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# Contesting Place/Navigating History: A reading on John Dominis Holt's *Waimea Summer*

**Kristiawan Indriyanto and Tan Michael Chandra**

Kristiawan Indriyanto is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Prima Indonesia, Medan City, 20118, Indonesia. He holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from Universitas Gadjah Mada on postcolonial ecocriticism in Hawai'ian-American literature. His main research interests are analyzing indigenous literature with a postcolonial ecocriticism perspective, primarily focusing on Native Hawaiian literature and the decolonizing discourse of Hawaiian indigene through aloha ʻāina.

Tan Michael Chandra is a lecturer in the English Department at the Vocational College of Universitas Pignatelli Triputra. He obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees on English literature from Universitas Sanata Dharma. His research interests include postcolonial and gender literature, ecocriticism, and discourse analysis, focusing on the themes of identity, power dynamics, and representation of the environment.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7827-2506
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2226-0585

**Abstract:**
*This article examines how the dynamics of place, history and culture intersect to shape the sense of displacement felt by the protagonist Markie/Mark Hull in John Dominis Holt's* Waimea Summer. *Holt's narrative vividly portrays the contestation between two contrasting cultures: Native Hawaiʻians/Kānaka and the West. Markie struggles with his Hawaiʻian heritage while navigating the rural landscape of Waimea on the Big Island (Hawaiʻi). This paper draws upon the concept of displacement articulated by Ashcroft, highlighting how Markie's experiences reflect a state of being uprooted and disconnected. Additionally, as introduced by Estok, the idea of ecophobia illuminates Markie's apprehension and fear towards the inexplicable phenomena he encounters in Waimea. These problematic ideas contextualize how Markie struggles to reconcile his Hawaiʻian heritage, rooted in the past, with his Western upbringing and beliefs shaping his present reality. The conclusion posits how*

*colonization's cultural and historical traumas have profoundly influenced and shaped Markie's perception of self and heritage.*

The issue of identity remains a problematic aspect to discuss within the postcolonial discourse, as one of the strongest and most lasting impacts of colonialism is its effect on the identity of the people living in the postcolonial environment. The postcolonial perspective analyses a society's identity and cultural aspects that have internalized the colonizer either culturally or physiologically. The construction of identity is socially bounded through social utterance and action, which often evokes the idea of Otherness. McLeod argues that "every definition of identity is always made *concerning* something else, a perceived other" (2010, p. 60). Postcolonial studies scrutinize the construction of identity under colonialism and after colonialism, particularly emphasizing the emergence of non-Western texts to counter previously established canon. As underlined by Ashcroft et al., postcolonial literature emphasizes "the canonical nature and unquestioned status of the works of the English literary tradition and the values they incorporated" (2003, p. 4). Writing through a colonial language – English – illustrates how it previously alludes to colonial hegemony, and imperial representation is appropriated by postcolonial writers to avenue their voice of resistance. Moreover, writing in English can better extrapolate the discourse of place and displacement in a broader postcolonial context, especially concerning the conflict between tradition and modernity.

The concept of place and displacement articulates the intertwined aspects of language, environment, history and culture within the experience of colonized people and the process of identity formation. A sense of place might be embedded in the collective memory of a particular indigenous group until it was disrupted through the interference of colonialism and the imposition of a Western way of thinking (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 161). The dialectic of place and displacement is a characteristic of postcolonial societies that the process of settlement and intervention had caused. Place becomes a contested and anxious site of the fractured link between language and identity, in which one vital aspect of postcolonial literature is to reimagine the displacement between people and place through poetics. The discourse concerning place is not limited to the present state but can also conjure memory of the past, which might occur in the pre-colonial era. Memory and place combine to construct individual/collective cultural landscapes and attach meaning to abstract geographical spaces. As Schliephake elaborates,

> […] the role of memory – and with it, of imaginative world-making – has thus been underlined as crucial to how people and collectives situate themselves in their natural environment and construct a sense of the past. The place is, in this context, thought of as a kind of spatial container or framework for human action and as the stage of historical experience so that, in the end, a sense of place is deeply intertwined with both individual as well as collective memory. (2016, p. 574)

Concern with the issue of place/displacement and how imperial power engenders the struggle of possible local/place-bound identities is a recurring theme of Native Hawaiʻian/ *Kānaka* literature. Located at the centre of the world's largest and most contested ocean, the historicity of Hawaiʻi has been shaped by colonialism, perpetuating the narratives of conquest and resistance (Teves, 2018). Hawaiʻian literature likely arises from the need of individual writers to tell their truth, their own story, instead of having it represented by foreign, white (*haole*) writers. Since the arrival of the Westerners, the possibility for the perpetuation of Hawaiʻian culture was threatened by the steadily declining number of Native Hawaiʻian speakers (Charlot, 2005, p. 1). Osorio (2002) further identifies how Western laws and politics, such as the 1840 constitution, erode the Hawaiʻian Kingdoms' governance and culture, ultimately leading to their dispossession from ancestral lands and suppression of heritage. As a result of American imperialism, the Kānaka became a conquered people, their land and culture subordinated to the United States of America. The law that made English the only official language in 1896 was revoked in 1965 during the Hawaiʻian Renaissance.[1] This period of colonization has led to the systematic distancing of the Kānaka from their cultural ways of knowing, replacing them with a Eurocentric paradigm (Cristobal, 2018, pp. 30–32). The educational systems and policies introduced during colonialism have shaped the identity politics of the Kānaka, impacting the conception of self and identity.

One of the most influential writers during the period of the Hawaiʻian Renaissance is John Dominis Holt, who vividly explores the problems of contemporary Hawaiʻian identity that are caught between the past and the present. Holt, a hapa-haole[2] writer, initially struggled with his Hawaiʻian identity but fully embraced it after returning to the islands following his education at Columbia University in 1942. In his monograph, *On Being Hawaiians*, Holt affirms his Hawaiʻian identity by stating how he is "a product of Hawaii, an American, yes, but I am also a Hawaiian, somewhat by blood, and in considerable measure by sentiment" (1964, p. 11). Since the 1960s, he worked to revive Hawaiʻian literature and reclaim the indigenous heritage in fragmented contemporary Hawaiʻi, often exploring themes of identity through hapa-haole characters. As Hershinow explores,

> […] an excellent storyteller, Holt is fond of presenting his narratives through the eyes of a young hapa-haole man or boy, a representative of the present, who loves listening to stories of the old days, stories seldom passed on any longer. (1980, p. 66)

Holt explores the theme of initiation as the boy protagonist tries to accept the complicated contradictions of Hawai'ians' differing cultural heritages. His writings delineate the traumatic experience of colonialism and the inheritance of grief through Hawai'ian cultural memory. Yet, he considers this loss as reparable concerning the continuation of the Hawai'ians as an indigenous group. His quote, "We are links to the ancients: connected by inheritance to their *mana*, their wisdom, their superb appreciation of what it is to be human," reflects Holt's belief in the endurance of Hawai'ian ethnicity through cultural heritage and identity (in Trask, 1999, p. 161).

This paper analyses Holt's magnum opus, *Waimea Summer* (1976),[3] focusing on the state of displacement experienced by its protagonist, Markie Hull, and his inability to reconcile between his Hawai'ian and Western self. A coming-of-age novel in the mid-20th century, the story is narrated from Mark's first-person perspective. This urbanized Honolulu resident struggles to orient himself in a rural, traditionalist country living in Waimea on the Big Island. The occurrences of spirit sightings and the active presence of the supernatural further alienate him from his Hawai'ian heritage. However, the existence of the more-than-human world had been a pivotal aspect of the Hawai'ians' acknowledgment of a holistic universe of entities. Seen from Estok's concept of ecophobia, Markie's rejection embodies the Western irrational fear of the natural world.

The analysis elaborates how Markie's orientation within Hawai'ian heritage remains hindered by the lingering presupposition that the West possesses towards non-Western cultures. Holt's narration vividly represents the picturesque landscape around Waimea, evoking the Hawai'ians' love of the land (*aloha 'āina*) and how Markie struggles to comprehend the differing perspective from his Westernized mind. As the narrative progresses, Markie can acquire a sense of place based upon aloha 'āina, yet it remains selective as he cannot comprehend the supernatural occurrence. Hence, the contested issue of place in *Waimea Summer* alludes to how Hawai'ian identity is formed through an engagement between the past/the present, rural/urban, and traditional/modern perspectives.

Several prior readings have been conducted in line with Waimea Summer's status as an example of canonical Hawai'ian literary works. Casey (2022) argues that *Waimea Summer*

explores the issue of burgeoning queer identity and conflicted cultural affinity between Hawaiʻi and the West from the perspective of Markie. Markie's time in Waimea deconstructs the rigid Christian prohibition of homosexuality, which is considered sinful, through his growing desire for Julian, his cousin. Casey identifies how "the boy watches Julian dance with a woman" and jealously positions himself within Julian's line of sight (2022, p. 87). In the end, Markie is pressured to accept a female companion and abandon his queer desire. Another reading from Najita (2001) explores how Markie's identity, representing the hapa haole, is constructed through an engagement with the traumatic history of Hawaiʻi-Western interaction. She argues that this "ethnographic trauma" presents a fragmented history as a by-product of colonialism in which the protagonist is caught in an ambivalent position (2001, p. 205)

Compared to the previous findings, this paper argues that the intertwined concepts of environment, history and culture illustrate the contested nature of place and its role in identity formation, especially in the Hawaiʻian context. The postcolonial framework is applied to analyse the issue of identity formation due to colonialism; moreover, it emphasizes the resurgence of non-Western texts written in English as a counter-discourse to previously established canon. The argument mainly focuses on the place/displacement experienced by Markie as he navigates between his Hawaiʻian/Western identities. It also foregrounds Estok's ecophobia theory to comprehend how Markie's irrational fear of the supernatural is rooted in the Western paradigm of nature. The finding highlights the difficulty of reconciling between facets of identity, mainly due to the entrenched Western view of the natural world. It also suggests that this issue may resonate with similar concerns shared by other indigenous communities worldwide.

## Exploring place, displacement, and ecophobia

The polemic concerning the concept of "place" – how place is conceived, how it differs from "space", "location", or "position", the formation of place within wider cultural consciousness, and how it becomes the locus of identity formation – has been widely debated in postcolonial thought. Ashcroft (2001a, p. 15) problematizes the way in which the concept of place, and the ways of conceiving place and writing about it, are often represented through the medium of the colonizer's way of perceiving the world. The Eurocentric control of place, in which humans are positioned outside the natural world, has been the most challenging form of cultural control of the holistic view of perceiving the environment by indigenous people. This form of ideological imposition detaches the indigenous people from acquiring a "sense of

place", defined by Heise as "that attachment to an immediate environment, which is still a significant part of the identity of most human beings" (Heise, 2008, p. 38). This sense of place is embedded in non-Western cultures' history, heritage, language, arts, and cultural performance until colonization disrupts a people's understanding of place. The tension, the gap, between the experienced place and either the language or the paradigm available to describe it lies in the mind of the colonized subject in the form of displacement. As defined by Ashcroft,

> [...] displacement is not necessarily a feeling. To some extent, any 'sense' of placelessness felt by people born in a place is just as much constructed as identity itself. More often, it displays itself in forms of behavior that occur as a consequence of colonization: uncertainties about the location of value, ambivalence or argument about certain kinds of cultural or political affiliation, social contestation over the 'proper' use of language, confusion about the use of the word home. (Ashcroft, 2001a, p. 154)

Under the Western paradigm, which instrumentalizes nature, the image of the non-human world is often subjected to stigma and prejudice due to the irrational fear of nature as uncontrollable and beyond human agency. As illustrated by Estok in his book *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (2011), the natural world is often conceptualized as terrifying and dangerous if left uncontrolled by human agency. His reading delineates how natural forces such as weather, predators, diseases and parasites have troubled human civilization since time immemorial, and this perspective underlines the transformation of the more-than-human world in the Western paradigm as the Other. This antagonism, in which humans consider nature an opponent, can be expressed either towards natural physical geographies, natural disasters, biotic land-, air- and seascapes, or other forms of non-human entities and agencies.

Estok defines ecophobia as "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism" (2011, p. 5). In his understanding, ecophobia lies within a human-oriented/anthropocentric paradigm that seeks to control nature and the resulting fear and anxiety regarding a potential loss of control (Alex & Susan Deborah, 2019, p. 426). This constructed concept of nature as the Other disrupts the prior understanding of nature as fellow entities of indigenous people worldwide, resulting in displacement between the past and the present. As seen in indigenous cosmology, the proponent of a holistic relationship among all entities challenges the construction of Western modernity, which considers humanity separate from nature (Heith, 2022, p. 22). Like the term culture itself, place is in a perpetual and dynamic state of formation,

a process intricately interwoven with the culture and identity of its inhabitants. The success of colonialism and ideological imposition of place as universal and un-contestable is a by-product of imperial discourse.

In the Hawai‘ian context, settler colonialism has profoundly impacted the indigenous people's relationship with their sense of place, which has often resulted in a sense of displacement. As Wolfe argues, settler colonialism establishes a new societal structure on expropriated land, emphasizing that invasion is not just an event but a continuous structure (2006, p. 388). Similarly, Lyons (2011, p. 150) asserts that the logic of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, as elsewhere, is structured around the transformation of the indigenous into the indigent. The internalization of Western values, conflicting with indigenous traditional knowledge, plays a crucial role in perpetuating settler colonialism. Applying the postcolonial concept of place/displacement provides insight into the complex identity dynamics between natives and settlers. Moreover, ecophobia is used to highlight how acquiring a sense of place based upon aloha ‘āina is hindered by the Western irrational fear of the supernatural. These theoretical concepts seek to illuminate the identity crisis experienced by historically marginalized groups, particularly the Hawai‘ian indigene.

**Contesting place/displacement: The complexity of identity in John Dominis Holt's Waimea Summer**

*Waimea Summer* tells the semi-autobiographical story of Markie Hull, whose perspective echoes Holt's view of Hawai‘ian society during his youth while on a visit to his uncle, Fred Andrews, in the ranches of Waimea on the Big Island. This novel chronicles the "spatial imagination made possible by the experience of place" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 6) as the conflicting nature of past and present experience of perceiving the intersection between place and culture collides on the island of Hawai‘i. Amidst the decline of Hull's family fortune and the loss of ancestral land, Mark seeks solace in Hawai‘ian traditions, immersing himself in cultural rites in Waimea and Waipio Valley. Struggling with his identity, Mark's life becomes intertwined with spirit sightings, leading him to believe that ancestral spirits are responsible for his family's misfortunes. This predicament motivates Markie to defend his extended family and rescue his cousin Puna. In a climactic hallucinatory episode, Markie meets his ancestor, Great Kamehameha, who asserts Waimea as Markie's rightful home. Rejecting this vision, Mark flees to Honolulu aboard the steamship Kamoi, leaving behind the haunting mysteries of Waimea.

Mark's profound sense of displacement and identity crisis is a central theme throughout *Waimea Summer*. Holt depicts Mark's hapa-haole identity as a dialectical hybridity, showcasing the internal conflict and division between his Hawai'ian and Western identities. His narration evokes a theme of initiation as the boy struggles to accept the complicated contradictions of differing cultural heritage. The story starts with Mark waking up in his uncle's rural home after a long journey from Honolulu. Looking around, he feels uneasy, hinting at the novel's atmosphere. Mark has heard rumours about Waimea, where he's staying now, describing it as a place full of superstition and mystery. His apprehension about this new environment is expressed through a reflective monologue.

> [...] at four of the morning, three days after I arrived on the Big Island to pay my first visit to Waimea, I awoke and was gripped by a sense of doom and apprehension, even before I could shake off the lingering remnant of sleep. All the things I'd heard said about Waimea being a place ridden with ghosts and black magic now seemed true. (Holt, 1976, p. 1)

The prior quotation highlights the internalization of colonial discourse, which is defined by Ashcroft et al. as the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships (2013, p. 37). This lingering prejudice, perpetuated by the West and urban-living Hawai'i in Honolulu, which denounce their rural counterpart as backward, adhering toward heathenish custom, hinders Mark's attempt to define himself as Hawai'ian. In this dichotomy, a clear boundary emerges between the "civilized" Westernized environment of Honolulu, the capital city, and the "primitive" Native Hawai'ians residing on the outer island chains. The Hawai'ians were denounced as pagan, primeval, pleasure-loving and superstitious, while the haole side embodies civilized, rational Christian values that result in restraint, primness and self-righteousness (Hershinow, 1980, p. 46).

This paradigm perpetuates Mark's sense of displacement as the narrative progresses. Najita argues that Mark's efforts to understand the Hawai'ian past result in him viewing his relatives through an ethnographic and historicizing lens (2001, p. 173). Later in the story, after witnessing the slaughter of goats, a common practice for Hawai'ians working as cattle ranchers, Mark adopts the detached ethnographic voice of a foreigner examining non-civilized society. He calls his fellow Hawai'ians "you a dirty bunch of kuaaina kanakas!" (Holt, 1976, p. 16), a term referring to rural or rustic Hawai'ians, a pejorative expression from the voice of a city dweller. This echoes the belief that Hawai'ians in the outer islands are not civilized, unlike those from the urban area. Mark's ethnographic voice considers his uncle Julian primitive due

to his participation in "far-flung rituals" (1976, p. 17). From the start in Waimea, Mark has wanted to leave, puzzled by the strange events he saw, and even asked his father for a first-class return ticket immediately. The turmoil resulting from prejudice related to the civilized/primitive, urban/rural, and Western/Hawai'i binaries contextualizes Markie's displacement in Waimea.

The language barrier proves to be another challenging aspect for Markie to reclaim his sense of being Hawai'ian, as the Hawai'ian language (*'ōlelo Hawai'i*) is a language that demonstrates "the intimate relationship between people and the environment" (Kimura, 1983, p. 178). This understanding and connection with the land, or *'āina*, relied heavily on human interpretation and empathy, passed down through generations (McDougall, 2016, p. 27). The naming of places, natural elements, weather patterns and specific landmarks in the Hawai'ian language are associated with particular paradigms within a naming pattern. A naming pattern includes a story (*mo'olelo*), which becomes the basis of the name, whether a legend, story, mythology or natural phenomenon (Clark, 2002). As language, culture and place are so interwoven in Hawai'ian heritage, a lack of proficiency in 'ōlelo Hawai'i hinders the formation of Hawai'ian identity. In the novel, Mark's disconnection becomes evident during a cultural performance when he struggles to grasp a chant's meaning (*kaona*), requiring translation from one of his family's elders. This event is narrated as follows:

> […] two younger women danced to the words of Prince Peter Kaeo's chant: *Hiilawe*. Aunt Bella Naihe translated for me and explained how the song extolled the beauty of a waterfall in Waipio Valley, which the prince had visited with his adored cousin, the late Queen Emma Kaleleonalani, and the recalled later when a patient at the Moloka'i leper colony. (Holt, 1976, p. 116)

The inability to comprehend the complexity behind language, culture and place manifests a sense of displacement in Markie's mind. Edwards and Graulund define this phenomenon as "insufficient connection between citizen and space being 'in place' leads into an experience of being out-of-place" (2010, p. 7). The lack of proficiency in the Hawai'ian language is a consequence of colonial policies, where English is used as the primary medium of instruction instead of Hawai'ian. Ashcroft argues that colonialism brings a sense of dislocation between the environment and the imported language now used to describe it, a gap between the "experienced" place and the descriptions the language provides (Ashcroft, 2001b, p. 154). 'Ōlelo Hawai'i carries uniquely Hawai'ian nuances and layers of meaning that can be fully grasped and appreciated only by language speakers (Oliveria, 2014, p. 78). The narration

depicts Markie's struggle to grasp the significance of a prayer (*pupule*), leaving him with only a fragmented understanding of the past:

> […] the old patriarch chanted a long Hawaiian prayer in melodious falsetto tones. I could not follow all he said, but my spirit seemed transported back hundreds of years. (Holt, 1976, p. 172)

Holt's *Waimea Summer* resonates with the contemporary lived experiences of Kānaka, particularly those in urbanized areas, who, like Markie, feel alienated from their cultural tradition. The issue of displacement is further compounded by the pressures of assimilation into dominant American culture and modernization. Cook et al. highlight the transition from indigenous cultural norms to Western ideals among the Hawaiʻian population, illustrating a shift in self-perception and identity (2003, p. 17). Despite its revival in the 1970s, Hawaiʻian culture remains overshadowed by Western influence. In 2016, the Census of Hawaiʻi reported that Hawaiʻian is only spoken at home by 5.6% of the overall speakers, a total of 18,610 people (Statistical Report : Detailed Language Spoken at Home in the State of Hawai'i, 2016, p. iii).

In recent years, there has been a shift toward revitalizing indigenous knowledge based upon aloha ʻāina, as seen in Molokaʻi and the Maui islands (Fujikane, 2016; Gupta, 2014). The kūpuna (elders) and cultural practitioners are leading a movement to protect sacred places from overdevelopment by countering narratives that depict them as wastelands for urban and industrial expansion. Yet, as the analysis further suggests, understanding aloha ʻāina requires embracing physical and spiritual connections to the natural world. Rejection of the supernatural due to the prevalent ecophobia hinders Markie's comprehension of aloha ʻāina.

**Aloha ʻāina and the manifestation of ecophobia**

Fujikane extrapolates how the *lāhui Hawaiʻi* ('Hawaiʻian people') are based on aloha ʻāina, a deep and abiding love for *ʻāina* (lands, seas and skies that feed physically, spiritually and intellectually). Aloha ʻāina originates from the *Kānaka Maoli*'s ('Native People') genealogical ties with the *akua* ('the divine'), evident in chants like the *Kumulip*o, which trace their lineage to the emergence of life from *Pō*, the primordial darkness. According to this lineage, the Kānaka Maoli are descendants of the land itself and are instructed to *mālama ʻāina* ('care for') their kūpuna, and elder and younger siblings (Trask, 1991, p. 123). Aloha ʻāina is both a verb and a noun, representing the active response of the Kānaka Maoli to assert their rights and embody their commitment to the land, water and the community.

This section focuses on how the prevailing ecophobia toward the spiritual hinders Markie's attempt to acquire aloha ʻāina, an integral part of Hawaiʻian identity. The narration underlines how Markie's growing acceptance of his Hawaiʻian heritage is symbolized through his "sense of place", in which he appreciates the picturesque landscape around the Big Island. The sense of this identity manifests itself through an attachment to place and an affirmation of the equal status of all entities in the world. As stated by Kay-Trask, the Hawaiʻians have "extraordinary respect when compared to Western ideas of nature, for the life of the sea, the heaven, and the earth" (1993, p. 5). As seen in the subsequent passage, Markie illustrates deep reverence toward Mauna Kea as one of the Hawaiʻian sacred places (*Wahi Pana*):

> My eyes flashed in all directions, greedily seeking out prominent features of the surrounding countryside. Above the eucalyptus trees across the road upon which the house faced, the mauve mist-surrounded peak of Mauna Kea rose to nearly fourteen thousand feet, a powerful and awesome physical presence. Growth of trees, shrubs, and other plants was most fiercely luxuriant. I sensed that the Gods had blessed Waimea as once the God of the Old Testament had bestowed magical, extravagant beauty upon Eden. (Holt, 1976, p. 13-14)

From the prior passage, Markie comprehends the sublime landscape of his home island and tries to identify the physical features of the surrounding countryside. His burgeoning sense of place manifests in the increasing awareness (sense) of the subtle differences within each locale, making its place unique. Sense of place is integral to Hawaiʻian's epistemology of place, culture and nature. This view challenges the Western dichotomy of humanity existing outside the non-human sphere by affirming their position within the natural world instead. Moreover, it can be seen how Markie tries to reconcile the Hawaiʻian pantheism, "the Gods had blessed Waimea", with the Christian deity "God of the Old Testament."

His burgeoning sense of place is further illustrated by his reorientation of the Hawaiʻian holistic relationship with the environment through the concept of *mana*, in which "the earth is a living entity and that the individual has a relationship and connection to that life force (Inglis, 2013, p. 181). Mana alludes to the equal status of all entities and that the position of the human, the Hawaiʻians, is to take care of and foster the environment. It is seen as the essence of life and is closely tied to the natural world, connecting individuals to their ancestors, gods, and the universe (Kane, 2016, pp. 1–2). All things, including rocks, rivers, and natural phenomena, are

seen as animated and capable of impacting the world around them. The following dialogues between Markie and one of the Hawaiʻian elders (kūpuna) affirm the interconnection of all entities as an integral part of forming the sense of being Hawaiʻian.

> "Mana is spirit. It's the life force unseen and without form. Mana is in people, in things. It's the essence of the universe."
> "Why do people say there's mana in rocks, in trees?"
> "Rocks are powerful! They are strong in their silence. They endure. So do trees. Look at them! Be silent in your heart when you do. They will speak to you."
> "Do you think rocks have a life?"
> "*Auʻwe*," the old man responded with a gentle chortle. "Of course, they do. They are not objects of flesh and blood, but they are alive in their way." (Holt, 1976, p. 176)

The conflict concerning the two contradictory facets of Markie's Hawaiʻian and Western heritage is more difficult to reconcile than acquiring a sense of place. It is stated that Mark is far more familiar with and more comfortable with the beliefs of his Western missionary ancestors than his Hawaiʻian cousins, especially in terms of religious and spiritual context. Even in the prior context, where he admires and acknowledges the beauty of Waimea, he immediately relates it with Christianity, especially the creation of the Garden of Eden. This view is problematic as he frames his Hawaiʻian heritage as part of the past, while his Christian upbringing and Western education belong in the present. An event that exemplifies Mark's stigma towards Hawaiʻian belief and the use of the Hawaiʻian language occurs when he suddenly awakens in the night to hear the "wailing, lamenting *ku-wo* tones of the *kanikau*" (Holt, 1976, p. 27). Unable to understand the meaning of the foreign words, he instantly construes the Othered image of the primitive superstitious ceremony, which evokes the following physical response, "my body froze, my skin tingled as goose bumps formed all over" (Holt, 1976, p. 27). Later that night, his cousin, Julian, rejects Mark's interpretation as, in Julian's view, he was praying for his younger cousin Puna's safety from evil spirits, and he had to say the words in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. This misunderstanding can be explained by the fact that these Hawaiʻian practices contradict Markie's Christian upbringing and missionary heritage, in which the tradition is associated with heathenish and primitive pagan behaviour. In Najita's opinion, *Waimea Summer* underlines how this Hawaiʻian practice "reminds Mark of a now racialized and primitivized Hawaiʻian past that continues to resurface" (001, p. 179) even in the era of Christianity.

Markie's inability to understand the spiritual events in Waimea further distances him from his Hawaiʻian heritage. The influence of Euro-American civilizing missions has

marginalized the rites, practices and belief in the supernatural that were once an integral part of his Hawai‘ian past (De Silva & Hunter, 2021). Markie’s Western education instils in him a deep fear of the natural world, especially when it comes to inexplicable phenomena that are commonplace in Waimea. This fear, described as ecophobia by Estok, encompasses an irrational anxiety towards unexplained occurrences in nature. The reemergence of a seemingly buried primitive past profoundly disturbs Markie. He experiences panic and nervousness, evident in his trembling, when he encounters an *akualele* (‘fireball’):

> […] the ‘thing’ appeared first a small flame and then, as it approached, an orb. I had heard it described so many times by Hawaiians: the *akualele*, the flying God, an evil spirit sent out to find victims. It circled the Punoho house, then Fred’s, then streaked off, leaving a long coruscant trail behind. I stood frozen in my path, shaking. (Holt, 1976, p. 200)

As stated through this episode, Markie cannot comprehend the Hawai‘ians’ belief in the supernatural and is deeply scared upon seeing the phenomenon himself. It is also notable how he recalls that he has been told about the occurrences by “Hawai‘ians”, positioning himself outside this ethnic group, although he is part-Hawai‘ian. In Hawai‘ian belief, while the messages or warnings they bring can be frightening, ghosts are not to be feared; they are *aumākua* (‘ancestors’] who remain in the physical world. Barrow defines aumākua as the “spirits of deceased family members who retain a personal interest in the welfare of their descendants (1999, p. 52).” The inability to acknowledge the continuing presence of ancestors in the Hawai‘ian further distances Markie from fully embracing aloha ‘āina.

Markie’s understanding of the natural world via his sense of place remains clouded by Western ecophobia, constraining his perception of the environment to only encompass sublime and picturesque landscapes. Marx connotes how the idea of nature in American consciousness refers to images of pristine landscapes and unaltered nature (Marx, 2008, p. 20). The sense of displacement occurs upon the cultural distance underlined by Markie’s selective understanding of the more-than-human world. In the narration, Mark can embrace the holistic relationship of all entities and admires the picturesque landscape of Waimea. At the same time, simultaneously unable to comprehend the existence of the supernatural, which in Hawai‘ian traditions is part of their universe. Markie’s rigid demarcation of these contradictory facets is aptly summarized through his inner monologue, as he differentiates between the sublime natural aspects of Waimea and the harsh reality concerning the existence of the supernatural:

> I felt a hollowness at the pit of my stomach and imagined briefly—but with fright—that I would be swallowed into the life pattern of my Waimea cousins and become a part of their world forever, at once so beautiful and harsh. (Holt, 1976, p. 42)

The novel's climax highlights the inherent challenge of reconciling the past with the present. While awaiting the steamship that will transport him back to Honolulu, Markie stumbles upon Puʻukoholā Heiau, an ancient sacred site once used by the esteemed ruler Great Kamehameha. There, he encounters the guardian (*kahu*) of the heiau, whose ancestral lineage can be traced back to Kamehameha's time. In a surreal and hallucinatory episode, Markie is transported to the past, specifically during a ritual ceremony at the heiau. During this ceremony, he discovers the astonishing revelation that he is a descendant of Kamehameha. The unfolding of this event is narrated in the following manner:

> […] as I back away from the old man, chiefs gather in the brilliant noonday sun. Attendants carry kahili, tabu sticks, and images held aloft on long poles. The heiau walls teem with wooden sculptures of angry, protective deities. The oracle tower, covered with white tapa, rises fifty feet from the lower platform. Under the tower, kahunas in white tapa stand chanting prayers. The Great One arrives. His helmet and cloak are a purity of rarest yellow feathers. (Holt, 1976, p. 194)

The depiction of the past event provides Markie with a glimpse into the ancestral memories of the Hawaiʻians, materializing as a visible manifestation within the specific location. Puʻukohalā, as a sacred place brimming with mana, is a significant landmark that illustrates the inseparable connection between place and culture. It becomes the site where Markie is presented with a final opportunity to embrace his ancestral past. However, in the end, reconciliation proves unattainable. The rural surroundings of Waimea and its inhabitants offer a present tarnished by the lingering echoes of the past, characterized by conflicting values and principles. Rejecting the proposition to remain in Waimea, Markie narrowly escapes the clutches of the older man and heads straight to the docks. Though the ending of *Waimea Summer* remains ambiguous, it suggests that Markie ultimately chooses his present, Americanized self. However, in accepting this present, he must relinquish a part of his heritage, his Hawaiʻian identity.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the analysis of John Dominis Holt's *Waimea Summer* highlights the theme of displacement that the protagonist, Markie, experiences due to the conflicting forces of place, culture and history. Markie's struggle to fully comprehend the intricacies of his Hawaiʻian

heritage, rooted in a deep understanding of the natural world and expressed through language, traditions and beliefs, impedes his ability to embrace his Hawaiʻian identity. Influenced by his Western education, Markie initially views Hawaiʻian traditions as remnants of a primitive past rather than living aspects of the present or future. The novel suggests that achieving reconciliation between these conflicting elements proves to be a daunting, if not impossible, task. As Markie departs from Waimea, he leaves behind his Hawaiʻian heritage, opting instead to continue his modern, Americanized life. Holt proposes that the complete restoration of an authentic, pre-colonial tradition and identity is unattainable, as the legacy of colonialism has shaped and traumatized Hawaiʻian culture and history.

**Endnotes**

[1] The Hawaiʻian Renaissance, also known as the Hawaiʻian Cultural Renaissance, was a significant socio-cultural movement that emerged in the 1970s in Hawaii. The Hawaiʻian Renaissance saw a rise in cultural pride and activism within the Hawaiʻian community. Kānaka worked to revive native traditions, like bringing back the Hawaiʻian language and supporting traditional arts. Additionally, they aimed to regain control of Hawaiʻian land and sovereignty, pushing back against Western influence (hoʻomanawanui, 2005, 2015)

[2] The term hapa, originating from Native Hawaiian language, translates literally to "part" or "mix," devoid of racial or ethnic connotations. Its widespread use in Hawai'i emerged with European immigration and the onset of miscegenation. Haole literally means foreign" or foreigner, but is often used colloquially to describe foreigners from Europe or mainland America (Trask, 1999). Locals in Hawai'i often use haole pejoratively to describe white or light-skinned nonlocals. Therefore, both hapa or hapa haole are terms used by locals to refer to people of mixed-race heritage.

[3] The novel has been acknowledged by many scholars (see hoʻomanawanui, 2015; Luangphinith, 2015; Lyons, 2017) to be the first contemporary Hawaiʻian novel written by a Native Hawaiʻian in English.

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*Kristiawan Indriyanto*
*Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,*
*Universitas Prima Indonesia*
*Medan City, North Sumatra, 20118, Indonesia*
*kristiawanindriyanto@unprimdn.ac.id*

*Remote Research Fellowship*
*University of Religions and Denominations*
*Pardisan City, Qom, 37185-178, Iran.*

*Tan Michael Chandra*
*English Study Program, Vocational College*
*Universitas Pignatelli Triputra*
*Surakarta City, Central Java 57145, Indonesia*
*michael.chandra@upitra.ac.id*