

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 25, Number 2, 417-433
© 2013 by University of Hawai'i Press

covering such a culturally diverse area. For instance, men's houses do not exist across all of Melanesia (28), and references to Melanesian dances as multi-art ceremonies (29) might be correct for many or most dances in some regions, but in others (for example, south Vanuatu) this formulation would not be correct. In some passages I felt that further attention could be paid to the ways in which contemporary music and dance are not necessarily tied to colonial experiences (39).

For the most part, however, the authors have avoided erroneous generalizations, and their remarkable efforts succeed in representing the musics of the Pacific Islands in an interesting and well-explained manner. Far from remaining on the surface of the topics, they regularly offer deep insights and well-chosen examples. This volume is a handy and valuable learning tool for scholars of world musics and especially for anyone seeking an excellent foundation for understanding the musical cultures of the Pacific.

RAYMOND AMMANN
University of Innsbruck

* * *

Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai'i. Documentary, 81 minutes, DVD, color, 2009. A Kuleana Works Production. Produced and directed by Anne Keala Kelly. Available at <http://www.nohohewa.com>. Rental US\$3.99; purchase personal US\$50.00, institutional US\$249.00.

In her 1997 essay "Writing in Captivity," Native Hawaiian scholar,

poet, and activist Haunani-Kay Trask supported the conviction that "the best art is political" and that art ought to be "unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time." As she affirmed the inseparability of art and politics for Hawaiians living under US colonial rule, Trask asserted that the reverse also holds true. The experience of watching—and teaching—filmmaker and journalist Anne Keala Kelly's documentary, *Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai'i*, supports Trask's assertion. If "the best art is political," *Noho Hewa* exemplifies how the best forms of political resistance can be unquestionably artistic and irrevocably beautiful at the same time. This makes the independently funded *Noho Hewa*—recipient of the Hawai'i International Film Festival award for best documentary in 2008 and the Prix Spécial du Jury at the Festival International du Film Documentaire Océanien in 2010—a powerful text to teach in classrooms centered on American, Hawai'i, Hawaiian, or Pacific history and politics, as well as in courses more broadly concerned with colonialism or poetics and aesthetics.

As an English professor at the University of Hawai'i, I teach *Noho Hewa* in courses that range from Freshman Composition, to Introduction to Literary Studies, to the graduate-level Theories in Cultural Studies in Asia/Pacific. I regularly include this film because it teaches students important lessons about their location—in Hawai'i, in the Pacific, in the United States—in a way that also allows them to understand the potent interrelations among art, on-the-ground activism, reportage, analysis,

and theory. This film documents the wrongs, or forms of hewa, that have accompanied the US occupation and colonization of Hawai'i, in ways that belie the commonly held opposition between political advocacy and artistic complexity. Through its inclusion of a range of political actors—academics, community organizers and educators, lawyers, farmers, environmentalists, people struggling to maintain their homes on public beaches, members of organizations ranging from the Revolutionary Communist Party to Nuclear Free/Independent Hawai'i to Kūlana Huli Honua—who eloquently address settler colonialism and occupation from different disciplinary angles and perspectives, the film also debunks the “there are two sides to every issue” approach to politics that stymies thought and limits action. Instead, Kelly includes interviews with activist/intellectuals who, across their diverse views, share a passionate commitment to decolonization (those interviewed include Kaleikoa Ka'eo, Kyle Kajihiro, Jimmy Medeiros, Jon Osorio, Walter Ritte, Mikahala Roy, David Keanu Sai, Noenoe Silva, and Ty Tengan).

Noho Hewa focuses not on an individual or family story, but rather on Hawai'i's most pressing political concerns. In doing so, the film evidences how emotional power and passion can reside in ideas and issues. The case that Kelly makes for decolonization is at once polemical and nuanced as she explores militarization, environmental devastation, grave desecration, tourism, the degradation and commodification of culture, real estate development, houselessness and its criminalization, and the takeover of big agriculture as

facets of occupation. Importantly, for instance with references to Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon, Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Gerald Vizenor, *Noho Hewa* also situates Hawai'i in relation to other colonial sites and struggles.

Moreover, the beauty and love that infuses *Noho Hewa*'s representations of the land and of its people who survive and resist occupation—through legal channels, civil disobedience, cultural practices, artistic and intellectual production—are integral to the film's political protest. This is evident from *Noho Hewa*'s very opening, a *kani-kau*, or prayer of loss and lamentation, issued by Kānaka Maoli gathered at the sacred cultural site Makua to protest its use as a US military training site. In its grief and resistance, its fury and beauty, its marking of loss and insistence on a continuing Kanaka Maoli presence, this *kani-kau* sounds a keynote for this breathtaking film that gives voice to so many Native Hawaiians and offers cultural and political instruction to its viewers.

The story that best captures my experience teaching this film occurred in an “Introduction to Literary Studies” class. Every morning, a student came late to class and then promptly fell asleep. Although I was annoyed, his classmates found this ritual amusing until, that is, the day we watched *Noho Hewa*. A few minutes into the film, this student had assumed his customary position, head down on his desk. At the end of the period, when I left the classroom, he was not fully awake. Fifteen minutes later, I received an e-mail from him. As he was gathering his books, a few classmates had confronted him for being white and for harming the Hawaiian

people. Never before in his twenty years in Hawai‘i had he experienced such hostility. He expressed shock and humiliation over a situation he found traumatic. He wrote that although he was sure I did not intend it, the fact remained that for the first time, he had been singled out and racially profiled in my class. I suggested that we talk about this in my office. What emerged from our conversation was that a classmate had charged him with disrespect for sleeping through this film. His classmate linked his napping to his racial privilege, and another student expressed agreement. The student reiterated his shock, his dismay, and his desire for an apology. I suggested that he view the film before we continued our conversation and also see if our class discussion of *Noho Hewa* might help him understand his classmates’ reactions.

The next class meeting, this student stayed awake as his peers engaged with the film. They expressed anger over the scene where a young woman, as she drives onto O‘ahu’s Fort Shafter Military Base, shouts anti-Hawaiian and anti-Asian (for her the two groups are interchangeable) obscenities at those protesting the introduction of a Stryker Brigade. When a protester counters the woman’s insult to his use of Hawai‘i Creole English, telling her his language “stems from the grammatical structure of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i,” she yells, “You know what? I don’t give a shit!” Students focused their outrage on this woman’s willful ignorance, on her refusal to care—a crime that they said compounded her complicity in the US military’s occupation of Hawaiian land, including the incursion of Strykers, or behemoth

eight-wheeled armored vehicles. They went on to discuss other scenes of complicity, including one where local youth, dressed as pieces of Jamba Juice fruit, perform the “hokey pokey.” Their job: to entice customers into this store adjoining the Walmart that had just been built over a Native Hawaiian burial site. In addition to the dancing youth, *Noho Hewa*’s documentation of this scene includes lineal descendants of those whose bones, or *iwi*, were disinterred to build the Walmart; a mix of other demonstrators against grave desecration including attorney Moses Haia with the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, a white kid with a green Mohawk, and sign-bearing Kānaka Maoli of all ages; locals hostile to the protesters; respectful locals; curious tourists; and rude or downright racist tourists. Kelly’s rendering is highly layered and complex as she also regularly splices critical commentary into the scene in a way that distills without simplifying it. The scene is framed by commentary from scholar Kēhaulani Kauanui, who emphasizes the need to understand that settler colonialism “is about implanting non-Hawaiians in Hawai‘i.” Midway through the scene, Kelly cuts to Haunani-Kay Trask quoting Frantz Fanon on the grip the colonizer holds on the colonized’s brain. These words prepare viewers for the next footage—Hawaiians disregarding protestors’ calls to respect their ancestors’ burial site, and then a return to the Jamba Juice workers. At the scene’s conclusion, as the dancing strawberry and banana continue to sing the “hokey pokey,” the screen goes black, and in stark white letters, line by line, this quotation from Ngūgi’s *Decolonising*

the Mind (1986) appears: The effect of the cultural bomb is to / annihilate a people's belief in their names . . . / in their heritage . . . ultimately in themselves. // It makes them see their past as one / wasteland of non-achievement and it / makes them want to distance themselves / from that wasteland.

As we discussed in class, this use of white text against a black screen is anything but simple. The use of black and white is integral to the film's complex but clearly delivered politics and poetics. Time and again, it is how Kelly conveys her position. Whatever form those well-timed and precisely positioned white letters against the black screen take (and whether they communicate data about proliferating military bases or about lines of poetry), this is one way—and the class identified others, including the use of music by Billy Bragg, Black Square, Sudden Rush, and Jon Osorio—that *Noho Hewa* delivers its combination logos-ethos-pathos punch.

After our second class spent discussing the film, I asked my student if he wanted to pursue his complaint. Without elaboration, he said he did not. Whether this film and his classmates' responses did more than startle him into a greater state of wakefulness, I cannot say. What I can say is that for some students, this film acts as a catalyst, one that propels them from a mix of tears and indignation into political action. I know because they have told me so, and because I see the ways they carry the lessons of *Noho Hewa* forward, into new as well as ongoing struggles that come with occupation and colonization—most recently, fighting for labeling of genetically modified organisms

(GMOs); working to repeal legislation that criminalizes homeless people and the (De)Occupy Honolulu movement; and opposing the development of Mauna Kea as well as the latest incarnation of the state's land grab: the legislature's creation of the Public Land Development Corporation.

When I place *Noho Hewa* on my syllabi, I think of the sleeping student, and, even more, I think about those students who, after watching this film, were inspired to wake him up and to find other ways to claim their past and their future. Not only for my students in Hawai'i but also for viewers in and beyond the Pacific, *Noho Hewa* serves as a wake-up call as urgent as it is beautiful.

CYNTHIA FRANKLIN
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

* * *

Etto ñan Raan Kein: A Marshall Islands History, by Julianne M Walsh with Hilda Heine, Carmen Milne Bigler, and Mark Stege. Honolulu: Bess Press, 2012. ISBN 978-1-57306-313-5; ix + 526 pages, maps, illustrations, appendixes, study questions, notes, glossaries, references, index. Cloth, US\$74.97.

This impressive and weighty tome has been compiled by several contributors to provide a textbook for use in Marshall Islands schools and the College of the Marshall Islands. It provides a chronological coverage of major events in the history of the Marshall Islands beginning with an overview of archaeological accounts of the islands' early history through to consideration of impacts of the Compact of Free