



Finding Meaning: Kaona and Contemporary Hawaiian Literature (Critical Issues in Indigenous Studies)

Brandy Nalani McDougall

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In this first extensive study of contemporary Hawaiian literature, Brandy Nalani McDougall examines a vibrant selection of fiction, poetry, and drama by emerging and established Hawaiian authors, including Haunani-Kay Trask, John Dominis Holt, Imaikalani Kalahela, and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl. At the center of the analysis is a hallmark of Hawaiian aesthetics—kaona, the intellectual practice of hiding and finding meaning that encompasses the allegorical, the symbolic, the allusive, and the figurative.

With a poet's attention to detail, McDougall interprets examples of kaona, guiding readers through olelo no'eau (proverbs), mo'olelo (literature and histories), and mooku'auhau (genealogies) alongside their contemporary literary descendants, unveiling complex layers of Hawaiian identity, culture, history, politics, and ecology.

Throughout, McDougall asserts that “kaona connectivity” not only carries bright possibilities for connecting the present to the past, but it may also ignite a decolonial future. Ultimately, *Finding Meaning* affirms the tremendous power of Indigenous stories and genealogies to give activism and decolonization movements lasting meaning.

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