



He Mele A Hilo (A Hilo Song)

Ryka Aoki

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Something strange is happening in Hilo. Noleani Choi's new show about the life of Jesus Christ told through hula dance has everyone, especially her halau, wondering what she could possibly be thinking. Rumors circulate about a rich guy from the mainland, and the dancers and their friends must reckon with what is really hula, who is Hawaiian enough, and why each of them wants to dance.

On one beautiful island, we discover that loving other people in spite of their flaws might just begin with being true to our own selves.

He Mele A Hilo (A Hilo Song) Details

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From Reader Review He Mele A Hilo (A Hilo Song) for online ebook

Meredith says

I loved the characters! I've been carrying this to the pool all summer and am sad to be finished. I will miss them!

Vivien Ryder says

Ryka's He Mele A Hilo is a delicious read. Set in Hawaii, this lush, comforting story explores ideas of identity, propriety and belonging. Following and joining the threads of her characters' searches for authenticity, Ryka gives us a view of Hawaii from many sets of eyes. Conversational in tone and pace, this book is an example of storytelling done by someone who excels at connecting to their audience and delivering characters who are believably whole human beings, worthy of our love and attention.

Hannah says

pretty much cried straight through this one and don't think it was only cuz i'm gonna bleed soon. there's without a doubt an immensity of depth i'm missing partially through language (it's written in hawaiian pidgin english) & partially through my lack of knowledge about the gods of those islands and their stories. what i received from this book were pictures of some rare & sweet kinds of romance & partnership, some subtle & complex kinds of growth in community, and also a relationship to innate talent that i deeply appreciated but that also raised such immense longing in me (thus the crying), specifically relationships to dance and music.

Paul Jr. says

Could not get through it. Tried 7 times. Made it to page 125 before i gave up. Good ideas but drags and plot details that come out of nowhere. Didn't seem to know exactly what it wanted to be. Can't rate since I didn't finish it.

Kathleen Clifford says

Wonderful, magic portrait of a small community in Hilo, Hawaii. Aoki's characters are richly conceived. I'm excited to check out other titles from Topside Press.

Yee-Ning S. says

A clarion call to love thyself and others and all the mistakes and flaws that come along in the package, *He Mele A Hilo* is a fun, relaxing read about personal growth and identity with a colourful backdrop of Hawaii, its landscape and culture, food, dancing, music, and even language (teaching you Hawaiian local slang throughout the book). Aoki creates rich vignettes of characters and links them together in her microcosm of the world, and as we uncover more and more about each character through their childhood stories or their interactions with each other, we seem to grow with them as well. Chapters are not titled, but different sections in each chapter have cute descriptive names such as 'The Tale of the Evil Plate Lunch,' 'The Tale of the Crazy Omelet,' and 'Strange Kine Funny Tings' which divvies up the novel into manageable bite-sized chunks.

If you would love a book about Hawaii, the drive behind expression through the arts, and/or getaways that will heal you spiritually even physically, would recommend.

Bill says

This is a great first novel from Ryka Aoki, full of heart, culture and food. Aoki does a great job of creating wonderfully developed characters with their own unique personalities. She does a fantastic job of incorporating different cultures and blending them together to tell a story of finding one's destiny. The only drawback I found while reading the book was the constant "deus ex machina" elements. From quirky old women who disappear and reappear when needed, to Hawaiian goddesses who just happen to be around, there was a lot of things that just sort of "happened". The ending was a little saccharine, but it had enough heart to appear earnest instead.

Overall, fantastic work that will leave you with a smile....and very hungry.

Mitch Kellaway says

Excerpt from my Lambda Literary review: "...The book, like a carefully calibrated structure—a tool, bridge, sculpture, recipe—would fall apart if even one element were out of place. Aoki, their creator, their steward, has made sure none will do so. Her building blocks: a lively group of co-occurring stories that cross in meaningful, almost predestined ways, and happen because of, to, and through the many vibrant, flawed residents of present-day Hilo, Hawaii. It's a simple, easy pleasure to let it all unfold before the mind's eye, the effort behind its construction invisible as the stories neatly cohere.

The list of characters—and their attendant chances for redemption—easily triple when considering the many minor story-lines that feed into the whole. Each figure is touched by enough quirky characteristics and backstory to keep them unique—no easy task, but Aoki pulls it off by drawing on the sounds, smells, and rhythms associated with each individual and the different spaces their hearts compel them to inhabit. Even bit-parts get a loving dose of humanity, the core of their motivations and faults excavated in the space of a well-honed paragraph or exchange.

The narrative moves briskly, held together by richly wrought settings that dare a reader to reduce them to the sickeningly sweet palm trees and sunsets that dominate mainlanders' imaginings of Hawaii. Dashes of humor and hints of allegorical meaning make the tale feel almost mythical, as if passed down to the reader through an oral history."

Sunny says

I absolutely LOVE this novel. Since I'm at work, and have already spent the first hour here finishing the book, I'll keep this quick. This book is full of characters who have deep histories with each other, with their families and communities and with the islands. You'll love this book if you're into seeing the world as full of ancient magic and believe that our past is always part of our present. I could hear all the voices as I read though I did have to make liberal use of the hawaiian pidgin glossary in the back. If you love food, dance, music or human relationships then you might enjoy this book. Please read this book!

okay go read this review: You are more than your trans self by Emma Caterine.

s says

The magic realism was sometimes laid on a bit thick--and I like the genre!--but the setting is wonderfully developed, and I really enjoyed the characters and was moved by their evolution over the course of the story.

Karen says

I thought this was a hidden gem of a book - I'm glad I managed to get it on ILL, as not that many libraries have it. I like how it felt kind of like a goofy soap opera but then had a lot of emotional complexity to it, at least for the first 3/4 of the book. Then it got kind of heavy handed and repetitive with its lessons of everyone learning to accept themselves and focus on what brings them joy and not what other people think of them. But still, I liked the variety of internal dilemmas the characters had (especially the main characters Harry, Nona, and Kam) and the way the author showed even people who seemed confident had their insecurities or foibles. Also, the writing in Hawai'ian pidgin was neat - not too hard to read, and it brought a distinct sense of place to the novel.

Irene says

It is a wonderfully written novel, flowing and structured at the same time, the characters are individuals and archetypes, and Hawaii and its spirit is most definitely the heart of the story. I haven't been touched like this by a book in a very long time.

Sumayyah says

"He Mele A Hilo" is a story about love, faith, friendship, and identity. Written in Hawaiian pidgen English, the narrator weaves several individual tales together to create one large story. Some transitions between voices will feel choppy to those unused to folktales and traditional story telling. All in all, the cadence and language feel warm. Ryka Aoki has done a wonderful job immersing the reader in Hawaiian culture, and bringing to life the lives of Harry, Nona, Noelani, Kam, and Steve, to name a few.

Rebecca says

Couldn't get into it. Wasn't interesting to me.

Jacob Wren says

I cried through the last fifty pages of this book. Perhaps the closest I've ever come to tears of joy while reading.

Ali says

He Mele a Hilo (A Hilo Song) is a delicious novel, filled with vibrant portraits of its characters. Not to be missed.

R.J. says

An incredible first novel from Ryka Aoki full of myth, food, music and heart. He Mele A Hilo follows an endlessly endearing ensemble of characters (who speak and are described in the local language of Pidgin) - their stories entwine and unravel at a relaxed pace that fits perfectly with the themes Aoki's working with. The narrative slowly peels back the edges of our world to reveal a magic that is at once mysterious and divine and as ordinary and knowable as spam. I usually find myself slogging through adult literary fiction, but this was a real pleasure to read.
