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The Voice of the Other

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In *The Folding Cliffs*, a narrative poem with a novelistic scope, W. S. Merwin reflects on poetic thinking by availing himself of the tools of narrative. He not only depicts historic injustice against indigenous Hawaiians but also tropes the form of his storytelling to assess the history it relates and its ethical implications. To promote this assessment, Merwin inculcates a judicious self-questioning in his readers by means of his narrative structure, which emphasizes the discrepancy between plot and story. By making readers keenly aware of the mechanics of his storytelling, Merwin offers a model of narrative ethics that respects the individual's alterity.

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In *The Folding Cliffs* (1998), a poem with a novelistic scope, W. S. Merwin reflects on poetic thinking by availing himself of the tools of narrative. He not only depicts historic injustice against indigenous Hawaiians but also tropes the form of his storytelling to assess the history it relates and its ethical implications. To promote this assessment, Merwin inculcates a judicious self-questioning in his readers by means of his narrative structure, which emphasizes the interaction between plot (discourse) and story (chronology). In *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin pricks his readers' consciences most effectively by making them aware of his role in shaping his protagonist's story and of the contexts in which he does so.

In what follows I build upon the perspectives of Cary Nelson and Charles Altieri, who have identified two important features in Merwin's poetry. Nelson focuses on its "deconstructive" tendency, while Altieri draws attention to Merwin's metapoetic commentaries on his practices as a writer. For Nelson (1987: 79), "The challenge Merwin sets himself in his best work is . . . to become the anonymous American figure who announces the harmonizing dissolution of the language." Altieri argues that identifying the deconstructive aspects of Merwin's work is insufficient. Instead, one must engage in a "process of situating the poetry" to fully appreciate it. According to him, "Merwin's best work makes us think about how we can think and where we must place our sensibilities in order to align ourselves with what may be our deepest energies" (Altieri 1987: 160). Altieri recommends a dialectical approach to Merwin's poetry that results in a provisional rather than a definitive view of his work. While Altieri's depth metaphor evokes the psychological orientation often associated with lyric poetry, the process of alignment to which he refers can be applied to narrative poetry too. Readers often speak of their ability to identify (or not) with a particular character in fiction, for instance. In its entirety Altieri's remark also suggests that Merwin provokes his readers into taking critical stands about the issues he depicts, stands that have existential or political as well as intellectual significance.

Merwin's Story and Its Contexts

The Folding Cliffs is about the troubles faced by two nineteenth-century Kauaians, Pi'ilani and her husband Ko'olau. In an unpaginated note before the poem Merwin (1998: n.p.) explains that his narrative "is a fiction but it was not my purpose to belie such facts as have come down to us." The poem recounts the couple's attempt to keep its family intact by preventing the exile of Ko'olau and the couple's son Kaleimanu to a leper colony on the remote island of Moloka'i, a practice that shows the efforts of whites to assert their growing power over the Hawaiian archipelago.¹ (Ko'olau's sister had been exiled before he himself contracted the disease.) As Michelle T. Moran explains, in 1865 King Kamehameha V called for the passage of "An Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy" in response to calls from European advisers. The act authorized

the arrest and inspection of any person "alleged to be a leper." Although the law required the isolation of any person found to have leprosy, its actual implementation fell most harshly on native Hawaiians, who soon discovered that the new regulation required them to send friends and relatives

away to either the Kalihi Hospital and Detention Center in Honolulu on Oahu (which served as a sorting station and treatment center for less advanced cases) or the Kalawao settlement on Molokai. By the early 1870s, the [B]oard [of Health] was sending about one hundred patients to Kalawao annually, almost all of them Hawaiian and all showing physical manifestations of the disease. (Moran 2008: 318)

In *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin characterizes Pi'ilani (rather than her husband Ko'olau) as the protagonist partly by beginning the narrative after the deaths of her husband and son and focusing on Pi'ilani's memory of them, then circling back to present their story more fully and chronologically. This choice distinguishes Merwin's poem from Jack London's "Koolau the Leper" (1982), which treats some of the same events but focuses on Ko'olau instead of Pi'ilani. The emphasis and ordering of Merwin's plot encourage readers to sympathize with Pi'ilani while recognizing their distance from her, a distance that includes not only the ethnic, gender, and religious aspects that may differentiate her from readers but also the historical gap between her era and the present. Numerous references to geologic time and Hawaiian mythology further mediate the reader's relationship to Pi'ilani.²

Toward the end of *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin describes Pi'ilani's dictation of her story about her son's and her husband's last days to the biracial journalist John Sheldon.³ Since Merwin reports these events much earlier in the poem in a moving and forthright manner, Sheldon's attempt to render them seems second-hand and stilted. In other words Merwin makes Sheldon's account part of the plot of *The Folding Cliffs*, and by including the journalist's effort to record Pi'ilani's story, he makes own readers think about the process of documenting historical events and the effects of the rhetoric used in that process. Merwin makes readers feel that Sheldon's version of events lacks authority because it significantly differs from the more organic one appearing earlier in *The Folding Cliffs*. In the scene of Sheldon's transcription, Merwin invites his readers to speculate on the differences between his rendering of Pi'ilani's story and Sheldon's more ornate version of it. The episode exemplifies the poetic thinking Altieri detects in Merwin's "best work," for Merwin's narrative doubling reveals his awareness that his writing risks violating the integrity of Pi'ilani's experience just as much as Sheldon's does.⁴ At the same time, his poem is also a means by which many readers will learn about Pi'ilani and her effort to sustain her family with dignity despite the disciplinary power of white supremacy.

While Merwin accepts the impossibility of telling Pi'ilani's story more accurately than Sheldon did, he also leads his readers to recognize the autonomy of Pi'ilani and her family by repeatedly expressing her sense that Sheldon gets her story wrong. Paradoxically, Merwin's readers experience Pi'ilani most intimately through her alienation from "her" story as told by Sheldon, but that difference also guarantees that she remains partially alien to the reader. We may sympathize with her, but Merwin warns us not to assume that we know her as well as we might think (and no better than she knows herself). By making readers keenly aware of the mechanics of his storytelling, Merwin offers a model of narrative ethics that respects the individual's alterity. He addresses the injustice of white rulers against sick Hawaiians as the theme of his story, but by developing a self-scrutinizing allegory about that injustice in the scene of Sheldon's transcription (and others like them), he also offers a way to critique the injustice instead of simply reporting it. Merwin weaves this critique into the very form of his storytelling.

To help explain how *The Folding Cliffs* emphasizes the division between its story and its discourse, let me turn briefly to a parable about naming in the opening two stanzas of Hart Crane's (1993: 119) "A Name for All":

Moonmoth and grasshopper that flee our page
And still wing on, untarnished of the name
We pinion to your bodies to assuage
Our envy of your freedom—we must maim
Because we are usurpers, and chagrined—
And take the wing and scar it in the hand.
Names we have, even, to clap on the wind;
But we must die, as you, to understand.

Crane's premise that "we must maim / Because we are usurpers" corresponds to the difference between a story and its echo in a key simile from *The Folding Cliffs*. For Crane, we humans maim the world around us because we resort to usurping it through the tool of language, an activity that divides consciousness from the world. (In the first stanza the "pinion" of language is not only a grotesquely artificial wing but a pin to pierce the body of the world to fix, possess, and anatomize it.) For Merwin, the division between self and experience is rooted in narrative as well as language. He expresses this idea in a simile that occurs late in his own poem: "The story begins as an echo of what went before" (Merwin 1998: 310).⁵ Merwin's lines characterize the reporting of historical events, but they also parallel the narratological distinction between story and discourse. According to that distinction, story refers to the chronological succession of events on which a narrative is based rather than the order in which they are arranged by the narrative's plot. Merwin's "what went before" provides the raw material or chronology for the expression of it that some narratologists call "discourse" (Chatman 1978: 19). Merwin uses the ordinary word *story* in a way that corresponds more to the narratological definition of *discourse*.⁶ Discourse is separate from story, yet discourse makes the content of story available to consciousness by representing it. Individuals participate in their experiences, but they are ultimately separated from those experiences by time, physical distance, memory, and the burden of self-consciousness that defines human existence. Narrative commemorates experience in mediated form.

Merwin's comparison of a story to an echo recalls Nelson's "harmonizing dissolution" in that an echo is a waning simulacrum, the trace of a passing event. In the terms of the simile, the echo necessarily dissolves or dies away, but by corresponding to an original event, the echo also harmonizes with something other than its own sound. While "A Name for All" laments the fact that language must separate selves from their experiences to represent them, *The Folding Cliffs* explicitly acknowledges this separation to offset the alienation it can induce without denying the fact of the separation. As Walter Kalaidjian (1987: 200) observes about Merwin's lyric poetry of the 1960s through the 1980s, "Merwin often undermines the authenticity of his phenomenological landscapes by exposing their grounding in fictive textual production." It is through such metadiscursive strategies, the "folding" nuances and lines of the poem, that readers glimpse the constructedness of Merwin's text. *The Folding Cliffs* honors its subject more faithfully by refusing to usurp it.⁷

In a coda of a few chapters that closes *The Folding Cliffs*, Merwin compounds the self-reflexivity of the chapters in which Sheldon records the story of Ko'olau's last days. This coda recounts an event that mirrors Pi'ilani's burial of her husband in both narrative and symbolic terms. As in the scenes of Sheldon's composition and revision of Pi'ilani's narrative, Merwin embeds another story within the larger arc of his poem. In this case, he doubles the image of Ko'olau's secret burial site when he describes the legend of a man named Christian Bertelmann, who is said to be dead and buried in a hidden grave. Bertelmann is in fact alive, but his presence is ghostly because he goes unseen by the family of musicians who overhears his nighttime flute playing (Merwin 1998: 321–23).⁸ Because Merwin's initial description of Bertelmann links him to the buried body of Ko'olau (whose grave Pi'ilani revisits several times to ensure it has not been looted), Bertelmann's absent presence suggests a kind of symbolic resurrection of Ko'olau (whose ghostly presence also pervades "Climbing," the first of seven named sections of the poem, since Pi'ilani vividly remembers mourning him in that section).⁹ Although both men are lepers and are hidden from view in different ways, ethnicity differentiates them, for Ko'olau is of Hawaiian stock and Bertelmann of German. The similarity seems to imply a vision of common humanity on Merwin's part, while the difference underscores the injustice of quarantining Hawaiian lepers at a disproportionately higher rate than white ones.

By portraying Pi'ilani's dictation of her story to Sheldon, Merwin makes his readers quite aware of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1999: 309) claim that "all speaking, even seemingly the most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception."¹⁰ By focusing on the issues of "decipherment" and "interception" as Pi'ilani tells her story, Merwin underscores the irony and personal compromise of her predicament. As a "native informant" (Spivak 1999: xi), Pi'ilani experiences the alienation entailed in Sheldon's "interception" of her story. Since Pi'ilani learns to read and write in *The Folding Cliffs*, Merwin implies that she could have written her own story instead of telling it to Sheldon (though she would presumably have encountered difficulty in publishing it by herself).¹¹ Merwin lets his readers see Sheldon's sympathy at work as he records Pi'ilani's story, but he also pushes them to recognize how Sheldon's assumptions frame and even skew Pi'ilani's experience. At the same time, Merwin (2013: 648) allows his readers to recognize his own dependency on Sheldon's narrative for important details of Pi'ilani's story—a dependency he admits to when he describes his experience of reading Frances N. Frazier's translation of Sheldon's book in "How I Came to Write *The Folding Cliffs*."¹² Merwin invites his readers to honor Pi'ilani as the sovereign source of her story, recognizing that because he offers only a *version* of it, they can admire its protagonist and sympathize with her without presuming to know or possess her account in a definitive (and hence

totalizing) way. “As a narrative whose protagonist resists the colonialism being imposed on her,” writes H. L. Hix (2012: 112), “*The Folding Cliffs* puts at stake the limits of one’s engagement with the other.” At the same time, the poem shows readers the importance of trying to engage with others in fair and just ways.

Listening for the Voice of the Other by Comparing Disparate Discourses

In “The Problem of Speaking for Others” (1991–92) Linda Alcoff addresses some of the issues raised by the discursive complexity of Merwin’s poem. “Who is speaking to whom,” she writes, “turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said; in fact what is said turns out to change according to who is speaking and who is listening.” She goes on to isolate two issues as particularly important, “the location of the speaker and discursive context,” and she concludes that “meaning must be understood as plural and shifting, since a single text can engender diverse meanings given diverse contexts” (12). In *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin draws attention to Pi’ilani’s location as a speaker when she dictates to Sheldon the story of her struggle to keep her family together (and again when she confirms the truth of that account to the local businessperson Christopher B. Hofgaard in the final two pages of Merwin’s poem). Merwin systematically focuses on the contexts of meaning by depicting diverse forms of language use, including dialogue between various Hawaiian and haole (white) characters and transcripts of official letters. In an interview Merwin (1999a: 17) explains that this diversity of discourses was deliberate: “I wanted something that could move from taking a phrase out of a letter straight into a chant and a dialogue—without changing the mode, doing the whole thing all the way through. And then I didn’t want to tell the story in the chronological way, because that makes it anecdotal.”

By featuring a variety of discourses and scenes of storytelling, Merwin encourages his readers to consider the contrasts and parallels among the perspectives they reflect and to speculate about the worth and meaning of such comparisons. For instance, Merwin adapts phrases from the *Kumulipo* (Beckwith 1972), the Hawaiian chant of creation, in the hymn enumerating the genealogies of Ko’olau and Pi’ilani that opens “Born” (Merwin 1998: 89). He depicts Pi’ilani (37–39; 271), her mother-in-law Kawaluna (104), and a chief named Taiana (73) chanting traditional prayers; he mentions the communal Hawaiian chanting that Pi’ilani and Ko’olau participate in (123); and he relates their son Kaleimanu’s passionate love of stories (19, 157).¹³ The echoes of the *Kumulipo* situate Merwin’s story in mythological time, and other passages about the birth of the islands situate it in geologic time. In a more documentary vein, Merwin frequently alludes to conversations at Hofgaard’s store about political events concerning the archipelago (158–59, 164, 181, 232), quotes extensively from Robert Louis Stevenson’s public letter defending Father Damien against Rev. Charles McEwen Hyde’s libels (178–80), relates Judge Kauai’s advice to Ko’olau to “keep reading” (119), and features excerpts from Louis Stolz’s official letters seeking to capture Ko’olau and the other fugitives in Kalalau (210–13, 218).

As a community leader and mentor to Ko’olau, moreover, Judge Kauai shares, reads, and comments on newspaper reports (128, 207–8), raising the issue of narrative framing for the consideration of his listeners (including the designation of “good” Hawaiians) after Stolz’s death (230). I have already referred to Pi’ilani’s recitation of her story to Sheldon (306, 309–10, 312), but Merwin compounds the complexity of this discursive context by indicating that her poses for Sheldon’s photographs are staged reconstructions rather than firsthand documentations of events as they actually happened, a difference that bothers Pi’ilani (314). Finally, by featuring a conversation between Pi’ilani and her sister’s family after Sheldon’s book comes out, Merwin shows that publication provides the occasion for Pi’ilani to discuss her own experience in relation to the story about Bertelmann (321–24). In other words, even though representation can mislead, it can also be a tool for strengthening social ties and commemorating the dead.

Ghost Story and “Crooked Words” as Figurations of History

Merwin’s decision to close his poem with the Bertelmann story and Hofgaard’s response to Sheldon’s account has an important allegorical function. The end of *The Folding Cliffs* shows that Pi’ilani’s story can register in different ways, both negatively and positively. For example, Pi’ilani’s family members share in her grief and courage when she recounts her experiences, and they enrich and expand the implications of her story with that of another, non-Hawaiian victim of leprosy. By contrast, while Hofgaard expresses his admiration for Pi’ilani many years after the deaths of her son and husband, Merwin emphasizes Hofgaard’s allegiance to the policy of leper exile and to the American takeover of Hawaii. In the midst of his account of the rebellion in which Ko’olau took part, Merwin embeds

a letter
to W O Smith Pres Board of Health and Att General
in red ink Sir We the undersigned request and demand
that every effort possible be promptly and diligently made
to bring to justice and punish the murderer
or murderers of the late L H Stolz and to clean out
the valley of Kalalau of its leprous population
or we will take the matter into our own hands and promptly
revenge the death of our friend murdered in cold blood
T H Gibson Professor English niceties
be damned Th Brandt E E Conant C B Hofgaard
H P Faye . . . (232)

By permitting the “undersigned” to speak for themselves, Merwin lets their letter damn them out of their own mouths, exposing the violence of their vigilante self-righteousness and the racist metaphor that characterizes a quarantine as cleansing. In the closing scene of the poem, moreover, Merwin emphasizes the fact that Sheldon’s account mystifies Hofgaard, which may reflect how his interest in Pi’ilani is contradicted by his allegiance to white supremacy in Hawaii and his attendant hostility toward Ko‘olau’s resistance.

Yet Pi’ilani is mystified in her own turn when Hofgaard calls on her to confirm her story. Merwin indicates her suspicion of him in the following lines:

And when Hofgaard had left Pi’ilani
had said to her mother—Why do you think that man came
to see me Did he think I would tell him something else
after all of the others he has listened to
what does he know now about what I remember. (324–25)

Merwin includes this event to dramatize the vulnerability of Pi’ilani in the face of a dominant culture that condescends to her people and their experiences. At the same time, the passage foregrounds Pi’ilani’s subjectivity through its vivid voicing: the relative brevity and syntactic autonomy of the penultimate line together with the driving rhythm of downbeats falling on “all” and the first syllables of “others” and “listened” effectively express Pi’ilani’s wonder. So do the phrases “tell him something else” and “know now” in the other lines. By including Hofgaard’s complaint that “some of the words” in Sheldon’s book “were too crooked for him” (Merwin 1998: 325) and emphasizing Pi’ilani’s question to her family about why Hofgaard needed to confirm her story by seeking her personal verification of it, Merwin underscores the way Hofgaard’s attitudes about the inferiority of Hawaiian culture and Pi’ilani’s second-class status reinforce her subordination in the racially stratified society that privileges him. Merwin’s phrase treats Hofgaard’s complaint as an allegory for white refusal to hear Pi’ilani speak on her own terms. I view this as a sign of Merwin’s attempt to pay homage to Pi’ilani without imposing on her family and her story, since Hofgaard himself uses the phrase less imaginatively (though rather epigrammatically) in his own narrative, which was published in three parts in the newspaper the *Garden Island* on December 19 and 26, 1916, and January 2, 1917. He writes that Sheldon “uses the greatest possible amount of crooked words to record the simplest historical point” (Hofgaard 1917). Although Hofgaard expresses admiration for Pi’ilani in the same article, Merwin suggests that his visit to Pi’ilani is motivated by a mixture of curiosity and disbelief not much different from the attitudes of many nineteenth-century American readers who doubted that Frederick Douglass and Harriet A. Jacobs could write their own accounts of their experiences as slaves. The prefatory certifications of their slave narratives by such white writers as William Lloyd Garrison (Douglass 1960: 9–10) and Lydia Maria Child (Jacobs 1987: 3) aim to rebut this negative presumption by testifying to the authenticity of the narratives they introduce. In this respect Merwin’s (1998: 315) crooked words

allegory also applies to an earlier scene in which Sheldon enlists a notary public to “swear to the truth” of his book about Pi’ilani because “there might be those who would challenge the facts of their story” (315). Sheldon secures Pi’ilani’s permission to include her name next to his during the notarization.¹⁴

Together with this subtle social allegory, Merwin’s plotting highlights the social and political aspects of Ko’olau’s fight to live and die with dignity. For example, Pi’ilani’s decision to remain with Ko’olau not only helped keep her family together, it also helped protect him against official nonexistence. As the government physician George Fitch, wrote, “Once declared a Leper, the person is civilly dead” (quoted in Tayman 2006: 322). Merwin dramatizes this injustice in his account of Ko’olau’s sister Niuli, who disappears and remains incommunicado after she is diagnosed with leprosy and taken away because of it. By telling the story of Niuli’s tragic disappearance prior to Pi’ilani’s flight with Ko’olau, Merwin illustrates the drastic impact of removing lepers to a separate island.¹⁵ More broadly speaking, Merwin emphasizes the textual basis of history together with the role of agency in the production of texts, for the chapters in which Sheldon records and revises Pi’ilani’s account clearly reveal the asymmetrical relations between Pi’ilani and Sheldon’s family. (A similar asymmetry exists between Pi’ilani and Hofgaard in the chapter in which he visits her.) Merwin emphasizes the social, racial, and religious differences between Sheldon and Pi’ilani, helping readers experience her consciousness of being an outsider in the Sheldon family circle so they can appreciate the importance of her twofold achievement: first, nursing and burying her son and husband and, second, reporting the event so Sheldon could record and commemorate it.

Patriarchal Proxies and the Matter of Representation

Merwin consistently dramatizes the differences between Pi’ilani’s way of seeing, narrating, and reflecting her experiences and Sheldon’s manner of recording it. By suggesting that Sheldon was not personally acquainted with Pi’ilani until he invited her to collaborate with him in the production of the narrative about her husband’s last days, Merwin (1998: 306) also indicates Pi’ilani’s loss of agency regarding her experience and the documentation of her family’s story. In fact for Merwin, Pi’ilani’s rendering of her story is framed by her father Ho’ona’s wishes to comply with Sheldon’s request that she tell her story to him so he can publish it. Merwin’s narration of this process emphasizes not only the mediation but also the potential vitiation of Pi’ilani’s story by patriarchal authority and orthodox Christian belief, forces that, according to Merwin, clash with Pi’ilani’s temperament and experience. These forces come clearly into view in the following scene, when Ho’ona prepares her for her visit to the household where she will report her story:

—Do you remember your Bible—he asked her and she could hear
that he was trying to sound like Reverend Rowell.
—I remember it—she said—Because in the Sheldon house
I am sure they read the Bible every day—he told her. (307)

This catechism-like exchange infantilizes Pi’ilani, reminding readers of the emotional, cultural, and gender differences between Ho’ona and his daughter (Ho’ona serves in the church yet has a second wife and daughter whom Pi’ilani has not formally met at this point in the narrative). The scene also echoes the schoolroom episodes in which Rev. Rowell, a missionary minister, teaches Pi’ilani and Ko’olau how to read and write (108–9). In this discourse Ho’ona positions Pi’ilani as sexually and socially inferior, insisting that she recognize his paternal superiority over her by adopting the posture of an obedient daughter even though he was often away from her and her mother when she was growing up. Readers share Pi’ilani’s amusement and irritation when she bristles at Ho’ona’s self-righteous rhetoric regarding the Sheldons and Waimea, where they live:

and Pi’ilani said—Waimea Waimea
you would think it was the moon and I used to walk there to school
every day and back—and she laughed and said—I will be home
before the moon is new—and then they drove off and her face
darkened as Ho’ona began talking to her as though
she were at school and she watched the road where she used to walk
but she had not been to Waimea since Kaleimanu

was a child and the last time she had come with Ko‘olau
they had been on horses and Kaleimanu was riding with him
and now that she was in the carriage she felt naked
without him and as they came closer to Waimea
it was all familiar but it looked strange like someone
who has been waked up suddenly and there were new houses
in place of some of the old ones there were many of them
that she did not recognize and many were painted
and there were many people whom she did not know and they came
to a big new house painted gray and stopped at the door. (307)

Ho‘ona’s reverence for the Sheldons’ family status and piety converts Waimea, the location of the Sheldons’ home, from a familiar place-name into a mystifying and overblown signifier. In the face of Pi‘ilani’s painful memories, moreover, the landscape of Waimea strikes her as eerily foreign. Like the feeling of nakedness expressing Pi‘ilani’s vulnerability, Merwin’s simile of sudden waking underscores the uncanny quality of a place his heroine thought she knew but that profoundly differs from her expectations. Nevertheless, the style of Merwin’s reportage locates Pi‘ilani as the subject of her thoughts rather than the object of her father’s hectoring remarks, as in the immediately preceding passage (“Do you remember your Bible—he asked her”). Hence Merwin’s depiction of Pi‘ilani offers two ways of perceiving her relation to speech in the same passage. The fact that Pi‘ilani occupies such different discursive locations indicates the subtle complexity of Merwin’s representational strategy when it comes to his protagonist, since she modulates from the grammatical object of action to the agent or subject of her own experience in the space of a page. Such modulation increases the verisimilitude of Merwin’s characterization of her, which in turn increases her authority in the eyes of readers and allows them to imagine her world in a sympathetic and open-minded way instead of appropriating or co-opting it.

If her father schools Pi‘ilani in proper religious belief and social behavior before she arrives at the Sheldon household, Sheldon himself coaches her in the somewhat sensational literary conventions he will use to tell her story. And like her father in the carriage on the way to Waimea, the Sheldon family members reinforce her alienating experience of the Bible as a literary model and perhaps an instrument of social discipline. Like Merwin himself in his different way, Sheldon situates Pi‘ilani’s story in the context of Hawaiian history and culture. Sheldon’s framework, however, is recognizably heroic, and Merwin emphasizes the cultural distance between Sheldon and the conventions he seeks to use when he describes Sheldon’s initial interview with Pi‘ilani. Sheldon opens the sessions this way:

—From what I have read and heard I believe
that the cliff below Kilohana which I must confess
I have never seen is the place from which warriors
used to hurl torches far out over the valley
and watched them sink like stars falling have you heard of that—
—I have heard about it—Pi‘ilani answered
—Because I think that might be part of our title—he said
—The Firebrands Flung from The
Heights of Kamaile and The
Hero
of the Cliffs of Kalalau or something like that—. (309)

By proposing such a sensationalizing title for Pi‘ilani’s story, Sheldon risks misrepresenting her experience. “The Hero of the Cliffs” is so masculine and singular in its emphasis that it excludes Pi‘ilani’s central role in the story Sheldon wants to record. Whereas the title focuses on the military prowess of Ko‘olau, Pi‘ilani’s heroic commitment

to her son and husband are also defining features of the story. This scene indicates that the very process of naming the narrative risks diminishing Pi'ilani's role in it, a risk that the disproportionate ratio of lines between the two speakers accentuates (Sheldon's eight lines to Pi'ilani's one). The lesson of this episode parallels Crane's fable in "A Name for All": language represents but also replaces firsthand experience.

Along with the other proposed title, "The Firebrands Flung from The Heights of Kamaile," "The Hero of the Cliffs" alludes to an actual reference in *The True Story of Kaluaikoolau* (Pi'ilani 2001), the English translation of Sheldon's account. The reference occurs in a passage in which Pi'ilani describes her state of mind after the deaths of Kaleimanu and Ko'olau (whose full name, which Merwin renders as Kalua i Ko'olau, appears in the following passage):

My great love and longing in those days was to be united with my relatives and tell them all the things I had witnessed, the things, indeed, not seen by any other living person except for my husband and our child, and they were gone, leaving only myself living here. I longed to tell them all the true things concerning this pathetic story so they would understand what they had mistaken and only guessed about. However these thoughts of mine were not fulfilled, they were only dreamed of. They are told here for the first time by the pen of Kahikina Kelekona [Sheldon], to be preserved in ink, and disseminated to the populace as the true story of Kaluaikoolau, the one boasted of as "The Fierce Brave One of the Kalalau Cliffs who Glides along the Peak of Kamaile whence the Fire was Flung."
(40)

In *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin emphasizes the way Sheldon's interests and commitments as a writer inform his storytelling, so much so that his florid style potentially obscures Pi'ilani's relationship to her story as a participant and a reporter. While the passage above ostensibly seeks to assert the authenticity of the Sheldon-Pi'ilani account, it potentially compromises the verisimilitude of the scene, at least for readers unfamiliar with the rhetorical conventions of traditional Hawaiian storytelling.¹⁶ The reference to the pen and ink of Kahikina Kelekona gives an immediacy to the text's claim for veracity, but the identification of Sheldon as the writer enhances his prestige at the potential expense of Pi'ilani. (What might have motivated the passage's honorific authorial reference and rhetorical grandeur? Are these touches Pi'ilani's more than Sheldon's? Alternatively, to what extent is Sheldon speaking for or through Pi'ilani here, letting her voice function as the tool or instrument for his own rhetoric? How can readers of *The Folding Cliffs* avoid applying the last question, mutatis mutandis, to Merwin himself?) Moreover, because *The True Story* is the result of a collaboration between Sheldon and Pi'ilani, it is not possible to know for certain how accurately, consistently, or authentically the text represents Pi'ilani's personal perspective either in conjunction with or instead of Sheldon's. Merwin's poem reminds his readers of this fact by situating these scenes of composition in his own version of Pi'ilani's story. The fact that the word *cliffs* appears in both Sheldon's proposed title and in the title of Merwin's doubled or "folded" narrative also seems to be Merwin's subtle way of confessing his own inability to escape both narrative conventions and the cultural assumptions of his era and experience. He can, however, admit his awareness of this problem to readers so they can form their own judgments and avoid turning Pi'ilani and her experience into the mere instrument or object of their preoccupations.

While Merwin works to make his readers keenly aware of this problem through self-reflexive devices that symbolize textual production (thereby signaling the discursive dilemmas and limitations entailed by his own narrative framework and plotting), he also allows readers to remain absorbed in his compelling version of the story. In *The Folding Cliffs* scenes of writing and interpretation occur frequently and resonantly enough to make readers aware of the poem's status as a textual construction, which can in turn lead them to question its historical accuracy or authenticity, but the questioning happens in tandem with the reader's absorption in the story. The poem effectively alerts the reader to the dangers of artistic appropriation (and therefore the eclipse of the historical Pi'ilani) without making the reader reject the story on its own terms. The believability and dramatic excitement of Merwin's narrative enhance his poem's moral force.

Perhaps Spivak's distinction in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* between representation as *Darstellung* (artistic figuration or mimesis) and representation as *Vertretung* (political representation) can shed some light on what I am suggesting. Spivak differentiates two kinds of representation with the German words to show how story lines about political and psychological subject formation (both Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx use the term *Darstellung*) can falsify and foreclose viable options for political action and self-representation. Spivak (1999: 264) expresses her claim this way: The "staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes,' paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*." In *The Folding Cliffs* Merwin differentiates Pi'ilani's experience from the particular heroic framework Sheldon adopts to emphasize her importance in her own

right and to make her a sympathetic character. Merwin also differentiates his story line, which places Pi'ilani so resolutely at the center, from that of London, who makes Ko'olau the hero of his short story, especially by focusing on Ko'olau's capacity as a leader and a sharpshooter. Merwin's Pi'ilani is affected by "paternal proxies" and "agents of power" but is not so circumscribed by them or by the heroic story lines associated with them that readers cannot see and hear her. To put it more simply, Merwin gives a compelling picture of Pi'ilani and her actions without making her conform to a received heroic plotline. Merwin's Pi'ilani is both ordinary and extraordinary.

By dramatizing the scenario in which Sheldon conceives the framework for his rendition of Pi'ilani's account of her last years with Ko'olau, Merwin shows how the phrase from Sheldon's book ("The Fierce Brave One of the Kalalau Cliffs who Glides along the Peak of Kamaile whence the Fire was Flung") subordinates if not suppresses the more ordinary story of domestic life Pi'ilani shared with Ko'olau, which Merwin so richly elaborates in *The Folding Cliffs*. In Pi'ilani's session with Sheldon Merwin satirizes the traditional formula of martial prowess and display. While Merwin dramatizes Ko'olau's defense of himself and his family, depicting Ko'olau shooting Stolz (Merwin 1998: 224–25) and later the soldiers dispatched to capture him after the declaration of martial law (245–51), he avoids sensationalism and makes his readers feel the falsifying power of "heroes" and of "paternal proxies" like Sheriff John Coney, Sheldon, and Hofgaard, three men of authority who listen to Pi'ilani's story about her husband and son. While these scenes of storytelling differ in nature and effect (as sheriff, only Coney has the power to exonerate Pi'ilani for remaining with her husband when he resisted Stolz and the soldiers sent after Stolz's death), they all position Pi'ilani as a speaker in relation to listeners who, by virtue of gender and social status, put her on an unequal footing with themselves. It may be that Sheldon best qualifies as a proxy for Pi'ilani, given his goal of representing her story for a Hawaiian readership, but the other two men "stand for" her as well, both by representing her and by substituting themselves for her in their official or public capacities. Finally, while Sheldon and Hofgaard do not have Coney's legal power over Pi'ilani, the fact that they call on a female native informant to account for herself in a public way makes the discursive context of their accounts similar to that of the sheriff's deposition. Merwin cannot entirely avoid manipulating Pi'ilani's subjectivity either, but his attention to the dangers of doing so, partly by depicting Sheldon's transcription and Hofgaard's visit in his own poem, go a long way toward offsetting this danger by teaching himself and his readers to keep it firmly in mind and actively resist it.

In addition to Pi'ilani's sessions with Sheldon, many other passages in *The Folding Cliffs* show how different discursive contexts produce significantly different meanings. As a Hawaiian figure of authority and a major character, Judge Kauai also exemplifies how Alcott's principle operates in *The Folding Cliffs*. In an interview Merwin (1999a: 16) singles out the judge as an important figure. His interlocutor in the following exchange is Sam Solecki:

SS [Solecki]: You're constantly swerving away from easy moral judgments by dramatizing certain things, trying to find a certain detachment, a voice that will not fall into moral categories.

MSW [Merwin]: I try to do it by putting in real characters. Like Judge Kauai.

SS: He's a wonderful figure! In retrospect, it seems to me that the Judge is really the key figure, because he's able to reflect on the situation.

In the following scene the judge expresses an attitude toward "heroes" that is strikingly akin to the passage from Spivak (1999: 264) cited above. Like Spivak, Judge Kauai demonstrates how the category of the hero oversimplifies reality by idealizing it. The judge makes his remarks after Ko'olau has killed Stolz. A Hawaiian named Kaumeheuiwa has reported the news of the killing to the white authorities, while Kapahe'e is among those lepers who recently surrendered to authorities:

—Well now they have two heroes—the Judge said—and you can be sure
they will make the most of them dress them up for a little while
and wave flags over them blow their horns and Kaumeheuiwa
will tell them again how he carried the news
of this catastrophe through the mountainous seas at night
to the proper authorities and for a while he will be
the good Hawaiian and Kapahe'e who I know is

as old as I am and has been improving upon
stories about himself all that time will bring them out
in up-to-date versions The Society of Stranglers
he belonged to in his youth and the man he passed one day then
up in the forest above Kalalau following him
but walking backward so they both stopped to fight and when
a twig fell on the man's shoulder and he looked aside
Kapahe'e caught him in the Strangler's Hold and killed him
.....
I expect that he
seldom revived those stories here in the valley
where they knew him and he had the Pa family
as neighbors who are said to swim with the sharks and have sharks
for guardian spirits but he will recall the stories now
wherever he is taken and the reporters will make notes
and nobody will have heard those tales in Honolulu
or on Moloka'i and so for a matter of weeks
he will be the good leper unlike the rest of us
when voices are rising about this news from Kalalau. (Merwin 1998: 230)

The judge's ironic treatment of the categories of the "good" and (by correlation) the "bad" shows how self-serving these designations are for the white people who bestow them.¹⁷ The terms reflect the judge's ironic view of the discursive context offered by the forthcoming newspaper reports he envisions. In keeping with the diegetic strategy of *The Folding Cliffs* as a whole, this passage depicts the judge as both a narrator and an interpreter, or as a storyteller whose ironic testimony is itself interpretational and contingent. He shows how newspaper rhetoric ideologically distorts social reality by translating colonial racial stratification into a rationalized measure of moral behavior. His speech also reflects his awareness of the communal ties and personal motives in the fashioning (and self-fashioning) of tall tales. The judge's speech clearly focuses on storytelling and audience reception per se, differentiating a local audience in the political periphery from a colonial center where Kapahe'e may promote himself through grander stories of his feats without the threat of being discredited by those who know him.

Moreover, the judge's view of events and their participants continues the mentorship he provided to Ko'olau earlier when he encouraged him to read newspapers and to reflect critically on their reports (119, 128). Rowell teaches Ko'olau the skills of basic literacy, but the judge offers him more advanced reading lessons. Whereas Rowell inveighs against native "Indolence" in a key episode, moreover, the judge proves to be a more sympathetic teacher (109).¹⁸ The judge's irony regarding newspaper rhetoric, like Pi'ilani's suspicion toward Hofgaard, is pronounced enough to suggest that Merwin wants his readers to think about the roles sources, reporting, and textuality play in the transmission of history throughout his poem. By doing so Merwin aims to prevent his narrative from being "merely" anecdotal and to give it instead something of the power of a fable—a form for which he has shown a marked affinity (see Merwin 2007).

In "How I Came to Write *The Folding Cliffs*" Merwin makes a remark about "good Hawaiians" that links Judge Kauai's dialogue with my more general focus on the relationship between Sheldon and Pi'ilani in the composition of *The True Story of Kaluaikoolau*. Merwin (2013: 649) finds Sheldon's account too idealizing:

Sheldon's sympathy with the Hawaiians' legitimate sovereignty was absolute, and I felt that it colored his portraits of Pi'ilani and Ko'olau and their story. It seemed to me that he had made them exemplars of "good Hawaiians," a shade too piously Christian, rather than portraying them just as

they were. Even Sheldon's getting Pi'ilani to pose out on the rocks, holding a rifle, I thought, was meant to evoke admiration and sympathy, and to place her among the frontier heroines of American popular legend at the time.

As John Burt (2003: 116) writes, "Merwin intends Sheldon's account to serve as a cautionary example of the ways even very sympathetic (and anticolonialist) readers might get Pi'ilani's story wrong, as perhaps even John G. Neihardt, for instance, sometimes heard what he needed to hear in what Black Elk told him." When Pi'ilani encounters an old friend from the days of her flight with Ko'olau into the Kalalau valley, for instance, she

felt how far away Kalalau seemed to have become
and how her telling about it at the Sheldons' house
seemed to have drawn a shadow across it blurring
and fading it like the pictures

she looked at in the Sheldons' family album (Merwin 1998: 316). Merwin's simile indicates not just the diminutions wrought by memory but also the attenuating effect of Sheldon's transcription.

The following passage emphasizes the way Sheldon's beliefs influence his response to Pi'ilani's dictation. It also shows how these beliefs divide her from her story by rendering it in an unfamiliar form:

He asked her about things that happened before she was born
and he asked her about Ko'olau and when they were children
and about times that she had forgotten and she answered him
as well as she could and when she told him about
Ko'olau's baptism she could see that he was pleased
and he said he was sure that their faith and baptism
had sustained them in the trials they had endured
but when he read back to her what he had written about them
it sounded like a story about somebody else
more than like what she remembered of what happened
but she could not think how to tell him that it had been
not like that and would never have belonged in those words
that came from church but she could see that he wanted it
to be true and down under all those words it was true
and he thought the words made it true but she kept thinking
of the time when Sheriff Coney asked her about
what happened in Kalalau and all he had wanted
was for her to say what she remembered about it
and she thought how much easier that had been . . . (310)

The religious piety of Sheldon's text is similar to the conventions of providence tales from New England, such as the narrative by Mary Rowlandson. When the Sheldon family reads the Exodus story together, for example, they look with expectation at Pi'ilani, suggesting their view that the biblical model applies to her situation in a typological way (309). This perspective raises the question to what extent the expressions of piety are Pi'ilani's and to what extent they reflect a preexisting narrative paradigm devised by missionary Christians.¹⁹ Merwin's version of Pi'ilani gives greater weight than Sheldon's does to the role of indigenous religious belief in shaping Pi'ilani's response to the events she reports. Merwin's Pi'ilani feels that her experience "would never have belonged in those words / that came from church," but her demurral is muted by Sheldon's desire for the self-confirming perspective of his own outlook.

Story as Echo of What Went Before

In *The Folding Cliffs*, then, the steady pressure of Sheldon's expectations and interests skew his account of the events Pi'ilani directly witnessed and of the way she experienced them. In the breezy words of Merwin's narrator, "Mr Sheldon always seemed to be hoping to hear / something better but she thought he was a kind man and she liked him" (310). By contrasting Sheldon's biased mode of storytelling with his own artistically richer account, Merwin implies that his version of the story is more true to life, but the fact that he tells his story at several removes from his sources seriously complicates that implication. By making his readers aware of this conundrum, Merwin challenges his readers to consider the problem of representing the experience of a person who does not speak directly for herself. In the following passage in fact Merwin's metaphor of story as echo insists on the radical difference between narrative and its real-world origins or referents. Sheldon addresses Pi'ilani in the following lines, which he attributes to Abraham Fornander, a family friend and prominent collector of Hawaiian folklore:

and Mr Fornander said
that the story is all that we have when things are over
the story begins as an echo of what went before
but then it is only the story we are listening to. (310)

This passage acknowledges the fictive quality of all texts, including Merwin's, but in doing so it also testifies to the reality and historic importance of "what went before." Such testimony functions not only as a confession of the radical otherness of experience and the inadequacy of language to express or embody it but also as a means of honoring individual experience.

In a 2003 interview Merwin (2003) comments more expansively on the gap between experience and language by relating it to the gulf between experience and memory:

We're always writing about the past. We're never writing about the present. We may think we're writing about the present, but we only recognize the present because of the past. Language comes out of the past. The past is always with us, and it's partly memory and partly what we make of it. And what you remember is not what happened, it's something that's already changed. Changed in your mind. And then when you are writing, you take what you remember and what you recognize and you invent something else out of it.

The strength of Merwin's homage to Pi'ilani lies in his concession that his poem can only provide a version of her story, an imperfect representation instead of the definitive record to which Sheldon lays claim. In the words of Phoebe Pettingell (1998: 24), Merwin "never minimizes the problems involved in trying to convey what is important for one society to another possessing quite different values." The story as echo metaphor pays homage to individual experiences, events, and histories ("what went before"), but it also acknowledges the mimetic gap between discourse and the real ("but then it is only the story we are listening to"). The last line exemplifies Hayden White's (1999: 1) claim that "our experience of history is indissociable from our discourse about it."

The metaphor of the story "as an echo of what went before" also corresponds to an important detail relating to the story about Bertelmann near the end of *The Folding Cliffs*. At the end of the family celebration of the publication of "Mr Sheldon's book" (Merwin 1998: 318), Pi'ilani gathers with her kinswomen and listens to her father's second wife tell a story about Bertelmann's mysterious flute playing, a story prompted by a relative's interaction with Pi'ilani's book.²⁰ Pi'ilani responds to this story by remarking that

there was a man in Kalalau
down by the stream who played the flute and when I heard it
I would go on thinking I heard it all the next day. (324)

This remark about the effect of music parallels the characterization of story as the lingering echo of an event or an experience, so the flute music functions as a metaphor for Merwin's poem itself.

Whereas this parallel underscores the affective links between artistic activity and experience, the closing lines of Merwin's poem reinforce the idea of disparity between experience and representation, for Pi'ilani responds to a visit from the local merchant Hofgaard by wondering aloud about the purpose of his visit. She speculates that

maybe he only wanted to see for himself
whether I was the one in the book he had been reading
where he told me that some of the words were too crooked for
him—. (325)

These lines give Pi'ilani the last words in Merwin's text, an act that might seem to enhance her importance as a character and a historic figure. However, they also undercut the authority of Merwin's poem by closing with the deliciously ironic image of a book whose words "are too crooked" for its readers to see clearly, decipher, or tolerate. Technically, moreover, the last nine words of Pi'ilani's remarks are a citation of Hofgaard's. It is as if through the syntax of indirect discourse Merwin is acknowledging how speech and experience are inevitably shot through with the intentions of others. While Hofgaard's words infiltrate Pi'ilani's speech (and that speech is of course Merwin's fiction), Merwin has taken pains to respect the historical Pi'ilani through his robustly varied representations of her. In his mindful attention to the problem of "what is at stake when we insist that the subaltern speaks" (Spivak 1999: 310), Merwin shows that "the enablement" of artistic representation "must be used even as the violation" entailed by any form of representation "is renegotiated" (Spivak 2003: 524).

By drawing attention to the divisions between Pi'ilani's personal experience and Sheldon's record of her husband's demise, Merwin makes his readers aware that access to Pi'ilani's experience is not completely available. Yet in tandem with this *via negativa* (negative path) Merwin takes a more positive approach to his subject, paying homage to Pi'ilani's character, bravery, devotion, and achievement as a storyteller through the enchanting beauty of his rhetoric. By pairing the story of Pi'ilani and her husband Ko'olau with the coda-like narrative of Bertelmann's ghostly flute playing, Merwin both characterizes Pi'ilani as an artist figure and notes the similarities between the two families' efforts to honor their kin and maintain the coherence of their family ties. However, instead of glossing over the differences between the fates of the German and Hawaiian lepers, Merwin makes his readers more sharply aware of them. By combining the awareness of such differences with the pathos readers feel in the face of Pi'ilani's tragedy, Merwin offers a way of honoring the past without imposing on the autonomy of the people he portrays. While homage and awareness do not equal justice, they can contribute to the conditions for creating it.

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¹ The modern term for leprosy is Hansen's disease, but Merwin uses the former to reflect the usage of the era. For clarity, I do too.

² Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of the significance of the poem's many references to geologic time and Hawaiian mythology.

³ Merwin depicts Pi'ilani as a fugitive in Kalalau telling the story of her life three times: to Sheriff John Coney (Merwin 1998: 301), to Sheldon (306, 309–10, 312, 314–15), and to the businessperson and judge Christopher B. Hofgaard (324–25).

⁴ Drucilla Cornell (2010: 104) characterizes Merwin's narrative dilemma in these general terms: "The other that we hear because he or she speaks to us in our language and through our forms of representation has already been assimilated, and thus appropriated by the subject who represents him or her."

⁵ Echoes also reverberate in Merwin's subsequent publications, suggesting the importance of the figure to his work more generally. Some examples include "Echoing Light" from *The River Sound* (Merwin 1999b); "To Echo" from *The Pupil* (Merwin 2001); and "Another to Echo," "Garden Music," and "White on White" from *The Moon before Morning* (Merwin 2014). As early as "On Open Form" (written in 1969), Merwin (1987: 299) reaches for the idea of an echo without an origin when he tries to define free verse and the effort to make it, identifying it as "an unduplicatable resonance, something that would be like an echo except that it is repeating no sound."

⁶ Merwin's distinction between "story" and "what went before" probably corresponds more directly to the Russian formalist distinction between story (fabula) and plot (*suzhet*) (Bal 1997: 79).

⁷ Jonathan Weinert (2012: 18–19) believes that Merwin "is sensitive to the irony inherent in an outsider attempting to use the usurper's own tongue to speak on behalf of the dispossessed. But he stakes out common ground by pointing to experiences of loss and elation . . . , and he attempts to fashion an imaginative language that can account for those common experiences."

⁸ This story is reported in Joesting 1984: 236–37. See Merwin 1998: 321–25 for Pi'ilani's family's discussion of the story.

⁹ Pi'ilani discusses her concern about the violation of Ko'olau's grave with Anne Sinclair Knudsen in the first section of the poem (Merwin 1998: 16–17).

¹⁰ Merwin (1999a: 17) confesses his hesitation about dramatizing the story in an interview. He does the same in "How I Came to Write *The Folding Cliffs*" (Merwin 2013: 648). In the early 1980s he told the interviewers Ed Folsom and Cary Nelson, "I was a little hesitant about writing about Hawaii at all, because I thought one more *haole*, one more white person, one more white foreigner writing about the Hawaiians, who needs it?" (Merwin 1987: 350).

¹¹ For Spivak, self-publication would not necessarily obviate the potential barriers to hearing Pi'ilani's voice.

¹² Merwin also alludes to Hofgaard's version of Pi'ilani's story in "How I Came to Write *The Folding Cliffs*." Frazier (2001: x) reports that Hofgaard gave a talk called "The Story of Piilani" to the Kauai Historical Society in 1916. See Hofgaard 1916a.

¹³ See Beckwith 1972.

¹⁴ I have not located a reproduction of the notarization in Frazier's English translation of Sheldon's book (Piilani 2001); perhaps it appears in the Hawaiian original. Elsewhere Frazier (1989: 108) explains that Sheldon's book "is a true account, publicly attested to (and legally notarized) by both Pi'ilani Ko'olau and John Sheldon." The fact that Louis Stolz becomes a notary public is also relevant (Merwin 1998: 159).

¹⁵ Alfons L. Korn (1976: xii) explains that "social oblivion followed by a harrowing form of death . . . was the common lot of Molokai lepers during the later nineteenth century."

¹⁶ See Ho'omanawanui 1998 for an exposition of indigenous poetic conventions in *The True Story of Kaluaikoolau*.

¹⁷ Later, for example, Merwin's (1998: 239) readers learn that the soldiers who capture the judge have taken to calling him the "Archleper." The reporter Frank L. Hoogs (1893) refers to the judge as "the old arch leper."

¹⁸ As R. K. K. Herman (1999: 398) writes, "The 'indolent Hawaiian'—the missionary discourse taken up by planters, newspaper editors, and travel writers—became an increasingly convenient trope for discrediting the Hawaiian right to rule."

¹⁹ Ku'ualoha Meyer Ho'omanawanui (1998: 253) credits the attribution of Christian faith to Ko'olau in *The True Story*. Treating *The True Story* as the direct expression of Pi'ilani's personal views, Kapalai'ula de Silva (2001) concludes that the Christian faith described in the text should not be questioned. See also Frazier 1987: 3. For another view in which Christianity coexisted with persisting indigenous beliefs, see Korn 1976.

²⁰ The conversation in this scene is generated by the Pi'ilani-Sheldon text, but it focuses on Hawaiians' responses to that text. As Wendy Stallard Flory (2007: 265) points out, Merwin "presents the situation of his main Kauhian characters as far as possible from their point of view."