

Productive narratologies of convergent sf

Bumpy Kanahēle's utopic genre modalities of Hollywood film and television

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This article examines how a Native Hawaiian activist's inventive self-representational tactics, deployed within corporate mass media, have enriched North American pop-culture discourses on the Kanaka Maoli independence movement. Analysis focuses on the convergent (that is, transmedial or purposefully cross-medial) self-representational efforts of Dennis 'Bumpy' Pu'uhonua Kanahēle, who rose to fame as one of several notable organisers in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement during the 1990s. Several film and television texts became targets of Kanahēle's indigenous media interventions into commercial cinematic genre storytelling across different narrative platforms beginning in the 2010s. Applying a utopian reading that brings out Kanahēle's Indigenous Futurist interventions, this article offers readings of the theatrical feature film *Aloha* (2015) and a 2017 episode of *Hawaii Five-0*. Both texts visually focalise Pu'uhonua o Waimānalo, the land base of Kanahēle's sovereignty movement known as the Nation of Hawai'i, which gets positioned within these narratives as a Kanaka Maoli utopia providing refuge for indigenous Hawaiians away from the predation of both rampant capitalism and Western empire.

Keywords: Indigenous Futurism, genre theory, Native Hawaiian, scripted television, screen-writing, film narratology, authorship, creative labour

Towards sf as convergent-media activism

I regard the term *utopia* with great ambivalence, as a third-generation Japanese-American settler raised in Hawai'i, a politically and discursively contested set of islands in the Pacific Ocean long associated with Western notions of 'paradise'. However, my goal in writing this article is not to deconstruct that Pacificist trope – to contrast the land's paradisiacal image in travel-industry ads with the historical reality of long-time labour and even longer anti-colonial struggles – but to highlight indigenous participation in mass media, especially given recent high-profile digital and documentary expression by indigenous Kānaka Maoli or Native Hawaiians within the global news coverage of the Kū Kia'i Mauna, Maoli protectors of the Hawaiian ecosystem who assert their Native governance over it.¹ Armed with Kapu Aloha, a nonviolent resistance

1. In this paper, I use the adjectives 'Native Hawaiian', 'indigenous Hawaiian', 'Hawaiian', 'Kanaka

strategy that pedagogically encourages agents of oppression to rethink their unethical actions, multiple generations of Kia'i face off against the US settler state and its violent security forces, as the activists peacefully block that state's latest construction of ecologically destructive, administratively mismanaged telescopes on the summit of Mauna Kea on Hawai'i Island so as to protect the sacredness of Hawaiian land and execute their never-relinquished sovereign rights.²

The fight by the Kia'i against the expansion of the Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory (TMT) across the richly legendary Mauna Kea, as well as related Maoli demonstrations subsequently ignited across the island chain,³ parallels justice movements of indigenous environmental defenders in the North American continent (such as the Sioux protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline) and Latin America (such Brazilian Native communities featured in the 'burning Amazon' deforestation news, whose resistance risks violent responses by the paramilitary forces of *comprador* security states that enforce pro-development agendas of globalisation) to reverse the effects of the Anthropocene era by challenging colonial resource management and its military-industrial exploitation of the environment. Viewing these movements as contiguous with the blossoming of Indigenous Futurism (see, for instance, Dillon's *Walking the Clouds*), I argue that global indigenous technocultural and sociopolitical practices form the evolving foundation of indigenous sf texts and that sf studies must hone expertise in organisational and productive – not only textual-discursive – dimensions of the human experience. I further posit that in this time of tremendous sf textual production by global mass media corporations, in order to fight against the capitalist impulse to devolve thriving communities of people into addictive consumers hooked on the relentless circulation of such texts across multiple information and

Maoli' (Kānaka as the plural noun form), 'Kanaka' and 'Maoli' interchangeably. Following contemporary scholarship of the islands, words in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, the Hawaiian language, are not italicised. Anglicised Hawaiian words do not contain diacritical marks (e.g. 'Hawaiian' not 'Hawai'ian'); however, if the form remains Hawaiian, diacriticals are used. For instance: Whether noun or adjective in official textual titles, 'Hawai'i' should include the 'okina, so if textual usage excluded this mark (e.g. *Hawaii Five-o*; 'The Untitled Hawaii Project'), I annotated the first in-text mention with '[sic]' (except for bibliographic first mentions) and thereafter left the word as the authors or producers spelled it.

2. For critical media perspectives on the Hawaiian community movement against further construction of the TMT, see Alegado, Fox and Prescod-Weinstein, Muneoka, Mauna A Wākea and Neilson.

3. For related Kanaka Maoli struggles against the settler state's partnership with 'environmental' capitalism and this partnership's overdevelopment of oceanic and coastal ecosystems, see Bernardo and also Downey.

communication technology platforms (ICTs), we need to shift our focus from the deconstruction and exegesis of sf textual meanings towards artistic and political tactics adopted by community members in imaginatively and pro-actively producing such works. In this article, I examine how a Native Hawaiian activist's inventive self-representational tactics, deployed within corporate mass media, have enriched North American pop-culture discourse on the Kanaka Maoli independence movement, expanding the mainstream US audience's critical awareness of the severely unequal relationship between indigenous Hawaiians and their land's foreign occupying force since 1898.

Specifically, my analysis focuses on the convergent (that is, transmedial or purposefully cross-medial) self-representational efforts of Dennis 'Bumpy' Pu'uhonua Kanahele, a small businessman and healer in the Kanaka Maoli community of O'ahu who rose to fame as one of several notable organisers in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement during the 1990s. Several film and television texts became targets of Kanahele's indigenous media interventions into commercial cinematic genre storytelling across different narrative platforms beginning in the 2010s, among them two under discussion in this article: 1) the theatrical feature film *Aloha* (Crowe US 2015), a romantic drama, and 2) 'Ka Laina Ma Ke One' ('Line in the Sand', 20 Jan 2017), an episode of cop/spy action-dramedy *Hawaii [sic] Five-o* (US 2010–20). Both texts visually focalise Pu'uhonua o Waimānalo, the land base of Kanahele's sovereignty movement known as the Nation of Hawai'i, which gets positioned within these narratives as a Kanaka Maoli utopia providing refuge for indigenous Hawaiians away from the predation of both rampant capitalism and Western empire.

Kanahele's tactical use of his own cinematic and televisual labour towards textual production within what many would consider the modern-colonial rather than indigenous ICTs of genre film and television, constitutes Native political work to challenge corporate media's industrial practices that assert imperial sociogeographies discursively, practices that aim to represent indigenous land as exploitable 'production locations' for settler audio-visual consumption. Kanahele, following Hawaiian ancestors who over a hundred years ago had used the 'Western' print-newspaper ICT to spread anti-colonial resistance by documenting and spreading the word against encroaching colonisation by white-settler businessmen and missionaries and by the US state (during which time the Kingdom of Hawai'i also grew into one of the most print-literate nations on the planet), performed development- and production-stage emotional labour to bring the Kanaka 'Ōiwi notion of pu'uhonua, defined by Ulukau Hawaiian Electronic Library as 'place of refuge,

sanctuary, asylum, place of peace and safety', into the audio-visual frame of these commercial mass media ICTs. In occupied Hawai'i, where the US settler state deploys military, economic and sociopolitical structures to threaten Hawaiians' deep relationship with their ancestors and spiritual source, the 'āina (in a secular settler framework, the land or environment), contemporary Hawaiian practices of pu'uhonua constitute ethical, embodied reassertions of Native values, language, perspectives and worldviews, eclipsing abstract sf notions of utopia due to their groundedness in continuous genealogical and cultural practice of caring for the 'āina.

Today, notable film and television texts considered sf, those blockbusting, IP-branded tentpoles for studios and streaming services, remain chiefly 'authored' for the screen – that is, attributed as written-directed and/or showrun – by elite male media-makers, largely auteurs from racial majorities raised in the global North.⁴ Contravening the market-based categorical logic of industrially designated genre labels, I identify how the (in this case) indigenous contribution of sf narrative modalities to generically complex commercial forms can be considered a kind of cultural activism. Examining sf modalities within texts, so as to foreground both representational and industrial struggles of the non-hegemonic workers who had produced those unmarked genre moments, movements and memes, can diversify and decolonise the study of speculative expression in global creative industries positioned within a worldwide division of labour. In our field of sf studies specifically, it is crucial to note that not everyone who contributes science fictionality to a text wields the privileged label of popularly anointed 'auteur' to whom sf authorship gets attributed; however, sf narrative contributions are made by an unrecognised legions of diverse workers and low-level managers within the creative industries, heightening textual form and broadening textual content, every day.

My methodology proposes Indigenous Futurism as more than just a cultural or geopolitical subgenre of sf, more than circumscribed sets of indigenous texts and related historical contexts – that is, more than something fixed and consumable via institutionalised textuality. Indigenous Futurism can also encompass critical and creative practices through which indigenous actants use mass media and other modern expressive technologies to perform a richly productive cultural agency, demonstrating what Anishinaabe literary theorist Gerald Vizenor might call *survivance* (which I, in my academic settler language, comprehend as sociocultural, tribal or national survival through the

4. I addressed the social stratification of Hollywood sf film and television auteurs (somewhat) in the previous issue of this journal (Yoshinaga 2020).

presence/persistence of individual Natives who despite being outnumbered or forced into colonial conditions, steadfastly retain collective knowledge and behaviours) or might view as an opening of *potentiality*, which I understand as the indigenous micropolitical reading of, and response to, emergent situations rife with expressive, ethical or agentic possibility.⁵ Indigenous survivance and potentiality are enacted futuristically even within, for instance, the dominating ICT structures of empire – here, the exploitative, abusive, discriminatory industrial labour market of Hollywood. By focusing on Kanahele as behind-the-scenes co-author of narratively complex works, especially on how his limited economic participation in Hollywood production processes has aided in the transmedial distribution of cinematic motifs about indigenous governance and Hawaiian political independence to mass audiences, in effect judiciously reworlding these viewers' default-colonialistic image of Hawai'i's relationship with the US, I conceptualise twenty-first-century sf media as a technocultural ethos that storifies the productive potentiality of recalibrating hegemonic ontologies.

Productive narratologies of 'screen writing' cinema: Kanahele co-authors *Aloha*

What I call a 'productive approach to cinematic narratology' can be used to demonstrate how sf textualities are constructed through the creative conventions of *screen writing*. Screen writing (as opposed to the solely written-text-based, one-dimensional 'screenwriting' as one word), also called scripting, is used by screenplay theorist Steven Maras to denote not only the writer's or writer-director's seemingly fixed set of single-auteurial narrative choices (as manifested, say, in a screenwriter's shooting script or in a 'director's-cut' Blu-Ray). These choices appear final and univocal as a cohesive singular vision, but in fact capture the whole collaborative and messy mediamaking workflow including 'improvisation, notation, creation and interpretation, structure and production' (170) which reflects multiple cinematic dimensions of cinematography, physicality/corporeality, lighting, movement, pacing/editing (171–2), and so on, constantly re-valued and re-negotiated in the industry job market

5. In my use of 'potential' and 'potentiality', I am indebted to Vizenor's rejecting the 'thick description' of Clifford Geertz (an anthropological method producing 'thin semiotic' textual representations of Native actions which force closure of meaning) in favour of Giorgio Agamben's political strategy of focalising 'gestures', events that reference the past with an ethos and that thus do not restrict meaning through representation (3–4).

between director, writer/s, producers, media corporate management and crew as production and distribution proceed, thus reflecting multiple forms of authorial labour. Like the commentary track on a DVD/Blu-Ray, this approach offers information on various media-makers' considered artistic options for, and actual production conditions of, the studio/network (aka 'produced') versions of filmic or televisual episodic moments (including theatrical but also other official cuts).

Though some film and television narrative scholars touch upon preproduction decisions, such as effective plotting within a three-act structure or alternative adaptations of popular stories (see, for instance, Mittell (2017)), major cinematic narratologists tend to focus on a 'main' version of the official text as their research subject (see Bordwell (2008); Verstraten (2009)), minutely decoding that text's filmic execution (*discours*, the specific narration or plot; *syuzhet* from Russian formalism), rather than on alternative versions or deleted/replaced scenes in order to grasp possible variants of the ongoing story (*histoire*, the larger, popular-cultural or general narrative; the Russian *fabula*) from which screen artists might have selected and then constructed the produced versions. Their analyses are not centred around evaluating the relative wisdom of artistic choices made from a wider set of options or around thematic and formal expressive opportunities foregone regarding a specific text, with those elements presented mainly as colourful asides to provide context for the official version. They avoid folding into their narratology how *collaborative* production processes, the contested and contingent development of the screen story, might shape the cinematic form itself, which they view as static rather than evolving with possibility. I offer as a kind of 'screen writer' Kanahale, rebel Maoli leader and tactical negotiator with the US settler state, who in the early 1990s trained himself as a savvy media pundit, mastering the art of speaking through compelling sound bites over local Hawai'i print and broadcast ICTs, in order to advance the longer historical cause of Hawaiian independence among Americanised/sceptical Asian and Caucasian settlers. By the 2010s, Bumpy Kanahale learned to assert his expressive power as one among multiple authors of national (US) mass media texts in the most unlikely way: during the production of box office and critical bomb *Aloha*,⁶ written and directed by acclaimed white-male auteur Cameron Crowe. The movie centres on a complicated friendship between a jaded, white, male military contractor

6. Box Office Mojo estimates that *Aloha* cost US\$37 million to produce, compared to its US\$26.25 million worldwide box office haul. In industry analyses, films are seen as profitable if they gross at least three times their production budgets ('Aloha').

burnout from the US continent and a hopeful, young, Native Hawaiian female United States Air Force captain, mixing 'Hawaiian' folkloric fantasy modes with New Wave speculative-fictional themes in order to criticise the privatisation of space by global capital.

Aloha is a patronising, colonialist movie: its liberal white-settler racism, pro-military-and-tourism-industrial-complex apologism and dodgy casting of a major Native Hawaiian character (US Air Force Captain Allison Ng, also written as a quarter Chinese and half Swedish, though those two ancestries bear no relevance to the film's key theme of her Kanaka Maoli genealogy and strong cultural identification with those Hawaiian roots) with white actor Emma Stone are well documented in film reviews and scholarly blogs.⁷ The film was unanimously panned in every major category of film reception. Audiences, for instance, gave the film an anaemic 'B-' Cinema Score (Lee n.p.) and a 27 per cent audience score on Rotten Tomatoes, whose critics during the movie's initial release gave it an 18 per cent 'rotten' average, which after DVD/Blu-Ray/streaming distribution plateaued at 20 per cent. Even executives at *Aloha*'s studio, Sony, were revealed to have called the original script 'ridiculous' and apparently bemoaned what they had perceived as uber-producer Scott Rudin's failure to correct Crowe's storytelling (Boot n.p.).⁸ When I viewed it, I found myself mortified at the ways the writer-director's performance direction and staging constantly undercut performer Stone's delivery of Crowe's own authored dialogue about her character's Hawaiian identity, through the generic *mise-en-scène* of screwball comedy. For example, in a critical exchange where Stone as Kanaka Maoli Ng confronts work colleague Brian Gilcrest (A-list movie star Bradley Cooper in the white-saviour protagonist role) about his complicity with the US military-industrial complex, she accuses that new lover of lying to her so that she in effect had made false promises to her fellow Hawaiian community members. This climactic moment of her speech which ends in the potentially powerful exclamation '(A)nd I'm Hawaiian!' tonally lands like a tantrum from a rom-com.⁹

Despite these deeply troubling patterns of race and gender representation, *Aloha* is unexpectedly the first scripted Hollywood movie in which a character

7. For an excellent summary of the whitewashing controversy from a Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, rather than an Asian American, perspective, see Hinemoana of Turtle Island, a collective that expressed major indigenous Oceanic criticisms of the movie.

8. For more on the contempt that Sony executives apparently felt towards *Aloha*, see Stern.

9. In that scene, Crowe first makes Gilcrest place on Ng's head an ironic 'sunglass' bucket hat that covers her face so as to block her visual authority, leaving her looking humiliated before she launches into a speech on her indigenous identity and political beliefs.

(also named Bumpy Kanahale, with the activist playing a fictive version of himself) mentions the word ‘occupation’ to represent Hawai‘i’s political status in relation to the United States. It is also the first mainstream feature film to display prominently the upside-down Hae Hawai‘i or Kingdom of Hawai‘i flag with the Union Jack hanging at its bottom, a defiant global symbol of the contemporary Kanaka Maoli sovereignty movement and a historical reminder of the legitimacy of Hawaiian claims for independence.¹⁰ As Stone’s Ng explains, the flag is a ‘symbol of a nation in distress’. Additionally, despite his brief screen time as a side character (amounting to less than 15 minutes total of the one-hour-45-minute running time), Kanahale serves as the moral centre of the film by essentially playing himself (aka ‘the King’, a fictitious label dreamed up by Crowe).¹¹ In the first act, he performs the charismatic role of Kanaka leader Uncle Bumpy to whom the Hawaiian Captain Ng makes an impassioned promise that her USAF leadership will not allow private-sector partners to weaponise space. Near the third act’s climax, Kanahale performs the role of a Native leader who dramatically stares up at the dark night sky of the countryside, in silent appeal to his ‘ancestors’ (in the language of Crowe’s spoken direction to Kanahale during the latter’s performance of this scene, heard in the Blu-Ray’s ‘The Untitled Hawaii [sic] Project: The Making of *Aloha*’ documentary), a no-dialogue sequence intercut with, and narratively motivating, the key moment when Gilcrest makes the career-killing choice to use his tech skills to blow up a freshly launched commercially owned satellite in that same sky above Hawai‘i. Though Crowe’s parallel cuts in this sequence between the Hawaiian pair of the star-gazing Kanahale and the distressed but passive Ng, and the ‘heroic’ white-saviour Gilcrest, feel overdramatic and unearned, it is Kanahale’s sincere, unvarnished performance that demonstrates the political and spiritual stakes of the climax.

Moreover, as an audiovisual memetic unit, Bumpy Kanahale presents a viscerally individuated indigenous character within a screen story otherwise dominated by Caucasian ‘name’ actors performing mostly white characters

10. This Hae Hawai‘i or Kingdom of Hawai‘i flag later became the US (settler) state flag of the islands; however, the original version was designed for the independent Kingdom by its founder, King Kamehameha I. See Hawaiian filmmaker Ty Sanga’s ‘Hae Hawai‘i’ (2018) and Kanoa-Wong on the flag’s pre-US-occupation history (2019).

11. Crowe’s produced film and its Blu-Ray’s deleted scenes infrequently have other characters refer to Bumpy ‘the King’ as well as by ‘Bumpy’ or ‘Uncle Bumpy’. However, while Kanahale views his Nation of Hawai‘i as a natural successor to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, and this perspective infuses these scripted Hollywood texts, multiple independence groups and Kanaka Maoli community figures also stake this claim. Thus, these film/television texts’ implication of Kanahale as the generally accepted sole leader (even ruler) of independent Hawai‘i is not quite accurate.

in Standard English. In addition to the co-leads of Stone and Cooper, Rachel McAdams, Alec Baldwin, Bill Murray, Danny McBride and John Krasinski round out the celebrity cast. His character could be easily slotted within the trite narrative trope of 'noble Native leader' – dark skin, muscular stocky body, gruff line delivery and manner, and Hawai'i-Creole-English (HCE)-inflected speech cadences, a figure generally bereft of narrative decision-making power in the main plotline despite his onscreen 'king' status. However, the film's 'screen writing' marshalled production and set design, locations, costumes and cinematography to tie Kanahele with Hawaiian land in ways which set up surreptitious audiovisual arguments about its dispossession from the Kanaka Maoli people. These onscreen cinematic elements pair him visually with the verdant foliage, relatively undeveloped landscape and modest wooden dwellings of the Pu'uhonua, with Kanahele and his fellow villagers frequently shot in 'natural' exterior locations, a touristic gaze not unusual for Hawai'i-Visitors-Bureau-boosting Hollywood productions in the islands. However, what could strike the real (Western/US continental) viewer as unusual and imprint upon the memory are other details cinematically recalling the land's history rolled into these (stereo)typical images of an indigenous man in the rural countryside. An example of this is the bold, two-sided T-shirt statement proudly sported by Kanahele who wore this outfit in all his scenes. When that viewer reads the words 'Hawaiian by Birth' across the tee's front as Kanahele opens his arms to embrace his old friend Gilcrest in a greeting, and the narrative consequently cuts to the reverse shot to capture Cooper's face as the star hugs back, the follow-up continuation of that statement on the back half, 'American by Force', becomes a visual one-two punch. In other scenes, like those depicting Gilcrest and Ng's entrance into Kanahele's village, the production design, edits and camerawork – working together with Crowe's screenplay that positions Kanahele as the Hawaiian head of state negotiating with Gilcrest, the US armed forces representative – collectively demarcate the end of the US settler state's geopolitical borders and the start of the Nation of Hawai'i, the entity governing the Pu'uhonua founded by Kanahele both in the film diegesis and in actual Hawai'i, textually declaring the refuge a sovereign and independent country.¹²

But how did these subversive narrative elements come to appear in an otherwise forgettable military drama about yet another well-meaning, white-male saviour? I posit that instead of it being Cameron Crowe who

12. From the viewpoint of settler-colonial laws, the land Kanahele and the villagers reside upon does not belong to Hawaiians, due to its 'leasehold' status framed within those US laws.

‘authored’ these cinematic details, it was Kanahele himself who served as the author of his own memorable film moments via behind-the-scenes creative labour, adding much-needed substance to shallow fluff. These narrative interventions added unmistakable indigenous content to an otherwise typical Hollywood production.

Just as he had once negotiated the lease of the 45-odd acres of Waimānalo land for his Nation of Hawai‘i with the US settler state, holding a famous protest in which hundreds of Hawaiians occupied a Makapu‘u beach in that region for over a year,¹³ Kanahele bargained during *Aloha’s* development using the filmmakers’ need for cultural authenticity. He did so initially as the movie’s Hawai‘i/Hawaiian consultant, but gradually came to believe that Crowe – whom he had befriended several years before – would include themes of the sovereignty movement in his film. For this reason, Kanahele allowed a Hollywood director to use his village as a movie location for the first time, parlaying the filmmakers’ touristic desire to capture the beautiful ocean views from the Pu‘ohonua¹⁴ in exchange for including a storyworld perspective substantially empathetic to Hawaiian independence within the film narrative. Kanahele explains:

Everybody [from Hollywood who] came up here [to the Pu‘uhonua O Waimānalo] in the past, they’re always looking to *use this, use that*; they had their own vision of what it was to be used for. Not our story. Cameron was interested in our story. What makes it easier is we’re friends. And when you’re my friend, I trust real fast. (qtd ‘The Untitled Hawaii Project’)

I suspect that Kanahele’s participation was essential to the filmmakers, as the working movie, shot unusually in chronological order of the onscreen plot, struggled to strike the right tonal balance prior to the activist’s scenes demonstrating his narrative contributions, its inauthentic efforts towards representing a sense of place mixing poorly with Crowe’s gratingly earnest undertone. Early in the theatrical version, when Ng flies Gilcrest over the island in her military helicopter, she aurally introduces into the narrative the character of Kanahele, explaining him to Gilcrest as ‘the sovereign king and the head of state of the Nation of Hawai‘i’ who is ‘a seventh-generation

13. Kanahele began those negotiations in the early 1990s, during which time he also led 300 people in the 15-month occupation of Kaupō beach park in Makapu‘u, influenced by the Hawaiian community’s wave of educational and protest events marking the centennial of the US Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1993 (Kanahele n.p.).

14. For instance, *Aloha* crew members gush in publicity interviews, ‘The moment we got up there, we turned around and looked out back, and we saw the ocean ... it was like, *We must shoot this!*’ (‘The Untitled Hawaii Project’ n.p.).

descendant of King Kamehameha the Great'. The film's cultural legitimacy at this point feels derailed by Stone's painstaking pronunciation of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i within the narrative as well as by Crowe's unnaturally cringeworthy juxtaposition/transliteration of English and Hawaiian words in the dialogue and by his romantic-comedy-flavoured performance direction. Crowe's sloppily researched 'local' colloquialisms, combined with his direction to Stone to base her character on that of Ninotchka – a Soviet female bureaucrat, played by Greta Garbo in Ernst Lubitsch's titular film (see Greg in Crowe's official blog)¹⁵ – in effect de-regionalise and whitewash the film in Stone/Ng's early scenes. But a few scenes later, when a ground visit to the Pu'uhonoa O Waimānalo sees the two military characters enter into negotiations with the Hawaiian leader on behalf of the USAF, Kanahele's 'screen writing' starts to show itself, working against Crowe's inorganic *mise-en-scène* and deployment of rom-com tropes.

Despite the continued comedy notes that pepper the following sequence as the two characters stride through forest and scenic clearings while exchanging 'witty' banter, the movie soon presents for a Hawai'i-raised viewer a visceral movement towards the political, when Kanahele himself first appears on camera a few minutes later once Gilcrest and Ng reach the village itself. First assistant director Scott Robertson notes that after Crowe originally wrote Bumpy Kanahele into his script as a fictional character within the film storyworld, the director had searched among available Hawaiian actors for a professional performer to play the part ('The Untitled Hawaii Project' n.p.). However, using their friendship as a base, Kanahele conducted a set of talks with the director while hiking the peaceful, scenic hills of his Pu'uhonua with Crowe and arranging for the latter's film crew to get blessed at a breathtaking Waimānalo beach. The end result: Crowe asked if Kanahele himself could perform the role, and the Hawaiian leader agreed ('Aloha Production Notes' n.p.). I believe Kanahele had intuitively set up these intimate encounters in such spiritually moving environments to build stronger interpersonal relationships with the film auteur and his crew, aiming towards his own greater participation in the project. The Kanaka Maoli leader admitted later in publicity interviews for the Blu-Ray that he did not think his ancestors would have let Crowe go with another casting option than himself for the role, and that 'I was actually really, like excited, scared, like – but I said [to myself], 'What the hell. I fought

15. Some traits of the Ng character, such as declaring her Hawaiian genealogy often and boldly, were based on that of a 'red-headed' Hawaiian female military pilot whom Crowe knows (see Crowe, 'A Comment on Allison Ng' n.p.). However, I think that to direct Stone's rom-com genre performance, Crowe relies on the gendered dynamic of the uptight and declarative Ninotchka, who, like Ng, unwittingly falls in love with a flawed man from the West.

with the government and all that, went to jail. It [negotiating with Hollywood] shouldn't be that hard' ('The Untitled Hawaii Project' n.p.).

This transactional process of long interpersonal encounters to build mutual trust proved a persuasive tactic through which Kanahale got what he wanted while simultaneously letting Crowe feel that he was learning about Hawai'i and Hawaiians. Kanahale personally risked his tough-activist reputation by letting the Hollywood director and his crew shoot in the Pu'uhonua as well as by appearing as the Crowe version of himself in the film, but Crowe also deserves some credit for filming techniques that optimised the activist's onscreen presence while extracting reality-genre information on Kanahale's background to play out audibly in relatively unscripted scenes. Key to the most artistically potent choice Crowe made in 'screen writing' *Aloha* is the genre-blending technique of method-acting improvisation mixed with semi-documentary interview footage. Robertson describes that directing tactic that when discussing the shooting of the realistic montage where Bumpy the character meets with Ng and Gilcrest in his office while they try to negotiate the moving of the Hickam gate. Crowe directed performers Stone and Cooper, while in character as their screen aliases, to ask the activist their own probing questions as a real USAF pilot and military contractor might, then encouraged Kanahale to provide honest answers as if responding truthfully as himself. In the resulting sequence, the filmmakers capture the actual audiovisual tension between the two haole, new-to-Hawai'i actors who know nothing about island history, one of which is costumed as an American military officer, and the Hawaiian leader who is simply replying to their interrogation as himself. Kanahale talks bluntly about the US theft of Hawaiian land (with the line, 'Your people are crooks; children of the white missionaries that stole our country in 1893' even making the theatrical cut); his complex views on hating, then grudgingly acknowledging the humanity of, US military members (reduced to the produced version's brief admission by the character Uncle Bumpy of wielding 'big-time respect' for representatives of the US armed forces 'when they're doing the right things'); the powerful notion that Hawai'i is not a free country (with the Kanahale character boldly insisting in that official version that Hawai'i is 'under military occupation' and 'you're on the wrong side', in response to Gilcrest's bigoted, contradictory claim that 'this is your nation, but we are in America'); his people's occupation of Makapu'u beach; and other rich topics, much of which Crowe and/or the studio ultimately edited out of the theatrical version ('The Untitled Hawaii Project' n.p.). What remained, however, together with the residents of the village performing their music in the next scene, added an unmistakable layer of reality to an otherwise

ambitious but tonally confusing, painstakingly effortful and ultimately failed, narrative on capital colonising the sky.

Iconographies of Hawaiian sovereignty add historical modes into scripted genre stories

Hollywood loves nothing more than cannibalising itself. Once a new narrative precedent is set, the producorial hordes swarm forth to get a piece of the 'cutting edge' action. In television, development executives, showrunners and executive producers of scripted shows track similar genre projects in film, television and now streaming services to evaluate the latest storytelling innovation in thematic and visual cinematic conventions so as to produce commercially current genre work. Producers of other Hawai'i-filmed or -themed audiovisual narratives likely watched *Aloha* for a sense of, say, new island locations against which to frame fresh episodes or scenes but encountered the powerful screen presence of Kanahele as well as the surprisingly refreshing thematic content he added to the film. Kanahele's potentiality to evolve into a Hawai'i-related media meme was also heightened by the fact that few of *Aloha*'s many critics blamed his participation for its failure (with many negative reviews even praising the activist's screen presence). Moreover, the whitewashing issues raised by advocacy group Media Action Network for Asian Americans (MANAA) about Stone's casting as an 'Asian American' character reminded Hollywood decision-makers of how race-adjacent justice issues about Hawai'i's diverse peoples can play out for modern film/television viewers as topical, thought-provoking and dramatically edgy. As a last-minute PR effort against MANAA's highly publicised criticism, around the week of the film's release the studio and Crowe deployed documentary 'making of' footage featuring Kanahele in unusual teasers, no doubt meant to counter the whitewashing objections.

As the most 'authentic' presence in an otherwise stereotypical movie about Hawai'i, Bumpy Kanahele (BK) elevated his potentiality as a memetic unit of mainstream media expression, a unit rapidly reproduced in other commercial Hollywood narratives set in the islands. I will call this expressive unit the BK *meme* comprising (a) a Native Hawaiian leader called Bumpy Kanahele (b) representing an independent international state called the Nation of Hawai'i which is (c) headquartered on a rural land base named Pu'uhonua O Waimānalo village on O'ahu island and which (d) rejects governance by the US settler-colonial state on behalf of Kānaka Maoli who live as citizens of that indigenous political entity. This meme next arose in the new *Hawaii Five-o*, the

longest-running scripted series primarily shot in Hawai‘i since J.J. Abrams’s *Lost* (US 2004–10). The rebooted procedural plays on CBS, known for the conservatism of its core viewership as well as for its racist employment and sexist programming¹⁶ – a rhetorical broadcast context that suggests Kanahale’s valuable, strategic narrative labour to the ‘Ka Laina Ma Ke One’ (‘Line in the Sand’).

Both the scriptwriter employed as a key maker of symbolic goods within this show’s labour structure and the discursive field itself were primed for another BK memetic appearance in Hollywood’s narrative landscape. Scriptor Sean O’Reilly authored a teleplay about a non-violent Native Hawaiian ex-con, Kanuha Noe (Maoli and Native American actor Kalani Queypo), who flees from urban Honolulu to the rural Pu‘uhonua when the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) suspects the former burglar of killing a long-time business partner. The episode centres on how the HPD’s special Five-o task force – which unlike the real settler state in the islands during the post-war era¹⁷ seems to respect the Nation of Hawai‘i’s political autonomy as a sovereign entity – works together with the character Bumpy Kanahale to find evidence of Noe’s guilt or innocence while staving off the less empathetic law enforcement tactics of Deputy US Marshall Wes Lincoln (Lou Diamond Phillips, a Filipino-American who has played multiple indigenous characters), an aggressive federal agent from ‘mainland’ who yanks the case’s jurisdiction from the HPD, demanding that the Nation of Hawai‘i turn over the fugitive or face the village’s invasion by the US military. The teleplay writer locates much of his first and second acts right at a gate marking the Pu‘uhonua’s entrance, turning it into a symbol of the division between the US settler state and the Nation of Hawai‘i, the literal ‘line’ referred to in the episode title. O’Reilly authors locally raised, Chinese American settler character Lt Chin Ho Kelly (played by Korean American performer Daniel Dae Kim), whose family has intermarried with Hawaiians, as the key Five-o officer to interact with Kanahale at this border as well as inside the village grounds, where the two men of authority team up to interrogate Noe.

16. See Koblin for a summary of CBS’s prejudicial pay practices which caused *Five-o* co-stars Daniel Dae Kim and Grace Park to exit the show to protest these Asian American performers’ unequal salaries in 2017. See Vanarendonk on how the toxic masculinity of CBS leadership affected its television content and also Thomason’s industry-wide op-ed shout-out about the millennial media history of network CEO and (alleged) sexual harassment perpetrator Les Moonves, under which the network practiced misogynist show development and programming. See also Fernandez.

17. See Cooper and Daws. From its inception in 1959, the fiftieth state of Hawai‘i has been run largely by second- and third-generation Americanised settlers from East Asia, bureaucrats and politicians tied financially to the real-estate industry that used US legal technologies to transform Native Hawaiian land into capitalistic property up for development.

On the one hand, O'Reilly insightfully depicts the cross-ethnic/-national empathy among diverse 'local' peoples of colour against 'mainland' (US continental) settler-colonial structures within post-plantation Hawai'i society including local sentiments that facilitate Native Hawaiian-East Asian settler alliances for Maoli independence. The dialogue offered by Kelly to Kanahele includes passages such as, 'I'm not no-one; *you know me*. I went to school with your niece; my father helped you build this guardhouse [at the Nation of Hawai'i border] ... I'm not asking you to trust a cop. I'm asking you to trust me' (emphasis added). Then, as if wanting to have it both ways politically, the writer also depicts Kelly hegemonically supporting his white military co-worker in the Five-o team's negotiations with Kanahele, in effect reinforcing the carceral logic of the US settler-colonial state. For example, when McGarrett argues with Kanahele about the ability of the HPD to fairly administer justice for Native Hawaiians, Kelly steps in, marshalling his local knowledge of the sovereignty movement and familial relations with Hawaiians, to argue for Kanahele releasing Noe to McGarrett and their HPD:

Kanahele: With all due respect, Commander, I've seen too many times when this can go wrong for Native Hawaiians.

McGarrett: HPD is one of the finest police forces in this country –

Kanahele: Who is also capable of making mistakes. ... I was forced to spend ten months behind bars after an HPD officer falsely accused me of pointing a gun at him. The Makapu'u lighthouse occupation. I can't get that time back. But I can make sure that no other injustice happens to anyone else.

O'Reilly clearly aims this dialogue towards an audience familiar with racialised police brutality issues raised frequently in the 2010s television landscape by progressive media-makers in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement (as troped through a range of television genres, including episodes of *Shots Fired* (US 2017), *The Red Line* (US 2019), *Shades of Blue* (US 2016–18), *Queen Sugar* (US 2015–) and many other procedural series), with his story plugging into a discursive field primed for such cogent critiques of law enforcement. But through this exchange, the scripter also demonstrates knowledge that outsiders typically lack of island politics – Kanahele's Makapu'u occupation and the leader's own historic harbouring of a tax fugitive from the HPD on behalf of his Nation of Hawai'i on the grounds that the US settler state legally wielded no jurisdiction for crimes allegedly committed on Hawaiian land, which became a key test case of the movement's legal arm.¹⁸ The surface similarity between this real case and the episode's main story suggests

18. See *United States v. Kanahele*.

that Kanahale might have provided this information to the producers, aiding to ‘script’ the episode’s premise. Or perhaps O’Reilly and his writers room researcher took the extra step of delving into the finer details of the history of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement to unearth this news event upon which the episode’s main plot is so obviously based. Inspired by the form-altering precedent of *Law and Order* franchise (1990–2010), a common writers room story development practice for procedurals in the millennium onward has been to ‘rip from the headlines’ provocative current events then homogenise them into episodic fodder, to keep the once-dying scripted show market competitive with the profitable, popular new genre of reality television. Native Hawaiian creative writer Wendie Burbridge, who reviews each week’s *Five-o* show for the islands’ leading newspaper, praised its staff for basing other episodes on research into traditional Hawaiian martial arts, pre-Kingdom-era historical battles and Kanaka Maoli cultural sailing and surfing practices – a fact that seems to support the ‘good research’ account of this episode’s story development process. Whether the premise in fact came directly from Kanahale working his behind-the-scenes connections, from the show’s writers-room research, or from a combination thereof, Kanahale has publicly cleaved to the show’s account that representatives from the television series came to *him* with the idea of this episode, backing up *Five-o* producer Bryan Spicer’s assertion that they had created a ‘storyline that would allow the audience to understand more about the sovereign country within the state’ (qtd Lincoln n.p.).

In the episode’s publicity materials for the Hawai‘i media, the show even officially declared ‘Ka Laina Ma Ke One’ a ‘special’ episode meant to draw attention to the 124th anniversary of the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893, an illegitimate *coup d’état* by white US and UK businessmen against Queen Lili‘uokalani (Lincoln n.p.). Of note here is that these PR efforts did not extend to US continental media; such local publicity was likely meant to help producers like Spicer – who would next work as a television director under *Five-o* showrunner Peter Lenkov on his Hawai‘i-set reboot of *Magnum P.I.* (US 2018–) – cultivate professional networks and narrative skills as a Hawai‘i-specialised television artist. Such decisions are part of a labour-market strategy employed by predominantly white writers, directors and upper-level staff of shows like *Five-o* and *Magnum* to fend off the increasing demands of multicultural media advocates to add more colour and regionality to the Hollywood writers room and directing staff.¹⁹

19. See, for example, Fernandez.

Whatever Kanahele's specific authorship of the episode relative to that of Spicer, O'Reilly and their research staff, his perquisites from participating in its production became clear when Hawai'i television journalist Mileka Lincoln interviewed the activist about the episode. Lincoln foregrounded contestable assertions beneficial to Kanahele with which not all Hawaiian groups or political leaders might agree, including the notion that should the US settler state of Hawai'i ever 'grant' sovereignty to Hawaiians, the Nation of Hawai'i and the Pu'uhonua would respectively become their official political organisation and land base, as well as the related implication that Kanahele might serve as the head of state for that entity (Lincoln n.p.). An *Al Jazeera* video interview of Kanahele by Dena Takruri echoed similar ideas albeit without such decisive legal implications. Though this political arrangement might have been included in the deal Kanahele struck with the settler-colonial state of Hawai'i for his Nation in exchange for paying to lease the Waimānalo land (see notes 14 and 15), he was not speaking for all Hawaiians – contrary to the interview's implications. The BK meme's limited (and perhaps US settler-state co-opted) political potentiality is mirrored in a dialogue exchange between McGarrett and the character Kanahele. The latter says to the Five-o chief, 'I still recognise your laws' – implying that US legal jurisprudence still covers the rest of Hawai'i, just not the Pu'uhonua. In other words, 'Line in the Sand' allowed Kanahele, using the BK meme, to build his media brand and local political power as one of many Kānaka Maoli vying for leadership within the Hawaiian movement, possibly at the expense of other independence organisations, prominent organisers and Maoli-futurist outcomes. At the same time, commercial mass media can have its narrative cake (the issue of indigenous political sovereignty exists in Hawai'i; some Hawaiians have been fighting for it) and eat it, too (do not worry: visitor-dominated Waikīkī, the neighbour islands, urban Honolulu and other places full of tourist hotels and travel attractions are still part of the US). As Kanahele developed the BK meme further for CBS's watered-down portrayal of Hawaiian sovereignty in national discourse, the credibility of bringing continental and global attention to the movement also helped him strengthen his personal expressive power and political authority within the islands.

Kanahele's convergence labour of expressing his viewpoint across scripted-narrative ICTs involves the work of tremendous alliance-building with politically progressive industrial artists of managerial-professional status who might empathise with his vision. In exchange for workplace support from well-regarded film auteurs like Crowe and mid-level television auteurs like O'Reilly and Spicer, he offers his heavily dramatic presence as an onscreen

narrative asset and his knowledge on Hawaiian sovereignty as an artistic tool in the story development process. Such tactics may not fit the high standards of ‘visual sovereignty’ achievable via the benchmark of excellence known as global (non-commercial, relatively independent) indigenous cinema²⁰, but they offer discrete elements of story premise, dialogue, performance and production design which accumulate into memetic nodes of indigenous independence and self-determination for mass media platforms. Kanahale delivered the BK meme not only to film then scripted television, but later across other ICTs such as cable reality television (in the ‘Hawaii’ [*sic*] episode of *Huang’s World* (US 2013–)) and digital news reports (in Takruri’s ‘Direct From’ web video), demonstrating in generically diverse commercial venues his Hawaiian utopic organising as well as augmenting these mass audiovisual narratives with semiotic reminders of the ongoing Maoli practice of resistance to settler-colonial power.

How might foregrounding such hidden behaviours of indigenous media-makers like ‘Uncle Bumpy’ challenge default methodologies for evaluating twenty-first-century speculative narratives so centred on *already produced* textuality? The example of Kanahale’s narrative agency during the *preproduction and production* stages of these audiovisual works reminds us in sf studies to search beneath the surface, to reconsider superficially non-sf genre texts (‘straight’ dramas, procedurals, comedies, etc.) as we seek out indigenous people’s behind-the-scenes participation in corporate media as resistant, even daring, futurist tactics. After all, the Hawaiian activist dared to deploy the might of Hollywood narrative ICTs towards destabilising the dominant settler-state perspective which would have articulated him as merely securing for the Nation of Hawai‘i in 2001 a 55-year *lease* to that Waimānalo land with the state of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) – a colonialist perspective that positions his agreement with the DLNR within settler-state governance and ownership of that land. By contrast, *Aloha* and this special episode of *Hawaii Five-0* contain unforgettable audiovisual segments from a Hawaiian independence perspective rather than that of the US settler state; not as whole texts but as fragmentary sections thereof, they contain utopian and decolonial cinematic motifs which justly attribute the ethos of the Pu‘uhonua O Waimānalo land ownership to the Nation of Hawai‘i and/or to a Hawaiian nation-state.

Through such bold if laborious discursive acts, Kanahale takes up informational strategies similar to those of the Kia‘i defending Mauna Kea against colonial land management and colonial astronomy; like him, Kanahale’s

20. See Raheja on the visual sovereignty of Native performers.

fellow Hawaiian activists set up on that mountain their own 'refuge' from US military and scientific authorities, called Pu'uhonua O Pu'uhuluhulu, where they created a utopian space to educate not only their own Maoli community members, but also US settler-state representatives, police officers, tourists and other outsiders on their Native ethos (see 'Learn'), countering colonial misinformation and reminding all of the essential transhumanist relationship with, and responsibility towards, the 'āina. As part of a wider wave of Kanaka expressive resistance, these fragments of Bumpy Kanahele's hidden but potent media interventions constitute his Native presence/persistence, exemplifying the indigenous 'potentiality' of Vizenor, who defines this concept's powerful transformative quality as 'marvelous enough to change ... associations with and interpretations of culture' (4). Kanahele might have technically signed the DLNR lease, but his survivant vision views that contract with the settler state of Hawai'i as temporary pragmatic fantasy and Hawaiian self-determination as the real futuristic outcome.

Offering onscreen for future allies a potentiality of governance that ethically eclipses that of the US-continental political status quo, Kanahele contributes the artistic work for gradually remaking global North epistemological frameworks about the multifaceted global South of Oceania. This step-by-step recalibration of hegemonic ontology that marshalls the full narrative power of mass media technoculture towards the striking expression of an Indigenous Futurist vision is what I offer as Bumpy Kanahele's sf practice.

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