

Book Review | *Cooling the Tropics: Ice, Indigeneity, and Hawaiian Refreshment*, by Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart (Duke University Press, 2023)

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Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart's *Cooling the Tropics: Ice, Indigeneity, and Hawaiian Refreshment* provides a detailed exploration of the shifting social meaning of the cold in Hawai'i. Hobart demonstrates how normative relationships between racialized bodies and environments operate as an expression of ongoing US imperialism and settler colonialism. In other words, Hobart shows that what we might have learned to think of as naturally pleasurable or refreshing at the sensorial level—such as eating ice cream on a hot day—is actually deeply shaped by thermal colonialism, or how environments are made friendly to settler habitation according to ideas of temperature normativity. *Cooling the Tropics* crafts a detailed history of ice and refrigeration to reveal the operations of thermal colonialism in Hawai'i.

Across five chapters and two centuries, Hobart's examination of discourses about the cold demonstrates that any understanding of racialization or modernity in Hawai'i is incomplete without also attending to how those ideas shape our very senses. The chapters proceed mostly chronologically, although Hobart at times brings in contemporary examples to illuminate the connections between present-day understandings of cold refreshment in Hawai'i and their historical origins. Chapter 1 belies Western portrayals of the cold as something entirely foreign to Hawaiians by investigating long-standing Kanaka Maoli relationships with the cold, particularly at the summit of Mauna a Wākea (Maunakea). Chapter 2 examines scarce accounts of nineteenth-century ice shipments to Hawai'i and the lasting ideological impact of that comestible ice, from cocktail bars to the

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temperance movement. Chapter 3 focuses on late nineteenth-century Honolulu to highlight how modern technological investments, such as ice machines, produced domestic coldness and contrasting interpretations of what the cold meant and who it was for. Chapter 4 discusses early twentieth-century legislation regulating the production of poi and the butterfat content of ice cream. Chapter 5 analyzes how rainbow shave ice offered a form of cold refreshment perceived to be democratic and local, diluting Kanaka Maoli claims to sovereignty in the post-statehood rise of liberal multiculturalism.

Cooling the Tropics continually shifts our understanding of what the cold is and what work it does. In Hobart's words, "the cold operates variously as infrastructure, taste, and a sensorial logic of power" (20). Such shifting makes clear Hobart's argument that while we each individually experience the sensation of cold, how we interpret that sensation is not individually determined but collectively shaped by social practices influenced by race, class, and gender (10). Hobart's incisive analysis of the history of ice and refreshment in Hawai'i not only foregrounds the context of settler colonial occupation in Hawai'i, it articulates how cold as a sensorial logic of power justified US imperialism and sorted racialized bodies into civilized and uncivilized, those fit for leisure and those fit for labor. Furthermore, in attending to cold as infrastructure—from the scale of the domestic refrigerator to the global cold chain that supplies nearly 90 percent of Hawai'i's fresh food—Hobart connects questions of infrastructure with those of food sovereignty. Hobart's meticulous archival research examines a dazzling range of materials from cookbooks to government documents, shipping records to mo'olelo, personal travelogues to published periodicals. Besides scholars of Hawai'i, readers at the intersections and edges of settler colonial critique, food studies, infrastructure, and racialized sensoriums may be drawn to this book.

Throughout the text, Hobart highlights Kanaka epistemologies of environmental cold and refreshment, offering numerous examples of how Kānaka Maoli participated in the ongoing contestation of social understandings of the cold. For example, Hobart examines a narrative from a Hawaiian-language newspaper accompanying a drawing of two haole (white foreigner) children playing in the snow. This narrative warned of snow's dangers and acknowledged the possibility of different reactions to snow between haole and Kanaka readers, but located that difference in epistemology rather than biology (83). Against American paternalism that imagined Kānaka as biologically unfit for the pleasures of the cold, this narrative suggested that it was Kānaka who were wise to its potential dangers, and Americans who were naive.

The attention to Kanaka epistemologies is especially clear in the first chapter, which brings us to Maunakea to foreground the racialized logics of dispossession through thermal colonialism. Hobart shows that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Westerners characterized environmental cold as something entirely

foreign to Hawai'i and thus viewed Maunakea, a place where ice and snow naturally occur, as a place separate from Kānaka Maoli. Against such logics of dispossession, Hobart turns to mo'olelo (storied histories) published in Hawaiian-language newspapers about Poli'ahu, an important akua (elemental force or deity) associated with the snow of Maunakea. The vivid descriptions of Poli'ahu's "freezing cold" circulated amongst newspaper readers demonstrate that Kanaka Maoli need not summit Maunakea to intimately know the cold (26). The chapter chronicles how Maunakea was produced in the Western imaginary as terra nullius, through nineteenth-century travel accounts, mid-twentieth-century US military infrastructures that increased both tourist and scientific access to the mountain, and the present-day context in which the astronomy community has cast Maunakea as humanity's entry point to a wider galaxy. In the ongoing stand to protect Maunakea from desecration by the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope, the kia'i (protectors) of Maunakea draw our attention to the akua. Unlike Western colonial aesthetics of the cold as "objective, rational, empty, and capitalistic," Hobart shows how kia'i interpret the presence of snow atop the mauna as the agential presence of Poli'ahu, temporarily halting construction and protecting Maunakea from development (23). This chapter thus calls attention to the multiple meanings that the cold has amassed in Hawai'i, both in resistance to and in service of settler colonialism, or in Hobart's words, how "ice transforms from akua into comestible, from Indigenous to foreign, and from element to product" (45).

Following that transformation of element to product, the second and third chapters investigate comestible ice as it arrived in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, at first through sporadic shipments and then through domestic production. Hobart highlights how the Hawaiian monarchy participated in and contributed to infrastructures and tastes of cold, such as introducing the ice machine, as they carefully negotiated Western imperial power and economic and political pressures. These chapters offer not only a detailed history of the infrastructures that made it possible for ice to become widely available for consumption in Hawai'i, but also an analysis of how icy refreshments of both the alcoholic and non-alcoholic variety came to express a settler colonial ideology of racialized civility. The powerful missionaries championed the moral purity of drinking cold water as "an antidote to Indigenous sexualities and tropical heat," while cocktails became an increasingly popular form of white leisure and respite to plantation oversight (55). The temperance movement worked hand in hand with haole perceptions and portrayals of Kānaka as lacking in self-control around alcohol consumption, a legacy that lingers on in the historiography of King Kamehameha III. Furthermore, the modernization of Honolulu, as observed by gustatory practices such as the ubiquity of ice cream at ali'i social gatherings, was perceived by Westerners as a sign of Americanization.

The fourth and fifth chapters are perhaps most obviously legible as food studies projects, as they turn to the production, consumption, and regulation of ice

cream, shave ice, and poi (a Hawaiian staple food of pounded taro). Hobart demonstrates that the territorial government of the early twentieth century prioritized an ideological commitment to purity over public health: a cholera outbreak led the Hawai'i Board of Health to unilaterally close all poi shops in Honolulu, but the health inspector then got sidetracked regulating the butterfat content in ice cream rather than finding the source of the outbreak. Although local tastes preferred little to no dairy in their frozen desserts, the colonial imposition of American food standards for butterfat content insisted on a particular purity and creaminess (and whiteness) of ice cream. As Hawai'i's racial politics shifted toward rainbow multiculturalism in the latter half of the twentieth century, rainbow shave ice emerged as an aesthetic expression of this new racial ideology. Whereas ice cream celebrated the purity of whiteness, rainbow shave ice became a celebratory and nostalgic representation of racial harmony and local identity in post-statehood Hawai'i.

The book concludes by returning to Maunakea through the camp kitchen of Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu to raise questions about infrastructure, Indigenous movements for self-determination, and the political possibilities of foodways. Coolers, bags of ice, and eventually a generator provided "critical infrastructure" that nourished the movement to protect Maunakea (139). People generously donated a variety of food resources: "huge buckets of fried chicken and chili from fast-casual restaurants, cardboard boxes of fruit picked from backyard trees, pallets of shelf-stable snack foods, and canned goods grabbed from home pantries" (143). Hobart invites us to view these collective acts as a form of food sovereignty. Moreover, Hobart provocatively invites us to contemplate melt in a time of global climate change as a way of thinking through what to do with infrastructures as we work toward futures that "refuse the legacies of their making" (145).

Author Bio

Mariko Whitenack is a PhD candidate in American Studies at NYU (Lenapehoking). Her dissertation examines the past and present of the ecological restoration of Hawai'i's watershed forests, sites in which human and more-than-human beings are recruited towards competing logics of settler extraction, Indigenous refusal, and reciprocal abundance.