Among the classical fine arts of Hawai‘i, the *hula ki‘i* ‘image hula’ is especially interesting, because it joins sculpture to chant and dance, and because it is the
Hawaiian form of true drama: the images represent characters with roles in a plot. Hawaiian creativity can be seen in the development of variant forms and connections with other genres; Hawaiian aesthetic sense, in the high art of the earliest surviving figures and the classic diction of the few surviving chants. The *hula kiʻi* continues to intrigue and inspire artists, Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian alike.

Katharine Luomala is one of the few scholars who can bring to such a subject the necessary range of expertise. She provides thorough descriptions of all the surviving images and precise — if unfortunately summary — discussions of the *hula kiʻi* chants, published and unpublished, in the original Hawaiian or, when that text is unavailable, in English translation.

She also exhausts, as far as I can see, the historical sources, analysing with particular attention Hawaiian-language ones such as 19th century newspaper articles. Her wide reading in Hawaiian literature enables her also to assemble a variety of scattered passages in which images are mentioned in different contexts, passages that provide a suggestive background for the use of images in hula. Her broad knowledge of Hawaiian history and culture enables her to connect her subject to minor points — such as the clothes of a certain period (p.25) — as well as to major concerns — such as the postcontact continuity of Hawaiian culture and its use to assert ethnic identity (pp.9, 122). She does not neglect oral sources and present practice.

Her study of her assembled materials is exemplary. Texts are handled critically and analysed for what they do not say as much as for what they do. The nonverbal reactions of informants are reported and used in making judgments. Her positions are judicious (e.g., that the *hula kiʻi* is an indigenous art form “that was adapted to the changing culture of the islands,” [p.138; also pp.2f., 60, 76, 170]) and carefully labelled (e.g., “subjective impression,” [p.21]). Open questions and subjects for future research are identified (pp.80–3, 88, 124ff., 171). The book provides, therefore, a solid basis for future work.

I have only two major criticisms of this excellent book. Luomala discusses whether the *hula kiʻi* was religious or entertainment (pp.5, 71–8, 131, 170). Some of her evidence supports one view; the rest, the other. Perhaps the Hawaiians did not think there was an opposition between the two? Christianity is, after all, one of the few religions that do not accord a ritual place to ribaldry. In any case, the Western distinction between religious and nonreligious — or sacred and profane — should not be equated with the Hawaiian one between *kapu* and *noa* (as apparently on p.78).

More attention could have been given to dance movement, using old photographs and dances performed today. The shape and use of the images could have been connected to the gestures indicated by the chants (pp.100, 127f., 132; but see pp.82f., 94).

My other criticisms are minor. Luomala's statement that there are only two reported “native Hawaiian” (p.92) dramas ignores the Hawaiian language pageants conducted well into this century and known from photographs (I have heard of the existence of texts, but have not been able to obtain any). Her expression “a pantheon of gods and lesser spirits” (p.73) implies an organisation that can only be imposed on historical Hawaiian religion. Hawaiian string figures with their accompanying chants could have been mentioned as an art form with similarities to the *hula kiʻi* (Dickey 1928). Her speculative interpretation that a very slightly carved torso might
"represent the goddess in the process of transforming herself into a breadfruit trunk" (p.57) strikes me as too Berninesque. I would call S. N. (not M.) Haleʻole's monumental *Laieikawai* a novel, not a "novelette" (p.94).

The book is handsome, well produced and provided with an index. I have sent the few typographical errors found to the editors.

**REFERENCE**