

# *Ma'i Lepera: Representation of Leprosy as Ecological Other in selected Hawai'ian-American Literature*

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## ABSTRACT

This study contextualizes the representation of leprosy on three novels written by Hawai'ian-American writers, focusing on segregation of lepers in Moloka'i island. Hawai'ians cultural contexts concerning identity based on familial ties and sense of place is employed to explore how leprosy problematizes the issue of identity formation. This study also explores the concept of ecological Other as theorized by Serpil Oppermann to contextualize leprosy as racialized disease. The objects of this study are three Hawai'ian-American novels, *Hawai'i* (1959), *Shark Dialogues* (1995) and *Moloka'i* (2004). The analysis underlines how segregation toward lepers functions as one apparatus of colonial power projected toward diseased colonized subject. Representation of leprosy in selected Hawai'ian-American literature contextualizes the stigma associated toward its sufferers and disrupts the question of identity through erasure of familial ties. It further posits the possibility of reclaiming genealogy and how the restoration results in the formation of hybrid Hawai'ian identity.

**Keywords:** Hawai'ian-American literature; ecological Other; disease in literature; hybrid identity; postcolonialism.

## INTRODUCTION

The popular imagination of Hawai'i is often conceptualized as an idyllic tropical paradise in the middle of Pacific Ocean. Hall (2004) explains that contemporary tourism is being designed to attract tourists through picturesque place and exotic narrative. Hawai'i has long been promoted as "south seas paradise" (Sasaki, 2016, p. 623), a welcoming, safe, and attractive place for potential pleasure seekers. Besides the lush landscape and picturesque beaches, the commodification of indigenous customs, branded as 'aloha spirit' is marketed as the selling point. Ancient ritual dances and traditions such as the *hula* and various chants, singing and orature, originally performed as the praise for the divine nowadays are performed for tourist amusement. The Hawai'ian isle and its local inhabitants, the *Kanaka Maoli* ethnic group thus delegated under the banner of exoticism in which Hawai'i is designated to symbolize the pleasure-filled exotic Paradise. (Carrigan, 2009; Kay-Trask, 1993; Stepan, 2001). Until the present era, many tourist advertisements, brochures, websites and videos foreground the picturesque depiction of Hawaii's island scenery, beautiful beaches and water sports, which is complemented by the hospitality of the local islanders. Within this phenomenon, the islanders' presence is being symbolically atrophied, written out under the dominant

tourist-oriented discourse. This Hawai'i-as-paradise-trope designates this archipelago as an idealized timeless utopia without the existence of racialized conflicts and omitted historicity of Hawai'i as a post-colonial landscape.

The historicity of Hawai'ian archipelago and the Native Hawai'ians is intertwined with the legacy of Western colonialism and domination. This formerly sovereign nation has been historically annexed by the United States in 1900 following a coup backed by white sugar planters that overthrow the Hawai'ian native dynasty. Up until the present day, the Native Hawai'ians, or designated as Pacific Islanders by the United States are still subjected to marginalization by the dominant Whites. (Drager, 2012; Haley, 2016; Kuykendall, 1967) The situation faced by the Hawai'ian islanders can be seen as an example of internal colonialism in which the dominant majority in a particular nation enforces a policy of domination toward the less privileged ethnic group. Militarization of this island chain, highlighted by the existence of American naval base in Pearl Harbor, appropriation of *Kaho'olawe* island for a target practice of warships, and the close proximity of Native Hawai'ians toward nuclear exposure contextualizes the struggle Hawai'ians faced under American domination.

Several scholars have argued that the relationship between Hawai'ian indigenous people (*Kanaka Maoli*) and the White American settlers can be seen on a colonizing-colonized dichotomy. Firth (1997, p. 262) contextualizes that the term 'Native' is invented by the Western powers as a homogenous term to encompass the non-West which lacked essential Western virtues such as rationality, application, and foresight. Similarly, Malie (2017) proposes her idea of settler colonialism as a dynamic system of power which aims to dispossess, subjugate, and marginalize Indigenous peoples and agency. Under American-enforced Western belief, traditional Hawai'ian epistemology based on love and respect towards nature was branded as an example of paganism and resulted in the necessity of colonialism and implementation of Western values and religion. Not only physically dominated, the Native Hawai'ians are also mentally and ideologically colonized. They are forced to internalize Western knowledge system that alienated themselves from their ancestral tradition. The present state of Native Hawai'ians can be summarized through the following excerpt from a Hawai'ian nationalist, Haunani-Kay-Trask,

"Hawai'ians became a conquered people, their land and culture subordinated to another nation. Made to feel and survive as inferiors when their sovereignty as a nation was forcibly ended by American military power, we Hawai'ians were rendered politically and economically powerless by the turn of the century. Today, our people continue to suffer the effects of American colonialism even after the alleged democratization of statehood." (1991, p. 24)

Within the dominant Western discourse of colonialism that negates the existence of Native Hawai'ians, Hawai'ian-American literature becomes one avenue to articulate their agency. Their literature functions to represent the reality concerning indigenous' marginalization under dominant American socio-cultural hegemony. As previously stated, the imagination of Hawai'i as paradisaic islands through marketing initiatives in the form of tourist advertisement disempowered the agency of local islander through their inability to narrate in their own voice. Up until the 1950's, the majority of literature concerning Hawai'i remains exclusively written by the outsiders, visitors, tourists which are overwhelmingly white American, or *haole* in Hawai'ian terminology. Their literature mainly abides with the stereotypical imagination of Hawai'i as paradise and not addressing the issue faced by the indigenous people especially the legacy of colonialism. As is stated by Spencer (2010, p. 23), the Pacific has been too often delegated as mere backdrops, scene, and stage for the white writers' fantasies,

floating utopia and idealized paradise. It was only in the late 1950's and especially its peak during the *Hawai'ian Renaissance*, an event parallel with the Civil Right Movements in the United States during the 1960's that writers of Hawai'ian descents are finally able to articulate their voice through literature. (Ho'omanawanui, 2015)

Hawai'ian literature in this contemporary period is mainly written by either the Hawai'ians themselves or people identified either as local resident or mixed (*hapa-haole*). Hawai'ian literature, or Hawai'ian-American literature as it is defined under the Ethnic American literature can be defined based on geographical aspect (literature written by writers residing in Hawai'i) or thematic aspect (focusing on Hawai'i as its subject matter). Instead of writing in their native language/*Olelo Hawai'i*, English is employed as the dominant language and the preferred literary form is novel. As articulated by Ashcroft in his book *Post-Colonial Transformation*, "entering the discourse of English language, appropriating a foreign language, and taking the dominant tool of imperial representation – the novel form-" (2001, p. 35) illustrates the process of appropriation, in which post-colonial writers articulate their avenue for resistance through medium associated with imperial power. One Native Hawai'ian writer, Kiana Davenport asserts that writing in English provides an avenue to voice both the stories of her people and their struggle under Western domination. Critique towards the impact of Western colonialism and domination is addressed as a shared theme for many Hawai'ian writers such as Davenport herself, Oswald Andrew (O.A) Bushnell, Kristiana Kahakauwila, and Lynn Kanama Nakkim. Through her interview, Davenport asserts that

"Our history, forced and illegal annexation, imprisonment of our queen, total destruction of our kingdom and mass theft of our native land by the white sugar oligarchy – is a unique story in all the world.... Any contemporary Hawaiian writer either addresses that tragic history directly, or in the subtext of their novels. Native Hawai'ians', whether living at home or elsewhere in the world, carry those transgression in their hearts." (2018, p. 3)

A recurring theme in Native Hawai'ian literature concerning the traumatic impact of Western colonialism is the representation of leprosy epidemic from the late 19th until the early 20th century. This disease was believed to be brought by Chinese laborer imported by the plantation owners; hence leprosy was often coined as *Mai Pake* (Chinese sickness). (Amundson & Ruddle-Miyamoto, 2010). Leprosy rapidly spread outside the sugar plantations especially

in the Hawai'ian main island of O'ahu. Responding toward this epidemic, the Legislative Assembly of the Hawaiian Island passed "An Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy", signed by the then king, Kamehameha V in 1866. The law concerns with the establishment of a leprosy settlement for the isolation and seclusion of infected persons who were believed to be disease carrier in Kalaupapa, Moloka'i island. Often referred to in the nineteenth century as "a land set apart, a natural prison, or the grave where one is buried alive", exile in Molokai was thus associated with the death penalty. (Inglis, 2014, p. 615)

The spread of leprosy, the practice of exiling patients in Kalaupapa colony and the stigma associated with the sufferers and their family are attributed to colonial encounter. Russel (2006) remarks that one rationalization behind the policy of exiling leprosy sufferers is the fear of disrupting the blossoming sugar industry, mainly driven by American capital. The boundaries between individual and disease is blurred, in which the sick person is often denoted as "leprosy persons at large" and considered as a threat toward national and social purity. Infection with leprosy were considered as a criminal act in which permanent exile or incarceration of the sick individuals is justified. Stigmatizing and criminalizing leprosy amounted to homogenizing Hawaiians as leprosy carriers because the leprosy patients exiled to Molokai were overwhelmingly of Native Hawaiian origin and almost exclusively non-white. (Gussow, 1989, p. 87) Moreover, from American perspective, the presence of 'endemic tropical disease' in the newly acquired colony threatened the development of democracy, American economic interests and therefore the entire stability of the American colonial system. (Kern, 2010, p. 79)

The present study contextualizes the representation of leprosy in Hawai'ian literature through reading of three novels, James Michener's *Hawai'i* (1959), Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1995) and Alan Brennert's *Moloka'i* (2003). The stigma and harassment experienced by both its sufferers and their family were attributed toward the racialized view of leprosy which primarily impact indigenous people instead of White settlers. Furthermore, in the newly Christianized Hawai'i, the social stigma attached to lepers were associated with Biblical references that connotes leprosy as "an expression of the wrath of God." (2000, p. 234) The resulting paranoia that fueled the act of exiling lepers disrupts the Hawai'ian conception of extended family (*ohana*) and reciprocal relationship between human and the environment (*aina*) due to being conceptualized as the ecological Other. The disruption associated through lepers as unclean problematizes how Hawai'ian conceptualizes their

identity based on familial ties, genealogy, and attachment toward particular place. This paper explores the disruption caused by leprosy through the Hawai'ian cultural concepts of *ohana*, *aina*, *malama aina* (care for the land) and *pono* (well-being/balance) to underline the resulting disruption caused by leprosy. From the reading of the novels, it is foregrounded how the lepers are stigmatized as unclean ecological Other which foregrounds the necessity of isolation, and how traditional Hawai'ian belief manages to thrive under policy of segregation and enforcement of Western epistemology.

While not specifically focusing on Hawai'ian contexts and its representation of disease, disease and illness have been a prominent topic in literary analysis. A research by Kong (2018) based on his analysis of a Chinese novel, *Such is the World*, explores the repression of human rights in China during the SARS Outbreak. His argument concerns with the issue of biopolitics, the occurrence of epidemic is positioned as a pretext of emergency to be declared and the enactment of sovereign power. Another study by Carrigan (2010) explores how two novels, Barclay's *Melal* (2002) and George's *Ocean Roads* (2006) positions the nuclear Pacific as an example of disabling environment caused by imperialist military intervention. As the danger caused by nuclear radiation is consciously non-spectacular, the presence of afflicted citizens is kept away from public eyes. Lastly, Indriyanto (2020)'s reading of Kiana Davenport's *The House of Many Gods* (2007) explores Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, in which the Western colonial powers in Pacific archipelago is able to deny the agency of Pacific islanders suffering from exposure to toxic nuclear radiation. Furthermore, this situation is deliberately caused by imperial powers to kept the islanders in a constant state of disempowerment.

Summarizing the prior studies concerning how disease is represented in literature, this study establishes the novelty in conducting this research. From the thematic aspects, representation of leprosy remains a scarce topic in literary analysis as seen from the literature review. Furthermore, although Kong and Carrigan's study have explored the role of government and colonial powers through their regulation of disease, as far as this study is concerned, the topic considering the stigma associated toward disease by its fellow citizens remains open for discussion. The present study focuses on how Western perception of leprosy is internalized by the Native Hawai'ians themselves which leads into act of harassment and segregation toward their fellow kinsman. Moreover, as far as this study is concerned, the prior studies concerning disease in literature still do not explore how leprosy causes the disruption of

identity formation. These factors establish the novelty of the present study especially as reading of Hawai'ian-American literature remains a niche topic to explore.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On his book, *Mai'Lepera: Disease and Displacement in Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i* (2013), Inglis argues that leprosy in Hawai'i should be considered within the scope of Hawai'ian relationship between its inhabitants and the living world around them. Disease in a form of leprosy is seen as inhibiting the intimate relationship based on familial ties that considers the indigenous people and the land (*aina*) to be derived from a shared ancestor. This is illustrated through Inglis' assertion that "*Kanaka Maoli* are connected to the land and to each other through the parentage of *Wakea* -from whom all Hawai'ian genealogies stem as the ancestors of the Hawai'ian people." (2013, p. 10) As every aspect of Hawai'ian genealogies are linked holistically, it is the duty of the *Kanaka Maoli* as the younger sibling to take care of the land as their older relative as articulated through the concept of *malama 'aina* (care for the land). The paradigm that regulates human and non-human relationship in Hawai'i based on familial ties is illustrated in the following passage,

as in all of Polynesia, so in Hawai'i: younger sibling must care for and honor elder sibling who, in return, will protect and provide for younger sibling. Thus, Hawaiians must nourish the land from whence we come. The relationship is more than reciprocal, however. It is familial. The land is our mother and we are her children. (Kay-Trask, 1993, p. 7)

In return for the Native Hawai'ians' care for nature, it is believed that the land will in turn provide the necessity for sustaining living, thus achieving *pono* (well-being/balance). Within these cultural contexts regulating human and non-human relationship, leprosy is positioned as a disrupting factor for this idealized condition. As explored in the analysis, leprosy disrupts the idealized state of Hawai'ian identity pre-colonial contact and foreground the possible formation of a newer hybrid identity based on culture instead of race/blood ties.

Serpil Opperman's concept of ecological Other provides another avenue of contextualizing the stigma experienced by leprosy sufferers in Hawai'i. She argues that the people afflicted by contagious disease such as leprosy are often perceived as 'the Other', and subjected from prejudice and harassment due to their disabilities. In her words, "they are doubly victimized; their physical, material bodies often bear the costs of environmental exploitation, and their bodies are discursively perceived as threats to national, racial, or

corporeal purity." (Oppermann, 2017, p. 425) This associated threat to purity contextualizes the resulting stigma for leprosy patient in Hawai'ian society. They faced exclusion from the Hawai'ian conception of family (*ohana*), by being erased from family history all together. Ruddle (2010, p. 25) argues that the conception of Hawai'ian personal identity positions oneself within their genealogy (history), *ohana* (family) and its' *aina* (local/geographical home). By being erased from *ohana* and exiled from their *aina*, a leprosy patient was a nobody. The existence of isolated penal colony in Kalaupapa, Moloka'i illustrated the demarcation between healthy citizens in Hawai'i and the segregated leprosy patients in which the sufferers are no longer considered part of Hawai'ian society. Even so, the novels contextualize the possibility of preserving Hawai'ian tradition even under enforced segregation and the implementation of Western belief.

## METHODOLOGY

In relation to the object of the study, which is literature in the form of novels, the study is qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p. 77). The data had not been attained through the statistical procedures or through any other calculational forms but instead are taken from the literary works in the form of quotations, phrases, and utterances. Qualitative research is able to provide complex details with regards to the phenomena that had been difficult to uncover through quantitative method such as statistics. (Creswell, 2009, p. 19). The data were descriptive, in the form of written words that focuses on the exploration of human problems and social problems. The analysis is conducted through foregrounding several excerpts from the texts concerning stigma toward leprosy and the situation experienced by the lepers, observed through Hawai'ian cultural contexts and Oppermann's concept of ecological Other. Besides literature as the primary data, the present study also positions secondary data in the form of journals, articles, books, and essays to better contextualize how leprosy is represented in Hawai'ian-American literature.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The representation of leprosy has been a recurring theme in Hawai'ian-American literature, especially in James Michener's *Hawai'i* (1959), Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1995) and Alan Brennert's *Moloka'i* (2004) which are employed as the objects of study. The novels mainly dramatize how the physical disfigurement and disabilities caused by leprosy are associated with the social stigma, isolation, and

banishment to leper's colony. The lepers are castrated and considered as unclean or the ecological Other, which leads into their exclusion from Hawai'ian society and forced exile. Through their narration, the writers establishes that the policy of segregation is intertwined with colonial paradigm and apparatus of control under racialized disease. The novels further posit how erasure of lepers from familial genealogy disrupts Hawai'ian conception of identity based on bloodline and place-attachment, and the subsequent formation of a newer, hybrid Hawai'ian identity based on love and respect toward the environment.

James Michener through his novel *Hawai'i* (1959) foregrounds that the social stigma associated with leprosy causes greater suffering than the physical symptoms of this disease itself. The book mainly concerns with the early establishment of leper colony in Moloka'i, the Kalawao sanatorium and the lack of attention given by Hawai'ian authorities and Western-sponsored Board of Health. The following passage, narrated from the perspective of a Native Hawai'ian lepers exemplifies his fear toward the rapid physical degradation that dehumanizes himself and the inevitable slow death caused by banishment to Moloka'i.

"He was different from all men, for he was irretrievably doomed to die of the most horrible disease known to men. His toes would fall away and his fingers. His body would go foul, and from long distances it would be possible to smell him, as if he was an animal. He was a leper." (Michener, 1959, p. 479)

Michener contextualizes that by being afflicted with leprosy, an individual is stigmatized as the ecological Other, antithesis of the healthy body. European and American missionaries, dominating the Hawai'ian Board of Health considers leprosy, which primarily impact the Native population as a just punishment for corrupt and sinful non-Western society. Inglis argues that conventional Western stigma toward leprosy "transformed the normal colonized Hawai'ians into dehumanized lepers, doubly colonized them." (2013, p. 35) The subsequent passage from the novel *Hawai'i* illustrates the dehumanizing treatment experienced by lepers on Kalawao, as it is believed that they will inevitably succumb to disease.

Those were the days when the missionary advisers to the king, in Honolulu, argued: "We must not waste money on Kalawao." They instinctively thought: "Those with *mai Pake* will soon be dead. Why, really, should we waste money on them?" (Michener, 1959, p. 599)

Under this underlying outlook that dehumanizes the lepers, Michener depicts the inhumane treatment experienced by leprosy sufferers in Kalawao. "The

lepers had been thrown ashore with nothing except the sentence of certain death, and what they did until they died, no man cared. "(Michener, 1959, p. 588) Prejudices and stigma surrounding lepers as the unclean or ecological Other foregrounds the colonial policy of segregation and banishment. Within the guise of isolation for preventing the further spread of disease, Moloka'i leper colony represents a diverse apparatus of ideological and administrative mechanism in which the Western colonial knowledge and power is projected over diseased colonized bodies. The horror caused by leprosy disabilities is a pivotal factor in legitimizing the act of segregation, considered a threat toward national or cultural purity. (Amundson & Ruddle-Miyamoto, 2010). The practice of segregation, enforced by both Hawai'ian government and U.S colonial advisors attempts to restructure the archipelago's population in racial hierarchies, based on racialized labels that determine which are eligible for life or isolation and death. The power of regulating who lived and who died is a pivotal aspect within colonial operation to signify their domination upon the Natives. Without proper care, exile in Moloka'i resembles death sentence for the afflicted lepers, as seen from the subsequent passage,

"We have been thrown away by Hawai'i. No one care and we shall soon be dead.' There was no medicine for them. No bed, no care of any kind. They crawled along the beach of Kalawao and in God's due time, they died." (Michener, 1959, p. 589)

Different with Michener, Kiana Davenport through her novel, *Shark Dialogues* problematizes the impact of leprosy toward the erasure of lepers from family lineage, and the resulting disruption in Hawai'ian identity formation. As a society in which the preservation of knowledge, traditions, myths, and legends is derived through oral traditions such as naming pattern, genealogy plays an important role in Hawai'ian society. Genealogy helps Hawai'ians position themselves among familial ties and evoke a sense of place toward their birthplace, an important part in establishing Hawai'ian identity which is disrupted due to leprosy.

"in Polynesian society, genealogy is paramount, who we are is determined by our connection to our lands and to our families. Therefore, our bloodlines and birthplaces tell our identity. . . . This is who I am and who my people are and where we come from" (Kay-Trask, 1993, p. v)

Native Hawai'ians are expected to be able to recount their familial ties both from the paternal and maternal lines. In Hawai'ian tradition, a person's most treasured possession is their name, as naming preserves shared

history and one is often named based on their ancestors. Pukui remarks that “when a Hawai’ian name is bestowed, a connection is made, a story told, history preserved, someone honored, a hope expressed.” (1983, p. 15) This genealogy, determined both from bloodlines and birthplaces signifies that one’s personal identity in Hawai’ian conception is inseparable from familial ties and sense of place.

The removal of familial bonds by rejecting the children born from leprosy sufferers is narrated through the perspectives of two Native Hawai’ian characters, Pono and Duke Kealoha. After being inflicted with leprosy, Duke is forced to abandon his family and forcibly taken to Kalaupapa in Moloka’i. While at first his wife, Pono remains able to manage Kealoha’s abandoned coffee plantation in Kona, Hawai’i, harassment from the fellow villagers toward their children forced her away from this island. This episode is represented in the following excerpts,

She felt eyes examining her brood, heard a voice, loud, unforgettable. “. . . *kamali’i o ma’i Pākē*.” Children of leprosy. All over Kona District, people associate the Kealoha family with *ma’i Pākē*. Our daughters would be ostracized.” (Davenport, 1995, p. 164)

From the prior passage, it can be stated how the stigma toward leprosy sufferers is also associated to their descendants. The stigma derives from the belief that leprosy is unclean and contagious and their children is especially prone toward suffering the same disease. This phenomenon can be observed through the phrase *kamali’i o ma’i Pake* to designate children borne from lepers. As exile in Moloka’i is considered death sentence for its patients, many families choose to remove the existence of lepers from their familial history to avoid being associated with leprosy. The erasure of leper sufferers from Hawai’ian genealogy can be observed through the following excerpt:

“In Duke’s study, photo albums rendered faceless generations. Termites had consumed whole genealogies. She was thinking of all the lepers through the years, imprisoned, experimented on, abandoned. Wiped from their family genealogies. (Davenport, 1995, p. 191)

The erasing of lepers from familial genealogy problematizes identity formation in Hawai’ian society. In *Shark Dialogues*, Duke’s removal from the family genealogy causes his children to be alienated from their ancestry. Having no paternal line to be identified upon, Pono’s children are considered as *opala manuahi*/bastard. Handy & Pukui contextualizes the changing acceptance toward bastard/illegitimate child in Hawai’ian society through two terminology *po’o-ole*

(headless) or *maunahi* (free) which only appear in post-Christianized Hawai’i. (1958, p. 141) Their finding asserts that in the Christianized Hawai’i, bastardy was considered as a stain on the family lines and a bastard was unable to recognize their ancestry especially their paternal lines. This problem is also extended into Pono and Duke’s grandchildren, who grow up believing themselves to be *po’o-ole*/headless, without paternal figure in their family to identify upon. As previously explored by Ruddle, a person without genealogy is cut off from family/*ohana* and considered as a nobody.

The plot of *Shark Dialogues* revolves around Pono’s four grandchildren (Vanya, Jess, Ming, and Rachel), each half Hawai’ians/*hapa haole*, who return to their ancestral home in Hawai’i as their grandmother, Pono, is dying. The return of Pono’s offspring is intended to establish link to their ancestry and reclaim their genealogy after years of bastardy. It is later revealed that their grandfather, Duke is still alive, although disfigured and disabled due to years of leprosy. His return from Moloka’i, already dying from old age and afflicted with leprosy for decades represents the act of reclaiming ancestry and genealogy forcibly erased by the outbreak of leprosy. After years of isolation, Duke returns toward a much changing Hawai’i, in which the dominant population is no longer White or indigenous but hybrid, or *hapa-haole* instead. Reclaiming long-forgotten genealogy by the younger generation of Hawai’ians is followed by realization that the future of *Kanaka Maoli*’s identity is hybrid, as exemplified in the following passage:

“They held his gaze, each one, looking deep beyond the scars, the mutilation, looking deep within at who he was, and who they were. Transforming the blemish into a reassurance, Duke says,” You’re hybrids, all of you. You are what the future is.” (Davenport, 1995, p. 371)

The formation of hybrid Hawai’ian identity, as explored in *Shark Dialogues* problematizes how Hawai’ians perceive themselves. Kana’iaupuni (2004, p. 9) explores the existence of three integral aspects concerning Hawai’ian identity, genealogy, love toward the land and all its entities (*aloha aina*), and commitment to their extended family (*ohana*). In her conception, the notion of genealogy connecting the Hawai’ians to their ancestral past, *aloha aina* asserts their affiliation with their place of birth, and *ohana* situates the social commitment not only toward immediate family members but also to the wider *Kanaka Maoli* ethnicity. The disruption of leprosy, as seen in the erasure of familial ties and genealogy can be stated to alienate Hawai’ians from their ancestral heritage. Davenport stresses that even though

reclamation and reorientation of genealogy and history is possible, it is impossible to truly recover the original or authentic identity. This issue is articulated through Duke's return from Moloka'i in which he encounters his grandchildren, all *hapa-haole* instead of pure Hawai'ian blood. This perspective echoes postcolonial conception of identity, in which the search of the original, pure, authentic identity pre-colonial contact is ultimately 'elusive and non-existent' (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 137) as it has been altered by colonialism. Regarding Hawai'ian contexts, the disruption caused by leprosy and also the cross-cultural relationship among various ethnicities in Hawai'i such as the Asian immigrants, white settlers, and the Hawai'ians themselves resulted in the creation of a new hybrid identity. The central tenets of *aloha aina* and commitment towards the Hawai'ian conception of extended family still remain as integral part of Hawai'ian identity. It can be summarized how *Shark Dialogues* proposes to shift the Hawai'ian conception of identity from race/blood into culture, in which a reciprocal relationship to the land and its resident remain vital.

The novel *Moloka'i* (2004) by Alan Brennert contextualizes how leprosy is seen as a disease that segregates the afflicted individual both from familial ties and their ancestral land, or from both society and place. Brennert problematizes the issue of place attachment, in which the segregated lepers are isolated both from their family and land/*aina*, and how traditional Hawai'ian concepts concerning love and respect toward their environment managed to thrive even under enforced segregation policy and implementation of Western epistemology. This story is narrated from the perspective of Rachel Kalama, a Native Hawai'ian who was afflicted by leprosy since young age and had to be exiled to Moloka'i. Rachel and her family faced constant persecution and harassment from the neighbors before Rachel was eventually sent to Kalaupapa leper colony in Moloka'i. It is narrated that after being identified with leprosy, Rachel was not seen "as a six years old girl but as a teeming culture of *bacillus laprae* in the shape of a six years old girl." (Brennert, 2004, p. 36), echoing colonial paradigm that dehumanized lepers in Hawai'i. The following passage dramatizes how the lepers and their family, represented through the point of view of the Kalamas' family, are considered as unclean and dirty, or to quote Oppermann's terminology, "the ecological Other."

The following Sunday in church it was as though the family were surrounded by a bubble of air that pushed away anyone who strayed too close: friends and neighbors of long standing greeted them at a comfortable distance, smiling hello but always somehow on their way elsewhere. "That family's dirty." As though their home were a

filthy breeding ground for leprosy germs." (Brennert, 2004, p. 54-55)

The stigma designated toward leprosy, originated from Western missionaries and colonial authorities are internalized by the Hawai'ians themselves who began to consider their afflicted residents as unclean Other. The preceding passage illustrates the internalization of Western paradigm that blames the advent of lepers for the Hawai'ians' lack of cleanliness and sinful nature from the perspective of the Native Hawai'ians themselves. Under this paradigm, lepers are no longer embraced as part of Hawai'ian society and extended family/*ohana* but should be segregated and isolated instead as their presence endangered national purity. This paranoia fueled mass deportation of lepers to Kalaupapa in late 1890's, which is fictionalized in Brennert's narration from the perspective of Rachel Kalama.

In Hawai'ian contexts, leprosy is called "*mai ho'oka'awale 'ohana*" or disease that separates family. Different from Western perception of leprosy that focuses on the physical disfigurement and enfeeblement of sick individual, *Kanaka Maoli* primarily concerns with how leprosy and the resulting exile severe the individual's familial ties toward both family and land. As stated by Inglis, "Native Hawai'ian did not name the disease for what it physically did to their bodies, but rather for what it did to their *ohana*." (2013, p. 35), The departure of a steamship that will carry the patients to their leper's colony is accompanied by a chorus of lament, resembling a funeral. Brennert narrates the following passage as follows, "or had they died with yesterday's eve, at the time of their parting from families and friends?" (2004, p. 46) to illustrate how a person sent to Moloka'i is forever erased from their genealogy, considered to be deceased. It is explained in the novel that although at first Rachel's family keep on answering her letters, eventually she lost contacts with her family altogether. As is narrated by Brennert, "in Kalaupapa they had a word for it, *ho'okai*, to reject, be rejected" (2004, p. 42) to signify how the lepers in Kalaupapa are castrated from the outside world.

Although the lepers are excluded from social, familial, and cultural aspects in Hawai'ian society, Brennert narrates how the leper's colony managed to thrive. The existence of *mea kokua*, voluntary helpers to patients, regulates Native Hawai'ians' cultural role as caretakers and challenge the Western legislation of segregation for lepers without contact from other healthy Hawai'ians. In the novel, the character of Haleola, who is both a *mea kokua* and *kahuna lapa'au* (traditional medical practitioners), ensures the preservation of

Indigenous knowledge in Moloka'i within a closely regulated colonial apparatus of control. Instead of being segregated from Hawai'ians outside Moloka'i, the lepers are able to experience some resemblance of normality and working society. The lepers in Kalaupapa manages to acquire familial love and indigenous kinship, no longer derived from bloodlines but based on shared ancestry from the parentage of *Wakea* and the ensuring legacy of traditional Hawai'ian religious practices. Exile in Moloka'i becomes one avenue for younger generation to recover their ancestral tradition, blemished with stigma of paganism in Christianized Hawai'i. Being raised under Christian paradigm in her old life in Honolulu, Rachel is puzzled by the survival of traditional Hawai'ian worship in Kalaupapa, an episode narrated in the following quotation,

Rachel frowned. "Mama says there's only one God." Haleola sat down beside the ruins of the tiny shrine and smiled. "Well, maybe now there is. But not so long ago, people here prayed to lots of gods. There was a god of the sea; a god of mountains; a god of mists, and rain, and wind. There were even gods for things that you couldn't see: a god of healing, a god of sleep." (Brennert, 2004, p. 97)

Through Haleola's perspective as both *mea kokua* and *kahuna lapa'au*, Brennert foregrounds the continuation of ancestral Hawai'ian belief and way of living, even under Western domination and the enforced isolation of the lepers in Kalaupapa. Her interaction with Western missionary, Father Damien, articulates criticism toward Western proselytism and the resulting marginalization of traditional Hawai'ian respect toward their environment which manifested through various deities. The preceding passage underlines Brennert's critique toward colonial discourse that condescendingly positions the non-West as inferior other which becomes the legitimacy for the act of colonialism.

"You must understand," he said. "Christianity is an evangelical religion. It is our duty to share the glory of it. If I allowed someone to die without repentance, it would be as if I saw a man trapped in a burning house and made no effort to save him."

Haleola shook her head. "Your religion is all about being miserable, and wretched. Ours had time for play, and joy. How is this an improvement?"

Not wanting to like this man, Haleola said sharply, "You come here to show us the error of our ways. You treat us like children." (Brennert, 2004, p. 79)

As summarized in the prior passage, Brennert criticizes Western condescending attitude toward the indigenous Hawai'ian based on binarism of superiority and inferiority. As the local islanders were considered uncivilized, believing in various spirits and lack rationality, this conceptualization becomes the rationale behind eventual Western colonialism in Hawai'i. Under the dominant Christian paradigm, traditional Hawai'ian epistemology of human and non-human relationship is abolished altogether as a reminder of heathen pre-colonial period.

Although subjected under foreign epistemology and racialized control of leprosy that enforce segregation, traditional Hawai'ian culture managed to survive in Kalaupapa. In his novel, Brennert foregrounds this continuation of Hawai'ian beliefs during the funeral ceremony of Haleloa. Haleloa's funeral, conducted under traditional Hawai'ian rites illustrates the continuation of *Kanaka Maoli* tradition and affirmation of a holistic relationship between human and non-human in Hawai'ian cosmology. It is believed that deceased person will remain in the material world in the form of spirit animal (*aumakua*) to establish how leprosy does not manage to disturb the balance/*pono* that regulates the relationship between all aspects in Hawai'ian tradition. From this concept, it can be concurred that isolation in Moloka'i provides one avenue to reconceptualizes long-forgotten belief forbidden during Western colonialism and ensure the continuation of ancestral Hawai'ian belief founded upon love and respect of their environment.

"*Lawa, Pualani, eia mai kou kaikamahine, Haleola,*" she intoned somberly. (Lawa, Pualani, here is your daughter, Haleola!) Are you here, Auntie? she wondered. Have you taken the form of a shark in the sea, or a bird in the trees? Was this the farewell you would have wanted? (Brennert, 2004, p. 159)

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the representation of leprosy in selected Hawai'ian-American literature contextualizes the social stigma associated toward its sufferers, as well as how leprosy disrupts the Hawai'ian conception of identity and also foregrounds the possibility of reclaiming genealogy, history and ancestry lost due to leprosy. The stigma associated for lepers is intricated with colonial discourse towards the non-West and the policy of segregation functions as apparatuses of control and the enforcement of Western conception toward disease. Under Western paradigm, the afflicted lepers are dehumanized and only seen as the carrier of bacillus *laprae*, a racialized concept of disease which is also internalized by the Native

Hawai'ians. Stigma toward leprosy as the ecological Other leads into policy of erasing leprous person from familial ties and the resulting disruption toward identity formation as lepers were considered as a nobody, severed from both their family and alienated from their land/*aina*. The novels further posit the idea of identity reclamation and the resulting formation of hybrid Hawai'ian identity, in which the identifying factor is no longer race/blood but cultural ties based on respect toward the environment.

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