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Theorizing Pō:

Embodied Cosmogony and Polynesian National Narratives

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Joyce Lindsay Pualani Warren

2017

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2017

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Theorizing Pō:

Embodied Cosmogony and Polynesian National Narratives

by

Joyce Lindsay Pualani Warren

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Chair

Polynesian epistemology and cosmogony dictate that all life and existence come from Pō, the generative, liminal darkness. Pō can be temporally expansive, producing a view of time that is spiral rather than linear. Within Pō, time and space are not necessarily discrete categories.

In this dissertation, I argue that literary depictions of Pō can represent and articulate notions of political and cultural sovereignty throughout contemporary Polynesia. These forms of sovereignty are rooted in cosmogonic connections to darkness and land, which are manifested in the Indigenous body's mediation of the intertwined spiral of time and space. I contend that the boundless potential of Pō is reflected in the varied ways embodied cosmogony appears in contemporary Pacific literature, and the methods by which Native Pacific authors such as Albert

Wendt, Patricia Grace, and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl rework Anglophone literary traditions of the novel and the short story to advance Indigenous notions of the nation. These authors invoke Pō through parallel yet distinct uses of “form”: first, in the exploration of how variously raced and gendered forms of the Indigenous body can affirm or contest the body politic; second, in the diverse articulations of space and time through the texts’ formal construction and narratology. In these texts, Indigenous storytelling techniques—such as kākau (tattoo), fāgogo, whaikōrero, and oli—suggest how literary forms and representations of Pō can variously (re)turn to the post/settler/colonial nation and (re)tell Indigenous narratives. My analysis relies on orature but also centers the ways the Indigenous body has always functioned as a legible text and a tool for mediating epistemology. My theorization of Pō draws on bodily- and sensory-based Indigenous concepts and discourses, including makawalu, Mana Wahine, and vā.

Overall, I investigate the literary intersections of cosmogony, body, and nation, to reveal how the Indigenous body’s cosmogonic connections can overcome the traumatic construction of the post/settler/colonial nation as the primary marker of community. In its place, I offer a theory of embodied cosmogony that requires an Indigenous reading praxis, resulting in a new iteration of the Polynesian body as text and a necessary intervention in postcolonialism and broader literary criticisms.

The dissertation of Joyce Lindsay Pualani Warren is approved.

Richard A. Yarborough

Keith Lujan Camacho

Yogita Goyal

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

Ho‘i hou i ka iwi kuamo‘o.

Thank you for being the backbone to which I could always return—no matter how many times
the writing of this dissertation took me away from you.

Juana Rosa Kaleiakalehuamakanoë Alá and Brandon Keoni G.Casso Taoipu: Thank you for
showing me the ways that endings become beginnings along the spiral.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	xviii
Note on Terms and Usage	ix
Glossary	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Vita	xviii
INTRODUCTION:	
Theorizing Pō	1
Local Articulations of Darkness and Global Articulations of Blackness	12
“A Tradition of Evaluating Our Literature”: Native Pacific Literary Theories and Criticisms	17
Embodied Cosmogony: Mediating Wā and (En)Gendering Pō—nō	29
Time	31
Space	34
Wāhine	37
(En)Gendering “Po—no”	38
Polynesian National Narratives	40
Chapter Overviews	53
CHAPTER 1:	
Kākau as Script and Skin as Text	59
Darkness on the Body: Peripatetic Foundations of Kākau as Script and Skin as Text	64
Darkness within the Body: Kākau as Refutation of Blood Logic	70
(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Kākau as Textual Intersection	73
CHAPTER 2:	
Pō as Relational Space between Bodies: Vā and the Individual’s Quest in Albert Wendt’ <i>Pouliuli</i>	81
(Dis)Connections as National Metaphor: Vā and Body as the Sacred Center	90
Sisyphus and Māui: Weaving Existentialism into a Literary Ancestry	97

(Re)turns, (Re)tellings, and Narrative Interruptions as Movements through Vā	101
CHAPTER 3:	
Gendering Te Pō: Māori Women’s Voices and Embodied Storytelling in Patricia Grace’s <i>Potiki</i>	125
Māori Bodies, Sovereignty, and a National Literature: Towards a Reading of Mana Wahine Māori and Female Bodily Agency as Whakapapa	135
Mana Wahine Māori as Bodily Mediation of Te Pō: The Liminality of Time and Space	158
A Non-Human, Embodied Storytelling: Wharenuī as Ancestress and Whaikōrero	171
(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Expanding the Spiral with the Ka Huri and Filling in Archival Gaps with Mana Wahine Māori	182
CHAPTER 4:	
Imagining the Pōstcolonial Lāhui: Genealogy, Women’s Bodies, and the Racial Production of the State in Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”	190
Genealogizing “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”: Kumulipo as (Con)Text	201
Genealogizing Blood Quantum: “One Unbroken Line Without Any Stems”	206
Gendered Genealogies: Women’s Voices as Many Stems of the Lāhui	213
Ontological Affirmations of the Lāhui: (Re)turns and (Re)tellings	222
CONCLUSION:	
(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Liminality as Belonging	232
“Here” and “There” in “A Letter from Afar”	237
Indigenous Articulations of Space: Writing Against the Settler Colonial Conventions of the American Travel Narrative	240
BIBLIOGRAPHY	247

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: “Te Po,” Robyn Kahukiwa.	152
Figure 2: “Te Po and Papatuanuku,” Robyn Kahukiwa.	153
Figure 3: “Muriranga-whenua,” Robyn Kahukiwa.	154
Figure 4: “Mahuika,” Robyn Kahukiwa.	155

A Note on Terms and Usage

Aotearoa/ New Zealand:

Aotearoa/ New Zealand has gained popularity in recent years and affirms the historical presence of Māori. As a marker of indigeneity, I often use Aotearoa. When referring to the settler colonial government, which has not officially adopted the term, I may use only New Zealand.

Diacritical marks:

The texts in this study are historically and culturally diverse. As a result, diacritical marks such as the macron and the glottal stop, known as the kahakō and ‘okina in Hawaiian, may appear in some sources and not others. When quoting I maintain the usage in the source material, although my analysis may contain different usage. Early print sources did not always contain these marks. In other instances, these marks were intentionally omitted in order to engage multiple interpretations of a single word or phrase. Finally, additional marks were sometimes incorporated in written texts to serve as cues for the speaker. For instance, the nineteenth-century Hawaiian-language text of the Kumulipo contains the word “po—no.” This can be interpreted as “pono,” meaning “balance”; “pō nō,” meaning “indeed, it is night”; or both simultaneously.

Indigenous:

I capitalize Indigenous to emphasize it as a marker of personhood and subjectivity. This term is used interchangeably with Native. I use the lowercase to describe an action or refer to an object, as in when I discuss how Indigenous Pacific authors have indigenized the Anglophone forms of the novel and short story.

Kanaka Maoli and Kānaka Maoli:

Kanaka Maoli denotes a single Native Hawaiian. It can also be used as an adjective, as in lāhui Kanaka Maoli. Kānaka Maoli is the plural form. However, when the number of Native Hawaiians is unquantifiable, as in a poetic or metaphoric allusion to all Native Hawaiians, the macron may be omitted and Kanaka Maoli utilized.

Kanaka Maoli, which can be translated as “true person” or “real person,” is used alongside Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, which can be translated as “bone person,” to emphasize genealogical connections among Native Hawaiians, as well as their kinship connections to the ‘āina, or land. This study uses Kanaka Maoli most frequently, but it should be understood as interchangeable with terms such as Kanaka ‘Ōiwi and Native Hawaiian.

Mana Wahine:

Mana Wahine is a theory that centers the mana (genealogical, intellectual, emotional, political, and physical strength and prestige) of Native women (wāhine). This term is used in the Hawaiian and Māori languages, and these theorists often speak to and build on the work of their Pacific cousins. However, genealogies of place are also crucial to the Pacific and intellectual genealogies can be invoked in these traditions, as in the qualifier, Mana Wahine Māori. I often draw on Mana Wahine theorists in both contexts, but chapters 3 and 4 discuss Mana Wahine Māori and Mana Wahine Kanaka Maoli in specific contexts.

Mana Wahine is often glossed as a type of Native feminism, but this is incomplete and inaccurate. Some Mana Wahine theorists accept this categorization, while others reject the histories and connotations “feminism” brings. Mana Wahine invokes the gender parity inherent in Native Pacific communities before Euro-American colonization, which also predates the western understanding of feminism by centuries. First-wave feminist scholarship in the United States also marginalized the realities of women of color. Mana Wahine positions indigeneity as a lens for magnifying and understanding women’s identities. In her theory of Mana Tama’ita’i, which is derived from Mana Wahine, Selina Tusitala Marsh explicitly invokes blackness and kinship among global women of color as key elements of Native women’s mana. Like Marsh, several Mana Wahine theorists have drawn on the productive intersections with work by Black feminist scholars such as bell hooks, Barbara Christian, and Patricia Hill Collins.

Pacific literature:

Rather than the term “Pacific Island literature,” Pacific literature accounts for the ways this literature encompasses the whole region and not just those islands in the base. This also incorporates the broader field of diasporic literature and those writers and texts who maintain their cultural and kinship ties but may no longer reside on an island.

Glossary

Āiga: Samoan term for nuclear and extended family.

‘Āina: Kanaka Maoli term for land.

Fa‘asamoa: A term loosely translated as “the Samoan way.” It refers to the culture, customs, and values that guide Samoan daily life, including familial, political, and religious structures.

Fale: Typically used to refer to Samoan houses, but may also describe other architectural structures.

Iwi: Māori term for extended, tribal kinship. An iwi can be subdivided into smaller units of hapū and whānau.

Kākau: The Kanaka Maoli term for the verb “to write.” Along with other Polynesian cognates, such as the Samoan tatau, it has been transliterated into English as “tattoo.” Kākau refers to the mark upon the skin (noun) as well as the act of creating it (verb). Kākau reflect a person’s mana as well as broader connections to family, society, history, and place.

Kaona: A Kanaka Maoli oratorical and literary device that relies on meaning hidden in the open through wordplay.

Kumulipo: The Kanaka Maoli creation chant detailing the unfolding of the universe from the generative darkness of Pō.

Lāhui: This term relies on figurative and literal kinship connections among the Native Hawaiian people, as both a nation and a race.

Makawalu: A Kanaka Maoli term which means “eight eyes,” and positions multiple accounts of a single narrative or topic as an intersectional strength.

Mana: Mana is understood in different contexts throughout the Pacific. In the Kanaka Maoli, Māori, and Samoan contexts of this study, mana refers to genealogical, intellectual, emotional, political, and physical strength and prestige. People, places, animals, and objects may possess mana.

Matai: Samoan titled head or chief of an āiga.

Māori: The Indigenous people of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Māoritanga: Refers to Māori culture, identity, values, and practices.

Meiwi: Kanaka Maoli poetic or literary devices.

Mo‘okū‘auhau: Kanaka Maoli term for genealogy or genealogical succession.

Mo‘olelo: A Kanaka Maoli term that refers to history, legend, story, essay, article, and journal, among other forms. A narrative may fall into a single one of these categories, or it may be understood as existing within multiple categories simultaneously.

Oli: A Kanaka Maoli chant or poem.

Oli ho‘okumu honua: Kanaka Maoli creation chant.

Pono: Kanaka Maoli term for harmony or balance.

Poupou: Māori carved figures located within the whareniui.

Tatau: The Samoan term transliterated into English as “tattoo.” See kākau.

Tautoga: Samoan oath-taking ceremony.

Vā: The Samoan term for the figurative space which governs the relationships between people, places, deities, and things.

Wā: A term that can refer to time and/ or space in Hawaiian and Māori. This term also marks formal divisions of the Kumulipo.

Whakapapa: Māori term for genealogy or genealogical succession.

Whaikōrero: Māori pattern of communal, processional speech within the whareniui. Speakers may move between song, speech, chant, and haka

Whareniui: Māori ancestral meeting house, located adjacent to the marae. The whareniui maintains ancestral ties among Māori people, and is also understood as the embodiment of an ancestor.

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JOYCE PUALANI WARREN

EDUCATION

University of California, Los Angeles	
Graduate Concentration Certificate, Asian American Studies	2016
C. Phil., English	2013
M.A., English	2012
B.A., American Literature and Culture (major)	2007
Afro-American Studies (minor)	
Magna cum laude and with college honors	

EMPLOYMENT

Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Ethnic American Literatures and Cultural Productions, <i>University of Oregon</i>	2017 -
Undergraduate Research Consultant, <i>Department of English, UCLA</i>	2016
Teaching Fellow, <i>UCLA</i>	2012 - 2017
Teaching Associate, <i>UCLA</i>	2008 - 2012

SELECTED AWARDS

Department of English Dissertation Year Fellowship, <i>UCLA</i>	2015
Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship	2014
Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, <i>UCLA</i>	2014
Institute of American Cultures Graduate Fellowship in Ethnic Studies, <i>UCLA</i>	2013
Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, <i>UCLA</i>	2009, 2010
Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship, <i>UCLA</i>	2007-2011

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

“Embodied Cosmogony: Genealogy and the Racial Production of the State in Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s ‘Ho‘oulu Lāhui.’” *Pacific Currents*, special issue of *American Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2015, pp. 937-956.

With deGuzman, Jean-Paul, Alfred Peredo Flores, Kristopher Kaupalolo, Christen Sasaki, Kēhaulani Vaughn. “The Possibilities for Pacific Islander Studies in the Continental United States.” *Transoceanic Flows*, special issue of *Amerasia Journal*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2011, pp. 149-161.

Book Reviews

Rev. of *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific*, eds. Carroll, Jeffrey, Brandi Nālani McDougall, and Georganne Nordstrom. *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 28 no. 2, 2016, pp. 523-526.

Rev. of *Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi‘iaka*, by ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2016, pp. 178-180.

Other Publications

“Mixed Race and Diasporic Indigeneity in Kristiana Kahakauwila’s ‘Thirty-Nine Rules for Making a Hawaiian Funeral into a Drinking Game.’” *Mixed Roots Stories Commons*. February 2016. MixedRootsStories.com/arts-education/

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“A Letter From Afar: Writing Diasporic Kanaka Maoli Kinship and Sovereignty.” *Oceanic Literature Panel*. Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference, Pasadena, CA, November 11-13, 2016.

“All the Hawaiians Here Give Their Aloha to Our Lāhui’: Travel Narratives and Diasporic Kanaka Maoli Kinship.” *Remapping Race, Gender, and Indigeneity in Hawai‘i and the Diaspora panel*. Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Annual Meeting, Honolulu, HI, May 18-21, 2016.

“‘Hawaiian, But No Local’: Race and Diaspora in Kristiana Kahakauwila’s *This is Paradise*.” *Oceanic Literature panel*. Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference, Portland, OR, November 6-8, 2015.

“Liminality as Belonging: Race and Diaspora in Literary Representations of Kanaka Maoli Communities.” *The Roots/ Routes of Maoli Indigeneity: Cultural Subjectivities, Identity, and the Politics of Home panel*. Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, June 4-6, 2015

“(Dis)Oriented in the Darkness: Polynesian Epistemology and Articulations of Blackness.” Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness Conference, University of California, Riverside, April 10, 2015.

“Theorizing the Pō: The Racial Production of the State in Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s ‘Ho‘oulu Lāhui.’” *Challenging the Archive: Epistemologies of Islandness and Indigeneity in the Pacific panel*. American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, November 6-8, 2014.

“Reo Mā‘ohi, Allegory, and Epic: The Political and Ecological Legacies of Language and Genre in Chantal T. Sptiz’s *The Island of Shattered Dreams*.” Association for Asian American Studies Conference, New Orleans, LA, May 18-21, 2011.

“Violence as Voice: ‘The Maiden Language’ and Testimony in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.” *African American Literature panel*. Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference, Chaminade University, November 13-14, 2010.

“The Possibilities and Future for Pacific Islands Studies in the Continental U.S.” Roundtable. Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Annual Meeting, Tucson, AZ, May 20-22, 2010.

SELECTED CONFERENCE AND EVENT ORGANIZATION

“Challenging the Archive: Epistemologies of Islandness and Indigeneity in the Pacific”
American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California 2014
Panelist and Organizer

“Oceans and Nations: ‘Failed’ States and the Environment in the Pacific”
Symposium, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji 2013
Research Assistant

“Unlearning the ‘American Pacific’: A Symposium of Anti-Colonial Pedagogies”
Symposium, University of California, Los Angeles 2009
Assistant and MC

Introduction

Theorizing Pō

O ke au i kahuli wela ka honua	At the time that turned the heat of the earth,
O ke au i kahuli lole ka lani	At the time when the heavens turned and changed,
O ke au i kuka‘iaka ka la	At the time when the light of the sun was subdued
E ho‘omalalama i ka malama	To cause light to break forth,
O ke au o Makali‘i ka po	At the time of the night of Makalii (winter)
O ka walewale ho‘okumu honua ia	Then began the slime which established the earth,
O ke kumu o ka lipo, i lipo ai	The source of deepest darkness.
O ke kumu o ka Po, i po ai	Of the depth of darkness, of the depth of darkness,
O ka lipoilipo, o ka lipolipo	Of the darkness of the sun, in the depth of the night,
O ka lipo o ka la, o ka lipo o ka po	It is night,
Po wale ho--‘i	So was night born.
Hanau ka po	(Lili‘uokalani, <i>An Account of the Creation of the World</i> 1)
(Kalākaua 187)	

As Queen Lili‘uokalani’s 1897 translation of the opening of the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) creation chant the Kumulipo illustrates, Polynesian epistemology and cosmogony dictate that all life and existence come from Pō. A pan-Polynesian concept, Pō is the darkness, a chaotic yet generative space from which life emerges. Predicated on the absence of stasis, Pō is a liminal space. It is also imagined as a vortex, spiraled and expansive. In addition to its spatial characteristics Pō is temporally expansive, producing a view of time that is spiral rather than linear. Within Pō, time and space are not necessarily discrete categories, which is evident in the linguistic collapsing of terms; for example, in languages such as Māori and Hawaiian, the same word, wā, can be used for time or space.¹ Wā is also the term used to mark the formal divisions of the Kumulipo. Thus, Pō affords one access to all points of time and space in discussions of

¹ Pukui and Elbert classify wā as a proto Polynesian word which in Hawaiian can mean era, time, or season, as well as “space, interval, as between objects or time” (375). Wā has a similar use in the Māori language, which also contains words like rerenga, which can mean “space or time of leaping.” For a discussion of the linguistic collapsing of distinction in the Māori context, see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 50-56.

cosmogony, genealogy, ontology, and epistemology. Pō is a site of temporal and spatial expansiveness that accommodates, but does not necessarily attempt to order, all of existence.

In this introduction I invoke the Kumulipo as a way to accommodate, but not necessarily order, multiple cosmogonic constructions of Pō throughout the Polynesian region of the Pacific. Drawing on the definition of the Hawaiian word kumu—or the Proto Polynesian tumu—as “base,” “foundation,” or “origin” (Pukui and Elbert 182), I position the Kumulipo as my foundation for discussing Pō’s many temporal and spatial migrations across the waters of the vast Moana Nui. The word au, which Lili‘uokalani translates as “time” in the above passage, can suggest an “era” or “cycle” of time as well as the “flow” of a “current,” “movement, eddy, tide” and likewise “drift,” “float,” and “hurry” (Pukui and Elbert 30). Just as au encompasses the multiple forms and speeds which water and time can take, Pō’s manifestation in cosmogonic traditions and contemporary literature is nuanced and varied. Rather than moving towards a unified theorization of Pō across the Pacific, I investigate its varying currents as it moves across the region, because, as bell hooks reminds us, “theorizing diverse journeying is crucial to our understanding of any politics of location” (1992, 343). This study recognizes the genealogical and epistemological kinship ties in the Pacific, but also treats the cosmogonic traditions of Samoa, Aotearoa/ New Zealand, and Hawai‘i discretely in order to analyze their applications to unique literary representations of movements towards cultural and political sovereignty.

Pō’s temporal and spatial expansiveness extend to its circulation throughout the Pacific, where it can be found in various island groups, often within multiple genealogical traditions in a single space. While Lili‘uokalani’s invocation of the Kumulipo would seem to mark Pō as a specifically Kanaka Maoli tradition linked to the Kalākaua dynasty, it was used by other dynasties within and outside of Hawai‘i. As nineteenth-century Kanaka Maoli historian David

Malo reminds us of our shared heritage when discussing the Kumulipo: “It would seem as if the Tahitians and Nuuhivans had perhaps the same origin, for their genealogies agree with these” (20). Lili‘uokalani’s version of the Kumulipo is a translation of her brother and predecessor, King Kalākaua’s, publication of the Hawaiian-language text. While multiple translations of the Kumulipo exist, the many other cosmological chants like it have not been preserved (N. Silva 103). Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa affirms that we know of ten cosmogonies and surmises that the influx of foreign diseases brought by settlers caused a massive depopulation and a “lack of Ali‘i Nui [high chief] descendants to give voice to their stories” (2005, 127).² In addition to Malo, J.M. Poepoe—writing during and after the time of Lili‘uokalani and Kalākaua, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—also affirms that the Kumulipo is among the five most important cosmogonies, the others being Paliku, Lolo or Ololo, Puanue, and Kapohihi (Malo 20-22; Poepoe qtd. in McDougall 2016, 174). Kame‘eleihiwa has pointed out that the twelfth wā contains the names of other cosmogonic genealogies: Paliku, Ololo, Ololohonua, and Kumuhonua (2005, 126). In recognizing the existence of other cosmogonies, the Kumulipo incorporates them into itself, creating intertexts and genealogizing genealogies. Their inclusion increased the mana (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and political strength and prestige) of the Kumulipo and positioned it as superior. The geographical and textual fluidity of the Kumulipo, which describes Pō, are also indicative of the expansive notions of forms attributed to Pō.

The Kumulipo and other cosmogonic traditions invest Pō with multiple meanings and forms. When discussing the successive generations of the universe and consciousness, the Kumulipo describes Pō’s ability to birth male and female darkness, who then continue the cosmogony through gods and the environment to contemporary Kānaka Maoli. These

² Osorio glosses Ali‘i Nui as “chiefs of rank and status whose very presence was so powerful that they were dangerous to ordinary people” (2002, 289).

successions are discussed through the wā which serve as divisions for the Kumulipo's 2,108 lines; wā can be translated as both time and space. Pō's female gender, gestative qualities, and position in the genealogy of the human invest this sacred, generative vortex with bodily characteristics that shape Indigenous constructions of space and time.³ These constructions also extend to the ways Indigenous Pacific peoples theorize their own bodily connections to space and time through the genealogical connection to Pō. The Hawaiian term for "future" is ka wā mahope, what is behind us, while the term for "past" is ka wā mamua, what is in front of us. As Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio writes of the Kanaka Maoli ontological experience of space and time: "These terms do not merely describe time, but the Hawaiians' orientation to it. We face the past, confidently interpreting the present, cautiously backing into the future, guided by what our ancestors knew and did" (2002, 7). Kame'eleihiwa makes the genealogical connections to space and time explicit: "The genealogies *are* the Hawaiian concept of time, and they order the space around us" (1992, 19). The present study engages the multiple constructions of Pō—as cosmogonic vortex, female ancestor, and the range of potentials which lie between the two.

The potential of Pō's cosmogonic power and bodily constructions have also been used by Indigenous Pacific peoples to theorize and organize their homelands through bodily metaphors. The Māori of Aotearoa/ New Zealand invoke Pō in their cosmogony, which eventually leads to Papatūānuku, the earth mother, and Rāngi, the sky father. Papa's body is the earth, upon which gods and men are only able to thrive after they have separated her from the crushing embrace of Rāngi. Kānaka Maoli also draw on Papa as a descendant of Pō and progenitor of the Hawaiian

³ The Kumulipo describes both male and female darkness, but as the foundational Pō is gendered female within the cosmogony, that is the gender I invoke here. See Patricia Grace and Robyn Kahukiwa's first-person perspective of the Māori female darkness Te Pō in *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth*.

islands; in Hawaiian, she is Papahānaumoku, “Papa who births islands,” and her genealogical connection to the first Kanaka Maoli and by extension the Hawaiian lāhui (people, nation) is detailed in the Kumulipo. In the Samoan religion of Tagaloaalelagi, the supreme creator, life originated from the separation of Lagi (Heaven) and Papa (Rock) and as a result, “Man is God-descended and there are genealogical links between man, the sun, the moon, the seas, the rocks, and earth” (Tui Atua 2014, 16). These constructions of primordial, ancestral bodies as progenitors of the land survive in contemporary bodily metaphors of the nation throughout the region. The etymology of Samoa as “sa” plus “moa” constructs the nation via a bodily metaphor that relies on a relational and liminal positionality, which is centered by a sense of sacredness. Samoan writer and foundational figure in the field of Pacific studies, Albert Wendt has described the roots of Samoa and its multiple etymological and epistemological linkages:

*[S]a means sacred and moa means the centre...a human being's centre is just below the rib cage in the centre of the belly. It's not quite the heart and it's not quite the belly either. It's that space between... The centre of life itself. That is linked to the concept of va, which means the space that relates all things. (M. Neill, qtd. in Sharrad *Circling the Void* 19)*

In Wendt's example, the nation is constructed in bodily terms which are liminal and relational, drawing on the Samoan concept of vā, which is analogous to the Māori and Hawaiian wā. Samoans theorize vā as the figurative space that represents relationships between beings, places, and things. The construction of the land and the nation in bodily terms also suggests a tradition in which the individual human body is linked to the nation, through ontological experiences of space and time as well as through genealogical connections.

The Kumulipo's publication history illustrates how these ontological and genealogical connections between the individual human body and the nation have influenced political power in the Pacific. The Kumulipo is an oli ho'okumu honua (a creation chant), but also a mo'okū'auhau (genealogy). King Kalākaua ascended to the Hawaiian throne via election in 1874 and published the Kumulipo in the Hawaiian language in 1889 to "establish himself as a descendant of the ancient chiefs of Hawai'i" and provide "a more substantial and dignified presence than the election afforded him" (Campbell Introduction). The recitation of genealogy was an integral component of the Native Hawaiian system of ali'i, which Osorio defines as "the class of Natives who ruled over the land and people and maintained their genealogies through careful mating and by recording their mo'okū'auhau" (2002, 289). Kalākaua recognized the political power of genealogy, particularly one that traced back to Pō; not just for himself, but for the entire lāhui (Hawaiian nation, people). He published the Kumulipo as *He Pule Hoolaa Alii*, which can be translated as "a prayer to consecrate (an) Ali'i" (N. Silva 98). The title suggests an affirmation of his own status as an ali'i, but also "consecrat[es] 'ali'i' as a system of government, which Kalākaua, Lili'uokalani, and the lāhui were trying to preserve" (N. Silva 98), during a period of increasing American economic, legal, and political encroachment in Hawai'i (N. Silva; Osorio 2002; Kame'elehiwa 1992). His sister and successor, Queen Lili'uokalani, produces her English-language translation while being held under house arrest by an oligarchy of American usurpers, publishing it in 1897 (Lili'uokalani 1897, Introduction). By sharing their personal genealogy, Kalākaua and Lili'uokalani framed it as a genealogy of the lāhui and literary tool of resistance to colonialism. In addition to affirming Kanaka Maoli cultural and political sovereignty, the Kumulipo's invocation of Pō asserts a genealogical kinship among all Kānaka Maoli within the lāhui that troubles the very notion of the nation.⁴

⁴ Goodyear-Ka'opua provides an extensive gloss of the word lāhui, drawing on its botanical, genealogical, and

The Kumulipo's history frames my dissertation's analysis of contemporary Pacific literature, which I argue inscribes the intersections of nation, body, and cosmogony in order to explore Pō's potential in advancing cultural and political sovereignty. Like their shared cosmogonic traditions, the nations and corresponding texts in this study invoke Pō through parallel yet distinct uses of "form": first, in the exploration of how variously raced and gendered forms of the Indigenous body can affirm or contest the body politic; second, in the diverse articulations of space and time through the texts' formal construction and narratology. Like the aforementioned cosmogonic traditions, these texts build on orature but also center the ways the Indigenous body has always functioned as a legible text and a tool for mediating epistemology.

In selecting the texts for this study I drew on Pō's liminal and relational qualities. The first chapter builds on Teresia Teaiwa's theory of the "polygenesis of Pacific literature," surveying accounts of kākau (tattoo) from across the Pacific as a frame for my analysis of embodied narratives in the rest of the dissertation. The following chapters examine texts which present unique political, historical, and genealogical constructions of Pō: Albert Wendt's novel *Pouliuli* (1977) from Samoa, Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* (1986) from Aotearoa/ New Zealand, and Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl's short story "Ho'oulu Lāhui" (1998) from Hawai'i. These texts all engage with Pō in ways that are unique to their respective islands of production, yet they are all informed by the ways embodied connections to Pō circulate throughout the region. Likewise, the migrations and identities of their authors also trouble the idea of a definitive perspective within a single island group: Samoan-born Wendt migrated to Aotearoa/ New Zealand in his early teens and has quipped that he considers himself to be from Aotearoa/ Samoa (Wendt 2013); Kneubuhl, whose heritage includes Kanaka Maoli and Samoan, lived in both places (Kneubuhl

divine connotations. I draw on Goodyear-Ka'opua, as well as Osorio and Pukui and Elbert in my discussion of the term lāhui in chapter four of this study.

2013, Wilcox) and has written about both cultures (Kneubuhl 1987). This project seeks to highlight how Pō's temporal and spatial expansiveness, coupled with its constructions of the body, can rework how contemporary literary studies position Pacific literature and Indigenous notions of the nation. While they seek to recuperate Indigenous modes of knowing and being, Postcolonial Studies, and at times even Native Studies, can focus on the fixed temporal and spatial encounters of Indigenous peoples in ways that reinforce the colonial experience as the defining factor in contemporary literary representations of the nation. Within the texts discussed here, representations of Indigenous bodies and their genealogies—and by extension the literary and oratorical forms they influence—are rooted in temporal and spatial constructs that predate and outlast the time of, and are simultaneously within and beyond the space of, the (post)colonial experience.

This study undertakes a discussion of three distinct models of nationhood and their Indigenous responses. Of the three nations in this study Samoa is the only one whose Indigenous population has attained political sovereignty. And while it must navigate the psychological decolonization required of any postcolonial nation, the relatively high fluency of the Samoan language and relative absence of foreigners (when compared to Aotearoa and Hawai'i) present a picture of cultural reclamation that is very different from either Aotearoa or Hawai'i, which experience varying degrees of settler colonialism. Kānaka Maoli have neither cultural nor political sovereignty, and have been incorporated into the larger American nation as a state. However, many Kanaka Maoli scholars have cited the overwhelming evidence of the illegality of this appropriation and some continue to position Hawai'i as an occupied nation (Trask 1999b; N. Silva; Kauanui 2008; Osorio 2002). The Māori of Aotearoa occupy a space between Hawai'i and Samoa—a nominally bicultural nation, it is still a settler colonial space in which the Indigenous

people do not exercise ultimate control. As subjects of settler colonial societies, Kānaka Maoli and Māori currently experience the violence of the nation state in a way sovereign Samoans do not: Issues of blood quantum, cultural authenticity, interracial violence, and land dispossession figure largely in these nations.

My theorization of Pō also centers the body as an epistemological tool and draws on bodily- and sensory-based concepts and discourses, such as makawalu. This study begins with a makawalu approach to the historical periods, locations, forms, and genres of the narratives I examine. Makawalu, a Kanaka Maoli term which means “eight eyes,” positions multiple accounts of a single narrative or topic as an intersectional strength. ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui describes makawalu as an Indigenous literary analysis that “refers to a culturally based concept of analysis from multiple perspectives or dimensions” (2014, xl). The theoretical latitude of these “dimensions” is echoed by Monica A. Ka‘imipono Kaiwi and Walter Kahumoku III, who describe the fluidity of a makawalu approach as a liberation from the rigidity of Western theories rooted in “historical, canonical” analyses: “Instead, the study of literature through a makawalu lens is no longer concretized in canonical standards of Western theory but acknowledges—and more importantly validates—Kanaka Maoli epistemology, axiology, and ontology” (183). Thus, my examination of Pō draws on nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives from Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, and Samoa, and teases out the differences in their epistemological and ontological constructions of Pō. I simultaneously highlight the similarities in the narratives’ formal construction, and discuss how each text draws on the temporal and spatial elements of an embodied cosmogony. Most often, this involves a reworking of narrative time, with multiple narrative temporalities within a text invoking the spiral time of Pō in order to challenge constructions of the (post)colonial nation as a project of linear progress.

Another layer of my embodied theorization of Pō examines representations of bodily forms—and their inherent societal expectations—as affirmations or contestations of settler and Indigenous forms of cultural and political sovereignty. I utilize the intersectional strength of a makawalu approach and draw on gender studies and disabilities studies in my literary analysis. However, I maintain my “culturally based... analysis” (ho‘omanawanui 2014, xl) within these fields by centering Pacific discourses of the body. My discussions are rooted in Pacific concepts such as the fa‘asamoa (“the Samoan way”), which dictates ideals of able-bodied, masculinized leadership; and Mana Wahine Māori, Mana Wahine Kanaka Maoli, and Mana Tama‘ita‘i, which describe Indigenous women’s spiritual, intellectual, emotional, political, and physical strength and prestige. These Indigenous knowledge systems often draw on genealogical, temporal, and spatial connections to Pō, making them highly applicable to literary representations and theorizations of Pō.

Finally, my makawalu approach to an embodied theorization of Pō draws on multiple oratorical, literary, and bodily forms of narratives. I opened this study with an exploration of an ancient chant, the Kumulipo, and I continue this focus on oratorical forms throughout. In addition to examining chants and songs as texts, in each chapter I explore how various texts take the form of Indigenous orations and structure the narratives according to the protocols of ritualized speech. The variety in narrative forms within this study is also deliberate. Native newspapers were the earliest forms of print literature in Hawai‘i and they were also venues for debates about Hawaiian sovereignty and settler colonial encroachment. Their circulation of histories and legends of kākau creates metatextual and intertextual continuities between historical Native bodies and the project of contemporary literary nationalism, making them a productive starting point for this project. I link these continuities to the novel form’s relationship

with the nation, particularly its emphasis on bodily norms as a requirement for a sound nation (Davis). Postcolonial theorizations of the short story have also linked it to this national literary project, as its “development...in the Western context [was] as the mirror image to the realist novel” (Awadalla and March-Russell 4). Yet, the short story was a popular form in earlier, post-independence waves of Pacific Islands writing (Subramani 115-116). Thus, these forms are central to a literary study focused on analyzing Indigenous literary representations of the nation and reworking Indigenous relationships between the individual and the post/settler/colonial nation.

A makawalu approach reveals how Pō’s construction of time and space as enmeshed and spiral requires this project to move beyond narrow intellectual and political divisions. In the next section, I discuss how Pō’s endurance and dynamism can challenge and affirm other global articulations of figurative and physical blackness. I then engage Pō’s creative potential and its function as a foundation, in a discussion of the roots of Indigenous Pacific literary criticism. To emphasize the centrality of the body to this study I contextualize this history of criticism in sensory terms of sight (makawalu) and speech—I incorporate multiple perspectives and I center Indigenous voices. This history acknowledges the ways that I am building on previous generations of scholarship, but also returning to the same points of departure within the spiral. Those points are mediations of time and space, which I discuss through a discussion of a specific mo‘olelo within the Kumulipo, that of Ho‘ohōkūkālani, Wākea, Papa, and Hāloa. I analyze Wākea’s reconfiguration of space and time during the creation of humanity and the Hawaiian nation to contextualize how epistemological and cosmogonic notions of space and time come to bear on literary national narratives. I then offer a metaphor of the Moana Nui, or Pacific Ocean, as a generative Void that produces a theoretical genealogy of literary representations of the

Pacific nation and body. I position these elements in a framework of Pacific literary criticism and push for a reading of the nation as a product of these genealogical and cosmogonic connections. I close this Introduction with chapter overviews and a note on my methodology and the formal construction of this study.

Local Articulations of Darkness and Global Articulations of Blackness

I opened with a brief description of Pō to adjust our epistemological orientation and frame this project's examination of literary representations of cosmogony, body, and nation in an Indigenous reading and writing praxis. A cursory examination of Western constructions of darkness reveals the necessity of this reorientation. The Indigenous notion of Pō as a site of potential has no equivalent in Western discourse: From European Enlightenment rhetoric of hierarchical knowledge to religious narratives of innate moral corruption, Western discourse constructs figurative darkness and physical blackness as markers of intellectual (hooks 1999), linguistic (Fanon 2008), and spiritual lack (Sualii-Sauni et al). bell hooks has theorized how the imperial perspective positions physical and figurative blackness in a perpetual state of negation. In her investigation of the complex entanglements of representations of blackness and whiteness, hooks asserts that the "reality" of whiteness is "one that wounds and negates" the black other (1992, 339). hooks reveals how "whiteness exists without knowledge of blackness even as it collectively asserts control . . . [through] imperial racist domination" (1992, 339). While hooks focuses on blackness as a feature of the African diaspora, her emphases on empire, travel, and global articulations of blackness provide a theoretical entry point for my concerns in a Pacific literary context. Indeed, the role of the traveler has been used in Pacific literature to variously critique (and conflate) whiteness and empire since at least the mid-nineteenth century, when Hawaiian Prince Alexander Liholiho, later King Kamehameha IV, surmised in a June 5, 1850

journal entry that a white train conductor in the Jim Crow-era southern United States had “taken me for somebody’s [sic] servant, just because I had a darker skin than he had. Confounded fool” (108). Nearly two centuries later, in Kristiana Kahakauwila’s short story collection *This is Paradise* (2013), phenotypical blackness affords the traveler subjectivity and individuality, as one Native Hawaiian character quips of tourists: “They’re all white to us unless they’re black” (1). hooks positions Western notions of the black other as a product of the “colonial imperial traveler” and argues that postcolonialism has a theoretical blind spot that can at times uphold this colonial perspective (1992, 339). In this way, the (post)colonial imagination figures physical blackness—and by extension figurative darkness—as the absence of knowledge (1992, 339-340). Darkness is then fashioned into a palimpsestic space able to be continually rewritten by whiteness as its referential other. This palimpsestic trait allows the constant refashioning of figurative darkness and physical blackness within the Western cultural imagination, ever malleable to the shifting needs of whiteness at any given moment. Devoid of any specific merit, darkness and blackness become collapsed as whiteness’s referential other, always rendered as the inferior opposition. One can see how the litany of stereotypes of non-whiteness then accumulates into the discourse of blackness.⁵ Thus, I started this study with a description of Pō to ask what it really means to be “in the dark.” And by extension, *of* the dark, to be rooted in it, as many Oceanians assert they are through cosmogonies such as the Kumulipo.

This study focuses on literary representations of Pō’s potential to rework temporal and spatial constructions of the post/settler/colonial nation, and relies on Pō’s millennia of migration throughout the region. Although these Indigenous articulations of darkness as cosmogonic and physical fecundity are established well before Euro-American contact (Lili‘uokalani 1897;

⁵ As Homi K. Bhabha argues in “The Other Question”: “As a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes” (100).

Kalākaua; Sualii-Sauni et al; Kahukiwa and Grace; Kame‘eleihiwa 2005; ho‘omanawanui 2014), contemporary notions of blackness in the Pacific have developed over nearly two centuries of imperial entanglements. Physical and figurative blackness in the Pacific have specific histories unique to each island chain, but these histories are also viewed through the lenses and layers of imperial expansion and racialization. As a result, in Aotearoa as well as Hawai‘i and Samoa, blackness has become, to borrow a definition from black British cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall, “the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions, and ethnic identities” (163)

Pō is a useful tool for theorizing the Pacific’s active role in global articulations of blackness. hooks’ attention to the colonial imperial traveler’s role in framing blackness as perpetual negation and postcolonialism’s theoretical blind spot, is made even more relevant to Pacific notions of blackness when one considers the myriad ways the Pacific has engaged with more widely recognized locations and frameworks of postcolonial blackness. Radhika Mohanram’s *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space* is one of the earliest texts to make connections between postcolonialism in the Pacific and global articulations of blackness as a racial category that contains “the social, economic and cultural history, as well as the markers of the places, of domicile, of the subject” (xii). Mohanram’s investigation of Māori and Australian Aboriginal women’s bodies as intersections of place, race, and gender also links them to historical movements and global understandings of blackness as a political concept. Robbie Shilliam’s *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (2015) catalogues the ways the African diaspora has resonated with Pacific peoples. Through his titular invocation of Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* and Gerald Horne’s *The White Pacific: US Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the*

Civil War, Shilliam pushes us consider the ways the Pacific is involved in global, imperial conversations of figurative and physical blackness. Bernida Webb-Binder's "Affinities and Affiliations: Black Pacific Art in the United States and Aotearoa/ New Zealand, 1948-2008" theorizes the global context of Pacific racial blackness through women's visual art and argues that we should "[look] to Oceania for nuanced visual representations of blackness rather than to the usual contexts of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe" (2016). Webb-Binder examines the multiple contexts and representations of blackness circulating between the US and the Pacific beginning with Juanita Hall, an African American woman cast as a Pacific Islander in Rodgers and Hammersteins's 1948 Broadway musical *South Pacific*, and concluding with contemporary Pacific artists like Jewel Castro and Lonnie Hutchinson, highlighting the ways their work relies on both US and Indigenous Pacific ideas of blackness. Women's bodies are also the focus of the art forum in a recent issue of *Amerasia*, "Black and Blue in the Pacific: Afro-Diasporic Women Artists on History and Blackness," convened by Teresia Teaiwa. The contributors center Black and Pacific women's bodies and draw Afro-Diasporic connections across and between the Indigenous Pacific and global protest movements such as Ferguson and Black Lives Matter.

This complex interplay between local, Indigenous, global, and foreign notions of blackness has also been utilized by Pacific Islanders to articulate sociopolitical concerns since the latter twentieth century. The Polynesian Panther Party, formed by Pacific Islanders from various backgrounds in New Zealand in the 1970s, drew explicitly on the Black Panther Party's goal of African American social and political liberation. Pacific migrants such as Samoans, Tongans, and Niueans, joined with Māori, themselves politically dispossessed in their own homeland, to forward an agenda of Pacific uplift through educational and political initiatives

(Salmon et al). Within Aotearoa Māori have also included non-Pacific migrants, such as Indians, under the rubric of blackness (Awatere 2). These global connections to blackness are often invoked by women throughout the Pacific, who conceive of blackness as an inclusive category that simultaneously bonds them to others while maintaining their distinct Indigenous identity (Marsh, Awatere). Selina Tusitala Marsh describes Pacific women as black in order to “identify with the global community of women who have encountered the colonialism of the West” (339). Native Pacific women have often drawn on black feminist theory—particularly work by hooks, Barbara Christian, and Patricia Hill Collins—to describe how the racist logics of settler colonialism also relied on harsh gender inequalities which did not exist in precontact societies (Marsh 339; Tomlins Jahnke 1997, 33-34; L. Smith 167-168, 78, 90; Te Awekotuku 1991).

Just as time and space form the complex spiral within the epistemology and cosmogony of Pō, gender and race are inextricable from contemporary constructions of physical blackness in the contemporary Pacific. Rather than separate ancient, figurative, epistemological darkness from contemporary, physical, racial blackness, this project embraces their intersections. I do this for several reasons. First, ancient notions of Pō were rooted in the potential of the human body and its cosmogonic and botanomorphous connections to the environment, which was also anthropomorphized. Second, contemporary Pacific peoples—including the authors discussed in this study—often incorporate constructions of physical blackness into their articulations of Pō as a tool for political resistance. Third, this project’s sensory-based, embodied theorization of Pō draws on Indigenous concepts such as fa‘asamoa and Mana Wahine, which often rely on gender and race, to articulate Indigenous notions of the self, identity, and belonging. And finally, to draw a distinction between ancient and contemporary constructions of darkness would undermine one of the core concepts of this study—the idea that Indigenous knowledge and

identity are dynamic, embodied processes which are a continual link between the past and present.

“A Tradition of Evaluating Our Literature”: Native Pacific Literary Theories and Criticisms

Nearly twenty years after Albert Wendt’s essay “Towards a New Oceania” (1976) appeared in the founding issue of the journal *Mana* and charted a path for Pacific studies to move beyond the “chills” and “wounds” of colonialism, another journal, *The Contemporary Pacific*, published an interview of Albert Wendt by Vilsoni Hereniko (1993) in which the two reflect on colonialism’s impact on Pacific literary criticism. Hereniko and Wendt identified problems with the ways dominant models and arbiters of literary criticism engaged Pacific literature, describing how some critics “dismiss our literature as being old-fashioned because they are still in the realist tradition,” causing “the literatures of the Third World...to be pooh-poohed or put down by so-called critics who think they know better” (Hereniko and Wendt 55). After their conversation moves through the problems with categories such as New Criticism, realism, and postmodernism, Hereniko—a creative writer, film maker, teacher, and critic—presents what he sees as “the main problem with Pacific literature”: “one is not sure how to evaluate what has been written. In the absence of a Pacific tradition of literary criticism, I often have to impose a Eurocentric yardstick that doesn’t always seem appropriate” (Hereniko and Wendt 55). Wendt counters that there “has always been a tradition of evaluating our literature” rooted in the audience response to oral storytelling, and charges successive generations of Pacific literary

critics to “study systems of evaluation in our oral traditions, and use that in combination with what they’ve learned from European literary criticism” (56).

Wendt and Hereniko’s call for a group of Indigenous literary critics and corresponding models of analyses grounded in Indigenous world views was based on the academic and cultural legacies of colonialism in the Pacific. These legacies created an analytical imbalance whereby settler colonial theories of criticism—and by extension, critics themselves—were privileged over Indigenous writing and writers. Native methods of evaluation, and the Native writers and critics who express them, have often been marginalized because of what Native Hawaiian poet, activist, and former professor Haunani-Kay Trask called “academic colonialism” in academic spaces and discourse (1991, 159). Two years before Wendt and Hereniko’s call for Indigenous methods of literary analysis, Trask famously took anthropologists Roger M. Keesing and Jocelyn Linnekin to task in her piece, “Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle,” also published in *The Contemporary Pacific* (Trask 1991; Keesing; Linnekin). It illustrates how and why some of the models that Wendt asserts have “always” existed in Native communities (Wendt and Hereniko 56), have been rejected and disempowered by the academic mechanisms of colonialism. Trask links Keesing’s dismissal of Native historical precedents of culture and knowledge to a rejection of Native sovereignty:

Keesing’s peevishness has a predictably familiar target: Native nationalists—from Australia and New Zealand through the Solomons and New Caledonia to Hawai‘i. The problem? These disillusioned souls idealize their pasts for the purpose of political mythmaking in the present. Worse, they are so unoriginal (and, by implication, unfamiliar with what Keesing calls their “real” pasts) as to concoct their myths out of Western categories despite their virulent opposition to same. Thus the romanticization of pre-

European Native pasts (the “Golden Age” allegedly claimed by the Māori); the assertion of a common Native identity (eg, Fijian “culture”); the “ideology” of land as spiritually significant (supposedly argued by Hawaiians, Solomon Islanders, Kanaks, and Aborigines). The gospel, according to Keesing, is that these claims are “invented.” To be specific, there never was a “Golden Age,” a common identity, or a spiritual attachment to the land. (Trask 1991, 159)

As Trask so cogently reveals, Native histories and epistemologies, such as those derived from Pō, represent a threat to contemporary forms of cultural and political colonialism. Merely through their existence, these histories and epistemologies refute the colonial mechanisms of Native erasure in the service of the colonizer’s advancement.

These intellectual and academic legacies of colonialism can also be linked to Native Pacific literature. From initial colonial literatures of supposed discovery and the subsequent civilizing mission, to early settler translations of Indigenous-language oral and written narratives, to late-twentieth-century anthologies of Pacific literature, foreign authors, translators, and critics exercised what McDougall has termed “colonial entitlement”: a “kind of unapologetic academic freedom” located “within the structure of settler colonialism...[by which] settlers become entitled not only to land and natural resources, but also Indigenous intellectual, cultural, and creative property... in effect usurping Indigenous authority over such productions” (McDougall 2015, 750). When read alongside each other, McDougal’s, Trask’s, and Hereniko and Wendt’s pieces reveal the double bind which Indigenous Pacific criticism must overcome: Foreign, largely Eurocentric, models cannot (or will not) address the fullness of Pacific experiences and world views; yet, these same models reject the Indigenous histories and philosophies developed over millennia to evaluate Pacific art. This study draws on embodied, literary representations of

Pō as a feature of Indigenous “common identity” and reveals how Pō’s “spiritual attachment to the land” is useful in the contemporary nationalist movements which Trask argues academics like Keesing oppose through the denial of a viable, dynamic Native past (Trask 1991, 159).

In this section, I emphasize the relationship between oral traditions and Pacific literary criticism. Throughout this study, I argue that Native Pacific authors have indigenized the Anglophone forms of the novel and short story. However, I do not mean to suggest that Indigenous Pacific literary theories and criticisms are reactionary or derivative, or that they begin with the introduction of Western literary traditions. Here, I elaborate on the historical and contemporary theoretical and critical traditions that facilitate that indigenization. Using the Kumulipo’s publication and translation history as a starting point, I provide a single example of the Eurocentric and colonial legacy of criticism highlighted by Hereniko and Wendt. I then provide context for a collaborative theory of criticism that centers the voices of creative writers, Vilsoni Hereniko and Sig Schwarz’s “talking chief.” Finally, in keeping with this study’s focus on the body and the senses as an Indigenous reading and writing strategy, I take seriously this call to incorporate the voices of creative writers in order to decenter foreign methods of evaluation. I conclude this section with a compilation of the criteria and methods Native Pacific creative writers have expressed as necessary to Pacific literary criticism, and which have become central to my theorization of Pō.

The Kumulipo’s publication history illustrates the legacies of colonial entitlement in contemporary Pacific literature and criticism. King Kalākaua’s Hawaiian language version of his personal genealogy, the Kumulipo, published in 1889, was also translated by his sister and successor, Queen Lili‘uokalani in 1897, and edited by American academic Martha Beckwith in 1951. The linguistic and aesthetic entitlement of Beckwith’s position as a settler translator and

editor reveals how the colonial systems of Native marginalization and erasure described by Trask and McDougal survive in the contemporary methods of criticism which Hereniko and Wendt argue marginalize Indigenous literature and world views. Beckwith positions herself as the wise and capable savior of the Kumulipo with her translation in 1951. She describes the Kumulipo as an obscure text and rejects Kalākaua’s political and cultural agency in publishing it; instead, she reasons that “[t]he interest shown in the chant by [a] European scholar probably influenced the king to have the text printed” (1). In reality, the Kalākaua dynasty positioned the Kumulipo as a rejection of foreign influence in the Hawaiian Kingdom. The appearance of Kalākaua’s version reaffirmed Kanaka Maoli religious and political structures after decades of American and European missionary and bureaucratic influence had demonized and disenfranchised a large portion of the lāhui; as did Lili‘uokalani’s, which was begun during her imprisonment by an oligarchy of American businessmen and completed in Washington, DC during a petition to the American government for redress (N. Silva; Osorio 2002). Kalākaua’s text was based on a version handwritten by his grandmother and rigorously researched by two separate intellectual societies for three years (Osorio 2002, 225, 249; McDougal 2016, 55). Yet, claiming that Kalākaua and Lili‘uokalani’s versions contained “textual errors” and “alleged tampering with the original,” Beckwith positioned herself as a more reliable authority on their personal genealogy and, through her attack, the “question of [textual] legitimacy or authenticity inevitably question[ed] the legitimacy of Hawai‘i’s last two sovereigns and native governance as well” (McDougall 2015, 760). Her refutation of Hawaiian genealogical, political, and intellectual autonomy was bolstered by more covert instances which used what Hereniko dubbed the “Eurocentric yardstick” of “literary criticism” (Hereniko and Wendt 55). McDougall argues Beckwith’s mistranslation of the word “wā” in the divisions of the Kumulipo as simply “chant,”

rather than “era” or “epoch,” rejects the genealogical and political agency of its previous publishers, allowing her to “view the Kumulipo entirely through an aesthetic lens” that found Native literature lacking and denied its cultural sovereignty while also negating Native political sovereignty (McDougall 2015, 768). This guise of entitlement and authority persists to this day. Despite errors in translation and her misclassification of the text as a purely literary effort devoid of historical, political, and genealogical agency, Beckwith’s version remains the most visible (McDougall 2015): Kalākaua’s remains largely out of circulation; Lili‘uokalani’s version was only reprinted once, in 1978 (Campbell); and Rubellite Kawena Johnson’s (1981) more recent small press publication does not have the same circulation as Beckwith’s, which is distributed by the University of Hawai‘i Press (McDougall 2015, 767).

The Eurocentric culture of contemporary Western universities and disciplines can reproduce this sense of “academic colonialism” and “colonial entitlement” because they cultivate a sense of intellectual individualism and can endorse an objective distance between the critic and the text or author, which in turn is used to justify an insular and self-affirming mode of criticism. The university can then become a site for the reproduction of aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural colonialism; Hereniko and Schwarz note that “[c]ritics trained in European or American universities are taught to look for certain elements when critiquing a work of art, literature included...This approach demands that so-called minority writers conform to what Westerners deem good literature or art” (57). This superiority can frame literature through the same colonial rhetoric which Trask decries as a tool to historicize the Pacific as a space of lack (Trask 1991; Chatterjee 1993, 30). As Beckwith’s edition of the Kumulipo shows, literary and linguistic analyses can then become undergirded by histories which are at times indistinguishable from settler fictions (Wendt 1995a, 117). This training extends to the ways critics can see themselves

in relation to Indigenous texts and authors. As Sina Va'ai notes, "the written literature of the colonizing European 'self' as taught in the classroom was paramount, becoming the standard against which the creative writing of the colonized Pacific other was measured and evaluated" (209). The aesthetic representations of the "self" as promoted in European and American universities facilitate a critical centering of the self in intellectual and literary evaluations of the literature of the colonized by the settler critic.

This project erases that critical distance: I craft a theory that builds on preexisting Native concepts, and affirms the sense of community inherent in the "tradition of evaluating our literature" (Hereniko and Wendt 56). Native Pacific literary criticism should be a collaborative process: Our earliest orature traditions incorporated audience response as a method of evaluation (Hereniko and Wendt 56); and, as I argue throughout this study, the Indigenous narratives that serve as intertexts for many contemporary writers have been (re)told in written and oral fashion for millennia. I take a cue from Vilsoni Hereniko and Sig Schwarz's endorsement of the relationship between high chief and talking chief, "known as *feutagai* in Samoa," which they "propose as a preferable alternative to the 'expert' posturing endemic in literary circles today" (58). In this model, the talking chief clarifies on the high chief's behalf, but can also criticize the chief "in a loving and constructive manner" (58). Hereniko and Schwarz present a paradigm in which the critic speaks to and on behalf of the author, yet also listens to and never seeks to silence the author. The roles of talking chief and high chief also speak to this project's interest in challenging settler/colonial structures of governance and nationhood. This study and my theorization of Pō center criteria and models of theory and criticism set forth by Indigenous Pacific Islands creative writers (58). Here, I briefly lay out criteria expressed by writers, taking care to include the perspectives of the three writers whose texts are discussed in the bulk of this

study. These criteria are drawn from a wide range of sources, including: published interviews, broadcast interviews, personal interviews, scholarly articles and book chapters, and personal essays. They also serve as the kumu, or foundation, of my understanding of what a Native Pacific literary theory should encompass, and what it can aspire to contribute to Pacific, literary, and Indigenous studies.

The following are a small but representative sampling of the criteria which Pacific Islands creative writers have expressed are integral to theories and criticisms of Pacific writing. I employ the plural forms of theories and criticisms to emphasize that the many overlapping criteria—at times complementary, at times oppositional—represent a range of experiences, regions, and perspectives, because, as the ‘ōlelo no‘eau instructs us, ‘a‘ole pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi.

- The methods and standards of evaluation should be rooted in Pacific Islands knowledge systems such as: customs, world views, and spirituality (Grace and Hereniko 160); philosophies and visions (Wendt 1995a, 4); navigational practices (Carroll et al; Hau‘ofa 2008); and rhetorics and aesthetics (Hereniko and Schwarz 62; Carroll et al; ho‘omanawanui 2015). When foreign models are used, their relevance to Indigenous perspectives should be critically interrogated (Hereniko and Schwarz 61; Helu Thaman 2003).
- Indigenous languages are necessary to convey the above knowledge systems and should be incorporated into analyses when possible. Their intricacies contain clues to world views (Helu-Thaman 1993, 109; Wendt 1999; McDougall 2016, 2014; Carroll et al) and settler languages are often unable to convey the fullness of Indigenous concepts (Hereniko and Hanlon 124; Wood 108). They also decolonize Pacific literature (Wendt

1995a, 2) and negate the peripheral position of the colonized by centering Indigenous audiences and those familiar with the language, particularly when writers refuse to use a glossary (Helu Thaman 2003; Hereniko and Hanlon 124). Indigenous words can also create registers (Grace qtd. in DeLoughrey and Hall) and non-standard versions (Grace and Hereniko) of settler languages, which in turn reflect Indigenous lived experiences.

- Writing should not be viewed as discrete from other Pacific art forms, and criticism can and should draw on theories which connect it to: material arts such as weaving (ho‘omanawanui 2014; Marsh 1999; Grace qtd. in DeLoughrey and Hall), carving (Grace qtd. in DeLoughrey and Hall; Somerville 2015), and architecture (Teaiwa 2010; Somerville 2015); performative arts such as dance (ho‘omanawanui 2014; Wendt 1995, 4), music (Wendt 1995a, 4; ho‘omanawanui 2014), kākau (Teaiwa 2010; Wendt 1999), clowning (Hereniko 1993; Kneubuhl 1987), and oration, such as chant and storytelling, (Kneubuhl 2013; ho‘omanawanui 2014; Wendt 1995a; Trask 1999a, 167; Grace qtd. in DeLoughrey and Hall) ; and visual arts (McDougall 2014, 17-21; Wendt and Hereniko 52).
- Literary forms are malleable and dynamic. Generic, formal, and disciplinary alacrity are integral to Pacific storytelling and should be considered in literary theories and criticism. A text may move through multiple genres such as drama, narrative, and poetry (Subramani 44; Teaiwa and Marsh 234), and fiction, nonfiction, history, and autobiography (Hereniko and Hanlon 119; Wendt 1987). For instance, the Kumulipo is simultaneously a personal and national mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy), a mo‘olelo (history, legend), and an oli (chant, poem) (McDougall 2015). Criticism and theory should also

recognize the ways writers have indigenized foreign forms and genres, such as the novel (Wendt 1995a, 3; Grace and Hereniko 160).

- Pacific literature draws on other literary cultures and global movements. This includes those that provide points of intersection with the Pacific experience of colonialism and racism (Wendt 1995a; Trask 1987; Marsh 339; Wendt 1992; Wendt 2013) and those that engage with similar styles, philosophies, and themes, such as existentialism (Teaiwa and Marsh; Wendt 1992). This can also include incorporating and refashioning the cultures and movements of dominant and settler populations (Hereniko and Grace; Wendt 1992).
- Pacific literature is inherently political: It does not differentiate between the personal and the political (Trask 1999c, 18) because art and the artist are part of society (Hereniko and Schwarz 57); it is a reflection of and a movement towards political change (Wendt and Hereniko 55; Trask 1987). Native Pacific theory and criticism can likewise contribute to decolonization (Carroll et al 6).
- Evaluation should be communal and collaborative. The community's reaction is integrated as a component of the storytelling process (Hereniko and Wendt) and art becomes a shared commodity (Wendt 1995a, 5). Critics should seek out artists and center their perspectives and literary goals in their analyses (Hereniko and Schwarz).

The above criteria have become central to my understanding of Pacific literature and have provided yet another kumu for how I theorize the literary connections between cosmogony, body, and nation.

Through an investigation of Pō, this study is rooted in indigenous epistemology and cosmogony, and how their subsequent constructions of space, time, and the body affect literary forms and representations of nationhood. This investigation relies on Native languages and

whenever possible I privilege indigenous terminology because the fullness of their meanings is often lost in translation. For instance, while the Samoan term *āiga*, the Māori term *iwi*, and the Hawaiian term *lāhui* all suggest the family as a mode of social organization, they also contain references to local and national levels of political involvement which English-language words such as “family” and “government” cannot express. I rely on these terms and their layers of meaning throughout this study to emphasize how kinship and corporeal connections can trouble the notion of the post/settler/colonial nation. *Wā*, as I understand it through descriptions in the *Kumulipo* and its connections to *Pō*, is another concept which I rely on throughout the dissertation. In Hawaiian and Māori, *wā* can suggest both space and time. In Samoan, *vā* indicates a series of specific, relational aspects of space. As a layer of the embodied and performative focus of this study, I rely on the fact that in Hawaiian, the *w* can be pronounced as a “w” or “v” sound. Thus, the connections of Proto Polynesian languages are also embedded in the performative aspects of language which ground this study. I draw on terms that occur, with some variation, across the Pacific to further emphasize through linguistic connections our broader kinship connections. In this way, the literary, linguistic, and epistemological elements of this project become mutually constitutive, and reinforce genealogical connections as a way to trouble foreign, static assumptions of nationhood.

I evaluate Pacific literature in the context of other art forms. I connect my theory to performative arts like *kākau*, oratory, and music, to emphasize the bodily and experiential roots of Pacific narratives. *Kākau*, the earliest forms of embodied narratives, contain motifs that convey the wearer’s genealogical connections to humans and the land in a way that troubles static ideas of time and space which undergird the nation. The poetic devices, or *meiwi*, common in orature and music, are tools of literary analysis that predate the introduction of Western

literary mediums and genres. They allow me to evaluate Native narratives through a Native lens, and also reveal some of the ways the texts in this study indigenize Anglophone forms of fiction such as the short story and novel. In addition to providing a historical breadth to my project—part of the previously discussed makawalu approach—kākau, oratory, and music all reinforce the relationship between the audience/ receiver and the performer. This is the same pattern of reciprocity and community that I seek to reproduce in my collaborative approach to an Indigenous theorization of contemporary Pacific literature. My analysis can employ multiple art forms at once. For example, my close readings in Chapter 3 draw on Māori forms of architecture, oratory, and song, to argue that the form and narration of Patricia Grace’s novel *Potiki* challenges gendered expectations of protocol in architectural spaces such as the whareniui (ancestral meeting house) and the marae (communal meeting space in front of the whareniui).

I connect multiple knowledge systems within this study to produce layers of Indigenous intelligence. The following sections address the components of this dissertation’s title: embodied cosmogony and Polynesian national narratives. “Embodied Cosmogony: Mediating Wā and (En)Gendering Pō—nō” lays out my understanding of Native Pacific constructions of space and time, and moves toward a reading of Pō as a time and space of gender parity. This section draws on literary and linguistic connections between cosmogonic representations of the human and the land. The following section, “Polynesian National Narratives,” employs navigational knowledge in my theorization of Moana Nui, or the Pacific Ocean, as a generative void. In this section, the ocean functions as a metaphor for a theoretical and critical genealogy whose kinship connections again challenge static ideas of bodily and literary representations of the Pacific nation. This project troubles the idea of space and time as finite, linear markers of the nation and belonging. My theorization emphasizes the many ways Indigenous nationhood is about more than the

geographic, cartographic, mathematic imagining of nation. So, I discuss the ways Pacific ideas of belonging and family rely on specific connections to land and sea, and how those affect my theoretical and critical perspective.

I draw on the aforementioned list of theories to ensure that my work is collaborative, but I also list them to affirm an intellectual genealogy. One which stretches across the artificial divisions of linear constructions of space and time, in order to emphasize the dynamic, thriving, and spiraled components of Indigenous intellectual connections. An integral part of this process is drawing on other global movements and contexts through the politicization of black identities. The mix of theorists, times, and locations also complicates the idea of strict categories of nation. Thus my methodology also affirms my broader epistemological project of troubling the post/settler/colonial idea of the nation in the Pacific, and points towards how Indigenous literary studies are a useful tool in discussions of decolonization.

Embodied Cosmogony: Mediating Wā and (En)Gendering Pō-nō

The twelfth era, or wā, of the Kumulipo describes the birth of humanity through a manipulation of time and space. As the term wā, which is used to mark divisions in the Kumulipo, can mean both time and space, this is a metatextual reference which implicates the cosmogony in its own self-fashioning. The god Wākea desired his daughter, Ho‘ohōkūkalani, and ordered his priest to devise a method whereby he could spend time apart from his wife, Papa. Kapu, sacred prohibitions which would come to be transliterated into English as “taboo,” requiring men and women to be separated by time and space are established:

Wakea became false to Papa.
Changed the days and months,
Ordered the nights of Kane towards the last of the month
And the nights of Hilo to be first;
And established sacred tabus across his threshold.
Such was the house that Wakea lived in.

...

The Haloa that grow by the edge of the patch became sacred.

Plant the Haloa, the leaves will grow tall (Lili'uokalani 1897, 68-69)

Through Wākea's deception Ho'ohōkūkālani becomes pregnant and gives birth to a stillborn named Hāloa whose buried body becomes the first kalo (taro) plant, a Pacific staple food and metaphor for family. Ho'ohōkūkālani's subsequent child is named Hāloa in commemoration of this older sibling and becomes the first kanaka. As Noenoe Silva tells us, "the kalo is a virtual kaikua'ana [older sibling or cousin of the same sex] to Kānaka that is owed filial love, loyalty, and care" (101). Kānaka respect and maintain the 'āina, which in return provides for them. This botanomorphie and genealogical construction of the lāhui is structured by a refiguring of time and space through deception and trauma. Space (the edge of the taro patch and Wākea's threshold and home) and time (the reordered nights of Kane and Hilo) become sacred through the dictates of this kapu. I discuss the effects of this gendered trauma at length in Chapter 4; here, I provide an overview of the ways this excerpt structures my understanding of how literary representations of the body can mediate time, space, and gender in the making of the Pacific nation.

In keeping with the criteria discussed in the previous section, I use this section of the Kumulipo as the base for my theorization of time and space as elements of an embodied cosmogony in contemporary Pacific literature. I briefly describe Pō's discursive and divine connections to space and time across the three island chains discussed in this dissertation, including Indigenous-language concepts which are necessary for a fuller understanding of Pō's corporeal relationality. I then build on these concepts by interrogating the tensions between land as a specifically feminine site of potential (Papahānaumoku births islands, and Ho'ohōkūkalanī perpetuates the sibling bond between kanaka and environment), and land as a symbol of gendered violence mediated by time and space. The final subsection of this section provides an overview of how I engage the range of gendered representations of Pō in contemporary literature. In discussing the elements of Pō discretely in this section, I do not mean to imply that they are distinct from one another.⁶ On the contrary, as previously discussed, wā's multiple meanings as both time and space, precludes one from separating the two. In explaining specific aspects of Pō, I attempt to foreground the ways in which these concepts are in fact mutually constitutive, and provide a theoretical frame for how I engage them as analytical tools in the following chapters. Indeed, my readings of Wendt, Grace, and Kneubuhl rest on their strategic deployment of the body to emphasize Pō's ability to simultaneously evoke and adapt different notions of time, space, genealogy, cosmogony, and gender.

Time

A discussion of Indigenous notions of time and their effect on Western narrative forms must begin with a discussion of the different relationships to time, particularly the past. As

⁶ See 'Okusitino Māhina's ta-va theory for a discussion of how the two are intertwined in Tongan artistic expression.

previously discussed, the temporal circuitousness of Pō renders the past and future immediately available to the present. This immediacy of different moments in time is mediated through the body. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey asserts in “The Spiral Temporality of Patricia Grace’s *Potiki*,” the Māori concept of spiral time is enmeshed in genealogy, making its relationship to history both sacred and corporeal. This is also true of the Hawaiian context, of which Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa writes, “the genealogies *are* the Hawaiian concept of time and they order the space around us” (1992, 19). The use of the body to articulate time makes it tangible and experiential, which DeLoughrey posits “facilitates interstices between genealogically ‘sacred’ time versus abstracted, ‘political’ historiography” (1999, 59). The expansiveness of sacred, spiral time allows it to accommodate and reinscribe linear notions of time; the body’s experience of these moments incorporates them into the larger genealogical concept of time which, as Kame‘eleihiwa points out, is also grounded in space. Thus, the expansiveness of temporality within Pō is also central to notions of land, allowing for its strategic deployment within texts concerned with land-based sovereignty, such as Grace’s *Potiki* and Kneubuhl’s “Ho‘oulu Lāhui.”

Although this expansive view of time is accommodating, the linear Western view of time sees the spiral in stark contrast to the opacities of its view of the past and the totalizing discourse of history. This framework creates a teleology in which all events are ordered and positioned in a narrative with an ultimate goal of totalizing them. Inherent in this system of ordering is a discursive deployment of power. As Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith tells us, history as a discipline is not innocent:

The concept of totality assumes the possibility and the desirability of being able to include absolutely all known knowledge into a coherent whole. In order for this to

happen, classification systems, rules of practice and methods had to be developed to allow for knowledge to be selected and included in what counts as history. (104)

Because the linear model does not allow events to occupy space beside each other, the act of ordering privileges certain events over others. In the colonial context, this involves a reworking of the past. Similar to hooks' observation of the postcolonial black other's experience of negation (1992, 339), Partha Chatterjee observes that "[i]nstead of tracing the particular course of the indigenous history, therefore, the practice has been to see the history of 'backward' countries as a history of 'lack,' a history that always falls short of true history" (1993, 30). In disavowing the usable past of the indigene through revisionist historiographies colonial, Euro-American frameworks sublimate Native histories, positioning them as either absent or peripheral. In totalizing history the linear narrative performs an erasure by positioning native histories as insufficient. Akin to this production of historical lack is the necessarily peripheral position those histories must inhabit in the linear narrative. This is most obvious in the narrative of the progress from "primordial, black 'degeneracy'" to enlightened rationality which underpins the use of the terms "precolonial," "colonial," and "postcolonial" (McClintock 84). As Anne McClintock tells us, this relegates indigenous histories to "prepositional" status, rendered only through their relationship to Euro-American histories. In the teleology of this framework, ancient Indigenous histories are not autonomous, but rather seem to build up to the moment of colonial encounter.

Fixing Indigenous identity in the precontact past alienates contemporary Pacific peoples from their histories and cultural identity. It also assumes homogeneity and positions whatever comes after colonial encounter as separate from the authentic past, which marginalizes the dynamism and heterogeneity of these cultures and binds them to a Euro-American

historicization.⁷ The texts in this study reject that historicization by troubling literary forms associated with the nation and interrupting narrative linearity with plots that turn and (re)turn along the spiral. These (re)turns are more than the plot doubling back upon itself in medias res; they create intertexts with historical narratives—such as the Kumulipo—which, in effect, overcome the alienation of static historicization.

Space:

Pō is conceptualized as a fluctuating and expansive space, and a Void which paradoxically uses distance to reify closeness between people and places. This relational aspect of space has been theorized in the Samoan and Tongan contexts of *vā* by Albert Wendt, ‘Okusitino Māhina, Tēvita O. Ka‘ili, I‘ugafu Tuagala, and Konai Helu Thaman, among others.⁸ Samoans and Tongans use the concept of *vā*, “the space between; a relational space that both separates and joins; a space that is both sacred and secular” (Suaalii-Sauni et al xxxii). In this way, *vā* is an “open relational system” with an “underpinning conception of Polynesian creation and interpersonal linkages” (Sharrad 2003, 19). *Vā* is a simultaneous recognition of difference and relationality and is something to be nurtured. As Wendt relates, “What we think of as the empty space between us is what links us” (qtd. in Sharrad 2003, 19). Indeed, Polynesian notions of relationships and reciprocity are articulated through maintenance of *vā*: to nurture a relationship is to nurture the space between. The *vā* is the figurative space between people, which may change as the contexts for the social and spiritual relationships between those people

⁷ Trask’s “Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle” clearly illustrates how anthropologists, such as Linnekin and Keesing, invoked this problematic historicization in the later twentieth century. As Trask argues, Keesing and Linnekin dismissed sovereignty movements by contemporary Pacific Islanders because their claims to land, culture, and identity were based on what Keesing and Linnekin purported was a fabricated, mythicized Golden Age of Native culture and unity.

⁸ In the Hawaiian language the letter w can be pronounced as either w or v, depending on the context.

broaden or shift. Tuagalu has catalogued at least 37 *vā* spatial relationships to which a Samoan may be connected. Chief among them are: “*Va o tagata* refers to the relational space between people; *va feiloa‘i* refers to the protocols of meeting; *va fealofani* refers to the brotherly and sisterly love that people should show one another; *va fealoaloa‘i*, the respectful space and *va tapua‘i*, the worshipful space” (Tuagalu 110). In the broader Polynesian context *vā* has also been linked to politics and kinship in a more concrete way, as Konai Helu Thaman provides a Tongan etymology in which “*vaa* is believed to be derived from the term *vaha’a*. *Ha’a* traditionally refers to a set of genealogically related titles” (2008, 464). The various types of *vā* articulate an individual’s sense of self, which is understood through both figurative and physical connections with others. While the varieties of *vā* allow for dynamism within and across relationships, the overarching principal is that space binds one to a larger collective and affirms those relationships,

Metaphorical notions of space abound in Pacific epistemology, but they are often rooted in a concrete place: the land. To interrogate the transcendent and transgressive potential of theorizing literary space through the dynamism of Pō, I begin with concepts of tangible space and their genealogical connection to the human. As the aforementioned Hāloa mo‘olelo illustrates, the relationship between *kanaka* and *‘āina*, human and land, is one of familial reciprocity and stewardship. The reciprocity and veneration of this familial relationship to the land did not exist in the capitalist-driven, colonial Euro-American articulations of space. The cyclical notion of reciprocity is replaced with a linear, unilateral narrative of dominance enacted through ownership and cultivation. This is clearly demonstrated in the language used to describe space. Smith cites Lefebvre’s argument “that the notion of space has been ‘appropriated by mathematics’ which has claimed an ideological position of dominance over what space means.

Mathematics has constructed a language which attempts to define with absolute exactness the parameters, dimensions, qualities, and possibilities of space” (50). In this mathematic imagining of space, land becomes an objective site in the rhetoric of cultivation. Pō reveals the land as a space of familial connections and limitless potential, both of which are at odds with the rigid constructions of space which Smith describes as a mechanism of colonialism. Nature is no longer a sibling (Hāloa) or a mother (Papahānaumoku), but a space to be ordered and owned, as evidenced by the colonial introduction of land privatization. I do not mean to suggest that the West has only one conception of land, which is predicated on domination. The recent proliferation of critical theories based on ecological concerns would belie that.⁹ I merely mean to discuss Indigenous notions of space in relation to the capitalist colonial articulations of land which shaped the Indigenous colonial experience and, subsequently, the legacy of land alienation that is central to modern land-based sovereignty movements in places like Aotearoa and Hawai‘i, which are subsequently articulated in the literatures of these nations (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992; Osorio 2002). Contemporary sovereignty movements often emphasize kinship connections between kanaka and ‘āina, and the relational spaces between them are frequently theorized through gender.

⁹ Cara Cilano and Elizabeth DeLoughrey provide a detailed genealogy of the intersections of ecocritical and postcolonial studies in “Against Authenticity: Global Knowledges and Postcolonial Ecocriticism.” Ursula K. Heise also traces ecocriticism’s development and describes its relationships to modernism, postmodernism, and realism. More recently, several anthologies have explored the interdisciplinary ways we understand and study the environment and ecology; in particular, see: DeLoughrey and Handley; DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan; Heise, Christensen, and Niemann. Kate Wright draws on work by Guattari and Deleuze, Haraway, and others, to provide an overview of the concept of “becoming-with,” whose emphasis on relationality between the human and the natural world, while not an exact fit for Indigenous constructions of familial connections to the natural world, is perhaps a useful point of intersection.

Wāhine

The Kumulipo's description of the circumstances around Hāloa's birth could possibly be read as a marginalization of women's bodily agency. After all, Papa and Ho'ohōkūkālani are both deceived by Wākea, their respective husband and father, as well as his priest, who manipulates time and space as part of the betrayal. Although time and space are manipulated into mechanisms of gendered abuse, my theorization of Pō again relies on the fullness of Indigenous Pacific languages to provide a context for how time and space relate to, and are even mediated by, gender. Wāhine, the word for women in Pacific languages such as Hawaiian and Māori,¹⁰ is epistemologically, etymologically, and ontologically linked to time and space through its root word wā (Simmonds 12; Wood 109; Pihama). Māori scholar Naomi Simmonds draws on work by Leonie Pihama in her analysis that "the highly relational and spatial nature of Māori language" reveals how wāhine "move in and through a range of subjectivities at different times and in different places" (Simmonds 12; see also, Wood 109). This is especially true in the aforementioned portion of the Kumulipo, after which Papa reasserts her figurative and physical bodily agency when she spits in Wākea's face and takes other mates, before eventually reconciling with him (Kame'eleihiwa 2005; Kneubuhl 2000).

The etymological and epistemological connections between Native women and the temporal and spatial potential, or wā, of Pō, has been explored through the theories of Mana Wahine and Mana Wahine Māori. Mana Wahine centers the literal and theoretical bodies and voices of Native women by emphasizing their mana, or spiritual, mental, emotional, political, and physical strength and prestige. The strength is often positioned as the result of genealogical links to powerful female ancestors and deities connected to Pō, such as Papa. The term Mana

¹⁰ The singular form is wahine, without the macron.

Wahine applies generally to Native women, but is used most often by Kanaka Maoli theorists. Māori scholars generally, but not always, specify their work as Mana Wahine Māori. However, these are mere generalizations and theorists often speak to each other across these categories. Indeed, Selina Tusitala Marsh has even introduced the idea of Mana Tama‘ita‘i, which uses the non-exclusionary Samoan word tama‘ita‘i in place of wahine, in order to include Native Pacific women who might not share linguistic roots with Māori or Kanaka Maoli wāhine. Of the many scholars who have developed this field, my dissertation leans most heavily on work by: Māori scholars Patricia Grace, Robyn Kahukiwa, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Naomi Simmonds, Briar Wood; Kanaka Maoli scholars Manu Aluli Meyer, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, and Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa; and Samoan and Tuvaluan scholar Selina Tusitala Marsh.¹¹ In chapters 3 and 4, I use Mana Wahine Māori and Mana Wahine Kanaka Maoli frameworks, respectively, to explore how literary representations of embodied cosmogony can challenge both Native and settler circumscriptions of Native women’s bodies in the service of the nation.

(En)Gendering “Po—no”

The first seven wā of Kalākaua’s Hawaiian-language version of the Kumulipo conclude with the line “Po—no” (Kalākaua 190, 194, 197, 199, 201, 202), which can be read in multiple ways. Nineteenth-century texts did not always contain diacritical marks, such as the kahakō, or macron. Thus, contemporary scholars and translators of these texts either select a single word through context, or trace the ways Hawaiians used this ambiguity to invoke multiple meanings. A possible reading is “pō nō,” which Lili‘uokalani endorses in her translation as “‘Tis night” (Lili‘uokalani 1897, 5, 11, 15, 18, 20, 21), and which Noenoe Silva also translates as “Indeed/

¹¹ Many of these scholars possess mixed heritages. My descriptors here are not meant to be exclusionary, but to emphasize the intellectual and cultural genealogies of theories of Mana Wahine, Mana Wahine Māori, and Mana Tama‘ita‘i.

still night/ darkness” (100). Another possible reading is “pono,” with “the dash signifying a lengthening of the sound that a chanter would make” (N. Silva 100). Kame‘eleihiwa engages both meanings in her translation, which she renders without the dash, as “Pono/ It is only night [or all is right and harmonious]” (2005, 37). Pacific languages are highly metaphoric and words are often chosen because they possess multiple meanings and engender layers of context. In this case, Kame‘eleihiwa surmises that “the night [Pō] is a metaphor for harmony” (2005, 37). The concept of pono, loosely understood as balance, permeates the sacred and secular realms of daily life for most Hawaiians, as it can be “an individual, an act, or a behavior that reflects a balance between male and female dualities; therefore wise, judicious, proper, good” (Osorio 2002, 291). Dualisms and gender parity are essential elements of Kanaka Maoli genealogies and cosmologies, in which “both male and female forces are always present” (N. Silva 93).

My theory of embodied cosmogony draws on these multiple readings and contexts of Pō, pō nō, and pono to explore how contemporary Pacific literature (en)genders Po—no. Wendt, Grace, and Kneubuhl each use gender to emphasize the temporal and spatial elements of Pō, which then instigate plot movements towards justice or harmony within the nation. In Wendt’s novel *Pouliuli*, traditional ideals of masculine, able-bodied leadership are challenged by characters that embody illness and willingly violate the dictates of vā, or relational space. In this instance, Pō becomes both an affirmation and contestation of the religious, political, and familial customs which structure Samoan notions of the nation. In Grace’s novel *Potiki* and Kneubuhl’s short story “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” (which retells the Kumulipo’s account of Ho‘ohōkūkālani, Papa, Wākea, and Hāloa), Pō is figured as a female deity whose role in ancient genealogies resonates in the lives of contemporary women. In both texts, female characters draw on their cosmogonic connections to Pō in order to embody spiraled constructions of space and time which challenge

the post/settler/colonial nation. *Pouliuli* is unique in that it figures Pō, which is most often articulated in terms of its gestational and female characteristics, as a male space. Because this study emphasizes gender parity as a crucial element of pō nō and pono, Wendt's text is a useful starting point that reveals how Pō's functions as a site of potential and fecundity varies widely in literary representations across the Pacific. In all three of these texts narrative time, and frequently narrative space, are interrupted just as social order is transgressed by reworking the constraints of Indigenous or settler constructions of gender so that pono, or pō nō, can be restored in succeeding generations.

Polynesian National Narratives

Kumu can be defined as “foundation,” “base,” “hereditary,” or “origin,” and pō as “darkness” and “the realm of the gods” (Pukui and Elbert 182, 333). These meanings are often invoked in discussions of the Kumulipo as a cosmogonic account of the source or beginning of life in the darkness of Pō. In her translation, Lili‘uokalani describes the time of Pō as “turn[ing]” and “chang[ing],” and emphasizes its spatial “depth” (Lili‘uokalani 1897, 1). Pacific languages are extremely contextual, poetic, and metaphoric, and these Proto Polynesian words also have multiple meanings which circulate throughout the Pacific.¹² In “Kumulipo: A Cosmogonic Guide to Decolonization and Indigenization,” Kame‘eleihiwa translates the ninth line of the first wā of the Kumulipo: “*O ka lipolipo, o ka lipolipo/ In the unfathomable darkness, dark blue and bottomless*” (2005, 119). Pukui and Elbert define lipo as a Proto Polynesian word meaning “[d]eep blue-black, as a cavern, the sea, or dense forest” and also the “[n]ame of a star in the

¹² Pukui and Handy note that the Hawaiian “kumu” is the Proto Polynesian “tumu” (182), and “pō” the Proto Polynesian “poo” (182, 333).

southern skies” (208). They also offer secondary definitions of kumu as “model,” “motive,” and “purpose” (182). In these contexts, Pō can also be read as the “unfathomable” “sea” between “hereditary”, or kinship, groups across the Pacific. As a “star,” Lipo could also suggest the highly developed navigational skills common throughout the Pacific, whose “turn[ing]” and “chang[ing]” “depth” Pacific Islanders frequently crossed.¹³ I engage these myriad meanings to theorize the ocean as a generative Void whose genealogical connections guide my framework for Pacific literature in this study. In this context, it becomes my “model” for a theoretical genealogy whose “motive[s]” are to: navigate the breadth and “depth” of Pacific literature; to trouble the waters of discourses of the nation in Pacific literary studies; and provide a framework for the “chang[es]” in Pō’s deployment across texts in the following chapters. This “model” emphasizes temporal and spatial genealogical connections across the ocean as a way to displace colonial national boundaries in the broader region and highlight the unique “purpose” of island-specific “hereditary” groups—such as āiga, iwi, and lāhui, which are the “foundation” of my analysis in chapters two, three, and four.

As a feature of postcolonialism, Pacific literature and criticism often focus on the formation of the nation as a specific occurrence in time and space. Usually, this involves the movements towards/ moments before or movements away from/ moments after political liberation from the imperial power. This study focuses on texts that rework narrative time, space, and form to refuse the nation and privilege embodied, genealogical concepts of belonging and social organization in its stead. Reclaiming Indigenous notions of the body and belonging are a crucial part of the decolonizing project in the Pacific because, as Susan Y. Najita points out, “The heteronormative and familial imperative of colonialism has suppressed tribal and extended

¹³ For a discussion of navigational techniques as models for theorizing Pacific studies, see: Hau’ofa; Diaz 2011; Diaz and Kauanui; Carroll et al; DeLoughrey 2007; Kouvaka; Case.

family structures” (2006, 14). This study examines the ways Wendt, Grace, and Kneubuhl explore the ramifications of “suppressed” kinship structures in a single text, but this has been a feature throughout their respective literary careers. Literary representations of the āiga, iwi, and lāhui position expansive notions of genealogy and kinship as tools for interrupting the (settler) colonial imperative of nationhood. As a genealogical connection across the Pacific, Pō refuses fixed temporal and spatial ideas of the nation because it predates and outlasts modernity and asserts a regional unity that is incompatible with the colonial carving up of nations. In this section, I provide a theoretical genealogy that endorses the Pacific Ocean as an expansive Void, an iteration of Pō that contributes to the ways we think about Pacific literature in national and regional terms. This genealogy traces an expansive, spiraled trajectory from the beginnings of Pacific literary theory, which focused on the politics of nationalism and Anglophone literature in the middle of the twentieth century; to movements towards globalism at the close of the twentieth century; and moves back toward the center of the spiral by reworking the relationship between the nation and the region through literary representations of a localized genealogy.

The precedent of Pacific Island literary theory, Albert Wendt’s “Towards a New Oceania” (1976), was first published in the inaugural issue of *Mana* and articulates the concerns of the first wave of modern Pacific Island writers as specifically tied to the process of decolonization. While it advocates a broader regional identity, the essay’s concern with decolonization in some ways foregrounds the sovereign nation as representative of the Oceanic experience. The piece focuses on a rediscovery of a dynamic past as a means of nation building and transcending the “wounds” and “chills” of colonialism (1976, 10). Wendt’s appraisal is similar to other global writers from newly sovereign nations in that it strives for a connection with a usable past as a rejection of the colonial experience; Kwame Anthony Appiah describes

this postcolonial tendency in the context of African novels, such as Nigerian Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which "celebrate" the "usable past" as part of a perspective that insists "new literatures in new nations should be anticolonial and nationalist" (349).¹⁴ "Towards a New Oceania" was reworked as the introduction to the first anthology of literature from decolonized Anglophone Pacific nations, *Lali: A Pacific Anthology*, edited by Wendt (1980). Neither the essay nor the anthology includes the Anglophone literature of Aborigines of Australia, Kānaka Maoli of Hawai'i, and Māori of New Zealand who, among others, were still living under settler colonial rule.¹⁵ Yet, like all of his work "Towards a New Oceania" resists the unquestioned valorization of a static Indigenous authenticity as a binary to the corruption of Western colonialism. In rejecting the notion of "cultural purity," Wendt's frame allows for heterogeneous pre-contact culture that was constantly evolving and as such, makes a space for contemporary Pacific Island cultures' encounters with the West and colonialism. This framework accommodates Indigenous sovereignty without endorsing a wholesale rejection of Western introductions which have become enmeshed in Oceanic culture.

In both "Towards a New Oceania" and the introduction to *Lali*, Wendt highlights the artist's encounter with the Void to forecast the direction of the field. Wendt's vision recognizes the varying degrees of sovereignty in the region, and sees artistic output as a tool to cross the artificial boundaries of colonialism: by drawing on "a fabulous treasure house of traditional motifs, themes, [and] styles," one can "catch and interpret the Void[,]...reinterpret our past[,]... [and] create new historical and sociological visions of Oceania" (1976, 17). The metaphorical

¹⁴ Wendt has also cited Achebe as a literary influence (Wendt 2013).

¹⁵ In the introduction to a subsequent anthology, *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English Since 1980* Wendt discusses his decision for not including literatures from these settler colonial settings in either anthology. He states that their writing "was already being anthologised in their countries" and that he also drew on certain nations because "[t]hrough [his] work at the University of the South Pacific from 1975 to 1987 [he] helped encourage, foster and publish that writing, particularly in the countries of that university's region" (5).

import of the Void is utilized to push Oceanic identity beyond static notions of a prelapsarian past truncated by colonial encounters and contemporary national boundaries. Rather, the Void becomes a symbol of Indigenous identity that accommodates dynamism and heterogeneity—even at the risk of upsetting presumed “arbiters of culture”—to accommodate the social outliers whose disruption of social restrictions are often what reinvigorate culture.¹⁶ In accounting for heterogeneity, Wendt also engages the Void as the space between us which needs to be nurtured; thus, difference is another way of articulating relationships.

The first book length study of modern Pacific literature, Subramani’s *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation* (1985), is similarly organized around the dialectic relationship between newly sovereign nations and former colonial powers, but also calls attention to the possibilities for literary growth. Because regionalism is only an aspiration at the moment of publication and the book is committed to an investigation of the genesis of the new literature, Subramani resists a single critical model. This critical openness is reflective of a generic inclusivity as well; the book began with the collection and translation of myth and legend, and eventually incorporated written literature. Rather than “a change from simple to complex or from communal to individual ways of expression,” Subramani characterizes the shift to written literature as a “proliferation” that allows continuities and discontinuities of orature within the written form (ix). For example, he notes Epeli Hau‘ofa’s incorporation of Tongan tall tale techniques into the collection of short stories *Tales of the Tikongs*, and Albert Wendt’s use of the fāgogo, a Samoan oral storytelling technique, in his fiction. In both examples, the

¹⁶ The trickster figure Māui often disrupts societal norms to procure benefits for humanity. These disruptions include slowing the sun and procuring fire. Published a year after “Towards,” Wendt’s *Pouliuli* features versions of the Maui figure in Pili and Lemigao, which I discuss in chapter 1. Wendt has alluded to Māui in several books since, and has described him as part of his literary heritage (1992). Patricia Grace also includes the Māui figure as a central character in *Potiki*, whose title invokes Māui-Pōtiki, Māui the youngest born.

continuities and discontinuities within the written form point towards critiques of colonial and Indigenous forms of governance.¹⁷

South Pacific Literature was also the first text to explore the history of regional and academic centers responsible for literary output, positing that “any inquiry into the structure and meaning of the literature requires a simultaneous investigation of its generative context” (152).¹⁸ Though this “generative context” was steeped in decolonial connections across the region and also appealed to the short-lived regional “Pacific Way” ideology, it was still largely an Anglophone academic space.¹⁹ Subramani locates the source of proliferation in the establishment of the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in 1966 and University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1968. Papua New Guinea was the initial center of production for modern Pacific literature, in large part due to the efforts of Ulli Beier, whose previous work fostering cultural production in Africa served him well in Papua New Guinea.²⁰ Beier’s position at UPNG enabled

¹⁷ Manu, the central figure in Hau’ofa’s *Tales of the Tikongs*, often questions religious and political authority; these are also topics of several stories in the collection.

¹⁸ Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s *Routes and Roots* (128-130) and Michelle Keown’s *Pacific Islands Writing* (111-117), among others, also explore this history. DeLoughrey contextualizes this history through metaphors of Indigenous seafaring and also examines how the “Pacific Way” ideology shaped movements between universities.

¹⁹ DeLoughrey describes the decolonizing goal of the Pacific Way: “With the decolonization of many island nations, the notion of a ‘Pacific Way’ arose to encourage the viability of a precolonial history, native communal and familial values, consensus building, reciprocity, indigenous arts, and inter-island cooperation and unity (see R. Crocombe 1976)” (*Routes and Roots* 128). Epeli Hau’ofa’s notion of Oceanic unity also subsequently factored into the refiguring of spaces of cultural production, which is apparent in the founding of the Oceania Centre for the Arts at USP in 1997. In “The Ocean in Us,” he discusses USP’s endorsement of regional unity through the short-lived and “shallow” ideology of the Pacific Way while also promoting dissention through Pacific Week, in which students represented their respective nations through song and dance.

²⁰ In addition to Subramani, for an extended conversation on Georgina and Ulli Beier, see Geoffrey White’s “Foreword” and Epeli Hau’ofa’s “Our Place Within,” both in Hau’ofa’s *We are the Ocean*. Conversely, see Regis Stella’s comments in “Reluctant Voyages into Otherness”: “While I credit Ulli Beier for his part in nurturing, inspiring, facilitating, and marketing Papua New Guinea writing, paradoxically, he also has to shoulder the blame for creating a ‘dependency syndrome’ (if such dependency existed) among writers, potential writers, and consumers. The prevailing thesis is that the departure of Ulli Beier (seen as the catalyst, the inspiration, and the Saint Peter of Papua New Guinea literature) created a literary vacuum. To some extent this is true, but there were

him to facilitate an outpouring of artistic expression within the university as well as help establish the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. USP was also responsible for early creative and academic efforts—Albert Wendt and Ken Arvidson taught there, and Subramani also studied there.²¹ Subramani used the university’s member nations as the geographical frame for *South Pacific Literature*, as did Wendt for his Anglophone anthologies *Lali* and *Nuanua*. While USP was not initially as productive as UPNG, Subramani calls attention to its value in catalyzing English language proficiency and therefore endorsing the growth of literature. In her mapping of Pacific literature, Michelle Keown also links USP’s role as “the locus of a lively new Anglophone creative writing movement” to the arrival of Marjorie Crocombe (who studied creative writing with Beier at UPNG) and Albert Wendt (2007, 116). Subramani’s genealogy of the centers responsible for literary proliferation is also key to the literary future he predicts. With their proliferation of English as the creative lingua franca and publishing opportunities, he posits that these centers of production will be influential because “distinctly local sensibilities will be more evident with the increase in the number of published works” (153).

The independence movements throughout the Pacific naturally produced a unique brand of nationalism which was interwoven in the simultaneous cultural renewal. While Wendt and Subramani focus exclusively on those nations already at least nominally politically sovereign, the struggle for independence was also intertwined in the literatures of those still under colonial rule. As Haunani-Kay Trask asserts of the Kanaka Maoli context in “Writing in Captivity: Poetry in the Time of Decolonization,” the two are more than complementary, they are part of the same

other Saint Peters: like James St. Nativeson[,]... the Savannah Man[,]... and Lomo’ha...Papua New Guineans continued to write. The oasis that had nurtured the literary seedbed of their imagination was not drying up” (224).

²¹ Arvidson taught throughout the Pacific, in universities in Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand, and, because of essays like his 1974 “Aspects of Writing in the South Pacific,” has been called “together with Albert Wendt and Subramani...one of the midwives of Pacific Literature.” For an extended discussion of his work, see Jan Pilditch.

endeavor: “two springs of Hawaiian Renaissance—cultural and political—merged together in a demand for sovereignty” (18). Trask takes to task those writers who see the personal and the political as discrete categories and marks this distinction as a particularly Western construction of power:

In the United States and its colonies, celebrated writers, those included in anthologies or the university canon, and predictably most of the authors who win literary accolades, are nearly always those that publicly deny that politics informs writing; or worse, such writers actually decry political writing, as if equations of power are absent in their work and that of others they admire (18)

Trask’s comments call attention to the role of the state, and the author’s relationship to the state, in deciding which authors receive recognition or are installed in the canon and thus circulate in the academy. This relationship between the state and the academy is particularly relevant to the shifting centers of creative output in Oceania, which had, after two decades in politically sovereign spaces like Fiji and Papua New Guinea, expanded into settler colonial Hawai‘i. This resulted in what Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik term “state-funded sites of Western knowledge/power such as the East-West Center in Honolulu” on the campus of the University of Hawai‘i (5).²² What is prescient in this example is Trask’s attention to equations of power. This is perhaps at odds with earlier attempts at regional unity propagated by those politically sovereign nations who may have outgrown the need for an inherently politicized national literature; as Subramani writes in *South Pacific Literature*, “the writer cannot be a legislator of political and social order” (155). Because much of the Pacific writing of the 1960s and beyond was steeped in the struggle for sovereignty—a struggle which is still ongoing for Kanaka Maoli in Hawai‘i,

²² For an autobiographical account of her own experiences with racist and settler colonial expressions of power within the academy, see Trask’s *From a Native Daughter*.

Māori in Aotearoa, and others—the literature of this region cannot ignore those totalizing discourses of power which shape the daily realities of existence in an occupied nation.

Epeli Hau‘ofa’s work marks a shift in theoretical scholarship, moving from the nationalism of the earlier postcolonial period into a broader perspective ushering in an era of globalism. Where Wendt’s work was limited to literatures in English and Subramani’s focused on former British protectorates served by USP, and both writers seemed more preoccupied with the era’s immediate concerns of political decolonization, Hau‘ofa’s influential “Our Sea of Islands” (1993) moves beyond specific national frames by focusing on the ocean’s ability to unite people. Hau‘ofa foregrounds the sea as an avenue for exchange and solidarity when he parses the syntactical difference between “our sea of islands” and “islands in a far sea.” The Oceanic perspective is deployed to frame the sea as a dynamic space of contact rather than a barrier; this is antithetical to Euro-American land-based frameworks which see the water as a space of demarcation, a means of othering that which is separated. In reworking the relationship of land and sea Hau‘ofa not only offers a useful framework for Pacific Islands identity as a whole, but also turns to pre-existing Oceanic relationships to begin the process of decolonizing the mind, detailing in “Our Sea of Islands” the moment he realized his own complicity in propagating notions of island inferiority. In teaching his students theories of Pacific economic dependence, he became complicit in “propagating a view of hopelessness...[and] was actively participating in our own belittlement” (30). The denotation of many Pacific nations as MIRAB societies (microstates dependent on migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy) is a contemporary economic reiteration of the colonial tropes of inferiority which were used to justify Western presence in the region. It also casts the Indigenous identity as relational to spaces outside of Oceania rather than within it, effectively using economic theory to reinscribe the West

as the epistemological referent. To return to Subramani's exploration of the "generative context" of Pacific literature, the founding of the Oceania Centre for the Arts at USP in 1997 revealed Hau'ofa's commitment to reworking political, economic, cultural, and literary theories of regional unity; endorsing the thematic of unity, he pushed for the titular reference to Oceania rather than a specific nation or institution.

Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik's *Asia/ Pacific as Space of Cultural Production* (1994), a special issue of *boundary 2*, employs and builds on Hau'ofa's discussion of the cultural limitations of economic imaginings of MIRAB societies by expanding the region to include rim nations and the transnational corporations which proliferated in the region after the demise of Cold War western dominance. In calling attention to the arrogance of ignoring the basin countries in discussion of economic movement through the Pacific Ocean, Wilson and Dirlik call attention to their potential as sites of cultural production. They characterize the proliferation of Pacific Rim discourse as an attempt at "semiotic and conceptual possession of an entire region" that depends on repressing and erasing "those Pacific Basin others who have not yet subscribed to the 'world economy'" (6). In questioning and undoing the dominance of economic and cartographic imaginings of this space, the argument points our attention to the "counter-hegemonic and oppositional projects of national identity and cultural location" in the region (6).

In a genealogy of Pacific theory, Hau'ofa's conception of the sea as a dynamic and unifying force and Wilson and Dirlik's attention to the potential of cultural production born from attempts to erase "Pacific Basin others," are pivotal movements towards a theory of the ocean as a generative Void. They lay the ground work for later studies that highlight Indigenous genealogical movements across Oceania, and move beyond the occupation with a singular temporal and spatial experience of sovereignty and the specificity of its attendant vision of

Anglophone literature. Wilson and Dirlik's invocation of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "Rhizome" to describe the Pacific as an "undo[ing]" of "arboreal formations" of Western geopolitics can be extended to Indigenous Pacific Islands constructions of genealogy, in which the family is theorized in rhizomatic terms.²³ The Kanaka Maoli term for "family" is 'ohana, and comes from the taro, a rhizome, which Vicente M. Diaz and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui contextualize: "'Oha is the taro corm (the *na* after 'oha pluralizes) grown from the older roots, especially from the stalk, and is figurative for offspring and offshoots" (320). The theorization of Hawaiians living off-island as "transplants" is also derived from the kalo (taro) as the familial construct. Diaz and Kauanui make known how this notion of "transplant" can trouble spatially fixed notions of identity, such as the nation: "Transplanting implies a binary, operating as a relational construct. But transplanting also marks the possibilities in taking root and growing in a different soil while continuing to maintain an originary location and emphasizing indigeneity as a central form of identification" (320). Literary representations of Indigenous genealogy are also theorized as refusals of Western geopolitics in the following chapters. Keeping in mind Wilson and Dirlik's assertion that the Pacific is "a *terra incognita* of staggering complexity, discrepant hybridity, and nomadic flux that fascinates and, more strategically, *undoes* arboreal formations of the post-Cold War geopolitical imaginary" (2), I turn towards theorizations of Pacific literature that draw on the Pacific as a site of cultural production through metaphors of genealogical movement.

²³ The Kumulipo tells of human kind's older sibling, Hāloa, a stillborn whose buried body becomes the kalo (taro), a rhizome. Kanaka Maoli constructions of family are also articulated in terms of botanomorphic connections to the kalo. I discuss Kanaka Maoli genealogical systems and literary representations of the kalo in the Kumulipo and contemporary fiction in Chapter 4. For a discussion of the etymology of 'ohana, see: Diaz and Kauanui; Kauanui 1998.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007) is representative of the continual invocation of the sea to unify Oceanic communities and recuperate Indigenous epistemologies. She does this, in part, by calling attention to the specifically "gendered logic of national belonging" invoked in the Asia/ Pacific economic and spatial discourse into which Wilson and Dirlik posed an intervention (2007, 97-98). DeLoughrey utilizes ancient voyaging techniques and tidalectics to counter the imperial notions of *terra nullius* and *aqua nullius*, which I find useful because their legacies are still at work in contemporary juridical relationships between settler and native in the Pacific²⁴. Although it foregrounds dynamism and heterogeneity, voyaging also cements broader kinship ties throughout the Pacific. As DeLoughrey tells us, "canoe metaphysics draw from fluid metaphors of kinship and blood" (2007, 43). These kinship ties are thus evoked in literary articulations of a regional identity: "writers from the Pacific Islands (Oceania) have turned to genealogies of transoceanic migration in an attempt to remap national boundaries imposed by colonialism" (2007, 96). I find these transoceanic genealogies particularly helpful because, as DeLoughrey points out, they complicate Western production of a white, male telos of travel in the Pacific.

The social and physical mobility of diverse Indigenous Pacific bodies is central to Alice Te Punga Somerville's discussion of Māori identity's kinship ties to the broader Pacific in *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (2012). Somerville endorses a Māori-Pacific connection that focuses on kinship ties rather than nationality. She sees the politics of nationality

²⁴ See Jodi A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg's "Between Subalternity and Indigeneity" (2011) for a discussion of the intentional "mishearing" in "forms of imperial reception" in indigenous land claims like the Australian High Court decision *Mabo* (1992). The colonial judiciary recognized indigenous epistemes but that recognition of difference was only articulated through the dominant framework of colonial law. The court recognized the native title "as a feature of Australian common law rather than a concept foreign to it," reinforcing the settler colonial articulation of Oceanic spaces as absent of viable, pre-existing juridical structures, itself another iteration of what Chatterjee terms the "history of 'lack.'"

as alienating because “Māori and Pasifika communities are drawn into the logic of New Zealand-specific prejudices as long as they insist that their primary relationship is with the New Zealand nation-state” (xxiii). Somerville’s decentering of the nation-state is not, however, a decentering of geographical location. This framework calls attention to the theorization of difference between similar but distinct groups within the Pacific. In teasing out the relationships between Māori in Aotearoa, Māori in the greater Pacific, and Pacific people in Māori spaces, Somerville also disrupts the narrative of encounter that focuses on simply European and Pacific exchange which was the focus of earlier studies’ attention to decolonization. Unlike Lyons, though, she does not endorse a broader conversation of colonial powers, but a deeper understanding of intra-Oceanic encounters. She endorses a regional framework that does not just seek to reject the incursion of the West, but calls attention to pre-existing Oceanic relationships in an attempt to forge an identity that recognizes difference but is not bound by the frivolous demarcations of colonial nation formation and its dismissal of pre-existing social, political, and kinship ties.

I trace this theoretical genealogy to highlight how the temporal, spatial, and kinship connections among Indigenous bodies circulating throughout the Pacific can position Pō as a way to imagine Pacific literature within and beyond national constructs. I hesitate to position Pō and this study as a way to (re)turn to the colonial encounters throughout the entirety of the Pacific and (re)tell the subsequent connections between all locations and literatures in a homogenous fashion. Hence, my utilization of the term Polynesian national narratives. Although the term “Polynesian” carries connotations of imperial cartographies, it suggests a smaller region of the Pacific and allows this study to speak to broader kinship connections without obfuscating

the startling linguistic and cultural diversity throughout Oceania.²⁵ Specifically, I trace this trajectory of theory to focus on the ways Pō can change the space and time of the Anglophone novel and short story forms by constructing Pacific Islands as simultaneously unique locations with their own constructions of cosmogony and mutually constitutive points within the broader temporospatial spiral of Pō’s movement across the region.

Chapter Overviews

“Theorizing Pō: Embodied Cosmogony and Polynesian National Narratives” incorporates Pō’s spatial and temporal spiral into its structure. I open with nineteenth-century editions of the Kumulipo and draw on multiple discourses of Pō from throughout the Pacific. Chapter 1 circulates across the Pacific and draws on nineteenth-century newspapers and contemporary songs to describe the historical movement of kākau and its relationship to a timeless, spaceless, embodied theory of Pacific literature. The remaining chapters circulate throughout the Pacific and reveal how each island chain has their own distinct epistemological and corporeal concerns for Pō—each of which is conveyed through family structures and kinship practices. Chapter 2 examines how Wendt’s novel *Pouliuli* uses the darkness as a relational space that challenges embodied, masculinist ideals of the Samoan family and nation. Chapter 3 contrasts the masculinist ideals of *Pouliuli* with Māori constructions of the female body as mediator of space and time as it moves the nation toward political change. Chapter 4 returns to the Kumulipo’s role in Hawaiian sovereignty efforts and imagines a sovereign Hawaiian lāhui at the close of the twenty-first century, and culminates with a reading of Pō as gender parity and a tool for

²⁵ Tevita O. Ka’ili offers the term “Moanan” in place of “Polynesian”: “I use the terms ‘Moana people’ and ‘Moanan’ instead of ‘Polynesian’ because *moana* is the Polynesian word for the Pacific Ocean. I also use these terms to highlight the Oceanic culture of Moanans. I was inspired by ‘Okusitino Māhina’s writings on the term *moana* (1999a, 278; 1999b, 53), and by Futa Helu’s definition of Samoana as ‘sea people’ (1999, 113)” (2005, 107).

transcending historical and state violence. In addition, each chapter ends with a section on (re)turns and (re)tellings to emphasize the spiral as part of my epistemological project and to highlight how each chapter builds on the previous one, but also (re)turns to similar concepts and (re)tells narratives with slight variations that expand the spiral. In addition to being an element of the spiral structure, this also recognizes a literary and discursive genealogy, in which each succession recounts the generations before.

In Chapter 1, “Kākau as Script and Skin as Text,” I engage kākau as both the verb (to write) and the noun (the mark upon the skin) to examine the ways the Indigenous body has been both a medium for storytelling and a mode of meaning making. Drawing on the work of contemporary scholars such as Teresia Teaiwa, Albert Wendt, Juniper Ellis, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, and Michelle Keown, and nineteenth-century work by historian Samuel Kamakau, I trace the ways the Native body has been used to make and carry meaning and narratives throughout Oceania and beyond. Akin to the liminal and spiraled elements of Pō, kākau is often presented as an art form with peripatetic origins, which I discuss in the contexts of Samoa, Aotearoa, and Hawai‘i. Within its movement, ideas of whose body should be marked and the meanings those marks may carry can be diametrically opposed, as I discuss through gendered and racialized notions of kākau as representations of belonging and embodied nationhood. Kākau can also open up limitless possibilities for the Indigenous body, as I discuss through its refutation of blood logic. I then focus on a single island group and draw on all of these elements and engage both definitions of kākau to explore moments when bodily and literary mediums intersect: Namely, what Kānaka Maoli wrote in periodicals focused on cultural and political sovereignty about how the narratives of their bodies were created, received, and read by themselves and others. I trace the role of the bodily text in the formation of ancient

Indigenous governments, resistance to colonial occupation, and possibilities of decolonial futures. This chapter's discussion of bodily forms serves as the basis for the rest of the dissertation's arguments on how the Native body influences literary forms and narratology. I close with a section on (re)turns and (re)tellings, discussing these historical bodily narratives at length in this chapter to highlight the following chapters' twentieth-century discussions of how representations of figurative blackness rooted in the Indigenous body provide multiple opportunities for real political and cultural sovereignty.

Chapter 2, "Pō as Relational Space between Bodies: Vā and the Individual's Quest in Albert Wendt's *Pouliuli*," interrogates how Pō is framed as a relational space in the Samoan context of vā, the figurative space which governs relationships between people, places, deities, and things. I analyze the effect of vā, or relational space, on the bodily and narratological forms within the novel. The relational nature of this notion of space means that the meanings and contexts of the space(s) between bodies are malleable and may shift over time. I begin with an examination of the novel's use of bodily metaphors of the individual and the nation through a discussion of the claims the protocols of vā relationships may make in familial, political, and religious spaces. I then explore the absurdist and existential elements of the protagonist's quest for individuality through feigned madness as a rejection of those claims. The second section of the chapter builds on these discussions of the ambivalence of vā relationships within the text and argues that the novel itself is structured by narrative interruptions which are (re)turns and (re)tellings that mirror the transgressions of vā spaces within its content. These (re)turns and (re)tellings invoke mythic figures associated with Pō and the societal expectations and misreadings of their bodies, which further my reading of Pō as the key relational space within the novel. Finally, I analyze moments when *Pouliuli's* temporal spiral serves as a relational space

whose transgression allows the protagonist to renegotiate relational spaces across generations, with an emphasis on his encounters with social constructions of idealized masculine leadership and fraught paternal relationships. *Pouliuli*'s embodiment of male characters through illness, its representation of Pouliuli as a space for the masculine quest of individuation, and the tension it creates between the individual body and societal expectations make it a productive touchstone for subsequent theorizations of Pō as specifically female.

Chapter 3, "Gendering Te Pō: Māori Women's Voices and Embodied Storytelling in Patricia Grace's *Potiki*," examines how the politics of gender, genealogy, and cultural protocol of speech inform constructions of blackness and the body in late twentieth-century Māori fiction. Prompted by a character's attention to her intersectional identity as a young, black, Māori woman, I analyze the ways Māori women's bodies and physical and figurative blackness come to bear on *Potiki*'s form and content. I begin by tracing an arc from Grace's earlier writing on representations of Māori women in New Zealand's settler colonial national literary tradition and the position of Māori female deities within contemporary Māori culture, highlighting how these tensions are later addressed in *Potiki*'s construction of Mana Wahine Māori as literary, epistemological, and political resistance to these marginalizations. I employ the Māori concept of whakapapa to discuss genealogical and gendered connections to Te Pō. In this chapter, I focus on Te Pō as a specifically Māori construction of the generative darkness and a specific female ancestor in Māori cosmogony. I ground my readings of whakapapa and Māori women's bodily and oratorical agency in theories of Mana Wahine Māori, which centers the literal and theoretical voices of Māori women and their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical strength and prestige. The strength is often positioned as the result of genealogical links to powerful female ancestors connected to Te Pō. While there are many scholars committed to these theories, in this chapter I

draw most heavily on work by Patricia Grace, Robyn Kahukiwa, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Naomi Simmonds, Briar Wood, and Kanaka Maoli scholar Manu Aluli Meyer. I also contend that *Potiki*'s construction of time and its narrative strategy are not just located in the bodies of characters or the anthropomorphized whareniui (ancestral meeting house) at the center of the text. The novel is arranged as a whaikōrero—the structure of communal, processional speech within the whareniui—and these corporeal and oratorical concerns then imbricate the reader's own body into the telling of the story and the cultural and political survival of the Māori. Finally, I argue that the novel uses forms of storytelling rooted in epistemological connections to Pō to rework the settler colonial archive within and beyond the confines of the text.

Chapter 4, "Imagining the Pōstcolonial Lāhui: Genealogy, Women's Bodies, and the Racial Production of the State in Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl's 'Ho'oulu Lāhui,'" continues the focus on gender and explores the female body's function in an imagined, futuristic postcolonial Hawaiian nation's encoding of the colonial legacy. I pay particular attention to the short story's articulation of Pō's role in maintaining genealogy, kinship ties, and the concept of lāhui: the Hawaiian word variously glossed as both "nation" and "race." I posit a recuperation of the mixed-race Kanaka Maoli body from the introduction of American notions of blood quantum and the "vanishing native" trope. In this way, the body is no longer a site of exclusion via presumed racial dilution inherent in the phenotypical markers of race mixing, but a representation of the genealogical expansiveness of Pō. I also return to the introduction's discussion of the Kumulipo, of which Kneubuhl's text is a partial retelling, highlighting the ways "Ho'oulu Lāhui" becomes imbricated in a literary genealogy that centers collective women's voices and bodies as a strategy for reworking literary and political forms.

The conclusion, “(Re)Turns and (Re)Tellings: Liminality as Belonging,” is my attempt to put theory into practice and examine the migrations and articulations of Pō which are responsible for my existence as a mixed-race, diasporic Kanaka Maoli. I use an ancestor’s publication in an early twentieth-century Hawaiian-language newspaper to trace my genealogical connections across space and time. I work with English and Hawaiian language versions of the text, which I read in the travel narrative tradition, to further complicate this dissertation’s focus on indigenizing Anglophone literary forms. In this sense, I quite clearly (re)turn to mediums and narratives discussed earlier in the dissertation, such as Native newspapers. But I also complicate their (re)telling by asking how Natives can affirm their political and cultural sovereignty when issues of belonging are compounded by how far and how long one has gone from the islands which maintain their cosmogonic connections to Pō. The open-ended nature of this question embraces the liminal element of Pō as a source of belonging and affirmation of Indigenous identity in the diaspora.

This project presents the Indigenous body as the manifestation of the figurative elements of Polynesian epistemological and cosmogonic darkness in order to affirm its membership in the community and improve the collective. Most often, this involves a radical reconfiguration of the “nation.” In each text, characters reject the colonial legacy of the nation as the primary unit of community. In its place, I offer an analysis of texts that actively embody cosmogony and thus require an Indigenous reading praxis, resulting in a new iteration of the Polynesian body as text and a necessary intervention in postcolonialism and broader literary criticism.

Chapter 1

Kākau as Script and Skin as Text

Battle began at once by the destruction of the Kohala people. The natives were put to rout. At that time a high chief of Hawaii, Kanaloa-kua‘ana, the son of Keawe-nui-a‘Umi, was taken and cruelly treated. His whole skin was tattooed, his eyelids turned inside out and tattooed. Kanaloa-kua‘ana was renamed Ka-maka-hiwa (Blackened-eyes) and Ka-maka-paweo (Shamed -eyes). (Kamakau 58)

...

Ka-hekili, ruling chief over Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, and Maui...join[ed] in a war against Kamehameha. Ka-hekili selected a type of soldier new to Oahu called “Cut in two” (pahupu‘), strange-looking men tattooed black from top to toe, with eyelids turned inside out and held up by props and only their eyeballs and teeth left in their natural state...Had the black negroes who came later to Nu‘uanu arrived at that time they might have been made favorites and given the lands of “Black waters” (Wai-pouli) and “Daubed black” (Hono-ma‘ele)! (Kamakau 159)

In many ways, this dissertation is concerned with the pooling of multiple literary genres, forms, and perspectives: first, through tracing a literary genealogy of Pō in a regional survey of contemporary Pacific literature; second, through an examination of these same aspects within the individual concerns of each text, unique to their island of production. While this study concentrates on the literary application of multiple cultural, political, and oratorical forms as an expression of Pō and an indigenization of the novel and short story forms, a critical element of this study is the recognition that Pacific literature itself is a collection of multiple cultural and material productions that existed long before the introduction of Western modes of writing. Literary studies, particularly those focused on postcolonial or Indigenous literatures, often concentrate on the shift from orature to literature; and while the texts covered in this project do draw heavily on oratorical traditions, other methods of Indigenous storytelling often undergird how meaning is forged and expressed within these texts.

Samuel Kamakau’s mid nineteenth-century Hawaiian language newspaper articles, which chronicle the history of the Hawaiian islands under the chiefs and monarchs of the ali’i system before the illegal United States overthrow at the end of the century, reveal how Kānaka Maoli created and circulated visual, written modes of communication long before the introduction of Western writing techniques by missionaries.²⁶ Kamakau traces an arc between the past and his contemporary moment: kākau presented a way to understand the actions and beliefs of Kānaka Maoli in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as they grappled with issues of invasion and governance, which resonated with Kamakau’s audience in the latter half of the nineteenth century as they faced growing American economic and political encroachment. This study subsequently (re)turns to Kamakau’s mana‘o (thoughts, opinions) and ‘ike (knowledge) to understand the range of sovereignties across the Pacific and contextualize their literary representations. The tattooing of Kanaloakua‘ana and Kahekili exemplifies how Kanaka Maoli bodies functioned as dynamic, relational mediums for storytelling: their skin served as text, the ink upon that skin a particular type of script. On the surface the men appear to undergo similar processes: Both possess elite lineages; one has his “whole skin” covered, the other likewise covered from “top to toe”; both have their “eyelids turned inside out”; both are renamed because of their experiences. While Kanaloakua‘ana’s new names reflect abuse and shame, Kahekili and his warriors are elevated by their experience of being pahupū, “cut in two,” or what is also known as pa‘ele kūlani, the process of chiefly darkening. In addition to the contexts of their production, the meanings of these motifs and representations are varied and layered. For instance, Kahekili’s name suggests his bodily assumption of blackness can be read as an

²⁶ Osorio defines the ali’i system as “the class of Natives who ruled over the land and people and maintained their genealogies through careful mating and by recording their mo‘okū‘auhau” (2002, 289). Genealogy is a tool to navigate this chiefly system, whereby the individual has multiple opportunities to access rank through different branches. This system is also a way to think about a narrative form rooted in the body that is exercised with creativity, as one selectively crafts narratives to increase one’s mana and political rank.

invocation of the god Kane's association with thunder (Kanehekili). Yet, just as Teresia Teaiwa argues for multiple sources as the genesis of Pacific writing, each of those sources can itself be replete with meaning. In Kahekili's case, one can also argue that with its associations of power and procreation, Pō, the figurative and generative cosmogonic darkness, was of such magnitude that certain Kānaka Maoli literally inscribed it onto their bodies in an attempt to intensify their mana, the life force of supernatural or divine agency.²⁷ The circumstances around the production of these specific scripts invest them with disparate meanings, revealing how the contexts and conditions of bodies convey meaning; and, as Kamakau's invocation of these bodily narratives in the nineteenth century suggests, those meanings have significance long after their moments of production.

Kamakau's attention to the roles these scripts played in the politics of their historical moments and their potential legacies in his own time present these scripts as relational and transformative. They raise questions about how and when stories are recorded, how meaning is conveyed and the means by which it circulates in the broader community. These legacies continue into the present moment as the texts covered in the following chapters similarly engage how individuals encounter and produce meaning through unique and intimate negotiations of their bodies as physical and figurative narratives. Is meaning only produced by the forces which act upon a body, as in Kanaloakua'ana's experience of opponents forcing meaning upon his body? Can meaning be transformed by the individual's exercise of bodily agency, as in the case of Kahekili and his elite warriors seeking out kākau? The central figures in Wendt's, Grace's, and Kneubuhl's texts grapple with these questions as their bodies invoke Pō to challenge Indigenous and foreign notions of nation and belonging. These questions of agency are

²⁷ See Takara's discussion of Kahekili's kākau as a connection to Pō.

particularly relevant in Kamakau’s time, when he ponders how peoples of African descent would have fared in the Hawaiian Kingdom before the ascendancy of the Western notions of racial stratification which were invoked to disenfranchise Native Hawaiians in their homeland. His suggestion that they would have been treated favorably and given lands whose physical features were also steeped in blackness, points to an Indigenous understanding of skin that is out of step with the contemporary views of race. This is especially pertinent given that Kānaka Maoli and other Pacific Islanders were variously theorized as Black or near White by Western powers who imported their ideas of race into the Pacific in the nineteenth century, a crucial first step in the enactment of blood quantum, which continues to use phenotype to shape ideas of race, Indigeneity, and identity today.²⁸

Just as the Kumulipo served as a specific example of how Indigenous epistemologies and cosmogonies circulate across the Pacific, I position these specifically Kanaka Maoli examples of skin and ink as emblematic of similar experiences across the region. I explore the significance of the various motifs and narratives Kanaka Maoli and other Pacific Islanders inked upon their bodies through the concept of kākau. Kākau is a Hawaiian word with cognates throughout the Pacific—for instance, tatau in Samoan, Tahitian, and Tongan.²⁹ Tatau and the tabu or kapu (sacredness, restrictions) they represent have been transliterated into English as tattoo and taboo, although the intricacy and variety of these terms is not apparent in the ways they circulate in

²⁸ For an analysis of the racialization of Native Hawaiians as approximating Whiteness, see Maile Arvin’s “Pacificaly Possessed: Scientific Production and Native Hawaiian Critique of the ‘Almost White’ Polynesian Race”; for a discussion of Native Hawaiians’ navigation of the ascendancy of racialization in the nineteenth century, see Kathryn Waddell Takara’s “The African Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century Hawai’i”; for an extensive overview of blood quantum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

²⁹ Although these terms are related, I do not wish to conflate their local distinctions. Therefore, I use “kākau” to structure the argument of this chapter, but I use local terminology when referring to a specific tradition; I also maintain the terms used in source materials.

English vernacular. Tatau has also been transliterated into several European languages and replaced previous terms for marking the skin, which, as Juniper Ellis notes, “included *puncturing, punctuating, and rasing*” (698).³⁰ There are multiple types of kākau/ tatau; for instance, in Samoa, the pe‘a for males and the malu for women. In Aotearoa/ New Zealand, markings in the form of moko were originally chiseled into the skin with an instrument called an uhi, a difference from the puncturing process of kākau in other places (Te Awekotuku et al 14-30). Kākau is translated as both “tattoo,” the verb and the noun, and “to write.” Engaging both of these meanings, I see kākau as narratives which inform the reading of the body as text, a crucial first step in a study whose focus is the reading of Indigenous bodies in contemporary texts. To understand what Wendt, Grace, and Kneubuhl are doing in their readings and presentations of Native bodies in the twenty-first century, one must understand the previous three thousand years of history of the body as text in Polynesia.

In this chapter, I examine the ways the Indigenous body has been both a medium for and a mode of storytelling and meaning making. Drawing on the work of contemporary scholars such as Teresia Teaiwa, Albert Wendt, Juniper Ellis, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, and Michelle Keown, and nineteenth-century work by historian Samuel Kamakau, I trace the ways the Native body has been used to make and carry meaning and narratives throughout Oceania and beyond. Akin to the liminal and spiraled elements of Pō, kākau is often presented as an art form with peripatetic origins, which I discuss in the contexts of Samoa, Aotearoa, and Hawai‘i. Within its movement, ideas of whose body should be marked and the meanings those marks may carry can be diametrically opposed, as I discuss through gendered

³⁰ Juniper Ellis provides a useful etymology for the term in the English language: “Before Captain James Cook’s 1769 use of the Tahitian word (which he spelled *tattoo*), the English words used to describe marking the skin with indelible pigment included *puncturing, punctuating, and rasing*. The English word *tattoo* that refers to beating a rhythm on a drum existed before Cook’s introduction of *tattoo* but did not refer to bodily marks” (698).

and racialized notions of kākau as representations of belonging and embodied nationhood. Kākau can also open up limitless possibilities for the Indigenous body, as I discuss through its refutation of blood logic. I then focus on a single island group and draw on all of these elements and engage both definitions of kākau to explore moments when bodily and literary mediums intersect: Namely, what Kanaka Maoli wrote in periodicals focused on cultural and political sovereignty about how the narratives of their bodies were created, received, and read by themselves and others. I close with a section on (re)turns and (re)tellings, discussing these historical bodily narratives at length in this chapter to highlight the following chapters' twentieth-century discussions of how representations of figurative blackness rooted in the Indigenous body provide multiple opportunities for real political and cultural sovereignty.

Darkness on the Body: Peripatetic Foundations of Kākau as Script and Skin as Text

In “What Remains to Be Seen: Reclaiming the Visual Roots of Pacific Literature,” Teresia Teaiwa’s “theory of the polygenesis of Pacific writing” genealogizes contemporary Pacific writing as the product of millennia of Indigenous engagement with the visual, arguing that today’s writing is rooted in material culture that evolved prior to and independent of Western modes of writing. Contemporary scholarship’s emphasis on the introduction of writing as a technology that engaged only oral forms of storytelling and meaning making marginalized a broader network of Indigenous knowledge and narrative production: “The proliferation (and elaboration) of visual and material culture in precontact Pacific societies indicates a sophisticated understanding of the visual, which has likely been overtaken and obfuscated by the introduction of writing” (2010, 734). Teaiwa argues that contemporary writing should not be understood as the product of solely Indigenous oral tradition because “throughout the Pacific, complex visual systems have also been found in architecture, the landscape, and even markings on the human

body”; systems often circulated between these mediums, as Teaiwa notes the “continuities between the prototypical Lapita pottery designs of some 3,500 years ago and tapa motifs and tattooing designs in Melanesia and Polynesia” (2010, 734). In addition to opening up the possibilities for genealogizing contemporary Pacific literature’s roots within the visual rather than solely the oral, Teaiwa’s analysis also suggests how those roots are mutually constitutive and planted throughout the region.

Analogous to the ways Pō is theorized as dynamic and generative affirmation of connections among people, times, and places, kākau is a dynamic affirmation of these relationships both within and beyond one’s family, village, and island of origin.³¹ As with these epistemologies, kākau’s dynamism is rooted in movement and change—perhaps paradoxically, this is a component of its endurance. In the introduction, I mentioned Euro-American figurative constructions of darkness as the absence of knowledge, the basis for colonial assumptions about an absence of Indigenous history, which Chatterjee terms a history of lack. This marginalization of the Indigene is predicated on an assumption of his/ her body as static, permanently occupying that position of being intellectually inferior and temporally behind according to the model of European Enlightenment. On a surface level, kākau negates this: The motifs represent millennia of accumulated knowledge displayed as text on the body, text which is passed down from body to body in a way that allows past, present, and future to manifest simultaneously. On a figurative level, the act of being “cut in two” by kākau is part of an infinite process of intergenerational production. It is in this collective that the individual’s identity is fully formed, as Ellis notes: “These marks on skin signal the splitting or doubling of subjectivity, a mechanism by which the individual human subject is produced continually and repeatedly” (687). Albert Refiti links

³¹ Teaiwa 2010, 734.

tatau's incorporation of time and space to other enmeshed relationships: "the repetitive beaten rhythm or *ta* which the tattooist strike into the skin is a giving over to time (*ta*) and space (*vā*)— by investing the body with dimensional consciousness— past/present/future/land/ancestors/community" (100). Each body receives *kākau* whose motifs tell their maternal and paternal genealogy, their social and familial rank, the unique lived experiences that create an individual's subjectivity; it is the most intimate marker of individual subjectivity and humanity, but also an unequivocal link to those who have come before and will follow.

Kākau, as both the ink on the skin and the act of creation, provide a literary link to contemporary Pacific writing. Pacific literary arts resist boundaries and consistently spiral between genres and disciplines. A speaker may move through or between genres at her will³²; an oration may contain a sequence of genres³³; and a narrative may be understood as simultaneously history, myth, and genealogy.³⁴ Teaiwa, Te Awekotuku et al (12), Māhina (90-91), Refiti, Wendt (1999), and others have also linked the tatau to other material, bodily, and literary art forms. These liminal links build the case for a connection between *kākau* as embodied narratives and contemporary literature which utilizes the body's ability to make, mediate, and carry meaning. In this context, contemporary literature becomes part of what Ellis describes as tatau's process of "the splitting or doubling of subjectivity" and the continual production of "the individual human

³² Subramani notes of Tongan oratory, "a *punake* (poet) can move imperceptibly from poetry to verse and vice versa, according to his emotions" because "[i]n South Pacific oral literature, artistic expressions (drama, narrative, poetry) are not sharply differentiated" (44).

³³ Grace describes the structure of the Māori *whaikōrero*, on which the form of her novel *Potiki* is modeled, and which I discuss at length in Chapter 3: "I've modelled *Potiki* on the way an orator would structure an oration – which will begin with a chant, go on to greetings, then to the main body of the speech, then conclude with a *waiata*" (DeLoughrey and Hall).

³⁴ N. Silva notes that chants like the *Kumulipo* can be "both *mo'okū'auhau* (genealogy) and *mo'olelo* (history/legend)" (103).

subject” (687). This process integrates contemporary literature into the larger projects of Indigenous ontology and history. As Michelle Keown clarifies in her study of contemporary literary representations of the Pacific body:

The tattooed Polynesian body may be read as a cultural cipher or as an index of (post)colonial history. It is also possible, however, to push the metaphor further, interpreting the tattooed Polynesian body as a figure for the inscription of cultural identity in the literatures of the South Pacific. (2005, 191)

While Keown utilizes the power of contemporary representations of kākau to inscribe (post)colonial history in contemporary literature, this chapter invokes the spiraled trajectory of these connections and investigates the influence that actual historical kākau have on contemporary representations of literary bodies.

Kākau is also a marker of broader regional unity through dynamism and movement, particularly through its itinerant origins. Throughout Polynesia kākau is historicized as a staple of an island’s culture, yet its origins are ascribed elsewhere. In “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body” Albert Wendt relates the Samoan song “Pese o le Tatau,” which links Samoa to “all the countries of the Pacific” through the “curved lines [and] motifs” of tatau: “This is the origin we know/ Of the tattooing of the tatau in Samoa/ A journey by two women/ Who swam from Fiji across the ocean” (1999, 403). In this example, the physical movement of women’s bodies across the ocean to disperse this knowledge ties kākau to the voyaging traditions of the region as well as the figurative and generative movement inherent in epistemologies like Pō. Like Pō, kākau is unique to each set of islands, and the cumulative effect is a regional art form whose movement simultaneously affirms kinship and recognizes difference. Ellis theorizes that “tattoos embody

the cross-cultural traveling of signs”: “in Samoan stories, (as in Tongan ones), the tattoo comes from Fiji; in Fijian stories, from Samoa; in Maori stories, from the underworld” (687-688). Akin to the generative movement and circulation of Pō, tatau’s peripatetic origin stories produce an epistemology that uses space and time to affirm broader connections. The circulation of these knowledges is contingent on the circulation and marking of bodies; often, high ranking royalty from one island group would travel to another, which they perceived as having an earlier association with tatau—for instance, Tongan royalty regarded Samoa as the origin of the tatau and thus would travel there to receive tatau from one of the two established guilds. Whether one travels to receive a tatau or not, circulation and connection to another place, to a broader community, is inherent in the indigenous theorization of tatau, as Ellis argues:

Even in its Pacific homelands, where tattooing has been practiced for three thousand years, in places that developed their own distinctive designs and techniques, the tattoo is a sign of elsewhere. The patterns at once promise that the bearer will be at home—by bearing marks of belonging, meaning, and identity—and inaugurate a redoubled journey toward creating here from elsewhere. This apparently most fixed sign proclaims that the subject is as much an itinerary as an identity, that location is as much a passage as a place (688).

This theorization of tatau as a “sign of elsewhere” that the wearer carries, and then circulates to a different place, is a critical piece of how Oceanians experienced, performed, and read their bodies as texts. As articulated in the Introduction, within Indigenous Pacific epistemologies the body is that which orients constructions of space and time via relationality. Kākau, then, is the text which reveals and reaffirms these relationships.

However, tatau's origins also reveal a nuanced, dynamic, heterogeneous, and at times even contentious, idea of which bodies could and should carry meaning. "Pese o le Tatau" continues the Samoan story of the two women, stating that during their journey they encountered a giant clam and swam underwater, during which "their unchanging song/ that said women were to be tattooed/ And not men," somehow "went wrong" and the song was changed "To say men were to be tattooed/ And not women" (Wendt 1999 403-404). Te Awekotuku offers a Māori account of the origins of moko (2007 12). When Mataora abuses his wife, Niwareka, she returns to her family in the underworld. To win her back, he puts on his best clothes and "enhanced his already handsome face with colour" which runs down his face when he perspires during his journey to the underworld (12). Niwareka's family, whose "skins were incised with rich patterns, and their adornment was forever," laugh at him, but agree to teach him "the art of tā moko" after he begs their forgiveness (12). These descriptions of women's voices and agency, coupled with the narratives their bodies carried as markers of belonging and foreignness, as authorized and unauthorized to convey the stories tatau and moko tell, forecasts how the texts in this study problematize the roles and restrictions of women's bodies and voices in matters of cultural and national sovereignty. While Grace's and Kneubuhl's fiction take this up most clearly with the exercise of female bodily agency extending beyond the content and affecting the forms of these texts, Wendt's novel engages the other side of this issue and details how the privileges and burdens of specifically masculine agency become embodied through illness and a lack of potency. Tatau's potential to theorize embodied narratives through problematized Indigenous and foreign notions of gender is also tied to its strategies for incorporating multiple genealogies and refuting attempts to essentialized Native bodies through blood logic (Kauanui 2007, 2008; Arvin 2015).

Darkness within the Body: Kākau as Refutation of Blood Logic

In chapters 2 and 4, I discuss at length the differences between Indigenous constructions of identity and belonging based on genealogy, and colonial constructions of race. Here, I explore kākau as a corporeal script whose refutation of colonial logic of racial essentialism—and the damage that can do to the concept of Indigeneity—is based on those genealogical links. From the Oceanian perspective, identity is predicated on genealogical and kinship ties, the act of claiming and being claimed by others. From the colonial Euro-American perspective, identity is racialized and essentialized. The conflict between these two perspectives lies in the fact that Oceanians recognize multiple, overlapping, and simultaneous claims, accommodating multiracial identity as a component of diverse, equally valid genealogical claims. For occupying colonial administrations, this was problematic because it rendered impotent the racial logic of static, essentialized, unchangeable racial inferiority of darker-skinned colonial bodies.

Kākau is an inseparable component of individual and communal identity that originates in the cosmogonic darkness, a tangible display of that figurative interconnectedness. As Tui Atua specifies, “the design of the *pe’a* is meant to reflect the Samoan thesis of creation” (2009, 5).³⁵ This interconnectedness crafts a text that incorporates family and heritage as inseparable elements of the fabric of existence, as Wendt notes of the Samoan context: “Tatauing is part of everything else that is the people, the *aiga*, the community, the environment, the *atua* [gods], the cosmos” (1999, 403). Race logic and blood quantum are based on the denial of simultaneous connections, incommensurable with the principles of inclusion which undergird Indigenous

³⁵ Tui Atua outlines the connections between tatau motifs and the Samoan genesis. After separating Lagi and Papa in the darkness, “Tagaloa sent down his *tuli* (plover bird) to earth and on his instructions the *tuli* formed the image of man from bacteria (*ilo*). It is said that man originates from *ilo* and eventually evolved from that into human form. The images and significance of the *tuli* and *ilo* are recorded in the motifs of traditional male and female tattoos, i.e. the *pe’a* and the *malu* (2009, 2).

identity. As Kauanui's work shows, blood quantum is the rhetoric of separation based on the exclusion of multiple heritages within one body; she also details how this exclusion can be compounded through additional identity categories such as gender, or the politics of place which mark certain bodies as unassimilable.³⁶ Tatau, on the contrary, positions the body as that which maintains these heritages. One only need look to specific motifs which emphatically reference extended kinship: In the Samoan tradition, the pula tele motif represents the "principle of caring...for the whole extended family," while fa'aila tatau motif is a symbol of one's "readiness to serve [the] extended family, should any one need" assistance (1999, 405). The entire extended family is represented and inscribed upon the body. Māori women have articulated moko's connection to their whakapapa (genealogy), characterizing it as an embodied and fecund link to past and future generations. One woman describes her mother wanting her to "get a moko that personified our whakapapa for the line of women...some of our whanau [extended family] got it done on their puku [belly], just imagine when they're hapū [pregnant], that beautiful blossoming" (Te Awekotuku 2007 97). Another describes having moko on her breasts as a way to "feed [her] whakapapa into [her] babies" (Te Awekotuku 2007 98). The act of inscription involves the mingling of the person's blood with those patterns that represent the extended family, therefore using what colonial frameworks would use to distance one—the mixing of blood—to instead affirm those multiple, mixed lineages. Often, perhaps in keeping with tatau's own origin as a peripatetic device, the motifs of these multiple heritages are displayed on a single

³⁶ See "Blood and Reproduction of (the) Race in the Name of *Ho'oulu Lāhui*—A Hawaiian Feminist Critique" for a discussion of how Native Hawaiian women face a disproportionate pressure to choose partners that would allow them to produce children that satisfy the demands of blood quantum. As Kauanui argues, this doubly marginalizes women because it refuses to recognize their genealogical agency—simply by being Hawaiian women, they will produce Hawaiian children. *Hawaiian Blood* discusses the strategies of American attempts to racialize Native Hawaiians, then assert through race logic that their nativeness was erodible while others, whom Americans deemed untrustworthy immigrants, were not. Hawaiians were held up as able to assimilate into the national American space, a position that carried with it the implicit negation of the validity of the Japanese presence in the islands. It then follows that in being made members of the American empire, Hawaiians were then manipulated into themselves being agents of exclusion.

body, creating a text with multiple origins. Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr has described tattoos as “a reminder of...multiethnic identity” and the “body’s way of remembering”; while Ellis has described them as the invocation of multiple traditions from disparate locations within and beyond Oceania.³⁷ Those multiple lineages are inscribed upon and animated by the body, thus the body can never be separated from them anymore than it can from its mediation of space, time, or the cosmos.

This mediation of space also produces a specific lineage, which kākau’s engagement with blood roots in the land. Kākau engages blood as an affirmation of an individual’s connections to the land, which is a symbol of expansive and inclusive notions of Indigenous family structure and genealogy. In the Hawaiian context, family is theorized as a collection of many roots: Pukui, Kauanui, Malo, and Kame‘eleihiwa, among others, have outlined the historical, political, genealogical, and cultural significance of how ‘ohana, the word for family, suggests multiple offshoots, or ‘oha, of the taro plant. The taro itself is genealogized as the older sibling of all Kanaka Maoli, which I discuss at length in chapter 4. The Samoan word for extended family, āiga, is a near homonym to the Hawaiian word for land, ‘āina. The Samoan word for landscape, fanua, is also close to the Māori word for extended family, whānau. Genealogical and bodily connections to the land are also affirmed through overlapping definitions: for instance, the Māori word whenua means both land and placenta. These linguistic and genealogical connections between land and family undergird Wendt’s assessment of tatau and blood as ties to the land:

³⁷ Ellis describes the process by which the protagonist of Wendt’s autobiographical short story “Cross of Soot” receives a tattoo from a prisoner: “The process indicates how people reproduce tattoos and in so doing invokes two traditions: the prison tattooing that has been prominent in many countries (beginning perhaps in response to penal tattooing) and the tattooing sought by Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land (especially from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century)” (691).

Our words for blood are *toto*, *eleele*, and *palapala*. (*Toto* can also mean to plant.) Eleele and palapala are also our terms for earth, soil, and mud. We are therefore made of earth. Our blood, which keeps us alive, is earth. So when you are tatauing the blood, the self, you are reconnecting it to the earth, reaffirming that you are earth, genetically and genealogically. (1999, 409)

The linguistic similarities, connections between the human body and the land, and the engagement with multiple sensory experiences position kākau as indelible features of both body and landscape in a way that precedes and outlasts the logic of blood quantum.

(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Kākau as Textual Intersection

In recent decades, Kanaka Maoli scholars have undertaken the arduous task of translating the millions of pages of Hawaiian-language newspapers published during the 19th and 20th centuries, many of which contain Kamakau's observations on kākau's role in history, politics, culture, and religion. These pages contain the most well-known debates over what Native Hawaiian sovereignty was and could continue to be: Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed* rediscovered the vital role newspapers played in driving resistance to American annexation, in effect halting an 1897 annexation treaty in the US Senate; J. Kēhaulani Kauanui's *Hawaiian Blood* draws on historical and contemporary periodicals to trace Native resistance to the settler colonial initiation of blood quantum. ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui's *Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi'iaka* similarly draws on periodicals to recuperate Kanaka Maoli notions of the lāhui—as the Hawaiian people and nation—through a study of textual discourse around the chants and hula of the Kanaka Maoli goddesses Pele and Hi'iaka. ho'omanawanui presents the first book-length study of the literary, intellectual, and political traditions to emerge

from the publication of Pele and Hi'iaka mo'olelo. Arguing that Native Hawaiian literary nationalism began with their publication in the mid-nineteenth century, *Voices of Fire* examines how the various versions of these mo'olelo reveal the interweaving of oral and written traditions to produce a specifically Kanaka Maoli literary tradition that flourishes today. In addition to providing a literary context for political and cultural conversations in periodicals, ho'omanawanui's focus on the performative components of textual representations of chants and hula provides a useful starting point for the present study's discussion of textual representations of embodied mediums.

Drawing on ho'omanawanui's textual analysis of an embodied tradition and Teaiwa's argument for a "polygenesis of Pacific writing" rooted in the visual, I return to Kamakau's observations on kākau, which I position as the first step in a literary study of embodied narratives that integrate time and space into literary constructions of the nation and the region. Engaging kākau as noun and verb—the mark upon the skin and the act of writing—I explore moments when these bodily and literary mediums intersect: Namely, what Kanaka Maoli wrote in newspapers about how the narratives of their bodies were created, received, and read. These examples include kākau as: narrative explorations of politics and religion; bodily markers of what would later become staples of Indigenous literary tradition and critical discourse; and the indigenization of a settler narrative form. Just as these historical accounts spoke to Kamakau and other Native Hawaiians' experiences and ideas of nationhood in the nineteenth century, in this section I invoke kākau's process of continual reproduction as an articulation of the spiral's endings that become beginnings and use separate mo'olelo about kākau to forecast the concerns of the following chapters.

Kamakau's comments on Kahekili's kākau and its relationship to Pō position the body as a site of political, legal, and religious intersections. The process of kākau that Kahekili and his elite warriors underwent was known as pa'ele kūlani, which Pukui and Elbert translate as "chiefly darkening." The process was accepted by Kahekili and others as a part of a protocol that, to echo Wendt's comments on tatau, affirmed their readiness to serve in leadership positions. This readiness was encoded on their bodies through kākau as "scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form" (Wendt 1999, 403). Kahekili's kākau marked his position in the social order but also his relationality to others in his community, as Kamakau comments on his kākau: "He elected to have his skin black; one half of his body from head to foot was tattooed black, and his face was tattooed black, and this became an established law with him: Any person taken in crime who passed on his dark side, escaped with his life" (166). The physical blackness which Kahekili "elected" to inscribe upon his skin can be read as a connection to the life-giving, genealogical, and relational elements of Pō, which are expressed through his gift of life to any criminal "who passed on his dark side." Kahekili's kākau craft a narrative which invokes Pō; in this act the body becomes a medium to represent the cosmogonic materially, positioning skin as a malleable site on which blackness is inscribed as an affirmation. As Kahekili's example illustrates, in this context to blacken the body is to *embody* genealogy, cosmogony, divinity, and sovereignty.

The religious, genealogical, and political elements of Kahekili's kākau are read through multiple lenses in Kamakau's time and resonate in the contemporary narratives of Indigenous Pacific bodies discussed in later chapters of this study. While affirming Kahekili's piety through an adherence to Indigenous religious beliefs in his own time, by the time Kamakau writes about

them nearly a century later Kahekili's kākau can be read by proponents of Christianity as elements of a divine punishment:

His cruelty to chiefs and people on Oahu is notorious. But God punished him for his cruel deeds for, although he had many sons and daughters, none of his children produced a long line of descendants (*puko loa i ke ao*). He was nevertheless a religious man and heeded well the laws of his gods, and this is why he was victorious over his enemies, and it was for this reason that he had half of his body tattooed black like Kane-of-the-thunder (Kane-hekili) and Kane-hekili-nui-‘ahu-manu, and he lived to a good old age. (167)

Kahekili's embodiment of Pō's spiritual power and genealogical agency expressed through the pardon of any criminal "who passed on his dark side" is paradoxically not extended to his own genealogical descendants, whom Kamakau asserts are denied to him by the Christian God because of that same pagan piety. Yet, Kamakau's assertion that Kahekili's own long life and political success in his time are due to his veneration of Kane, reveals how Kānaka Maoli in Kamakau's contemporary moment were navigating the shifting values inherent in a society that recognizes multiple religious and political traditions.

Similar to the way Kahekili's kākau position his body as a relational text informed by his interactions with others, Kamakau records the actions of Kahahana, a chief who lived during the time of Kahekili. In this instance, kākau are used as bodily texts by those without power to admonish chiefly authority. Kahahana abuses his position as chief and begins to treat his people cruelly. When he ignores advice to mend his ways, "the kahuna and all his followers, relatives, and members of his household tattooed their knees as a sign of the chief's deafness to his admonitions. [The word *kuli* means both 'knee' and 'deaf.']" (133). Just as kākau can represent

an individual's readiness to serve through leadership, they can also represent a failure to live up to that expectation. In this example, that failure is conveyed through punning the body. In addition to playing on the multiple meanings of kuli, this example brings additional sensory components into the reading of the body as text, moving it beyond the visual. The oral and aural components necessary for verbal punning further position kākau as embodied, relational narratives rooted in dynamic and lived experiences of the Indigenous body.

Kahahana's example reveals the ways the body can be used to admonish political power and use sensory components and interactions with others to rework narrative form. Brandy Nālani McDougall describes punning as part of the Kanaka Maoli concept of kaona, an Indigenous literary aesthetic that relies on shared experiences and that is also useful to the project of decolonization. McDougall positions kaona as part of shared experience of hiding and finding meaning through word play:

Inclusive of allusion, symbolism, punning, and metaphor, kaona draws on the collective knowledges and experiences of Hawaiians, recognizing these knowledges and experiences as unique, while also recognizing the range and contexts within which we must inhabit, learn, and access knowledge in its many forms. (2014, 3)

McDougall's extension of the relational linguistic aspect of kaona to visual art opens up the possibilities for analyzing how kākau such as the ones Kahahana's followers created, relate the body to broader discourses of narrative and aesthetic resistance. While kaona is specific to Kanaka Maoli experiences, as "a decolonial assertion of Hawaiian aesthetic sovereignty" (2014, 21), it is also part of a regional effort to promote decolonization through literary and critical discourse: "recognizing the rhetorical and aesthetic sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples of the

Pacific...contributes to the overturning of these hegemonic structures and the promoting of decolonization” (Carroll et al 6). Engaging embodied kaona as part of a broader effort at Indigenous Pacific aesthetic sovereignty reveals an entry point to incorporate the layers of lived Indigenous experience into discussions of literary forms.

Kamakau’s discussion of the death of Liliha, granddaughter of Kahekili, suggests how kākau also function as decolonial aesthetic and affirm Indigenous narrative techniques. In Kamakau’s example, the Kanaka Maoli body represents the reworking of a single text by multiple authors and indigenizes settler form in a way that sets the ground for subsequent chapters’ discussion of these topics. Kamakau describes the death of Liliha, purportedly poisoned by one of her relatives:

Few of the chiefs were so beloved by the common people as Liliha. It is said that never before had there been heard such lamentation for the death of a chief as on the night that she died at Leleo, and her body was brought back to Honolulu. The river of Kikihale was stamped dry by the feet of people of all ranks and races crossing over to the city. Common people loved the name of Liliha, little children loved Kuini Liliha, and when she died they tattooed their skins with the words “Liliha Leleo” as an everlasting memorial of their affection. (351-352)

In this example, as words become part of the motifs and patterns of kākau, the body becomes a medium to represent Indigenous and settler modes of narration, both of which are crafted in commemoration of a figure of Hawaiian sovereignty. The body’s relationality is emphasized by the inclusion of Kanaka Maoli of all social classes and ages, suggesting how textual representations of the Native body are open to multiple, overlapping readings and perspectives.

The representation of diverse bodies and kākau as an “everlasting” marker again reminds us of the narrative significance of the body’s connection to multiple times and spaces, discussed at length in this study’s introduction and the following chapters.

The incorporation of the words “Kuini Liliha” into multiple kākau reveals the potential for theorizing the Indigenous body as text, opening up discussions of indigenizing settler forms and endorsing the aesthetic and narrative sovereignty of Indigenous forms. While kākau existed as a written mode of communication for millennia, the Western written word was a relatively new introduction at the time of Liliha’s death. The people’s incorporation of words into kākau showcases its ability to encounter foreign technologies and adapt them to the Indigenous practice of dynamic, embodied narratives. In addition, the transliteration of the English word “queen” into the Hawaiian word “kuini” reworks the previously discussed transliteration of the Hawaiian word “kākau” into the English word “tattoo,” suggesting the ability of Indigenous bodily representations of language and narratives to counter hegemonic discourses of literary form and technique which often marginalize texts rooted in Indigenous methods. The politics of translation and transliteration, and their relationship to Native Hawaiian literary, cultural, and political sovereignty are central to this study’s critique of settler literary, linguistic, and political forms.

Each of the previous examples of kākau relate a different possibility for reading the Indigenous body as part of the genesis of contemporary Pacific literature. The presence of all of these examples in Hawaiian-language newspapers also lays the groundwork for contemporary literary explorations of the Indigenous body’s ability to rework Western narrative forms such as the novel and short story. These examples reveal the potential of the embodied narrative as a foundational component of the following chapters’ discussions of how narratives rooted in embodied practices and knowledges speak to and through questions of cultural and political

sovereignty. Their prescient applications across times, spaces, and literary genres also emphasize the potential of a reading and writing praxis which centers the spiraled (re)turns and (re)tellings as markers of regional literary and cultural dynamism and unity.

Chapter 2

Pō as Relational Space between Bodies: Vā and the Individual's Quest

in Albert Wendt's *Pouliuli*

This study concentrates on Pō and its deployment in Indigenous Polynesian fiction that focuses on (re)establishing Indigenous nationhood through various forms of cultural and political sovereignty. Across the region, Pō's gestational imagery and its role in cosmogonic articulations of Pacific spaces and peoples display an attention to the physical body and its genealogical ties. Often, those genealogical ties are extrapolated out to others within a specific island group or region in the Pacific as real and extended, or theoretical ties which relate groups of people. In this chapter, I focus on how Pō and the relational spaces, or vā, between bodies function in Albert Wendt's novel *Pouliuli* (1977). In the novel, Wendt evokes Pō through the titular term, which has many meanings in the Samoan language, among them: the general darkness; the dark night; the sacred space of epic quests; and the name of a spirit who accompanies the demi-god Pili. In this chapter I interrogate how Pō is framed as a relational space in the Samoan context of *Pouliuli*. To do this, one must first understand the Samoan concept of vā, the figurative space which governs relationships between people, places, deities, and things. Teresia Teaiwa and Selina Tusitala Marsh note that Wendt's work "has helped to catalyze the global circulation of indigenous Polynesian concepts such as 'vā' and 'pōuliuli'" (Teaiwa and Marsh 234). The relationship between vā and literary, material, and bodily arts has been theorized in depth by Indigenous scholars: chief among them 'Okusitino Māhina with his tā-vā theory of reality, as well as Tēvita O. Ka'ili, Albert Refiti, I'uogafa Tuagalu, Konai Helu Thaman, and Leanne

Clayton, among others.³⁸ Vā is “a relational space that both separates and joins; a space that is both sacred and secular” (Suaalii-Sauni et al xxxii). The relational nature of this notion of space means that the meanings and contexts of the space(s) between bodies are malleable and may shift over time. Vā is also part of fa‘asamoa, often loosely translated as the Samoan way of life, which encompasses “Samoa culture, norms and customs, and the vision and values that underpin these” (Suaalii-Sauni et al xxv). The ideological and social elements of fa‘asamoa are inextricably tied to the politics and economics of the fa‘amatai system (Meleisea 1987b; Vaai 72), in which each āiga (nuclear or extended family) has a matai (titled head or chief).

In this chapter, I use an Indigenous reading praxis by centering discourses of narrative form around Samoan constructions of relational spaces and the bodily forms they connect. Within the novel, Pō brings the fluidity of vā relationships into dialogue with the rigid expectations of fa‘asamoa, particularly as they pertain to masculinist, able-bodied ideas of strength and leadership in familial, political, and religious relational spaces. I employ the concept of vā in this chapter to theorize how within the novel, Pouliuli is a relational space that simultaneously affirms and denies relationships among characters; these representations of the body and their negotiations of figurative space within the novel extend to the form of the text as well. A key component of this analysis is how and when certain bodies—sacred and secular, idealized and marginalized—inhabit the space of Pouliuli. The relational spaces between these bodies allow the narrative to exist in multiple spaces and times, which is reflected in multiple

³⁸ This sampling represents the “global circulation” Marsh and Teaiwa reference; these texts present vā in terms specific to island groups, but also invoke its broader Polynesian connections. Māhina, Ka‘ili, and Helu Thaman (2008) discuss the Tongan construction of vā (particularly in the context of tauhi vā); Tuagalū, Refiti, and Clayton focus on the Samoan construction of vā. Ka‘ili in particular draws on the diasporic potential of vā, linking it to the waves of migration from Tonga to Hawai‘i and highlighting how diasporic Tongans use this concept to maintain socio-spatial relationships outside of their immediate homeland. For a discussion of Lily Laita’s painting *Va I Ta Taeao Lalata E Aunoo Ma Gagana* in the context of Pacific Islander diaspora in Aotearoa/New Zealand, see Webb-Binder 2009.

narrative temporalities, flashbacks, and subplots. This fluidity moves beyond the form of the narrative and extends to the novel's content, which engages multiple times and spaces in its cultural production through the invocation and indigenization of French existentialism.

At the close of *Pouliuli*, Faleasa Osovae, previously the matai of the Āiga Faleasa and most respected patriarch, politician, and religious figure in the fictional Samoan village of Malaelua, stands mutely and immovably atop the steps of a church built by the London Missionary Society, an emaciated shell of his former self.³⁹ After seventy-six years of outwardly upholding the ideals of Samoan masculine leadership, selflessness, and service for the greater good, Faleasa awakens one day with the realization that his central position is an odious burden. His body registers this distaste through a nausea that reflects Wendt's career-long engagement with Sartre, Camus, and existential angst (Sharrad 2003; Ellerman; Subramani 122, 139). Ironically, although he wishes to free himself of the responsibilities of fa'asamoa, the nausea overwhelms him when in the presence of āiga and community members whose selfishness and corruption he detests as disrespectful of the fa'asamoa (Chadwick 155), and upon whom Faleasa has discovered he has the power to vomit at will. The novel details Faleasa's attempts to relieve himself of his familial, political, and religious obligations by feigning madness and covertly removing corrupt figures from each of these spaces through intricate plots involving his best friend, Laaumatua Lemigao, and favorite son, Moaula. Just as Faleasa is transferring power a displaced rival instigates a moment of fatal violence which dashes this careful scheme, sends Faleasa's son to prison for life, and instills a corrupt and unworthy successor in Faleasa's place.

³⁹ Samoan custom dictates that each āiga (extended family unit) refers to their leader by the family's last name once he has assumed control of the family. At the close of the novel, Faleasa has possessed his family's title for many years. However, to stay consistent with the text which denotes his social position at various points in life, I refer to him as Osovae in the scenes before he has been granted the title of the Āiga Faleasa. The same is true of his companion, Laaumatua Lemigao, who is simply known as Lemigao, a member of the Āiga Laaumatua, before he is given that title late in his life.

Crushed by his despair and the realization of his own vanity and meaninglessness outside of the central societal position of the titled head of a family, Faleasa crosses the precipice between feigned and actual madness and the novel closes with the image of him atop the church steps. Laaumatua, Faleasa's closest friend for most of his seventy-six years, observes that Faleasa "looked as though he had emerged out of the fabric of the church itself and no one would ever shift him from those steps," with his arms stretched towards the sky and his mouth "fixed in a soundless scream" (144). This image typifies the current of existentialism running through *Pouliuli*: Faleasa's body often registers his ambivalence towards his central position in an intensely communal culture, in which he paradoxically feels like an outsider, and he eventually retreats into a psychological "living death, into the living darkness of Pouliuli" (97).⁴⁰ This "living death" frames *Pouliuli* as an Indigenous response to the central claim of one of Wendt's favorite texts, Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Camus 3).

Within Wendt's reworked vision of existentialism (Sharrad 2003; Auva'a), Faleasa's emotional revulsion by and psychological isolation from the only way of life he has ever known produces an intense sense of exile. Pouliuli, which Wendt alternately refers to as the Void, is part of Indigenous Samoan religion which was displaced by the Christian tradition that has become an integral component of fa'asamoa in the novel and in contemporary Samoan life. Although *Pouliuli* incorporates *The Myth of Sisyphus* as an intertext, the tensions between Pō's generative and "living death" contexts is rooted in Samoan cosmogony of this Indigenous religion. Samoan

⁴⁰ For a further exploration of the connections between images and Pō in Wendt's work, see *The Book of the Black Star* (2002), which combines Wendt's paintings and poetry. All of the images feature black, his favorite color, and are a continuation of his career long engagement with Indigenous Samoan religious beliefs and the effort to restore the fecundity to pō, which began with *Pouliuli* (Wendt 2013). Wendt has also expressed that the opening image of Faleasa vomiting was his starting point in writing *Pouliuli* (Wendt 2013). The oral and the visual are integral to his writing process (Hereniko and Wendt).

Head of State, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi's translation of the first line of a funeral chant from the Tagaloa religion highlights Pō's centrality to notions of genesis and death: "Tulouna le lagi tuatasi! Tulouna le pogisa ma le leai! / Salutations to the first heaven! Salutations to the darkness and the void!" (2009, 2). The commemoration of the cosmogonic "transformation of void and darkness to substance and matter" in the opening line of a funeral chant reflects the relational, generative, and existential elements of Pō which undergird Wendt's novel (Tui Atua 2009, 3). Similarly, Tui Atua's idea that "[the] sense of smell is central to [the] indigenous Samoan religion" can be read alongside the "stench" that instigates Faleasa's existential nausea (2009, 1). Paradoxically rife with potential and nothingness, calm and chaos, in Wendt's novel Pouliuli is the space where the trickster demi-god Pili upsets the established social order and rejects his ties to his family during a quest to discover his true origins. Wendt's reworked vision of existentialism is facilitated by a reworked version of the Indigenous Samoan religious narrative, in which Pili outwits his father, the god Tagaloa, who is the supreme creator.⁴¹ Faleasa's quest to find meaning in his life and a space for himself as an individual lead him to Pouliuli, the space rampant with potential and a symbolic link to the generations of Samoans who have come before him; yet, this same space has become peripheral, displaced by the Church which Faleasa so devoutly served for decades. Paul Sharrad, whose *Circling the Void*, is the authoritative critical survey of Wendt's prolific career, argues that whether the Void is "discounted as either pagan ignorance or modern nihilism," it remains "an authorizing symbol connecting Samoan creation myth with Western existentialism" (118). Sharrad also argues that the Void connects Samoan creation myth to the larger colonial experience, as Wendt's works

⁴¹ Throughout his career, Wendt has consistently reworked Pacific Islands mythologies in his work, stating: "There are no original versions...I take a lot of traditional Samoan and Polynesian mythology and include them in my novels. But they are not true to the originals. I even change the mythology to suit the purpose of the novel" (Hereniko and Wendt 54).

“shuttle between the meaningless void of colonial disintegration and the creative void of creation myth and existentialism in which ‘darkness is fertile’” (2002, 116). The Void becomes a peripheral space in relation to both the content and form of the text: it is in conflict with the intensely Christian tenets of fa‘asamoa which center communal life in the novel; and, from a perspective of literary criticism, it becomes yoked to the discourse of Western existentialism which, despite Wendt’s incorporation of it into his literary ancestry (Wendt 1992, 49), represents another space of epistemological divergence from fa‘asamoa.

Wendt’s protagonist highlights the ways the Samoan body and consciousness mediate the complex temporal, spatial, and existential intersections and disjunctures between fa‘asamoa, Indigenous Samoan religion, and the firmly entrenched Christian missionary tradition. Faleasa’s movement towards madness and the comfort of Pouliuli unfolds alongside parallel flashbacks and narrative subplots: the former involves his childhood engagement with an elderly Samoan man who is the product of missionary adoptive parents, and tries to contain his own descent into madness by constructing stone circles which represent Pouliuli; the latter involve a retelling of the Samoan demi-god Pili, who is aided by Pouliuli, the darkness, in his mythic quests. The formal elements reveal how in *Pouliuli*, as with all of his work, Wendt rejects the totalizing discourse which sees the contemporary Pacific and West as discretely binaristic categories. As a representation of how these experiences are an indelible feature of contemporary Samoan life, Faleasa’s body is tangible and inextricable from the “fabric of the church itself,” while his consciousness transcends the stasis of space and time to inhabit a specifically Samoan construction of Pouliuli. Laaumatua soothingly assures Faleasa that their fates were determined “a long time ago” and that they are not necessarily “of the times,” and encourages him to “Sleep on [...] safe in the embrace of Pouliuli, the Great Darkness out of which we came and to which

we must all return” (145). Wendt’s invocation of the Void—the term he uses throughout much of the text to describe Pouliuli—through the Samoan body and consciousness on the steps of a Christian church of which Faleasa had been a devoted leader, draws my attention to how the body’s relationship to particular times and spaces, both foreign and Indigenous, is dynamic and relational.

My reading of *Pouliuli* relies on Wendt’s previous theorizations of Pacific Islands and Samoan constructions of culture, space, and time as dynamic and rooted in Indigenous, corporeally-based epistemologies of the Void. My reason for relying on these is two-fold: First, it is rooted in the criteria set forth by Indigenous writers that critics be aware of creative writers’ other forms of writing, which I discuss at length in the introduction to this study; second, it is informed by Wendt’s call to promote Indigenous theories of literary criticism (Hereniko and Wendt 56). Wendt’s oeuvre has shown that the static assumption of an authentic indigenous identity frozen in the precontact past alienates Pacific peoples from their histories and cultural identity. It also assumes homogeneity and positions whatever comes after colonial encounter as separate from the authentic past, which marginalizes the dynamism and heterogeneity of these cultures and binds them to a Euro-American historicization. Wendt’s ambivalent literary depictions of Pō, vā, and fa‘asamoa within *Pouliuli* demand a nuanced analysis of Samoan culture, and afford it a dynamism that allows a contemporary engagement with foundations yet still leaves room for critique and transformation. “Towards a New Oceania” (1976), his widely recognized foundational essay in the field of Pacific Studies, argues for an Oceanian identity which recognizes contemporary encounters with other cultures as simply another manifestation of the dynamism and interexchange of our voyaging traditions.

Within the novel, Faleasa's movement towards Pouliuli unfolds through comparisons to two other figures, both of which contain religious significance and reflect the dynamism Wendt articulates as central to Pacific culture. The first is the adopted Samoan son of London Missionary Society parents, who has a tumultuous relationship with Christianity and a tenuous hold on his own sanity; the second is Pili, a trickster figure from Indigenous Samoan religious beliefs who performs epic quests in the Ninth Heaven and eventually disappears into Pouliuli after a long and peaceful reign over all of Samoa. Faleasa's relationships with these two figures and the community around him are often extrapolated by his bodily responses to his movements through the *vā*, or relational spaces (and times), between them. Space is fecund and its potential contexts and meanings are not fixed, but malleable and attuned to the relationships between people. Thus, Samoan space relies on dynamism and inherently rejects assumptions of temporal or bodily stasis, affirming that meaning and identity are continual processes that link individuals and communities across time.

Wendt's text insists on the ambiguities and intersections between foreign and indigenous cultures, and in the novel's glossary he defines its titular term as simply "darkness." The absence of any further descriptions allows the reader to draw on multiple meanings of that description, meanings given context through the varieties of *vā*, or spaces, the reader or the term may inhabit. Pouliuli can be understood as an Indigenous Samoan construction of the generative space of Pō which I describe at length in my introduction chapter, what Laumatua affirms is the "Great Darkness out of which we came and to which we must all return." However, within the strongly Christian nation of Samoa, this construction of darkness is also equated with the benighted ignorance of paganism, and the colonial assumption that Indigenous knowledge prior to this introduction was inherently inferior. This intellectual inferiority was, as Toeolesulusulu

Damon Salesa notes, positioned as morally inferior as well: “Elements of these ancestral Samoan ways of being, were (as we know) in Christian eyes, heathen, pagan, sinful or evil: Pouliuli” (2014, 145). Thus, within the nation and the novel, darkness occupies a liminal, ambivalent position in which its obverse, whiteness, can suggest “purity and forgiveness”; and while blackness can serve as a foil to whiteness, it can simultaneously be “the colour of femaleness, of sacredness and of life” (Suaalii-Sauni et al xii).

In this chapter, I theorize Pouliuli as a type of *vā*, or relational space, that exists between Faleasa and other characters. Drawing on the previous chapters’ discussions of *Pō* as a generative space which is often articulated through ontologies rooted in figurative darkness, I begin with an examination of the novel’s use of bodily metaphors of the individual and the nation through a discussion of the claims the protocols of *vā* relationships may make in familial, political, and religious spaces. I then explore the existential elements of Faleasa’s quest for individuality through feigned madness as a rejection of those claims. The second section of the chapter builds on these discussions of the ambivalence of *vā* relationships within the text and argues that the novel itself is structured by narrative interruptions which are (re)turns and (re)tellings that mirror the transgressions of *vā* spaces within its content. These (re)turns and (re)tellings invoke mythic figures associated with *Pō* and the societal expectations and misreadings of their bodies, which further my reading of *Pō* as the key relational space within the novel. Finally, I analyze moments when Pouliuli’s temporal spiral serves as a relational space whose transgression allows Faleasa to renegotiate relational spaces across generations, with an emphasis on his encounters with social constructions of idealized masculine leadership and fraught paternal relationships.

(Dis)Connections as National Metaphor: Vā and Body as the Sacred Center

The vā is the figurative space between people, which may change as the contexts for the social and spiritual relationships between those people broaden or shift. The various types of vā articulate an individual's sense of self, which is understood through both figurative and physical connections with others. While the varieties of vā allow for dynamism within and across relationships, the overarching principal is that space binds one to a larger collective and affirms those relationships, as Wendt notes:

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of Va or Wa in Maori and Japanese. Va is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships and the contexts change. (We knew a little about semiotics before Saussure came along!) A well-known Samoan expression is “Ia teu le va”—cherish, nurse, care for the va, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or thing in terms of group, in terms of va, relationships. (“Tatauing” 402)

Pouliuli explores the consequences of a central figure in the “communal culture” valuing his own “individualism” and suddenly refusing to “perceive... [himself] in terms of group, in terms of va, relationships.” Faleasa's decision to remove himself from his responsibilities and reject the vā between himself and others jeopardizes a way of life that hinges on the communal, and its tragic effects are felt by the entire community. While this construction of relational space includes ideas like vanimonimo, whose malleability deems it “space that appears and disappears,” the

idea that the space would simply not exist is not compatible (Wendt 1999, 403). It appears and disappears, yet always endures as the source from which life and relationships spring (Wendt 2015).⁴² In this section, I describe the multiple types of *vā* and analyze how these relational spaces lay claim to the individual on figurative and physical levels. While *vā* are figurative, relational spaces, they can also dictate how physical bodies interact and the ways an individual theorizes and maintains bodily autonomy. I then discuss Faleasa's attempts to individuate himself through control over his own body and feigned madness as a rejection of the larger tenets of *fa'asamoa* which are based on the metaphor of the nation as the body's sacred center.

Vā relationships can shift over time and, as *vanimonimo* suggests, these relational spaces can even appear and disappear; but *vā* can also be understood as very specific types which carry their own entrenched archetypes of behavior, emotion, and self-identification. Leanne Clayton, a Samoan artist based in Aotearoa New Zealand, has argued that the malleability and variety of *vā* relationships can be understood as patterns: "Behavior, structure, images, feelings can be expressed as patterns that carry meaning" (Clayton 3). The maintenance and transgression of these patterns, which are entrenched components of the *fa'asamoa* protocols that govern daily life, are at the heart of Faleasa's crisis and the multiple conflicts that move the plot of *Pouliuli*. Faleasa attempts to remove himself from several relationships, a daunting task given that, as I'uogafu Tuagalu notes, there at least 37 *vā* spatial relationships to which a Samoan may be connected. Chief among them are: "Va o tagata refers to the relational space between people; va feiloa'i refers to the protocols of meeting; va fealofani refers to the brotherly and sisterly love that people should show one another; va fealoaloa'i, the respectful space and va tapua'i, the

⁴² In *Out of the Vaipe* Wendt describes *Vanimonimo* as a generative space: "[I]n the beginning there is only Tagaloalagi, the Supreme Creator, existing in the *Vanimonimo*, the Space-that-appears-and disappears, and that it is from where He stood that the first Papa, the Rock, grows."

worshipful space” (Tuagalu 110). In the broader Polynesian context *vā* has also been linked to politics and kinship in a more concrete way, as Konai Helu Thaman provides a Tongan etymology in which “*vaa* is believed to be derived from the term *vaha’a*. *Ha’a* traditionally refers to a set of genealogically related titles” (2008, 464). When Faleasa schemes to extricate himself from his familial, spiritual, and political relationships, he violates many of these *vā* and implicates Moaula and Laaumatua in these transgressions as well by enlisting their help in his covert schemes. Because these relationships are foundations of the *fa’asamoa* which Faleasa has sworn to uphold, he becomes guilty of the same transgression for which he sought to displace those that were “disrespectful of the *faa*-Samoa, an embodiment of the worst characteristic” (4). Faleasa’s attempts to use Moaula to dismantle certain aspects of *fa’asamoa* unintentionally erode the sanctity of the relational space between parent and child. The deeper Moaula becomes entangled in Faleasa’s increasingly convincing performance of madness, the more he treats his father as a burden to be borne out of an outward expression of filial duty rather than the sacred and indispensable center of familial, political, and religious life which he had previously been through the maintenance of *vā* relationships. This complicity is a factor in pushing Faleasa’s madness from performance to reality. While the *vā* relationships are malleable, they are not expendable and their maintenance inextricably binds an individual to those around him.

The figurative elements of relational space in a communal culture also have very real implications for the physical realities of one’s body and an individual’s sense of autonomy within a social order. Noting the interconnections of the body, space, time, and community through the concept of *vā*, Albert L. Refiti argues that:

[Y]our body does not necessarily belong to you as an individual. Because you are woven from the flesh of the dead, your body belong[s] to the ancestors, to your *fanua* the place

of birth, and to the community that shaped and cared for you...this gives meaning to what I am proposing here as *vā* relationships—*vā* spaces, what is in-between us that is more than you and me, what in you that is more than you. (99)

Faleasa's quest for freedom begins with his attempts to exercise control over his own body, drawing on its innate figurative strength for his own pleasure. Comparing his family to a pack of "cannibals" who want to consume his "carcass," he begins to vomit on them profusely (5). It is not a coincidence that Faleasa's attempt to claim ownership over his body and therefore reject his communal ties is centered around his stomach, the Samoan word for which is "*manava*: stomach (mana: power; va: space)" (Wendt 1999, 402). This is clearly displayed in his existential vomiting during meals, whose protocols of rank and serving display Faleasa's status and central position in society.⁴³ His interruption of the protocols based in *fa'asamoa* represents a disruption of the ritualistic occasions of eating, through which, as Michelle Keown notes, "the refusal or regurgitation of food functions as a rejection of an unacceptable social order" (2005, 30). Faleasa's rejection of this social order is emphasized by others' continued figurative consumption of his body, maintaining the social order Keown references even as Faleasa resists it.

Faleasa's attempts to locate answers to his existential questions/ crises within the body reveal how the novel constructs the Samoan body as a symbol of culture and metaphor for the Samoan homeland and way of life. Similar to Victoria Kneubuhl's "Ho'oulu Lāhui," discussed in Chapter 4, *Pouliuli* is a postcolonial *bildungsroman* and the protagonist's development and search are expressed through his body and plotted alongside the shifting ideas of what the

⁴³ For a discussion of meals as ritualistic opportunities to maintain *vā* and sociospatial relationships in broader Polynesian contexts, see Ka'ili's "Tauhi Vā: Creating Beauty through the Art of Sociospatial Relations."

fa‘asamoa should be across various types of political (in)dependence. The protagonist is born in the early twentieth century and lives through the transition of Samoan national and political administrations, the movements of missionaries, the erosion of a communal Indigenous culture by the encroachment of Western capitalism, and the presence of various foreign and colonial powers in Samoa and the Pacific during World War I and World War II. Wendt’s parsing of the word Samoa throughout his career as “sa” plus “moa” constructs the Samoan nation via a bodily metaphor that relies on a relational and liminal positionality, which is centered by a sense of sacredness. It also suggests that the novel’s constructions of the Samoan nation, language, and body—and their respective representations—are co-constitutive and rely on multiple meanings, narratives, and histories, which have been interwoven. Wendt has described the roots of Samoa and its multiple etymological and epistemological linkages:

*[S]a means sacred and moa means the centre...a human being’s centre is just below the rib cage in the centre of the belly. It’s not quite the heart and it’s not quite the belly either. It’s that space between... The centre of life itself. That is linked to the concept of va, which means the space that relates all things. (M. Neill qtd in Sharrad *Circling the Void*, 19)*

[The] belly... is where the power of the language comes from. In the Samoan way, the center of the human being is the belly...And that’s where your whole spirituality—the power of the language and the power of feeling—comes from. In some cultures, the center seems to be the head. [chuckles] (Hereniko and Wendt 52-53)

The novel details Faleasa’s attempts to individuate himself from the overarching social and familial structures which are pillars of the communal fa‘asamoa, by focusing on the control he

exerts over his own body. These attempts are rooted in his stomach—most specifically and viscerally when he notices a “feeling of nausea [that] surged up from the centre of his chest” and allows him to exercise his newfound skill to “vomit whenever he chose to,” a skill “that he was really enjoying” (6). We have a novel whose protagonist wants to free himself of the responsibilities and constraints of the communal and relational aspects of the fa‘asamoa, while also replacing political, familial, and religious figures who are disrespectful of the fa‘asamoa; yet the methods he chooses—those of a bodily-based center of agency and spirituality—are also the same epistemologies at the foundation of what Samoa is. Thus, the same metaphor which centers the novel’s construction of Samoanness is simultaneously ambivalent and incapable of accommodating an individual exploration of both his personal and relational ideas of Samoanness.

This ambivalence is mirrored in the text’s representations of Faleasa’s madness and the various sources to which other characters ascribe it. Faleasa’s madness is perceived by others as a result of trying to individuate himself from the relational spaces of a communal culture which he is simultaneously trying desperately to uphold. He performs madness under the guise of possession by an *aitu*, or spirit, which Kneubuhl defines as disruptions of Samoan communal life: “*Aitu* embody the chaotic side of Samoan existence, just as village life, *atua* [gods], and *tupua* [deified spirits of chiefs] embody order” (1987, 167). In the early stage of his ruse, Faleasa’s family calls a group of village and church elders, one of whom is a nephew of Faleasa, to their home to assess his state and devise a treatment plan.⁴⁴ A key component in their assessment of Faleasa’s state and their subsequent callous dismissal of him as a social force, comes from their observation of his inability to receive them and treat them with the proper

⁴⁴ For an extended discussion of Samoan healing as ritualized performance in the context of the *fofō* (Samoan doctor or healer), see Kneubuhl 1987.

protocol and signs of respect that their personal, familial, and social relationships with him require. Although their dismissal of Faleasa is motivated by their personal greed, the public justification they give for the madness that has befallen Faleasa is rooted in the rhetoric of relational spaces. Sau, who has been Faleasa's friend for fifty years and benefitted from his largesse, positions Faleasa as disrespectful of both the group dynamic of fa'asamoa and the interpersonal vā he shares with others: "We all know, he's always been slightly odd, arrogant, and too dictatorial," reasoning that his madness is a curse, a "tragedy" that is a "punish[ment] by the Almighty for his past" (13). The four elders, who hold prominent positions in church and village life, decide that the "clever palagi [European] doctors" located hours away in the hospital in the urban Apia are not equipped to deal with any illness not rooted in the body: "Palagi doctors don't know how to cure Samoan illnesses anyway...And this is a Samoan illness" (14).

In a study of contemporary Samoan mental health, Kiwi Tamasese, Carmel Peteru, Charles Waldegrave, and Allister Bush provide context for understanding Samoan mental illness through the relational space, and highlight how European notions of the individual are inadequate to address violations of this space. Their research found that "Mental ill health was sometimes linked to breaches of forbidden and sacred relationships, which could be addressed effectively only within protocols laid down in the culture." They noted that Samoans viewed a person's spiritual and psychiatric components as so closely connected that mental illness could not be successfully treated without a process that addressed the spiritual component, of which the maintenance of vā relationships is a key element. Furthermore, their findings revealed the idea of the autonomous self to be incongruous with the traditional Samoan worldview:

The Samoan self was described as having meaning only in relationship with other people, not as an individual. This self could not be separated from the 'va' or relational space that

occurs between an individual and parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family and community members. (Tamasese et al 303)

The elders in *Pouliuli* quickly rule out palagi remedies for what they deem a specifically Samoan type of madness, yet simultaneously ascribe the source to the Christian God introduced to them by palagi. While these two causes might seem oppositional, they are both rooted in attempts at individuation: Faleasa's madness is a result of trying to be an individual in a relational culture and also transgressing his personal relationship with the Christian God. Their seemingly paradoxical location of his madness as simultaneously separate from, yet suspended between, two cultures points towards Wendt's larger project of Indigenizing foreign concepts of exile and the existential intertexts to which *Pouliuli* speaks.

Sisyphus and Māui: Weaving Existentialism into a Literary Ancestry

The struggle with madness and the place of the individual in broader society also reflect how Wendt took global, cosmopolitan concepts such as existentialism in the contexts of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and filtered them through the local with a particularly Samoan bent. As Teaiwa and Marsh note, Wendt's indigenization of French existentialism is part of his consistent engagement with "global movements in mode, style, and philosophy" (234). While *Pouliuli*'s philosophical concerns with meaning, individuation, and vanity, as well as its use of bodily experiences like vomiting, are similar to existential texts like *Nausea*, *The Outsider*, and *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Faleasa's motivations and the novel's climax are built around an ultimate embrace, rather than a rejection, of certain Samoan religious, kinship, and political structures. *Pouliuli* highlights the ways fa'asamoa can use these structures to marginalize the individual, yet

the text still manages to center and uphold these tenets as it moves to the margins of the community, and even sanity, with Faleasa.

Reclaiming and centering Indigenous Samoan religious and cultural practices is a central project of Wendt's literary career (Wendt 2015). In *Pouliuli*, Indigenous religious elements become the method by which, paradoxically, the protagonist realizes his outsider position and reaffirms his relationships with others. Though the novel is concerned with the corruption of individuals within institutions and highlights individual flaws with betrayal and intrigue around the maintenance and transfer of power (Sharrad 2003, 107; Doetschman 84), aspects of these structures are also what allow characters like Faleasa and Laaumatua to endure after the novel's catastrophes. The same sense of extended kinship and community which Faleasa found suffocating and overbearing is part of what leads Laaumatua and his family to care for Faleasa once he has moved from feigned to actual madness and found the peaceful embrace of Pouliuli a reprieve from the traumas of his life. Faleasa's existential quest brings him back to the center of the community, affirming it through its response to his rejection, in a way that a strictly French existentialism would not.

Existentialism is not a concept Wendt discovered elsewhere and incorporated into his writing style and philosophical outlook; it was part of his experience of growing up culturally bifurcated. He was born into a colonized Samoa, whose colonial status dictated that at the age of thirteen he had to "[leave] Samoa, the sacred centre, and a large and extended family and a communal way of life" to be educated in New Zealand in the "puritanical culture of a spartan boarding school modelled on the private schools of England" (Wendt 1992, 48). Wendt saw in Camus someone who had also grown up in two worlds and articulated what it meant to live in exile, which meant that Camus's explorations of the existential were not foreign to Wendt, but

parallel articulations of a similar experience. Thus, according to Wendt, the form and content of existential texts were part of a literary heritage which he built upon:

As I matured as a writer, I took [Camus's] style (and the style of other writers I admired) and combined it with mine: a fusion of Sisyphus pushing the rock up the mountain and the Polynesian trickster demi-god Maui who challenged the atua (gods) and stole their secrets, and his eventual death in Hine-nui-te-Po, the Death Goddess. I've woven out of my ancient Polynesian heritage and Camus and all my other literary ancestors a way of writing/ seeing/ being. (1992, 49)

The local and the global become co-constitutive in this “woven” literary ancestry. The existential becomes part of an Indigenous methodology rooted in Polynesian religious beliefs while still retaining its discursive significance as a philosophical form related to a global literary tradition.⁴⁵

Existentialism's role in Wendt's literary ancestry is dynamic and relational, evolving as the author himself moves across different relational spaces throughout his lifetime. *Pouliuli* marks a shift in Wendt's engagement with existentialism and the place of the individual in his literary arc. Wendt remarks on this trend in an interview:

In my early books, I go for a very rampant individualism. And then a little while after I published my first two books, I decided that this was not for me, because of what individualism has done to the planet today...you don't think of the group and what's going to happen to others. Now, in my new books, my philosophy has changed. It still

⁴⁵ In addition to French existentialism, *Pouliuli* has been compared to other national literary traditions: The most obvious and common example of this has been Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Hamlet* (Sharrad; Beston; Bertram); Collins notes that “[b]oth the theme and the technique are highly reminiscent of the work of Nigeria's Chinua Achebe” (474).

remains existentialist in the sense that spiritually and emotionally I believe that I should make my own way, but this is to be done within the framework of the society and the group, and one's responsibility to that community and to the society (Hereniko and Wendt 57-58).

His first novel, *Sons for the Return Home* (1973), fully embraced the path of the individual, following an anonymous young Samoan university student who becomes increasingly alienated from his family while moving with them between New Zealand and Samoa. Upon learning that his mother had persuaded his Pākeha (European New Zealander) lover to have the abortion responsible for crumbling their relationship, he “ritually slaps [his mother] in renunciation of his connection and we see him finally suspended between the two countries, flying back to Wellington” alone (Sharrad 2003, 41). His next piece of long fiction, *Pouliuli* (1977)—his fourth book, after the short story collection *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* (1974) and the poetry collection *Inside Us the Dead* (1976)—engages the same tensions around the process of coming to an individual consciousness with respect to the communal aspects of Samoan cultural and familial life, yet these struggles take place in the protagonist's homeland, where he is moored to his familial, social, political, and religious responsibilities in a way that the central figure of *Sons* can never be in exile. *Pouliuli*'s protagonist abdicates his familial title—after which, he is only referred to as Faleasa out of courtesy—in order to gain a certain type of freedom; yet he still lives among his aiga and attempts to install his replacement rather than fly away after irrevocably severing ties and violating the vā between parent and child the way the anonymous protagonist of *Sons* does.

The cultural and epistemological disjunctures which position the Void at the margins of Samoan community within *Pouliuli* also infuse Faleasa's eventual embrace of madness and

search for refuge within Pouliuli with layers of meaning derived from that tension. While Faleasa's entrance into Pouliuli is enmeshed with the madness that afflicts him, it is also an affirmation that the space that he had once marginalized through his adherence to Christianity has been reclaimed and moved back to the center. In the next section I explore how the novel utilizes that centering, positioning Pouliuli as the relational space through which Faleasa and others access the layers of time and space inherent in Pouliuli to (re)negotiate their connections to one another.

(Re)turns, (Re)tellings, and Narrative Interruptions as Movements through Vā

The temporal and spatial expansiveness of Pō and the shifting nature of vā relationships which form the core of the novel's content are also reflected in its form and construction. In my introduction chapter, I discuss at length the spiraled characteristics of space and time within Indigenous constructions of Pō across Māori, Kanaka Maoli, and Samoan knowledge systems and literature. In *Pouliuli*, the plot is comprised of similar events reenacted in multiple times and spaces, both sacred and secular. Some early criticism questioned the "point" of the flashbacks within the novel, asking if they were "merely a loosely related anecdote" that hinted at Wendt's predisposition to the short story form (Beston 146); later, Sharrad pointed to the absence of "aestheticist unity" within an "imperfect text" full of "edginess" as part of *Pouliuli*'s "achievement" (2003, 119). I argue that these (re)tellings unfold as the novel turns and turns along a spiraled continuum of space and time, resulting in (re)turns which evoke Pō's spiraled form. Vā lends a Samoan specificity that is reflected in the text's (re)turn to events and plot lines, with each (re)telling reflecting a variation in the vā between the characters involved. In this

sense, these relational spaces begin to move across what Sina Vaai calls the “spiral of ever-moving-present” and the “spiral of the *va*” (57). Faleasa transgresses relational spaces in the present in an attempt to assert his individuality; but because these *vā* are incorporated into a spiraled narrative from which their meaning is inextricable, the time and space of the novel, reflected in its form, reject such a facile separation. Rather than a nuanced retelling of the same event, *Pouliuli* recasts similar experiences from different vantage points and across different times in characters’ lives.

Being on the receiving end of an action as a titled adult is much different from instigating a similar action as an untitled youth, and the resonances reflect different relational spaces at different moments in a character’s development. However, for both the adolescent, untitled Osovae and the adult, titled Faleasa, these formal textual (re)turns are often bound up in notions of virile, masculine leadership and problematic, austere fatherhood. These episodes carry meaning on their own, but their full significance is only accessible once they have turned back in on themselves through multiple (re)tellings. For instance, the climax of the novel—in which Faleasa’s deposed and publicly shamed political rival, Malaga, comes to Faleasa’s home with a shotgun and instigates the two murders for which Moaula receives life imprisonment—is a reworking of a similar event from Faleasa’s youth, in which he fired a shotgun into the home of a friend whom others had perceived as impugning Faleasa’s family honor. Faleasa’s exercise of violence was part of his strict adherence to the violent models of masculinity and fatherhood passed down to him by his father, the previous matai of his *āiga*.⁴⁶ The story of Faleasa’s adherence to ideals of Samoan masculinity through constructs of bravery and family honor, as

⁴⁶ Michelle Keown discusses Faleasa’s violence as “merely re-enacting what he has learned from his father” in the context of sexual violence towards women. She also traces the evolution of Wendt’s representations of gender dynamics and gendered violence in Samoan culture, noting *Ola* (1991) as a shift from earlier works like *Pouliuli* (2005, 26-28).

well as unprecedented ingenuity in dealing with a much stronger rival, is well known throughout their village and likely served as Malaga's inspiration for Faleasa's demise. Malaga, a nephew of Faleasa's, often follows the custom of referring to an authority figure as "father."⁴⁷ Thus, the moment when his actual son, Moaula, and his figurative son, Malaga, perform the pivotal violence which sends Faleasa over the precipice from feigned to actual madness can be seen as his own failure to end the succession of paternal models of violence. Similarly, Faleasa's descent into actual madness and forlorn physical appearance at the novel's close is foreshadowed by the appearance of an unkempt old man in Faleasa's youth. Faleasa's connection to the old man is more than a mere physical resemblance, as Beston has argued (146). The anonymous mad man becomes Osovae's surrogate father figure, offering him an alternative to his own father's harsh and unloving models of masculinity and leadership which often inspire fear manifested in physical illnesses for Osovae. Like Faleasa, the old man attempts to find meaning within the Void, constructing rings of white pebbles around centers of single black stones. Just as Faleasa instigates his own madness when he throws away the central tenet of fa'asamoa by casting away his matai title and family responsibilities as an adult, as a child he casts away one of the old man's central stones, which precipitates the stranger's descent into madness. In each of these events, Faleasa's recognition of the relational spaces between himself and other characters carries a meaning that is independent from the subsequent iterations; yet that meaning can only be fully understood when placed alongside its counterpart within the novel's spiraled construction.

⁴⁷ Susan Y. Najita discusses Wendt's use of multiple father figures through this custom of respectful reference as a central theme in *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (2006, 76-80). As she argues, "The two fathers, Toasa ('my father') and Tauilo ('the man who calls himself my father'), refer to the competing sources of authority during the colonial period, the traditional chiefly structure and the capitalist-inflected colonial one" (76).

In this section, I concentrate on how the temporal liminality of Pō and the shifting nature of vā relational spaces come to bear on characters' bodies to influence the form of the novel. When read through a disabilities studies lens which critiques idealized and peripheral bodily forms that are tethered to specific ideas of masculinity and leadership, the (re)turns and (re)tellings of plot points become transgressive and transformative acts that reveal the potential for renegotiating relational space across generations. I begin with a discussion of how Wendt's fiction presents Indigenous narratives of Pō as malleable, resisting authoritative versions and insisting on reshaping their form to fit the needs of the novel. This reshaping of orature and the novel form are also explicitly tied to a politicization of the novel and its reliance on a specific form of Indigenous story-telling rooted in Pō, fāgogo. I then trace the ways characters within the novel, who are drawn from Indigenous figures associated with Pō narratives, are only fully understood through an analysis of their bodily forms. The transgressive potential of these bodily forms is mirrored in the form of the text, which contains two types of narrative interruptions. The first are flashbacks to Osovae and Lemigao's youth (before they have received their respective family titles of Faleasa and Laaumatua), and feature some type of innovation or transgression of social protocol through an exploitation of others' expectations of their bodily forms. The second involves a retelling of the Pili narrative, which serves as context for Faleasa's own encounter with Pouliuli, while also providing a subplot independent of the time and space of the present narrative in Malaelua or the flashbacks to his youth. The narrative interruptions often touch on the community's and individual's ideas of masculinity as expressed through bodily representations of virility, leadership, and fatherhood that take place within the space of Pouliuli. I conclude with a discussion of how Faleasa utilizes Pouliuli as a site to renegotiate the relational space between himself and the community, focusing on how the (re)turns of the plot suggest the

Void as a tool to refashion the self and liberate it from the societal constraints and expectations of his bodily form.

The (re)turns and (re)tellings within the plot of the novel are themselves (re)turns and (re)tellings of Indigenous narratives which are both pan-Polynesian and unique to Samoa. These narratives function as allusions which reveal deeper truths about certain characters, while also rejecting the idea that there is a singular, authoritative version of any tale. As Wendt observes of his use of existing orature within his written work:

There are no original versions...you change them to suit your audience. For instance, I take a lot of traditional Samoan and Polynesian mythology and include them in my novels. But they are not true to the originals. I even change the mythology to suit the purpose of the novel...most of the mythology in my novels is made up [*laughs*].

(Hereniko and Wendt 53-54)

As with his theoretical constructions of space and time, in *Pouliuli* Wendt's descriptions of Pouliuli and its attendant narratives employ figures both common throughout the Pacific Islands and specific to Samoan spirituality and nationality. These figures and spaces are revered as foundational narratives of indigenous thought and spirituality, while simultaneously marginalized as pagan remnants from a time before Christianity took root in a nation whose Christian piety often outpaces colonial, missionary metropolises.⁴⁸ The pan-Polynesian Māui is a trickster god whose exploits often involve disrupting established social hierarchies based on gender, age, and social rank; his quests often take him into the realm of Pō in an attempt to

⁴⁸ For an extended discussion of the intersections of indigenous Samoan religion and Christianity, see Suaalii-Sauni et al.

procure some benefit for humanity.⁴⁹ In *Pouliuli*, the invocation of the figure is a centralizing force in a text which insists on ambivalence, on the refusal to grant discreet stasis—a direct articulation of the murkiness and ambiguity of the root “po” in the novel’s title. Within the novel, this transgressive liminality is most prominent in the trickster figure of Laaumatua Lemigao, a “cripple” dubbed “Crooked-leg” by villagers, who uses the community’s assumption that the “burden” of his clubfoot equates with mental inferiority, to outwit his social betters (20). The novel also draws on Pili, a specifically Samoan figure with close ties to the broader Pacific Māui. Pili also moves between the realms of men and deities, and often calls upon his companion, the spirit Pouliuli, the darkness, to aid him in his quests. Faleasa often invokes the Pili narrative and draws parallels between his feigned and actual madness, and Pili’s inhabitation of Pouliuli. A third figure, whom I find to be a present absence within the text, is Nafanua, the heroic Samoan goddess who, like Māui and Pili, is born misshapen or prematurely and abandoned by her mother.⁵⁰ Upon hearing that her family’s lands in the upper world of Samoa have been invaded, Nafanua traverses Pō to lead them in war and subsequently “consult[s] with the highest chiefs in the restructuring of the government of Samoa” and becomes the first person to control all four of the highest chiefly titles, “thus extending her rule over the entire country” (Sinavaiana Gabbard 2014, 250). Nafanua is not explicitly invoked in the text, but the connections between her quest and Faleasa’s efforts to inhabit the Void while trying to restructure Samoan politics on the

⁴⁹ These benefits include securing fire, slowing the sun, and fishing up islands. These exploits are told throughout Polynesia.

⁵⁰ In “Sina and Nafanua,” Caroline Sinavaiana Gabbard describes her being born as a “blood clot” which her mother buries in the land (249).

village and national level suggest another level of theorizing how Pō functions in both Samoan religious and political life.⁵¹

The spiraled and expansive temporalities and (re)tellings across relational spaces of *Pouliuli* do not unfold through narrative linearity; rather, they are part of a narrative structure built around (re)turns and (re)tellings within familial and relational spaces. The text's multiple retellings of events detailing Faleasa's attempts to extricate himself from political responsibilities are inextricable from the text's larger concerns with the political and social ramifications of the oral storytelling techniques from which the form is derived. Wendt has argued that the "techniques of the so-called discontinuous narration...[are] not new to oral storytelling" (Hereniko and Hanlon 119), and that postmodernism's "argu[ment] that it's all a game, a word game" can place so much emphasis on elements like narrative form that the aspects of "politically committed fiction" which characterized much of the wave of post-independence fiction of which *Pouliuli* was a part, are erased or "put down by so-called critics who think they know better" (Hereniko and Wendt 55). *Pouliuli*'s inclusion of oratorically-inflected spiraled narration and temporality become a political tool for interrupting the narrative linearity of the novel, the literary form most closely associated with national form. In this sense, while the fa'asamoa and fa'amatai are flawed systems of social and political organization, they still serve the purpose of disrupting and rejecting static notions of Samoanness and nationhood.

In addition to invoking orature through its use of (re)tellings and discontinuous narration, *Pouliuli* contains elements of the Samoan fāgogo story-telling tradition, whose content and form can be connected back to Pō. Elements of the fāgogo include opening by rooting the protagonist

⁵¹ For a more direct and extended exploration of the Nafanua figure, see Wendt's novel in verse, *The Adventures of Vela* (2009), which the speaker affirms in the final lines is not just Vela's story, but also "Her/ biography" (276).

to a particular space through a discussion of his or her genealogy, which the novel's opening sentence does by describing Faleasa in terms of his āiga commitments as "titled head," "faithful husband," and "stern but generous father" (1). Fāgogo can also detail the exploits of archetypal or mythical figures such as Pili, who is clearly connected to Pō within the novel.⁵² Fāgogo has been variously explored within Wendt's work specifically, and also as a form utilized in other Pacific authors' writing.⁵³ Susan Y. Najita has pointed out that Wendt's use of the fāgogo throughout his career has "accommodated European forms such as the fable and fairy tale" (2010, 355), to which one could also add allegory (Chadwick), which suggests another layer of Wendt's intertextual connections in *Pouliuli*. Along with the fāgogo, these forms also suggest the intergenerational connections Faleasa rejects within the novel. While *Pouliuli* highlights the tensions inherent within an extended family atmosphere, reading it within the culturally specific ideologies of Samoan pedagogy expressed through the fāgogo construction reveals a layer of meaning that the haphazard application of the post-modern label cannot achieve. One of these is the understanding of fāgogo as "stories told, particularly by the elderly to the very young, at night" and part of a uniquely Samoan "pedagogical category" (Kolone-Collins 2).⁵⁴ An emphasis on the intergenerational transmission of fāgogo highlights the tension of Faleasa's attempt to

⁵² These elements are similar to those of the Hawaiian mo'olelo and, as Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa has noted, "A mo'olelo (history) would begin with the hero's immediate antecedents or several generations further back along the ancestral lineage. In some instances, it would start at the very beginning of time . . . the Kumulipo, that distant, dark beginning of the earth" (1992, 1).

⁵³ For a discussion of fāgogo: in Wendt's work, see Susan Y. Najita's "Under the Banyan Tree"; in Wendt's life, see Albert Wendt's *Out of the Vaipē* and Vilsoni Hereniko and Albert Wendt's "An Interview with Albert Wendt"; in Pacific literature, see Peggy Dunlop's "Samoan Writing: Searching for the Written Fāgogo"; as a genre, see D.S. Long's "In Search of a 'Written Fāgogo': Contemporary Literature for Children"; as an epistemological tool, see Su'ela Kolone-Collins, "Fāgogo: 'Ua Molimea Manusina': A Qualitative Study of the Pedagogical Significance of Fāgogo—Samoan Stories at Night—for the Education of Samoan Children."

⁵⁴ Soon after Faleasa decides to rebuke his title and ties to his community, he meets with Laaumatua to discuss his plan. The two meet and "[a]lone in the black midnight silence and stillness of the church they were beings without physical form, mere voices" (17). The emphasis on orality and darkness while Faleasa discusses rejecting his intergenerational ties may also be an allusion to the fāgogo's role in the form and content of the novel.

extricate himself from his commitments to the successive generations of his āiga, whom the fāgogo structure dictates he should be educating. Fāgogo as a “pedagogical category” shared at night also highlights the epistemological nature of the text’s exploration of its titular topic, Pouliuli, the darkness, the night, and the protagonist’s existential and isolated search for meaning within it.

The content and politics of the novel’s indigenous narrative techniques are also reflective of the archetypes and types of bodies which Wendt explores at length in the text. These archetypal figures possess bodies far from the idealized embodiment of masculine strength and leadership: the trickster Māui is small and misshapen; Pili falls to Earth in the form of an ugly lizard; Nafanua, born as a premature blood clot, eventually disguises her gender during her fierce and cunning war campaign. Disabilities Studies scholar Lennard J. Davis has shown that “the novel as a form promotes and symbolically reproduces normative structures” and that “the plot and character development of novels tend to pull toward the normative” (9). Davis also ties these normative structures to the notion of linear progress (8, 12). From this perspective, one can argue that *Pouliuli*’s representation of bodies that are not “normative”—whether through disability, age, or gendered expectations—is part of its project of spiraled time and relational spaces. Each of these archetypal figures’ bodies and social rank positioned them as peripheral members of society; yet, through an exploitation of assumptions others might make based on their bodies, these figures were able to transgress and transcend social hierarchies to establish new realities for themselves and those around them. These liminal and transgressive components are also part of the novel’s narrative structure, in which linear narration is broken up by two particular types of interruption. The first are flashbacks to Osovae and Lemigao’s youth, before they have received their respective family titles of Faleasa and Laaumatua, and usually feature some type of

innovation or transgression of social protocol stemming from expectations of ableist or gendered expectations. The second involves a retelling of the Pili narrative, which serves as context for Faleasa's own encounter with Pouliuli, while also providing a subplot independent of the time and space of the present narrative in Malaelua or the flashbacks.

The first set of narrative interruptions are flashbacks which draw on Pō and the mythic figures associated with it, as well as the collapsing of temporal and spatial distinctions made possible by the abundance of vā relationships. Lemigao figures prominently in most of these flashbacks. Like Māui, the trickster figure whom Lemigao represents, these flashbacks interrupt the narration of the present and feature scenes of transgression or innovation of the social order. Just as Māui operated outside of societal protocol or upset social ranks based on genealogical seniority and his small, misshapen stature, these flashbacks feature moments when the novel uses Lemigao's physical "burden" to question accepted protocol. The use of Lemigao's physical difference is more than the "opportunistic metaphorical device" which disabilities studies scholars David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have termed "narrative prosthesis" (215). Rather, it is specifically tied to the project of interrupting the novel's form and displacing narrative linearity, which is rejected in favor of looking backward. This is a direct refusal of the "normative structures" Davis describes as markers of the novel form's "ideological consolidation" through its emphasis on social and bodily "progress" (12). As Sarah J. Doetschman has observed, in *Pouliuli* "attempts at planning paths for the future...[fail], and the characters who are least socially assimilated survive the disasters most unscathed" (86). These moments of transgression and innovation are also articulated through tensions around vā relationships between Lemigao and others. The transgressions and relationships are often overlapping and oppositional, resulting in a folding and doubling which is characteristic of the

potential of the vā, which Refiti notes “collaps[es] the distinctions between an inside and an outside marking an ambivalent limit” (98). Lemigao is marginalized by the community because of his ignoble paternity and clubfoot, which is perceived as an emasculation that precludes his full participation in traditional male behaviors; yet his exploitation of that perception in the pursuit of excessive material consumption, sexual conquests, and the production of the ideal Samoan son paradoxically center him as an example of male virility.

The Māui figure is a centralizing force in a text which insists on ambivalence, on the refusal to grant discrete stasis, a clear articulation of the pō of the title and Māui’s insistence on disrupting social order. This transgressive liminality is most prominent in Lemigao’s use of the community’s assumption of a “cripple”’s mental inferiority to outwit his social betters. In addition to being the illegitimate child of a “wayward and ugly daughter” of the poorest aiga in Malaelua, Lemigao is born with a clubfoot and his angry and disgraced āiga underscore how unwanted he is by naming him Lemigao, which Wendt translates as, “Without Manners” (20). Just as the disgraceful conditions of his conception are constructed as inherently Lemigao’s fault and indicative of a defect in his moral character, the misshapeness of his club foot is extended to his whole body and he is deemed unattractive, and physically and mentally feeble by the entire village. Unlike the complex negotiations of Faleasa’s feigned madness as simultaneously outside of and cutting across notions of physical, spiritual, and mental sickness discussed in the previous section, Lemigao’s clubfoot is universally accepted as a defect across all three of these realms.⁵⁵ While the rest of the community derides and underestimates Lemigao, Osovae alone is aware of Lemigao’s physical, mental, and emotional dexterity: He often dominates Osovae in physical

⁵⁵ See Juliann Anesi’s *Trying Times: Disability, Activism, and Education in Samoa, 1970-1980* (2016) for a discussion of Samoan disability and education policies, as well as constructions of disabilities as variously physical and/or mental ma’i, or sicknesses.

competitions, manipulates him into partaking in the pastime of his choice, and “hardly ever los[es] control of his emotions”—while Osovae frequently bursts into tears and is overtaken by fear in his youth (21). Lemigao has upset the expected social order: Osovae, as the son of the highest ranking member of the village, should never be dominated by the disgraced member of the village’s poorest family. As well as invoking the trickster figure, Lemigao embodies literal qualities of the figurative Tausamitele, the Insatiable Appetite who is Pili’s companion in his mythic quests: Lemigao voraciously and secretly seduces the most beautiful women in Malaelua and surrounding villages and “though food was the compulsive core of his life he didn’t grow fat” (21). His unflagging, yet undetectable, sexual and culinary consumption and his ability to control how his body responds to that consumption, illustrate not just a covert aspect of Lemigao’s character, but an ability to control his body in ways that are unavailable to other characters who assume his body is inferior or flawed. Lemigao often exploits these assumptions of his inferiority, as he does in the tautoga (oath taking) ceremony in Osovae’s fale.

As a youth Lemigao calls attention to his clubfoot, which he calls his “burden,” to invoke misreadings of his body and its abilities in relation to able-bodied males in the village. When Lemigao and Osovae are fourteen years old, Lemigao’s insatiable appetite gets the better of him when the two are alone and he deftly throws a “lethal stone” with his “expert hand” and kills a stranger’s pig (22). Osovae’s father then announces that the matai council has called a tautoga for males of all ages, to be held in Osovae’s fale, to determine and punish the perpetrator of such a serious offense. The tautoga is a specifically male space, as “pig stealing was considered beyond the sinful capabilities of females so they weren’t compelled to attend” (25-26). Osovae implores Lemigao to think of a way out of their problem, which Lemigao does by calling attention to his burden during the ceremony. In the case of the tautoga, his clubfoot evokes

assumptions of broader physical disabilities about the rest of his body. This assumption of disability then suggests, to the rest of the male members of the village, a type of emasculation. He emphasizes his limp when walking down the aisle to perform the tautoga, causing the village elders to laugh and announce, “With a burden like that he hasn’t got a hope of catching a pig!” (26). Despite the fact that he *has* killed the pig, Lemigao capitalizes on this assumption of his inferiority and pleads to take the oath. Because the society has already dismissed him as feeble and impotent his participation in the tautoga is seen as a superfluous indulgence; because these assumptions render the ceremony hollow, there is no need for Lemigao’s honesty and he happily lies. Lemigao understands the importance of protocol in terms of securing and sustaining cultural ties and rank, but because of misreadings of his body during a ceremony which is based on corporeal qualities (such as sex, age, and physical ability) he does not see the dishonest performance of the ritual as morally binding.

While Lemigao has protected his relationship with Osovae and shielded his friend from the shame and wrath of his overbearing father, he has also violated the space between himself and other members of the village as well as violated both sacred and secular forms of *vā*—*vā* *tapua‘i* and *vā* *fealoaloa‘i*, respectively. Using Refiti’s articulation of the *vā* as a series of temporal and spatial interconnections which dictate that “your body does not necessarily belong to you as an individual,” I argue that Lemigao’s exploitation of others’ assumptions of his body is simultaneously a selfish survival tactic and a selfless method of preserving the status quo (99); in effect, invoking the folding and doubling over the *vā* as a site of ambivalent yet relational potential. The tautoga ceremony takes place in Osovae’s family’s *fale* and involves both religious and political significance because participants are asked to swear on the Bible in the presence of the village’s matai council. The *fale* is now simultaneously a domestic, political, and

religious space, and all of these elements have overlapping and at times competing forms of protocol and claims on the Samoan male body. When discussing how to proceed before the ceremony, both boys agree that to be physically absent would bring shame upon their respective āiga and single them out for punishment. While fa‘asamoa demands their presence, the competing responsibilities of Christianity pull at Osovae, who warns Lemigao that “if [they] lie on the Holy Book something bad will happen to [them]. God will punish [them].” Osovae wants to know what type of punishment God would inflict on them, and wonders if it would be based in the body, if they would “go blind or drop dead or go nuts?” (24). Based on my readings of his previous usurpation of societal expectations, how would the possibility of another physical affliction as a punishment from God not be another “burden” with which Lemigao could exploit those who marginalize him? Lemigao perhaps senses this and, in an appeal to Osovae’s bravery and sense of familial and religious duty, which is also a challenge of God’s love, Lemigao asks, “Why don’t we try and find out?[...] If God really loves us He won’t punish us; He’ll forgive us” (25). While the boys lie during the tautoga and through their mere physical presence and speaking of words are able to uphold their responsibilities to be upright males within the framework of fa‘asamoa and village protocol, Osovae’s body registers Christian religious rejection of the lie and acknowledges his failure to uphold the ideals of Samoan male piety and honesty. Osovae falls violently ill with bouts of vomiting, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms which baffle his family, yet Lemigao is perfectly fine and continues consume life and food with his usual voracity.

The narrative flashbacks also reveal moments when Lemigao’s engagement with Pō, performance of idealized roles as husband and father, and transgressions of vā spaces have tragic repercussions. After a series of scandalous affairs with women in Malaelua and surrounding

villages, Lemigao marries Mua, whose goodness was so strong that she was described as “the material out of which true myth was spun,” yet who had suffered so many deaths of close relatives and husbands that she believed herself to be cursed (82). Lemigao disregards this and jokes that he “had always wanted to make Death his wife,” a clear allusion to Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga’s encounter with Hine-nui-te-Pō, which resulted in his death and humanity’s mortality. Their marriage is a happy one and they eventually adopt a son, Mose, whom the entire village unanimously praises because “Ugly Crooked-leg has produced the true Samoan son, who is fearless, obedient, and conscientious, and who serves his aiga with unquestioning loyalty and devotion” (81-81). While Mose is admired as the epitome of Samoan filial obedience, Lemigao paradoxically induces his son to transcend social order and instruct his father: “Lemigao was the first Malaeluan parent to allow his son to teach him anything publicly” (82). Lemigao, a marginalized figure, has produced a son whom all others see as the center of fa‘asamoa; this transgression of societal expectations is compounded when Lemigao, in an effort to grow closer to his son, actually erodes the filial ideal by allowing him to disrespect his father’s seniority through public instruction.

The tensions of this ambivalence are highlighted by contrasting values of orality and literacy within the vā between father and son. Lemigao teaches Mose “to be well versed in oratory and the genealogies and in the history of Malaelua. In return, as Mose mastered reading, writing, and arithmetic he taught his father these skills” (82). In addition to violating the respectful space between parent and child, the reciprocal exchange of orality and literacy is a challenge to the protocols of vā, in which, as Helu Thaman argues, “normally direct personal attention is preferred to indirect, written, impersonal communication and interaction” (2008, 465). Mose comes down with an undiagnosed but fatal mental illness which doctors describe “as

if he was mortally afraid and feared to confront whatever he was afraid of,” and is precipitated by an essay he wrote about his āiga and village (85). Lemigao also experiences “an almost overwhelming fear” when he receives written news—which he refuses to read—that his son has fallen ill, one in which “the physical universe had been sucked away into a terrible void and he was utterly alone” (82). Like Mose, Faleasa, and the old man, Lemigao’s potential rejection of societal protocol and embrace of madness is portended through imagery of the Void; yet, unlike the others, Lemigao never truly embraces the Void and stops short, only “almost” allowing this “fear” to take hold of him. The essay is not discovered but Lemigao finds a page of a letter his son never mailed him and, after reading the contents, refuses to give his son a traditional or religious burial. The denial of these types of burials could be read as a denial of the sacred and secular relational spaces between Lemigao and his son. In addition, Vaai notes that this is a “transgressing of the *va-tapuia* between parent and child” and instigates further tragedy for Lemigao and Mua (71). After Mose’s death Lemigao feels compelled to beat Mua and “divorce[s] Death,” with Mua fleeing the village never to be seen again (86).

Mua’s absence from the village and the novel also have implications for its narrative structure. Lemigao’s beating and expulsion of Mua take on symbolic significance when one considers that Mua’s name suggests the Samoan word “muamua” which means “first,” but her name can also signify “last.” Lemigao’s transgression of social rank and custom based on seniority results in his literal beating of the embodiment of that concept. This episode emphasizes Lemigao’s connections to Pō and the trickster figure Māui, as Mua’s description as “true myth” and “Death” align her with the goddess Hine-nui-te-Pō, the Woman of Great

Darkness.⁵⁶ In Māori tradition, Māui attempts to secure immortality for man by transforming himself into a bird and entering the birth canal and exiting the mouth of Hine-nui-te-Pō, who awaits humankind after death. She awakens and crushes him with her toothed vagina, denying his attempt to upset the natural order. In Wendt's "made up" version which refuses "original versions" of mythology (Hereniko and Wendt 53-54), the trickster figure does not necessarily defeat death (since he loses his son) but he does dominate and banish her; this upset is incorporated into the temporal form of the novel. Mua's exit also marks the last of the flashbacks which deal specifically with Lemigao's life, as if his physical violence toward Mua and transgression of vā are reflected in the form of the novel through the absence of any further temporal firsts interrupting the linear progression of the narrative present.

The second set of flashbacks reveals Faleasa's childhood relationship with an anonymous character known simply as "the old man," and through their negotiation of his lifelong struggle with paternal relationships and idealized masculine leadership serve as an analog to Faleasa's contemporary encounter with the Void and his transition from feigned to actual madness. Tensions around the father-son relationship resonate in the flashbacks and the events which precipitate them. A fraught paternal relationship focused on political and familial leadership seems to be Osovae's birthright: His father detested his grandfather for being small, ugly, and frail, "which throughout much of his life he conveniently used to justify his many illnesses and his cowardice," manifested in his being cuckolded by two wives and remaining a taulealea (an untitled man) all of his life (117-118). His grandfather's absence of physical, political, or sexual power lead Osovae's father to idealize physical and sexual dominance as markers of masculine

⁵⁶ For an account of Hine-nui-te-Pō and Māui, see Robyn Kahukiwa and Patricia Grace's *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth*, which is discussed at length in the following chapter.

leadership within the structures of fa‘asamoa.⁵⁷ Osovae dreamt that the old man would replace his father and allow him to have an adolescence, in which he “encouraged him to cry openly when he felt like it, and talked to him when he wanted to talk,” resulting in “limitless, endless freedom” (100). From childhood, Faleasa has associated his personal freedom with models of fatherhood and leadership which run counter to the role he has been groomed to inherit since birth, and which ultimately pushes him to find release in the Void. This series of flashbacks is instigated by Faleasa’s realization that his favorite son, Moaula—treasured by his father as a paradigm of physical strength and filial loyalty—no longer believes in his father’s feigned madness and has begun to treat him as a petulant child whom he no longer needs. Drawing on the novel’s structure of (re)turns and (re)tellings, I read this precipitation as an iteration of Osovae’s own adolescent rejection of the old man, whom he regarded as a tender father figure and dreamed would replace his cold and calculating father. Further, Faleasa realizes he has in fact become the anonymous old man when he abdicates his family’s title and is subsequently cast aside by his son. Recognizing that his “quest” to extricate himself from his responsibilities was “all self-love and vanity” and that his refusal of his āiga and matai responsibilities rendered him “valueless,” Faleasa retreats further into himself in a stark contrast to the masculine individualism of the novel’s existential intertexts (94).

During Osovae’s childhood, the anonymous old man appears on the church steps and, due to his nakedness, stench, and blank stare, is assumed to be a madman. Osovae’s usually cold father surprises his son when he orders his āiga to nurse the old man back to health and announces to the village that he is his honored guest and is to be treated with respect. The old man regains his senses and becomes a cherished part of the community, often leading prayers

⁵⁷ See Keown’s *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 26-28 for a discussion of Faleasa’s re-enactment of sexual dominance learned from his father, as well as an analysis of the arc of women’s sexuality in Wendt’s work.

and assisting others. Rumors of the old man's past circulate and the most widely believed origin story is yet another (re)telling of a fraught parental relationship that seems to pick up where Mose's death left off. Like all of the mythical figures in *Pouliuli*, there is "no original version" of the madman's life, but in the widely accepted version he is the Samoan adopted son of a London Missionary Society couple; his intelligence and aptitude for languages led to ten years of theological studies in England and Germany. Upon his return he begins speaking only German and quarreling with superiors in the LMS, claiming that they and his dead adoptive parents have "stolen his soul and replaced it with the crippled soul of a palagi" (111). He then drifts from village to village, speaking only Samoan and gaining the respect of the most famous orators, and those who treat him kindly are rewarded while those who mistreat him have misfortune befall them. He was able to help others, but "whenever he tried to do something for himself he failed and the state of his mind deteriorated further." His bouts of sanity became fewer and far between and people agreed that the old man seemed to prefer it that way, as if "madness was his escape from suffering" (111).

However, the old man seemed to have found a way to help others find meaning in the world and also to contain his madness. In keeping with the novel's reliance on (re)turns and (re)tellings, Osovae's encounter with this process for making meaning and containing madness will echo in his adult life. During the old man's stay, items mysteriously disappear from places like homes, the church, and the school, and there is always a circle of white pebbles surrounding a single black stone placed outside of the building. One of the first manifestations of Faleasa's contempt with his āiga and his feigned madness was his removal of items from their fale (family home), which he variously broke or gave away. Osovae discovers that the old man has taken all of the items, but his father instructs the entire village to act as if nothing had happened and to

accept the stone circles. Osovae discovers the old man constructing a circle outside of his fale under the cover of darkness. Intruding on the old man's process "before he can complete the circle which, by containing his madness, gives meaning to it," Osovae "wrench[es]" the central stone from the old man's hand and "throws the pebble, the heart, into the darkness" (113). This pushes the old man over the precipice into madness and he assumes the same withered posture and soundless scream which Faleasa enacts on the church steps at the close of the novel. Pouliuli, the Void, becomes a reprieve for the old man once Osovae has desecrated the *vā* between them by ignoring the pleas of his guest and father figure, and obstructing his attempt to contain his madness. Analogous to Osovae's adolescent casting aside the central stone of the old man's attempt to contain his madness, Faleasa's attempt to cast aside his familial, political, and religious responsibilities as an adult precipitate his own madness (Vaai 72; Sharrad 2003, 116; Chadwick). The responsibilities he attempts to discard are the central stone of the Samoan way of life and though he attempts to find freedom by extricating himself from them, he realizes that without them his life has no meaning and he is adrift in the Void—like the old man who no longer has a method to contain his madness.

Faleasa's contemplation of his own past and his encounters with the old man whom he would eventually become, are prefaced by his meditations on Malaelua's past and the story of the trickster demi-god Pili's quest and assistance by Pouliuli. Like the old man he has rejected European missionary epistemology, but is as yet unable to construct meaning within the confines of a *fa'asamoa* that fiercely binds the individual to the group and strips him of his autonomy. This creates a world in which one has no individual value independent of the collective which stretches forward and backward in time. Pili's story is seen by Faleasa as "the essence of pre-papalagi Malaeluan beliefs about the cosmos and man's place in it, and also offered him truths

about his present reality” because it was a “past which offered him glimpses of the past and the present, and of the darkness that was the future” (94). Pili is the son of Tagaloaalagi, the Supreme Creator, and Sina, the mortal daughter of the ali‘i of Malaelua. Convinced that Pili is the result of Sina’s infidelity, Tagaloaalagi turns him into an “ugly, sickly lizard” and casts him down to Earth, where he is raised by a barren old woman who never allows him to see his own reflection (94). Upon learning the truth of his appearance and parentage, Pili undertakes a quest to get his father to return him to human form and enlists the assistance of three spirit companions: “They were Tausamitele—Insatiable Appetite, Lelemalosi—Strong Flight, and Pouliuli—Darkness” (95). When Pili arrives in the Ninth Heaven his father threatens to murder him, and is thwarted because Pili has outsmarted him and kidnapped Sina while he slept. With his companions’ assistance he performs the three tasks set by his father and is restored to human form. He returns to earth and unites all of Samoa under his peaceful and just rule, at the end of which he divides his kingdom among his children. His children bicker and his favorite casts him aside as a useless old man. Pili then vanishes from Malaelua by jumping into the mouth of his old friend Pouliuli, in the same manner in which he accomplished the tasks set by Tagaloaalagi, and is never seen again. Pili’s story parallels Faleasa’s, who never felt loved by either of his parents, accomplishes tasks with the aid of companions whose allegorical qualities align with Tausamitele (Lemigao as Insatiable Appetite) and Lelemalosi (Moaula as Strong Flight), and is cast aside in his old age by children who are fighting over the social, religious, and political power he has consolidated over the previous decades. Faleasa draws a comparison between himself and Pili and concludes that “like Pili in his bitter old age, he too had voluntarily jumped up, as it were, into a living death, into the living darkness of Pouliuli” and finds consolation in

“being suspended in the core of a timeless sea, without a beginning or an end; and all was well” (98).

Faleasa’s reprieve in the space “without a beginning or and end” signifies his desire to individuate himself from the rest of society, but is also built on his relationships to that society. The Void, Pouliuli, represents a relational space through which Faleasa contextualizes the most meaningful relationships throughout his life, which are often fraught by the expectations inherent in idealized bodily forms, masculine leadership, and the paternal bond. Like Pili, he never feels loved by his father. Yet, when given the chance at a sustainable relationship with a surrogate father figure, he replicates his biological father’s paternal revulsion and, exploiting the old man’s physical weakness, selfishly violates the *vā* between them and pushes the old man into the Void. While Laaumatua is able to produce the ideal Samoa son and enjoys a loving relationship with him, he too ultimately desecrates the *vā* between them when he forces his son to upset the social order between them (Vaai 71). Faleasa makes the same mistake with his own son, Moaula, when his machinations render him valueless in the eyes of his family. When placed alongside each other, these events create a spiraled unfolding of Faleasa’s lifelong journey towards an individuality that is simultaneously rooted in his own desire for autonomy, yet thwarted by his inability to respect the relational boundaries between himself and others. The form of the novel mirrors the content in that these relationships and revelations unfold through flashbacks and narrative interruptions—(re)turns and (re)tellings that resist an analysis of their discrete parts. Not only is Faleasa incapable of extricating himself from these relational spaces, but by containing his experiences and layering them through their relationships to one another, the novel seems to suggest that, within an Indigenous Samoan reading praxis, this is an epistemological and narratological impossibility.

The novel's form reinforces its epistemological project, but also suggests how characters' own bodily forms can provide autonomy and agency even though they do not belong to the individual (Refiti). Just as the (re)turns and (re)tellings of the novel resist an analysis of their discrete parts, their content and ramifications are no longer Faleasa's alone to bear. The novel's pattern of fraught paternal relational spaces is transgressed by Faleasa's oldest friend, Laaumatua, the embodiment of the trickster figure Māui. Laaumatua, who has literally and figuratively beaten death, remains behind to care for Faleasa once he has moved across the spiraled construction of a series of vā and crossed "into a living death, into the living darkness of Pouliuli" (98). Laaumatua, who has violated the relational spaces more frequently than any other character, paradoxically reinforces them through a final transgression of the social order. Laaumatua, born as Lemigao, the "crippled," ill-mannered, and lowliest member of the lowest family in the village, defies hierarchical social custom by becoming the parent figure to the highest ranking member of the village. As a result, the relational spaces which contained Faleasa for most of his life and bound him to others "without a beginning or end" paradoxically offer a freedom "without a beginning or end." Just as the old man before him and Pili before him, Faleasa has found individual freedom within an epistemological and relational space.

Faleasa's inability to extricate himself from the relational spaces which bind him to the rest of his community does not suggest a facile reading of the novel, one in which the individual's quest is summarily thwarted by the collective. Nor does the use of bodies marginalized by ableist, masculine ideals produce a simplistic narrative prosthesis. Although it is a relational space, Pouliuli paradoxically offers Faleasa a freedom specifically because it links him to others who exist outside of the norm of fa'asamoa. The novel presents Pouliuli as a reprieve from the immediate, bodily connections of fa'asamoa; yet its connections to

marginalized bodily forms is reflected in their paradoxical centering through a formal disruption of linearity and the “normative structures” of the novel (Davis). The marginalized forms of the old man and Pili represent two quests for individualism within fa'asamoa, and their interruption of the narrative through flashbacks is also a representation of transgressions of vā and an interruption of the fāgogo, a form symbolic of fa'asamoa and the normative structures of the familial, political, and religious relationships Faleasa tried desperately to escape.

Pouliuli's (re)telling of foundational narratives and reworking of the fāgogo form create a literary variant of the established forms of fa'asamoa. Yet, Samoan ideals are not completely forsaken, as the relational reprieve *Pouliuli* offers Faleasa and its counter to idealized masculine forms is an indigenization and reworking of the masculine individualism of traditional existential writings. Wendt's depiction of *Pouliuli* as a means of navigating the relational spaces of the fa'asamoa, which he positions as an at times flawed but also malleable and enduring method of cultural and political survival, anticipates the self-reflexivity characteristic of later literary representations of Pō. In dictating that to opt out one must turn inward and rework the relational spaces that tie the individual to the collective, *Pouliuli* suggests a path for other Pacific writers and nations to overcome cultural and political restrictions: Using Pō to rework the structures of the Pacific nation from within.

Chapter 3

Gendering Te Pō: Māori Women's Voices and Embodied Storytelling

in Patricia Grace's *Potiki*

Theorizing how constructions of blackness and bodies are interconnected in Indigenous narratives of Pō requires an investigation of how those categories may broaden and shift over space and time. Wendt constructs Pouliuli as the relational space of the masculine quest of individuation in a politically sovereign, early twentieth century Samoa. These male characters are embodied through mental and physical illness, which the novel deploys to reject and replace the ableist, masculine ideals of leadership and community within the āiga and the fa'asamoa. For the Māori of late twentieth century, settler colonial Aotearoa New Zealand in Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* (1986), Te Pō is an emphatically female space and represents their oratorical and genealogical connections to a series of female ancestresses and goddesses, such as Te Pō (the Night), and through her to Papatūānuku (the Earth Mother), and Hine-titama (the Dawn) who became Hine-nui-te-Pō (the Woman of the Great Darkness, the goddess of death). Like Wendt, Grace has included (re)turns and (re)tellings of Polynesian orature throughout her career (Wendt 2015; Wendt 2013; Keown 2005; Grace 2013; Rask Knudsen; DeLoughrey and Hall). *Potiki* incorporates the intertexts of the Māui myth cycle through Toko, the central character and titular invocation of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga—also known as Maui Pōtiki, the youngest born—who has a physical disability and disrupts aged-based social order in myriad ways. While much of the existing criticism of bodies in *Potiki* concentrates on Toko, I focus on Māori women's bodies as representations of Māori epistemologies of time and space; I emphasize their contributions to cultural and political sovereignty through affirmations of iwi and Māoritanga which, like āiga and fa'asamoa in the Samoan context, respectively encompass extended, tribal kinship and Māori

culture, identity, values, and practices. Whereas Wendt utilizes the āiga as a backdrop for the bildungsroman within a largely Indigenous setting, Grace positions the iwi—particularly its women and their voices—as a rejection of settler colonial notions of progress and the novel form’s tendency towards nationalism.

In this chapter, I examine how the politics of gender, genealogy, and cultural protocol of speech inform constructions of blackness and the body in late twentieth-century Māori fiction, focusing on Grace’s novel *Potiki*. With an attention to the local distinctions among Indigenous Pacific kinship groups, in this chapter I employ the Māori concept of whakapapa to discuss genealogical and gendered connections to Te Pō. I focus on Te Pō as a specifically Māori construction of the generative darkness and a particular female ancestor in Māori cosmogony. As Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal outlines, whakapapa can be translated as the creation of a foundation. It is understood as both a noun, the collection of genealogy and accompanying knowledge; and a verb, in which genealogies are recited to affirm fundamental knowledge and connections between people, deities, and/ or places (48). *Potiki*’s reliance on whakapapa to inform its content also reveals the ways the narrative is shaped by a complex interplay between orature and literature.⁵⁸ Royal notes the tensions around modes of recording whakapapa: “Committing whakapapa to paper tends to ‘fix’ it in a specific form. However, in an oral society in which whakapapa is held in the memories and experiences of individuals, whakapapa is more

⁵⁸ Miriam Fuchs argues that *Potiki*’s relatively simple plot reveals a complex interplay of narrative and orality, in which “a series of predominantly spoken chapters” builds a “plot in *Potiki* [that] is controlled and directed by voice” (174). Elizabeth DeLoughrey explores genealogical constructions of time in *Potiki*, and reveals the way the novel incorporates both the spiral of “genealogically ‘sacred’ time” and the “Western linear framework” of “abstracted, ‘political’ historiography” (1999, 59). For a discussion with Grace on the structure of extended family, the concept of Turangawaewae, and the arc of extended family in her fiction, particularly *Potiki*, *Baby No-Eyes*, and *Tu*, see Della Valle 2007. For a discussion of genealogy in the wider context of narration in *Potiki*, see Della Valle 2010. Briar Wood links aspects of orature and whakapapa within *Potiki* to broader conversations of Mana Wahine Māori and ecocriticism.

active and often used in ritual action to reinforce relationships, to activate mana and to harvest resources” (48). These tensions around fixing whakapapa in spoken and written forms underlie the form of *Potiki*, which seamlessly moves from Indigenous modes of orature, such as prayer and chant, into more fixed forms of literary narration more closely associated with the novel form. The use of whakapapa and orature in this context is then political, as Susan Y. Najita writes of Pacific literature:

As a mode of reclamation, orality provides a language to articulate new modes of belonging based upon genealogy that leads out of and beyond the traumatic past...The presence of the oral and the everyday within the dominant structures of knowledge-constituting discourses and the novel form represents one of the tactics used to write through and out of colonization. (2006, 23)

In this way, orature and whakapapa in *Potiki* become tools to affirm Māoritanga and reject the settler colonial framework. At the same time, the inclusion of the form and content of orature within the novel draws on the public debates, contemporaneous with the novel’s publication, around which Māori bodies could and should participate in particular aspects of Māori oration. While Māori whakapapa almost always trace connections back to the foundation of the universe through the female gendered darkness of Te Pō, which contains fathomless expanses of space and time, debates have centered on when and where Māori women’s voices can be heard in various types of oration.⁵⁹ By *Potiki*’s publication in 1986, although Māori had spent centuries cultivating knowledge systems around bodies and their genealogical connections to epistemologies of space and time, Aotearoa had also experienced roughly two hundred years of

⁵⁹ For debates on the role of women’s voices on the marae, see Te Awēkotuku 1991, Karetu, and Ralston. For the influence of the marae on Māori women’s daily lives, see Tomlins Jahnke 2002.

European contact and the subsequent importation of settler colonial ideas of bodies, race, family structure, and the nation.⁶⁰

Scholars have theorized the connections between bodies, time, and narrative form in Patricia Grace's *Potiki*. Since its release, foundational critical conversations around *Potiki* have focused on the relationship between Indigenous epistemology and settler social and political structures. Most critics agree that *Potiki*'s use of the Māori concept of spiral time as a narrative strategy placed a necessary pressure on literary studies to engage more fully with the possibilities of Indigenous knowledges to rework generic conventions. In this chapter, I draw on work by Miriam Fuchs and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, whose earlier works on *Potiki* reveal the ways Māori constructions of time presented alternatives to linear narratives within the novel and highlight the utility of spiral time to broader social and political issues in New Zealand. Fuchs examines Grace's narrative strategies and temporal shifts as a product of Indigenous orality, noting that "plot in *Potiki* is controlled and directed by voice" (174). DeLoughrey also points to the ways the Indigenous body informs narrative and time in the text, referencing the fact that one of the primary differences between Māori and Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) constructions of time is that Māori understand spiral time as a genealogical construction. She shows how *Potiki* incorporates both of these constructions, emphasizing how the process of disrupting the linear narrative with the spiral results in a narratology that does not necessarily position one over the other, but produces something new. Building on these ideas of time as a genealogical construction and corporeal expression, I put theorizations of time in conversation

⁶⁰ Dame Mira Szaszy invokes Māori women's connections to Papatuanuku and Te Pō to "validate the role of Maori women in Maoridom" and discuss their role in settlement claims stemming from the Treaty of Waitangi, first signed in 1840. Historically, the New Zealand government used the treaty to justify the appropriation of Māori lands and sovereignty, although Maori have consistently argued that the significant inconsistencies and mistranslations between the English and Maori versions of the treaty reveal their ancestors never ceded their sovereignty. For an extended history and analysis of the treaty, see Orange 2004, 2015; Mikaere 2007, 2011; Walker 1990; B. Wilson.

with arguments that examinations of metaphors and constructions of the Māori body are crucial for a full understanding of Māori history and literature, respectively. Using an Indigenous reading praxis to work towards a theorization of embodied cosmogony, I ground my readings of whakapapa and Māori women's bodily and oratorical agency in theories of Mana Wahine Māori, which centers the literal and theoretical voices of Māori women and their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical strength and prestige. While there are many scholars committed to these theories, I draw most heavily on Mana Wahine Māori work by Patricia Grace, Robyn Kahukiwa, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Naomi Simmonds, Huia Tomlins Jahnke, and Donna Awatere, and Kanaka Maoli scholar Manu Aluli Meyer's work on the connection between sensuality and knowledge. I also contend that *Potiki*'s construction of time and its narrative strategy are not just located in the body, but that these corporeal and oratorical concerns then imbricate the reader's own body into the telling of the story and the cultural and political survival of the Māori. Finally, I close read the use of the settler colonial archive within the text to argue that the metatextual imbrication of the reader's body is an enduring challenge to settler colonial constructions of knowledge and their deployment through documents like the Treaty of Waitangi.

Shortly after *Potiki*'s climax, Tangimoana Tamihana delivers a raw, impassioned, and impromptu speech decrying the failure of the New Zealand settler colonial government to protect Māori lives and lands. Her outburst has interrupted the singing of the Tamihana iwi, who have gathered to mourn around the still smoldering ashes of their whareniui (ancestral meeting house), which had been burned to the ground with Toko, Tangimoana's wheelchair bound younger brother, still inside. The fatal bombing that destroyed the meeting house was an attempt by land developers to push the Tamihanas off of their coastal ancestral lands in order to build a luxury resort and bring progress in the form of tourist dollars to the area. Tangimoana argues that the

Tamihana family cannot trust the government to conduct an honest and unbiased investigation, noting that the previous investigation was both incomplete and inaccurate, blaming the victims without making the least effort to apprehend the perpetrators. Unable to take comfort in the communal singing, Tangimoana “[stands] up and shout[s] above the singing”:

‘Fuck the investigation. What did that show last time? Told us nothing. Told us probably this probably that. Probably. Not “it did”. Not “who did”. Not “he did, she did”. Nothing. Fuck the enquiry. I know what it’ll find and you know what it’ll find. It’ll find we did it ourselves. They’ll go through all their shit and rubbish and try and hang it on us. Like last time. And. Who was last in the house yesterday? Aunt Mary, right? What’re they going to presume when they get that bit of information? When they find out it was her, Aunt Mary, that was last in there, what do you think they will all have buzzing round in their small, shitty screwed around minds?’

No one spoke. We knew what would be in their minds.

‘Those Pakeha friends of ours knew what they were doing when they chainsawed tyres and bowled the shed over the bank. It should have been us doing that. Especially since it was thought we did it anyway. It was insinuated...Should have been us putting chainsaws through. And, one of these days...soon...And if none of you help me then it’ll be just me...all by my own black self.’ (137)

Tangimoana’s indictment of the government is based on its marginalization of Māori bodies. As she points out, the government has alternately failed or refused to extend justice and protection to the Tamihanas based largely on a marginalization rooted in their bodies. In this chapter, I explore this as a marginalization of Māori bodies based largely on differences between Māori and Pākehā

constructions of genealogy—which the Pākehā-dominated nation conflates with race—and gender. Tangimoana’s emphasis on her solitary, black identity, delivered in front of the smoldering wharenuī, which is itself a representation of a female Māori ancestor and genealogical link to the cosmogonic darkness, reinforces this reading.

Tangimoana’s blackness speaks to local and global articulations of black identity, which was often bound up in the politics of gender and protest during the decade of *Potiki*’s publication. Māori are Indigenous Pacific peoples with their own history of racialization through the circumstance of settler colonial encounters with the British empire (Salesa 2011). Yet, Māori blackness, particularly in the context of women’s protests, has also often been articulated through global links. In her account of the first National Black Women’s Conference in 1980, Mana Wahine Māori scholar Donna Awatere describes its attendants as “black women—Maori, Pacific Islanders and Indians (and one lone white who passed for black until the last hour)” (2). The conference articulated itself in Māori terms—it was consistently referred to as a hui (the Māori word for gathering), had its own kawa (protocol), and took place at Ngati Otara Marae (an urban marae)—yet, as Awatere’s description highlights, the focus was often on blackness as an inclusive term that extended beyond Māori women. Zena Tamanui, a hui participant, describes blackness in terms of shared experience: “The term black women is the common bond of being the lowest, the most oppressed: the only ones to lead the revolution. It has to be *all* black women. I don’t believe that Maori women can lead the revolution on their own” (Awatere 3). Black womanhood was also made relevant to the participants’ Indigenous identity, as Mona Papli‘i describes her motivation for attending the hui:

I believe that the feminist revolution is in the hands of those who are most oppressed, black women...but sexism is often seen as a Pakeha problem. Sexism? No such thing in

“fa‘a Samoa”, or Maoritanga for that matter...we’re perceptive enough to see that white man’s culture is not for us, but we don’t make the same connections where our own cultures are concerned” (Awatere 29).

For Māori women, blackness is an intersectional identity inseparable from their unique concerns as Indigenous women. Mana Wahine Māori scholars often invoke African American feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks in their critiques of the New Zealand settler colonial government and the ways some Māori have internalized its patriarchal social norms (Tomlins Jahnke 1997, 33-34; L. Smith 167-168, 78, 90; Te Awekotuku 1991). Tamanui and Papli’i’s assertion that black women should lead the feminist revolution clearly speaks to hooks’ notion that black women were “shaping feminist theory” (hooks 1984). Selina Tusitala Marsh similarly links Pacific women’s identities to global notions of blackness in her theory of Mana Tama‘ita‘i (339, 350), which is inspired by Mana Wahine Māori.⁶¹ Māori have also engaged more directly with African American racial protests, as evidenced by the formation of the Polynesian Panther Party in 1971 (Salmon, Ellmers, and ‘Ilohia). Blackness in this Māori context is not simply a derivation of other struggles⁶²; rather, Tangimoana’s blackness and the National Black Women’s Hui’s articulation of a black, Indigenous feminism can be understood through Stuart Hall’s positioning of blackness in the British context as “the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions, and ethnic identities” (163).

⁶¹ Marsh describes Mana Tama‘ita‘i’s connection to Mana Wahine Māori: “*Mana* is a word used throughout the Pacific to refer to issues of power and respect. *Tama‘ita‘i* is the nonexclusive Samoan word used to refer to a woman. It is used in this context in a culturally nonspecific way to refer to Pacific Islands women, for want of an ethnically neutral term. The term was inspired by the creation of Mana Wahine, a Maori-based theorized feminism” (338).

⁶² Bernida Webb-Binder theorizes the global context of Pacific racial blackness through women’s art and argues that we should “[look] to Oceania for nuanced visual representations of blackness rather than to the usual contexts of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe” (2016).

A surface read might suggest that Tangimoana's mention of her blackness situates race as the primary bodily difference between the Māori, the Indigenous people, and the largely Pākehā (white, foreign) government. While race certainly separates the Tamihanas from the Pākehā government and land developers, I argue that it is not necessarily their representation of physical blackness which marginalizes them, but the figurative associations of that blackness manifested in their whakapapa connections to Te Pō. Māori genealogical connections to cosmogonic darkness are incommensurable with Pākehā constructions of racial blackness encoded in phenotypical readings of the body. Before his death, Toko articulated the racialized differences people like the land developer, dubbed Mr. Dollarman, saw between themselves and the Māori: "What he saw was brokenness, a broken race. He saw in my Granny, my Mary and me, a whole people, decrepit, deranged, deformed" (102). Mary is Toko's birth mother but because she has a mental disability and his paternity is unclear, he is adopted by her brother, Hemi and sister-in-law, Roimata. Toko's characterization of the Dollarman's appraisal of the Māori as a "decrepit, deranged, deformed" race that should be pushed off of their land and, as the government's failure to investigate suggests, out of the national space, emphasizes the connections between the individual body and the nation within the text. As disabilities studies scholar Lennard J. Davis notes, "If individual citizens are not fit, if they do not fit into the nation, then the national body will not be fit" (6). Tangimoana and Toko both highlight the ways Māori physical and figurative blackness are positioned as inferior and outside of what the New Zealand nation deems acceptable citizenry or bodies. For both Tangimoana and Toko, the solution is not necessarily to counter foreign notions of blackness in order to procure a space within the nation, but to (re)turn to Māori constructions of the body and blackness in an effort to make their own space in a nation which recognizes their Māoritanga.

For Tangimoana, this entails breaking protocols of both Māori and Pākehā culture and governance. In the moment of Tangimoana's speech and throughout Grace's text, this resistance is rooted in bodily and narrative forms, which are both informed by gender. As Tangimoana stands on what is left of the marae, or communal ceremonial space, outside of the remains of the meeting house, she calls attention to herself and, by interrupting the communal singing, claims a space for her own voice. There is no universal Māori protocol on the marae, with each of the various tribes and families adopting their own best practices over the years, but there are unfailingly a set of guidelines that must be followed on every marae (Tauroa and Tauroa; Keane). Most often, these include only speaking when it is appropriate to do so, with age, gender, and familial rank playing determining factors. Waiting one's turn and not interrupting one's elders, let alone the entire family engaged in song, would undoubtedly be expected of a young university student like Tangimoana. There are also some tribes whose protocol insist that women's voices be heard in the songs of greeting and closing on the marae, but not during the speeches that occur between the two (Karetu; Te Awēkotuku 1991). These debates were prevalent during *Potiki's* publication and persist in the present day. Tangimoana's interruption and refusal to participate in song, rather insisting on making a speech, all the while calling attention to her own body and the bodies of other Māori, suggest that her resistance to Pākehā constructions of Māori bodies is also dependent on a rethinking of Māori constructions of bodies as well.

In this study I build on previous readings of *Potiki* and, prompted by Tangimoana's attention to her own intersectional identity as a young, black, Māori woman, I analyze the ways Māori women's bodies and physical and figurative blackness come to bear on the text's form and content. Drawing on *Potiki's* use of the darkness and the spiral, clear invocations of a

specifically Māori construction of Te Pō, I ask what can be gained by tracing an arc between Te Pō, Māori women's bodies, and narrative form within the novel. I begin with a reading of Grace's earlier writings on literary representations of Māori women's bodies and their significance to Māori cosmogony and mythology. Positioning these as my theoretical foundation, I then turn to constructions of Māori women's bodies as mediators and repositories of knowledge within *Potiki*. Close reading key scenes of human and non-human female ancestors in the text, I also focus on how the meeting house itself becomes gendered as a female ancestor and deity, and analyze the implications for how communal voices circulate in that space. Finally, I examine what the protocols of an embodied storytelling might bring to the form and function of the physical text as well, whose communal narration and spiraled trajectories indicative of the "now-time" of Te Pō, suggest that Māori constructions of bodily blackness can rework narratology and, subsequently, settler notions of nationhood and temporality.

Māori Bodies, Sovereignty, and a National Literature: Towards a Reading of Mana

Wahine Māori and Female Bodily Agency as Whakapapa

The decades preceding *Potiki*'s 1986 publication saw the beginning of the Māori Renaissance, a political, cultural, and artistic revitalization of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. For Māori, an Indigenous people who are a demographic, political, and cultural minority in the settler colonial state established in their homelands, the latter half of the twentieth century marked a turning point in Māori efforts for political and cultural sovereignty. This two-pronged approach to sovereignty saw political efforts such as the national government's 1975 creation of the Waitangi Tribunal to address the theft of Māori lands and denial of self-determination

stemming from the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, flourish alongside cultural efforts such as Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, Māori-language immersion schools.

In 1840, representatives of the British crown and over 500 Māori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, English and Māori language versions, respectively.

Mistranslations of key words resulted in British appropriation of Māori lands and sovereignty, which Māori have insisted they never ceded (Mikaere; Orange 2004; Orange 2015). Ani Mikaere describes the discursive and legal slippages between the two documents from a viewpoint that endorses Māori sovereignty:

In 1840 we had been here for a thousand years. We had a highly workable and adaptable system of law in operation, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi guaranteed that it would remain as the first law of Aotearoa. Te Titiriti o Waitangi (and perhaps I should clarify here that in my view Te Tiriti—the Māori text—is the only document of any relevance to us) also stated that, subject to our tino rangatiratanga, we granted kāwanatanga (delegated authority) to the Crown. That was to allow the Crown to pass law, thereby enabling it to regulate the conduct of its own people. This meant that the Crown’s kāwanatanga was subject to our tino rangatiratanga, and that the Crown’s laws were subject to tikanga. That is how I see it.” (25)

Contrary to the Māori text of Te Tiriti, the English version gave the crown dominion over Māori people and lands, a discrepancy which Māori in a contemporary settler colonial setting continue to fight. Māori efforts for cultural and political sovereignty led to the New Zealand Parliament’s establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975, whose goal was to preside over claims that the Crown had breached the terms of the treaty. Iwi have often drawn on their whakapapa and

connections to ancestral lands to make claims before the Tribunal. Māori women have frequently been integral—yet overlooked or marginalized—members of these efforts (Rangiheuea; Te Awekotuku 1991; Szaszy).

Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa were founded by elders to combat the plummeting rates of Māori-language speakers and perpetuate Māori customs and world views that offered alternatives to the settler colonial model (Te Kōhanga Reo). Māori literature was a vehicle for reviving this world view and Grace has characterized her 1975 short story collection *Waiariki*, the first published by a Māori woman, as “part of the movement” along with Hone Tuwhare’s *No Ordinary Sun* (1964) and Witi Ihimaera’s *Pounamu, Pounamu* (1972), the first book-length publications of poetry and fiction, respectively, by Māori. Grace was a teacher for many years and describes “the movement”’s educational elements:

There was a call for Maori language to be taught in schools. There was a call for our curriculum to be relevant to all students. *Te Ao Hou*, the official journal of the Maori Affairs Department, was publishing short stories and poetry by Maori writers. There was beginning to be a recognition that writing by Pakeha writers writing about Maori was presenting an outsider viewpoint only. (Della Valle 2007, 135)

As Briar Wood notes of this time period, “promotion of Māori language and culture was increasingly state responsibility” (114). These efforts reveal the ways Māori in the twentieth century were concerned with improving contemporary conditions by righting past wrongs in an effort to assure future survival. In most instances, these efforts were made under the auspices of perpetuating Te Reo Māori and Māoritanga in order to right and (re)write their own political and cultural narratives. Much of the debate over the validity of the Treaty of Waitangi surrounds

British (intentional) mistranslations of key words such as “sovereignty,” and Kohanga Reo maintain that certain aspects of Māori knowledges and world view can only be fully communicated in Te Reo Māori. In the decades that followed, Māori-centered education and community-based political action have remained intertwined. Just as the immersions schools were founded to “ensure that [Māori] children had the opportunity to learn free of White oppression,” those opportunities are seen as vital elements of a larger Māori community: Since the 1990s, adults in these communities have participated in decolonization wānanga (workshops and seminars) that “work on encouraging oral debate, confirming Māori culture and identity through [Māori] history, traditions, language, and values; on identifying and deconstructing the myths of colonization; and on challenging [Māori] to break free of the suffocating oppression of the colonizers and to regain control of [their] lives” (Mutu 275). The Māori Renaissance’s two-pronged approach to sovereignty advocated Indigenous knowledges and social structures as a way to overcome centuries of dispossession, and relied on the inclusion of the extended family and broader community members to emphasize that the lived experiences and histories of Māori peoples were often the best way to perpetuate those goals.

Patricia Grace’s *Potiki* utilizes a similar two-pronged approach: It has been celebrated for the ways it deploys Māori language and oratorical forms to rework Western literary and generic conventions; and its use of contemporary issues, such as land rights and the forced relocation of Indigenous communities, are a rewriting of the political and historical narratives of Māori people. This is very much part of the Maori Renaissance project of the 1970s and 1980s, but I argue that to more fully understand the cultural and political stakes in *Potiki* one must view it as part of a larger arc in Grace’s writing. Tangimoana’s interruption of the family’s mourning of Toko’s death is as much a commentary on the inclusion of Māori women’s voices—particularly

the younger generation—in matters of protocol and ceremonial spaces, as it is an indictment of settler colonial attempts to erase Indigenous cultural and political sovereignty. The broader cultural and political concerns of Māori people as a whole are, in Grace’s work, often filtered through the lived experiences and embodied knowledges of Māori women. While Māori movements were often whanau-based and relied on women to do much of the “flax roots” work, issues of cultural and racial equity between Māori and the largely Pākehā institutions often marginalized pressing concerns for Māori women.⁶³ In addition to cultural and racial inequality, twentieth-century Māori women often found themselves doubly marginalized by the erosion of traditional Māori gender roles over the preceding centuries of settler colonization. As Naomi Simmonds states, cries to address this marginalization were “premised on the argument that pre-colonisation, mana wahine and mana tāne existed as complementary parts. The roles of men and women, while distinct, were not mutually exclusive or necessarily hierarchical” (13). While the sovereignty movement focused on the political, cultural, and racial discrimination Māori faced, it did not always adequately address the way Māori had internalized the gendered hierarchies of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism (Te Awēkotuku 1991; Tomlins Jahnke 1997; Szaszy; Simmonds; Rangihēuea; A. Smith). At best, these issues were seen as secondary; at worst, they were presented as “anti-Māori or anti-Māori men” (Simmonds 13).⁶⁴ However, Grace’s work leading up to *Potiki* is often concerned with how the fullest reclamation of Māori cultural and political sovereignty—which is largely based on whakapapa and kinship structures—necessitates an examination of the roles of Māori women not only in the contemporary moment, but tracing a

⁶³ Here, “flax roots” has similar connotations as “grass roots,” with the additional implication of the importance of flax in Māori culture. For instance, patterns woven in flax often told stories, passed down beliefs, or affirmed Māori identity. See Te Awēkotuku’s *Mana Wahine* for an extended discussion of the movement and the term.

⁶⁴ Simmonds provides an extensive historiography of Mana Wahine Māori literature and contemporary responses from within and outside of the Māori community (13).

path along the spiral all the way to female deities and ancestresses such as Te Pō, which ground constructions of whakapapa and whānau. Placing *Potiki* within this trajectory highlights how and why its concerns with women's bodies and voices in spaces of symbolism and protocol rely on the lived experiences and bodily-based knowledges of female characters such as Tangimoana and Roimata, and their connections to Te Pō. This trajectory, I argue, is in keeping with the broader cultural and political aims of the Māori Renaissance's concerns while it strategically places Māori women's issues at the center of sovereignty discourse.

In this section, I examine how Grace represents Māori women's bodies to address sovereignty issues within the national, settler colonial literary scene, while simultaneously clearing a space for them within the broader Māori community through a literary decolonization of Māori beginnings in Te Pō. I begin with an analysis of "The Maori in Literature," a piece co-authored by Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera. Its placement in a 1978 anthology on Māoritanga reveals the ways Grace's earlier concerns with gender were operating in a broader conversation about Māori cultural and political sovereignty, and how issues of gender were often sublimated by broader racial or cultural concerns. A close reading of texts by other foundational thinkers in the anthology emphasizes how pivotal her later work with artist Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth* (1984), would be in articulating concepts of a specifically female embodiment of Māori cosmogony, custom, and culture, through an embodied female whakapapa. I contextualize these two pieces of Grace's work through a discussion of other contemporary Mana Wahine Māori scholars such as Kathie Irwin, Irihapeti Ramsden, and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. These readings of Grace's earlier texts then serve as a foundation for understanding how embodied knowledges and narrative practices, both rooted in Māori constructions of Te Pō,

are deployed in *Potiki*, and how they clear a space for the literal and theoretical inclusion of Māori women's voices.

Grace's contribution to the 1978 anthology *Tihe Mauri Ora: Aspects of Maoritanga* edited by Michael King, reveals an early concern with how Māori women were represented in a national literature that had failed to grant Māori people subjectivity. In "The Maori in Literature," Patricia Grace writes about how Māori people, culture, and language have been misrepresented by Pākehā writers who often reduce them to stereotypes. While this piece is not as overtly concerned with gender as some of her later writings, Grace uses examples of misrepresentations of Māori women to make broader points about how Māori bodies are racialized and Māori culture in general has been marginalized. In each of these examples, stereotypes of Māori women's bodies, language, and sexuality are positioned by white male authors as highly visible, accessible, and representative of Māori culture as a whole; yet these figures are never granted any interiority or cultural authenticity. When combatting stereotypes of a singular Māori body type, Grace writes: "We don't all look the same. Not all overweight, brown, with round eyes and blunt features. Our young women do not all look like the 'maidens' of the tourist pamphlets and the glossy books" (Grace and Ihimaera 81). In her appraisal of the debasement of Māori language by non-Maori authors, Grace again turns to misrepresentations of Māori women. Noting the liberality with which Māori language has been appropriated in an attempt to lend some cultural authenticity to Pakeha texts, she asserts that "seeing the word *wahine* used in this way not only makes me feel that the word itself has been debased but also that Maori womanhood has been degraded" (Grace and Ihimaera 81). White male authors' uninformed descriptions of "*wahine*" not only debased Māori language, but reinforced the heteropatriarchal settler notions of a rigid, diametrically opposed positionality of men and

women. Māori women scholars such as Naomi Simmonds, Leonie Pihama, and Briar Wood have problematized the assumptions of the simple translation of “wahine” as “woman,” noting that this obfuscates “the highly relational and spatial nature of Māori language” because wahine “move in and through a range of subjectivities at different times and in different places” (Simmonds 12; see also, Wood 109) Finally, Grace also turns to misrepresentations of Māori women to illustrate broader points about stereotypes of Māori bodies in general as lascivious and hypersexualized, particularly in their racialized encounters with Pākehā. Drawing examples from John Mulgan’s *Man Alone* (1939), Maurice Gee’s *The Big Season* (1962), and Maurice Shadbolt’s *Summer Fires and Winter Country* (1963), she points out the ways New Zealand’s national literary tradition had consistently represented Māori women as “passionate hip swingers with flashing eyes (almost always a half-caste or a princess),” to be objectified as minor characters whose only purpose is to develop traits of white male characters through their own sexual objectification, noting that many serve as a protagonist’s “first woman,” after which “something [is] to be learned about the young man here, but nothing more about the girl. She has served her purpose” (Grace and Ihimaera 82). In each of her analyses of how representations of bodies, language, and sexuality circulate in the largely Pākehā national literature, Grace argues for Māori cultural authenticity and protocol, but also endorses diversity and a range of possibilities within Māori customs and attitudes.

Its presence in an early anthology comprised mainly of male, Māori voices places “The Maori in Literature” within the tradition of Māori Renaissance texts concerned with cultural and political sovereignty within a nominally bicultural, settler colonial nation. “The Maori in Literature” is split into two parts: the first four pages written by Patricia Grace, the last two written by Witi Ihimaera. In the latter, Ihimaera also points out the differences between Māori

and Pākehā, adding that New Zealand's national history is full of cultural entanglements that have produced two ways of reading the nation's cultural geography: As Ihimaera deftly points out, Māori knowledge and narratives are marginalized within this settler colonial state and their inclusion is a necessary step in drafting an accurate and inclusive cultural map of the nation. However, the erosion to which he alludes has had lasting effects on how Māori knowledge and custom are maintained and perpetuated. In the same anthology in which Grace adeptly represents Māori women's objectification within the national literary tradition as indicative of broader Māori cultural sovereignty issues, several scholars who endorsed a return to Māori traditions did so through an explicit denial of certain roles to women.

Sam Karetu's "Kawa in Crisis," also included in the anthology *Tihei Mauri Ora*, is an early and often cited argument against women speaking on the marae during certain events. Many Māori claims to land and sovereignty were predicated on genealogies of place and the proper, uninterrupted chain of command that those genealogies presupposed, and women's demands for recognition were positioned as anachronistic threats to that succession. In his discussion of kawa, or protocol on the marae, Karetu is quick to point out that as kaikaranga (those who call out in welcome) Māori women alone are responsible for the opening and closing chants of these oratorical gatherings, and thus questions why their voices should be heard during other components. Karetu positions the inclusion of women's voices on the marae as out of keeping with Māori tradition, and a modern threat to proper kawa, which was already in peril due to settler colonialism. Whether or not women should speak on the marae is a contested question, with each tribe or 'iwi making their own decisions and following their particular history and custom. While many tribes prohibit women's voices, East Coast tribes of the North Island such as Ngati Porou, Ngati Kahungunu, and Whanau-a-Apanui contain high ranking female members

who exercise their considerable political power by speaking on the marae; this is the notable exception rather than the norm (Mahuika; Ralston). However, as Ihimaera posits, the contours of the Māori cultural landscape have often been superimposed by Pākehā beliefs. Thus, scholars such as Api Mahuika, Steven Webster, Anne Salmond, Joan Metge, and Caroline Ralston have argued that positions such as Karetu's may be based on the settler colonial archive's erasure of Māori women's agency, pointing to "evidence to suggest that chiefly women, from a much wider range of tribes than previously admitted, in earlier times exercised political rights and power that were much greater than is allowed for today" (Ralston 25). While in the preceding centuries decisions about women's voices on the marae had been based on custom and history, as Karetu and others pointed out by the mid to late twentieth century, Māori language and custom had eroded to the point that ceremonial roles on contemporary marae were simply filled by whoever was available, with preference in many instances given to those few who still maintained a dexterity in te reo Māori or even English speakers who possessed the proper knowledge of protocol. Whatever the current state of te reo Māori and Māori protocol on the marae, Karetu and others asserted that their denial of women's voices on the marae was not rooted in a disavowal of women's prominence and agency, but rather a deference to the customs of ancestors, emphasizing the greater need for a return to Māoritanga and its perpetuation in the face of extinction.

Against a backdrop of Māori cultural and political sovereignty rooted in tradition, many Māori women, such as Grace, began to theorize how they could perpetuate Māoritanga while also affirming their agency as women. To be clear, I am not arguing that Māori culture is or was inherently gender-biased. Instead, I am interested in the ways that theories of Mana Wahine Māori—a recognition of the inherent mana, or spiritual, intellectual, and physical strength of

Māori women—turned to Māori tradition to recover and reinvigorate the traditional roles women have always played in Māori culture and histories. In this way, Mana Wahine Māori is not just a discourse about Māori women in Māori spaces, but a theoretical tool with real world implications for how a specific type of Indigenous feminist knowledge can combat the paternalism of settler colonialism and its inherent erasure of Indigenous world views. Theories of Mana Wahine Māori were also circulating during the 1970s and 1980s, and are reflected in Grace’s writing before and after *Tihei Mauri Ora*; for instance, her inclusion in the collaborative, women-centered efforts such as Kathie Irwin and Irihapeti Marsden’s anthology illustrated by Robyn Kahukiwa, *Toi Wahine: The Worlds of Maori Women* (1995), as well as Grace’s own collaboration with Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa* (1984). As foundational Mana Wahine Māori theorist Ngahuia Te Awekotuku describes:

That is the message in the phrase, ‘Mana Wahine Maori’ – reclaiming and celebrating what we have been, and what we will become. It is not a re-action to males, and their violence against us; it is a pro-action, a determining of ourselves as Maori women, with authenticity and grace. (10)

This involved excavating Ihimaera’s aforementioned layers of the nation’s overlapping cultural maps, and also examining how contemporary Māori related to and perpetuated ancient customs and knowledges. For Te Awekotuku and other Māori women, such as Grace and Kahukiwa, this excavation involved a return to their beginnings, and many of them turned to narratives and images of Māori female deities and ancestors. While these women ultimately found that female deities and ancestors often had not been given the credit or attention they deserved, in some cases, it involved rethinking what many Māori accepted as nearly standard versions of narratives—in so much as one can call any Māori story or experience standardized.

Te Awekotuku has critiqued Karetu's argument and contextualized it as oppressive and misogynistic, seeing it as an impediment to women's fullest expression of their rights as members of Māori society and rooting her argument in the lived experiences and histories of Māori ancestors. While, as previously mentioned, some scholars relied on evidence to suggest the roles Māori women had in pre-contact society, Te Awekotuku's reliance on Mana Wahine Māori as both what Māori women "have been" and what they "will become," affords the experiences and desires of Māori women in the present equal footing in determining proper behavior in ceremonial spaces and occasions. She relates one incident when women from Te Arawa, a tribe to which Te Awekotuku belongs and which has strongly opposed women's speaking on the marae, refused to acquiesce to male opposition. When the female relatives of a deceased person were forbidden to set foot on Motutawa, a small island used as a burial ground, for fear that they would pollute the tapu, or sacred space, they drew on women's experiences with the island throughout time: "They argued that no calamity would occur, because women had frequented the island, even lived there at one time, and the current restriction was so recent it was suspect" (Te Awekotuku 102). In this example, contemporary Māori women were able to use the legacy of their lived, tribal experiences with a place—in effect, creating a whakapapa of place—to root their arguments in the land and refute a restriction whose more recent claim to the land was then deemed spurious.

While Karetu's refutation of women's presence on the marae is among the most obvious examples of how the Māori Renaissance positioned women's concerns as peripheral or even counter to larger sovereignty efforts, other entries in *Tihei Mauri Ora* reveal how women's experiences and positions can be unintentionally marginalized. In "The Relevance of Maori Myth and Legend," Ranginui Walker makes a similar argument to that of Grace and Ihimaera in

“The Maori in Literature,” noting that “the erosion of Maori culture by that of the European has made the thread binding it to its mythology more tenuous” (1978, 20). In the same collection where Grace analyzes Māori women’s representation in the national literature in order to make broader points about Māori cultural sovereignty, Walker’s argument for Māori mythology as a component of cultural sovereignty places female Māori deities in a somewhat limited scope. Walker’s account renders Māori female deities as somewhat peripheral, a positioning Grace and collaborator Robyn Kahukiwa would seek to correct years later in *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth*.

While Walker endorses a reading of Māori cosmologies and traditions that extends their utility to the broadest possible number of Māori in their daily lives, a close reading of his piece reveals that some of Grace’s concerns about the marginalization of Māori women in New Zealand’s literary traditions and Ihimaera’s comments on the erosion of the contours of the Māori cultural map, can also resonate in readings of Māori narratives. Walker does not begin his mythology with the generative female darkness of Te Pō, but states that “The creation myth begins logically with the procreative act of the primaeval pair Ranginui the sky father and Papatuanuku the earth mother. But the procreation took place in a world that inhibited growth, progress, and an increase of knowledge” (1978, 20). Walker, as a foremost authority, has written extensively on Māori history and culture. In other places he may have mentioned pō and ao (the realm of light, which is often a binary and/or a compliment to the darkness of pō), but I am curious as to why a short piece in an anthology on sovereignty would begin with the pairing of Papa and Rangi, rather than Te Kore and Te Pō. Walker’s presentation of humanity’s origins also obfuscates the roles of female deities, instead describing it as an independent act of the god Tane, a son of the aforementioned Rangi and Papa: “Eventually, he came to the conclusion that a

separate act of creation was necessary. Tane fashioned Hineahuone the earth-formed maid and gave her the breath of life” (21). Walker does mention several female deities throughout his piece, but often presents them as secondary characters without much subjectivity or interiority, described only in their relation to others, such as when he describes how the trickster demi-god Māui Potiki often uses “deceit and trickery” to outwit his mother, Taranga, and other ancestresses, Muriranga-whenua and Mahuika (21-24). I am not attempting to find fault or an intentional gender bias in Walker’s retellings of Māori myths. Rather, I highlight his depictions present in the same anthology containing conversations around Māori women’s roles in Māori communities and broader New Zealand literary landscapes, to reveal the climate in which Grace’s writing about Māori women’s bodies, knowledges and narratives were entering into broader conversations about Māori cultural and political sovereignty.

Nor do I suggest that there is a single, definitive version of any Māori cosmological tradition or narrative. Instead, I point to the ways Māori and broader Pacific literary studies position these narratives as elastic, their pluralities and retellings a strength. *ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui* and *Malama Meleisea* affirm that multiple versions of narratives present multiple perspectives from which to understand what *ho‘omanawanui* calls the “polytexts and politics” of a single narrative (*ho‘omanawanui* 2014; *Meleisea* 1987a). Each (re)telling is a variation that expands the (re)turns of the spiral without deviating from a broader sense of kinship. Or, as Grace described writing about Māori cosmogony and mythology: “All of the characters in our mythologies that we write about, I don’t think we’re doing anything new, just new interpretations of the different types of people we are, really” (Grace 2013).

The literary and creative potential of an elastic and expansive cosmogony—one full of (re)turns and (re)tellings—are on display in Patricia Grace’s writings about Māori beginnings

and female deities in *Wahine Toa: Women of Māori Myth* (1984), for which she provided the text to accompany Robyn Kahukiwa's paintings and drawings. As with other early Mana Wahine Māori texts, this book was a collaboration between women, but it was also a pooling together of the mana of various female ancestors and their narratives. Just as Grace's literary and Kahukiwa's visual skills complemented one another, the narratives of these various deities, when laid side by side, create a stronger whakapapa of female agency and lived experiences than they would contain independently. In addition to personifying female deities and presenting narratives from their perspectives, *Wahine Toa* also explores the roles they played in foundational Māori narratives that often focus on the exploits of male figures, such the trickster demi-god Maui Potiki, after whom Grace's novel is named. Acknowledging that female deities had not been paid as much attention as their counterparts, Kahukiwa began researching and painting them. Knowing that these pieces would be sold and separated after their exhibition, Kahukiwa collected them into a book and asked Grace to write the text. The result is a collaboration that simultaneously centers female voices within an Indigenous space and contributes to the broader New Zealand literary and artistic communities; but also centers ideas of Māoritanga, whakapapa, and whanau, which were central to the broader Māori sovereignty movement.

Unlike some other accounts of Māori beginnings which start with the separation of Papatūānuku, the earth mother, and Rangi, the sky father after their children have been born, *Wahine Toa* is a cosmogony that begins with the idea of female procreation of the universe. The first entry in this book on Māori women is the formless yet fertile darkness Te Pō, yet she gives her own whakapapa and positions herself within a larger female genealogy, stating from whom she came and who will come after her:

I am aged in aeons, being Te Po, the Night, that came from Te Kore, the Nothing

First there was Te Kore that could neither be felt nor sensed. This was the void, the silence, where there was no movement and none to move, no sound and none to hear, no shape and none to see.

It was out of this nothingness that Increase and Consciousness, and I, Te Po, were born. I am aged in aeons, and I am Night of many nights, Night of many darknesses—Night of great darkness, long darkness, utter darkness, birth and death darkness; of darkness unseen, darkness touchable and untouchable, and of every kind of darkness that can be. In my womb lay Papatuanuku who was conceived in Darkness, born into Darkness—and who matured in Darkness, and in Darkness became mated with the Sky.

Then Papatuanuku too conceived, and bore many children among the many long ages of Te Po.(16)

Grace's presentation of Te Pō is similar to many creation accounts, containing the movement from nothing to something and darkness to light, yet her narrative technique and the interiority she lends Te Pō are quite singular. One of the goals of *Wahine Toa* was to “make the text relevant to today...to personalize them and I thought the way to do it would be to put myself in the place of the entities and write the stories as if they were telling them, speaking them” (Grace 2013). In addition to granting these figures subjectivity and interiority, the first-person narration also emphasizes the oratorical tradition of Māori narrative while claiming their rights as women to speak. Te Pō not only asserts her autonomy in claiming her own voice, but one can also read Grace's descriptions of the first two female generations as autonomous creations. Te Pō asserts that she, Increase, and Consciousness were “born” “out of [the] nothingness” when there was only Te Kore. Te Pō, who claims that she is “every kind of darkness that can be” and “birth and death darkness,” describes her daughter, Papatuanuku as being “born in Darkness”; however, as

with her own birth from Te Kore, she does not mention a partner. It is not until the third generation that she describes a male and female coupling, when Papatuanuku “became mated with the Sky,” Rangi. The contributions of Rangi and other male deities such as Maui are not marginalized in Grace and Kahukiwa’s presentation, rather, they are vital elements of a broader Māori cosmogony. However, in emphasizing the interiority and autonomy of their female counterparts, *Wahine Toa* highlights a whakapapa that is steeped in Mana Wahine Māori. It presents that mana as an integral part of Māori foundations, organizing structures (such as whakapapa and whānau), and knowledge systems, and suggests how that may be useful to sovereignty efforts for all Māori, since the fullest return to beginnings cannot happen without an acknowledgement of the centrality and selflessness of Māori women.

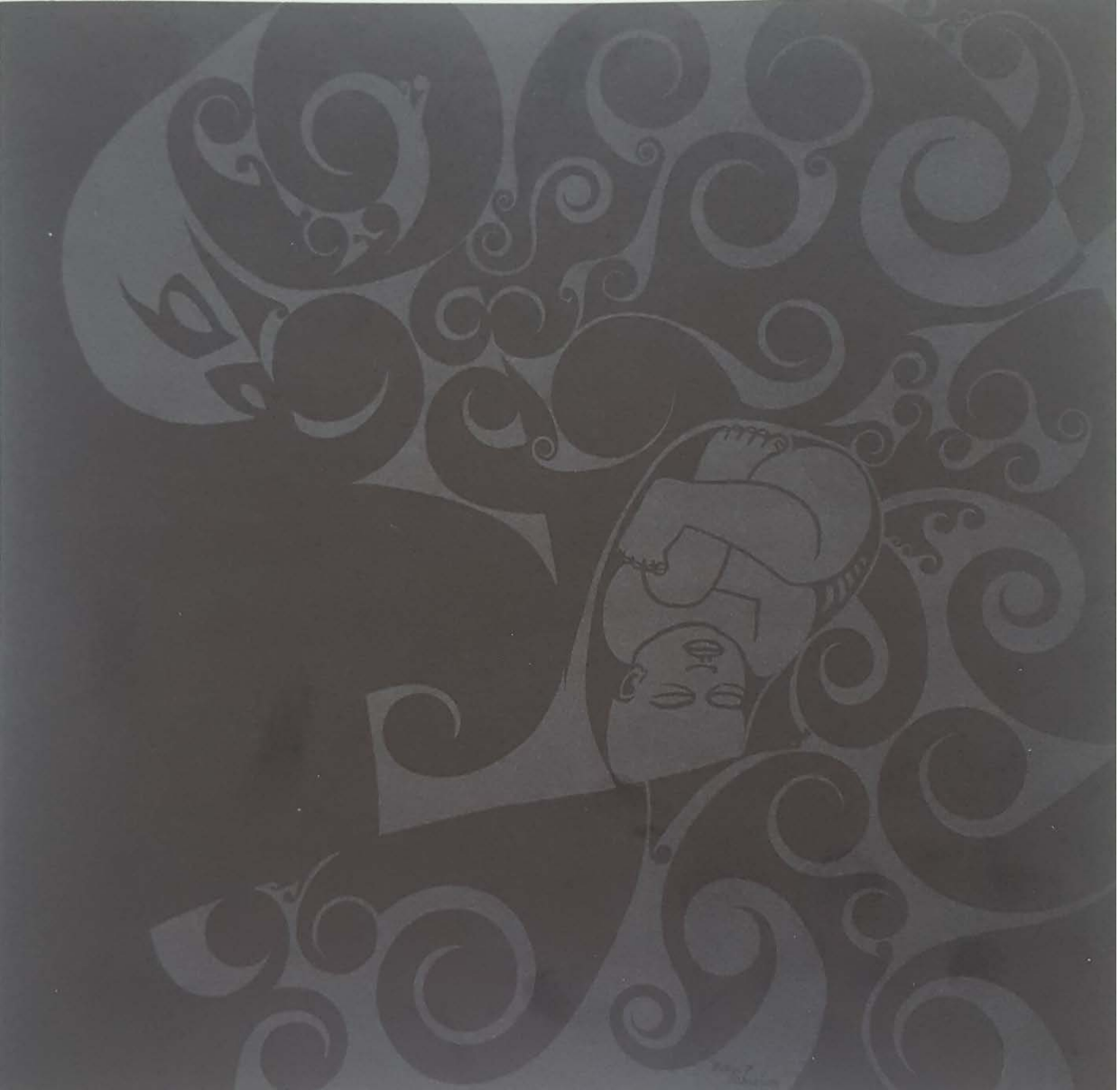


Figure 1. Te Po. Oil on hardboard. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa*,17.



Figure 2. Te Po and Papatuanuku. Pencil on Paper. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa*, 19.

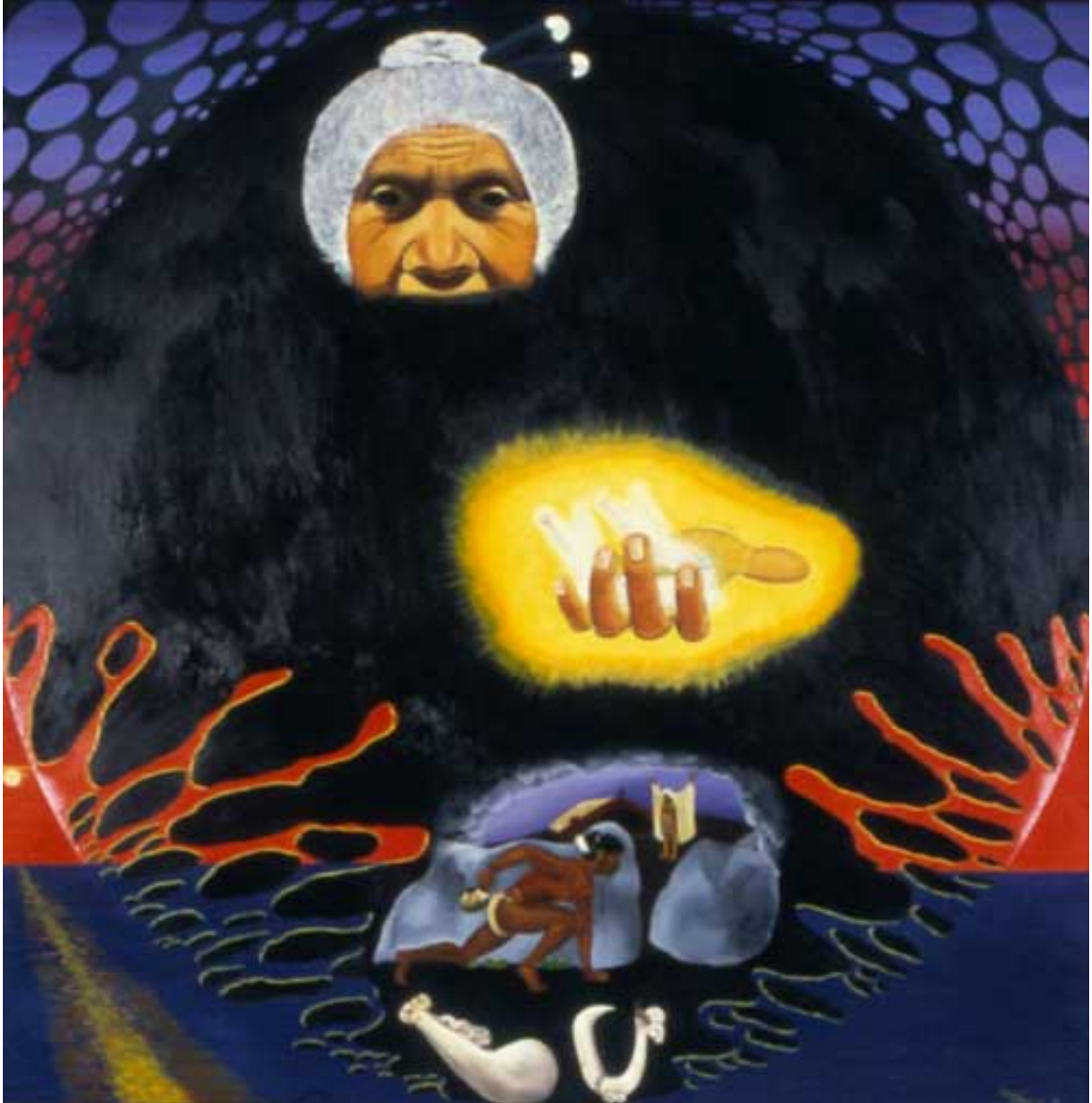


Figure 3. Muriranga-whenua. Oil on hardboard. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa*, 53.

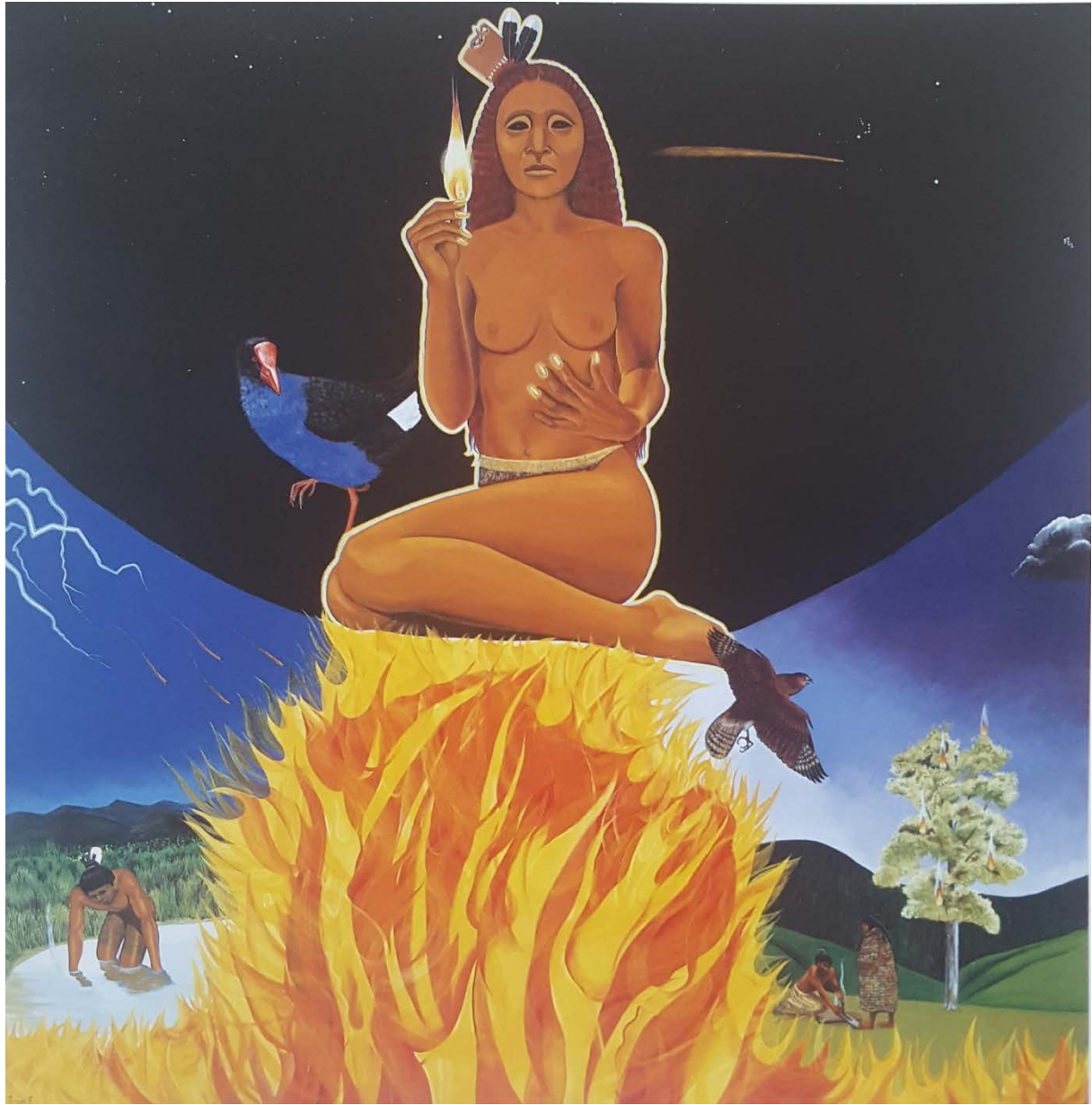


Figure 4. Mahuika. Oil on hardboard. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa*, 47.

The first-person narration and the personification of Te Pō are innovative and, when read alongside Kahukiwa's images, present a version of Māori creation that is corporeal and ontological. Grace presents a sensory view of Te Pō, whose consciousness seems to extend before her own birth and who is able to describe Te Kore through the "sense[s]" and what one could or could not "move," "hear," or "see" (Kahukiwa and Grace 16). The bodily emphases aid in Grace's personification of the abstract concept of Te Pō. They also reinforce the genealogical components of Māori creation, which Kahukiwa highlights in her paintings. In Kahukiwa's "Te Po" (figure 1), we see a dark gray fetus gestating against the black expanse of Te Kore. The familiar genealogical references of the koru are present as well, spiraling out from the fetus and moving around the border of the painting. The closeness of the spirals and the warmth of the gray Kahukiwa uses convey a sense of intimacy and familiarity between Te Pō and Te Kore, whose infinite expanse is still very present between the creeping tendrils of koru. In Kahukiwa's "Te Po and Papatuanuku" (fig. 2), Te Pō is now a fully formed woman and is depicted carrying her own baby, the goddess Papatūānuku whom Grace mentions in her text. Te Pō is covered in koru and other whakairo (carvings with symbolic patterns) which are also superimposed on her gestational fetus.

To reference Te Awēkotuku's description of Mana Wahine Māori, I do not suggest that Grace and Kahukiwa were reacting to male voices or ideas, but I do want to point out that their presentations of Māori goddesses were often much more detailed and comprehensive than others' accounts. For instance, where Walker and others write that Māui often outsmarted his female ancestors—Muriranga-whenua who gave him her jaw bone to fish with, or Mahuika who gave him her fiery fingers so that mankind might have fire—Grace's text presents them as conscious of his deceit, but obliging because he was a descendant of theirs on an epic quest.

Kahukiwa includes three illustrations of Muriranga-whenua's story: Two are close-ups of her face and do not include Māui; in the third, her shining gift to humanity occupies the center of the image and her omniscient gaze stares directly at the reader, while a disproportionately smaller Maui crouches behind a rock near the bottom of the image, unaware that she is conscious of his presence (fig. 3). Similarly, Māui is only present in one of Kahukiwa's three images of Mahuika; again, he crouches in a peripheral position, in this case, after she has chastised him for his trickery (fig. 4). As Grace writes, Māui went to his relative several times for fire for mankind, each time dousing in the river the fiery fingernail she had given him. When he returns for her last fingernail Mahuika angrily chastises him and causes the fire to "[leap] and spread around him," causing Māui to call out for Tāwhirimātea, the god of weather, to send rain to drench the earth and save him.

Even in instances where female figures are not giving birth, they give of their bodies in an effort to assure the advancement of subsequent generations, incorporating them into the whakapapa begun by Te Pō. Muriranga-whenua, who is an old woman near death when Māui visits her, with her "stomach swollen with hunger," gives him her jawbone so that he may accomplish earthly tasks and positions this as a connection to her descendants: "through you it is my gift to the people of the earthly land" (52). Her enlarged abdomen, her removal of a piece of her body, and her assurance of future generations are significant allusions to procreation. When Mahuika's chastisement of Māui results in Tāwhirimātea drenching the earth, she similarly gives the last bit of herself for future generations. Grace writes, "as the flood waters rose about me I sent the last seeds of fire into the earthly trees" (46). The diction evocative of procreation—fire as "seeds"—and the threat to Mahuika's bodily safety again suggest the perils of childbirth. In both of these instances, these women gave of their bodies so that their descendants might have

knowledge. This theme of knowledge rooted in and given through the female body recurs throughout the text and offers a foundation for Grace's later writing about the genealogical and ontological connections of the Māori body in her novel *Potiki*.

As I have shown, the Māori Renaissance relied on components of Māori culture and history, such as family structures like whanau and genealogical methods such as whakapapa, to ground arguments for cultural and political sovereignty. However, this broader effort often marginalized or explicitly denied the rights of Māori women to contribute their voices. In tracing an arc towards Mana Wahine Māori in Grace's career, I point to the ways her clearing a space for Māori women in the national literature and reclamation of Māori women's voices in cultural spaces, laid the foundation for her use of Māori women's vocalization of their connections to whakapapa, Te Pō, and embodied knowledge in *Potiki*, which I discuss at length in the following section.

Mana Wahine Māori as Bodily Mediation of Te Pō: The Liminality of Time and Space

Grace's emphasis in *Wahine Toa* on gestational imagery, the senses, and spiraled trajectories of movement (or "turning") in the time and space of Te Pō highlight the ways representations of the Māori female body encompass epistemologies of beginnings and darkness. The attention to procreation and the resonance of whakapapa as vehicles for autonomous female voices and the exercise of their agency in the crafting of Māori narratives are also central to Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki*, which is published two years later (1986). In the following close readings of key scenes in *Potiki*, I contend that the Māori female body is also the reader's epistemological entry into the knowledges and narrative structures which shape the novel;

particularly as female characters narrate their own bodily mediations of their spatial, cultural, and familial environments. I analyze Roimata's nocturnal return to the Tamihana land as a young woman and her subsequent participation in communal chants of welcome during a funerary procession on the marae, reading this scene as a foil to the moment when her own daughter, Tangimoana, will interrupt the protocol of collective singing on the marae after her brother's death decades later. In both instances, in their expressions of their voices these women draw on their lived experiences as Māori women and the embodied knowledges they carry. Exploring Roimata's experience also reveals the ways Tangimoana's outburst is at once part of a larger arc of female voice and agency, and a break with that tradition, which paradoxically produces a new path for the community through individual transgression. In this section, I argue that Roimata's epistemological reorientation occurs in the dark and analyze how that perspective orients the reader. Tracing the ways this reorientation is part of a larger return to the community via Roimata's participation in a tangi, or lamentation, during a funerary procession, I examine how Māori constructions of space and time—which are rooted in Te Pō—are focused not just on the individual body, but on how that body relates to others. Drawing on Miriam Fuchs's and Elizabeth DeLoughrey's arguments of time and narration in *Potiki*, Manu Aluli Meyers's and Linda Tuhiwhai Smith's constructions of space, and a Mana Wahine Māori perspective, I conclude with an analysis of how centering Māori women's voices and embodied knowledges can advance a decolonizing narratology dependent on multiple ways of reading physical and figurative relationality.

While *Potiki* is narrated by multiple characters in multiple tenses, Roimata is the most frequent narrator, and the first to describe the events through a first person perspective. As such, one can argue that her perspective is one that initially roots and orients the reader, and it is no

coincidence that her return to the Tamihanas' ancestral land is an ontological and epistemological reorientation that occurs in the dark. She arrives at night and must traverse the coast in darkness, relying on her body's connection to the land and memories to guide her footsteps. While Western discourse describes being "in the dark" as being adrift, rudderless, without knowledge, in the Polynesian context, and for a character like Roimata, the darkness is the space which orients her and maintains her cultural moorings. Returning to Tamihana land twelve years after the death of her father, who had arranged for her to complete a European style education and become a teacher, Roimata's journey along the coast in the darkness is more than a physical return to start the novel. After twelve years away from the land and people, twelve years spent not only learning but reinforcing foreign knowledge systems as a Western-style teacher, Roimata's physical return is symbolic of an epistemological return. Her return to the "old family home positioned at the centre of the curve" is brought about by a circuitous and nocturnal journey, evocative of the spiral and the darkness which undergird Māori epistemology (15), and which Grace has previously linked to a specifically female whakapapa in work such as *Wahine Toa*.

Roimata's ontological and epistemological return indicates broader Mana Wahine Māori theorizations of women's lived experiences as symbolically and etymologically linked to space and time. As previously discussed, Mana Wahine Māori theorists such as Simmonds, Pihama, and Wood have theorized the limitations of assuming a simple correlation between the Māori word "wahine" and the English word "woman," which Grace pointed out as a feature of the New Zealand settler colonial national literary tradition (Grace 1978). A prime distinction between these terms is that wahine is etymologically linked to Māori epistemologies and ontologies of time and space. Pihama observes the "many times and spaces Māori women move through" as a

feature of their daily lives (Pihama qtd in Simmonds 13). Wood parses the word wahine to amplify these movements:

It is also important to consider the multi-valences of the word wahine, the word for woman, of which the plural is wāhine. The first syllable of the plural with a long vowel—wā—can also signify time and place, so that by extension it becomes the ‘time and place of Hine.’... Hine is the word used for girl (in Māori and other places/ languages of the Pacific) and is also the name of many of the ancestresses, demigods, and goddesses associated with women. (109)

Wood’s attention to the suffix –hine as a feature of Polynesian narratives and also a word to describe women in all aspects of their daily lives, speaks to the ways Grace’s female characters function within the novel and also in the times and places beyond fiction. Roimata’s role of orienting the reader’s epistemological perspective within the times and places of *Potiki* can also be read as Grace’s response to the New Zealand literary tradition which positioned wahine as flat, peripheral characters and, as such, she clears a time and space for them within the national literary tradition as well.

Roimata’s first-person recollection of her return emphasizes her bodily mediation of these knowledge systems, particularly space, as she narrates: “light had gone but I knew the way ahead...I had not forgotten how to walk the rock, feeling each step and taking each foothold firmly,” and “I traversed it so surely in the dark” because it was “a way still familiar although the road had been straightened and sealed by then” (24-25). The first-person emphasis on bodily movement and her preference for the circuitous route over the linear one, which she positions as unfamiliar, mark this journey as an epistemological return, and challenges the types of knowledge production Roimata has been complicit in during her absence. “Familiar” denotes a

previous knowledge of the area, but I also point to the word’s historical association of “senses relating to knowledge and habituation” and invoke its definition as “known to a person from long or close association or perception by any of the senses” (“Familiar”). Roimata’s interaction with and knowledge of this space are rendered as the text toggles between her senses—what she can and cannot see, what she feels—similar to the ways Grace’s first person narration of “Te Pō” unfolds in *Wahine Toa*. Thus, in this scene the body mediates and encodes culturally specific forms of knowledge based on genealogical connections to time and space.

Roimata’s reliance on her memory and senses to guide her across a familiar space in the darkness evidence a unique connection between her body and that land. Her reliance on embodied, Indigenous forms of knowledge to guide her as she left behind her life as a Western-style teacher and returned to her birthplace, can be read as an allusion to the previously discussed role that Kōhanga Reo played in the sovereignty movements contemporaneous with the novel’s publication and their explicit goal of decolonizing Māori knowledge and world view. The connections between a person and her birth sands—and the knowledge that flows from that connection—have been well theorized by Pacific Islands scholars, and I turn here to Manu Aluli Meyer’s construction of “cultural empiricism” in a Pacific Islander context. Meyer gave a keynote address in which she described how an attention to sensuality and cultural empiricism as expressions of human potential could benefit Kanaka Maoli and their Māori cousins.⁶⁵ She defines “cultural empiricism” as “the idea that knowledge that comes from our five senses is shaped by a distinct relationship we have had with the world as cultural people” (31). In this model, the senses do more than register the physical conditions of a place such as what one can

⁶⁵ I do not wish to conflate the differences between Māori and Kanaka Maoli knowledges. Meyer frames her address as the result of a “life-changing” “wae wae tapu in Aotearoa” and draws connections between Māori and Kanaka Maoli knowledges and experiences throughout.

see, hear, smell, feel, and touch in that place. Instead, the senses are themselves affected by the land and how one interacts with it:

I have been taught to “see” and “hear” differently because intimacy with land, sky and ocean develop a different set of timings, a distinction with history that extends beyond my own life-time, and an understanding that keeps pace with the tides. (31)

Similar to my close reading of Grace’s use of the “familiar” and sensory aspects of Roimata’s physical return to indicate an epistemological one as well, Meyer discusses the ways Indigenous Pacific constructions of knowledge are rooted in a bodily understanding. She points out how the Hawaiian word ‘ike means both to “see” and to “know” (31); the same is true in te reo Māori, in which the similar sounding kite means to “see” and to “know” (Williams 120). Meyer challenges us to not only accept the knowledge our senses might offer, but to rethink “where our knowledge actually ‘comes’ from.” She notes that for Hawaiians:

It is found in the idea of na‘au and na‘auao. Na‘auao translates as “wisdom” and also as “emotion, heart, feeling.” It refers to our stomach region, our na‘au, and helps us erase any notion that knowing something is simply a brain function. (32)

Again, in te reo Māori, the puku has the same associations as the Hawaiian na‘au and na‘auao, as it means “stomach,” “seat of passions, affections,” and “memory” (Williams 308). Meyer’s attention to how the Indigenous body produces a particular cultural empiricism which is rooted in the land and produces a “different set of timings, a distinction with history that extends beyond [one’s] own life-time” is a useful framework on which to build my larger arguments about how Roimata’s bodily mediation of time and space reorients the reader’s perspective and the text’s narrative strategies.

The representation of Roimata's bodily mediation of time and space is rooted in genealogical connections, which are inherently communal. Here, I examine the ways *Potiki* builds on bodily and "familiar" knowledges of space and time by layering them with communal and kinship connections; specifically, how the presence of multiple bodies and the connections among them affect how space and time are constructed within the narrative. Grace has said that Roimata was one of the earliest characters in the writing of *Potiki*, and that she fleshed her out through imagining her walking toward the meeting house: "I didn't know who she was or what she would be so I started her off walking, coming to this place where the meeting house was" (Grace 2013). Through imagining who would be waiting for Roimata at the meeting house, "the house of genealogies," Grace began to realize who Roimata was (1986, 11). In traversing that space between herself and the meeting house Roimata's body enacts Māori epistemology, as she literally walks a curved path evocative of koru. In this context, it is not the closing of the distance between Roimata and those at the meeting house, but the experience of space as a connection to them and a reaffirmation of their communal existence, that reorients Roimata's—and by extension the reader's—perspective at the beginning of the novel.

While Roimata's body registers a sensory familiarity with the land that time cannot erode, Māori constructions of space and one's relationship to it are also shifting and dynamic. She returns to a land with which she is familiar, but the protocols of the Māori funerary procession paradoxically circumscribe her as a stranger. Because she has unknowingly arrived during a funerary procession, and, as she has yet to marry Hemi she has not established herself as a part of the Tamihana family in the strict sense, she must approach the meeting house with the visiting party she stumbles upon. Because she is part of the manuhiri (party of visitors or strangers), she must wait to be called into the meeting house and may only approach the marae

after strict protocols of call and response have been performed by the manuhiri and the hosts. She is at once an individual returning to her birth sands and a member of a group of visitors entering a space to which they have no claim. Relying on these theorizations of space, I see in Roimata's spiraled movement across land to the meeting house as the movement through what Albert Wendt describes as "the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates...the space that is context, giving meaning to things" (Wendt "Tatauing" 402).

In her groundbreaking text *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes how Māori notions of space and time are intertwined. This is helpful in articulating how Roimata's bodily experience of a place could be inextricably bound to the times in which she inhabits it. Smith notes that while Western thought separates space and time, in Te Reo Māori the word for space and time is the same, as "[t]here are positions within time and space in which people and events are located, but these cannot necessarily be described as distinct categories of thought" (50). Epistemological categories can be enmeshed in the Indigenous framework in ways that settler knowledge cannot accommodate. Thus, emphasizing the liminality of Roimata's position to Māori spaces at various times is a crucial step in immersing the reader in an Indigenous world view, which directs the text's narration. In addition to drawing distinctions between theoretical categories, Smith discusses the ways colonial frameworks have allowed a single discipline to exercise control of a category. She cites Henri Lefebvre's argument "that the notion of space has been 'appropriated by mathematics' which has claimed an ideological position of dominance over what space means. Mathematics has constructed a language which attempts to define with absolute exactness the parameters, dimensions, qualities, and possibilities of space" (50). Thus, *Potiki's* first presentation of the

Tamihana family's land, and by extension most Māori spaces in the text, is one that evades the exactitudes of rigid, Western constructions of the "possibilities of space." Instead, the potentiality of space is emphasized through Roimata's corporeal experience of it, registering a sensory familiarity that supersedes the superficial physicality of modifications such as straightened roads. Space and time are also dependent on her relationality to others who also occupy that space and time, and her kinship connections, or whakapapa, to them.

As with Grace's earlier writing, this text uses Māori women's positions in multiple communities as a decolonizing tool for clearing a space for Indigenous perspectives in national and global discourses of literary criticism. The enmeshment of time and space and their impact on the development of the narrative in *Potiki* were initially dismissed by some critics. The inherent subtleties of how women's bodily experiences of space and time impacted one's relationship to one's surroundings and by extension how the reader encountered the novel, were overlooked by some who saw, as Miriam Fuchs argues, only a pat binary between Indigenous and settler and dismissed the novel as a relatively simple plot without narratological merits. The specificity of "national identity and cultural location" are integral to Miriam Fuchs's "Reading towards the Indigenous Pacific: Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, A Case Study," which critiques "cultural holism" as a method of cross-cultural inquiry because its emphasis on a system as a whole rather than the discrete parts can lead to its least visible units, such as Māori, "be[ing] elided by holism's intercultural paradigms" (166). In the literary context, this can result in Western criticism's self-referential appraisal of Indigenous writing: "critics who use holistic methodologies often articulate cross-cultural judgments and subordinate the work's ethnic difference to Western forms and tropes—even as they attempt to do otherwise" (167). Fuchs links these literary concerns to the journal's broader thematic engagement with Pacific relations

and nomenclature because to exclude it from transcultural conversations and leave Indigenous Oceanic literary criticism exclusively to the native would exacerbate the marginalization of these nations already precipitated by the rise of major commercial trading partners. Fuchs points out the ways *Potiki* was initially dismissed as narratively simple and plot-driven by some literary critics unfamiliar with the Indigenous storytelling techniques undergirding the narration. Fuchs argues that “by assuming it to be no more than its plot, critics reduce this complex novel to the familiar, representative Pacific tale of indigenous people versus *pakeha*” (170). As Fuchs’ use of the word “versus” points out, ignoring the text’s narrative complexity reduces it to a tale of social and political binarism, one in which Indigenous and settlers are imagined to be in a constant state of opposition and precluding any alternative knowledge production. By pointing out this blind spot, she also creates a space to apply Western notions of narrative theory to the text in a way that accommodates its distinct Indigenous identity.⁶⁶ *Potiki*’s narrative and epistemological innovations come from its refusal of the limits of binary thinking, in literary strategies as well as social and political structures.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s “The Spiral Temporality of Patricia Grace’s ‘Potiki’” also addresses the binarism Fuchs mentioned and shows how *Potiki* overcomes that by using both types of time, and poses as its central question, “How can the linear structure of the novel accommodate alternative temporalities that do not celebrate individual ‘progress’?” While my reading of *Potiki* centers on Tangimoana’s moment of individuation, it is also very concerned with how her disruption of the communal voice is ultimately an affirmation of her role within the community. Namely, with how she employs Māori precedents of the younger sibling upsetting

⁶⁶ By objectively applying narratology without self-referential cultural holism, Fuchs shows that “through this perspective, Grace’s novel emerges as a text about the Māori themselves, their means of orally recording their own histories, genealogies, mythologies, and myth-histories, centuries before the *pākehā* and presumably after the *pākehā*” (171).

the social hierarchy in order to promote a change and growth for the entire community. As DeLoughrey points out, *Potiki* “disrupts the linear novel, reforming the individualistic narrative into a communal Māori narration of spiral time” (60). Rather than highlighting the tensions between the individual and the communal, DeLoughrey endorses a reading centered on what develops through that tension:

Potiki offers a way of embodying the postcultural—a movement to highlight the *process* of cultural change and rebirth—without denying the ‘sacred time’ of ancestral presence. Such a balance between Māori tradition and regeneration offers a temporalization that represents constant spiral *and* linear movement, rather than its facile binary opposition.
(62)

This enmeshment of the spiral and linear temporalities undergirds my reading of knowledge as corporeally mediated within the text. With DeLoughrey’s argument in mind, I turn to moments when women’s agency is most apparent through their bodily mediation of multiple temporal and spatial moments.

Roimata’s reconnection to Indigenous conceptions of time shares the immediacy and interiority of her corporeal and ontological experience of space. The temporal circuitousness of Te Pō renders the past and future immediately available to the present, and this immediacy of different moments in time is mediated through the body. Unintentionally, Roimata has returned during the funeral proceedings for Hemi’s mother and must approach the family land “at the centre of the curve” with the other community members in a traditional funeral procession with strict protocol. During the proscribed physical actions of walking and singing, Roimata’s consciousness of her body’s actions is again what registers the epistemological shift, in this

instance in conceptions of time. The group “[treads] slowly across the marae. Call and countercall filled the space across the sacred ground” while they “tangi for death,” and as she and the group affirm in unison “Tihei maurimate...,” Roimata immediately asserts, “And twelve years had never been” (27). The ellipses in the phrase “Tihei maurimate...” suggest there is something contingent on or necessary to its meaning. “Tihei maurimate” can be translated as, “I exhale death” and is usually preceded by the affirmation, “I inhale life force.” Within the same breath, Roimata’s body mediates the broadest and most obvious markers of time—life and death—and in the affirmation of these tenses, she immediately asserts that “twelve years had never been.”

The bodily experience of these temporalities, the intake and exhale of breath in lamentation, are used to underscore the malleability of time. Māori artist and scholar Moana Nepia, in his exploration of Te Kore, points out tangi, or lamentation’s, paradoxical relationship to time : “Tangi extends time, / draws together” (Nepia vol. 1, 11). The simultaneous extending and drawing in of time seem to come from the body’s ability to exist in multiple temporalities by always being in the “now-time.” As DeLoughrey argues, the Māori concept of spiral time is enmeshed in genealogy, making its relationship to history both sacred and corporeal. The use of the body to articulate time makes it tangible and experiential, which DeLoughrey posits “facilitates interstices between genealogically ‘sacred’ time versus abstracted, ‘political’ historiography” (59). The expansiveness of sacred, spiral time allows it to accommodate and reinscribe linear notions of time; the body’s experience of these moments incorporates them into the larger genealogical concept of time which, as other Pacific Islands scholars such as Lilikalā

Kame‘eleihiwa point out, is also grounded in space.⁶⁷ In *Potiki*, the funerary procession uses the genealogical ties of the mourners as an affirmation of the connections between people, space, and time, as the mourners chant: “Bring with you the many deceased from there, from that mountain and that river, being the deceased of the many ages of the past and present and the many parts of this land” (27). Thus, the expansiveness of temporality within Te Pō is also central to notions of land, allowing for its strategic deployment by peoples concerned with land-based sovereignty, such as the Tamihana family and the Te Ope people, distant relatives of the Tamihanas who are involved in their own struggles to maintain access to ancestral lands.

Roimata’s circumvention of Western telos through a gendered, indigenous world view rooted in bodily experiences of space and time as affirmations of kinship and genealogical claims to land, sets the stage for the novel’s concerns with preserving genealogical ties to land in the face of another model of western linearity as progress: the logic of unilateral advancement which undergirds capitalism. As the Tamihanas fend off the advances of land developers, the bodily mediation of epistemology discussed in this section and the genealogical ties to place which undergird Māori rights to ancestral lands, are synthesized in the text’s attention to the whareniui, the meeting house which exists as an anthropomorphized female ancestor and becomes the most visible marker of opposition and endurance in the face of cultural and political colonization. In the next section, I discuss how the Tamihanas and the Te Ope people both present their respective whareniui, or ancestral meeting house, as markers of their connections to specific times and places of lived experiences and simultaneously as whakapapa to each other across colonized spaces. In both of these instances, they draw on female ancestors and their connections to Te Pō, and I draw on discussions in this section and the preceding one to argue that

⁶⁷ Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 19: “The genealogies are the Hawaiian concept of time, and they order the space around us.”

constructions of knowledge rooted in female bodily experience may also undergird broader Māori constructions of non-human, embodied whakapapa which inform the narrative construction of the novel.

A Non-Human, Embodied Storytelling: Wharenuī as Ancestress and Whaikōrero

The wharenuī in *Potiki* serves as the center of Tamihana family life. Relatives gather there to share stories, commemorate major life events, and discuss important decisions, which are often guided by the emphasis on immediate and extended kinship connections reflected in the poupou (carved figures) housed there and the kowhaiwhai (carved patterns) which decorate it. The kinship connections are not just among the people within the wharenuī, but between the people and the house itself, which can also be known as a tipuna whare, or ancestral house. In her appraisal of Māori literary representations of the wharenuī, Alice Te Punga Somerville explains that “the house itself is the embodiment of an ancestor and also functions as a place in which time and space are differently configured and charged by the memory and ongoing presence of ancestors” (2015, 77). Historically, carved figures at the apex of a meeting house were often of an illustrious ancestor whose deeds were an inspiration to the extended family, one that reminded them of their connections to other family branches in distant places, or one that rooted the family in a specific place through a story related to the land (Ballantyne; Orbell). While these figures could be male or female, there was usually a female figure carved over the lintel of the doorway. These figures were placed here in order to remove any tapu, or sacredness, that one might have obtained while inhabiting the space of the wharenuī.⁶⁸ In *Potiki* the

⁶⁸ The gender politics of tapu as sacred/ male and noa as profane/ female are highly contested and have been discussed at length by scholars such as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. For a discussion of the politics and colonial legacy of discourses of the body in architectural spaces such as the wharenuī, see Tony Ballantyne’s *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body*.

Tamihanas' meeting house contains a carving of Hine-nui-te-Pō: she began her life as Hine-titama, the dawn, the first born of Papatūānuku and Tane, and subsequently chose to become Hine-nui-te-Pō, the woman of great darkness, the mother who awaits her children on the other side of death and welcomes them into the darkness (Kahukiwa and Grace). During the climax of the novel, the doorway becomes her "toothed aperture through which all must pass" when Toko enters the meeting house and is killed by an explosive set by the land developers to detonate when someone walks into the building (183). The "toothed aperture" is a reference to the Māori trickster demi-god Maui-Potiki's attempt to obtain immortality for humanity by reversing the birthing process: after transforming himself into a worm, he tries to climb into the birth canal of the death goddess and out through her mouth. Hine-nui-te-Pō awakens and crushes the trickster with her "toothed aperture."

In addition to housing figures and images which detail genealogical connections, the architecture of the meeting house has also been theorized as a way for Māori to remember and organize whakapapa. Rāwiri Taonui describes how a specific whakapapa, in this case that of the earliest tribal whakapapa set down on paper by Āperahama Taonui in 1843, when organized from past to present can take the shape of a wharenui:

The wharenui has a tekoteko (a carved figure on the apex of a house) which sits at the top of the maihi (barge boards) and then main body of the whare (house). A tekoteko spans 27 singular generations recording older ancestors and creation. This flares out to the maihi, spanning two to three generations covering the formation of the tribe. From there the genealogy rapidly expands into a rectangle or whare (house) including 80 collateral lines with a depth of 8 to 10 generations, which form a cross-checkable matrix.(Taonui)

Rāwiri Taonui's description of the wharenuī as a method for organizing whakapapa emphasizes how Māori knowledge structures could be linked to architectural structures in literal and figurative ways.

In *Potiki*, the wharenuī's function as an architectural tool for organizing whakapapa and its inclusion of the female ancestress Hine-nui-te-Pō combine to produce a specifically female whakapapa that in turn influences the form of the narrative. Building on this chapter's overview of Grace's earlier work as a movement towards a discourse of Māori cultural and political sovereignty that included a Mana Wahine Māori perspective, I draw a connection to the ways Grace's work has consistently returned to the wharenuī as an indispensable component of contemporary Māori survival. As Eva Rask Knudsen points out, the wharenuī has figured prominently in "Grace's collective works ranging from the novel *Tu* (2004) to *Dogside Story* (2001) and *Cousins* (1992) in which the *wharenuī* is either inaugurated ceremonially, featured as the animated recording agency of community life, or sanctioned as the final site of communal reconciliation" (Rask Knudsen 4). The wharenuī serves all of these purposes in *Potiki*, but what separates it from the use in Grace's other texts is how these purposes are explicitly rendered part of an embodied female whakapapa rooted in Te Pō. The politics and tensions of women's voices on the marae provide a useful contrast for the form of the text once it moves into the wharenuī. The narrative moves from the marae, a space where women's voices and bodies are contested, to a space which is shaped by a woman's body, and where, because of the inclusive nature of the *whaikōrero*, no voice is excluded, as everyone is given a chance to speak.

In this section, I trace the ways *Potiki*'s wharenuī is anthropomorphized and gendered as a sentient ancestress, extending the previous section's theorization of knowledge as corporeally mediated to explore the significance of the wharenuī's body to discourses of Mana Wahine

Māori and narrative. The protocols of *whaikōrero* (communal speech) and the relationships among bodies located within the space are layered with the house's function as a literal and figurative reminder of the Tamihanas' *whakapapa* to specifically female ancestors such as *Hine-nui-te-Pō* and *Te Pō*, producing a narrative that is imbued with the politics of Māori orality and centers the bodies and voices of Māori women in sovereignty discourse. The *whareniui* furthers the emphasis on the body as the mediator of temporospatial epistemology; stories are transmitted orally and received aurally, putting an emphasis on the communal and sensory propagation of narratives. The mode of transmission varies across participants: Mary, Toko's differently abled birth mother, alternates between song and silence as she tells her stories; the house itself "whispers" to the Tamihanas; *Roimata* makes room within her narration for the voices of others; anonymity is the foundation of some narrators' participation. As the site of intergenerational storytelling, the *whareniui* provides a variety of voices, which, with each (re)telling of a story, affirm the spiral as a narratological tool for the central concerns of Grace's text: How women's bodies and voices relate to the times and spaces they inhabit within a dynamic literary and cultural *whakapapa*. In this case, women's voices are not silenced or marginalized based on specific gender protocols or even mental abilities; rather, a female ancestor's body dictates how speech is passed from one person to the next, creating a combination of speakers which produces a spiraled narration of the text.

The *whareniui* is described by multiple characters as a living being, whose bodily characteristics are often articulated through genealogical connection to the Tamihana family. The description of the doorway as *Hine-nui-te-Pō*'s "toothed aperture" during the novel's climax would dictate that the inside of the meetinghouse is also a part of her body. Various family members define the interior in maternal and anatomical terms: *Tangimoana* describes the

wharenuī as “the wombed house” (178); Toko describes not just the house, but how people feel while inhabiting it: “It was the warmth of embrace, because the house is a parent, and there was warmth in under the parental backbone, enclosure amongst the patterned ribs” (88). The house’s animism registers a physical response in human bodies who feel a sense of warmth, while familial connections to the Tamihanas illicit an emotional response from its inhabitants, who are also able to hear the “whisperings of the house” (180). The personification of the wharenuī as Hine-nui-te-Pō and the allusions to her womb position the house as part of the gendered whakapapa of female deities rooted in Te Pō and previously discussed in Grace and Kahukiwa’s *Wahine Toa*. Like the figures who preceded her—Te Kore, Te Pō, Papatuanuku, Mahuika, and Muriranga-whenua—Hine-nui-te-Pō sacrifices a part of her body to ensure the survival and advancement of her descendants when the house is blown up by land developers.

Like Te Pō and the womb, the wharenuī is a generative space in which narratives and whakapapa circulate within unfettered potential. The house, as the anthropomorphized Hine-nui-te-Pō, also moves through a range of potentialities rooted in the female body: the house is both the generative space of the womb, but also the site of Toko’s death within her aperture and the loss of the family’s gathering place and marker of kinship due to the explosion. I link this range of possibilities, contingent on time and space, to a specifically Mana Wahine Māori theorization of the female body. Leonie Pihama contextualizes dynamism within a variety of spaces and times as part of Māori womanhood: “There are many times and spaces Māori women move through, in our lives... There are varying terms that relate to times in our lives and relationships. From birth we journey through those spaces” (Pihama qtd in Simmonds 13). The wharenuī’s invocation of the spiraled movement of Pō through the presence of female whakapapa, coupled with the variety of spaces and times Māori women’s bodies move through, also dictate the form

of the text. The novel's narration circulates among various speakers in a spiraled fashion, each section contingent on the time and space that the speaker's body inhabits as well as the time and space through which the wharenuī is moving at that same moment. The wharenuī's body also dictates the movement of the narration: the story unfolds through the Māori practice of *whaikorero*, a communal oration in which the right to speak passes amongst the inhabitants gathered in a circle within the wharenuī.

Potiki is replete with references to the “call and countercall” of narrative formation, and various Pacific Islands scholars have theorized the form of expression, communal orality, to be co-constitutive of the content. The reciprocity of communication is more than figurative; it is often dependent on the vitality of the body's literal, lived experience. *Potiki*'s narrative is bound by the cultural conventions of oral storytelling within the wharenuī, which is centered on the placement of bodies within the space. Grace describes how the text is shaped by these conventions, using the oratorical structure of the *whaikōrero*: “A *whaikorero* for example, is an oration, or formal speech. I decided to use the pattern of *whaikorero* for the shape of *Potiki*...to give a circular shape suitable to the storytelling content of the book and to reflect the way that talk moves in a circular fashion inside the meeting house” (1999, 72). The movement of story from body to body, mouth to mouth, stresses an accessibility which the “isolated practice of writing,” as Haunani-Kay Trask has described it, cannot produce (1999a, 167). The polyphony of narrative voices and structures in *Potiki* is often dictated by the bodies of the characters who serve as narrators. For instance, Toko's space within the meeting house and the use of his voice are very much tied to the physical conditions of his body, as he relates: There was a special space “left there all the time for me...I could speak from there, throwing my voice high into the heke. I was always given a time to speak even though speaking is mostly done by those who are old. But

the people knew that I would never be old, and that is why they allowed me oldness as a child” (154). The importance of bodies and community in the telling of *Potiki* is highlighted when one remembers that the “heke,” or rafter, of the meeting house is anthropomorphized as one of the house’s “patterned ribs,” and the house theorized as a member of the family and community (88).

The figurative polyphony of narrative perspectives is very much dependent on literal voices within the text which produce a culturally specific fluidity in modes of storytelling. The variety in narrators produces a variety of narrative perspectives: Toko narrates his chapters in the first person; Roimata’s chapters are largely first person narration, although as the text progresses some sections are increasingly told through the rarer narrative technique of first person plural; Hemi’s and Mary’s chapters unfold via a third person omniscient narration; and James’ chapter contains a more limited third person perspective. Each chapter is named after its narrator, so there are multiple chapters with the same title. All of these perspectives add up to a communal narration, arguably a figurative extension of the first person plural as communal affirmation. The narrative perspectives of each chapter are, like the *whaikorero*, dependent on their placement among and relationship to other narrative voices. As Rask Knudsen points out, Toko’s final narration is preceded by a section without a narrator’s name, simply titled “The Stories, “where all members of the Tamihana family have shed their individual names and become generic or collective representations...What the characters represent in terms of a Maori consciousness overshadows their individual identities in the sense that diversity is distilled into unity, individual strengths into a collective power” (Rask Knudsen 6) Toko’s final narration, which is given posthumously, is dependent on the collective perspective of the extended family which precedes it. Just as “The Stories” is narrated by an anonymous collective of Tamihana family members,

the final section is titled “Potiki,” signaling Toko’s movement from an individual character to an iteration of Maui-Potiki as well as his assumption of his place within the carvings of the meeting house. His posthumous consciousness is linked to the communal consciousness of the Māori family and the ancestral consciousness of the wharenuī, from which he observes the rest of the family’s continued participation in the whaikōrero.

The examples of literal and figurative first-person plural narration are part of the whaikōrero oratorical form and further an Indigenous reading praxis, but they also draw on broader literary studies discourses of power and perspective within the narrative. As Amit Marcus argues, the first person plural also challenges philosophical and social-political norms within a community, and its use inherently poses questions such as: “[W]hat beliefs about consciousness operate in the writer’s community? [S]hould the form and ideology of the narrative represent the hegemonic system of values or subvert it?” (46). Marcus’s attention to first-person plural as a general challenge to consciousness as individualistic and self-contained within a narrative is particularly useful for my reading of the wharenuī as a conscious and active participant within *Potiki*’s narration. The accumulation of voices as a cohesive whole with a shared consciousness is amplified by the fact that the accumulation and pattern of those voices is dictated by their placement within the wharenuī, to whom the communal consciousness is also extended. The wharenuī and first person plural also “represent” and uphold the Maori “system of values” while “subvert[ing] those of the settler colonial state and Pākeha land developers which see the wharenuī as a disposable object, and Māori notions of the body and the nation as peripheral and backward.

Potiki’s diversity of perspectives is analogous to its diversity in types of expression. The contemporary politics of how and when women speak in ceremonial spaces is always under the

surface in *Potiki*, but it is most clearly on display in the moments when Mary, a woman who in some ways exercises the least agency over her body, deploys her voice in the most unconventional ways. Her unconventional expression is, paradoxically, in many ways characteristic of Pacific storytelling. As Pacific Islands literary critic Subramani notes of indigenous oratory, “a *punake* (poet) can move imperceptibly from poetry to verse and vice versa, according to his emotions” because “[i]n South Pacific oral literature, artistic expressions (drama, narrative, poetry) are not sharply differentiated” (44). The generic dexterity Subramani notes as characteristic of the orator is also built into the form of the *whaikōrero*, during which, as Grace notes, the speaker may move between song, speech, chant, and haka:

These orations may begin with a *tauparapara*, which draws attention to the speaker, and may be in the form of a chant, a song, or a haka. After the *tauparapara*, the orator goes into the main body of the speech and at the end sings his or her *waiata*, usually accompanied by others. The *waiata* may be followed by a few final words. (“Influences on Writing” 72)

Mary, Toko’s differently abled birth mother, displays the imperceptible movement Subramani characterizes as a model of Indigenous oratory, and fulfills the *whaikōrero*’s potential by incorporating a different “form” than the other speakers (song) and is the speaker most often “accompanied by others,” as the *poupou* (the ancestral carvings of the *wharenuī*) pick up Mary’s song. In the chapter “The Stories,” which describes Toko’s murder through multiple characters’ third person perspectives, Grace relates that: “The child-woman had a story to tell but she did not tell it. She too sang along the pathways not known. Yet her story could be heard if you listened to the whisperings of the house” (180). Mary shifts imperceptibly between silent and vocal, whispering and singing; these shifts are often, as Subramani notes of the orator’s prerogative,

“according to [her] emotions.” Māori women’s voices specifically, have been theorized as tools whose inflection in effect moves them from one medium to another; Te Awēkotuku argues that women’s singing in ceremonial spaces performs the “function” of “storytelling” through complex interplay of patterns and imagery, ensuring that “the same story will never be told the same way twice” (1991, 107). Mary’s emotional prerogative and her range of volume and genre can also be positioned as a type of Mana Wahine Māori and tied to a gendered form of storytelling. She often tells her stories through song, stories “which were not always exactly the same if you listened carefully, of talking-man and angry-wife, trick-man and singing-girl, pretty-man and fighting-mother and no one for the loving-man with the big, big hammer” (41). While Grace renders the narrators communal and anonymous in “The Stories,” Mary assigns individuality and interiority to the poupou through her descriptions of them as individuals and couples. Although Mary does not speak in the whareniui during “The Stories,” she has essentially created narratives for and given voices to the various poupou within the meeting house; these poupou, as mouthpieces of the anthropomorphized whareniui, in effect become participants in the whaikorero and circulate Mary’s stories.

Mary’s inclusion of the poupou and the variation of her stories bring me to a discussion of how the personification of the whareniui as a whole and the “pattern of the whaikorero,” incorporate the narrative into the larger conversation of Māori genealogy and epistemology. The “whisperings of the house” and the description of the rafter as a “patterned rib” mark it as a sentient being, but the major importance of the whareniui comes from its position as the genealogical link between the people and their cosmogonic foundations in the familiar yet varied structure of the spiral. Within the whareniui the people feel “the warmth of embrace, because the house is a parent,” and as such it is the “house of genealogies” (88, 137). As the site of and

inspiration for genealogies and storytelling, the wharenuī becomes a tangible component of Māori epistemology and cosmogony: On a literal level, the final poupou is completed in a “darken[ed]... room”; and on a figurative level, as the characters often remind the reader that “all stories come from the darkness” (11). The wharenuī is thus a harbinger of the creative potential of the darkness, the Void, the nothingness; it is the “parent” generated from the potentiality of darkness that, through narrative structures such as the whaikōrero, facilitates the infinite variations of spiraled stories the people will tell within its walls. The rafters of the wharenuī are “patterned” and Grace describes the whaikōrero as a “pattern” of storytelling. But within *Potiki* and Māori epistemology, the “pattern” of the spiral is not necessarily the reproduction of the same elements indefinitely. Just as Mary’s stories “were not always exactly the same if you listened carefully,” the wharenuī facilitates a slight variation in the spiral of stories which emanate from the whaikōrero structure. Although the whaikōrero structure dictates that stories always move in a circular fashion around the meeting house, each gathering will contain different bodies in a different order and subsequently produce a slightly different narrative. On some days there will be voices which are “throw[n]...high into the heke,” on others only “whispering,” and on others perhaps silence (154). The result is a spiraled composition of familiar voices weaving a slightly unfamiliar story at every gathering, each iteration a continuation of the previous one as the spiral widens and expands.

The text closes with the phrase “ka huri,” an invitation for the next participant in the whaikōrero to speak. This invitation effectively moves the whaikōrero beyond the space and time of the Tamihanas’ wharenuī, and invites the reader to contemplate how the Tamihanas’ iteration of the whaikōrero and its attendant gendered discourse can be useful beyond the novel itself. In the conclusion for this chapter, I find the most potential in moments when the spiral turns back in

on itself and the novel builds on the female whakapapa of the Tamihanas' meeting house to tell the story of their relatives, the Te Ope people's, struggles to maintain their own meeting house and how the whaikōrero structure creates a productive method for advancing how the Māori, as Indigenous people, can clear a space for themselves within the settler colonial state.

(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Expanding the Spiral with the Ka Huri and Filling in Archival Gaps with Mana Wahine Māori

Potiki's closing invitation to the reader to "ka huri," to continue the story as the conventions of the whaikōrero dictate, moves the focus from the characters' bodies within the meeting house, to the reader's own body. In addition to highlighting the epistemological project of the text—that the spiral never ends, or at least is full of endings that become beginnings—this attention to the relationship between the reader's body and the physical text is related to the multiple metatextual and metafictional references to Māori women's bodies throughout *Potiki*. The significance of the reader's awareness of her role in perpetuating the narrative is best understood through an examination of the moments when characters within *Potiki* create and perpetuate physical books with their own hands. These books (re)turn to events that happened decades before the novel's opening and (re)tell narratives contained in the government's archive. By challenging the "outside" perspective responsible for colonial land theft, the construction of the Tamihana family's books about the Te Ope people's struggle for land rights challenges colonial knowledge production; as a metatextual and metafictional device, this also invites the reader to contemplate from the "inside" Māori women's role in the struggle for cultural and political decolonization by challenging the power of the state.

In “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits,” Achille Mbembe describes the archive as both the contents, which are “normally written documents,” and structure of a building controlled by a constituted state (19). Entrance to the archive is also controlled by the state, which exercises power through what it grants and denies a place within this space:

Over and above the ritual of making secret, it seems clear that the archive is primarily the product of a judgement, the result of the exercise of a specific power and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded. The archive, therefore, is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged “unarchivable.”

The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status. (20)

Just as it reworks *Potiki*’s narrative form, the whaikorero structure’s emphasis on orality and inclusion create a novel that challenges the strict enforcement of archivable “status.” In addition, the novel’s closing ka huri is an invitation to move oral modes of storytelling outside of the structure of the wharenuī—this then places the novel in opposition to the strict notion of a governmental archive as “both the building itself and the documents stored there” (Mbembe 19). But Grace does not offer a pat binary of written and contained documents versus oral and circulating voices. The novel itself becomes an archive of Māori resistance through a (re)turn to the government’s own archived documents that the Māori manipulate into books guided by oral storytelling techniques, which are then used to (re)tell the narrative of settler colonial land theft.

Within *Potiki*, resistance takes place within an alternative, Indigenous-based model of education, whose emphasis on Māori knowledge and lived experience is analogous to the previously mentioned Kohanga Reo and Kaupapa Māori immersion schools, which Ngauhuia Te

Awekotuku describes as “a flax roots movement of grandmothers, aunties, mothers and big sisters” (1991, 12). Drawing on Te Awekotuku’s description of Indigenous schooling and knowledge production as “woman-initiated political action,” I highlight the ways this political project of filling in the nation’s archival lacunae with Indigenous voices is also rooted in knowledges and ontologies that derive from a Mana Wahine Māori worldview. As a result the novel’s (re)turns and (re)tellings are multiplied. In addition to crafting the novel and the *whaikōrero* as viable models to counter the archive of the settler colonial state, Grace also uses the specifically female *whakapapa* of Indigenous models of education and “woman-initiated political action” to (re)turn to issues of gender within notions of contemporary Māoritanga. These (re)turns and (re)tellings allow for more expansive views of Māori women’s bodies’ relationship to knowledge, narrative, and voice within and beyond the text of *Potiki*.

The Te Ope people are distant relatives of the Tamihanas and their *iwi* ties are affirmed by the presence of a shared ancestress in their *whakapapa*. James, Tangimoana and Toko’s brother, carves a figure of this ancestress above the lintel of the Tamihanas’ rebuilt *whareniui* (153). Unlike the Tamihanas, the Te Ope people have not been able to hold on to their land; they were forced to relocate to an urban setting when the government requested their land for an airfield base around World War I. Their homes and meeting house are destroyed without their consent and contrary to the government’s initial statement, the land is “made into a playing-field by men on relief work” and after the war converted into a public park (77). The land is never returned as promised and decades later the Te Ope people find themselves languishing without their own *marae* and *whareniui*. Their dispossession evokes the Māori Renaissance’s response to the Treaty of Waitangi: after decades of the government relying on misinterpretations of the “facts” stated in their written agreements (77), the Te Ope people begin to occupy their land and

petition for its return. Reuben, a contemporary of Hemi's, leaves university as a youth because he feels compelled to revive his grandfather's nearly forgotten efforts to hold the government responsible for not returning the land.

Reuben's assumption of his grandfather Rupena's struggle is also an iteration of the *whaikōrero* which guides *Potiki's* form and content. Rupena urges Reuben to take decades old letters to the younger generation with the hope that "yous can do something..."; the invitation coupled with the unfinished tone suggested by Grace's use of the ellipsis are evocative of the *ka huri* of the *whaikōrero* (75). The letters are part of an intergenerational *whaikōrero*, as they "were a part of the old story. They later became a part of the new story" (73). With his grandfather Rupena's fading, "unarchivable" letters as proof of the government's culpability (Mbembe 20), Reuben occupies a small section of the public park built on Te Ope land and ignites a political he-said-she-said, with the government and many citizens—Pākēha and Māori—casting aspersions on Reuben's claims. Guided by Roimata and another "Aunty" the Tamihana family compiles all of these "unarchivable" events and perspectives into several books, which eventually detail the return of most of the Te Ope people's land (78). This iteration of the *ka huri* detailing Māori resistance is part of an Indigenous method of education, suggesting the "flax roots movement of grandmothers, aunties, mothers and big sisters" which Te Awekotuku describes as a specifically Mana Wahine Māori form of political decolonization (1991, 12).

Through this Mana Wahine Māori effort the novel becomes an Indigenous archive rooted in the times and spaces of Māori women's lived experiences and *whakapapa*. Evocative of the multiple versions of the Treaty of Waitangi and their conflicting narratives, the debate between the Te Ope people and the state produces several metatextual and metafictional moments in *Potiki* as the Tamihana family and the greater community create their own texts to

catalogue this story. Through Roimata and the Aunty compiling copies of old Rupena's letters, all of the state's responses, newspaper clippings, and photographs, the family participates in a form of knowledge production whose inclusivity challenges the settler colonial state's political and cultural dominance. Toko describes how the community skirts this mediation through the exchange of information: "The people later gave copies of the letters to us so that we would all know their stories...Roimata and Manu and I made little books with them, and read them and told them over and over. And we made a big book from the newspaper cuttings that our Aunty had saved too...Roimata wrote the dates on the pages of our book for us so we would know" (78). In addition to archiving information the state has long ignored by crafting their own "big" and "little" books, the family also actively crafts information, as Roimata's hand literally writes pieces of the narrative. The community reworks the form of knowledge production, pointing out that the children "read them and told them over and over." Roimata's recording the date alludes to the many times Māori women's bodies have "move[d] through" during the plot of *Potiki* (Pihama qtd. in Simmonds 12; Wood; Tomlins Jahnke 1997). The repetition of the stories crafted by women is also a figurative centering and privileging of Māori women's voices in this struggle for cultural and political sovereignty (Szasz; Rangihēuea; Te Awēkotuku 1991). The stories circulate in both oral and written form and are repeated "over and over," similar to the ways *Potiki*'s form and content blend discourses of oral and written narration through the spiral. The community's archive challenges state power by indexing those items in whatever fashion they see fit; and removes knowledge production and compilation from the realm of the state by including those voices which are usually "intentionally misheard" by colonial power (Byrd and Rothberg). But the centrality of women's voices in this Indigenous archive is also a challenge to

the ways Māori women had been marginalized within contemporary notions of Māoritanga which drew on gender hierarchies introduced during colonialism.

The Te Ope people's occupation of their land eventually leads to a "full enquiry" which produces "all of old Rupena's letters...and some of the [state's] replies as well, but not all of the replies. They were the letters that a lot of people said didn't really exist, but now they had been found" (82). While the attempt to obfuscate some of its culpability through omitting certain responses ultimately fails the government, it does mark the erasure of unfavorable information as a particular feature of the state's form of knowledge production and compilation—what Mbembe terms "discrimination and selection" (20). Yet, as Rupena's descendants discover, one method of overcoming these lacunae is to fill them with Indigenous epistemology. In the same way that poupou in the wharenuī were left unfinished because the next generation would have to fill them in with their own versions of the past, the Te Ope people and the Tamihanas fill in the government's blank spaces in the enquiry with their own refashioned versions of the past through books built around a *whaikōrero* structure that incorporates letters and testimonies from the past.

In keeping with the notion that the spiral contains no endings, or merely endings that become beginnings, I close this chapter with a return to Tangimoana's impassioned speech to the Tamihana family after the climax of the novel, in which the Tamihanas' wharenuī was bombed and Toko murdered: "Fuck the investigation. What did that show last time? Told us nothing. Told us probably this probably that. Probably. Not 'it did'. Not 'who did'. Not 'he did, she did'. Nothing. Fuck the enquiry." She calls on Māori to create a space for themselves within the nation because the government refuses to accept their subjectivity and respect their citizenship. Yet, her outburst and dismissal of Māori protocol suggests that this assertion of a Māori space within the

government is also contingent on a reworking of Māori notions of who is able to speak and when.

The creation of the big and little books to tell the Te Ope people's story and their blending of written and oral, of reading and telling, reveals the potential for Māori knowledge systems and modes of communication to rework how the nation operates. The same characteristic ambiguity and gaps in the government's information that Tangimoana finds unacceptable in the government's enquiry of the Tamihana wharenuī's destruction, are refashioned by Māori in the newly reopened enquiry for the Te Ope lands and wharenuī restoration. Rather than accept the government's incomplete enquiry into the matter, Reuben and the rest of the Te Ope people have reworked the process of governmental enquiry and Roimata and the children have created books cataloguing their efforts. These books are compiled from letters, the government's official responses, newspaper clippings, and photographs, yet Māori hands have reworked these materials and altered them so that in their retelling they are slightly different—a clear invocation of the variation inherent in the spiral. The whaikōrero also informs their construction as they have literally passed from hand to hand and mouth to mouth, circulating among community members. The whaikōrero structure, the invocation of the female whakapapa tied to the meeting houses within *Potiki*, and the network of women who form the “flax roots” initiatives that created Indigenous-based educational spaces like the one Roimata uses in the novel, all endorse a view of Māori cultural and political sovereignty that is tied to Mana Wahine Māori and the inclusion of female voices. The equality of the whaikōrero structure also makes room for younger voices, such as the children who help form these books, and engages Tangimoana's insistence on younger voices clearing a way for themselves within the settler colonial government as well as within traditional Māori spaces.

In crafting the novel as an Indigenous archive of voices and documents, Grace represents what Māori constructions of Te Pō as specifically female whakapapa and whaikōrero can offer to discourses of narratology in general, as well as conversations of Indigenous efforts at endurance and reworking the settler colonial nation. *Potiki* suggests how movements towards an Indigenous futurity are rooted in the history of the representation of female bodies, gendered genealogies, and methods of storytelling derived from Te Pō. Pō's role in decolonizing the settler colonial state through these collective elements marks a shift from its use in Wendt's *Pouliuli* a decade earlier, which deployed Pō's fecundity to rework Indigenous social and political structures. In the next chapter I build on both of these iterations of Pō. *Potiki*'s incorporation of Indigenous women's ontological and genealogical connections to Te Pō and *Pouliuli*'s use of the Void as the relational space which denies and affirms cultural and political ties, set the stage for a discussion of Kneubuhl's construction of Pō as a space which severs and repairs Indigenous women's genealogical connections to the postcolonial state.

Chapter 4

Imagining the Pōstcolonial Lāhui: Genealogy, Women’s Bodies, and the Racial Production of the State in Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”

Pō and its cosmogonic connections are central to the plot and form of Kneubuhl’s “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”; yet unlike the other texts in this study, the references to Pō and cosmogony are not necessarily titular or overt. The title of Kneubuhl’s short story sets the precedent for how one sifts through the text to consciously construct meaning and reveal connections to Pō. “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”—both title and text—employ a Kanaka Maoli meiwī (poetic or literary device) called kaona.⁶⁹ Meiwī are a foundational element of Hawaiian orature and their use in literature reminds us of the bodily-based roots of Hawaiian poetry, storytelling, history, and narration, as ho‘omanawanui notes that “[m]eiwī were an integral part of oral tradition that were embodied in memory and performance” (2014, 41). Elasticity and recognition are integral to the practice of kaona, which Brandi Nālani McDougall describes as an “intellectual and aesthetic practice.” Kaona is generally translated as “hidden meaning,” but McDougall puts a helpful discursive pressure on that definition:

It is more exact to say that kaona refers to meaning hidden out in the open, with a range of both the “hiddenness” and “openness” of meaning engaged. . . . Inclusive of allusion, symbolism, punning, and metaphor, kaona draws on the collective knowledges and experiences of Hawaiians, recognizing the range and contexts within which we must inhabit, learn, and access knowledge in its many forms. (2014, 3)

In this chapter, my bodily-based reading strategy draws on McDougall’s emphasis on kaona as Native Hawaiians’ collective experiences and habitations, and ho‘omanawanui’s analysis of

⁶⁹ See ho‘omanawanui’s well-researched discussion of meiwī (2014, 39-45).

meiwi as embodied and performative. This understanding of kaona and meiwi actively locates Kanaka Maoli bodies in the multiple times and spaces of Kneubuhl's narrative, which breaks down metatextual barriers by its retelling of the Kumulipo and subsequently links readers to the protagonist through the kinship connections facilitated by Pō. Thus the notion of what is spoken or unspoken, revealed or obscured, detected or undetected, within Kneubuhl's "Ho'oulu Lāhui" takes on additional significance through a kaona-centered reading praxis; and the analysis of meiwi as literary techniques with roots in oratory emphasizes that performance and epistemologies of the body undergird how one receives and consumes the text.

The successive nature of genealogical connections is helpful to articulate how kaona function within a text: A single reference may provide multiple offshoots, and multiple kaona may intersect or interrupt one another. As Jonathan Osorio notes, kaona employ "several interconnected and yet distinct meanings" (2014, viii). Kneubuhl's title is borrowed from King Kalākaua's slogan near the end of the nineteenth century, when "ho'oulu lāhui" became a rallying cry for Kānaka Maoli who saw themselves increasingly dispossessed from their land and their legal system by American imperialism in the form of missionary descendants, businessmen, and bureaucrats (N. Silva; Osorio 2002; Kame'eleihiwa 1992; Kauanui 2008). Lāhui is often glossed as "the Hawaiian people" and "the Hawaiian nation," with notions of identity, indigeneity, race, citizenship, and kinship between kanaka and 'āina (land) overlapping within this concept (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua; Goodyear-K a'ōpua, Hussey, Wright). Ho'oulu can mean "to cause to grow," so Kalākaua's phrase is understood as a plea for the lāhui Kanaka Maoli to reinvigorate itself in the face of foreign cultural and political encroachment (Osorio 2002; N. Silva). Kalākaua's phrase also spoke to the staggering depopulation of Kānaka Maoli, who had, by some estimates, declined from at least 800,000-1,000,000 down to 40,000 in their century of

contact with Western diseases (Stannard). As a result, in the century since Kalākaua's proclamation, a significant portion of the lāhui are mixed race. Contemporary Native Hawaiian scholars such as J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (1998, 2007, 2008) and Maile Arvin (2013, 2015) have analyzed the ways issues of blood quantum are incompatible with the ideas of genealogical connection at the heart of the lāhui; and in the nineteenth-century, members of the Hawaiian monarchy, such as Queen Lili'uokalani and Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole stated in no uncertain terms that mixed race Kanaka Maoli are part of the lāhui (Lili'uokalani 2004, 227; Arvin 2013, 107). Yet, since its overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom at the close of the nineteenth century, the United States has consistently relied on blood quantum to forward its agenda of political disenfranchisement and land alienation of Kānaka Maoli. In the Hawaiian context, blood quantum is rooted in specific historical moments: most notably, European contact in 1778 and the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) of 1921. The HHCA set the precedent for the current legal definition of native Hawaiian as a "descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778." From its inception, Hawaiians rejected the notion of blood quantum, and Kalaniana'ole, the Territory of Hawai'i's non-voting delegate to US Congress, unsuccessfully argued that it be extended to at least 1/32 rather than 1/2. Blood quantum's insistence on fixing what it presumes is an authentic Indigenous identity in the precontact past alienates successive Kānaka Maoli from their histories and cultural identity. It positions whatever comes after colonial encounter as separate from the "authentic" past, which marginalizes the dynamism and heterogeneity of this culture and binds it to an American historicization. Thus, Kneubuhl's title has "several interconnected and yet distinct meanings" (Osorio 2014, viii), because the use of Kalākaua's phrase suggests Indigenous

resilience, but simultaneously forebodes the forced racialization and the political precariousness, and ultimately the overthrow, of Hawaiian self-governance.

Another layer of the titular kaona is one of the means by which Kalākaua encouraged the practice of ho‘oulu lāhui: the publication of the Kumulipo, which is also an intertext for Kneubuhl’s short story. As I discussed at length in the Introduction, the Kumulipo is a mo‘okū‘auhau, a genealogy, which is also a type of meiwī (ho‘omanawanui 2014); more specifically, the Kumulipo is an oli ho‘okumu honua, a cosmogonic chant in which Pō is the foundational darkness from which the universe unfolds through a succession of plants, animals, deities, and geographic features, to the first kanaka (Kame‘eleihiwa 2005; McDougall 2016). Its publication affirmed that Kanaka Maoli had thriving religious and historical perspectives prior to the arrival of Europeans and Americans, whose missionaries had enacted bans against Hawaiian religious performances (Silva; Osorio 2002; Merry). Noenoe Silva ties this religious and cultural revitalization to the contemporaneous political climate: “This knowledge directly contradicted, and thus effectively contested, the discourse that represented [Kānaka Maoli] as backward savages incapable of self-government. The *Kumulipo*, which connected the reigning monarch to the creation of the universe, assured the people that the nation was in the proper hands” (N. Silva 89). As I discussed in the introduction, Kalākaua’s Hawaiian-language publication of the Kumulipo contains mo‘olelo (history, legend) of the goddess Papahānaumoku, her husband Wākea, their daughter Ho‘ohōkūkālani, and her two sons, both named Hāloa.

“Ho‘oulu Lāhui” (re)tells that mo‘olelo and through myriad kaona, positions its protagonist as a futuristic iteration of Ho‘ohōkūkālani and emphasizes her symbolic representation of Pō. Kneubuhl’s text tells the story of Kahikina, a “pure-blooded” Kanaka Maoli woman, and her relationship with Ke Aupuni Hawai‘i Hou, the New Hawaiian Nation, formed in

2025, a few years before her birth. In this way, the emergent postcolonial nation parallels Kahikina's own life. But this connection is more than figurative: "As one of only fifty pure Hawaiian women of childbearing age left in the world," Kahikina is asked to donate an egg for a repopulation program that will give children to infertile Kanaka Maoli couples (188). The program's premise appropriates the concept of hānai, in which a child is given to family members because of their infertility or to cement kinship ties. Unbeknownst to Kahikina, hers is the only sample used, and she is responsible for repopulating the entire nation, literally spawning thousands of children whom she will never know. The truth is not revealed to her until she is in her late sixties, and her doctor's personal journal is posthumously leaked to the press. The story details her initial refusal to meet the man who was similarly deceived and whose sperm was used to create these children—a man she vaguely recalls as "the Kapuahi boy," also racially unmixed, whom she saw as a child at family functions. Kahikina's pain is layered: the trauma of spawning thousands of children she will never know is juxtaposed with her life as a childless widow. Her closest relative is her nephew, Alika, who diligently tends to her expansive lo'i (irrigated terrace used to grow taro), and who she now suspects may be one of her cloned children. The story begins and ends with Kahikina's reactions to the Kapuahi man standing on the edge of her property and chanting portions of the Kumulipo while waiting for her to acknowledge him. Kahikina's responses to the visitor waiting at her gate, and the trauma she experiences as a result of the government's deception, are steeped in the discursive slippages of Hawai'i's legacy as a settler colonial state.

Discussions of Kneubuhl's oeuvre have concentrated on her outpouring of plays, living histories, and novels, noting their ability to use "historical drama as political and pedagogical tool" (Looser 25). This confluence of political and literary efforts is emblematic of the

expansive, dynamic aspect of the Hawaiian Renaissance through which much of Kneubuhl's work has been contextualized, as well as her experience working as a museum educator at the Hawai'i Mission Homes Museum and the Judiciary History Center of Hawai'i. For instance, Diana Looser cites *January, 1893* (1993)—a five-act, nineteen-scene living history spanning fifteen hours and performed on-site in downtown Honolulu to commemorate the centenary of the US overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy—as an impetus for the introduction of bills related to Hawaiian culture and sovereignty to the state legislature (25). And while the wide-reaching effects of Kneubuhl's works are perhaps inextricable from the grand scope of their productions and the sense of community inherent in attending a dramaturgical performance, her short fiction similarly engages history as a “political and pedagogical tool.” Looser has pointed out that Kneubuhl's drama, such as *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* (1988) and *Emmalehua* (1986/1996), tends to “focus on female protagonists and on domestic responses to moments of crisis-ridden social transition” (25). “Ho'oulu Lāhui” has this in common with Kneubuhl's plays and living history pageants, yet filters the same epic and historical resonances through interiority and intimacy derived from the immediacy of short fiction mediated through a single protagonist's recollections. Kahikina, the protagonist, processes her experiences as the accumulation of generations of women's knowledge and lived experiences. Kneubuhl's “Ho'oulu Lāhui” contains the same historical scope as her other works, perhaps even more: the plot unfolds through metatextual retelling of pieces of the Kumulipo, an ancient chant that links the genealogy of all Kanaka Maoli to the creation of the universe, which is then placed in conversation with the legacies of cultural and political colonization begun in the nineteenth century. These historical resonances become even more prescient when they are projected nearly a century into the future to deal with the iteration of American imperial influence sure to produce

the twenty-first century's "moments of crisis-ridden social transition": biocolonialism. The text constructs an analogy between blood quantum's precipitation of the genetic engineering of Kanaka Maoli bodies and the genetic engineering of the taro plant, which Hawaiian cosmogony states is the older sibling of the Kanaka Maoli, as crises the lāhui must navigate on its path to cultural and political sovereignty.

Kneubuhl's use of mo'olelo, mo'okū'auhau, and kaona infuse the text with layers of orality, kinship, and lived experience, which historically predate the introduction of Western technologies of writing and subsequently work to indigenize the Anglophone short story form in ways similar to Wendt's and Grace's reworking of the novel form. Understanding meiwī such as kaona and mo'okū'auhau is, as ho'omanawanui writes, "important to understanding Hawaiian poetics and the composition practice" of mo'olelo (2014, 43). Pukui and Handy provide a useful etymology of mo'olelo as "*mo'o 'ōlelo*, succession of talk; all stories were oral, not written" (254). Mo'olelo encompasses history, story, literature, legend, essay, record, article, and journal, among other forms (Pukui and Elbert 254). In the Hawaiian context, a narrative may exist as any or all of these, simultaneously. From this perspective, Western conventions of genre that would categorize "Ho'oulu Lāhui" as short fiction are reductive, incomplete, and inadequate.

Kneubuhl's text draws on existing mo'olelo in multiple forms: Her plot retells an ancient mo'olelo from the Kumulipo, the foundational narrative and mo'okū'auhau of the lāhui; while also addressing contemporary mo'olelo of biocolonialism, a contemporary threat to the ancient kinship connections which established and maintain the collective identity of the lāhui (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua et al). Mo'o, the suffix of mo'olelo, can also mean "fragment," which I read two ways in the context of Kneubuhl's story: first, it implies a connection to other narratives, which resists the strict definition of a short story as the effort of a single author; second, it can be

read as an Indigenous, oral counterpoint to the static notion of the Anglophone short story as the only form of short fiction.

Although a fragment implies larger connections, it also suggests that these have been severed in some way, which Kneubuhl's plot reveals through the abuse of women's bodies and the marginalization of their voices. This distance can also be understood as a feature of the short story form specific to its development in the Pacific. Subramani binds this existential separation within the short story form to the historicization of the nation in Pacific contexts:

The short story writer often looks at the world from the fringes of his society with an attitude of ironic detachment. And irony, the life-blood of the short story, develops in a literature or culture at a certain stage in its evolution when the problematic nature of the universe is confronted. (116)

Subramani's attention to the confrontation of "the problematic nature of the universe" is applicable in its most literal sense in "Ho'oulu Lāhui": the narratives of the creation of the universe are problematized because of their abuse of women's bodies, and the text is metafictionally compiled by characters on the "fringes of [their] society," in this case, the nation and the lāhui. Kneubuhl's text imagines a sovereign New Hawaiian Nation, Ke Aupuni Hawai'i Hou, where racially unmixed and therefore "pure" Hawaiian bodies are given prominence in all aspects of life. The differences and similarities among historical constructions of lāhui are the starting point for this chapter's discussion of the (presumed) intersections of race and culture in matters of nationhood, which is informed by the emphasis on Native bodies in both Kneubuhl's title and Kalākaua's slogan. The fictional and historical resonances of these intersections also reveal the ways that American heteropatriarchy eroded the political agency of Native Hawaiian

women at the same time that it placed the burden of producing a specific type of racialized citizen squarely on their shoulders. This chapter indexes the shifting relationships between the individual and the nation, as proscribed by both Kanaka Maoli epistemology and US political frameworks, to suggest how a return to Indigenous conceptions of the Kanaka Maoli body may liberate notions of identity and belonging from the American imposition of blood quantum. Recovering the body's connections to the lāhui through Pō allows it to transcend the temporal and spatial restrictions of blood quantum, which is a product of a series of specific historical moments.

Subramani's characterization of the short story as a hallmark of the nation's "evolution" also speaks to the ways the concepts of nation and lāhui evolve within Kneubuhl's text. Kneubuhl's diction creates an etymological and epistemological disjuncture between the individual body and the consolidation of political power. Although it appropriates the concept of lāhui and even uses the word in its fertility project, the New Hawaiian Nation is translated as Ke Aupuni Hawai'i Hou, the operative word being *aupuni* rather than *lāhui*. The terms *aupuni* and *lāhui* intersect around concepts of genealogy, "race," and nation as each evolves from the late eighteenth century through the twenty-first century in which Kneubuhl situates her text. *Aupuni* is more easily translated than *lāhui*, referring mainly to the political unification of the islands and the hierarchy of power within a government structure. Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio defines *aupuni* as "the unified government established by Kamehameha the Great and ruled by his successors" (*Dismembering Lāhui* 289); Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert define it as "government, kingdom, dominion, nation, people under a ruler" (33). While these definitions vary slightly in that *aupuni* may refer to either the ruler(s) or the ruled, both use political power as the key referent. In the *lāhui*, the individual's position within hierarchies of power is

sublimated by the individual's relationship to the collective, which is simultaneously imagined in national, racial, communal, and environmental terms, with definitions such as "great company of people; species, as of animal or fish, breed; national, racial . . . to assemble, gather together" (Pukui and Elbert 190). Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua observes the etymological roots of lāhui:

The prefix "lā-" can be a contracted form of "lau," meaning leaf or a plant's manner of leafing out. . . . "Lau" also means many or numerous and is often used poetically to refer to an unquantifiable number of people or beings, as in the countless gods or descendants. "Hui" can be used as both noun, meaning a society, organization, association or team, and a verb, meaning to join, unite, mix, or combine. Thus, the components of the word lāhui suggest both a singular, organic body with branches that nourish the whole *and* a gathering of distinct, pre-existing elements combining to form a new entity. (139)

The references to plants and poetic quantification clearly link the lāhui to the cosmogony of the Kumulipo. However, lāhui's emphasis on community is intensified by the conflation of race and nation in the previous definition. This conflation is complicated further when one considers that Kanaka Maoli notions of race are at times incompatible with US articulations of the term: Kānaka Maoli position genealogical inheritance as the supreme method of ascribing membership within the lāhui, while the US perspective favors genetic inheritance in the form of blood quantum, which Kānaka Maoli scholars such as J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Noenoe Silva, and Osorio have variously theorized as a political tool of cultural dispossession.

The critical slippage between US constructions of nationhood and the Kanaka Maoli lāhui is intensified by the historical layers and intersections of Hawaiian and US conceptions of representation and belonging. Kneubuhl's "Ho'oulu Lāhui" provides a starting point for a

genealogy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century attitudes towards the body's role in discourses of representation and inclusion. In this chapter, I argue that the Native body is represented as an extension of the text's form, whose construction through multiple literary and political genealogies endorses an expansive method of identity and belonging which counters the narrow restraints of blood quantum. I begin with the multiple cosmogonic, political, and literary contexts of the Kumulipo, whose mo'olelo of Ho'ohōkūkālani is a kaona, an intertext underpinning Kneubuhl's plot. My emphasis on the Kumulipo's multiple composers, recorders, researchers, and translators positions Kneubuhl's story within a broader literary genealogy infused with layers of meanings, affirmations, and contestations of lāhui formation and the effects of cosmogony on the individual body. Next, I contrast this expansive textual form with the limits the story places on bodily form by the racialization of Indigenous kinship practices such as hānai within the text's content. I then analyze how the text's reliance on multiple female voices to move the plot forward yet simultaneously (re)tell events and interrupt narrative linearity through flashbacks, invokes an explicitly female narratological genealogy that is tied to Pō. This section builds on Chapter 3's discussions of communal narration in Grace's *Potiki* and Chapter 2's discussion of Pouliuli as a specifically male means of interrupting narrative linearity and, by extension, the linear progress of the post/colonial nation. This emphasis on gendered forms and voices as connections to Pō, and its attendant articulations of kinship connections to and through the 'āina (land), results in a centering of the protagonist's voice that by extension centers all women's voices and bodies; this then extends a model of lāhui inclusion for all Kanaka Maoli. Ultimately, I argue that in returning to Indigenous epistemologies of the body, which are dependent on its genealogical and metaphorical connections to community, we can open up

discussions of inclusion and belonging that are based on the body but freed of US constructions of blood logic that have permeated Hawaiian society.

Genealogizing “Ho‘oulu Lāhui”: Kumulipo as (Con)Text

The Kumulipo and the cultural, political, and literary ramifications of its publications have been analyzed in depth by Kanaka Maoli scholars such as Lilikalā Kame‘eleiwi (2005, 1992), Brandy Nālani McDougall (2016, 2015, 2014), Noenoe Silva, and ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui (2014), who have linked it to historical and contemporary sovereignty movements. The Kumulipo possesses formal and generic dexterity: its function as a 2,108 line cosmogony is also inherently related to its form, as it is “a great poem of the cosmos” with its own mnemonic devices (Kame‘eleihiwa 2005, 121; 1992, 22); and it is “both mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) and mo‘olelo (history/legend)” (N. Silva 103). What Western literary discourse would remark on as a postmodern amalgamation of multiple forms and genres is, from an Indigenous Pacific perspective, actually a shift that goes unmarked. Arguing that this is a feature of Pacific arts, Subramani notes that a piece may “move imperceptibly from poetry to verse and vice versa” because “in South Pacific oral literature, artistic expressions (drama, narrative, poetry) are not sharply differentiated” (44). Kneubuhl’s “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” contains a similar generic and formal dexterity. It is as much the nation’s biography as it is Kahikina’s. The Kumulipo is at once a personal genealogy and a genealogy of the Hawaiian people and by extension the Hawaiian nation. When Kalākaua and Lili‘uokalani shared their mo‘okū‘auhau, and that of other ali‘i, with the world it was as much an affirmation of their genealogy as it was an affirmation of Hawaiian cultural and political sovereignty. As discussed in the Introduction,

the ramifications of their publications persisted in the literary criticism of the twentieth century by Native scholars such as McDougal and Kame‘eleihiwa, as well as settler scholars exercising “colonial entitlement” (McDougal 2015; see also Trask 1991). Appreciating the ways in which the cosmogonic, political, and literary elements of the Kumulipo are mutually constitutive is necessary for the fullest understanding of the Kumulipo itself and for showing how its form and content are inscribed in “Ho‘oulu Lāhui.”

These multiple literary elements and the text’s formal and generic dexterity are also linked to the multiple mouths and hands that crafted the Kumulipo over the centuries before Kneubuhl’s (re)telling of the Ho‘ohōkūkālani mo‘olelo. The movement between multiple chanters, recorders, researchers, and translators results in a layering of affirmations and contestations of who and what the lāhui has come to be. The meanings of these layers are both hidden and open, crafting a form of what Brandy Nālani McDougall has termed “kaona connectivity” (2016). The process by which the layers are crafted is an affirmation of Kanaka Maoli cultural production, as ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui contextualizes movements between chant, dance, and literature as “reweaving the literary lei,” the central metaphor of her study of Hawaiian orature of Pele and Hi‘iaka reproduced in written forms (2014). Kanaka Maoli cultural productions are consistently figured as collective; they are (re)turned to and (re)told over centuries, even millennia, as affirmations of lineage, kinship, aloha, and mana. Lili‘uokalani states the Kumulipo was first recited at the birth of the ali‘i Ka-I-i-Mamao, also known as Lonoikamakahiki, tracing the more than eight hundred generations between him and the unfolding of the universe through Pō as an affirmation of his high status (Lili‘uokalani 1897, Introduction). It was composed by Keaulumoku in 1700 and subsequently chanted twice: first by Hewahewa and Ahukai, and then by Puou on Captain Cook’s arrival (Lili‘uokalani 1897,

Introduction). These recitations were “demonstrations or displays of authority, honor, and power” (McDougall 2016, 54), because “[e]ach name chanted in the hundreds of generations lends mana to the Ali‘i Nui child for whom the chant was performed” (Kame‘eleihiwa 2005, 126). The multiple mouths that crafted and recited the chant would then give way to the many hands that recorded and researched it in subsequent years. Kalakāua’s 1889 text was the product of many hands: a version handwritten by his grandmother, Kamokuili, was researched for three years by two intellectual societies focused on genealogy and religion (McDougall 2016, 55; Osorio 2002, 225, 249). Queen Lili‘uokalani succeeded her brother to the throne and began translating his version into English while she was imprisoned by the haole led Republic of Hawai‘i which had illegally overthrown the Hawaiian monarchy, publishing it in 1897.

Lili‘uokalani’s introduction frames the Kumulipo as a cosmogony and a personal and national genealogy, which has also become a linguistic and historical record in the service of political and cultural survival. Although as a genealogy it is “the special property” of her family, Lili‘uokalani also emphasizes that it is a “national history” that belongs to the entire lāhui (Introduction). Lili‘uokalani’s translation calls attention to the multiple forms the Kumulipo has taken, and even anticipates the ways subsequent Kānaka Maoli may (per)form it: “As it is the only record of its kind in existence it seemed to me worthy of preservation in convenient form” (Introduction). As with Pō, which it describes, the Kumulipo is singular—“the only record of its kind in existence”; yet it can exist in multiple forms—oral, written, ‘Olelo Hawai‘i, English, personal genealogy, record of political and cultural sovereignty. The Kumulipo was also a tool to maintain linguistic connections to future generations and provide a historical touchstone for future sovereignty efforts, as she notes: “language itself changes, and there are terms and allusions herein to the national history of Hawaii which might be forgotten in future years

without some such history as this to preserve them to posterity” (Introduction). The “terms and allusions” Lili‘uokalani endeavored to preserve often contained deeply embedded kaona which, even when rendered in English, spoke to Kānaka Maoli in ways that others would never fully grasp. As Noenoe Silva relates of the resurgence of Kanaka Maoli performances of orature and dance during Kalākaua and Lili‘uokalani’s reigns: “these performances worked simultaneously as official narratives of the nation and as underground narratives that the haole community did not understand. In that way they functioned to constitute the nation as the lāhui Kanaka Maoli, excluding those they were resisting” (89).

Kalākaua and Lili‘uokalani’s publications were, like the original recitations, meant to be “displays of authority, honor, and power” during moments of political assault by a foreign power. These displays have continued to resonate in the Kumulipo’s publication history in the twenty-first century. In 1951 Martha Beckwith, an American folklorist with personal and financial ties to descendants of the settler oligarchy which overthrew Lili‘uokalani, published an inaccurate and problematic translation. Her commentary attacked Lili‘uokalani and Kalākaua’s authority over their own genealogy and their claims to the monarchy, which by extension, McDougall argues, was an attack on Hawaiian sovereignty (2015). In 1978 Kimo Campbell and Pueo Press republished Lili‘uokalani’s version, which had been out of print since its initial publication. Campbell does not mention Beckwith’s version in his preface of the reprint, but does state that “the first English translation of this work ought to be available” and that he hoped to provide “a useful tool for modern Hawaiians attempting to understand, preserve, and revitalize Hawaiian culture” (Campbell). Campbell’s impetus seems to have been successful in inspiring subsequent translations: Just three years later, in 1981 Rubellite Kawena Johnson published another translation, and in their studies of the Kumulipo, scholars such as Kame‘eleihiwa and

Noenoe Silva have opted to provide their own translations of sections of the Hawaiian-language text (Kame‘eleihiwa 2005; N. Silva, 99-104). Kanaka poets have also “underst[ood], preserve[d], and revitalize[d] Hawaiian culture” through creative interpretations of the Kumulipo: McDougall’s poem “Pō” is an “anticolonial genealogy” “inspired by the Kumulipo” (2016, 52-53); and Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio’s poem “Kumulipo,” which she performed for President Obama at the White House in 2009, incorporates her personal genealogy.

The formal and generic dexterity, multiple literary elements, and combination of composers over the centuries resonate in Kneubuhl’s reworking of elements of the Kumulipo into short fiction. Her short story becomes another layer in the “literary lei” and infuses it with an additional “kaona connectivity,” through the multiple versions and speakers of the narrative within her text. The text’s structural demand for an Indigenous reading praxis opens possibilities for the application of Kanaka Maoli epistemology and ontology to contemporary discussions of lāhui formation and inclusion.

Attention to the formal echoes of the Kumulipo in “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” positions the former as a literary decolonial tool in the service of crafting the lāhui through a specifically Indigenous frame. The Kumulipo was a centralizing force in imagining and perpetuating the lāhui Kanaka Maoli as a mode of resistance to American imperialism and a method of communicating in ways that actively excluded, and thereby minimized the cultural power of, those who sought to topple the lāhui (N. Silva 88, 89). The cosmogonic, political, and literary contexts of the Kumulipo facilitate a reading of “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” that elucidates connections between the individual and political power, as well relationships among individuals. The exigencies of US constructions of citizen and nation are at times stalled by their Kanaka Maoli counterparts, which infuse political

power structures with layers of communal reciprocity and metaphors of kinship. These mutually constitutive layers speak to and through American imperial formations of the nation.

Genealogizing Blood Quantum: “One Unbroken Line Without Any Stems”

The boundless potential of Pō recounted in the Kumulipo is also reflected in the structures and principles by which Kānaka Maoli trace and maintain genealogical ties. Mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogical succession) dictates that Hawaiian identity is based on both descent and kinship, emphasizing multiple heritages as an intersectional strength. These heritages are understood within the botanomorphous construction of the family as ‘ohana, a collection of the many offshoots, or corm, of the taro plant. The corm is “grown from the older roots, especially from the stalk, and is figurative for offspring or offshoots” (Diaz and Kauanui 320). As the nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian David Malo writes in *Hawaiian Antiquities*: “The genealogies have many separate lines, each one different from the other, but running into each other. Some of the genealogies begin with *Kumu-lipo*. . . . This is not like the genealogy from Adam, which is one unbroken line without any stems” (20). The multiple lines, or offshoots, that Malo references are overlapping and complementary, providing the individual abundant opportunities to forge new relationships or recognize old ones. In their invaluable exploration of traditional Hawaiian family systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mary Kawena Pukui and E. S. Craighill Handy posit that “everything relating to [the] individual is within the matrix of ‘ohana; an individual alone is unthinkable, in the context of Hawaiian relationship” (Pukui and Handy 75). This familial matrix, from which one is inextricable, belies blood quantum’s assertion that those links could be weakened through connections to other racial ancestry. The mo‘okū‘auhau system also contains a bilateral fluidity in which descendants may

claim heritage through matrilineal and patrilineal lines, which further accommodates multiple heritages. As Kauanui writes: “Whereas in the colonial frameworks a person’s vital substance comes from genetic inheritance, in the Pacific Islands context, one’s substance is acquired through genealogical inheritance and sustenance from feeding in any given set of relationships” (Kauanui 2008, 52). US notions of identity that were imported into Hawai‘i in the nineteenth century were based largely on the immediate conditions surrounding one’s birth, and the supposedly inherent qualities of nationhood and race became conflated in an attempt to predetermine the character and quality of a being. In this way the US concept of kinship is a restrictive force, an “unbroken line” that racializes bodies in order to recognize only immediately tangible relations with no significance placed on shared histories, and is essentially restrictive and exclusionary, while the Kanaka Maoli mode is inherently extensive and inclusionary.

The tensions and discursive slippages around constructions of lāhui that “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” emphasizes are crucial to understanding how the idea of lāhui has, over the last century, become yoked to an imperial discourse that codes political sovereignty as racial survival dependent on blood logic. “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” offers a productive space for overcoming the historical trauma to Hawaiian genealogical and ontological systems through its commentary on the fantasy of racial purity and critique of the very real importation of patriarchal American notions of blood quantum in nineteenth-century Hawai‘i.⁷⁰ Through the text, I examine the incompatibility of Kanaka Maoli and US constructions of identity, and their contemporary legacies. US identity categories are restrictive, constructing racial and national identities as finite and dilutable, while the Kanaka Maoli genealogical system is inherently inclusive and extensive. In this sense Kahikina’s experience with blood quantum elucidates the incommensurability of a US patriarchal racialization and movements for Hawaiian cultural and political sovereignty.

⁷⁰ For an extended discussion of blood quantum, see Kauanui’s *Hawaiian Blood*.

The New Hawaiian Nation of “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” constructs its fertility project around the concept of extended kinship, but the principles that guide the project’s application are entrenched in a colonial blood logic which actually perpetuates a restrictive notion of genealogy. The most obvious invocation of extended kinship is the idea of hānai, which Kahikina herself uses as a justification for her participation. To hānai is to adopt or foster a child, rearing her as one’s own.⁷¹ This is often done to cement kinship ties or to provide a child to infertile relatives and it is still practiced today. While hānai is often practiced within biological families, this is not a requirement and children fostered in this way are not usually marginalized because of a difference in racial or genetic background. Kahikina is told that “stress, pollutants and chemicals have affected infertility,” resulting in “low sperm counts and defective ovum” that preclude “fifty percent” of Native Hawaiians from conceiving children of their own (187). Under the impression that she is giving only one child to the program, Kahikina offers a contextualization to which her doctor readily agrees: “It’s like the old idea of hanai, isn’t it?” Kahikina mused. ‘Like giving your child to be lovingly raised by others’” (187). The description of hānai as “old” suggests that it is no longer practiced in the futuristic New Hawaiian Nation; perhaps, like the clinic’s slogan, it was something “ancient” “from another century” that the “health clinic had revived” (186). Hānai’s privileging of forged kinship ties over strict biological ones appears to guide the health clinic’s placement policy, but newer notions of blood quantum have begun to affect how the “old” practice is implemented in its “revived” form. Although the project mandates that only one of the partners receiving a child must be of “Hawaiian ancestry,” it does not specify a percentage or suggest those in mixed race partnerships will be excluded (187); however, unbeknownst to Kahikina, the same racial and genealogical latitude is not extended to

⁷¹ Hānai ties are not minimized because of the absence of direct genealogical succession. Historically, these ties have been invoked to substantiate claims of succession to leadership positions among the ali’i.

those donating their genetic material. Within the health clinic's program, the multiple genealogies inherent in inclusive models of kinship at the core of the Hawaiian family structure are subsumed by an emphasis on blood quantum and the marginalization of those members of the lāhui who are "only part Hawaiian" (187).

As its invocation of Kalākaua's slogan, ho'oulu lāhui, would suggest, the health clinic's fertility project is an attempt to cause the lāhui to grow; but its reliance on blood quantum to substantiate belonging leads one to question exactly what type of lāhui the New Hawaiian Nation envisions. In addition to Native Hawaiian scholarship on the applicability of blood quantum and genetics to the categories of indigeneity and genealogy, my analysis here draws on this chapter's previous discussions of the incommensurability between the English word nation and the Hawaiian word lāhui, as well as the slippages between lāhui and the Hawaiian word aupuni, which the New Hawaiian Nation uses in its Hawaiian rendering, Ke Aupuni Hawai'i Hou. Kahikina was told that her genetic donation would be one of three hundred, and while her contribution was valued because of her racial purity, many donors would also be mixed-race Kanaka Maoli. However:

Instead of selection on a rotation basis, they had simply chosen two donations of the very best, one male and one female, both of them from pure Hawaiians. First they were cloned for grooming purposes, and then altered to withstand inbreeding. Lab technicians combed through the strands of DNA, searching for and removing all defects. They engineered, strengthened, and activated enough genetic traits from each ancestral pool to produce an infinite variety of looks. Next, they cloned these perfect specimens again. Not once, but hundreds, maybe thousands of times. . . . The race didn't die. It began to flourish—Ho'oulu Lāhui. (190)

Hawaiian Studies scholars such as Kauanui and Arvin have delineated the ways American notions of nationhood and citizenship based on the racialization and marginalization of Indigenous bodies through foreign notions of blood quantum have disenfranchised Kanaka Maoli in their homelands. As Kauanui notes, “The definition of Hawaiian identity on the basis of blood logics was an American conception, a colonial policy” developed to disenfranchise Hawaiians because “blood logic works to displace a discourse and recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty” (Kauanui 2007, 112). Maile Arvin has mapped the intersections of nineteenth- and twentieth-century US ideas of anthropology and eugenics, and points out that critical conceptions of “hybrid Hawaiian girls” and miscegenation were crucial symbols and methods of Americanizing Hawai‘i. (2013, 42). The New Hawaiian Nation seems to operate under the assumption that the erasure of miscegenation is a method of un-Americanizing, of genetically decolonizing the Hawaiian body. However, as Arvin’s scholarship points out, the reliance on blood quantum and genetics to determine one’s indigeneity is latent with a precariousness that minimizes Indigenous agency through a discourse of “the various power relations that continue to write indigenous peoples as always vanishing” (2015, 126). From this perspective, one can see how the New Hawaiian Nation’s reliance on scientific manipulation is a cautionary tale about “what happens when indigeneity is recast as genetic: it loses its traction as a discourse of survival and instead becomes a discourse of scarcity and death” (Teves et al 115). Historically, Kanaka Maoli genealogical practices and methods of ascribing membership within the lāhui have been expansive and focused on vitality. As Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s previous parsing of the word lāhui’s etymological links to plants and unknowable bounty has shown, the lāhui and Native Hawaiians’ genealogical links have always cast them as a people with potential to grow and claim kinship in limitless ways.

Blood logic and its “discourse of scarcity and death” is so pervasive that it nearly erases Kahikina, a native with “pure” blood, on multiple occasions. “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” illustrates how the emphasis on racial purity can erase not just those bodies that are racially mixed but, ironically, those bodies that are privileged because of their racial purity. As a child, Kahikina at times experiences her racial purity as a societal burden that fetishizes her: “She’d grown up being treated like an endangered species . . . subjected to the poking and prodding . . . Kahikina remembered how she hated going out in public when she was a child. Visitors to Hawai‘i had somehow come to believe that it brought good luck to touch a pure Hawaiian” (184). The same abhorrence of public fetishization reappears sixty years later, when Kahikina’s role in the production of thousands of racially pure Kānaka Maoli is leaked to the media. The Minister of Health visits her home and tells her, “I’ve ordered national security to delete your name and address from any and all public files. I’ve changed your communication numbers and covered any possible traces” (189). In addition, the “Sovereign Parliament” offers to perform a religious ceremony of the “most elaborate and ancient formality” to elevate her to ali‘i status and even establish kapu laws to “make [her] life more private” (189-190). The details of how the New Hawaiian Nation achieved its sovereignty and the structure of its government are not revealed within the text; however, the references to intense bureaucratic control and a parliament suggest that Kahikina’s potential elevation to ali‘i status would carry no real political power as it did in “ancient” times. Instead, coupled with the establishment of kapu laws—which would at the least consecrate her body and could even forbid others to touch her or be in her presence—this figurative elevation based on the prestige of the past could mean a life of silence and isolation in the present.⁷² Ironically, after using her body to combat the “vanishing native” trope, the

⁷² Pukui and Elbert define kapu as “Taboo, prohibition; special privilege or exemption from ordinary taboo; sacredness; prohibited, forbidden; sacred, holy, consecrated; no trespassing, keep out” (132).

government attempts to erase that body and all traces of it. The poking and prodding she experienced as a child is analogous to the poking and prodding of her genetic material as an adult, after which the New Hawaiian Nation is keen to “[cover] any possible traces” of her existence. Once her genetic material has ensured the general population will not “vanish,” the government is keen to expedite her own virtual erasure.

Within the context of the story, Kahikina’s near erasure is caused by the government’s attempts at a genetic decolonization linked to the project of cultural and political decolonization through the propagation of a racially pure citizenry. Yet, Ke Aupuni Hawai‘i Hou’s reliance on hānai, kapu, and “ancient and elaborate formality,” draws on a Hawaiian chiefly system and monarchy whose historical archive evidences the inclusion of mixed-race Kānaka Maoli citizens, even in the face of American political encroachment. Antithetically to Ke Aupuni Hawai‘i Hou’s attempts to marginalize mixed race bodies as a form of sovereignty, the Hawaiian monarchy often incorporated mixed race bodies in its resistance to political and cultural colonization: During the same period in which her brother and predecessor, King Kalākaua, encourages Kanaka Maoli to ho‘oulu lāhui, Queen Lili‘uokalani writes in her 1897 Protest of Annexation that she seeks redress for both “the native and part-native people of Hawaii” (2004, 227); and when pressed on the issue of blood quantum, Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole argued inclusion should extend at least to Hawaiians of the 32nd degree (Arvin 2013, 104). In addition to its dismissal of the many overlapping and complementary lines of Hawaiian genealogical practice, which David Malo describes as the defining difference between Indigenous and Western constructions of family and belonging which are at the root of the lāhui, this attempt at erasing miscegenation continues to reify US imperial blood logics and further marginalize the lāhui as a whole through the dismissal of a significant portion of the population. It positions Hawaiian

identity as finite and erodible, a negation of our people’s ability to endure even as it purports to be a project in service of that endurance by giving “a true act of aloha to those who can’t have children” in an effort to ho‘oulu lāhui (187).

Gendered Genealogies: Women’s Voices as Many Stems of the Lāhui

The narrative tension in “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” is caused by the multiple and often oppositional—as well as metafictional—origin stories of the lāhui. These genealogies of the lāhui, both fictional and historical, intersect and diverge around the agency and/ or abuse of women’s bodies. Like the Kumulipo, “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” contains many genealogies (content) and can also be read as a genealogy (form). Thus, mo‘okū‘auhau is the first meiwī I employ in my analysis in this section. I also rely on kaona (veiled or hidden meaning) and inoa kanaka (personal names) (ho‘omanawanui 2014, 42). These devices are part of a makawalu reading and writing strategy that incorporates multiple perspectives and centers women’s voices, which are paradoxically centered and marginalized in conversations of genealogical and genetic inheritance in the text and in contemporary society (Kauanui 2007). Makawalu, which means “eight eyes,” positions multiple accounts of a single narrative as an intersectional strength. ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui describes makawalu as an Indigenous literary analysis that “refers to a culturally based concept of analysis from multiple perspectives or dimensions” (2014, xl). The multiple dimensions of a makawalu approach move beyond the visual. ‘Ike, which means to see, to recognize, and vision, also connotes: a connection to other bodily senses, such as hearing; a connection to divinity, “to receive revelations from the gods” (Pukui and Elbert 96). As an affirmation of Indigenous epistemology and ontology in the face of Western canonical and generic distinctions, makawalu becomes an inherently decolonial tool (Kaiwi and Kahumoku III,

183). My use of makawalu and ‘ike as tools of literary analysis relies on another kaona of maka: Eyes are frequently described in great detail in Hawaiian literature, which Elbert links to “the cultural interest in the sacred body” (349); maka can also connote “beginning...source; any new plant shoot coming up” and is used figuratively to refer to a “descendant” (Pukui and Elbert 224). These connotations then invest multiple layers into my reading of a story about descendants, which are often figured through imagery of the taro plant and offshoots, and the sacredness of the human body. The visual (makawalu, kaona, and ‘ike), the oral (mo‘okū‘auhau as chanted aloud), and the aural (‘ike and mo‘okū‘auha as heard) reinforce this project’s focus on embodied theorizations of Pō. In “Ho‘oulu Lāhui,” women’s bodies, visions, and voices are key tools for literary analysis because their intersectional identities—which speak to and through gender, Indigeneity, and race—are expressed through meiwī, whose performative roots are a reminder that Kanaka Maoli literature is inherently corporeal. As ho‘omanawanui notes, “Meiwī were an integral part of oral tradition that were embodied in memory and performance” (2014, 41).⁷³ Drawing on the cultural concepts inherent in a Kanaka Maoli reading perspective, I argue that the text positions a series of female and mixed race oppositions to the state’s narrative of events in order to create a genealogy of the nation that contains the many stems which David Malo reveals are a defining component of Kanaka Maoli identity and world view. In my analysis, these stems are rooted in ‘ike wahine (women’s knowledge and lived experience) and mana wahine (women’s spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, and political strength and authority). In this way, the hui (collective) of female voices are not just a negation of the state’s attempt at a heteropatriarchal narrative which excludes mixed race citizens, but an affirmation of the inherent strength of female voices and multiple genealogical roots. Kneubuhl crafts Native

⁷³ See also ho‘omanawanui’s table comparing and contrasting Kanaka Maoli orature and literature, which includes their performative and interactive elements (2014, 40-41).

female characters that not only negate the nation's marginalization of their bodies, but also produce and circulate their own narratives. In this section, I analyze how the plurality of these voices affects the form and content of the text: the whispers, chants, gossip, and journals of Native women create a text that incorporates oral storytelling components and narrative interruptions into the genesis of the state as well as its own literary genealogy.

I tie the multiple perspectives of a makawalu approach to the overlapping voices of Native women in the text, which produce a national and literary mo'okū'auhau that recognizes mana wahine and expresses it in forms that emphasize the vital role of women in orature and politics. When describing life in Hawai'i before foreign innovations, Kamakau tells us that genealogical chants were composed under kapu and that the composers were "skilled in oratory and statecraft" (241). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Kalākaua and Lili'uokalani's publications of the Kumulipo are nineteenth-century examples of how genealogy was used to consecrate and validate Kanaka Maoli visions of the state. In addition to multiple versions of a specific genealogy, there could also be multiple composers of a single version. The multiple composers relied on a balance (pono) of perspectives: "If a group worked together to compose a chant the leader would ask each composer to give a line; if there were eighty composers the chant would contain eighty lines, and these would be combined into a single composition" (Kamakau 241). Collectivity extended to subsequent memorizations and performances of mo'okū'auhau, such as the Kumulipo (ho'omanwanui 2014, 41; Lili'uokalani 1897, Introduction). Like the women of *Potiki*, who (re)fashion historiography with their big and little books, but unlike the New Hawaiian Nation, which attempts to push a homogenous narrative of the state without dissent, Kneubuhl's female characters insert their own memories in the forms of

whispers, chants (oli), gossip, and journals into the text to (per)form a single narrative that compiles all of their perspectives into a cohesive whole.

Kanaka Maoli wahine scholars have elucidated the ways mana wahine, as a mode of analysis and an ever expanding set of aesthetics, troubles settler colonial structures of heteropatriarchy in the service of Kanaka Maoli sovereignty (ho‘omanawanui 2012, 2014; L.K. Hall). The latitude given to female voices within the text’s formal mo‘okū‘auhau and the fictional lāhui’s mo‘okū‘auhau suggest expansive notions of kinship and reciprocity, which can be read as mana wahine and specifically feminine expressions of aloha. These are rooted in what Kame‘eleihiwa has called “the lessons of female Akua” in the context of Native Hawaiian sovereignty. Among these are “Aloha i ka ‘ohana, having love and affection for the extended family,” and ‘oli (chanting) and ‘olelo (the Hawaiian language), the last two of which are “the inspiration of Laka,” goddess associated with hula and forests (2000, 29-30). The reciprocity and inclusion inherent in the composition of genealogical chants coupled with their political connotations and the invocation of chanting and the Hawaiian language as specifically female expression of the divine, are part of the kumu for a reading of “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” that teases out the potential of female voices and agency for future forms of sovereignty within the text.

Orature and its reliance on multiple participants and perspectives are the foundation of the text, which opens with Kahikina’s awakening by the Kapuahi man chanting at her gate. He is chanting the state sponsored version of the genesis of the Hawaiian people. The chant’s form and content are incomplete, and I read its reliance on the female perspective as a useful entry point for a makawalu approach which incorporates gender and community into the broader narratives of the New Hawaiian Nation’s formation and the form of the text as a whole. In addition to providing a common ancestral bond between himself and Kahikina, the Kapuahi man’s chant is

also a request for entry onto her land and into her home. However, Kahikina refuses, “[knowing] he would never come across unless she chanted back to him with her own kāhea, welcoming him in the formal and polite way of their ancestors” (183). The kāhea (greeting, calling out) relies on a call and response structure, whereby one is not complete without the other. The reciprocity of this structure evokes the concept of pono, or balance, which permeates the sacred and secular realms of daily life for most Hawaiians. Dualisms and gender parity are essential elements of Kanaka Maoli genealogies and cosmologies, in which “both male and female forces are always present” (N. Silva 93). While the kāhea is not expressly concerned with gender, pono permeates multiple elements of our daily lives, as it can be “an individual, an act, or a behavior that reflects a balance between male and female dualities; therefore wise, judicious, proper, good” (Osorio 2002, 291). Orature and gender parity are aligned in the text’s opening, which suggests that its formal reliance on orature is inseparable from its content’s focus on gender, particularly gendered forms of knowledge (‘ike wahine) and strength (mana wahine). Thus, the invocation of oratorical structures within the text’s form suggests the ways Native women are literally and figuratively exercising their voices within the narrative of the lāhui; and that the lāhui is imbalanced and incomplete without them.

‘Ike wahine is also necessary to complete the content of the Kapuahi man’s chant, which is a “sanitized” version of the genesis of the Hawaiian people through the union of Wākea and Ho‘ohokūkālani. In a flashback which interrupts the narrative,⁷⁴ the unvarnished version is relayed by Kahikina’s grandmother, a version of the granny figure that often appears in Pacific Islands literature as the guardian of ancient knowledge that has been marginalized or erased in

⁷⁴ Drawing on Hiapo Perreira’s Hawaiian-language work on Hawaiian oratory and meiwī, ho‘omanawanui lists the meiwī ho‘omakili (flash-forward) (2014, 42).

contemporary settings.⁷⁵ Although she does not vocalize her response to the Kapuahi man, Kahikina “muse[s] over his version”: “I guess he never heard the *old* story, the way it was told before the Ministry of Hawaiian Culture reshaped oral history. ‘Kānaka Nouveau,’ Grandma used to call the proud new bureaucrats. But I remember hearing a different story, from Grandma’s lips, alone, in secret” (183). Ke Aupuni Hawai‘i Hou has attempted to erase Wākea’s deception of his wife and daughter from the lāhui’s genealogy; yet, Kahikina’s grandmother manages to pass down that knowledge in secret, incorporating it in a specifically gendered type of knowledge passed from matriarch to granddaughter. The shift from omniscient third person narration which points out the Kapuahi man’s “reshaped” version to the interiority of Kahikina’s use of the “I” suggests a sense of connection to this knowledge. As she “whisper[s]” the truth to Kahikina in her childhood, revealing that “Papa found out about the deception and spat in Wākea’s face,” her grandmother emphasizes that this version is to be kept a “secret” because “People today don’t like this story. They don’t like that it tells of how our people came from a lie, a lie to use and deceive women, but this is the story our ancestors told, my pua” (191). The grandmother’s intimate whispering is powerful enough to resonate with Kahikina decades later, as is the agency of Papa, who refuses to accept her partner’s infidelity and abuse of their daughter. In this example, both the grandmother and Papa use their voices to center their own ‘ike, setting a precedent for Kahikina to do the same when she recognizes that the Kapuahi man’s chant has been “reshaped” by incomplete knowledge.

⁷⁵ This figure is common in the work of all of the writers covered in this dissertation: See Auntie Lu in Kneubuhl’s short story “Manōwai”; Granny Tamihana in Patricia Grace’s *Potiki*; and Albert Wendt’s discussion of how his grandmother shaped his storytelling process in Vilsoni Hereniko’s “An Interview with Albert Wendt: Following in Her Footsteps.” For use of the granny figure in fiction related to kākau, as discussed in Chapter 1, see Rai a Mai’s short story, “Tattoo.”

Examples of different women's literary and historical agency intersect in Kneubuhl's text, as pono, 'ike wahine, and mana wahine are also the catalysts for Kahikina's exposure decades after her participation in the fertility project. Dr. Haehae is Kahikina's lifelong physician and oversees her participation in the Ho'oulu Lāhui fertility project at the health clinic. Upon her death, her only heir, a niece who has also become a doctor, discovers her aunt's handwritten journal detailing the fertility project and, "determined that history would not forget her Aunt's heroic work," releases the information to the media without the government's or Kahikina's consent (189). The niece's preoccupation with "history," the grandmother's reference to the "*old* story," and the distinction between ka po'e kahiko and "people today," tie narratives and knowledges to women's bodies in multiple times and spaces. As Briar Wood parses wāhine, in the Mana Wahine Māori context:

It is also important to consider the multi-valences of the word wahine, the word for woman, of which the plural is wāhine. The first syllable of the plural with a long vowel—wā—can also signify time and place, so that by extension it becomes the 'time and place of Hine.'... Hine is the word used for girl (in Māori and other places/ languages of the Pacific) and is also the name of many of the ancestresses, demigods, and goddesses associated with women. (109)

Like the grandmother's revelation of the true version of the chant, Dr. Haehae's version of the fertility project is described in a flashback that interrupts narrative linearity. Although this release results in Kahikina's exposure and the government's attempt to erase her by deleting all of her contact information and potentially elevating her to ali'i status to ensure her isolation, it is also an attempt to ensure that Dr. Haehae will not vanish from history. Since Dr. Haehae "died without much fanfare or public notice," likely at the behest of the state-run media, the niece's

release of her journal counters the government's effort to silence her and attempts to place her within Ke Aupuni Hawai'i Hou's mo'okū'auhau. The release of this information creates a sense of pono; it balances the state's narrative of its genealogy, and centers the voices, knowledge, and experiences of Native women within the lāhui's history. Kneubuhl's use of a journal and its dissemination through media such as newspapers is also a kaona to the roles Native Hawaiians played in historical discussions of who and what the lāhui should be.⁷⁶ In addition to publishing debates over sovereignty and genealogy, 19th and 20th century Hawaiian-language newspapers were linked to autobiographical efforts such as Queen Lili'uokalani's *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, in which she describes newspapers smuggled to her during house arrest, their contents a direct counter to the narrative pushed by the U.S. businessmen and military that had illegally overthrown the kingdom. Noenoe Silva has argued that nineteenth and early twentieth century Kanaka Maoli women produced specifically gendered forms of veiled and overt forms of knowledge, which circulated in newspapers, mo'olelo, 'oli, hula, and material productions, and served as enduring reminders of Kanaka Maoli sovereignty and resistance to American colonialism (8). Kneubuhl's inclusion of Dr. Haehae's journal is thus a kaona, a metatextual reference to the various literary tactics of Native Hawaiians to resist their erasure by the government within and beyond the short story, stretching across and between the multiple temporalities, or wā, wāhine may inhabit.

While Dr. Haehae is largely responsible for the program which repopulated the nation with genetically "pure" children, her journal's insistence on an alternative literary genealogy of

⁷⁶ Contemporary Native Hawaiian scholars such as Noenoe Silva and ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui have written extensively on the role of Hawaiian-language newspapers in discussions of political and cultural sovereignty, and the works of Samuel Kamakau and David Malo, widely recognized as foremost Hawaiian historians, are collections of their articles published in newspapers over decades. Silva discusses the ties between the Lili'uokalani's brother, Kalākaua, and the nupepa *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, as well as the role *Nupepa Kuokoa* played in supporting Lili'uokalani's overthrow.

the nation and her relationship with her niece actually center mixed race bodies and affirm inclusive kinship models that look beyond blood quantum. This literary and genetic potential is mirrored in the bountiful and mutually constitutive characteristics of *meiwi*: The affirmation is hidden in the open through the *kaona* built into *inoa kanaka*. “Hae,” the root of the doctor’s name, can mean “fury, rage” and “to tear,” but also “flag, banner” and “flowers” (Pukui and Elbert 45). In the same way that her actions tore Kahikina from her children and made her feel like “a big gaping hole,” Haehae is also responsible for the next generation of the nation, as suggested by the meanings of her name which draw on nationalism and the Hawaiian language’s figurative use of flowers to suggest descendants (similar to the English use of “offspring”) (192). Yet, Dr. Haehae’s own notion of family suggests that, for her at least, genetic material may not be the supreme method of ascribing genealogical ties. Her niece has always suspected she was not raised by her biological parents and scours Dr. Haehae’s journal for clues to her “true genealogy,” yet once she has them, in the next sentence she is fiercely determined that “history would not forget her Aunt” (189). The absence of any genetic link with Dr. Haehae does not diminish the niece’s perceived kinship connection to her aunt, who is never described as “full blooded, *Kānaka maoli piha*” the way Kahikina, the Kapuahi man, and their offspring are (184). Furthermore, the niece, who is not a genetic relative of Dr. Haehae’s and who also has a different blood quantum, is the doctor’s sole heir, the only one who will carry on her legacy and continue her genealogy.

Kneubuhl’s diction compounds this tenuous connection between genetics, blood quantum, and kinship with further *kaona*, or connotations, of the name “Haehae.” Haehae is also “a native variety of taro in the *piko* group, characterized by having the two basal lobes of the leaf blade separated up to the *piko* (point of joining with the leaf stem)” (Pukui and Elbert 46). Taro,

or kalo, is the metaphor for Hawaiian constructions of family, and, as the story of Ho‘ohokūkalani’s offspring reveals, the older sibling of all Kanaka Maoli. ‘Ohana, the word for “family” is derived from the ‘oha, the corm or offshoot of the taro plant, and can be translated as a collection of many taro roots (Pukui and Elbert; Kauanui 2008; Diaz and Kauanui). The haehae variety of taro is also known as piko eleele because of its dark petioles, “‘ele‘ele” meaning black or dark (“Piko eleele”). Piko can mean “navel” or “umbilical cord,” but also “blood relative” (Pukui and Elbert 328). Taken together, these multiple meanings of Dr. Haehae’s name endorse a type of genealogy rooted in the same Indigenous concepts the New Hawaiian Nation had tried to erode through its insistence on blood quantum. The “two basal lobes” of the haehae taro’s leaf, which join at the piko, invoke Malo’s discussion of the multiple stems inherent in expansive Kanaka Maoli views of genealogy; the haehae taro’s characteristically dark piko and its definition as an umbilical cord suggest the figurative darkness to which all Kanaka Maoli are linked, Pō; and the definition of piko as a “blood relative,” suggests that all Kanaka Maoli are linked, a fact that cannot be diluted through exact measures of blood quantum.

The text’s formal construction as a pooling of women’s voices that speak to and through their associations with nature, Pō, and gendered ‘ike and mana inform Kahikina’s decisions in its resolution. In the next section, I build on this reading to suggest how the pono, or balance, of voices which guide its narratology provide an intertextual and specifically gendered space from which Kahikina finds her own voice and overcomes her bodily trauma by embracing the generative potential of Pō. Because she has become one of the many composers of the text’s genealogy, by exercising her voice, by extension she centers all women’s voices.

Ontological Affirmations of the Lāhui: (Re)turns and (Re)tellings

“Ho‘oulu Lāhui”’s invocation of historical events, chants, and texts to deal with an imagined future situates the trauma of Hawaiian political instability along a temporal spectrum that constantly doubles back upon itself, invoking the spiraled and intertwined elements of time and space within Pō. Within the text, traditional Hawaiian practices and knowledge systems are invoked, then refashioned to fit the needs of the futuristic government—often in ways that may run counter to their original usage. This is seen most specifically in the connections between the Kanaka Maoli body and the lāhui. The fertility project concentrates its vision of sovereignty on quantifiable and tangible elements of the human body; this is reflected in the plot’s focus on characters’ negotiations of blood quantum and the government’s attempt to control the release of the project’s details to the public. Through its invocation of oratorical structures rooted in gender parity and expansive notions of kinship, the text’s form relies on metaphorical connections between the human body and the lived experiences of sovereignty that sustained Kanaka Maoli for millennia. In synthesizing these seemingly oppositional views of sovereignty and the body, I read the text’s conclusion as an appeal to recognize that the tangible and the metaphorical elements of the body are both integral to the fullest understanding of what sovereignty looks like for contemporary Kanaka Maoli, within and beyond Kneubuhl’s story. In her appraisal of how Native peoples might overcome legacies of historical trauma, the Native American activist Winona LaDuke finds “an answer in the multifaceted process of recovering that which is ‘sacred.’ This complex and intergenerational process is essential to our vitality as Indigenous peoples and ultimately as individuals” (11). Kanaka Maoli knowledge systems emphasize the sacredness of the body, and I argue that the racialized logics of blood quantum which guide the New Hawaiian Nation’s fertility project are, in effect, a metaphorical desecration of what was

always thought of as sacred.⁷⁷ “Ho‘oulu Lāhui” suggests how the recovery of the Kanaka Maoli body can perpetuate a reinvigoration of Indigenous epistemology that opens up more productive modes of belonging and nationhood in our contemporary moment.

The most potential for an inclusive model of the lāhui is found in scenes where bodies emphasize the experiential and cultural elements of Hawaiian identity through their recognition, rather than exclusion, of others. I start from the position that the “individual alone is unthinkable, in the context of Hawaiian relationship” to examine Kahikina’s moments of rejection and recognition of her connection and responsibility to others (Pukui and Handy 75). This connection and responsibility are not just to other human bodies; they are also extended to the ‘āina and the lāhui, which are anthropomorphized and intertwined in Kanaka Maoli epistemology. The Kumulipo details the connections among the life forms that unfold from Pō, and its publication history is evidence that cosmogonic connections are effective methods of maintaining cultural and political sovereignty. Ultimately, the text’s literal and figurative moments of corporeal and sensory recognition evidence the body’s ability to ascribe membership in the lāhui via Kanaka Maoli notions of ontology independent of blood logic.

In addition to the genealogical connections between human and land articulated in the Hāloa mo‘olelo, whose buried body becomes the first taro, and the gestational imagery of the Kumulipo, which links human and nature through the spiraled time and space of Pō, Hawaiian knowledge systems articulate the lāhui and systems of governance through bodily metaphors.

⁷⁷ Our primary written records of Hawaiian life before Western contact, Malo and Kamakau, relay the sacredness of the body over and over again via discussions of topics like corporeal kapu of the ali‘i, corporeal kapu between men and women, and eighteenth-century chief Kahekili’s attempt to manifest his mana through the tattooing process. In addition to historical and metaphorical articulations of bodily sacredness, Pukui and Elbert trace the linguistic survival of these beliefs through discussions of everyday language and etymology. The consciousness of bodily sacredness survived in the preference of certain colloquialisms over others. For example, as they note of the literal translation of the English language toast “bottoms up” into Hawaiian as “‘ōkole maluna”: “this expression is condemned by older Hawaiians as vulgar and indecent because of the sacredness of the human body in old belief” (*Hawaiian Dictionary*, 282).

Kame‘eleihiwa connects the lāhui’s sovereignty to its recognition of the bonds between human, land, and body:

In Hawaiian, the word is Ea. It means sovereignty; it means political control over land, over water, and over ocean. It means life breath; it is the life breath of the nation. The ancestors taught that the nation is like a body. The head is the Mo‘i (Supreme Ruler); the shoulders are the Ali‘i Nui (High Chiefs). The right arm is the priests, and the left arm is the land managers. The legs are the farmers and the fishermen. When all parts of the body work together, there is Ea: life breath and sovereignty. (“Ea Hawai‘i” 23)

The nation is a body that depends on support and reciprocity between all of its parts to ensure its well-being. This well-being is experienced as a sovereignty that is tied to a national right to manage natural resources, to mālama ‘āina, or care for the land. Kame‘eleihiwa’s example mentions “political control over” nonhuman nature, but it does not separate mankind from the nonhuman world through the exercise of unilateral control. Rather, the “land managers,” “farmers,” and “fishermen” who are vital components of the nation are also stewards of the land.

Kahikina’s initial refusal to recognize and greet the Kapuahi man, who was similarly deceived and exploited by the government’s fertility project, is bound up with foreign notions of land ownership that occlude the recognition of genealogical bonds and metaphors of kinship and personification of the land. As the story opens, the Kapuahi man has waited at her gate for three days, hoping Kahikina would greet him in the “formal and polite way of their ancestors”; when Alika, her nephew, questions her refusal to do so, Kahikina bristles at what she perceives as the Kapuahi man’s nerve: “He trespasses on my property, uninvited and expects me to welcome

him?” (183, 185). The relationship between human and ‘āina is one of familial reciprocity and stewardship; as the Kumulipo reminds us, Kanaka Maoli come from the land and, until foreign pressure resulted in the Māhele of 1848, land ownership did not exist in Hawai‘i. Further, the multiple kaona to taro throughout the text as well as its direct invocation and retelling of the Hāloa mo‘olelo emphasize the centrality of land to Kanaka Maoli constructions of family.

In Hawaiian culture, family is variously theorized as a collection of many roots and articulated as what feeds and sustains one. ‘Āina, the word that means land, also means that which feeds. Thus one can see that Kahikina’s emphasis on land privatization that undergirds her claims of “trespassing” simultaneously distances her from her connection and responsibility to the Kapuahi man. This directive of domination through ownership is the predecessor of what Carolyn Merchant describes as the “capitalist industrial model of accumulation” (32). The theorization of land as site of accumulation replaces the infinite possibilities of reciprocity with ownership and consumption, which are unilateral and finite. Here I extend Western discourses of space to my reading of Kahikina’s word choice. When it is no longer an affirmation of kinship connections, land becomes an objective site in the rhetoric of cultivation. Although aloha ‘āina has likely been a central commitment to her career in “agricultural economics” and “train[ing] to help people establish the maximum self-sufficiency in home environments,” Kahikina’s sense of violation instigates her use of the rhetoric of ownership and denial of reciprocity (188). If nonhuman nature is no longer a sibling but a space to be ordered and owned, then the genealogical connections and metaphors of kinship that bind Kahikina to the Kapuahi man are erased as well.

Alika often provides a pono perspective, serving as a foil to counter Kahikina’s instinct to deal with her trauma in isolation, and model inclusion and reciprocity through engagement with

the ‘āina. After respectfully disagreeing with his aunt’s refusal, steeped in the rhetoric of domination, to greet the “trespass[er],” Alika has a symbiotic moment with the ‘āina. Although he uses a “laser key card” to set the “water data board” to “[run] a house water treatment and recycling process,” he returns to the lo‘i (taro field) and foregoes technology for corporeal confirmation of conditions and “put[s] his hand in the water near an in-flow valve to check the temperature of the circulating water” (185). This interaction reminds Kahikina of the familial connections the ‘āina facilitates, as she muses while watching him: “Born of the same parents, the taro is the older brother, man being the younger” (185). This mode of inclusion via land-based kinship models resonates in the connection Alika forms with the Kapuahi man. When he takes the man food against his aunt’s wishes, Kahikina snaps, ““Why did you feed him?” As soon as the words left her mouth, she knew they were wrong, wrong words gone out, not to be taken back” (186). After Kahikina’s own quiet reflection on the situation, Alika rationalizes his actions as pono through the common bond of the land, explaining, “He’s just a simple man, Auntie, mahi‘ai, dirt farmer, like me” (191). Alika’s reference to himself and the Kapuahi man as “mahī‘ai” can be read in the context of Kame‘eleihiwa’s comments on the farmers as crucial elements of the lāhui, the “legs,” without which the body would be incomplete, not pono. In his interactions with technology overseeing the water conditions and the Kapuahi man, Alika finds a mandate for his actions in the reciprocity and kinship that the land facilitates. In sharing food with the Kapuahi man, Alika reminds Kahikina that the land’s function as that which feeds is inseparable from its maintenance of kinship ties.

Reciprocity and land-based kinship ties are integral to Kahikina’s climactic decision to finally act in a pono fashion and return the man’s call. Soon after Alika explains his connection

to the Kapuahi man as a mahi‘ai, Kahikina contemplates nature, and as she “watch[ed] the luminous sun in its declination”:

Far away, she heard birds singing. Their songs were faint but present, somewhere on the periphery of her thoughts. Then another sound began to rise quietly, slowly and gradually like water, like punawai, spring water, seeping up from the voice of the man waiting under the tree... [With] the fire sky behind her and fixed in her mind, warming every visible thing...she faced the east, and her voice returned to the tall figure at the gate, making for him a deep and resonant chant of welcome.

(192)

The sun, birds, spring water, tree, and fire are vital elements of Kahikina’s recognition of the Kapuahi man. Kneubuhl uses a simile to compare his voice to punawai, but also conveys that it is indistinguishable from the rest of the natural world, enmeshed with the singing of birds and rising up from beneath a tree. The same is true of the Kapuahi man himself; his family name, Kapuahi, is the name of a star, but also refers to fire through its root word, ahi. By returning the Kapuahi man’s kāhea Kahikina acts in a pono manner not only towards him, but restores her balance with the ‘āina as well. Unlike her initial reaction to the Kapuahi man’s kāhea, at this moment land is a site of mutual recognition and affirmation rather than a tool for the rhetoric of domination and isolation that previously dubbed him a “trespasser.”

Thus, when Kahikina does return the Kapuahi man’s kāhea, one can read her participation in the call and response function of the chant as an affirmation of community based Indigenous ontology, which transcends the temporal stasis of US constructions of blood quantum. Kneubuhl’s description of the exchange emphasizes what McDougall describes as the “experiential and cultural” components of the Hawaiian aesthetic (McDougall 2014): “It

ascended through the lines of space, washed over her, crumbling gently in waves, crisp waves, his kāhea, calling out to be answered, calling out for recognition, flooding in the empty space and vibrating in the darkness” (Kneubuhl 192). Their kāhea travels through Pō, the cosmogonic darkness described in the Kumulipo, and transcends time on two levels: First, it recognizes their contemporary reenactment of the ancient creation narrative; second, it allows them both to transcend the violence of the near past, enacted in the state’s deception and the metaphorical and historical trauma of blood quantum. This transcendence refashions space as well: unlike Kahikina’s initial reaction to the Kapuahi man’s kāhea, in this instance space is a site of mutual recognition and affirmation rather than a tool for the rhetoric of domination and isolation that previously dubbed him a “trespasser.” In this way Kahikina is able to move through her feelings of isolation, so that she is no longer a “gaping hole”—her chanting is an acceptance of the mutually constitutive aspect of the lāhui, as well as her physical and figurative embodiment of Pō. Kahikina is able to overcome the restrictive force of blood quantum, and the genealogical isolation it perpetuates, through an emphasis on the body’s expansive and figurative sensory components.

The temporal agility of Kneubuhl’s text reveals how in representing a recovery of the body’s sacredness, one can also recover the epistemological and cosmogonic connections the body facilitates through a discussion of Kanaka Maoli constructions of time. The human body’s connection to knowledge systems survives in the construction of time as corporeal and experiential. The Hawaiian term for “future” is ka wā mahope, what is behind us, while the term for “past” is ka wā mamua, what is in front of us. As Osorio writes, “These terms do not merely describe time, but the Hawaiians’ orientation to it. We face the past, confidently interpreting the present, cautiously backing into the future, guided by what our ancestors knew and did” (2002,

7). Unlike the opacity of the US construction of time, Kanaka Maoli temporal construction renders the past and future immediately available to the present, as they are constantly mediated by the body's metaphorical orientation and movement. This emphasis on orientation and temporal dexterity reminds us that conversations of decolonial futures must be rooted firmly in the past. I rely on the expansive nature of the Kanaka Maoli construction of time to guide my reading of "Ho'oulu Lāhui" and underscore how the text's form and content reveal the significance of Indigenous epistemology and ontology as an aesthetic practice.

A return to indigenous discourses of genealogy and ontology prompts a version of the lāhui that transcends the US framework of blood logic, which rests on an articulation of Native bodies as temporally peripheral. To return to the introduction's question of defining the lāhui, these Indigenous discourses and my reading of Kneubuhl's text endorse a vision of the lāhui that affirms genealogy and kinship as key determinants. The inclusive and shifting nature of Hawaiian kinship systems allows one to constantly reaffirm physical and metaphorical connections. That constant reaffirmation necessitates a perpetual invocation of multiple temporalities, as these connections are based on kinship ties that are forged in the past and that will continue into the future. In this way, Indigenous epistemology and cosmogony position the contemporary body as constantly transcending the US construct of linear time through its connection to both previous and successive generations and their temporal moments. In effect, this renders the temporal logic of blood quantum impotent. In the Hawaiian context, blood quantum is rooted in specific historical moments: most notably, European contact in 1778 and the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) of 1921. The HHCA set the precedent for the current legal definition of native Hawaiian as a "descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778." Blood quantum's

insistence on fixing what it presumes is an authentic Indigenous identity in the precontact past alienates successive Kānaka Maoli from their histories and cultural identity. It positions whatever comes after colonial encounter as separate from the “authentic” past, which marginalizes the dynamism and heterogeneity of this culture and binds it to an American historicization.

Liberation from this historicization is vital for Kanaka Maoli, above and beyond their experiences of US epistemological colonialism. In recovering the sacredness of the Kanaka Maoli body, we recover the metaphorical connections to ‘āina, akua, and ‘ohana, which in turn overcome the discursive violence that US cultural and political imperialism have done to the body and, by extension, the community. Kneubuhl’s text pushes us to contemplate what, who, where, and when the lāhui is. In my analysis of this text, I hope that I have elucidated some of the ways we may seek it out beyond legal and racial discourse. I hope that we may find it in the conscious implementation of cultural knowledge and the conscious act of binding and maintaining the sense of community and extended kinship that have been, and will continue to be, the most effective means to ho‘oulu lāhui.

Conclusion

(Re)turns and (Re)tellings: Liminality as Belonging

This project has shown how Pō can represent and articulate notions of political and cultural sovereignty throughout Polynesia. These forms of sovereignty are rooted in cosmogonic connections to land, which are manifested in the human body's mediation of the intertwined spiral of time and space. The boundless potential of Pō is reflected in the variety of ways embodied cosmogony appears in contemporary Pacific literature, and the methods by which authors rework Anglophone literary traditions of the novel and the short story to advance Indigenous notions of the nation. Writings and songs about kākau position the human body as a medium to represent extended kinship ties—both within one's island of origin, and throughout the peripatetic history of kākau in the Pacific. Wendt, Grace, and Kneubuhl explore what can happen when these ties become markers of presumed authenticity that yokes the individual's body to spatial and temporal relationality that preclude autonomy. Similarly, the organization of their texts within this study surveys the transgressive potential of Pō to rework assumptions of authenticity and challenge cultural expectations. Beyond the recognition of kinship ties, this study also asks how Pō's vast migration is reflected in different representations of how the individual can encounter and overcome the traumatic construction of the nation. In the texts explored here, Indigenous storytelling techniques—such as kākau, fāgogo, whaikōrero, and oli—suggest how literary forms and representations of Pō can variously (re)turn to the nation and (re)tell narratives. Whether the nation is run by Natives (as in Wendt's and Kneubuhl's texts) or settlers (as in Grace's text), it is consistently presented in terms that speak to the bodily experience of space and time as an affirmation of belonging.

But what happens when the individual experiences space and time outside of the nation? Pacific literature in the twentieth century can certainly be characterized in terms of its struggles for national independence, reflected in movements such as the Mau movement in Samoa, the Māori Renaissance, and the second wave of the Hawaiian Renaissance. Each of these struggles emphasized personal, historical, and cosmogonic connections to the land. Yet, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have also seen swift upticks in Pacific emigration, as Hau'ofa so deftly described in his rejection of the idea of MIRAB societies.⁷⁸ As a Kanaka Maoli born and raised amidst the various Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, and Chamorro communities of California's South Bay, the effects of diaspora have always been central to my identity and understanding of Pacific culture, and have shaped my understanding of Pacific Studies (deGuzman et al). Indeed, diasporic concerns have even shifted the ways we can conceive of rubrics of Pacific Islander Studies or Pacific Studies.⁷⁹ Pacific literature reflects this reality, and the authors discussed in this dissertation have consistently engaged travel throughout their careers. Migration has been integral to Wendt's career: his first novel, *Sons for the Return Home* (1973), closes with the protagonist en route between Samoa and New Zealand; *Ola* (1991) travels across Samoa, New Zealand, New York, and Israel; while *The Mango's Kiss* (2003) moves between Samoa, the United States, Europe, and New Zealand over a century; and *Book of the Black Star* (2002) charts its own migration across the Pacific. Grace's *Tu* (2004) follows members of the World War II 28th Māori Battalion from New Zealand to Italy and back again; *Ned & Katina* (2009) similarly explores how World War II moved bodies between New Zealand and Crete. The

⁷⁸ Microstates dependent on migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of Pacific diaspora: in a global context, see Spickard et al and Chang; within the Pacific, see Somerville 2012 and Case; as an integral element of Pacific Studies, see deGuzman et al. For a discussion of navigational techniques as models for theorizing Pacific studies, see: Hau'ofa; Diaz 2011; Diaz and Kauanui; Carroll et al; DeLoughrey 2007; Kauvaka.

protagonist of Victoria Kneubuhl's short story "Manōwai" is a diasporic Kanaka Maoli returning home; her play *Ola Na Iwi* adds another layer to this idea of the body's experience of space and time outside of one's nation by following Native Hawaiian bones as they travel the globe as museum artifacts. Wendt and Kneubuhl have also discussed their personal migrations as formative moments in their lives (Wendt 1992; Kneubuhl 2013; Wilcox).

The presence of travel in contemporary Pacific literature is not a recent development, but a (re)turn to a voyaging tradition that has constituted Pacific societies and impacted Pacific identity formation.⁸⁰ As its title suggests, Florence Johnny Frisbie's *Miss Ulysses from Puka-Puka*, one of the earliest texts in the contemporary Pacific literary tradition, is largely constituted by Frisbie's travels.⁸¹ In addition to Frisbie and the authors discussed in this study, contemporary writers such as Kristiana Kahakauwila, Craig Santos Perez, Dan Taulapapa McMullin, Victor Rodger, and many others, have consistently engaged diaspora in their writing, making it a central theme for this wave of Pacific writers. My discussion in Chapter 1 of "Pese o le Tatau" and the peripatetic origins of kākau shows how travel has been a vital element of Pacific Islanders' conception of narrative for millennia. This, of course, is a reflection of the central role the Moana Nui has played in our history and how voyaging routes maintain our kinship ties even in the present day.

Keeping these literary and historical traditions in mind I again ask: What happens when the individual experiences space and time outside of their nation of origin? To take this further, what happens when this experience occurs outside of the Pacific, where kinship ties and cultural

⁸⁰ See Case's discussion of Hawaiki and Ka'ili's discussion of migration as an affirmation of Tongan identity and sociospatial ties.

⁸¹ While Frisbie's writing is foundational, it remains understudied with few pieces of literary criticism. See DeLoughrey 2002a and 2002b.

affinities can lessen the cultural, emotional, and psychological effects of being away from one's island of origin? How are the cosmogonic connections between the individual and Pō experienced in a land where time and space are not conceived of as the interconnected and relational spiral of wā? With a huge portion of Pacific Islanders residing in the diaspora, how are issues of belonging now compounded by space and time, by how far or how long one has been away from the islands?

While writing this dissertation, I often looked to literary texts to provide answers to these questions. Many of them addressed diaspora's temporal and spatial effects on individual Indigenous identity; in particular, Kahakauwila's *This is Paradise* resonated with my experience as a mixed race and diasporic Kanaka Maoli (Warren 2015b, 2016).⁸² Yet, as I searched for a way to forecast the potential of my theorization of Pō as embodied cosmogony to answer these questions, I began to realize the ways my focus on the literary had elided my personal narrative and the ways I embodied the cosmogonic elements which linked me to other Kānaka Maoli, our Pacific cousins, and the temporal and spatial potential of Pō. In short, in my exploration of textual representations of oral and embodied storytelling, I neglected my own voice and my corporeal connections. I had, as Selina Tusitala Marsh so thoroughly and presciently warned Native Pacific women, nearly theorized myself out of existence by "view[ing] theory solely as something foreign and outside of myself" (338).

This conclusion is an affirmation of the applicability of theory to my own life and the application of my life to my theory of embodied cosmogony. Like all Kānaka Maoli, I am bound

⁸² I have pointed to Kahakauwila's use of time in "Road to Hāna" and space in "Thirty-Nine Rules for Making a Hawaiian Funeral into a Drinking Game" as expansive and spiraled theorizations of diaspora (Warren 2015a, 2016). In the latter, the protagonist explicitly links space to her feelings of being an outsider due to her mixed race. Teves has analyzed the tensions around the ho'i mai, the Hawaiian concept of the call to return home, for diasporic and queer Kānaka Maoli through a discussion of Kahakauwila's "The Old Paniolo Way," also included in *This is Paradise*.

to the lāhui by cosmogonic constructions of space and time as elastic and expansive categories that structure the world around us and affirm our connections to ourselves and the rest of the Pacific. I draw on my experience as a diasporic Kanaka Maoli and read my experience and my genealogy as twenty-first century iterations of the peripatetic elements which are crucial to the earliest forms of embodied narrative, kākau, discussed in chapter 1, and which resonate through subsequent chapters. In doing this, I invoke Pō's ability to rework multiple literary forms and by narrativizing my mo'okū'auhau (genealogy) I also turn it into a mo'olelo (history, story, literature). Yet, if this project has taught me anything it is that most stories are not new, rather they are (re)tellings of narratives that have been shaped by the ways our ancestors saw the world. My mo'okū'auhau and the mo'olelo of my existence as a diasporic and mixed Kānaka Maoli are no different, and in searching for a way to center these experiences I realized I could only do so by engaging the words and actions of my kūpuna (ancestors). I turn to one in particular, and analyze a letter he wrote on his journey from O'ahu to the continental United States, which was published in a Hawaiian-language newspaper over a hundred years ago. In doing so, I position myself and this project within the spiraled construction of time and look to the past to interpret and move into the future. My literary analysis of a document that reveals how and why I exist in the diaspora also collapses the temporal and spatial distinctions between myself in the twenty-first century and my 'ohana and the lāhui about which they wrote a century before. I do not see my narrativizing and analysis of my genealogy as a departure from the literary concerns of the rest of this study. Rather, I offer the epistolary and the travel narrative as additional literary forms to be theorized through Pō. Just as Reuben does in Grace's *Potiki*, I (re)turn to a grandfather's letters and, through my analysis of them, imbricate myself into the ka huri of this study of Pō.

“Here” and “There” in “A Letter from Afar”

“All the Hawaiians here give their aloha to our lāhui,” reads a translation of the closing line of Samuel K. Nainoa’s “He Leka Mai Na Aina Mamao Maia,” or “A Letter From Afar,” published in the June 7, 1912 issue of *Nupepa Kuokoa*, a Hawaiian-language newspaper (Nainoa; “A Letter from Afar”).⁸³ Nainoa, an esteemed musician from O‘ahu, wrote the letter after visiting the thriving community of diasporic Kānaka Maoli residing in Seattle. While Nainoa immediately notes that some of the men who make up the majority of this community have “married haole women” and have “no desire at all to return to the land of their birth,” he also describes at length the kinship ties cultivated in the diaspora, noting how certain Hawaiian women have “become mothers” among the community and all seem to “get along lovingly” (“A Letter”). Beyond remarking on the novel material conditions and attitudes encountered in this diasporic community, Nainoa’s account also suggests the ways their dynamism affirms broader kinship and nationalistic ties. Although the letter appears to be an account of the bonds among Hawaiians living in a foreign land, I read Nainoa’s descriptions of the kinship connections among those diasporic Kānaka Maoli and their counterparts in Hawai‘i as an anticipation of one of the coming century’s most pressing concerns for lāhui inclusion: How does one navigate the complex intersections of Indigenous identity in the diaspora?

A century after Nainoa’s letter, the U.S. is home to more diasporic Hawaiians than any other nation. Among them are the descendants of Samuel Nainoa, who eventually followed in the footsteps of the aforementioned Hawaiians and settled in Los Angeles, never to “return to the land of [his] birth” (“A Letter”). I turn to Nainoa’s diasporic account to suggest how literary

⁸³ Nainoa’s letter originally appeared in the Hawaiian language as “He Leka Mai Na Aina Mamao Maia” in *Nupepa Kuokoa*. Here, I rely on an English translation, “A Letter from Afar,” from *Nupepa-Hawaii*. My quotations of the Hawaiian version are consistent with their original publication and do not use the ‘okina or kahakō.

studies can put a discursive pressure on the ways we “read” constructions of diasporic Indigeneity. In the previous chapters I discuss how Indigenous constructions of space and time rooted in Pō reworked the forms of Anglophone novel and short story; here, I read Nainoa’s account as an indigenization of the literary tradition of the travel narrative, and argue that his affirmation of diasporic bodies as an extension of the lāhui Kanaka Maoli opens up conversations of identity and belonging in our contemporary moment. By reading with and against the conventions of the American travel narrative, I pose an intervention in a literary genre that has traditionally seen the protagonist’s movement in foreign lands as an erasure of Indigenous identity and sovereignty. Putting pressure on the descriptions of kinship and sovereignty in this literary context, I aim to show how the discourse of Hawaiian cultural and political sovereignty at the turn of the twentieth century anticipates and affirms the inclusion of a huge portion of the contemporary lāhui: diasporic and mixed race Kānaka Maoli.

Samuel Kalunahelu Nainoa was born in La‘ie in 1877, the only son of Lyons Baldwin Nainoa, a judge in Ko‘olauloa, O‘ahu. An accomplished musician, Nainoa attended the Kamehameha Boys School and played the violin, standup bass, and steel guitar among other instruments. Nainoa’s skill on the violin would also be an inspiration for his cousin Joseph Kekuku’s invention of the steel guitar during their teenage years. As an adult, he was a member of several bands, among them the Royal Kawaihau Glee Club. Along with his wife, Eugenia Maude Lonokahikinikaunakinilani Brotherhood Nainoa, Samuel Nainoa would travel the United States as a successful Vaudeville musician, spreading awareness of the new steel guitar from New York to Los Angeles. Settling in LA in the 1920s, Nainoa and his band, which included several of his children who were also accomplished musicians, would often perform in the glamorous venues of Old Hollywood, like the Brown Derby. He eventually opened the Sam K.

Nainoa Foundation of Hawaiian Music in LA where he taught the steel guitar and was a member of a local Hawaiian civic club.

While the Sam K. Nainoa Foundation of Hawaiian Music is no more, Nainoa did leave a legacy of a different type in Los Angeles. Like the Native Hawaiian community in Seattle about which he wrote, Nainoa would “bury [his] bones in this foreign land” of Los Angeles and although he did not, as he noted of the men in Seattle “marr[y] haole,” some of his children and grandchildren did. One of these grandchildren, Karen Joyce Kalehuamakanoë Anderson Warren, daughter of Joyce Kalehuamakanoë Nainoa Anderson and Whitney William Anderson, did when she married David Warren. The second of her three children is me, Joyce Lindsay Pualani Warren. Which brings me to how I discovered Nainoa’s letter published in 1912, one of many thousands of pages in the archives of Hawaiian-language newspapers, and why I chose to discuss it here, in the conclusion of an academic study. His comments about Kānaka Maoli who would not only choose not to “return to the lands of their birth,” but “bury their bones in this foreign land” and “marry haole” resonated with me, his mixed race descendant born in the diaspora, whose earliest memory of Nainoa was visiting his grave in Los Angeles, a foreign land. While my interest in Nainoa’s attention to movement, space, time, and diasporic Indigenous kinship and nationhood, is independent of my own familial connection to him and my residence in Los Angeles, the significance of analyzing his writings on space, Indigeneity and sovereignty in the diaspora under these conditions is not lost on me.

Indigenous Articulations of Space: Writing Against the Settler Colonial Conventions of the American Travel Narrative

When Nainoa's letter is published in 1912 Hawai'i is nominally an American territory and Native Hawaiians are American citizens, but his attention to the lāhui, as both a people and a nation, complicates any easy assumptions about which national literary tradition his work might fit into.⁸⁴ In fact, what I find most interesting about Nainoa's letter is its assertion of an enduring lāhui Kanaka Maoli, not only in Hawai'i but in the American Pacific Northwest. This assertion relies on constructions of space and time as features of the cosmogony of Pō, which the Kumulipo ties explicitly to the Kalākaua dynasty as a genealogy and expression of Native Hawaiian sovereignty. Previous accounts of Hawaiian travelers—such as those by Prince Alexander Liholiho published in 1850 and Queen Lili'uokalani published in 1898—focus on their encounters with Euro-Americans within the continental United States, often describing how Americans viewed Hawaiians as nationally and racially other and inferior in ways that minimized Hawaiian sovereignty. David Chang has traced the ways Kānaka Maoli travelers to New England and California in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “engaged with the notion of race” as a feature tied specifically to American constructions of space and nation, noting that it was “a crucial category that was fundamental to Americans’ understanding of world geography” (Introduction). When Nainoa writes these letters in 1912, he focuses on Native Hawaiians who have left Hawai'i for the continental United States, but by this point in time they—as well as Nainoa—are technically American citizens; yet as the only Americans he

⁸⁴ After American businessmen with the support of the US military overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, they establish the Republic of Hawaii. In 1900 President McKinley signs the Organic Act, which grants American citizenship to all citizens of the Republic of Hawaii.

describes on the continent they are also racially and culturally Native Hawaiians who have maintained their lāhui ties.

From its inception, American literary studies has most often engaged with the travel narrative as a colonial American tool. From the earliest examples of Puritan immigrant journals and captivity narratives like Mary Rowlandson's, American travel narratives construct land and space as sites of domination and expansion ripe for colonization. In her book on 17th and 18th century colonial American travel narratives, Wendy Martin notes that it is characteristic for the author to “attempt to gain a sense of control over the landscape” (viii). In his study of late 19th and early 20th century travel narratives, Christopher Mark McBride argues that the term “colonial” be applied to specific narratives written by white males, because he “view[s] these writers not in the roles of the unbiased travelers and observers in which they often cast themselves, but instead as active participants in the process of American colonization of foreign lands” (2-3). Martin and McBride reveal the ways American literary nationalism is rooted in discourses of space as a commodity, the accumulation of which will forward the agenda of the fledgling nation. This accumulation is both literally and figuratively unilateral: Europeans cross the Atlantic and Americans subsequently move westward across the continent, displacing and destroying entire native communities, in search of “a ‘clear land’ where a ‘new world’ might be built” (McBride 1).

Nainoa's letter provides a useful contrast to this model of the American travel narrative, as it is often in direct opposition to these characteristics. On a literal level, it is quite antithetical: Unlike the American colonial westward movement which begins in the imperial metropole of England, crosses the Atlantic, and sweeps westward across the continent before culminating in the Pacific, Nainoa's travels begin in Hawai‘i, cross the Pacific, and move eastward across the

United States. And while acquisition and domination of new land, or as Martin terms it, “a sense of control over the landscape,” are hallmarks of Americans attempting to forge a new national identity, in Nainoa's letter, the community presents alternative constructions of space in an effort to reclaim and maintain a lāhui that had already existed before Europeans even crossed the Atlantic. However, it is important to note that this Indigeneity is being maintained on a land to which Native Hawaiians are themselves visitors. Chang and Kēhaulani Vaughn (2016) have shown how Kānaka Maoli have recognized their position as visitors, connecting with and in some cases becoming part of Native communities in the United States, all the while maintaining their lāhui ties. Space is fecund and its potential contexts and meanings are not fixed, but malleable and attuned to the relationships between people. Relying on these theorizations of space, I read Nainoa's movement--between Hawai‘i and Seattle, and later across the continent and back again--as the movement through “space that relates...the space that is context giving meaning to things” (Wendt 1999, 402).

I keep these theorizations of the possibilities of space as connection and context in mind when I close read Nainoa’s descriptions of the diasporic community’s relationship to space and land. While he repeatedly refers to the Seattle community residing in a “foreign land” and draws distinctions between “here” in Seattle and “there” in Hawai‘i, he also simultaneously performs a linguistic erasure of that distance (“A Letter”). Although they have put down roots in the diaspora and may have no desire to “return to the land of their birth” and will “bury their bones in this foreign land,” he consistently refers to their connections to the ‘āina, or land, in Hawai‘i as unbroken (“A Letter”). He refers to this community in Seattle as “kamaaina” (Nainoa), which literally means “land child,” and which I read as an explicit invocation of nativeness and an affirmation of its endurance outside of the ‘āina. He also calls them “keiki Hawaii,” children of

Hawai‘i, again referencing their genealogical connection to Hawai‘i and the rest of the lāhui who remain there (Nainoa). These connections can also be traced further back along the spiral of wā to Papahānaumoku, she who births islands, and through her to Pō. Regardless of how far they may have gone, Nainoa maintains that these Kānaka Maoli are actively connected to the lands of their birth.

Their genealogical connection to the ‘āina does more than maintain their connections to the lāhui in Hawai‘i, it also affirms their connections to each other while thousands of miles away from their home. To refer again to the embodied and relational possibilities of space which I have theorized in this dissertation, their movement does not create a separation, but rather creates more opportunities for the contexts and connections between them to broaden and shift. Nainoa writes, “There were two Hawaiian women there with their husbands, and they have become mothers to the Hawaiian boys there; their living is easy and they get along lovingly; I would not be mistaken to say there is a place for them in this land without their parents” (“A Letter”). In this instance, although these “boys” have no immediate familial connections in Seattle, their larger genealogical connections to the lāhui and the ‘āina thousands of miles away, provide the context for newly forged kinship connections in the diaspora.

The final distinction I draw between Nainoa’s letter and the conventions of the American colonial travel narrative has to do with the way he uses his individual movement across space to articulate a communal subjectivity rooted in the land and sea. Wendy Martin notes that earlier American narratives “make it quite clear that travel, whether voluntary or forced, presents a radical challenge to the notion of a fixed stable self” (viii). However, Nainoa’s letter is replete with references to moments when the community’s engagement with the land in Seattle meets his expectations of a typical Hawaiian community, affirming not just his own identity, but that of

the community's, as what Martin terms "fixed" and "stable." In Hawaiian culture, family is often the mechanism through which one's sense of self is formed, because "everything relating to [the] individual is within the matrix of 'ohana; an individual alone is unthinkable, in the context of Hawaiian relationship" (Pukui and Handy 75). Family is variously theorized as a collection of many roots and articulated as what feeds and sustains a person. 'Aina, the word that means land, also means that which feeds (Diaz and Kauanui; Kauanui 2008). Nainoa adroitly engages this interconnection of self, family, land, and food, as he describes how the Hawaiians in Seattle take him out to gather food for a feast. Although they have travelled quite far from their homeland, contrary to the threat to a "fixed stable self," Nainoa describes how they follow the same protocol they would in Hawai'i to gather similar foods or adapt the ones to which they have access:

There is bountiful food *there*, and when *we* arrived, two pigs were roasted as is the custom of Hawaiians, and all the luau foods were prepared like inamona, limu eleele, dried fish, alamihi crab, raw fish, and *their* poi was poi palaoa [flour poi]...*Here they* have dried opelu and dried nehu and many other things...[*W*]e went pole fishing... [and] there is a fish that looks like opelu *here*, and perhaps it is opelu; so too with the puhiki'i, which is good eating raw. ("A Letter." Emphasis mine.)

Nainoa's descriptions of familiar and familial foods and preparation practices, as well as the adaptation of traditional staple foods like poi when the necessary ingredients are unavailable, reveals how travel is not a hindrance, but an affirmation of a fixed communal identity. The community is able to maintain culturally significant protocols rooted in Hawai'i, but also embrace the diversity and abundance of the land on which they are now guests. In addition to challenging the individualism of the conventional American travel narrative, Nainoa's use of the

first-person plural in this section also leads up to his concluding remarks, around which my own conclusion is framed.

Nainoa's letter closes with an endorsement of this community's ability to create a life away from the islands on which the majority of his reading audience is based. This endorsement also contains a clear recognition of their inclusion in the broader lāhui. He writes, "These Hawaiians of ours are blessed in making this place somewhere that they look for a livelihood" ("A Letter"). The possessive and inclusive nature of the word "ours" clearly marks these Hawaiians in Seattle as part of a larger Hawaiian community. They no longer inhabit a "foreign land," and have established a sense of family and community in a land which feeds them in literal and figurative ways which evoke the concept of 'āina. But it is his final line which simultaneously affirms and blurs spatial distinctions: "All the Hawaiians here give their aloha to our lahui" ("A Letter"). While Nainoa's letter began with several distinctions between "here" and "there," Seattle and the islands, by the end, "all the Hawaiians" are "here," as is the lāhui, with no reference to "there." It is within this perpetual state of "here," with no "there," that I find the most potential for future discussion of the lāhui and the inclusion of diasporic and mixed race Kanaka Maoli.

Nainoa's language blurs spatial distinctions and my (re)turn to his letter over one hundred years later is my attempt to blur temporal divisions, to emphasize a perpetual state of now that is similar to the perpetual state of "here" in his farewell. In (re)telling the mo'olelo of his emigration from O'ahu to the continental United States, I explore the ways my personal mo'okū'auhau has been formed by the elastic and inclusive constructions of time and space which are rooted in Pō, the cosmogonic force which links all Kanaka Maoli and many of their Pacific cousins, as well. If, as my reading of Nainoa's letter suggests, the liminal and peripheral

may become central through perpetual states of here and now, then the Indigenous body carries within it the potential of Pō. Thus, it is with the utmost reverence and humility, that I recognize the ways my body has become an extension of my theory; in the context of diaspora, space and time are no longer markers of separation from cultural and political authenticity, but affirmations that we all carry within us the potential of Pō and an embodied cosmogony.

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