
Presstime in Paradise is an apt title for George Chaplin’s history of the oldest newspaper still in publication in the Islands. As editor-in-chief of The Honolulu Advertiser from 1958 to 1986, Chaplin has been intimately acquainted with the demands of a daily morning press, and Paradise indicates his affection for the Island community the paper has served since its birth on July 2, 1856, as the Pacific Commercial Advertiser.

Thorough research and a sharp journalist’s eye buttress the story. The book is divided into five sections. Section I, from 1856 to 1880, introduces founding editor Henry Martyn Whitney, the Hawai‘i-born son of American Protestant missionaries who also began the Hawaiian-language paper Nupepa Kuokoa in 1861 (to run to 1927). Whitney learned his trade on American newspapers in New York. A strong believer in the American ideal of a free press, Whitney, back in the Islands, ran afoul of the rising haole plantation/business oligarchy by editorializing against the contract labor system, suffered a boycott by them, and was forced out by Black and Auld. He continued his association with the paper until his death in 1904 but not as publisher.

Section II describes the turbulent period from 1880 to 1898, when control of The Advertiser shifted to Walter Murray Gibson, prime minister to King Kalākaua. This is the only time in the paper’s long life when it did not trumpet American values. The oligarchy succeeded in forcing the Bayonet Constitution upon the king in 1887 and in overthrowing his sister, Queen Lili‘uokalani, in 1893. Lorrin Andrews Thurston, also a missionary descendant, was a power on the paper while leading these conspiracies and another—the all-out effort by a tiny but powerful group to annex Hawai‘i to the United States.
Section III covers from 1898 to 1931. Thurston became publisher in 1899. With formal annexation occurring in 1900, the symbiotic relationship of newspaper ownership and political power is dramatically illustrated. The PCA was retitled The Honolulu Advertiser in 1921. The section concludes with the death of Lorrin A. and the ascendancy of his son Lorrin Potter Thurston to publisher in 1931.

Section IV, 1931 to 1961, covers big news, including the infamous Massie case, World War II—the event that forever changed the Islands—and the postwar years of the Republican oligarchy and its principal paper. The Advertiser’s rabid anticommunism and antiunionism, its racial biases, and opposition to statehood led to precipitous declines in circulation and advertising revenue. The rival Honolulu Star-Bulletin threatened to run The Advertiser out of business. Lorrin A. swung around, supported the drive to statehood, and hired George Chaplin from the New Orleans Item to replace retiring editor Ray Coll, Sr.

This fortunately turned out to be a brilliant appointment. Chaplin, the son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and a racially liberal South Carolinian, was already a distinguished journalist. He had spent time in Hawai‘i during World War II as founding editor and officer in charge of the armed forces Stars and Stripes—Mid Pacific Edition.

Chaplin’s book takes us through 1961–1995, the concluding Section V. The paper was still in trouble, and a palace revolution in 1961 unseated Lorrin P. Thurston. Chaplin cast his lot with Thurston’s nephew, Thurston Twigg-Smith, another army veteran and a seasoned journalist. Advertiser and Bulletin leaders joined together in 1962 to form a joint operating agreement (JOA) and the Hawaii Newspaper Agency. Even a long, debilitating strike in 1963 could not stop the momentum of an uphill climb to solvency and the paper’s best decades under editor-in-chief Chaplin and publisher Twigg-Smith. There was “A Policy Shift from Conservatism” (p. 303), a noticeable increase in the hiring of women and minorities, and Chaplin’s own specialty, giving talented reporters and section editors their heads. In the larger community, Chaplin moved easily into the new multiethnic power structure and served on a variety of civic boards and agencies.

The end of 150 years of a family-owned paper arrived in 1993. An American value again came into play when The Advertiser was sold to the Gannett Corporation, a chain operation, the deal completed on January 23. Chaplin states that “clearly the Advertiser has shifted . . . to [being] an outpost of American corporate journalism.” An era has ended and another has begun, he adds, his usual buoyancy somewhat tempered.

Following the narration are a reprint of the PCA’s first editorial and a biographical sketch of Chaplin by Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr.
Among the book’s strengths are an abundance of photographs and entertaining anecdotes. One of the latter is of “No Opening Offered” (p. 49) when Mark Twain, in 1866 a correspondent with the Sacramento Union, came to Hawai‘i and visited Whitney in the PCA newsroom. Other stories of “chumps and champs” (p. 280) include a recap of the adventures of Samuel Crowninburg Amalu (p. 276), whose financial shenanigans included rubber-check writing sprees and promoting bogus $50 million real estate deals. A friend of Twigg-Smith’s from their Punahou School days, Amalu sent columns from Folsom Prison in California to his old friend. Twigg-Smith hired him after his release to write a regular column.

Chaplin’s is among the all too few newspaper biographies of metropolitan dailies, such as Harrison Salisbury’s The New York Times and Its Times (1980), that document a significant cultural and historical phenomenon which the advent of live television, chain ownership, and the Internet threaten to wipe out. If there are any shortcomings, these probably arise from Chaplin’s generally positive outlook on life and people so that, for example, he is not terribly critical of the ugly and self-serving role that The Advertiser played in the annexation of the independent nation of Hawai‘i nor of the controversial JOA.

Presstime in Paradise, however, is on balance a solid and highly readable contribution to the literature of the printed press. Because it is a first-hand narrative by the editor himself, the book is, in effect, a primary source for future historians. In this sense, this book is irreplaceable.

Helen G. Chapin
Vice-President Emerita
Hawai‘i Pacific University


Reading Tom Coffman’s history of our annexation is a little like being drawn into a conspiracy. I confess, in the first place, to an unwillingness to be enticed into his explanation of events for several reasons. Most important is that he is not Kanaka Maoli, and we have been subjected to numerous haole accounts of our past which, even when sympathetic to our people and leaders, still never manage to get things right. Our ali‘i are misrepresented, our religion
and values misunderstood, our politics evaluated by scholars who have no personal understanding of being colonized. In the second place, I wondered about his qualifications for writing this sort of history and, more important, what new contributions such a history could make to the discipline, to the public's general awareness, and to Native Hawaiians. Despite certain academic shortcomings in Nation Within, I do believe that the work makes important contributions to all three. First, my reservations.

Although a skilled writer in many respects, Coffman is not a trained historian, and the book suffers, to an extent, from the absence of a systematic approach to telling the story. It is also clear that, aside from his very persistent study of the conspiracy between members of the U.S. legation and State Department and local haole businessmen and attorneys, he has no fresh historical theories to test. Nation Within demonstrates that the acquisition of Hawai‘i was made more likely by the ongoing work of such dedicated annexationists as Blaine, Stevens, and Thurston. Other published works have made similar claims, though not with the same focus and attention to detail.

Nation Within is also not the first revisionist history of the annexation that doesn't treat the Hawaiians' loss of independence as either salutary or necessarily inevitable. Both Budnick's Stolen Kingdom and Dougherty's To Steal a Kingdom do a reasonable job of recounting the tawdry, even criminal nature of the taking of Hawai‘i. Both were published in 1992 and both revise earlier “standard” histories of the period with a much more jaundiced eye to American imperialism. What they lacked was much of a Native Hawaiian perspective, especially any contemporary analysis done by Kanaka Maoli scholars. None of the published books by Kanaka Maoli scholars Haunani-Kay Trask, Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, or Kanalu Young had appeared prior to the release of these works by Budnick and Dougherty.

But Coffman also greatly benefited from the research of Noenoe Silva into the activities of the late-century Hawaiian political parties Hui Kālai‘aina and Hui Aloha ‘Aina and the petition drive they organized to protest annexation in 1896. Coffman's use of this material, as well as the translated nineteenth-century biography of Joseph Nawahi, greatly enhance the possibilities of his book by presenting the largely untold story of the Kanaka Maoli loyalty to their nation and queen. Unfortunately, the absence of a consistent theoretical approach to his diplomatic history makes its integration with a Native history confusing in places and difficult to follow.

At times it seems as though he is telling two different stories at once, and quite often he moves from one scene to another with no apparent connection between them. For instance, the end of his eighth and beginning of his ninth chapters is a sequence of a very interesting and insightful analysis of
Native politics in 1890 interspersed by a short and seemingly out-of-place introduction of Alfred Mahan and followed by the description of the American coup in 1893. It appears that one element of Coffman’s style is to subtly suggest relationships through juxtaposition rather than treating these individuals to extensive and consistent analysis.

Another example of this is when Coffman interrupts his narrative of Cleveland’s strong opposition to the overthrow and the suggestion that the president was being “swamped by criticism” (p. 147) with a very odd recounting of Sanford Dole’s illness and his attachment to a Native Hawaiian family and their daughter. That is not to say that such historical revelations are not interesting, but Coffman doesn’t say why he finds it interesting or what point he believes it makes, especially in the context of where it appears in the text. The weakness of Nation Within is not a lack of research, data, and insight. But lacking a systematic theory and method, Coffman appears to treat every part of his narrative, every small detail of these peoples’ lives with equal emphasis. On occasion his attention seems divided between telling the remarkable (and little known) history of Kanaka Maoli resistance to annexation and the cruddier tale of how such a tiny constituency of conspirators was able to destabilize the politics in the kingdom and influence foreign policy at the highest levels of the U.S. government. And while he is able to describe a geography of the conspiracy—a strange confluence of individuals having family and birth ties to a river in Maine—he is somewhat less successful in showing a definitive conspiracy to gain annexation between the State Department and haole in the Islands. In his ninth chapter, titled “An American Coup,” Coffman describes some of the correspondence concerning annexation between Secretary of State James Blaine and his American minister to Hawai‘i, John Stevens. Coffman says:

Stevens at one point wrote to Blaine, asking, “...are you for annexation?” In the diplomatic correspondence, there is no record of a response. However, to interpret this silence as a lack of agreement is in error, given the nature of their long-standing relationship, and particularly given that Stevens had his hands on one of the most delicate issues of U.S. foreign policy. The most likely distinction Stevens sought was whether Blaine had shifted his thinking from a military protectorate to outright annexation. (p. 111)

But what does Coffman mean by “most likely distinction?” Even though there is no response from Blaine, I assume that the author quotes Stevens from his correspondence with Blaine, which ought to contain some clearer
context to Stevens’s question. Since the author does not footnote this quotation (a deferent to the public that will not appeal to academics), I wonder how or why Coffman cannot be more definitive here. And that troubles me because I am not sure why it’s all that important to show a dog and tail-wagging relationship between Blaine and Stevens. Stevens was an employee of the State Department. How are Blaine and the U.S. government not responsible for the actions of its representatives? In fact, in the very next paragraph, Coffman quotes Charles Campbell, a historian of American foreign policy, who argues that Blaine’s official silence on the issue notwithstanding, he “incurred a clear responsibility for Stevens’s actions.” So why is it necessary to explore the long-standing relationship between these two men, as well as the possible relationship between them and Sanford Dole, whose father hailed from Holowell, Maine? I looked in vain for some systematic attempt to link these protagonists to an ideological bent common to the citizens of Hallowell, Skowhegan, and Augusta. Was there some particular Calvinist culture in Maine that made it easier to negotiate a tricky passage between antislavery, temperance, and naked imperialism? Or was it simply the Kennebec Journal, edited and owned by Stevens and Blaine respectively, that provided a consistent call for the eventual annexation of Hawai‘i? Coffman raises the question himself without clearly answering:

If there is an apparent combination of climate, geography, and zealotry at work here, the question is nonetheless not adequately answered: Why would this one stretch of land, only several miles long, originally five months’ distant from Hawai‘i by sea, produce an interconnected network of people who would play such prominent roles in American expansionism? (p. 98)

Why indeed? The simplest explanation is that the effort to secure possession of Hawai‘i to the United States was a group effort in which the principal players knew and trusted each other. It would appear that they could just as easily have all graduated from Yale in the same year, or all been Masons, to have been fitted for conspirators’ roles with as much ease and meaning. What did their backgrounds mean? This is what Coffman fails to address, and in part, it is because he does not clarify that the issues of American expansion, their ethics and rewards, intensely colored by racism, nineteenth-century realpolitik, and fears of economic malaise, were national issues, widely debated in the senates, storefronts, and churches across the American continent in the 1890s. If, in Maine, Hawai‘i was the preferred victim of future expansion, Coffman should spend more time telling us why.
Coffman clearly and unequivocally sympathizes with the Kanaka Maoli citizens, chiefs, and rulers, but his work should not be taken as a Kanaka account of the kingdom, overthrow, and annexation. The author is clearly an American telling a story about America and Hawai'i. It is possible to read Coffman's political analysis of our Native leaders without agreeing with it, just as it is possible to find fault with some of his historical details, or absence thereof. But in the end, I think that Coffman's scholarship is well-founded. No one has taken the time to explicitly search out the relationships between and among Americans who stole our independence with as much tenaciousness and perspicacity as Nation Within. Even better is his exemplary analysis of how the Japanese threat to the Islands was essentially created by confused and greed-inspired policies in the republic and outright deception at the U.S. State Department level.

But what I found most valuable about this work was his portrayal of the republic as an opportunistic masquerade of democratic ideals that swindled an entire nation of its inheritance. In no other history that I've seen is the cynical and manipulative nature of annexation so clearly displayed. His ironic recounting of how voting under the republic was to be constructed in such a way as to adopt all of the finest traditions of the Jim Crow South tells us all we need to know about the nature of the government that surrendered the nation of Hawai'i to the United States.

Moreover, his analysis of Lili'uokalani's leadership is sensitive and perceptive, and in a very compelling section he clearly shows how difficult a political path the queen negotiated not just between haole and Kanaka, but between the monarchists and liberals among the Native subjects as well. To this date I have not seen a more believable analysis of the queen's leadership, nor a more compelling analysis of the failure of President Cleveland's leadership in the end.

I suppose that I could characterize this work as inconsistent, but it strikes me as being more incomplete. Clearly there are important features, especially to the academic, that this narrative lacks, but it does not lack for acumen and persistent research. And that is what drew me into a growing appreciation for this work, the more of it that I read.

It is not easy to write for a public audience and still satisfy professional academics' thirst for structure and theory. While I think that most readers will find this work thought-provoking, even enlightening, I think the contribution Nation Within makes to Native Hawaiians is that it superimposes the ugly, often racist, and even depraved motivations of the annexationists with the comparatively straightforward, loyal, and honorable efforts made by the Kanaka on behalf of their nation. While we may not all agree with Coffman's
analysis of Native politics in the nineteenth century, we certainly would agree that our kupuna deserved much better than they received at the hands of the American people and their government. In the end, it would appear that Coffman’s intentions were simply to write a better book on the annexation than William Russ did in the 1960s, and in that he succeeded admirably. As a Native scholar I intend to include this book as a text in my course on the kingdom’s history, and that says all I need to say about its usefulness.

Jonathan Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio
Assistant Professor of Hawaiian Studies
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa


The publication of Mālamalama: A History of the University of Hawai‘i marks a significant occasion in the history of the university. Several attempts have been started in the past with some having achieved some importance. None, however, reached published state. For this reason, Mālamalama is important. One hopes it will be a springboard or foundation for future efforts.

The editors of Mālamalama asked several people connected with the university to contribute chapters to the history. They also solicited some short essays, primarily from participants, to capture the feeling of students during particular periods in the history of the university. Some of the chapters stand out as clearly written, interesting, and valuable.

The section on Hawaiian language and Hawaiian studies by Rubellite K. Johnson details the emergence of these two important disciplines on campus. Johnson cites a statement of the Board of Regents of the university in 1921 that the university intended to give instruction in Hawaiian and should become the center for the study of the language. The board hired Frederick W. Beckley to instruct a one-year, basic Hawaiian course and added a second-year course in 1923. By 1926, the university listed Hawaiian along with the classical languages, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese as languages students could use for elective credit leading to the bachelor of arts. Later, the university instituted the first degree program in Hawaiian language. Over the years, the university gradually hired the faculty and instituted
the courses that would eventually form the discipline of Hawaiian studies. Ralph Kuykendall teaching Hawaiian history, John W. Coulter teaching Hawaiian geography, Felix Keesing teaching Polynesian culture in anthropology, Romanzo Adams teaching race relations in Hawai‘i, and Dorothy Kahananui including Hawaiian song in her music classes were among the early examples.

Alison Kay's chapter on the biological sciences provides a thorough and well-written history. Kay cites Willis Pope, the acting dean of the College of Hawai‘i and professor of botany and horticulture, as distinguishing even in the very earliest years of the institution's history between applied science and theoretical science and as insisting upon the need for both. She provides details of the contributions of several early science faculty: Vaughan MacCaughey, Joseph F. Rock, William A. Bryan, David Crawford. The stars, however, were Charles Edmondson in zoology and Harold St. John in botany. Both these men restructured the curriculum within the respective departments, leading to the expansion of courses offered and specialization possibilities for students. Kay develops the vital role interdisciplinary studies have played in the biological sciences at the university, leading to the Department of Oceanography, the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology, the Drosophila studies, and the program in evolution, ecology, and conservation biology.

Robert Kamins, in the section on theater and dance, details the important role of Asian drama in the history of the University of Hawai‘i. Beginning in 1931, each year until American involvement in World War II, Japanese plays were produced at the university. (Evidence indicates that plays with Asian themes, if not from Asia, began as early as 1921.) After World War II, under Earle Ernst and Joel Trapido, drama achieved its independence as a separate department and began again the emphasis in classical Asian drama. Kamins also explains the interesting transition of the Kennedy Theater to the university.

Victor Kobayashi and Robert Potter give a detailed and interesting account of the development of the concept of summer school in Hawai‘i. They recount the efforts of Henry Townsend, inspector general of schools for the Republic of Hawai‘i, who held a three-week summer session for teachers from 1896 through 1899, inviting distinguished lecturers from the mainland. (An error occurs on the date of Townsend's removal from this post; it should read 1900 not 1890.) When summer sessions for teachers recommenced in 1910, they essentially consisted of certification examination preparation. Benjamin Wist of the Territorial Normal School changed that in the 1920s, beginning a genuine academic program, which continued after the merger of the Normal School into the university.
The second concept mentioned above is of inviting various participants to write short vignettes to focus on student life. The short essays by Tomi Knaefler, Ralph Toyota, and Thomas Gill help today’s readers catch an aura of what the university was like shortly before, during, and after World War II. This approach, however, also fosters part of Mālamalama’s weakness. Too many past periods are lacking, leaving the reader with too many questions to the editors, “Why not include . . . ?”

Readers can justifiably ask that question several times. The book approaches the history of the university from an establishment perspective. Mālamalama reveals that Kamins and Potter did not rigorously pursue obtaining a different perspective. The accounts of the turmoil the university experienced during the war in Vietnam do not reflect the perspective of the students occupying Bachman Hall, nor the faculty and students occupying the ROTC building. We do not see the perspective of various union organizers of the faculty.

The issue of academic freedom and the related issue of autonomy pervade the history of this university; indeed successful struggles to obtain and preserve these qualities are crucial in the history of any university worthy of the name. Yet these issues hardly appear in Mālamalama. The tenure case of Oliver Lee remains couched in language regretting the loss of perhaps the best president the university has had, but it is more than that. The chapter on the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo cites the struggle of the faculty against administrators seen as pro-Manoa to the expense of UH Hilo, but little analysis into the problem and its resolution. Autonomy pervades the chapter on arts and sciences after statehood by Deane Neubauer, but never explicitly. The fate of New College, mentioned in the chapter on the honors programs by James R. Linn, likewise seems to avoid an explicit pinning the events upon these two issues.

Mālamalama is worth reading. It is a most welcome history of the university as a whole, including UH Hilo, UH West O‘ahu, and the community colleges. Yet even with its heavy emphasis on UH Mānoa, Mālamalama is not definitive, even on UH Mānoa.

James F. Cartwright
Archivist
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Born in a dark wave the fragrance of red seaweed
born on the land the shore grass hissing while the night slips
through a narrow place a man is born for the narrows
a woman is born for where the waters open
the passage is for a god it is not for a human
the god is a gourd full of water and vines coming from it
there the forest rises to stand in the current of the night. . . . (p. 89)

Ko‘olau, the crack *paniolo* of nineteenth-century Kaua‘i, and his staunch wife Pi‘ilani are at the heart of W. S. Merwin’s ecstatic book-length narrative poem. When Ko‘olau (short for Kalauiko‘olau) contracts Hansen’s Disease, the government and its agents compel him to leave his wife, his family, and his livelihood, like so many hundreds of sufferers, for exile at Kalawao on Moloka‘i. Refusing to comply—refusing, really, to be separated either from each other or Kaua‘i—the couple decides together to take their young son and disappear into “the folding cliffs” of their island.

The rudiments of the legend of Ko‘olau the Leper are well known in Hawai‘i. That he killed Louis Stolz in 1893 when Stolz tried to arrest him, that he and Pi‘ilani ultimately escaped from the posse sent to track them, that they sustained themselves in upland Kaua‘i until Ko‘olau and their son Kaleimanu died of the Hansen’s are as much a part of Island lore as they should be of textbooks. Ko‘olau the Outlaw, Ko‘olau the Victim, Ko‘olau the Martyr, Ko‘olau the Murderer, each epithet could be applied depending on who is writing, when, and what their interests might be. Making Ko‘olau and Pi‘ilani metaphors, however, is the realm of poetry and the brilliant gift of W. S. Merwin.

In *The Folding Cliffs* their story becomes an integral thread in Hawai‘i’s greater history. (Merwin reminds us that history is not just big dates and big ideas, but individual people.) From the birth of the islands out of the bottom of the ocean and the settling here of Polynesian people, through the arrival of Europeans and Americans, Kamehameha’s wars, the Mahele, and the overthrow of the queen, the landmarks along Hawai‘i’s journey from then to now stand solemnly beside Ko‘olau’s exquisite skill at riding and roping and the plants and birds Pi‘ilani encounters as she climbs along the ridges of Kaua‘i’s wilderness. The broad, overwhelming sweep and the vital everyday detail are effortlessly married in what might be called a creation chant of modern Hawai‘i. Literally and figuratively—that is, both in the characters’
nature and in the lines on the pages themselves—the couple’s story and Hawai‘i’s are perfectly balanced, leaving the carved granite letters of “Hawaiian History” dissolved into a few courageous lives.

From any angle The Folding Cliffs is an important work of literature, a “masterpiece” as British Poet Laureate Ted Hughes called it. Merwin’s success at reviving the nearly lost medium of epic poetry alone inspires awe. The book consists of 280 flawless stanzas. And it is a rare book of poetry, even if the story is innately compelling, that can genuinely be labeled a “page turner”; there are sections in The Folding Cliffs when Merwin’s words drive the narrative ahead with unrelenting urgency, while elsewhere they slow to reflect on “the gray wings sailing along the edges / of the lagoon like a shadow through the dry notes / of the insects shrilling the hour and the long quavers / of the toads the heron’s bark the low hushing of the surf . . .” (p. 145). Literature is defined by its timelessness, its universality, and its craft. Ko‘olau and Pi‘ilani’s story, and Hawai‘i’s history, possess the first two in spades; in them love, violence, triumph, tragedy, creation and extinction abound. The Folding Cliffs takes the first two and soaks them in the third. Here Merwin’s full powers are unleashed to speak with a timbre both as resonant as the Kalalau Valley and as vivid as the sores on the soles of a little boy’s feet.

W. S. Merwin’s mastery over words is long-established—he won a Pulitzer and has been awarded almost every other major poetry prize and fellowship in a career that includes seventeen books of poetry, four of prose, and eighteen of translation. He was asked to become the poet laureate of the United States, which he declined. He has lived on Maui for more than twenty years and has written a number of articles and poems in that time about Hawai‘i’s natural history and its conservation. Merwin began compiling notes about Ko‘olau, Pi‘ilani, and Hawai‘i’s victims of Hansen’s Disease—notes that resulted in The Folding Cliffs—soon after moving to the Islands when he read for the first time Frances N. Frazier’s translation of John Sheldon’s version of Pi‘ilani’s own account the story.

Poetry is most invaluable as the story’s medium when Merwin writes of the conversation in his protagonists’ own minds between the language of their ancestry and that of their American missionary school teacher, the Reverend George Rowell. They each teeter on the edge, just as the kingdom does, of the new culture overtaking the Islands. Before the insidious blotches of Hansen’s begin to appear on Ko‘olau’s skin, he resides in what seems a golden moment during the overlap between what was and what is to come, when he can work for and respect the manner and the man of Valdemar Knudsen, the European rancher who employed him, and when he possesses a self-determination the maka‘ainana rarely enjoyed in the past (especially, the
author points out, in the days of the sandalwood trade). Yet, in the evening, Koʻolau can return home to the pono of his people and their land. Inherent in poetry are folds of meaning conventional prose can rarely express. And Merwin has the luxury of poetic license at his disposal; though the dates and the basic outline of history both biographical and writ large are accurate and carefully researched, some characters, action, and much of the dialogue in The Folding Cliffs are fiction. That said, he (his poetry) provides subtlety, kaone, and metaphor where they are absolutely indispensable to truth. He is responsible and discerning with his use of fiction; fiction is a tool for creating understanding rather than for gaining moral or political high ground or for sensationalism. Because of his art, Merwin can pass on to his readers both the finest human aspects and the wider complex nature in the relationship between a young Hawaiian woman and the older haole woman she has known from afar almost all her life, in just a very few taut lines. Poetry narrates, but it offers the very essence of what is being narrated at the same time. Certainly there is no better way to get the latter half of nineteenth-century Hawai‘i down on paper.

Koʻolau only sits on the fence for a short time, however, before the Hansen’s Disease pushes him over to one side. The further he climbs into the mountains and the more distance he puts between himself and his pursuers, the more he embraces age old Hawaiian traditions. Koʻolau and his family are now alone with the land and the land provides everything they need; everything, that is, except a cure for the disease. Hansen’s acts on many levels in The Folding Cliffs. From the purely literary standpoint it is the catalyst behind much of the book’s plot, moving characters together then apart; but it serves as a terrifying metaphor for the West’s oozing colonialism, and is also a reminder of the many diseases that ravaged the Hawaiian people in the nineteenth century. What’s more, maʻi hoʻoko‘nale, the “separating sickness,” as it was called by Hawaiians, evokes AIDS as well. The ultimate devastation wrought by Merwin’s invocation of the disease, however, is in his unadorned reportage of the Provisional Government’s handling of its sufferers, how armed men ripped people from their homes and cut them off entirely from their families and lives. Think what you may about Hawai‘i’s prism-like history, Merwin says, there are no easy answers to be sure; but put aside the usual excuses for another age’s ignorance and fear for a minute and look at it for exactly what it was: cruel, utterly contemptible treatment of everyday people cursed once by their bodies then a second time by the authorities.

Merwin comes down particularly hard on Stolz and the Stolz-like characters of Hawai‘i’s history. The conniving deputy sheriff portrayed in The Folding Cliffs arrived in the Islands with big dreams of wealth and position, see-
ing this place not for what it was but as rife with “opportunity.” He is a racist and a particularly inept and heartless example of the white adventurer who was pouring west then. Another villain to Merwin is Charles Hyde, the Protestant preacher immortalized in Robert Louis Stevenson’s “open letter.” He writes, paraphrasing Stevenson’s own words:

\[ \text{. . . the Reverend Doctor Hyde . . . a man quite below} \]
\[ \text{the reticences of civility one of those} \]
\[ \text{missionaries who in the course of their evangelical} \]
\[ \text{calling had grown rich until the cab driver commented} \]
\[ \text{upon the size the taste and comfort of the minister’s home. . . .} \]
\[ \text{(p. 179)} \]

It was Dr. Hyde, while sitting in his rather too sumptuous Honolulu house, who slandered Father Damien of Moloka‘i and his efforts to minister to the imprisoned lepers. In the hands of many writers, accounts of these characters can reek of defensiveness or innuendo—or worse yet, shoddy journalism—in the wisdom of The Folding Cliffs there is a distinct and poignant sadness in the author’s voice. His agony becomes almost spiritual.

After Stolz and Kalākaua and Dole and Lili‘uokalani and Bishop, we are always returned (and grateful to be so) to Pi‘ilani and Ko‘olau and to the simple power of their story. Perhaps the loveliest passage in the entire book is when the couple, who had been childhood friends, fall in love.

\[ \text{. . . [S]he looked at other boys} \]
\[ \text{all of them watching for any hint of welcome} \]
\[ \text{and she thought they were all missing something that she} \]
\[ \text{had always known in Ko‘olau it was already so} \]
\[ \text{when they both found themselves lifted up as when a wave} \]
\[ \text{arches itself under a canoe and the whispering hull} \]
\[ \text{pauses like a caught breath then is flung forward racing} \]
\[ \text{down the blue slope that keeps curling out from in front of it} \]
\[ \text{they felt themselves hurtling in a single rush with no thought} \]
\[ \text{of anything else no sense of before or after} \]
\[ \text{yet it seemed to them that they were not moving at all} \]
\[ \text{and everyone around them could see what was happening (p. 122)} \]

His portrait of Pi‘ilani—child, woman, wife, Hawaiian—and her strength, devotion, and sense of self underpins the book as much as she did her husband Ko‘olau. (Sheldon, who knew her, breathlessly described her, “a beautiful lehua blossom of the highest, a beautiful, nectar-sipping, yellow-plum-}
aged Oo bird." Pi'ilani makes a number of harrowing pilgrimages back to the site where she buried Ko'olau's body. Newspapers in Honolulu claimed that scavengers had found his remains and were bringing back the rogue's gun to display. She had hidden his body, much the way the bodies of the ali'i were hidden, so no one could steal his mana. It is during these journeys that much of the magic of inland Kaua'i is revealed. Merwin the naturalist and conservationist appears over and over again on her trips, as does an author who deeply loves the place and the people he is writing about.

The mountain rises by itself out of the turning night
out of the floor of the seas and is the whole of an island
alone in the one horizon alone in the entire day
as a word is alone in the moment it is spoken
meaning what it means only then and meaning it only
once with the same syllables that have arisen
and have been formed and been uttered before again and again . . . .
(p. 47)

Robert Becker
Author


They came from practically the antipodes of the American experience. Yet in many ways their lives were similar, formed by the turbulent events of a mid-century world at war. And those events brought them to same place as principal actors in the formative years of the new state of Hawai'i.

William Francis Quinn was born in Rochester, New York, the son of C. Alvin and Betty Dorrity Quinn. He grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, where his father worked as a marketing manager for a leather company and his mother
brought their children up Irish and Catholic. He attended public and Catholic schools and in 1940 graduated summa cum laude from the Jesuit-run St Louis University.

Matsuo "Matsy" Takabuki was born in Haleiwa and reared by immigrant parents from Japan. His father was a trucker. His mother harbored a strong belief in education, and she encouraged his progress in the rural plantation schools of Waialua. He attended Waialua High School, worked summers in the sugar fields, and graduated in the spring of 1940. The following fall he entered the Teachers' College at the University of Hawai'i.

He was there in 1943 when President Franklin Roosevelt approved the formation of the all-Japanese 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Takabuki left the university, joined the 442nd, and fought in southern France and in Italy. While Takabuki and his fellow nisei trained for combat in Europe, Bill Quinn accepted a commission in the U.S. Navy. He spent eighteen months with a naval intelligence unit in the Pacific and made brief stops in Honolulu.

Both men attended prestigious law schools: Quinn went to Harvard, Takabuki to the University of Chicago. Quinn graduated in 1947 (he had begun law school before entering the Navy), Takabuki in 1949.

A particularly awful Massachusetts winter of 1946-47 and a wife weary of putting on and taking off snowsuits persuaded Bill Quinn to accept a job offer from the prestigious Hawai'i firm of Robertson, Castle, and Anthony. Bill and Nancy Quinn arrived in the spring of 1947 and took up residence on Portlock Road in East Honolulu.

Takabuki returned to the Islands in 1949, but there was no place in a prestigious law firm for him. Postwar Hawai'i was changing rapidly, but a racial hierarchy still existed in the Hawai'i Bar. The stellar firms would go as far as Cambridge, Massachusetts, to recruit a first-rate Irish Catholic legal mind—while neglecting first-rate Asian American legal minds in their own neighborhoods.

Takabuki found equality of opportunity in electoral politics. In 1952, he won election as a Democrat to the Honolulu Board of Supervisors. Quinn sought elected office as well, but in his first effort, a run for the territorial Senate in 1956, he came up short. He had campaigned vigorously, however, utilizing his charm (and an Irish tenor singing voice) at every campaign stop. His Republicanism was of the moderate variety, several clicks to the left of the oligarchic Republicanism that had governed Hawai'i since annexation.

Quinn's moderation drew the attention of a moderate Republican president, Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1957, Eisenhower abandoned incumbent Samuel Wilder King and appointed the thirty-seven-year-old malihini attorney to Hawai'i's powerful territorial governorship.
From his inaugural as territorial governor to his election as the new fiftieth state’s first governor in 1959 to his defeat for reelection in 1962, Quinn faced opposition on all sides. A Democratic state House of Representatives bucked him; so too did conservatives who dominated the state Senate’s majority Republican caucus. Even his lieutenant governor, former Big Island Mayor Jimmy Kealoha, plotted his defeat in 1962—in favor of himself.

But worst, the tides of history were against him. The Republican tide was running out, and it carried with it even charming, intelligent, idealistic moderates like Bill Quinn. The Democratic tide had been rising since the end of World War II, and it brought with it 442nd veterans like Matsy Takabuki, Dan Inouye, Nadao Yoshinaga, Tadao Beppu and their champions—like Jack Buns, the not-all-that-charming Democrat who defeated Quinn in 1962.

Except for a quixotic run for the U.S. Senate in 1976, Quinn’s political career ended in 1962. So too does Mary Richards’s book. But Matsy Takabuki served on the Honolulu City Council until 1968. He also practiced law: “I assisted clients in the structuring of financial deals.”

Among Takabuki’s clients was Chinn Ho, the founder of Capital Investment Company. Takabuki credits Ho with teaching him the financial aspects—the number-crunching—that go into investment decisions. In part through Ho’s tutelage, by the time he left public office Takabuki was involved in a highly profitable legal/financial practice.

In 1972, a Supreme Court dominated by friends of Jack Burns appointed Takabuki to a vacancy on the Bishop Estate Board of Trustees. The appointment unleashed a furious reaction from the Hawaiian community, causing perhaps the most painful period in Takabuki’s life. He persevered, however, and when he retired from the estate’s board in 1993, many gave him principal credit for the enormous growth in the assets of the estate and the activities of the Kamehameha Schools.

More than two-thirds of Takabuki’s memoir are devoted to his career as a trustee, his observations on doing business in Japan and China, and his thoughts on Hawai’i’s economic future. Some of it is very interesting stuff, some of it only people who know what “arbitrage” means could love.

The book is marred by egregious errors, however. Takabuki says that he remembers “vividly [Jack Burns’s] 1954 campaign against Joe Farrington as delegate to the U.S. Congress.” Burns ran against Elizabeth Farrington in 1954; against Joe in 1948. Takabuki has Burns winning the delegateship in 1958; he won it in 1956, was reelected in 1958. Takabuki places the statehood elections in 1960; they were held in 1959. An Unlikely Revolutionary is part of a series titled “Extraordinary Lives: The Experience of Hawai’i Nisei.” Series general editor Dennis Ogawa should take greater care in future volumes.
Mary Richards's treatment of Bill Quinn is a far different book. It provides a readable narrative of the life of an enormously attractive man. To be sure, she relies on Quinn's own interpretation of his political career, but she occasionally includes unflattering glimpses of her subject. The book's greatest fault is a certain airiness, a tendency to tell the tale of one too many parties, one too many Washington Place receptions.

Together the two books are better than either one alone. They tell the story of a transfer of power from Hawai'i's Republican past to Hawai'i's Democratic present.

Dan Boylan
Professor of History
University of Hawai'i-West Oahu