We Dance for Knowledge

Sharon Māhealani Rowe

> *History shows the dancer his heritage, his place in a line of distinguished, artistic ancestors. It is a legacy to instill a sense of pride—and responsibility. (Cohen 1974, 3)*[1]

Every year, for hundreds of thousands of tourists, seeing "real Hawaiian hula" in a hotel or in a packaged *lū'au* setting is standard fare. Commonplace too is receiving one's introduction to hula through any of the many competitions that take place annually in Hawai'i and, with increasing frequency, throughout the world. Still others find hula marketed for its exercise benefits, peddled as the latest fitness fad in gyms and malls across the country. But is hula the allure of exotic dancers evoking prurient responses from tourists, one moment tantalized by undulating hips only to be teasingly chastised the next to "keep your eyes on the hands"? Is it the crisp, impeccably synchronized movement danced before panels of judges at the several hula competitions that mark the year for many hula *hālau*? Is hula the movement, the meaning conveyed through the movement, or the full context out of which movement casts itself into an art form that inspires passion and perpetuates a traditional way of living?

For Mary Kawena Pukui, credited with helping to bring the rich traditional context of hula into the present, hula is "a general name for many types of Hawaiian folk dances" (1942/1980, 70). Pukui's laconic description says everything, and nothing. Everything because hula *is* the unique dance of the Hawaiian people. Everything because despite the homogenizing influence of hula competition, which has brought only a limited range of the vast hula repertoire to the public's attention over the past thirty-five years, hula encompasses many different styles and types of dances. But it says nothing because hula simply cannot be reduced to Hawaiian folk dance. Hula is a moving encyclopedia inscribed into the sinews and postures of dancers' bodies. It carries forward the social and natural history, the religious beliefs, the philosophy, the literature, and the scientific knowledge of the Hawaiian people. It is, therefore, more than the dance form of a particular Polynesian people, more

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than swaying hips and talking hands, more than competitions, vacation entertainment, or a weekly workout routine. Because the story of native Hawaiians is an ongoing one, hula is important in the living present, and because that history and its politics are still very much evolving and revolving around unresolved questions, it is important to understand hula as a vital, creative art form and a lived experience that preserves a culture's values, continually forming and reforming identity in and through movement.

Once the same could have been said of the court dances of Europe (*ballet de cour*), where, prior to the intellectual and social changes we call the Enlightenment, first the dance floor and then the proscenium stage were places for political discourse construed in a language of gesture and story. Louis XIV's daily dance lessons culminated a long tradition of royal dancing in which "French court ballet was essential to the legitimation of the monarch in his double status as real and ideal body" (Franko 1993, 4). Dances before and by the Hawaiian court had an analogous signification. David Malo notes their function in "conferring distinction upon the *ali'i*" (1898/1980, 231). Gifted dancers and *kumu* (teachers) had their place in the royal courts of Hawai'i as they did in European courts, and members of the *ali'i* (chiefly) class were themselves known as talented dancers and composers.[2] In dance both the European and the Hawaiian royal courts represented the idealized body of their people. The symbolic and political context of sixteenth-century European court dance would thus resonate with hula practitioners of old, who could easily recognize the significance of the royal genealogies that flowed from the Medici court of France. A Hawaiian chief or chiefess would see no incongruity between the political status and function of European royalty and their numerous stage appearances. Easily recognizing the signifying layers of court protocols, they would easily take their appropriate place within its order.[3] Hawai'i's *ali'i* would appreciate the stories that gave vitality and structure to performance, readily "reading" the signs and figures that suffused them with significance and acknowledging in particular the meaning behind dances that depicted the ordered hierarchy from deity to man. In these ways Europe's court dances were closer to hula than to their direct descendent, contemporary ballet, where trained bodies perfect moving images of abstract geometrical lines cultivated into a display of beauty for its own sake (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Dance does not change fundamentally unless some fundamental dynamic in the culture changes. In order for Western audiences to abandon the idea that dance was integral to a larger cultural context and accept it as an isolated, autonomous form of art and entertainment, they needed to change their relationship with dance. Such a shift began to ripple through Europe during the seventeenth century, altering how knowledge was construed as well as the standards for what was an acceptable presentation of one's self and one's knowledge. A once cohesive, shared context of knowledge fractured into individual arts and sciences, each focusing upon a specific and unique object that could be isolated and analyzed. The knowing subject and the object of knowledge were distanced from one another. What was knowable could be distinguished clearly and explicitly, quite apart from individual subjective experience. The introduction of the proscenium stage dramatically illustrates the impact this change of perspective had upon dance. Where once there was continuity between dancer and audience, now the two were separated, allowing for the objectification and abstraction of both the dancer and the dance.

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Figure 1. Louis XIV. The most famous and influential of European court dancers. Image in public domain.

French philosopher Michel Foucault uses the term *discontinuity* to label "the fact that within the space of a few years a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think . . . in a new way" (1973, 50). Discontinuity characterizes the dramatic shift of perspective that led to the separation and specialization of the distinct arts and sciences we identify today as unique domains of knowledge. Foucault explains how changes in the way we think about knowledge could decontextualize an expressive form such as dance and launch it in the direction of art for art's sake. He observes:

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century . . . thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance. Similitude is no longer the form of knowledge but rather the occasion of error. . . . [It was natural that sixteenth-century knowledge] should leave behind it the distorted memory of a muddled and disordered body of learning in which all the things in the world could be linked indiscriminately to men's experience, traditions, or credulities. . . . [T]he noble, rigorous, and restrictive figures of similitude were to be forgotten. And the signs that designated them were to be thought of as the fantasies and charms of a knowledge that had not yet attained an age of reason. (1973, 51)

What once counted as knowledge came to be perceived as falsehood, fantasy, or mere superstition. Old associations within which similitude was meaningful, that found intentionality in everything and knitted the world into a tight fabric of significance, were

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Figure 2 Hula noho *(sitting hula) Arago, 1819, solo female dancer. Her adornments and costume indicate someone of the* alil'i *class. Image in public domain.*

denigrated. An entirely new set of assumptions, with new definitions and an emphasis upon method, came into the foreground.

The influence of French philosopher René Descartes cannot be underestimated in this context. His methodological approach, outlined in the *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (1993), drew upon the abstract, linear, and heavily rule-governed model of geometry for its promise of objectivity, clarity, and certainty. He argued that knowledge was a matter of personal acquisition (the *cogito*), a self-disciplined achievement within the reach of all rational beings and a reflection of a world that was as clear and distinct in its makeup—as was the knowledge we could have of it. His method was as cautious as it was simple. It began by refusing to accept anything that could be doubted. Then, only from "clarity and distinctness" should one continue in a sequenced manner, first dividing the phenomenon to be understood into its simplest parts, and then, after analyzing the relations among those parts, reconstructing complexity in a step-by-step manner. Under the force of this new model, every phenomenon was given over to critical, rational analysis. Foucault describes the resulting paradigm shift:

> [T]he entire *episteme* of Western culture found its fundamental arrangements modified. And, in particular, the empirical domain which sixteenth-century man saw as a complex of kinships, resemblances, and affinities, and in which language and things were endlessly interwoven—this whole vast field was to take on a new configuration. This new configuration may . . . be called "rationalism." (1973, 54)

Cartesian rationalism impacted the arts by reconceptualizing aesthetic questions and introducing a methodical approach that was applied to all branches of knowledge, including artistic production and the training of artists. Philosopher Ernst Cassirer observes how "classical aesthetics shows its kinship with the Cartesian theory of knowledge which was guided by the methodological principle that we can attain to philosophical certainty only by . . . insight into the various sources of error and by way of its conquest and elimination"

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(1951, 286). The Royal Academy of Music and Dance, founded shortly after Descartes's death, established definite rules that would guide these arts away from error. Order, linear structure, clarity, and distinctness (the watchwords of this new methodology) became the qualities of "classical" ballet. Perhaps no art form more directly embodied the Cartesian doctrine that a phenomenon must first be realized in geometrical figures before it could be known clearly and distinctly. Pierre Beauchamp's clarification of the basic positions of the feet and arms, and his distinction among the various types of *battements* (beating movements), provided the firm foundation that propelled the dancer higher into the air and refined the classical geometrical lines that now identify ballet as a unique, quintessentially Western dance form. In 1725, in the full flush of the Enlightenment, Rameau refers back to this accomplishment, crediting Beauchamp with "giving needed order to this art" (qtd. in Fairfax 2003, 3). At the end of the century, Jean Georges Noverre and his disciples of the *ballet d'action* (story ballets) furthered the "rationalization" of ballet by supplying rules for the construction of choreographies. It is the priority given to order, clarity, and rules, itself a product of the new epistemology, that leads noted dance historian Ivor Guest to claim, "The *ballet d'action,* which marks the emergence of ballet as an autonomous theatrical art, was essentially a phenomenon—one can even say an invention—of the European Enlightenment" (Guest 1996, 1).[4] Meanwhile, in the classroom, movement was isolated from costume, mask, and gesture and broken down into simple, discrete moments. Movements and parts of movements were broken down, each part perfected through countless repetitions to be reassembled into increasingly complex movements and movement combinations. The context that gave court ballet its levels of meaning had disintegrated—splintered into individual parts that could be easily analyzed, then mixed and molded at the whim of a choreographer or impresario. Under this approach, the rich weave of overlapping signification faded, gradually but incessantly, leaving only movement and the ideal of movement. The result, after hundreds of years, has left ballet primarily as a movement technique.

When *ballet de cour* moved onto the framed stage, it was stripped of the religious, social, and political context that gave it broader meaning and changed it into something that would hardly be recognizable by earlier practitioners. Today when we look at ballet we do not see its history. We see beautifully refined, technically mastered movement. Ballet dancers are trained to achieve *this* ideal, an ideal possible only in the wake of the profound change in the way knowledge and reality are construed. Contemporary audiences and performers no longer expect the wigs, the masks, the vocabulary of gesture and facial expression, the protocol of manners. Nor do most know their significance when they do make an appearance in older classical or Romantic ballets. Today it is implausible to conceive of a head of state in costume, promenading across the stage while imitating the movements of planets, and affirming the reach of his political power by dancing the role of Apollo or portraying the force of goodness in the world. The *reverence* (bow) was once integral to the social-dance context from which ballet evolved. Now it is a vestige of a time in which such gestures had meaning.

It is against this backdrop that I want to consider hula both as a traditional and an evolving dance form. Hula emerges in an empirical context that in striking ways paral-

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lels that of pre-Cartesian Europe, and changes to hula, I believe, reflect changes in this empirical context. Even outside the stricter *hālau* serious study of hula imparts a discipline that calls forward a knowledge perspective and the unique cultural experience of the Hawaiian people. Beneath the movement is an epistemology that informs the dance and endlessly interweaves language and movement with what Foucault identifies as "a complex of kinships, resemblances, and affinities" (1973, 54).

The hula we see today reflects three hundred years of cultural intermingling. Mary Pukui observed some fifty years ago, when she began to share her understanding of the older practices of hula, that "[t]he hula of ancient times was not like the modern performance. Very many of the old are passing and will in time be lost" (1943/1980, 90). Forty years prior Nathaniel Emerson noted, "Even now, the people of northwestern America are listening with demonstrative interest to songs which they suppose to be those of the old hula, but which in reality have no more connection with that institution than our negro minstrelsy has to do with the dark continent" (1909/1965, 138). Costuming, musical accompaniment, the occasions and venues for dancing, associations with deities, and movement have all evolved as the entire context of Hawaiian culture has been forced to accommodate the influence of Western values and institutions. Expectations for explicitness, combined with an inability to appreciate the subtle poetics of Hawaiian language, promoted a more literal and codified vocabulary of hand gestures. The more recent influence of formal competition has encouraged increasingly more precise, unison movement and a greater degree of uniformity in the look of dancers than was expected by previous generations. Speed, greater complexity of footwork, and difficult technical movements are thought to give a competitive edge while offering a more entertaining presentation. Some of the older, extant choreographies built around two or three basic steps and a more subtle vocabulary of gestures are perceived by many contemporary audience members as boring. The overlapping layers of meaning implicit in a typical *mele* are lost to all but a few. Without understanding the subtleties of the social context within which the dances had meaning or those conveyed in the chanted story, movement inevitably takes center stage. Modern audiences come to hula with expectations about movement, and as both audience and performer understand less of the language (and consequently less of the stories and the multiple levels of meaning implied in the richly dense language of *mele hula*), the expectations for movement increase.

The West has had a long tradition of appreciating both art and knowledge for their own sakes without regard to any pragmatic purpose. Not so with native Hawaiians for whom all aspects of life are "fraught with exact and definite significance. One had relationship only with what was tangibly a part of one's living. The old Hawaiians had no 'pure science,' and did not indulge in 'art for art's sake'" (Pukui and Handy 1972, 119). Like sixteenth-century European court dance, hula was not traditionally enjoyed simply or solely for its entertainment or aesthetic values in isolation from other purposes. It was situated in a more functional context that served not only recreational ends but religious, political, and social purposes as well, celebrating and integrating all facets of life. Hula movement had meaning in this context, meaning that cannot be reduced simply to a

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set step vocabulary. Western ideals and expectations about knowledge changed the way we look at the movement possibilities of bodies and created the conditions for dance to evolve in dramatic new ways. So too have they changed hula, both as it is perceived and as it is practiced. But has that influence erased the possibility of experiencing hula as it once was? Is an older, indigenous form irretrievably lost?

Change is inevitable. About this there is general agreement within the hula community. But the nature and direction of change is a matter of serious question and provokes deep emotional responses.[5] Part of the issue here is that hula is not only movement but also text and a repository for a people's culture and history. *Kumu hula* Cecilia Akim tells us, "The story hula is telling is the story of a people. As a dancer . . . you put into motion *our* oral history" (Itagaki and Lependu 1997, 10, emphasis added). The bodies of hula dancers hold a body of knowledge, a complete philosophy with its own epistemology, its own vision of reality, and an ethic based on the virtues of sharing, responsibility, reciprocity, and humility. Historically, hula dancers were the moving archives of the cultural knowledge of the Hawaiian people, and today they can help us understand an alternative approach to knowledge and learning that reflects a different concept of enlightenment.

How Do We Know?

> *'A'ohe o kāhi nānā o luna o ka pali; iho mai a lalo nei; 'ike i ke au nui ke au iki, he alo a he alo. (Pukui 1983, 24)*

The notion that knowledge is objective and culturally neutral is one cultural perspective of knowledge, as is the idea that explicit expression in written language is a mark of superiority.[6] The perspective that one way of knowing is *the* way of knowing has influenced not only the general perception of what Hawaiians knew but how Hawaiian ways of knowing were appraised; the depth of knowledge held by Hawaiian culture was often left unacknowledged. Even when Hawaiians are credited with great understanding, this is accounted for in terms that reflect our Western knowledge values. For example, in their considerable volume *Hawaiian Planters,* Handy and Handy regard the range of Hawaiian agricultural knowledge in terms of "[t]he systematic differentiation, identification, and naming . . . evidences of powers of observation and classification of the first order. . . . To this must be added the carefully thought out procedures of cultivation . . . [c]onscious selection" (1991, 21). The personal relationship between farmer and land, the stories of gods and *'aumākua*—the power of words used in chant or prayer—are not counted among the factors of knowledge that supported their success as farmers.[7] What comes comfortably into the foreground are "systematic differentiation," "identification," "naming," "observation," "classification," careful thought, procedure, "conscious selection"—all hallmarks of post-Cartesian epistemology. While these features may be a part of Hawaiian epistemological consciousness, we need to confirm this before we assume it. And where they are not—in spite of the fact that they may be valuable tools of knowledge—if our effort is to understand an indigenous phenomenon, we must question how and when to use *these* tools and how and when to defer to indigenous ways of knowing and theorizing.

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Figure 3. Dancing before royalty. As in the European courts, dance was used to entertain as well as display and enhance the power of royal families. In Hawaiian society before the arrival of missionaries, rigid social protocols made it impossible for anyone but another royal to dance before the highest ranking ali'i *(chiefs). Image in public domain.*

Before we can defer, however, we first must have an inkling of what that indigenous way of knowing might be and how its assumptions might counter or complement our own. Recently, Manu Meyer, Hawaiian philosopher and educator, has pointed to key differences that distinguish the West's Enlightenment model from Hawaiian ways of knowing. Her *Ho'oulu* (2003) offers a prolegomenon to Hawaiian epistemology and outlines several thematic areas in which the Hawaiian approach contrasts sharply with the Cartesian emphasis on method, definition, explicitness, singular meaning, and individual mental effort. She makes clear that a different base of assumptions is prerequisite to an appreciation of the nuances of meaning implicit in things Hawaiian. The notion that epistemologies are products of culture and therefore vary among different cultures is not startling or new. For the last century the global philosophic community has been engaged in heated debate over the shortcomings of the Enlightenment model, focused most recently by the critical perspectives raised by feminism, multiculturalism, and postcolonial studies. But it remains a fact that what constitutes knowledge, as well as how we acquire and present valid knowledge generally, operates below our conscious awareness. Most of us never question our default assumptions about knowing, nor do we consider the fact that they are not universally shared or that there are other valid models of knowledge. Yet these very assumptions frame what we perceive and find noteworthy.

If we want to understand hula, we must contextualize it within the epistemic model that informs it. Meyer notes several salient features that distinguish Hawaiian epistemology, including the spiritual context from which knowledge emerges and the strong link between knowledge and *'āina* (land). The vitality of sense experiences and a body-centric

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focus aligns the Hawaiian epistemological stance more closely with embodied ways of knowing over more intellectually grounded models of knowledge that accentuate a sharp mind-body distinction. The importance placed on the way personal relationships shape and validate knowledge experiences, and the requirement of the practicality of all that counts as knowledge, further differentiate the Hawaiian model from that of the Enlightenment West. Meyer's work tells us that from a Hawaiian perspective knowledge is embodied and situated, contextualized by time and place and knower. It reflects a deeply felt sense of environmental rapport. What can be known is infused with spirituality, utility, relationship, and reciprocity. As knowledge hula represents all these values. They are exemplified in the basic *aiha'a* stance with knees bent and feet flat, in full contact with the earth. One feels its rhythms and responds to its contours. Rather than seeking to leave the earth, this stance indicates a responsive connection to earth. Here the values of humility and reciprocity inform the movement, not just of hands but of face and eyes, and the rhythmic sway of hips (perhaps hula's most defining feature) synchronizes the body with the constant movement of the wind and waves. Values and meaning are found in the adornments of *lei* and costume where meaning is communicated in the choice of color and style and in the types of plants, shells, or other objects from which *lei* are woven. They are acknowledged in the protocols of respect that once accompanied every facet of hula, and they reverberate most powerfully in the sound and rhythm of the *ipu* and other implements and through the words and tones of the *mele*. These elements do not accompany the hula. They are as constitutive of it as is the movement.

"Knowledge, for Native Hawaiians, is grounded in the natural environment and in the ancestral line of family. . . . *This is a spiritual concept*" (Meyer 2003, 93). This epistemological fact is profoundly exemplified in hula. For native Hawaiians spirituality is immanent in nature, in genealogy, in the moving body, and in the breath that gives voice and life to words. All have degrees of *mana* (power or reality). As a pivotal figure in this nexus of genealogy, voice, word, and nature, the traditional hula dancer bears immense responsibility. George Kanahele explains: "The meaning and power of dance lie in what is being expressed by the entire body of the dancer, for in dance the body is the agent of expression" (1986, 134). Video recordings of dancer 'Iolani Luahine make this evident (Haar 195, Davis 2002). Much is made of how the "hands tell the story," but intentionality is apparent in 'Iolani's whole being—in the animation of her face and eyes, in the response of her torso, in the articulate gesturing of her arms and flashing fingers. Her movement is the medium through which a story maintains its vitality, and its meaning is conveyed through her entire body, itself a living library that archived a host of stories.

Few dancers ever attain the exquisite performance quality that characterizes the dancing of 'Iolani Luahine, but any culture recognizes artists who transcend even the ideal of the movement form and tap into something that transports themselves and the audience to an ineffable place of meaning. She illustrates the power of hula to affect, "to mesmerize," not only an attending audience but the gods—the *'aumākua* and the forces of nature.[8] Dancers possess an ability to act upon, to move, and to influence, as well as to be acted upon in reciprocal fashion. The values of *aiha'a* (humility) and *kuleana* (responsibility) pertain to hula because the power to move is literally vital in that it has life-giving and

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life-sustaining implications. Movement is therefore at the core of hula but it is not its end. As vital movement its intention is life itself. To understand hula in this light is to see it from a perspective in which what Foucault calls "noble, rigorous, and restrictive figures of similitude" (1973, 51) are not forgotten but rather provide the scaffolding of knowledge and reality.

For many hula practitioners this understanding of hula is still alive. So, it is discomforting to see hula consigned to mere entertainment and competition—where, at the very moments it is celebrated, their history risks being simplified, if not effaced, by what has the widest range of audience appeal. This perspective also illuminates the controversy over preserving what heritage hula still holds while allowing it to flourish as a vital, creative art. It is amplified in importance because the figure of the hula dancer is in many ways the idealized body of the Hawaiian people. Hula has generated a global iconography, much of which is distorting and patronizing.[9] Many who are drawn, particularly to ancient hula, seek some sort of continuity and spiritual connection with the past. The paradox is that this desire to connect with something genuine and authentic, while popularizing hula, perpetuates its disconnection from the very basis of that authenticity. Often out of a desire to share, some *kumu* yield to the limited attention span of students and audiences who have no time or inclination to appreciate its fuller dimensions.

So, hula changes in ways that make it more accessible to modern audiences, performers, and teachers. It is not uncommon to find newer choreographies that alter the traditional step vocabulary, create new variations of steps, or incorporate steps from other movement disciplines, following the creative impulse of the choreographer. Yet we know from other dance histories that slight changes build gradually, compromising and even corroding a traditional repertoire of dances. Without a broad base of knowledge grounded in traditional practice, one is unlikely to see subtle changes or appreciate the full context in which nuances signify the most. Eventually, a new generation of "experts" assumes its place and traditional knowledge is eroded until the discontinuity is complete. Such changes can again be referred back to epistemic changes, when deference to the authority of *kūpuna* (elders) as keepers of knowledge is no longer honored but replaced by an epistemic model that values individual authority, independence, and innovation.

The Power in Words

I ka ʻōlelo no ke ola, i ka ʻōlelo no ka make. (Pukui 1983, 129)

Because how we know determines in large part what we know, we must be mindful of how knowledge is construed.[10] Meyer points out that the concept of *ʻike* (to know, to feel, to see) "is immediately linked with sensory, and emotional descriptors, which are also linked to revelations from the gods" (2003, 96). Knowledge of this kind is a profound, visceral, subjective experience. It is not something that necessarily finds easy expression in explicit or precise terms. It does not easily translate across culture, but this does not make it less valid as knowledge. To know (*ʻike*) what is proper (*pono*) from a traditional

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perspective is properly the domain of those who can weave together multiple perspectives and give credibility to interpretation. While a younger generation of Hawaiians have come of age on the other side of a "discontinuity" fault line that separates traditional attitudes and beliefs about knowledge from modern ones, many in the hula community have experienced no such rift. They live in the full experience that knowledge *is* practice, that traditional dances interpret *their* history and make present the beauty, wisdom, and values of their Hawaiian culture. For them hula *is* the continuity and the repository of *their* cultural knowledge, not a unique vocabulary of steps and movements.

When a scholar like Adrienne Kaeppler raises the question of whether Hawaiians had a "cultural concept of dance" (1993, 8), she not only draws into the foreground the scaffolding of one set of assumptions and expectations, she situates hula within those assumptions and expectations. Viewing hula "as a structured movement system" will naturally draw movement forward in ways that inevitably diminish or exclude other facets of the dance. As dance scholars we have a responsibility to think about how we approach and write about this subject, because the written word has the power to fix reality in the minds of readers. Too often it is taken uncritically and gains authority as truth. If we hope to contribute positively to a body of knowledge, we must recognize that our perspectives are inevitably framed by assumptions and approaches unique not only to our general culture but to the culture of scholarship. We must acknowledge as well that our scholarly contributions are unavoidably interwoven into that web of factors that continue to impact hula. In this light the more important question for those of us who address hula from an academic perspective is, What do *we* need to be aware of in order to see and discuss hula in a way that is meaningful for hula?

Hula evolved, often in geographically isolated communities throughout the islands, as traditional practice. This fact illuminates one meaning behind the *'ōlelo no'eau* (proverb) "*A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okāhi*" (Not all knowledge is found in a single school) and accounts for the variegated interpretations one finds both in the text and movements of "traditional" hula, as well as the emphasis placed upon knowing one's hula genealogy. As with any art, hula is open to levels of interpretation and elucidation, but hula "scholarship" is by and large still held in the bodies of hula practitioners. Very little is written. If we are to move toward hula scholarship in the Western sense, we must take into account the implicit knowledge base that gives meaning to the movement of hula as well as the movement itself, considering not only movement but connectedness to text, to the context of a performance, and to the layers of symbolism that attend it, among a host of other factors. In approaching hula (or any indigenous dance form) we have a responsibility to consider the scaffolding that structures our impulse to think in terms of structure and movement either as a primary focal point or even to the exclusion of other factors. We need to respect cultural context and not project upon it, wittingly or unwittingly, terms that move through us from our own cultural backgrounds, terms whose meanings and implications create a framework in which hula will only be distorted. After such considerations we need to proceed with caution lest by applying our well-honed analytic skills and isolating one aspect of this rich and wonderful art from others that are equally important, we leave hula less than we found it.

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Notes

1. The epigraph, which describes Western dancing, expresses well the concept of *kuleana* (responsibility) that is strongly felt by many hula dancers and teachers.

2. For numerous examples of the ways in which Hawaiian royalty participated directly in dance performance see Barrère 1980, especially 13–22. That court dances were performed by the members of court is amply documented. According to Beaumont, "[The *Grand Ballet*] was sometimes danced by ladies, sometimes by noblemen, . . . In May, 1681 . . . Lully, introduced female dancers for the first time. These were drawn from the Court ladies" (1980, 354). "Louis XIII . . . Danced in many court ballets, and on one occasion he devised a whole ballet himself. . . . The court ballet entered its final and most brilliant phase under Louis XIV" (Guest 1967, 8), who danced many prominent roles. Guest points out that "[t]he dance had not yet become wholly separated from song and the spoken word" (1967, 10). This strong link between text and movement draws a further connection with hula.

3. "Strict protocol pertaining to the order of their appearance applied to the fifteen families of the Royal House of France down through those of foreign nobles at court, marshals of France, dukes and counts" (Lee 2002, 70).

4. Noverre hoped to establish general principles for the creation of dance as lasting art. He chastises artists of older ages with failing to pass down "their ideas and the principles of their art" (1760/1980, 9). For this reason these artists enjoyed only "a moment's glory." His desire echoes Descartes's interest in establishing a firm foundation for knowledge, and his method echoes Descartes's desire to seek truth by avoiding error: "If . . . the principles pronounced were followed, the stage would be disencumbered of an inestimable quantity of indifferent dancers and of bad *maitres de ballet*" (1760/1980, 16). Almost two hundred years later Michel Fokine shows the enduring stamp of the Cartesian approach when he argues, "[D]ancing is developed from . . . basic movements. . . . [E]very movement should be logical" (1980, 22–23).

5. The following excerpts from interviews of contemporary *kumu hula* (hula teachers) found in Itagaki and Lependu (1997) offer a glimpse of the range of responses to the issue of change in hula.

> "*Hula kahiko* is not the same as it was fifty years ago or even twenty years ago for that matter. We as people have evolved and have changed and therefore our likes and dislikes have changed." (Vicky Holt Takamini, 111)
>
> "I think the hula has changed . . . The only thing that I see that's bad is if we confuse our traditional hula with modern hula and if we don't keep the classical hula and the contemporary hula separate." (Nathan Napoka, 87)
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> "Change is alright if it inspires the younger people to hula." (Ed Collier, 32)
>
> "How do you teach somebody who does not know the language? I've seen a lot of misinterpretations of dances. They don't understand the beauty of what the chant is talking about." (Cecilia Akim, 10)

These and many other remarks about change in hula speak to a wider cultural context. They point to the need to understand Hawaiian culture from a fuller perspective if we are to understand the dynamic within which hula is evolving in its contemporary context.

6. A Hawaiian proverb: "The top of the cliff isn't the place to look at us; come down here and learn of the big and little current, face to face."

7. Handy and Handy (1991) clearly have great respect for the intellect and skill of native Hawaiians; they explicitly mention the intimate personal relationship between the people and the natural elements that define their environment. They give considerable mention to the horticultural god, Lono, as well as other Hawaiian deities. Yet the attention they pay to these elements is largely descriptive and not linked to a larger epistemological context. And while acknowledging

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that "the Hawaiians were true experimental horticulturalists" (21), they hesitate to credit them, for example, with an understanding of the relationship between pollination and fertilization (22), even as they indicate that this may have been true.

8. The concept of mesmerizing and the idea that both chant and dance are intended to affect "those looking at the performer, those you can't see, and the elements in a broad sense" were presented by Pualani Kanahele and Kekuhi Kanahele during a panel presentation, "Pagan Pride: Decoding the 'Sacred' in Hawaiian Chant" (2006). The specific power of movement as affecting the environment as well as being affected by it was discussed by Taupouri Tangaro in a presentation entitled "Ritualizing the Flame" (2006).

9. Examples of the degradation of hula and the image of the hula dancer abound. But to offer one example that recently caught my eye, I refer to the Daedalus Books mail order catalogue, "New Arrivals Holidays 2004." Note item 44956, *Hula Honeys:* "Paradise awaits in this calendar of period Polynesian-inspired illustrations. Taken from matchbooks, menus, and other delightfully tacky printed sources, these images of scantily clad hula dancers sway with tropical breezes" (44).

10. A Hawaiian proverb: "In the language is life, in the language is death."

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