



Coming of Age: Hawaiian Culture in Kirby Wright's Fiction

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Bachelor Thesis from the year 2008 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, TU Dortmund (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), language: English, abstract: Love and hate, joy and anger, passion and frustration, life and dreams, hopes and illusions – the themes and topics to be found in Kirby Wright's fictional works is endless. A California resident with Hawaiian blood, growing up in Honolulu, HI, and attending Punahou School, a private school with such exquisite graduates like presidential candidate and governor Barack Obama, winning short story and poetry contests in his teenage years and then publishing two successful novels later on, Wright lived his dream coming out of a world that was caught in between cultures, which could not be any different. Experiences that directly translated into his works, with the protagonists Jeffrey and Ben Gill roaming the islands of Hawaii, always searching for a way to unite both worlds and free themselves of the stigma of being a hapa haole.

The present paper focusses on the fictional work of Kirby Wright, including the novels Punahou Blues and Molokai Nui Ahina, and explores the way Hawaiian culture and the topic of “coming-of-age” in a multicultural society are integrated and used. A brief introduction to Hawaiian literature and cultural history, including a portrait of author Kirby Wright, will be followed by a summary of both novels and a look into to what extent the setting of a novel is crucial to its interpretation, before I will then explore the way in which Wright presented the coming-of-age of the protagonist in his work and in how far this was connected to Hawaiian culture and traditions.

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