# Introduction

## Touristic Visions and Virtual Tourists

> As desperate as my straits were [upon the cruise ship's arrival at Aloha Tower in Honolulu], my prayers were suddenly answered. Hal Bock and his lovely wife, Sybil, appeared at my elbow uttering cries of greeting in my own tongue. Astonishingly enough they were in native costume. I asked if the savages had committed any overt acts against them and Hal responded with heartiness, "Hell no! *We* are the savages. We have been living amongst them, peaceably, for three long years."
>
> "Are you missionaries?" I asked, confounded and amazed.
>
> "Quite the opposite," said Hal, "I'm in public relations."
>
> —H. Allen Smith, *Waikiki Beachnik* (1960)

In the early 1960s, the *New York Times* observed that "Hollywood has not ignored Hawaii in the past . . . but its current vogue overshadows all former interest."[1] Around that time, a writer for the *Washington Post* commented how "now that it's only five hours away from the Real World [with the postwar emergence of jet travel], Hawaii is becoming the new movieland—Hollywood with a hula. The stars, sometimes hard to find in the old Hollywood, are in ready view here, to the everlasting joy of the tourists."[2] Certainly, Hawai'i's admission as the fiftieth state into the union in 1959 was one key factor in the heightened focus. "The modern



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phase of tourism development" on the islands, wrote Luciano Minerbi, "can be said to have begun with the attainment of statehood . . . and the desire for economic development."[3] Hawai'i ranked third among Americans in 1959 only to Florida and California as preferred tourist destinations, while it "has ranked well above any other 'off-shore' or 'foreign' vacation area for many years."[4] Meanwhile, interest in California and Florida was in decline, while Hawai'i's appeal was growing.[5] Yet the mainland popularity of Hawai'i-themed film and television in the wake of statehood was a complicated proposition. As one character noted in 1931's *The Black Camel*—one of the earliest studio films shot in part on location in Honolulu—Hollywood always had a reputation as a "famous furnisher of mysteries," of fiction and fantasy (and was equally fond of reminding its audience of this fact at every turn).

Post-statehood, one writer for the industry trade paper *Variety* found himself looking back at the islands' heavily manufactured and long-promoted touristic appeal with a certain amount of skepticism, even a hint of exhaustion: "Hawaii's charm," wrote Walt Christie, "*has been on the hard sell for years*. Everybody ends up at Waikiki sooner or later."[6] A few years earlier, the NBC skit comedy show *Bob & Ray* (1951), known for its satire of popular TV commercials, used an advertisement parody for the fictional "Tourist Bureau of Hawaii" to poke fun at decades of oversaturation on radio and later television markets (the fake company's name was a thinly veiled swipe at the real-life Hawaii Tourist Bureau, which had spent the prior decades blitzing the mainland with print and radio marketing). In 1960, noted humorist H. Allen Smith—after being told by a friend that Hawai'i was really more a "Bing Crosby kind of place"—wrote that he knew what she meant: this version of "Hawai'i" that circulated in mass media "was actually a mythical land, a place invented and devised and dressed up for Crosby to sing about."[7] Across literature, radio, television, and film, the statehood-era ambivalence toward Hawai'i's touristic charms was understandable: for several decades prior, various business interests connected to the Hawaiian economy had been selling a very specific mass-mediated vision of the "Paradise of the Pacific" to mainland audiences.

As a 1939 economic report by the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce made clear, the revenue generated directly by tourism itself was an important but still minor economic consideration in a territory dominated by that continuing "mainstay of Hawaii's business": agriculture.[8] Before the postwar tourist boom, actual visitors to Hawai'i were a secondary consideration—especially given that expensive travel to and from the islands

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was still limited financially to the wealthy few (such as, not insignificantly, Hollywood elites on the nearby US West Coast) who could afford the time and money to voyage by ship to Honolulu. Rather, the origins of this long publicity campaign had more to do with two interrelated political goals. The first was winning a public relations fight locally in favor of the so-called "Big Five" group—the de facto oligarchy of businesses and banking interests that dominated all local industry and that was, in the era of the "New Deal," coming under heightened scrutiny from increasingly mobilized and organized labor groups (especially, in their case, workers in the fields of *agriculture and shipping*—two industries so often on display in Hawai'i-themed Hollywood films of the time). The other goal, meanwhile, involved winning support for statehood among skeptical Americans back on the mainland, a goal that had been present with various degrees of visibility since the illegal overthrow and eventual US annexation of the sovereign monarchy in the 1890s. Even before America's participation in WWII, at least one prominent local tourist organization in the early 1940s was already pushing the notion that "the next great coming event of Statehood is already looming."[9]

That Christie's point about "how everybody ends up at Waikiki sooner or later" had appeared in *Variety* (a publication largely involving Hollywood insiders discussing relevant news among themselves) highlights the close ties personally and professionally between the old studio system in Southern California and one of its closest getaway travel destinations. As a sometimes-willing accomplice, Hollywood had long been well aware of the same tired sales pitch to audiences of Hawai'i as a premodern tropical paradise. For decades, writes Delia Malia Caparoso Konzett, Hollywood has portrayed the islands through the "clichéd scenarios of tourism, romance, escape, or heroic military history, with only a few addressing the history of Hawaii's colonization by New England missionaries and its subsequent subordination to US interests."[10] Jeffrey Geiger, meanwhile, noted that the continued circulation in more recent years of the same "static image of Polynesia is remarkable, especially when one considers that it was already a long-standing cliché" by the 1920s.[11] As far back as a series of lightweight, mostly forgettable, often comedic studio films from the 1930s (*Waikiki Wedding*, *It's a Date*, *The Black Camel*, *Honolulu*), Hollywood even then foregrounded, and often poked fun at, the stereotypical touristic identity that the economic interests of the Hawaiian territory had aggressively constructed for themselves (even as those same hokey stories often embraced ultimately a similar lure of romance and adventure that fit their own tired genre formulas only too well). Meanwhile, later film

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and television shows such as *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Diamond Head* (1963), *Hawaii* (1966), *Endless Summer* (1966), *Blue Hawaii* (1961), *The Brady Bunch* (1969), and the original *Hawaii Five-O* (1968–1980), reveal a much more historically specific glimpse into Hawai‘i's popularity with mainland audiences, which in turn reflected uniquely timely cultural and economic concerns to those of the wartime and postwar generations.

In some ways, Hawai‘i tourism was a victim of its own success by the statehood era—how to keep a very specific kind of tropical experience fresh and new, especially at a time when more visitors were finally seeing the islands *in person for the first time*. In his 1963 industry study for island tourism businesses, economist Paul Craig observed that "Hawaii probably received, free of charge, more promotion in all US news media during 1958–1960, than all paid advertising by all overseas tourist areas combined."[12] The newly minted fiftieth state's "place in literature, WWII and statehood, all gave Hawaii free publicity. But now that Hawaii is a modern developed state . . . now that the tour package masses are visiting Hawaii . . . *the free ride is over*."[13] To hear the aforementioned local bureau's own "hard sell" in 1961, the tourist sales pitch had never been easier (their audience in this context were travel agents). The reasoning behind this was obvious—in thinking about the future of the state's economic prospects at the time, Craig summarized it aptly: "All analysts of the Hawaiian economy agree on one thing—tourism is the most promising growth sector of the economy."[14] So, in the bureau's own forty-minute promotional film, entitled *Hawaii: Never Easier to Sell* (1961), narrator Webley Edwards (host of the hugely successful radio program *Hawaii Calls*, which also appeared in movie and television form) used the radio show's long-running staple of island music and hula girls to remind travel agents of the best ways to sell travelers on the still-enduring appeal of Hawai‘i in a postwar age of air travel and expanding leisure culture that presented more domestic and international alternative options to mainland US travelers.

Of course, it had been organizations like the Hawaii Tourist Bureau (which changed its name to the more innocuous "*Visitors* Bureau" after WWII) in particular that had been selling Hawai‘i most aggressively for decades—often employing in a range of aural and visual media, direct and indirect advertising, their own exotic fantasies of romance and adventure on which the studio system too had thrived. Both industries, tourism and Hollywood, were fundamentally about *mythmaking*, about selling intangible experiences as much as consumable goods. And, in both cases, the figurative and literal distances between reality and image, between physical

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Figure I.1. Numerous films from Hollywood's classical studio system, such as 1939's *Honolulu*, often reinforced stereotypical touristic images of hula, palm trees, beaches, and pineapples. Yet some of them, such as this 1939 MGM film, were also often quite aware of the clichés of tropical romance and adventure they were selling the public.

feelings and distant spaces experienced as travelers and their mediated representations, which shape expectations and assumptions about those places, were never as clear as they first seemed. And it is perhaps those *distances* that speak to the industrial, historical, and cultural contradictions, ambivalences and frustrations involved in needing, or even wanting, to "sell" paradise (whether easy or hard). If an experience is so self-evidently sublime, why would it need to be so aggressively sold?

And yet that mediated *vision* of the dream Hawaiian vacation in the US imagination was a powerful one that would prove to be every bit as consequential for the islands and for Hollywood. "Hawaii increasingly lived off its own myth," write Beth Bailey and David Farber, "and therefore collaborated to a great extent in creating and perpetuating it. And the myths *did* have a kernel of truth. The beauty of the islands is

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real, and the Hollywood myth and its offspring, the tourist brochure, were attached—very securely—to scenes that actually existed."[15] These "scenes"—shaped through decades of touristic discourses—tend to gravitate toward simple images of swaying palm trees, sunny beaches, and warm breezes. Pushed further, one might conjure up images of hula girls and beachboys, with the seemingly omnipresent Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach always framed in the background. This, writes Native Hawaiian historian Haunani-Kay Trask, is the "Hollywood, tourist-poster image of our homeland as a racial paradise with happy Natives waiting to share their culture with everyone and anyone."[16] These images offer a limited, and at times entirely distorted, sense of life on the Hawaiian islands, instead reflecting a surprisingly resilient vision of middle-class leisure, postwar nostalgia, and racial utopia to which some tourists always strive to both visit and somehow hold on to. In this touristic fantasy, everyday concerns in the "real world," such as time and money, or class exploitation and racial tension, seem to have no consequence—despite long and ugly histories to the contrary.

Around the era of statehood, Daniel Boorstin described in his influential *The Image* (1962) what he called "pseudo-events"—moments in everyday life that were primarily, if not solely, constructed for media reproduction and dissemination, but which were intended to create the illusion to the causal viewer of being largely authentic and spontaneous. "Much of our curiosity" as tourists, he wrote, "comes from our curiosity about whether our impression resembles the images found in the newspapers, in the movies, and on television. . . . We go not to test the image by the reality, but to test reality by the image."[17] There are echoes here in one 1936 cruise ship passenger's description, while bound for O'ahu during the long journey across the Pacific, of watching a travelogue film produced by the Hawaii Tourist Bureau: "It would do your heart good to see the effect the color movies of Hawaii exert upon the passengers. Never in my travels have I seen such gorgeous reproductions of nature. What grand publicity for our group of ocean gems."[18] Konzett notes that "this reversal of cause and effect in which cinematic reality would appear to have preceded reality also applies to the perception of modern Hawaii, which can be roughly dated to the end of its monarchy and the rise of cinema."[19] In a rapidly accelerating era of visual and aural mass media in the first half of the twentieth century, the construction of "Hawai'i" as an ideal tourist destination highlighted as much as any physical location the elusive boundary between image and reality.

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Figure I.2. Cruise ship passengers in the 1930s would watch onboard promotional films of Hawai'i, such as the Hawaii Tourist Bureau's *The Story of Hawaii* (1934), while traveling to O'ahu. Even for actual visitors to the islands, their perceptions and expectations were heavily influenced by a touristic and cinematic point of view.

The islands prove to be a useful case study because they were, as Orvar Lofgren has noted, the first purely mass-mediated tourist destination—a location constructed throughout the twentieth century through the emergence of advertising, radio broadcasts, cinematic production, and later television: "a landscape not only to experience through colored postcards and illustrated magazine features but also a landscape set to music."[20] John Connell and Chris Gibson noted how original impressions of Hawai'i were derived in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth by the mainland audiences' ability to merge sound (recordings, sheet music) with image (paintings, postcards, album covers). This merging, they argued, constituted "the first forms of virtual tourism."[21] These stereotypical sounds and images of Hawai'i serve as a prominent example of what John Urry called the "touristic gaze"—this vision, he writes, "is constructed through

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signs. . . . When tourists see two people kissing in Paris [with Eiffel Tower in the background] what they capture in the gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris.' When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England.' "[22] Hawai'i's decisive *geographical* separation, its literal distance, from the US mainland is not inconsequential—the anticipation of traveling is "constructed and sustained through a variety of *non-tourist* practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which contrast and reinforce the gaze."[23] Though not wholly unique in this regard (as one example, a similar convergence of aggressive touristic branding, high-profile mass media, and distinctive geography occurred with the city of Las Vegas, Nevada), the perception of Hawai'i was—and to a degree still is—as much as any destination constructed and defined through its narrow visual and aural signification in popular culture. "From an economic point of view," writes Konzett, "one could argue that the selling of imperialist fantasies via cinematic illusions of Hawaii and the adjoining South Pacific proved just as lucrative as the actual economic exploitation of Hawaii."[24]

This is a book about the ways in which visual mass media solidified Hawai'i's function as an exemplary instance of *virtual* tourism, and how those mediated experiences assisted in the mainland United States' negotiation of postindustrial notions of national self, affective labor, and racial identity throughout a unique moment of profound political, economic, and cultural transition. In this respect, "tourist" refers not only to those physically traveling from one part of the globe to another, but also to media audiences figuratively touring the world via mediation. Mass media such as film, music, photography, literature, and television have long been surrogates for traveling. As Jeffrey Ruoff argues, "The cinema is a machine for constructing relations of space and time; the exploration of the world through images and sounds of travel has always been one of its principle features."[25] They can serve either as rich substitutes for the physical touristic experience, where the deferral can be as powerful as the actual journey, or as nostalgic mementoes of past travels—a medium's visual and aural "truth value" can evoke warm memories as strongly as a souvenir from the local gift shop. As something with both undeniable indexical power—and yet also contradictorily one whose framed content can be so easily selective, manipulated, and staged—the medium of film (both still photography and the moving image) presents the ultimate touristic souvenir. Indeed, part of media's power here was with the millions of working- and middle-class Americans of a wide range of economic,

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cultural, and racial backgrounds who could not afford to experience Hawai'i as anything other than fantasy.

These popular media representations of Hawai'i were situated within a postindustrial economy involving the complementary apparatuses of classical Hollywood and US mass tourism—both of which formed in the pre-WWII period and then exploded as part of a postwar economic boom that promoted an emerging middle-class leisure culture in which Hawai'i and commodified Hawaiian imagery were commonplace. Influenced by two seminal historical events (immersion into world war in 1941, and admission into the union in 1959), a uniquely *generational* arc developed, an audience of predominately working- and middle-class white Americans. This included both those who lived through the eras before and after WWII and their offspring, who enjoyed the postwar spoils of a new consumer culture driven by media synergy and directed at emergent teenager demographics. In this era, the appeal of the islands in the US collective imagination was roughly situated between four key contexts that were affirmed, contested, and elided in a range of films, television programs, and popular literary texts during this period: 1) Hawai'i's central role militarily as the hub of the US' immense naval presence in the Pacific, highlighted during conflicts with Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and the ambivalent memories of said conflicts for both veterans and civilians; 2) the long held, and often contested, ideal of Hawai'i as a site of racial harmony, given its much more complex history of multiculturalism, a utopic fantasy that appealed in particular to mainlanders amid the overt racial tensions that marked the civil rights movement for African American equality; 3) the eventual development of a postwar leisure culture that focused in particular on the suburban family and baby boomer demographics, the increased affordability of airfare, and the general emergence of a new middle class with more disposable time and money on its hands; and, finally, 4) questions about understanding Hawai'i's long colonial history, while also defining its new identity, in the wake of statehood in 1959.

Given all these developments, it should be unsurprising that Hawai'i would have such a uniquely powerful presence in the American imagination of the mid-twentieth century, in particular dominating the 1960s pop culture landscape. So often these texts are directly or indirectly inflected by the logic of tourism, giving rise to what Paul Lyons terms "histouricism": "an imperial, developmental view of history, written from its imagined democratic result, that asserts a continuous historical

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Figure I.3. *December 7th* (1943): For decades after World War II, all depictions of Hawai'i carried the specter of the Japanese military attack on US naval facilities at Pearl Harbor and the surrounding areas.

U.S. relation to Hawai'i, while employing romantic and distancing strategies, in which Hawaiian spirituality and socio-political forms are presented as atavism."[26] Such "historicism" ranges from travel guide books to historical nonfiction by such writers as *Hawaii* (1959) author James Michener (who also wrote several introductions on the side to Hawaiian tourist guides, themed cookbooks, literary anthologies, and the like, throughout the postwar period). The rhetoric, narratives, and histories of tourism in representations of Hawai'i intersected with, and at times mystified, what Konzett described as Hollywood's "narration of nation. . . . The remote and highly imaginary South Pacific and Hawaii provide a convenient narrative that cements a nation internally torn and divided."[27] These narratives directly and indirectly reflected "Hollywood's expansionist, military, and Orientalist imagination"[28] as the center of the US' naval presence in the Pacific dating back to the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, US military personnel in the Pacific serve as both soldier and tourist, argues Vernadette Gonzalez, where their consumer status within the local economy masked their role in what she calls tourism's

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"softer" colonialism, which proved in the long run more resilient than older forms of conquest.[29]

## "They Have Learned the Wisdom of Investing in Intangibles That Cannot Be Taken from Them"

Not incidentally, one prominent example that Boorstin highlighted in his book was the Kodak Hula Show, which was staged for audiences in Waikiki from 1937 up until 2002, the visual commodification of one of the tourism industry's most iconic performances. "Like the hula dances now staged for photographer-tourists in Hawaii (courtesy of the Eastman Kodak Company), the widely appealing tourist attractions are apt to be those specially made for tourist consumption," he wrote. "By the mirror-effect laws of pseudo-events, they tend to become bland and unsurprising reproductions of what the image-flooded tourist knew was there all the time."[30] In collaboration with Matson Navigation Company (the dominant cruise ship company in Hawai'i at the time), Kodak vice president Fritz Herman came up with the idea in the 1930s for an attraction that would encourage mutually beneficial consumption between the film camera industry and local tourism interests. A simple performance of what Rob Wilson has called "commercially transformed hula,"[31] or the "simulation of the local,"[32] the show was quite literally defined by its mediation, since the entire point of the show was to encourage tourists to take pictures and the occasional home movie that would then circulate back on the mainland, to an even wider audience of (virtual) tourists. Joyce Hammond notes that the show was "one of the oldest performance events created to accommodate and encourage tourist photography, and the only 'ethnic performance' to my knowledge that explicitly communicates the expectation of tourist photographic behavior in its very name."[33] In these respects, the show was a microcosm of the entire Hawaiian tourism industry during the mid-twentieth century—the commodified interpretation of contested Native Hawaiian culture whose immediate exhibition for island visitors masked how it was primarily intended for the rapidly proliferating culture of mass media in an unrelenting push by local business interests to shift Hawai'i from its stagnant agricultural-based economy to a more limitlessly lucrative tourist-based one.

Added to the artifice of that performative function was the show's tenuous link back to traces of an authentic Native Hawaiian culture (even as contemporary hula practices—within and outside the tourism

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Figure I.4. The Kodak Hula Show (1937–2002) was an early marketing strategy designed not only to promote the consumption of camera equipment and film stock, but also to use visitors' own image production to spread specific touristic images of Hawai'i across the globe.

industry—can act also as potential sites of cultural reappropriation). "The Kodak Hula Show," adds Jane Desmond, "gave tourists a chance to photograph the hula dancers, a possibility unavailable during the dimly-lit night-time shows. . . . [Herman wanted] a natural background of palms, sun, and sand, a more iconic representation of the hula girl, a suitable souvenir."[34] The hula shows elided the modern value of the performer's labor by reframing it in a stage context as little more than a modern-day continuation of ancient leisure activities. The show was where several noted "hula girls," such as Clare Inter (better known as "Hilo Hattie"), got their start performing for the camera before moving on to roles in Hollywood films and television shows. Although she was never a regular, writes Milly Singletary, "her impact [at the show] was so great that a story of her life would be incomplete without a reference to the Kodak Hula Show—perhaps because several of her most publicized photographs were taken" there.[35] Many were also part of the hula circuits that toured the mainland to perform live hula shows in the first several decades of the twentieth century, and first helped create what Adria Imada

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has called "the *imagined intimacy* between the US and Hawaii, a potent fantasy that enabled Americans to possess their island colony physically and figuratively."[36]

In more recent echoes of Boorstin's argument about the simulacric nature of the Kodak Hula Show, Wilson argues that it "functions nicely as a postmodern art form, phasing out so-called real hula, or at least desacralizing it in the context of mass images, a trillion copies, flash-bulbs popping."[37] Similarly, Hammond adds that "in the postmodern tourism industry, tourists may seem ironically to reverse the process of colonial predecessors by valuing that (or, more accurately, a representation of that) which was formerly destroyed and/or condemned by Western missionaries. . . . However, tourists continue the appropriation of Others . . . not the least of which is the photographic impulse to 'take' Others' images, 'shoot' them or 'capture' them on film."[38] Discussing the notion of "*legendary Hawai'i*" (how ancient local legends are adapted for a presumed touristic audience), Cristina Bacchilega has noted how the emergent technology of photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was key to solidifying Hawai'i's appeal to outsiders. "Legendary Hawai'i" is "the antecedent and supplement of the 'hula girl,' the backdrop against which her performance is loosely placed and justified as 'culture' even when it is commodified 'entertainment for sale.' "[39] The wide circulation of these colonialist images, she adds, "and the excitement with which they were met in the West depended not only on their novelty, but on their [indexical] truth value. . . . Photographs of faraway places and people were thus seen to provide more powerful 'evidence' than words."[40]

The hula as modern commodified spectacle grew less out of local music traditions than agricultural economy—less the creation of Hollywood or the Tourist Bureau in the twentieth century than of the pineapple industry at the end of the nineteenth century. This mainland media blitz centered on the ubiquitous iconography of the hula girl—with the heavily manufactured connection to traces of Native Hawaiian heritage providing a cultural and historical "authenticity" at the core of this highly artificial fantasy. In the first part of the twentieth century, since most Americans could not afford to travel to the islands, the most common form of live hula performances were Hawaiian dancers and musicians who toured the mainland:

> From Seattle's Yukon Expo in 1906 to San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Expo in 1913 and San Diego's lavish

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> 1916 State Fair, Hawaiian entertainers such as Ernest Kaai and George E. K. Awai's Royal Hawaiian Quartet—many fresh from the supper club shows of Waikiki—sparked a craze that was to sweep the United States in the 1920s and 1930s.[41]

One such group were the "Aloha Maids"—Hawaiian woman who came to the continental US in the 1930s to perform across country. Other shows, such as Robert Bell's "Original Hawaiian Follies," featured native Hawaiian performers who offered a "clean" program of "Wicki-Wacki Wooing in Waikiki" but also clearly sexualized dancers who would perform "the secret love dances."[42] Short of seeing performers in person, however, the more common option for audiences was "commercial films with Hawaiian themes, travelogues, newsreels, mainland dance shows, radio broadcasts, and even fashion designs and canned food advertisements [that] reproduce variations on the 'hula girl' image at an unprecedented rate."[43] The pineapple industry's version of the hula girl was a particularly egregious act of cultural appropriation—using the performance of overt sexuality and distinctive regionalism, with little direct connection back to the local traditions from which the image was extracted, in order to sell fruit at those early twentieth-century World's Fairs throughout the US. "The Hawaii Pineapple Growers Association brought 'attractive' *hapa haole* (part-white, part-Hawaiian) women to serve pineapple to visitors at the official Hawaiian buildings," wrote Imada. "The icon of the 'hula girl' at first helped to sell commodities, but Hawaiian women would soon be marketed as commodities themselves, providing gendered labor for the territory in the form of hula."[44]

The evolution of hula girl from agricultural advertising model to primary symbol of Hawaiian tourism is an appropriate historical metaphor for Hawai'i's economic and cultural transition through the first decades of the twentieth century—symbolizing the transition from material commodity (fruit, coffee) to abstract experience (adventure, romance) as the islands' biggest selling point. Thus, economically speaking, the islands skipped the entire industrial age altogether—going straight from an agriculture-based plantation economy in the nineteenth century, to a postindustrial service model based primarily on the production and consumption of touristic experiences in the twentieth. The concept of experience is, as Dean MacCannell argued, "the ultimate postindustrial commodity"[45]—something that serves as a source of near limitless consumption, loaded with layers of affective investment, and yet requires relatively minimal use of material goods in its actual production (appropriately, the very real

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issue of Hawai'i's limited land supply as a plantation-based economy is in part what forced such an economic shift to begin with). In the midst of the Great Depression, the Hawaii Tourist Bureau's executive secretary predicted in 1932 that the country was on the verge of a new golden era of travel, arguing that "people who had denied themselves travel and other pleasures in order to accumulate fortunes, have seen their savings disappear . . . *they have learned the wisdom of investing in intangibles that cannot be taken from them*, such as the memories and rich experiences of world travel."[46] Desmond also observes that after the stock market crash of 1929, "the presumed equation of hard work with prosperity came under intense scrutiny, an emphasis on consumption challenged that on production, and the most popular self-improvement manuals [of the time proposed that Americans] needed to learn how to live, to stop deferring pleasure."[47] In the post-Depression era, the consumption of pleasure increasingly became a primary commodity in demand by those with the leisure time to afford it. Meanwhile, the emergence of a consumption-focused economy pushed the importance of labor and production to the margins as leisure, pleasure, fun, and the other attributes associated with the rhetoric of tourism took center stage in everyday life—and yet far from enabling people to recuperate from the stresses of work, coming back home "better rested," the seductions and deferred promises of leisure time ultimately can generate even more dissatisfaction with everyday life, and thus often driving them to continually seek out new sources of pleasurable and fun experiences elsewhere.

## Selling Hawaiian Tourism

For decades, the Hawaii Tourist Bureau and its partners pushed for favorable press coverage aggressively. Although the bureau was responsible for helping coordinate positive experiences for tourists visiting the islands, the main goal in their early years was to harness various forms of mass media to shape outsider perceptions of Hawai'i. In 1962, the bureau listed as one of its primary activities "publicity and promotion through press releases, photos, cooperation with national television shows and major motion picture companies; and out-of-state presentation of Hawaiian displays, shows, and entertainments that help create the image of Hawaii."[48] An "autonomous affiliated committee"[49] of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants Association, and the territorial government until 1959 (when it became its own incorporated company), the HTB was originally a public

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relations organization funded by, and responsible to, local economic groups with at least one hand in Hawai'i's burgeoning tourism economy (in its early decades, much of the money came from Matson Navigation[50]). The organization began as the "Hawaii Promotion Committee" in 1903, and initially was as interested in encouraging people to move permanently to the islands as in just visiting. "We cannot emphasize too strongly," wrote the bureau in one 1923 promotional pamphlet, "the fact that Hawaii is not only a wonderland to visit but far more important, an ideal country in which to establish a residence."[51] There was much debate in the early decades among Hawai'i business leaders over how much to invest in tourism directly. One of the leading proponents earlier of overthrow and annexation, editor and president of the *Honolulu Advertiser* Lorrin A. Thurston was also key to encouraging others to support the bureau both logistically and financially as much as possible. "In a very public feud in 1927," writes James Mak, "he argued with pineapple industry founder, James Dole, over legislative appropriations for tourism promotion."[52] In the days before the Great Depression, Dole believed that only cruise ship companies such as Matson and its smaller one-time rivals, such as the Los Angeles Steamship Company (LASSCO) and the Oceanic Steamship Company, benefited from such expenditures. However, Thurston was convinced instead that "tourism's economic benefits trickle down through the entire community"[53]—a prophetic vision that indeed would prove to define Hawai'i's economy for the next century.

In 1919, the organization changed their name to the Hawaii Tourist Bureau and played arguably the biggest role prior to 1942 in shaping mainland images of the islands. The December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor brought a pause to their tourism efforts, as they shifted their focus to supporting GIs stationed in Hawai'i during the war. After WWII, they reemerged as the "Visitors Bureau" (they later changed their name again in the 1990s to the "Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau," reflecting their increasing interest over the decades in supporting group travel and other forms of prepackaged group tourism). During their first aggressive push during the 1920s and 1930s, the HTB bought considerable amounts of advertising space to directly and indirectly affect print coverage and fostered close relationships with journalists, up to and including paid trips to the islands. Christine Skwiot notes that the HTB "proved quite successful in maintaining power over the production of discourses of Hawai'i. A cadre of town-and-gown experts was always on hand to guide reporters, travel writers, and others around the islands and through the archives. The [bureau] worked closely with reporters, travel writers, and editors."[54]

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# A week away...

Dinner is over. You sink into a generous chair where the wide lanai looks across Waikiki . . . ready for the day's after-thrill . . . the soft beauty of the tropic night.

Diamond Head sticks down into the sea like a giant, nicked knife-blade cutting off the work-a-day world. Within, the magic of Hawaii's night. The cool soft breeze whispers of oleanders, ginger blossoms.

Suddenly you feel the crowd about you. White linen suits. Dinner jackets. Sun-bronzed shoulders . . . evening dresses. The insinuating beat of the Hula floats with the rhythm of the night.

The strum of ukuleles dies. Lights dim to the moon. Your recent days drift past . . . The driver in Kona who pulled to the side of the road to sing to the sunset. The lei of twenty dewy gardenias you bought for a half dollar before the dance. The days in a sampan trolling for tuna, and swordfish. Flame trees. Cruising to the islands, Kauai, Maui. The gracious friendliness. The fear that you will not remember that which you know you'll never forget. Hawaii . . .

*Hawaii offers*—escape from winter. You find no more evenly perfect climate anywhere. Winter is "Kapu" (taboo) in sunny Hawaii. Twenty golf courses. Luxurious hotels. Moderate inns.

A trip to Hawaii need not be expensive. A round-trip from the Pacific Coast, including all expense afloat and ashore, can be made for less than $300. Seven days from Chicago.

*The Hawaii Tourist Bureau will, upon request, mail you* FREE, *authoritative information about the Islands —costs, what to see and do, etc.*

*For a special booklet on Hawaii, illustrated in full color, with picture maps, send 10c to defray handling charges.*

HAWAII TOURIST BUREAU
(OF HONOLULU, HAWAII, U.S.A.)
225c BUSH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, or 1151c SO. BROADWAY, LOS ANGELES
MATSON Line *from* SAN FRANCISCO
LASSCO Line *from* LOS ANGELES

215 Market Street, San Francisco
730 So. Broadway, Los Angeles

814 Second Avenue, Seattle
271 Pine Street, Portland, Ore.

535 Fifth Avenue, New York
140 So. Dearborn Street, Chicago

Figure I.5. In the prewar period, the most aggressive organization for the promotion of the islands' tourism interests was the Hawaii Tourist Bureau, which published its own literature, produced its own films and radio programs, and purchased a countless amount of advertising space in mainland periodicals.

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Everything from magazine advertisements to radio broadcasts constructed the same ideal vacation in prospective tourist imaginations, experiences that companies such as one of the bureau's chief funding sources, Matson Navigation, was quick to provide with its synergistic monopoly on shipping lanes and majestic hotels. Matson began in the late nineteenth century primarily as a freight shipping company. "Capt. William Matson and his growing San Francisco concern," wrote Gordon Ghareeb and Martin Cox, "held a virtual monopoly on shipping between California and Hawaii, controlling over forty-five percent of all trade involving Honolulu."[55] Like other island-connected businesses, Matson then began to exploit, promote, and redefine the territory's emergent tourism industry as more people began to visit. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Matson benefited heavily from protectionist maritime laws that restricted the travel of non-US ships within domestic shipping routes,[56] effectively meaning that between Hawai'i and the mainland, Matson had no international competition in the midst of otherwise international waters.

Figure I.6. Possessing a virtual monopoly on shipping lines and island hotels in the days before the dominance of affordable airfare to and from the mainland, Matson Navigation Company also helped fund the Hawaii Tourist Bureau, coordinated with Hollywood on film promotional campaigns, and frequently appeared in prominent studio films, such as *Diamond Head* (1963), seen here. While Matson was not the only cruise line that shuttled celebrities between California and Honolulu in the prewar days, it was by far the most powerful, in part because of its heavy direct influence over the larger tourist infrastructure of the islands.

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In the 1920s, Matson's primary island rival for a time was the upstart LASSCO, a cruise ship company based out of Los Angeles. Given its close proximity to Hollywood, LASSCO also shuttled countless movie stars and studio executives to and from Hawai'i during this decade.[57] Much of its publicity in local and national print media came from celebrity sightings on its steamships.[58] Also unsurprising was that the Southern California–based LASSCO on several occasions loaned out part of its fleet to Hollywood productions looking to shoot cruise ship scenes onboard, such as the 1923 Harold Lloyd comedy *Why Worry*.[59] A few years later, another Lloyd star vehicle, *Feet First*, was shot on Matson's SS *Malolo* after original plans to use LASSCO's ship, the SS *City of Honolulu*, for production had to be cancelled when the steamer suffered severe fire damage while docked in Hawai'i.[60] Losing out on the filming of this 1930 comedy, Ghareeb and Cox argue, was a key part of what led to Matson to "usurping the LASSCO image as the 'Hollywood way to the islands.'"[61] Despite some success with Hawai'i routes, LASSCO never enjoyed the close synergy with, let alone control over, island tourist interests in the way that Matson had. Thus, they were forced to merge with its more powerful rival in 1930—part of a larger trend wherein Matson also acquired portions, and sometimes all, of four rival steamship companies operating in the Pacific between 1925 and 1931.[62] (As a way to further overwhelm any competition, Matson built several top-of-the line ships during this same window: the SS *Mariposa*, SS *Monterey*, SS *Lurline*, and SS *Malolo*.)

Once visitors had arrived in Honolulu, meanwhile, Matson retained its firm control on the tourist's experience. In 1927, the Territorial Hotel Corporation, in which the shipping giant had a primary financial interest, built the Royal Hawaiian Hotel to accommodate passengers. Then, five years later, they also acquired the biggest lodging rival in Waikiki: the Moana Hotel. The latter's construction back in 1901 had effectively announced the beginning of Waikiki's modern tourism industry. However, by the start of the 1930s, the Moana's financial fortunes were another of the Great Depression's countless victims, as the initial sharp drop in visitors forced the previous owners to sell. (The economic aftereffects of the 1929 stock market crash are also what forced the struggling LASSCO to merge their ships and routes with the one-time rival.[63]) By the end of the 1930s, Matson owned nearly 80 percent of all the hotel rooms located in Waikiki, and nearly half of all those on the island of O'ahu.[64] Matson's local dominance was not hard to spot—by the 1950s, their sixteen-story corporate office in Honolulu was "sometimes called 'Little Hawaii' for

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the reason that many of the leading island commercial enterprises [had] their mainland offices in it."[65]

All these expansions and acquisitions in shipping and lodging solidified the Matson company's virtual monopoly on the primary opportunities available to those travelers who bought the HTB's idealized image of Hawai'i and chose to sail to Honolulu. "By the late 1920s," writes Desmond, Matson had become the centerpiece of tourism's "established industry in the islands. A formal system of tourist infrastructure—hotels, travel companies, a tourist service bureau, special tourist publications, new, vigorous advertising on the mainland, and so forth—had replaced the more haphazard services rendered to visitors during the nineteenth century."[66] Adds DeSoto Brown, the company went "after those with the time and money to travel in a tasteful and elegant manner. Their advertising featured the smart set at sea, in a way that made you wish you could join them."[67] Like the Tourist Bureau, Matson contributed to, and benefited from, Hollywood's depictions of the islands. From pre-WWII movies such as *Feet First* (1930), *Hawaii Calls* (1938), and *Honolulu* (1939) to postwar films such as *From Here to Eternity* and *Diamond Head*, Matson ships figured prominently in the background of Hollywood's Hawai'i, one that frequently featured cruise ships and extended maritime travel as a key component of the Hawai'i tourist experience. In 1938:

> Hollywood's army of press reviewers were cheated out of a cruise aboard the Matson liner Ansonia when the seamen's union refused to permit the ship to sail without its full trans-Pacific crew of 300 men. Principle [Pictures] had set the party, which was to feature a preview of "Hawaii Calls," featuring Bobby Breen, many of the scenes for which were shot on the Ansonia. Heavy nut in compliance with the union's demands caused Sol Lesser to call off the excursion.[68]

Matson also produced its own media, "broadcasting a weekly series of Beachcomber programs from KFRC, San Francisco."[69] In the postwar period, however, Matson struggled in its tourist-related businesses. It built two more Waikiki hotels in 1950 but had sold all of them to Sheraton Hotels by the end of that same decade. Ten years after that, Matson abandoned its cruise ships as well, and focused on its roots as a freight shipping company. Its struggles in the postwar era can be traced primarily to one development—the rise of commercial aviation, which quickly surpassed cruise ships in terms of cost, convenience, and popularity. While

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