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CHARTING THE STAGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: ECOLOGICAL READING OF JAMES MICHENER'S HAWAI'I

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Abstract
This study analyzes James Michener's *Hawai'i* to underline how the environment was changed, altered and transformed over time based on differing paradigms of conceptualizing nature and environment. It primarily focuses on how the Native Hawai'ians, American settlers and Chinese immigrants have contrasting ways of perceiving the more-than-human world. The stages of environmental history, as underlined by Worster and Cronon argue how the differing paradigm is intertwined within the cultural contexts and socio-historical circumstances of a particular ethnicity in *Hawai'i*. Their paradigm manifested through social reproduction resulting from the mode of production, either instrumentalising or respecting the land. Moreover, race, social status and gender also problematize how the environment is conceptualized. From the perspective of environmental history, the environment is positioned as dynamic and changing, contrary to a prior depiction of nature as passive and static. The finding suggests that environmental perspectives in the novel *Hawai'i* can provide an avenue to reinterpreting human and non-human relationships by considering humanity as part of the natural world.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, environmental history, Hawai'ian literature

Introduction
The term Anthropocene, introduced by the Nobel Laureate in 2002, Paul Crutzen recognizes the advent of an epoch defined by the recognition of a global-scale impact of humanity on the natural environment. This term contemplates that human activity has become a global ecological force in its own right, or other world humanity has such a profound impact in altering the more-than-human world. As stated by Riordan (2007, p. 326), Anthropocene is a new geological epoch in which humanity emerges as a globally transformative species. Riordan's statement foregrounds the underlying scientific, technological and material progress as a driving factor behind the irrevocable transformation of the environment. In the Anthropocene era, it is necessary to provide environmental ethics as a parameter to regulate human and non-human relationships. Environmental ethics can be defined

as a systematic account of the moral relations between human beings and their natural environment. This concept argues how non-human entities should also be considered in the line with their ethical norms and considerations, previously a unique characteristic of humans (Desjardins, 2013, p. 17). Within a wider framework, the possibility for a more ethically oriented paradigm calls upon the refiguration of a stereotypical conception of the human as an active agent and nature as a passive, unchanging subject.

The introduction of Anthropocene as a terminology does not negate how humans have interacted with their environment even on a limited scale. Although the pivotal date for the rapid-scale transformation of human and non-human relationships can be traced to the scientific and industrial revolution from the 18th century onwards, humanity has been interacting with non-humans since time immemorial. From this timeframe of interaction, humanity is positioned as an ecological agent, both affecting and affected by the more-than-human world. Dürbeck et al conceptualize how "human choices are determined by specific cultural and material circumstances and their agency is nevertheless always part of larger cultural and material flows, exchanges, and interactions" (2015, p. 119). This perspective is founded upon the realization of a wide range of agencies, or agencies beyond the human and the resulting awareness that humanity should be construed 'ecologically', as co-participant within active ecological systems. The broadening of agency to incorporate the non-human, commonly misconstrued as a passive agent challenges the nature/culture dichotomy bias of Western thinking based on the supremacy of human agency (Adams, 2003, p. 17).

The prior exposition argues that the environment has always had a place in history although the environment, or nature, remains prone to be instrumentalized as an automata devoid of meaning for the benefit of the civilized (Western) human. Western paradigm, derived from the philosophy of Bacon, Descartes and Galilei abide upon a dualistic concept of reality, with humans as active and dynamic factors whereas nature is considered a passive and unchanging entity (Heith, 2022, p. 13). As nature was excluded from the human sphere, the natural world is objectified into a definable and controllable object of scientific fascination. The primacy of humans in Western thinking is the defining factor of the present state of environmental crisis and the necessity of reconceptualizing this paradigm (Oppermann, 2007; Plumwood, 2003; Spencer, 2010). Reinterpreting nature's position within the dominant human/anthropocentric history can be seen as an avenue for finding a more ecologically sustainable environmental outlook. The following passage posits Worster's idea of positioning nature as an active agent with an undeniable impact in shaping human history.

> "The natural environment is not really passive but is rather a powerful determining force throughout history. Nature is an active, decisive factor, a subject in history influencing available options and shaping development path" (1984, p. 5)

Worster's statement foregrounds the core premises of environmental history, an interdisciplinary study of humanity's interaction with the more-than-human world over time. Environmental history emphasizes the role of non-human factors in history, as a recognition that human beings are positioned as one component of the natural environment. In short, environmental history can be stated as an attempt to analyze the interaction between humans and nature either in the past, present

period, or contemplating the future. Besides focusing on the framework of disciplines that primarily examine the natural world, the focus of environmental historians is contemplating the sociocultural construction of several terminologies. One example is problematizing terms such as "nature" and "environment", diverse concepts across societal and cultural contexts. People's actions, how they cultivate the environment, adapt toward changing seasonal cycles and manage the natural resources have long shaped the perception of the non-human. As Freyfogle emphasized, a culture writes its name on land, from the ways they use nature, for all to see (2001, p. 8).

In humanities in general and literary studies in particular, the dominant outlook of environmentalism mainly discusses Anglo-American environmental writing based on the tradition of Emerson, Thoreau, John Muir and Aldo Leopold. This movement romanticizes the idea of wilderness, an idealized pure nature outside of human influence. Garrard argues how

> "Wilderness has an almost sacramental value: it holds out the promise of a renewed, authentic relation of humanity and the earth, a post-Christian covenant, found in a space of purity, founded in an attitude of reverence and humility" (2004, p. 59).

The prominence of the Anglo-American outlook results from the settler experience of colonizing the New World and its resulting consequences on the natural environment. The pristine and pure nature or wilderness becomes a pivotal role in shaping American national consciousness, as

> "Nature has long been reckoned a crucial ingredient of the American national ego. Ever since the American literary canon began to crystalize, American literature has been considered preoccupied with country and wilderness as setting, theme and value in contradistinction to society and the urban, notwithstanding the sociological facts of urbanization and industrialization" (Buell, 1995, p. 33).

The concept of wilderness is often associated with the sublime and the frontier has been imagined as a sacred realm without any human influences. Feldman and Hsu consider this paradigm as a dangerous fiction and misconception which hinders humanity to recognize what an ethical and sustainable human place in nature should be (2007, p. 201). By focusing only on picturesque landscapes and sublime sights to be preserved, nature closer to our perspective tends to be overlooked and undervalued. Similarly, Worster (1993, p. 3) criticizes the perspective of modern environmentalists that echoes the wilderness trope as a benevolent moral order existing outside human culture. This presupposition, deriving from the Anglo-American bias of wilderness tends to perceive nature with an a/anti-historical bias as if nature remains unchanged from the hundreds of years since earlier settlers' arrival. On the contrary, nature always changes and humans have intensively contributed toward these changes, either in beneficial or harmful ways.

It has been established that Anglo-American discourse of the environment, as the basis of modern environmentalism remains rooted within a binarism of human/non-human. On the contrary, the perspective of environmental history that seeks to erasure this human/non-human demarcation viewed wilderness as a cultural construct. Heise (2006) identifies that wilderness' connotation with the sublime and the sacred, started in the nineteenth century corresponded with the

displacement of indigenous people inhabiting areas designated for the creation of National Park. Feder, in support of Heise's argumentation, expounds how

> "The idea of wilderness has long functioned as a guiding metaphor for ecological thought; yet in recent years, many critics have challenged wilderness as a metaphor or model, and rightly so, on the grounds that it has served to "erase" human presences from the landscape in the service of economic exploitation (as in the American West), and continues to reinforce a conception of nature as static and separate from humanity." (2010, p. 5).

The novel *Hawai'i* (1959) by James Michener provides an avenue to contextualise an environmentally oriented approach in perceiving the shifting perspective of human/non-human interaction within the boundaries of ethnical and cultural diversity among various inhabitants of the Hawai'ian archipelago. The novel *Hawai'i* contextualizes the historicity of the titular isles under the backdrop of various civilizations that settles on its shores. The book begins with a vivid description of how these islands were formed due to volcanic activity and how various groups of settlers began inhabiting the Hawai'ian archipelago. Among such diverse ethnicities are the Polynesian/Tahitian seafarers as the first settlers in Hawai'i, White Anglo-Saxon missionaries and eventual businessmen and capitalists, and also Asian people from China, Japan, and Korea brought as labourers in the newly established sugar plantation and industry. The timeline of the novel which ranges thousands of years contextualizes how human and non-human relationships undergo changes over time due to differing socio-cultural aspects of perceiving the environment among a diverse groups of settlers in Hawai'i. This study mainly emphasizes the resulting conflicts among three ethnicities represented in the novel, the Native Hawai'ians (*Kanaka Maoli*), white settlers (*haole*) and people of Asian descent.

Prior studies on the topic of environmental history in general, Hawai'ian literature and the novel *Hawai'i*, in particular, have been addressed by several scholars. Bourlet and Lorin contextualize the production of Pulaar literature in Senegal which addresses territorial dispossession and the simultaneous processes of migration (2018, p. 522). Their finding addresses the engagement of literary resilience which preserves the geographical imagination of the Pulaar people within their dispossession from their ancestral home. Different from their study, this paper focuses more on the transformation of Hawai'i's ecological thought based upon the differing paradigm held by each ethnicity represented in the novel. Another study by Indriyanto articulates the manifestation of colonial ideology in the form of an anthropocentric outlook on Michener's *Hawai'i* (2020, p. 53). His finding problematizes the contrasting ideologies between the Hawai'ian indigene and the White settlers. Compared to a prior reading of *Hawai'i*, this study problematizes the existence of another ethnicity, the Chinese immigrants which hold a similar anthropocentric view that instrumentalizes nature. This discussion of previous studies positions the novelty of this paper among other research.

Method

Several scholars have articulated the basic premises of environmental history, most notably Worster and Cronon. In his article, "Doing Environmental History", Worster (1989) observes that environmental history functions on three levels:

nature by itself, human socioeconomic and intellectual realms, and their interaction and adaption with the natural environment. The first facet aims at understanding nature itself in the past, especially how nature was organized and functioned. It primarily focuses on the history of nature's ecosystem and tries to reconstruct the natural environment in the past. On his second level of environmental history, Worster catalyzes how environmental changes are perceived in relation to the historical modes of production. This facet expounds on the interaction between social conditions, the economy and the environment. Lastly, Worster focuses on analyzing the environment purely from a human perspective, regarding the mental and intellectual history of human attitude in perceiving the environment. A society's dialogue with nature can be observed through its myths, ethics, religions, ideologies, perceptions and scientific doctrine.

As later proposed by Cronon in his critique of Worster's three levels of environmental history, Worster's model tends to focus only on the material aspects and perceive human culture within a homogeneous framework. In Cronon's (1990, p. 1124) idea, understanding a mode of production is inseparable from the cultural contexts in which the mode is embedded, and the mode of social reproduction resulting from the mode of production. Cronon calls for the expanded model of social reproduction, regarding how families, societies, religions, and ideologies reproduce themselves from one generation to another, especially concerning environmental ethics and values.

Hence, historical causation between materialist and idealist forces is inseparable when dealing with environmentally focused history. Furthermore, the emphasis on a holistic analysis, in which nature and humanity are oriented as a whole to trace how interconnection develops discourages us "from looking as much as we should at conflict and differences within group of people" (Cronon, 1990, p.1128). A holistic approach in dealing with human relationships with the more-than-human world has the tendency to neglect conflicts and differences within groups of people differentiated through gender, race, or ethnicity. In short, Cronon expands upon Worster's idea of environmental history by emphasizing the social-cultural context concerning nature as a cultural construct. Nature might be perceived differently among different ethnic groups especially considering the role of gender, class, race, and power in problematizing human and more-than-human relationships.

The study is a qualitative literary study which provides the data in the form of quotations taken from the novel *Hawai'i* by James Michener. A qualitative study is intended "to explore and understand individuals/groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p. 97). The analysis is presented through underlying quotations from the text which explores the issue of environmental thought, primarily from the Hawai'ian indigene, White settlers and Chinese immigrants. The focus of the analysis is to underline how the representation of different ethnicities each have its paradigm in contextualising human and non-human relationships. Secondary data in the form of academic articles, essays, journals or books are provided to better contextualize how each ethnicity in the novel *Hawai'i* comprehends the position of humanity within a wider natural world.

Findings and Discussion

The novel *Hawai'i,* written by James Michener in 1959, the year when Hawai'i was officially integrated into the 50th state of the United States chronicles the historicity of Hawai'ian isles from the volcanic creation of the islands until 1954, a few years before Hawai'i was granted statehood. As this saga spans centuries and even millennia, it was the environment that remains a constant presence in the novels, while others ethnicities rise and fall within the turbulent state of Hawai'i as a political entity. The presence of the environment is dynamic instead of static, as it is irrevocably altered by years of landscape transformation conducted by diverse ethnic groups. The novel chronicles the development of Hawai'i from a geographically isolated island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean into a burgeoning U.S. state sustained by the tourism and sugar industry. At the beginning of the novel, a prologue depicting the evolution of the Hawai'ians islands, Hawai'i is portrayed as a timeless paradise with all the necessities to sustain future civilizations and only waiting for someone to discover and tame this Edenic paradise. The narration foregrounds how

> "valleys and sweet plains, waterfalls and rivers, glades where lovers would have walked and confluences where towns could have been built, the lovely island had all these accouterments, these alluring invitations to civilization. But no man ever saw them, and the tempting glades entertained no lovers, for the island had risen to its beauty long, long before the age of man; and at the moment of its greatest perfection it began to die" (Michener, 1959, p. 13).

It can be argued that representing the non-human through literature is problematic, "although humans can "speak a word for Nature…self-evidently no-human can speak *as* the environment, *as* nature, *as* a nonhuman animal" (Buell, 2005, p. 7). Hence, the representation of nature, either in literature or other fictional works is inseparable from an anthropocentric bias, in which our perspective towards the environment is projected in how the environment is represented. Hawai'ian isles, in the perspective of the unnamed narrator of Hawai'i, is instrumentalized only for its potential use for future human settlers, to quote the text "alluring invitations to civilization." This passage problematizes that nature has no meaning or inherent value by itself until humanity cultivates and transforms the non-human environment. The anthropocentric outlook in perceiving nature is further emphasized in how the narrator invites potential colonizers to invade the untamed Hawai'ian isles with food and courage and determination:

> "How beautiful these islands were! How shot through with harmony and peace! If paradise consists solely of beauty, then these islands were the fairest paradise that men ever invaded, for the land and sea were beautiful, and the climate was congenial. And so these beautiful, inhospitable islands waited for some breed of men to invade them with food and courage and determination" (Mitchener, 1959, p. 19-20)

Contrasting worldviews concerning human and non-human relationships as represented through different ethnic groups problematizes how the environment is perceived in the novel *Hawai'*i. These differing paradigms contextualize that the concept of nature and environment is perceived differently through differing socio-cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, in line with Cronon's assertion, race, class and gender role also plays a central role in shaping a worldview regulating human

position in the wider ecology as a whole. The conflicts mainly arise among three ethnic groups, the Polynesian settlers and their descendant; the indigenous people of Hawai'i (*Kanaka Maoli*), white (*haole*) missionaries and later capitalist plantation owners and businessmen. Lastly, for people of Asian descent, mainly Chinese in which Hawai'i provides an avenue for themselves to advance their social status.

Kanaka Maoli, following the tradition upheld by their predecessors, the Polynesians conceptualize a sense of deep reverence and respect toward nature under the epistemology of *aloha aina*. The love and respect toward the environment derive from a shared familial bond in which both the indigenous people and the land around them are both descendent of the parentage of *Papa* (earth mother) and *Wakea* (sky father). As articulated by Inglis, "*Kanaka Maoli* are connected to the land and each other through the parentage of *Wakea* -from whom all Hawai'ian genealogies stem as the ancestors of the Hawai'ian people" (2013, p. 13). This cosmology collectively recognizes the non-human entities as fellow beings in which the land/*aina* has a higher position due to their seniority as the elder siblings. In Polynesian society, upheld from the highest chief (*ali'i*) into the lowest class (*maka'ainana*), land should be respected and taken care of, as they already provide all the necessities for sustaining living. This is exemplified by an excerpt in which a high chieftain of the early Polynesian settlers, Tupuna disregards his high social status and offers his humility for the land around them:

> "At the head of the nervous column marched Tupuna, and whenever he came to a large rock, he begged the god of that rock to let him pass. When he came to a grove of trees he cried, 'God of the trees, we come in friendship" (Michener, 1959, p. 118).

This mutual dependency of human and non-human is founded upon the belief that all entities in the world, either living or inanimate possesses energy in the form of spiritual power (*mana*). Meyer argues that "in Western terms, it might be described as power, or an essence of God and godliness. *Mana* is part of the spiritual world, but felt in the material world" (2003, p. 124). This concept, derived from Polynesian cosmology provides an avenue to understand matter beyond human comprehension of the natural world such as natural phenomena and disasters. By acknowledging that each material aspect, either biotic or abiotic contains its agency in the form of *mana*, this paradigm challenges Western epistemology which instrumentalizes as an object to be exploited by a rational human. Furthermore, the concept of *mana* established a hierarchal society in which some people, such as high chiefs, learned persons (*kahuna*) or talented persons have a greater abundance of *mana* than others. Similarly, places such as volcanoes, waterfalls, craters, or stone formations are believed to possess *mana* in larger quantities. Through the naming of places, *Kanaka Maoli* acknowledges the living world around them, and cultural practices are interwoven within these place names. Kay-Trask explores how "in Hawai'ian culture, nature was not objectified but personified" (1993, p. 18).

The novel *Hawai'i* situates one personification of nature through the figuration of *Pele*, the volcano goddess whose eruption threatens the city of Lahaina in Maui. To prevent the eruption from happening, the high chiefess Noelani tries to appease Pele's wrath by appealing for her mercy and clemency. These passages underline that the *Kanaka Maoli* acknowledges the sovereignty of the volcano and

not the other way around, as humans are powerless under the agency of natural forces and phenomena. Furthermore, Noelani's proclamation that she was "a daughter of Pele" echoes how nature is personified as a female deity, the depiction that challenges stereotypical gender roles constraining the non-human as objectivized female body (Moore, Araica, & Ruíz, 2008). The personification of Peel is narrated as follows,

> "she was a daughter of Pele, one in whose family the very being of the goddess had resided, and now, returning to the suzerainty of the fire goddess, Noelani planted her feet before the on-surging lava and decided that here she would stand and if need be, die. Holding the sacred rock of Pele aloft, she cried, "Pele! Great goddess! You are destroying the town of those who love you! I pray you to halt!" (Michener, 1959, p. 408)

Hawai'ians' respect toward nature as their familial members based upon the belief of shared lineage is contrasted with Western epistemology, articulated through the portrayal of American missionaries and capitalist plantation owners. The arrival of Westerners since the discovery of Hawai'ian islands by James Cook in the late 18th century problematizes the reductionist view of nature based on the Western paradigm. This anthropocentric view aligns with colonial discourse which contextualizes the Hawai'ians' reverence toward the more-than-human world as a sign of their backwardness and anathema with Christian teaching. This "complex of signs and practice that organize social existence and social reproduction" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013, p. 50) is founded upon binary opposition that legitimizes Western superiority in which control of the natural world is one key element in their tenets. The arrival of American missionaries, as articulated by the depiction of Abner Hale is intended to solidify the Western outlook upon the seemingly backward and pagan *Kanaka Maoli*, as is seen in the following excerpt.

> "Abner closes his eyes, raised his head toward the grass roof, and cried in the voice that Ezekiel must have used when addressing the Jewish elders: 'the islands of Hawai'i will live under these laws, for they are the will of the Lord God Jehovah" (Michener, 1959, p. 333).

Western anthropocentric discourse considers Hawai'ians' ancestral tradition as pagan and superstitious irrationality not based on scientific observation. Hale forces the Hawai'ians to remove their place of worship, in the form of a small temple (*heiau*) built from stone to honour their ancestors. In Hawai'ians' epistemology, people who have died did not ascend to heaven as is believed in Judeo-Christian tradition but they remained in the mortal realm in a different form, as spirit animals (*aumakua*), might be manifested in a shark, owl, or bird, selected plants or even rocks (Barrow, 1999). Hence in Hawai'ians' perspective, taking care of their environment affirms their acknowledgement that their spiritual ancestors remain in their surroundings (Mcgregor, 2007, p. 14). The arrival of Western powers problematizes this paradigm by offering a contrasting view of nature. . It is narrated in the novel as follows

> "we shall have to remove the stone platform. In this world there is room either for God or for heathen idols. There is no room for both" (Michener, 1959, p. 260).

Within the dominant Western outlook which instrumentalized nature, the Hawai'ian landscape was transformed into a capitalist-driven industry. In line with what Oppermann coins as ecological imperialism (2007), a large tract of Hawai'ian

soil is altered to support the growing sugar industry. As stated by Haley, the existence of the sugar industry fundamentally altered both the Hawai'ian ecology and its population demographic (2016, p. 90). One pivotal event in Hawai'ian history, the *Mahele* (land divide) from 1848-1851 enables the acquisition of land to lay the foundation of the sugar economy, an act which ensured the dominant *haole* economic and political powers. It was stated that although in 1856 only 209 of 15.514 land claims were held by foreigners, by 1886 two-thirds of all government-allocated land was owned by the Whites (Kent, 1983). The portrayal of Hoxworth Hale, a sugar plantation owner descendant of the early missionaries dramatizes capitalist ethos in the desire to transform the untamed landscape into economic capital. His perspective contextualizes the transformation of the arid and barren landscape around the island of O'ahu into watered land suitable for sugar plantation, as seen in the preceding passage;

> "When he had control of six thousand acres of barren soil, he hired two hundred men and many teams of mules and with his own money launched the venture that was to transform his part of O'ahu from a desert into a lush, succulent sugar plantation (Michener, 1959, p. 544).

The capitalistic paradigm originated from the desire to conquer and cultivate non-human entities and is intended to maximize the profit from one's business through the exploitation of both the landscape and the labour force needed to sustain the industry. This paradigm creates a stark demarcation between rational Western people who considered themselves outside the domain of nature, and passive and objectified nature, ripe for plunder and conquest. The indigenous people were considered to forfeit their legitimate claim of ownership of their land possession due to their inability to develop and maximize their property. This results in joint oppression between the indigenous people and the land they inhabited, as Estok puts it,

> "The ideology of capitalism and capitalist ideas of acquisition and plunder, profit and growth, and exploitation and control are obviously integral to the joint colonialist exploitations of people and land" (Estok, 2013, p. 228).

The growing sugarcane industry created the necessity for a cheap source of labour forces, a driving force behind the immigration of Asians to the Hawai'ian archipelago. The first sugar plantation was established in 1835, and within two decades Asian labourers, mainly from Japan, China, Korea and the Philippines became the primary labour force. Among these ethnicities, it was the Chinese emigrated to Hawai'i and the mainland United States in large numbers, around 46.000 between 1852 and 1899 alone (Okamura, 2008). Although subjected to discrimination within a racialized Hawai'ian socio-economic sphere dominated by Whites Chinese immigrants in Hawai'i generally fared better compared to their counterparts in the U.S. While around 30 % of the Chinese immigrant returned home after finishing their plantation labour contract, the majority were able to urbanize in cities such as Honolulu and having business and residential endeavour (Nordyke and Lee 1989).

Tsin's story echoes the socio-historical upward mobility of the Chinese community in Hawai'i as they managed to establish themselves in downtown Honolulu, the area later known as Chinatown. Later in the 20th century, as war broke up in the Pacific, Tsin managed to expand her business by acquiring property

abandoned by the *haoles* as they escaped to the mainland after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The preceding passages further illustrates the intertwined nature between land ownership and the social mobility of Chinese immigrant in Hawai'i,

> "Land," Nyuk Tsin replied with the terrible tenacity of a Hakka peasant who had never known enough land. "As the frightened haoles ran away, we must buy all the land they leave behind" (Michener, 1959, p.875).

The contrasting environmental perspective among three ethnic groups in Hawai'i can be broadly differentiated into an anthropocentric and biocentric view of the more-than-human world, particularly concerning how land is perceived. Hawai'ian concept of land or *aina*, the literal translation is 'that which feed' conjures a sense of birthplace and homeland in which their relationship to the land derives from familial ties. On the contrary, settlers and immigrants to Hawai'ian isles are primarily motivated by the potential values of the untamed Hawai'ian landscape to advance their social or economic status. Ho'omanawanui criticizes what he considers to be the 'settlers' ideology' of White Americans and Asian immigrants to view Hawai'i "as a commodified resource, not as an ancestor, a picturesque setting for people-centred stories" (2008, 122). In other words, the non-human world remains a backdrop or setting for the struggle of settlers coming to the Hawai'ian isles in the foreground. The Whites perspective of the environment can be read as an apparatus of Western colonial discourse which correspondents with the exploitation of the colonized periphery for the benefit of the civilized colonizer, while Asian-American success story in Hawai'i is founded upon the acquisition of commodified land as property.

These differences in representing the environmental perspectives occur because both ethnic groups are operating from different cultural paradigms, language bases and socio-historical circumstances. While the domination of these aforementioned ethnic groups derived from their exploitation and acquisition of commodified land, the struggle of Hawai'ian indigenous people as an ethnic group directly correlates with their absence of agency and sovereignty over their homeland. As Kay-Trask puts it,

> "The issues before Hawaiians are those of indigenous land. cultural rights, and survival as a people. In contrast, the issues before "locals" have merely to do with finding a comfortable fit in Hawai'i that guarantees a rising income, upward mobility. and the general accoutrements of a middle-class "American" way of life. Above all, "locals" don't want any reminder of their daily benefit from the subjugation of Hawaiians. For them. history begins with their arrival in Hawai'i and culminates with the endless re-telling of their allegedly well- deserved rise to power. Simply said, "locals" want to be "Americans" (2000, p. 20)

An environmentally oriented analysis of James Michener's *Hawai'i* contextualizes the environment as dynamic forces, not just a static setting or backdrop for human conflicts, struggles and dramas. The historicity of the development of the human and non-human relationship is problematized through various factors such as socio-cultural filters, race, gender, and class which affected how a given culture interacts with the environment and vice versa. The novel dramatizes the shifting perspective from an ecologically sustainable perspective of the indigenous people into an instrumentalized outlook of land as a commodity through the settlers' arrival. In line with Worster and Cronon's idea of

environmental history, the analysis of socioeconomic factors and intellectual and imaginative facets contextualizes the contrasting idea of the human-non-human relationship between the Hawai'ian natives and Western and Asian settlers. Within settler/native binarism of contrasting environmental outlook, both the Hawai'ian landscape and the indigenous people were subjected toward domination under a paradigm and ideology that seeks to conquer and exploit nature for the benefit of civilized humans.

Conclusion

This study analyses James Michener's *Hawai'i* to underline how the environment was changed, altered and transformed and the ensuing changes in how people perceived their natural world over time. By focusing on the different environmental perspectives among diverse cultures and ethnicities that inhabited the Hawai'ian archipelago, this paper posits how each group contextualizes their differing interpretations of the term 'nature' and 'environment'. In line with Cronon and Worster's stages of environmental history, this study contemplates that these differences are intertwined with cultural contexts and socio-historical circumstances of a given culture, in how they interact with the environment. Furthermore, the questions of race, social class and gender helped to shape an understanding of the natural world. It further reveals the role of humans as an ecological agent with their agency to shape the environment, for better or for worse. This emphasis on human agency should be considered not as placing humanity outside the sphere of nature that seeks to conquer and exploit it, but instead within the domain of the natural world, to challenge the culture/nature dichotomy of the Western world.

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