

Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima
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Hula ‘Auana. Wāhine Division
Hula Ho‘okūkū

Mahai‘ula

Haku mele: Helen Desha Beamer, c. P.C. Beamer, Jr. 1990.
Source: Marmionett M. Ka‘aihue, *Songs of Helen Desha Beamer*, 24.
Our text: Ka‘aihue, 24.

O kekahi mau mea e hoomanao ia e pono ai e poina ole ia e ka noonoo o ke kanaka e ola ana i keia la ame kela mau la aku la mai ka 1870 mai, no keia kowa o 53 makahiki a oi, oia no ka noho ana o na ohana ma keia mau apana o Kekaha mai na Honokohau, Kaloko, Kohana-iki, na Ooma, Kalaoa, Haleohiu, Makaula, Kau, Puukala-ohiki, Awalua, na Kaulana, Mahailua [*sic.*], Makalawena, Awakee, na Kukio, Kaupulehu, Kiholo, Keawawaiki, Kapalaoa, Puuanahulu, ame Puuwaawaa.

He mau aina piha kanaka keia ia mau la, na kane, wahine a me na keiki piha na hale me na ohana nui a lau-kanaka maoli no. Holoholo pu au me na keiki kane a me na kaikamahine oia mau la a noho pu a hele pu no a ai pu no hoi me lakou a moe pu ma ko lakou mau Home aloha. [The writer now provides a list of the families who lived at each of the places above:]

... Na Ooma, na Kalaoa a hiki i na Kaulana, a Mahaiula, he mau aina kanaka keia ia mau la, a i keia la aole kanaka. O Mahaiula, oia kahi i noho ai o na kanaka lawaia nui oia mau la. O Pookoai ma, o Paoao makua ma, O Kaa ma, o Kaia ma, o Kaaikaula ma, o Pahia ma ame John Kaelemakule Sr. e noho nei ma Kailua.

– Ka Ohu Haaheo Ina Kuahiwi, Kona, Hawaii, May 15, 1924¹

With the exception of a single word – *unu* – there is no hint of past generations in Helen Desha Beamer’s “Mahai‘ula.” Her mele is decidedly present-tense and exuberantly in-the-moment. It displays what both Mahi Beamer and Aaron Sala have identified as an essential quality of HDB’s poetry. It offers us a “moving picture” of a single, intensely-detailed experience² – in this case, Helen and Pete Beamer’s visit to the perfectly isolated Mahai‘ula beach home of their friends Alfred Kapala and Ruth Puanani Magoon.³

The reason for this visit is provided in verse one – not with a stodgy “we were invited” but with a rousing “let’s go; let’s indulge ourselves in what is both invitation and inclination, *kono* and *makemake*; let’s visit, enjoy, and relax.” The informality of the verse is further emphasized by HDB’s use of Hawaiian names: Ruth Dorothea Lindley Magoon is Puanani. Chun Alfred Kapala Magoon is Kapala. They are Beamer’s Hawaiian friends, and by sharing their Hawaiian names

with us, she allows Mr. and Mrs. A. K. Magoon of the prominent Magoon family to become our friends as well.

The Beamers' escape from the mundane begins, in verse two, with a boat ride from Kailua town to the otherwise inaccessible Mahai'ula bay (only 12 miles distant but a world away) over the broad expanse of the famous, quiet seas of Kona. Beamer's diction here and through most of this mele is simple and familiar, even to Hawaiians not entirely fluent in their language; her purpose, as John Charlot has suggested, might be to keep all of her audience engaged in the unfolding story. "Hiki i Kailua" and "Kau i ka moku" are basic 'ōlelo: arrive in Kailua; get in the boat. The boat is named *Imua* (Forward!); it is HDB's third inoa in two verses and its familiar meaning and Kamehameha resonance ("I mua e nā pōki'i") adds more energy to the song's already energized lyrics and music. The two lines that follow, although a little trickier to parse, are already comfortable in the Hawaiian ear because they are slight variations of familiar sayings and song-lines: "'Au i ke kai loa" is a Pukui-explained 'ōlelo no'eau and appears, for example, in the song "He Aloha nō 'o Honolulu" ("Au aku i ke kai loa / 'Oni mai ana 'o Upolu"). "Kona kai malino" is an even more familiar epithet and appears in a number of Kona compositions including the mele inoa for Kamehameha II "'O Kona Kai 'Ōpua i ka La'i" and the similarly named "Kona Kai 'Ōpua" by Henry Waiiau.

It becomes apparent in verse 3 that the inner bay of Mahai'ula is too shallow for the *Imua*, so the Beamers are shuttled on a "wa'apā hoe lima" (a skiff; literally, a hand-paddled board canoe) to the waving hands of those who wait on shore. What follows is a familiar scene of "honi aku a honi mai" – of shared breath, of kissing and being kissed – and Beamer's proud reminder that this is how Hawaiians greet each other and express affection: "ke aloha ia a ka Hawai'i." It might be too much to expect that shared honi at Mahai'ula was nose-to-nose, but I have been kissed by several of the Beamer grandchildren, by Aunt Nona in particular, and I can assure anyone who hasn't that the act is anything but perfunctory. I also view HDB's "ke aloha ia a ka Hawai'i" as further hinting at the need to escape the everyday; "Mahai'ula" begins as a we're-out-of-here song; this line helps us to understand where we are escaping to: to a place where it's still comfortable to be Hawaiian.

We are meant to upack this boat-to-shore scene ourselves, to supply a broader context to HDB's sequence of immediate, as-it-happens detail. Because all of her verb and gerund phrases are absent of aspect and tense – *Kū i ke awa*, anchor in the bay; *ani lima ka'u 'ike aku*, waving hands are what I see; *kau i ka wa'apā*, board the boat; *pae i ka 'aina*, arrive on shore; *ka 'apo 'ana mai*, the embracing; *honi aku a honi mai*, kiss back and forth – and because her details are so compelling, this figuring-out is the most nanea of tasks. We are drawn into her experience; she places us at her side within the composition.⁴ We put on her glasses, see what she sees, and find ourselves painting-in the rest.⁵ What we paint, using the brush of our own memories (as with Aunt Nona's honi in the paragraph above), may not always be what HDB had in mind, but – as Keola Donaghy argues – her ability to draw us in is what anchors us to her songs.⁶ It is why they are so clear in our mind's eye and ear.

Today’s Instagram photo posts of Mahai‘ula show a run-down, boarded-up house and outbuildings of the same rusty red color as my Tūtū Man’s home in Hōnaunau. Because I have never seen Mahai‘ula in the days of Kapaka and Puanani, the place will always be rusty red in my mind’s eye (as Magoon’s wa’apā hoe lima will always be the eggshell blue of Tūtū Man’s three-board fishing canoe). Beamer doesn’t give us house color in verse 6; what we get are three *kīpa i ka ‘olu, ho‘ola‘ila‘i*, and *moani ke ‘ala* lines followed by a signature HDB list of particulars. The first three lines –

Kīpa i ka ‘olu o ka home	Inviting is the cool comfort of the home
Ho‘ola‘ila‘i me nā hoa	Lighthearted contentment among friends
Moani ke ‘ala o nā pua	Windborne fragrance of the flowers

– are more than familiar to us from other, much loved home-and-hospitality songs including Mary Low’s “Pu‘uwa‘awa‘a,” Helen Parker’s “‘Olu o Pu‘ulani,” and Beamer’s own “Kinuē.” Low’s “Pu‘uwa‘awa‘a” (composed for the home of Robert Hind) begins with “Kīpa i ka ‘olu,” Parker’s “‘Olu o Pu‘ulani” (composed for the Levi home and family) also begins with “Kīpa i ka ‘olu” and includes “nā ‘iwa ho‘ola‘i.” And Beamer’s “Kinuē” (composed for the Arthur Greenwell family) describes the contentment of guests as “ho‘ola‘i nā malihini” and the fragrance of flowers as “moani ke ‘ala o nā pua.”

John Charlot contends that the similarity of language in these mele is indicative of “the Hawaiian practice of standardizing a vocabulary for different literary forms.” The Kalākaua poets, for example, codified a language of beauty, vigor, height, and brilliance to emphasize the pedigree of their ali‘i pua mae ‘ole i ka lā. Love songs, too, have their shared vocabulary, as do the “dirges composed by different authors at different times.” When new genres were developed – national anthems, school songs, political campaign songs, home and hospitality songs, boat and train songs – “a standard vocabulary was quickly developed for each.” Charlot then offers the conclusion that HDB, who “was very knowledgeable in the genres of Hawaiian music and hula,” simplifies her vocabulary “and chooses her words appropriately for the Hawaiian genre she is using.” Mahi and Gaye Beamer, as Charlot conscientiously notes, take issue with this analysis, insisting that “Beamer did not compose to conscious programs, formulas, or patterns, or make conscious decisions about language based on the probable audience of her songs.”⁷ For my part, I would argue that in the genre of what might be called “home ho‘okīpa,” there is without doubt a common vocabulary of *‘olu, nani, manu, pua, ‘ala, ho‘ohihi*, and *ho‘ola‘i* that comes together most powerfully for me in the closing lines of Beamer’s chorus to yet another home and host song, “Lei o Hā’ena”: “Ua puā ka nahele i kō ‘ala / Ke pōhai nei nā manu.” I would argue that Beamer, whether by conscious design or not, drew regularly on this vocabulary and was, in fact, instrumental in establishing it. If I were to compose a song for home and friend, I would not do so without first immersing myself in the HDB canon.

What can’t be argued with is Charlot’s identification of the closing line of this verse – “‘Oliana, aloalo, pua kalaunu” (oleander, hibiscus, crown flower) – as a favorite literary device of Helen Desha Beamer: the papa helu, the list. Charlot explains it as both traditional and innovative – as

an old way of “displaying the completeness of one’s knowledge and of one’s picture of [a] place,”⁸ and as the careful selection of items that “most people would [still] recognize.”⁹ Hence the list of mountains in verse six of “Pāni‘au” (“Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa, Hualalai”) that is followed in verse seven by a list of familiar beach trees (“‘O ke kiawe, ‘o ka milo, ‘o ke kou, ‘o ka hau / Me ka niu ha‘a”). Hence the list of verb-progressions, each verb building on the next, in “Keawaiki” (“E kipa, e nanea, e ho‘oluana / E pā‘ina”), in “Mahai‘ula” (“E kipa, e luana, e ho‘onanea”), and again in “He Makana” (“Lawe ‘ia, lei ‘ia, pūlama ‘ia”). Whether traditional, innovative, or a bit of both, these lists come across to me as fun, as playful memory challenges, and as tongue-twisters precisely matched to their music. In every case, I get the sense of “one is not enough”; here they come, tumbling out of the song; can I sing them, can I get the sequence right, or will I mess up? I’m engaged, I’m drawn in, I’m delighted in a way that overwhelms any “academic attempt to dissect”¹⁰ what I’m hearing. And in my mind’s eye, the rusty red house at Maha‘iula is suddenly wreathed in mae ‘ole colors – in the bright pinks, whites, and purples of oleana, aloalo, pua kalaunu.

Unu, the first word of verse 6, jumps out at me like John Ka‘elemakule from the pages of *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*. An unu is an altar, “especially a crude one for fishermen.” *Unu* also means to stack, or “place like stones.” *Unu* is also a rare variant of *ulu*: to grow, increase; to inspire. In the ancient fishing village days of Mahai‘ula, the shrine to which those lawai‘a made offerings was named Pōhakuolama:

Many pre-contact archaeological sites are located on or near the [Mahai‘ula] shoreline... the most famous is Pohaku o Lama, a stone fish goddess standing in the ocean almost at the water’s edge. At certain times of the year, fishermen brought her offerings to ensure their luck at sea. During the months of May, June, and July, the water around the rock occasionally turned red. In former times the Hawaiians believed this meant that the deity was menstruating. Such “red tides,” usually caused in Hawai‘i by great masses of tiny organisms called dinoflagellates, still occur at Mahai‘ula, generally during the spring months.¹¹

Although I certainly cannot get into the mind of Helen Desha Beamer, I am fascinated by the prospect that she might have known more of the history of Mahai‘ula than her mele – with the exception of *unu* – otherwise indicates. *Unu* is an odd word, an “‘Au‘a‘ia” word, one unfamiliar to the non-fluent ear, one not found in the home ho‘okipa vocabulary, and – in my hasty survey of Beamer texts – one not used in any of her other compositions. Did she choose *unu* as a nod to the Mahai‘ula fisherman’s past that Ka‘elemakule describes as one of great difficulty?

O ke ola e ola ai keia mau kamaaina o keia mau Kaha, oia ka lawaia a loa ka ia, alaila e panai aku ana keia mau ia maloo me na pai ai mai Maui mai, a mai Waipio me Waimanu mai no hoi, a mai Kohala Akau mai no hoi i kekahi manawa.

He aina pololi no hoi keia o ka noho ana, a me ka hoomanawanui wale e pono ai ka noho ana. I ka manawa maikai ua hoea mai la no kela mau waapa lawe ai, ao he Moku kiakahi

no hoi i kekahi manawa, a loa mai la no na pai-ai, ae panai ia au ana hoi nae na ia maloo, oia hoi ka Aku maloo, ka opelu maloo no hoi, a o na poke ahi no hoi i kaulai maikai ia, ame na ia moana no hoi e loa ana i ka lawaia ia, oia hoi ka “ulaula” ke opakapaka no hoi, ao ke kahala no hoi ame na ia ano like oia mau ano.

I ka manawa nae e hoi mai ai ka ino o ka “aina Kaha” nei, a hiki ole mai la na waapa lawe pai ai, a hiki ole no hoi ka poe lawaia o na Kekaha e holo i ka moana, alaila, he manawa pololi maoli no ia o ka noho ana o keia aina.¹²

Unu, as Beamer uses it, stands in stark contrast to the lifestyle described by Kaelemakule. In “Mahai‘ula,” the wonderful delicacies of the sea and the intoxicating drinks of Maleka are stacked in abundance as an offering of hospitality at the table of the Beamer hosts. HDB further describes the generosity of the Magoons in language that is a variation of the customary “command” of host to guest to “‘ai a mā‘ona, inu a kena.”¹³ And she concludes the verse with “‘A‘ohe mea i koe,” a variation of another customary expression of appreciation for unconditional hospitality: “‘A‘ohe mea koe ma kū‘ono – Nothing remains in the corners.”¹⁴

I detect a subtle undercurrent in “Maha‘ula” that hints at the Hawaiian assimilation of things that belong to the West. I see it here in “wai kau o Maleka,” in the list of non indigenous plants in verse 5 (oleander and crown flower in particular), in the hybrid wa‘apā of verse 3, and in the Hawaiianization of Alfred and Ruth in verse 1. I hear it as a celebration of “we make it ours”: the drinks become part of Hawaiian hospitality, the plants become part of a Hawaiian landscape, the skiff becomes a canoe of boards, the “Punahou” Magoons become Kapaka and Puanani.¹⁵ We do the assimilating; we bring the outside into our world, we are not assimilated by the outside. This seems especially evident in the next verse of the song. Verse 7 is taken up with the sweet voice of a gasoline-powered generator as it hums softly through the evening, bringing word that electricity is now lighting the Mahai‘ula home.¹⁶ Where we are usually lulled in mele by the soft sounds of nature, we are here comforted by an assimilated western object whose leo is given that older, elemental status.

The telephone serves a similar function in Beamer’s “Kinuē” (“Hone ana e ka leo o ke kelepona / E kono mai ana ia‘u e kipa aku”), and that same song ascribes to a bouncing jeep the far more soothing qualities of, perhaps, a swaying sea (“Mea ‘ole ke alanui kīke‘eke‘e / I ka holu mālie ho‘i a ka jeep”). “Mahai‘ula” however, is the Beamer composition in which the Hawaiian assimilation of the haole world is most prevalent. It is where her eye and ear most regularly settle, for whatever reason, on things not Hawaiian that have been made Hawaiian through the magic of ho‘okipa.

I see verse 8 as describing the larger shelter of mahina and Hōkūloa under which all of this can safely happen. Twilight falls, evening moon and morning star fill the sky with the light of their love-making. We are embraced in a Hawaiian universe where ho‘oipoipo still happens on a cosmic level and where we are among the children of this union. All is well, and we are still who we were.

John Charlot has discussed at length what he sees as Beamer's reticent view of traditional sexuality: elegant, love-making language is okay in the limited context of a wedding song like "He Makana"¹⁷ but is inappropriate in place-and-person songs because it undermines the dignity of Beamer poetry and hula, conflicts with Christian thinking, and diminishes that which should be regarded a respectable, authentic art form.¹⁸

The traditional Hawaiian view as expressed in the Kumulipo and the theme of Papa and Wakea was that the universe began with the mating of sky and earth and continued as a genealogy through the elements, the plants, the animals, and human beings. The universe is a family tree and the power that drives it is the sexual joining of male and female. For this reason, the universe and its components are beautiful and attractive to each other. This view provided the mental framework of Hawaiian thinking and literature, and Hawaiian culture was permeated by this appreciation of sexuality.

[One of Beamer's solutions to the Christian view of sexuality as private not cosmic] was to establish a new emphasis among the three elements of place chants and songs: 1) original, personal observations of the actual place, 2) the traditions learned about the place, including earlier perceptions and expressions like names and sayings, and 3) the place's symbolic – emotional or sexual – associations. These three elements are combined in different proportions by a composer to create a compete, multidimensional picture of the place. Although Beamer does not entirely abandon tradition and non-sexual symbolism she puts the greatest emphasis on original observation – that is, her own perceptions and experiences of a place.¹⁹

Charlot notes that "Mahai'ula" stands alone in HDB's poetry for her use of *ho'oipoipo* in the 8th verse description of the moon and star: it is "the only reference to cosmic sexuality that I have found in Beamer's own lyrics: the moon *E ho'oipoipo ana*, is 'Making love' with Morning Star."²⁰ Charlot is quick to explain that Mahi Beamer did not see it this way at all: "Making love with Morning Star is a purely poetic expression used by Helen Desha Beamer to express the fact that Morning Star is already visible when the moon rises."²¹

Having already taken my lumps from a member of the Emma Paishon family for my sexual interpretation of the "selamoku 'ai ho'okano" reference in "Hoehoe Nā Wa'a," I am reluctant to similarly offend the Beamers, a family for whom I hold the deepest regard and whose representative – Gaye Beamer – has given us permission pumehana to perform "Mahai'ula" this year at Merrie Monarch. I must say, however, that HDB's moving picture has caught me up and swept me away. Where it takes me, in the 8th verse, is to a suddenly altered vantage point –from the tightly focused details of Imua, ani lima, oleana, and 'enekini to the vast panorama of a Hawaiian world lit and watched over by its, yes, love-making guardians. Were I there at Mahai'ula, after a glorious day like that, I would want to join in. I can't know what Beamer intended, but I can, as Charlot suggests, "look as closely and respectfully as I can," and accept

responsibility for an interpretation that is my own “and has no more authority than its arguments.”²²

Although it seems impossible to feel any better about Mahai‘ula than I do after verse 8, I find myself sighing again in the chorus that is, in effect, a slightly different-sounding verse 9. It’s as if Beamer herself takes a musical breath and offers us her final “oh my goodness.” She opens with the familiar repetition of “he nani a he nani maoli nō,” a characteristic of several other Beamer songs including “Nā Kuahiwi ‘Ekolu” with its twice-repeated “mahalo i ka nani,” “Pihanakalani” with its twice-repeated “home nani ho‘okipa malihini,” “Keawaiki” with its very similar “he nani a he ‘olu i‘o nō,” and “Moanike‘ala” with its equally similar “he nani i‘o nō ia uka.” When HDB is visually and emotionally overwhelmed, “nani...nani,” “nani maoli,” and “nani i‘o” are her go-to expressions. The simplest word, in her uplifting musical settings, carries the most weight.

The second and third lines of the hui hold to a bird’s-eye perspective that balances nicely with the wide-angle view of verse 8: where verse 8 looks up from below at the heavens that are illuminated by the love-making moon and star, the chorus looks down from above on a peaceful Mahai‘ula that is spread out below like a moena on the sand. We are droned: down-up in 8 followed by up-down in the hui. Beamer then delights us with final, breath-taking zoom-in – a one-line, detail-crammed, consonance-packed, tongue-challenging, perfectly-timed-to-the-music image of the surf drawing delicate, lacy pictures on that sand: “Me ke kai kahakai ki‘i lihilihi i ke one.”

What Beamer ends with, what she herself draws in the sand, is “Mahai‘ula” and the names “Puanani me Kapala.” At the risk of further lump-taking, I want to suggest that there might be a metaphor and koan here, a riddle of the enduring present, of the ephemeral and the eternal in which the one is, in fact, the gateway to the other. We draw the picture, we write the song, we call the names; the more intensely we do it, the more present we are, the greater our participation in that which endures. Ola ka home; ola nā inoa. I don’t want to make too big a case for the zen of HDB, but this paradox is, in fact, at the heart of a very in-the-moment song that, as it approaches its 90th birthday, shows no signs of fading.

Mahai‘ula

Haele a‘e kāua la	Let’s go, we’re
I ke kono a ka makemake	Invited and wish
E kipa, e luana, e ho‘onanea	To visit, enjoy, and relax
Me Puanani a me Kapala	With Puanani and Kapala

A hiki i Kailua	Arriving at Kailua
Kau i ka moku “Imua” he inoa	Board the boat, “Imua,” by name
‘Au aku ‘o ia kai loa	Sail the long sea of
Kaulana Kona i ke kai malino	Kona famous for its calm

Kū i ke awa ‘o Mahai‘ula
He ani lima ka‘u ‘ike aku
Kau i ka wa‘apā hoe lima
A pae aku i ka ‘āina

Anchor in the channel of Mahai‘ula
I see hands waving
Board the small boat and row
Until (we) reach land

Hau‘oli nā makamaka
Pumehana ka ‘apo ‘ana mai
Honi aku, a honi mai
Ke aloha ia a ka Hawai‘i

Happy, dear friends
Warmly embracing
Exchanging “honi”
The greeting of the Hawaiian

Kipa i ka ‘olu o ka home
Ho‘ola‘ila‘i me nā hoa
Moani ke ‘ala o nā pua
‘Oliana, aloalo, pua kalaunu

Inviting is the cool comfort of the home
Lighthearted contentment among friends
Windborne fragrance of the flowers
Oliander, hibiscus, crown flower

Unu mai nā ‘ono o ke kai
Hui me nā wai kau o Maleka
Ua ‘ai, ua inu a kena
‘A‘ohe mea i koe aku

Heaps of delicacies from the sea
Together with drinks (waters from America)
Ate and drank our fill
There was nothing left

Aloha e ka leo o kahi ‘enekini
I ka hone mai nā hola like ‘ole
E ha‘i mai ana i ka nūhou
Ua ‘ā ka uwila iā kahakai

Greeted by the “voice” of the generator
Softly humming throughout the hours
Telling the news
That electricity has come to the beach

Ho‘ohihi au i ka lī‘ulā
I ka ‘ā mai i ka welelau o ka honua
Eia mahina kau ahiahi
E ho‘oipoipo ana me hōkū loa

I am entranced by the twilight
That lights the very ends of the earth
Here, evening moon rises,
Making love with Morning Star

Hui:

Chorus:

He nani, a he nani maoli nō
Mahai‘ula i ka la‘i
Hāli‘i mai la i ka loa
Me ke kai kahakai ki‘i lihilihi i ke one
E ō, e Puanani me Kapala kou inoa

Beautiful, how truly beautiful
Mahai‘ula in the calm
Spread out there lengthwise
With the sea drawing lacey pictures on the sand
O answer, Puanani and Kapala to your namesong

A note on our performance:

We have worked on this song in collaboration with Robert Cazimero who will also be singing it for us. Outside of Mahi’s recording of “Mahai‘ula,” Robert’s is the definitive version and comes from his own pili relationship with Mahi and family. Robert’s joyful choreography of “Mahai‘ula” is also, in our minds,

the definitive (and timeless), men's rendition of the mele. Our own rendition pays homage, at points, to Nā Kamalei, but is otherwise our own best attempt to live up to the precedent.

Notes to the essay:

¹ “Some memories that can't be forgotten in the contemplation of kānaka living today and in those days since 1870, a gap of 53 or more years, is the presence of families on the lands of Kekaha from nā Honokōhau, Kaloko, Kohanaiki, nā 'O'oma, Kalaoa, Haleohiu, Maka'ula, Kau, Pu'ukalaohiki, Awalua, nā Kaulana, Mahailua [Mahai'ula], Makalawena, Awake'e, nā Kūki'o, Ka'ūpūlehu, Kīholo, Keawawaiki, Kapalaoa, Pu'uanahulu, and Pu'uwa'awa'a.

In those days, these lands were filled with kānaka, women, men, and children, and the houses were populated with large families in truly dense numbers. In those days [of my being a school teacher at Honokōhau], I went everywhere with the boys and girls, and I stayed with, and walked with, and ate with them, and slept at their beloved homes. [He then names the families that resided at each of places listed above]

... Nā 'O'oma, from nā Kalaoa all the way to nā Kaulana, and Mahai'ula, in those day were 'āina kānaka [populated lands], but today there are no people. In those days Mahai'ula was a place where many fishermen lived: the Pookoai people, Paoao Sr. and family, Kaaō folks, Kaia folks, Kaaikaula folks, the Pahias, and John Kaelemakule, Sr., who is now living in Kailua....”

Ka Ohu Haaheo Ina Kuahiwi, “Na Hoomanao O Ka Manawa,” *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, 12 June 1924. My translation.

² Joseph Keola Donaghy, *The Language is the Music: Perceptions of Authority and Authenticity in Hawaiian Language Compositions and Vocal Performance*. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. 205-206.

³ John Clark reports that Alfred Kapala Magoon, “a prominent part-Hawaiian businessman,” bought the Mahai'ula property in 1930s (*Beaches of Hawai'i Island*, 116). Patricia Tummons is more specific: Kapala's wife Puanani bought it in 1936 for \$1000 (“Mahai'ula at Center of Dispute Over Will of George Magoon, Sr.,” *Environment Hawai'i*, April 1995). I have not found a record of the building of the beach house and assume, in the absence of other information, that it was constructed by Kapala and Puanani in the years following their purchase of the property. It is possible that Magoon's house was built on the site of – or was even a restoration of – an older home named “Kalāhikiola” that had been built there by John Ka'elemakule in about 1880 (Ka'elemakule, “Ka Moolelo Oiaio o ko John Kaelemakule Ola Ana,” *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, August 6, 1929; Ka'elemakule shares the first two verses of a song written for his hale by David Alawa of Holualoa who is best known as the author of “Hanohano Wai'ehu”). At any rate, Helen Desha Beamer died in 1952, leaving a 16-year window, at most, for her visit to Mahai'ula. John Clark also notes that “the traditional month for everyone to gather at Mahai'ula was August, to celebrate A.K. Magoon's birthday [Aug. 15, 1890]. He and his wife...were renowned for their hospitality, and the festivities at Mahai'ula often lasted for days on end” (116). Mahi and Gaye Beamer both describe their grandmother's writing process as immediate: “she composed words and music simultaneously, working directly from her unconscious and inspired by the particular events of the day. To be ready to write at any moment, she carried her 'ukulele with her, sometimes completing in the car a song for their destination” (Charlot, 7). It would not be unreasonable to guess, then, that “Mahai'ula” was written in mid-August in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

⁴ Donaghy, 222.

⁵ Aaron Sala, in reference to “Pāni‘au,” says: “you put on these glasses and you see everything she saw.” Donaghy, 206. I’ve modified his words and added a bit more.

⁶ Donaghy, 238. “[Beamer’s strong visual elements] provide a framework by which the listener can create an individual mental image of the song that assists in memory retention of the image and the text of the song. This image is constructed using each individual’s experiences and knowledge and may include elements not intended by the composer. This construction of a mental image not only assists in memory retention, but creates a personal meaning for the individual...[that] should not be portrayed as the composer’s own.” Donaghy dances carefully here with the differences between intent and interpretation because of his respect for Mahi Beamer who told him in no uncertain terms that “we have no reason to analyse grandma’s music” (238).

⁷ John Charlot, “Helen Desha Beamer’s Pāni‘au: Innovations in Song and Hula,” *The Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Kansai Gaidai University, 2007-2008, 7-8.

⁸ Ibid. 11.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ John Clark, *Beaches of Hawai‘i Island*, 117. Clark’s description of Mahai‘ula in his *Place Names of Hawai‘i* offers a similar explanation but places the stone at “about a fathom from the shore” and describes the menstrual color as “yellowish” (137, 187).

¹² “The means by which the kama‘āina of these dry lands sustained themselves was fishing; when fish were gotten they were dried and traded for pa‘i ‘ai from Maui, Waipi‘o, Waimanu, and sometimes North Kohala.

This was very much a land of hunger for its residents, and it was only with great patience that they could survive. In good times, the wa‘apā came to deliver food, and sometimes single-masted ships, and pa‘i ‘ai was gotten and exchanged for dried fish, namely dried aku, dried ‘ōpelu, and poke ahi that had been nicely hung to dry, and the fish of the deep ocean that were gotten by the fishermen, namely the ‘ula‘ula, ‘ōpakapaka, the kāhala, and other fish of this kind.

When bad, stormy times came to these barren beach lands, and the wa‘apā were not able to come ashore and the fishing people of Kekaha could not venture into the ocean, then it was truly a time of hunger for those living on these lands.”

John Ka‘elemakule, “Ka Moolelo Oiaio o ko John Kaelemakule Ola Ana,” *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, June 5, 1928, my translation. Ka‘elemakule’s obituary (“Hala Ia Kamaaina Kahiko o Na Kona,” *Ke Alakai o Hawaii*, September 8, 1932) identifies him as a prominent merchant who owned his own store in Kailua, Kona, Hawai‘i. He died in 1932 at age 79 – meaning that he was born in 1853. He was adopted at 6-months by Kaaikaula and his wife Poke of Mahai‘ula and was raised there in the fishing traditions of that “āina wai ‘ole.” His memoir, “Ka Moolelo Oiaio...” was published in *Ka Hoku* from May 29, 1928, to March 4, 1930. The 31-month series of approximately 80 installments makes for amazing reading. Ka‘elemakule’s kanikau for his kahu hānai Kaaikaula was published in October 25, 1894, along with puakū written by Poke Kaaikaula and Bebe Kaelemakule (“He Make i Aloha Nui Ia,” *Ko Hawaii Pae Aina*).

¹³ Eat until full, drink until satisfied.

¹⁴ “Said of one who is extremely generous, giving freely without reservation.” Pukui, ‘*Ōlelo No‘eau*,’ #187.

¹⁵ They were, in fact, Punahou classmates and are listed as 8th and 9th graders in the *Catalogue of Oahu College*, 1906-7, 66, 74, 77. I believe they belonged to the class of 1911, but Alfred does not seem to have graduated with Ruth. His name is not present in the list of seniors (as Ruth’s is) in the 1911-1912 edition of that *Catalogue*.

¹⁶ Abbie Kong’s “Kaneohe,” written in the 1930s to celebrate the coming of electricity to Kāne‘ohe, may have had a influence on the coming-of-electricity verse in “Mahai‘ula” (which, I suspect, was written in the 1940s). Kong uses the voice of the kelekalapa to make this announcement; Beamer ascribes that role to kahi ‘enekini. Both deliver the same message of progress that is nevertheless wrapped in tradition.

¹⁷ Charlot, 5. Charlot argues that, in contrast to her mother Isabella Desha’s “more explicit sexuality” in “Pua Malihini,” Helen’s own wedding composition displays a “reduced and spiritualized...love lyric vocabulary.” Mahi and Gaye Beamer, he adds, insist “that she did not use traditional sexual symbolism and avoided references to sexuality.”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, fn ix.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 7. Keola Donaghy says much the same thing. He contends that the natural consequence of Beamer’s highly visual, invite-you-in lyrics is that they provide a framework for the listener to create his own individual mental image that “may include elements not intended by the composer...[and] such personal constructions of meaning should not be portrayed as the composer’s.” Donaghy goes on to apologize for any analytical prying of his own but contends that analysis is a vital part of our efforts “to find examples of excellence in the past in order to create new compositions for future generations” (*The Language is the Music*, 238- 9). So I am in good company for getting ears pulled.