin . . . is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants, or by nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists. A moment comes when, through the actions of masters or conquerors, a part of this space is assigned a new role, and henceforward appears as transcendent, as sacred (i.e. inhabited by divine forces), as magical and cosmic. The paradox here, however, is that it continues to be perceived as part of nature. Much more than that, its mystery and its sacred (or cursed) character are attributed to the forces of nature, even though it is the exercise of political power therein which has in fact wrenched the area from its natural context, and even though its new meaning is entirely predicated on that action.<sup>38</sup>

But we cannot know, and it is such uncertainty that has been the basis, for the last decade or so, for a feud between Trask and a social anthropologist, also at the University of Hawai’i, who claims nativist traditions about cooperative, non-despotic land use or spiritualization of certain land sites are merely fictions of the present, culturally constructed to fight against demeaning control by Japanese or US outsiders.<sup>39</sup> For Trask, however, the maternal sublimity of the Hawaiian geo-gods constitutes a unique, irrefutable, and primal sensuality. To the extent that such beliefs operate mostly performatively (and work towards reducing what both liberals and leftists would agree is the sterility of Hawaiian overdevelopment), it maybe does

not matter that the happy pre-contact relation of people to rulers, of *ali'i* to *maka'ainana*, may have been a ruse of politics, then, or a ruse of politics now (Trask is often dismissed by conservatives for being stuck in a certain 1960s' atavism).

#### 4. Coda: The Plea of the Liberal State and the Failed Transference of Affect

Many Polynesian/Pacific Islander scholars, especially through the journal *The Contemporary Pacific*, ponder the need to recover and link indigenous epistemologies and ontologies to progressive, liberal-democratic action. They want local/global transference to go both ways. Yet the recognition that Hawaiian and Pacific identity has local density, however amorphous and unstable—"Unique. Yes," writes Osorio, "There is not another people in the world like us. But who, exactly is 'Us?'"—conjoins uneasily, I believe, with our current penchant for a fluidic globality.<sup>40</sup> Rob Wilson, the most astute theorist of the local/global in respect to Pacific places and destinies, calls upon "postmodern knowledge-workers" to act on their responsibility "to trace the dynamics of the contemporary Asia/Pacific regions as a force, flux, and possibility of a transcultural future."<sup>41</sup> I'm not sure, though, what all this optative inbetween-ness and potentiality entails. It is alluring (especially in Wilson's magisterial jazzy prose), but would it not be salutary to move away from post-imperialist or poststructuralist paradigms of being inbetween—which echo liberalism's vague hopefulness—and towards more exact state formations and, in the context of this essay, case studies of more explicit affect? Political theory cannot dispense with charting the interactions of the local and the global. However, there is a danger that the rhetoric of transpositionality will run roughshod over a caring focus on discrete geo-psychological territories and the intimacy of identities located here *and* there, now. I find it more revelatory to hear "Aloha 'Oe" in its affective specifics (imagined at a Hawaiian mountain resort, composed under house-arrest, published in Chicago, and made famous worldwide by Elvis) than as an always in-transit cultural artifact. We should not stop thinking globally, but to think too globally will, without care, get us nowhere, or just between several somewheres.

Care in the circumstances of political woundedness likely requires some inflection of anger, and yet anger of all affects is the one that liberalism most fears. In sincerity or a posture of sincerity, Obama before he was elected gave a stump speech in Hawai'i in which he eagerly declaimed that "it's that [Aloha] spirit that I am absolutely convinced is what America is looking for right now."<sup>42</sup> Whatever generosity of spirit Obama learned in his youth, will, as is becoming increasingly apparent, not be signed into US law. That the spirit of liberalism Hawai'i-style, that is, the Aloha spirit, was signed into law (the fifth epigraph of this essay) is either encouraging or a travesty, the kitsch-ification of law. It would require more than the closing gesture of a coda to fully entertain what it means for President Obama to "be" Hawaiian, or partly Hawaiian; or to critique, as history repeating itself absurdly, the far-right's obsession with invalidating his US citizenship and thus his rule on the

basis of his seemingly murky offshore birth and his dark-skinned complexion. In short, if we can say liberalism does not seem likely to solve Hawaiians' problems of injustice, we can also say, that for the rest of the country as well, liberalism has proven insufficient to the urgency of the times. Is not Obama's plea that the Aloha spirit is just what this country needs "right now" a naive wish of how far affect can go, or worse, a tired sign once again of the liberal state's cohesion by minimalism and a sort of faux pluralism, and why, all universal-pluralistic subjects who hold grievances are condemned interminably to only voicing, singularly, the blues and being blue?<sup>43</sup> Bruddha Iz got it all too right: hope, here, now, is somewhere over the rainbow.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The lyrics come from Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's hit-song "Hawai'i '78" in the CD album *Facing Future* (Mountain Apple Company, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, rev. 1999), 19.

<sup>3</sup> I'm referring specifically to Slavoj Žižek's politically-resonant critique of lack (something we all have, one way or the other) posing as loss (specific occasions for resentment). See "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): "the melancholic is guilty of committing a kind of paralogism of the pure capacity to desire, which resides in the confusion between *loss* and *lack*: insofar as the object-cause of desire is originally, in a constitutive way, lacking, melancholy interprets this lack as a loss, as if the lacking object was once possessed and then lost. In short, what melancholy obfuscates is that the object is lacking from the very beginning . . ." (659–60).

<sup>4</sup> My statement's minimalism hazards cynicism. Drawing upon Emmanuel Lévinas, I could alternatively adopt a triadic psychoanalytical, ethical-theological, and political posture that transcodes his theory of facing the Other into one of facing the Other-as-Nation, a geobody that only has a "face" once we collapse history back into an originary *volk*, and/or nominate our own critical identity as part of some aggregate: a responsible political party, a concerned faculty, a member of a community, and so on. That is, my affect can only become effect, or strong effect, by becoming corporate and yet not impersonal. The issue of affect (a certain academic-discursive sympathy) and true political effect is, of course, the basis of the critique of Derrida's delay of praxis in Michael Sprinker, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: a Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx* (New York: Verso, 2008), a volume devoted to theorizing why Derridean theorizing attenuates rather than seeks action. The deconstructuralist/Marxist problematic of how to enact justice for an aggrieved group has been theorized in a more psychoanalytical direction (whereby a juridical grievance becomes a matter of grieving) by, in addition to Žižek (see n. 3), Judith Butler in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*

(New York: Verso, 2006), especially chapter 2, “Violence, Mourning, Politics.” But I remain skeptical when we conflate psyche and nation, as if the citizenry (subaltern or not), collectively, might be put on the couch of the therapist. The utility of doing so seems to have become commonplace, since Franz Fanon’s meditations on the pathologies of colonialism; however, therapeutic analytics or transference does not obviously translate into political practice.

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of how the slogan “Hawaiian at heart” has become appropriated by Hawaiian wannabes, see Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “‘Hawaiian at Heart’ and Other Fictions,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 17 (2005). She notes that the feel-good sentiment of broad identification, along with tourist culture and kitsch, trivializes radicalism: “non-Hawaiians fail to take Hawaiian sovereignty seriously and Hawaiian activism remains invisible” (409). The initial seduction, however, is not by means of Hawaiian-at-heart affiliation but by the so-called “Aloha Spirit,” a “social lubricant,” Keiko Ohnuma notes in “‘Aloha Spirit’ and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20 (2008), that glosses over colonialism’s harm in Hawai’i and “obscure[s] a history of traumatic meanings” (365–66).

<sup>6</sup> Wilkes, quoted by Emerson, in the preface to David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, trans. Nathaniel B. Emerson (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1951), xiv. All subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>7</sup> Rob Wilson (albeit in stark contrast to my own gloomier interpretation) brilliantly argues that Obookiah’s journey from Hawaiian orphanhood to a new American oratorical strength demonstrates a vital hybridity and cultural plasticity. See chapter 2, “Henry, Torn from the Stomach,” in *Be Always Converting, Be Always Converted: An American Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Henry Obookiah, *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*, ed. Edwin W. Dwight (Hartford, Conn.: 1818), 22. All subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>9</sup> See Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 243–58.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Anlin Cheng, in *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), refers to majoritarian minorities who need, in effect, to appear in drag: “In drag . . . the faculty of agency in assimilation—the work that it takes to negotiate one’s ego relation to a dominant (and at times rejecting) culture—demands a conceptualization beyond that of pure will or the utter loss of will” (72). The intersection of political theories of victimization and psychological theories of mourning and melancholy (grief-being-worked through and grief-inconsolable) are amply surveyed in the anthology of essays, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Bingham's comment comes second-hand, in R. B. Lewis, *Collected From the Bible and Ancient and Modern History, Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Race, from the Creation of the World to the Present Time* (Boston: Benjamin F. Roberts, 1844), 259.

<sup>12</sup> Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands; or the Civil, Religious, and Political History of those Islands* (Hartford: Hezekiah Huntington, 1847), 93.

<sup>13</sup> See Rod Thompson, "Missionary's grave to get historical ornament," in *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 21, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> I have quoted the Queen's poem from Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano, eds., *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Traditions and Revolutions, Beginnings to 1900* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 605.

<sup>15</sup> For standard overviews of the politics of Hawai'i/US relations during the last decades of the nineteenth century, see Ernest S. Dodge, *Islands and Empires: Western Impact on the Pacific and East Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976); Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From Old China Trade to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Edward Joesting, *Hawaii: An Uncommon History* (New York: Norton, 1972); and Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968). More radical and focused accounts of the Queen's overthrow include Michael Dougherty, *To Steal a Kingdom: Probing Hawaiian History* (Waimanalo, Hawai'i: Island Style Press, 1992); Tom Coffman, *Nation Within: The History of the American Occupation of Hawai'i* (Kihei, Hawai'i: Koa Books, 2009); and Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, "Constructed Images of Native Hawaiian Women," in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology*, Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>17</sup> Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1991), 290. All subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Helena G. Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani: Last Queen of Hawaii, 1838–1917* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1982), 345. For the subversive potential of her songs, see Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, chapter 5 "The Queen of Hawai'i Raises her Solemn Note of Protest." For a good discussion of the counter-colonizing strategies of the Queen's memoir, see Lydia Kualapai, "The Queen Writes Back: Lili'uokalani's 'Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen,'" *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17 (2005): 32–62.

<sup>19</sup> For the blight of tourism and kitsch on Hawaiian self-identity, see in particular Elizabeth Buck, *Paradise Remade: The Politics of Culture and History in Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: Temple



University Press, 1993); and Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: The Rhetorical Production of Hawai'i* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Antoinette Withington, *The Golden Cloak: The Romantic Story of Hawaii's Monarchs* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1986), ix.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, quoted in Wood, *Displacing Natives*, 87. The white press often demonized the Hawaiian monarchy: the King's pretense of emulating his European peers was deemed laughable, and he was castigated as being scandalously immoral. A leading newspaper editor, Sereno E. Bishop, when the Queen came into power vilified her as the "debauched Queen of a heathenish monarch" and accused her—in a story that was picked up by the *New York Herald*, which thus tainted US public opinion against her—of being the illegitimate offspring of her mother's union with a black coachman (see Dougherty, *To Steal a Kingdom*, 166).

<sup>22</sup> See "Hawaii's Last Queen, PBS "American Experience" series, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/hawaii/program.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Theroux, "Hawaiians: Reclaiming Their Culture," *National Geographic* 202 (2002): 2–41.

<sup>24</sup> See 103rd Congressional Joint Resolution 19, Nov. 23, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> James A. Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Fawcett, 1959), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Kiana Davenport, *Shark Dialogues* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 318–20.

<sup>27</sup> Trask interview, with Cynthia G. Franklin and Laura E. Lyons, "Land, Leadership, and Nation: Haunani-Kay Trask on the Testimonial Uses of Life Writing in Hawai'i," in *Biography* 27 (2004): 235.

<sup>28</sup> From Haunani-Kay Trask, *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). 35. The format of the original verse has not been maintained.

<sup>29</sup> The review blurb is quoted by Burl Burlingame, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, January 12, 2003: see <http://starbulletin.com/2003/01/12/features/story7.html>; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 252.

<sup>30</sup> Trask, Sept. 2003, interview at The Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, University of Hawai'i-Manoa Campus, "Haunani-Kay Trask . . . in her own voice," reported by Yvonne Mokihana Calizar, *Hawai'i Island Journal*: <http://www.hawaiiislandjournal.com/stories/9b03a.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, vi.

<sup>32</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, "Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, eds. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 167–82.

<sup>33</sup> Rona Tamiko Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), notes that “blood work” is a communal, performative form of identification that supersedes strict percents of blood that, by state mandate, determine degrees of nativeness. See chapter 5, “Little Bit Blood, Heart, and Spectacle: Practicing Hawaiian Memoir and Community in Diaspora.”

<sup>34</sup> Trask, interview at The Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies.

<sup>35</sup> See Buck, *Paradise Remade*, for an astute sociological analysis of the transition from traditional power structures between ruler and ruled to the subordination of both under foreign US rule; see specially 41 and 55.

<sup>36</sup> For an excellent history of the erosion of Hawaiian power, see Jonathan Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio, “‘What Kine Hawaiian Are You?’: [?] A Mo’olelo about Nationhood, Race, History, and the Contemporary Sovereignty Movement in Hawai’i,” in *The Contemporary Pacific* 13 (2001): 359–79.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Lefebvre, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 234.

<sup>39</sup> Trask herself reviews the debate (with Jocelyn Linnekin, who teaches Anthropology at the University of Hawai’i-Manoa) in *From a Native Daughter*, 127–29.

<sup>40</sup> Osorio, “‘What Kine Hawaiian Are You?’” 375.

<sup>41</sup> Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, “Introduction: Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production,” in *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, eds. Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>42</sup> President Barack Obama speech, February 20, 2008, Honolulu, quoted in Office of Hawaiian Affairs website: [http://www.oha.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=683&Itemid=225](http://www.oha.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=683&Itemid=225).

<sup>43</sup> Wendy Brown, in her seminal essay “Wounded Attachments,” *Political Theory* 21 (1993), tracks the asymmetrical relationship between the private “logics of pain in subject formation within late modernity” and public “emancipatory political recognition” (390). She notes if we are “expected to recognize our political selves in the [modern liberal] state, we are not led to expect deep recognition there. Indeed, in a smooth and legitimate liberal order, the particularistic” sense of selfhood “must remain unpoliticized, and the universalistic ‘we’ must remain without specific content or aim, without a common good other than abstract universal representation or pluralism” (392).