AFFINITIES AND AFFILIATIONS:
BLACK PACIFIC ART IN THE UNITED STATES AND AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND, 1948-2008

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AFFINITIES AND AFFILIATIONS:

BLACK PACIFIC ART IN THE UNITED STATES AND AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND, 1948-2008

BERNIDA ANNE WEBB-BINDER, Ph. D.

Cornell University May 2016

This dissertation employs four case studies of pioneering women and artists—Juanita Hall, Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold, and Lonnie Hutchinson—in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand to theorize what I call *Black Pacific art.* The women, as subjects or as artists, share affinities in their portrayal of the black or brown female identity. To elucidate their mutual concerns, I analyze selected examples of visual art in the context of both African American and Pacific notions of diaspora, indigeneity, the body, and genealogy. I propose that the phenomenon of Black Pacific art is not a new one and that examples of its visual culture are embedded in a web of identity that is not imposed upon but chosen by the female subject. I provide a theoretical counterpart to Paul Gilroy's black Atlantic by utilizing the female body of color as the starting point in this critical intervention in African American and Pacific art history. This art history dissertation looks to Oceania for nuanced visual representations of blackness rather than to the usual contexts of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe.

The dissertation outlines how the Black Pacific is a space that fosters collaborations between people of many backgrounds and describes how its art reflects what I call *connections and community*. The Introduction builds the historical and theoretical context of Black Pacific art. Chapter One surveys blackness from an Oceania perspective and highlights similarities and differences with other perspectives on blackness. Chapter Two concentrates on the musical *South*

Pacific to illuminate how the African American actress Juanita Hall's black identity is erased against the backdrop of official Cold War strategies in Asia and Oceania. Chapter Three compares the intent, content, and process of Samoan American artist Jewel Castro and African American artist Faith Ringgold to outline how Castro's notions of Samoanness are prompted by Ringgold's representations of blackness. Chapter Four analyzes the signature black cut-outs and the *Black Pearl* video installations created by Lonnie Hutchinson (Samoan, Maori), to determine how blackness is understood and visually represented in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The conclusion projects the future of Black Pacific art.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bernida Anne Webb-Binder was born in Louisiana in 1973. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from Carleton College in 1995. She completed her Master of Arts in Art History with a concentration in Museum Studies at the University of Denver in 2000 with her thesis, *Adorned Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. She earned a Master of Literature in English from the University of Auckland in 2002 with her thesis, *Storytelling and Identity: The Art of Lily Laita and John Pule*. These two qualifications were supported by a Fulbright grant to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Her Master of Arts in the History of Art, Archaeology, and Visual Studies was granted in 2010. This dissertation was completed with the support of a Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship.

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For Carrie and Hilangela and my grandmothers, Bernida and Anne, and Markus

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This dissertation is the sum and more of the connections and community I have had the privilege of experiencing ever since the seeds of this project were planted in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the end of the twentieth century.

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This dissertation tells just a small segment of the story of four warrior women, Juanita Hall, Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold, and Lonnie Hutchinson. I am glad that I got to know Juanita through the traces of her life in the archive. I thank Lonnie Hutchinson for sharing her art and inviting me into her life after so many years had passed since we first met in 2000. I treasure Jewel Castro. There are no words that adequately capture her support, help, aid, advice,

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I first met Teresia Teaiwa in Aotearoa/New Zealand and I am grateful to her for sharing her poetry with me for this dissertation. I thank curator Ron Brownson, Auckland Art Gallery/Toi O Tamaki, for his advice during my visit to Aotearoa/New Zealand in spring 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

FRAMING THE BLACK PACIFIC THROUGH THE LENS OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC

In the early 1990s, the role of black people and black intellectuals in modernity was at the forefront of sociologist Paul Gilroy's mind as a lecturer in London. His teaching challenge was to "persuade [students] that the history and the legacy of the Enlightenment were worth understanding and arguing about."[1] Accordingly, he recalls that he "worked hard to punctuate the flow of the Europe-centred material with observations drawn from the dissonant contributions of black writers to Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment concerns."[2] Consequently, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* arose out of his "uneven attempts to show … that the experiences of black people were part of the abstract modernity that … was so puzzling …" to his students.[3] Hence, within its pages, Gilroy produces "… evidence [of] some of the things that black intellectuals had said—sometimes as defenders of the West, sometimes as its sharpest critics—about their sense of embeddedness in the modern world" [4] in order to demonstrate that our understanding of modernity must not leave out the black Atlantic; rather, it is necessary embrace its presence rather than perpetuate its absence. In *Affinities and Affiliations: Black Pacific Art in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand,*[5]

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[1] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), ix.

[2] Ibid. Throughout the dissertation, I retain Commonwealth English spelling in quotations. I also include diacritical marks where appropriate. I do not place them into quotes in which the author has not used them.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Gilroy writes of the "black Atlantic" and I write of the "Black Pacific." I capitalize both words in the term in order to emphasize the interconnectivity and equality of both perspectives.

[5] "Aotearoa" translates as "land of the long white cloud" and is the Maori name for the North Island of New Zealand but has become accepted as the name for the country. "Aotearoa/New Zealand" is the accepted way of acknowledging the bicultural nature of the country.

1948-2008, I build on Gilroy's theory and take the next step: understanding how blackness[6] is not just a condition of the black Atlantic; its "lived experience"[7] is also a condition of the Pacific, or Oceanic, [8] world and as such, the Black Pacific exists and its visual art aptly demonstrates the "affinities and affiliations" that Gilroy finds fruitful in the black Atlantic. He writes, "affinities and affiliations … link the blacks of the West to one of their adoptive, parental cultures: the intellectual heritage of the West since the Enlightenment."[9] He argues that "black intellectuals have understood this connection and … have projected it in their writing and speaking in pursuit of freedom, citizenship, and social and political autonomy."[10] Gilroy brings these intersections to attention to highlight the "modern subjectivities and movements" and the "special political problems that arise from the fatal junction of the concept of nationality with the concept of

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[6] I define blackness and Pacificness as the process of navigating the world in a racial schema that divides people into white or non-white categories. Blackness is linked to ancestry or affiliation with Africa, the African diaspora, African American culture, aboriginal Australia, Melanesia or any Pacific culture to which "black" has been ascribed as a derogatory label. Pacificness is linked to ancestry or affiliation with Oceania.

[7] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 85.

[8] In this dissertation, I use "Pacific art" rather than "Oceanic art" whenever possible. The discipline of art history has traditionally categorized Oceanic art as that made before European contact and colonization. Oceanic art is made in Oceania in three historically categorized regions: Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. Polynesia consists of the triangle inscribed between Hawai'i in the North, Tonga in the West and Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the East. Micronesian islands include Palau and Guam, which are both in free association with the United States. Melanesia includes the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, and Papua New Guinea. All are considered sub-regions of Oceania.

The mainstream discussion of Oceanic art ends with examples from the early twentieth century and does not take into account continuing and contemporary art which is sometimes discussed as "Pacific" or "Pacific Islands" art, a designation most likely originating from Aotearoa/New Zealand, and used mostly throughout the Commonwealth; if a distinction between the two is made. I prefer "Pacific" as I was first introduced to Pacific art in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I use it to refer to all the art made within the region generally unless designated otherwise. In this way, I position "the Pacific" as a discursive space.

Terminology is an important aspect of artistic practice for many. "Oceania art," as both historical and contemporary is the term of choice for the artist Jewel Castro, whose work I discuss in Chapter Three. Castro's use of the term references the essay "Our Sea of Islands" by Epeli Hau'ofa; see "Our Sea of Islands" in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, eds. Eric Waddell. Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau'ofa. (Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific, 1993), 2-16. I use "the Pacific" when referring to the region's geography and discursiveness and "Oceania" to evoke the metaphorical, liminal, and inspirational space outlined by Epeli Hau'ofa (1939-2009) in "Our Sea of Islands."

[9] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. 2

[10] Ibid.

culture…."[11] His definition of the black Atlantic develops from this stance; to Gilroy, it is "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structure of feeling, producing and communicating, and remembering that [he has] heuristically called the *black Atlantic world* [emphasis added]."[12]

To outline how this conjunction takes place in visual art made at the junction of blackness and Pacificness, I ask, "How is blackness culturally conceived and visually represented in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand?" To answer, in the following chapters, I present four case studies of pioneering women and artists—Juanita Hall, Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold and Lonnie Hutchinson—in these two seemingly disparate countries to elucidate *connections and community* as a way of framing how the black or brown female subject is visually portrayed. I propose that the phenomenon of Black Pacific art is not recent and that its visual culture is embedded in a web of identity that is not imposed upon but chosen by the female subject. I maintain that the African American vocalist and actress Juanita Hall, the Samoan American artist Jewel Castro who studied under African American artist Faith Ringgold, and the Maori/Samoan/Pakeha[13] New Zealander artist Lonnie Hutchinson understand a connection between a black perspective and a Pacific one and this is evident in visual representations of or created by the four women.

Therefore, to speak of a Black Pacific, in this sense, is to explore the "possibilities" that occur when blackness and Pacificness meet. I define the Black Pacific as the ontological space that develops when people of black, Pacific, or mixed descent, together or separately, explore

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] *Pakeha* is the Maori word for people of European descent and is used in contrast to the Maori word for themselves as indigenous people, *tangata whenua* or people of the land.

structures, forms, and situations that arise from but are not limited to concepts that originate in African, African diaspora, African American or Oceanic communities historically and develop into the present and future. Black Pacific art arises from this concurrence. I posit that the Black Pacific *can refer to blackness as linked to Africa in the region, blackness as originating from Oceania, and more broadly as the signifier for an inspirational space of collaboratio*n. The role of skin color is not ignored in the shaping of insider and outsider perspectives on identity and its representation. Rather, it is acknowledged and celebrated as a starting point for discussion but does not limit creative possibilities.

In this dissertation, the "black identity" in question is that of an African American woman unless otherwise stated. As an African American woman with no known Pacific genealogy, I acknowledge this as my point of entry as a way to situate the underlying perspective of this dissertation. That is not to say that this is the only perspective. It is, instead, the viewpoint I offer while engaging with those who study the Black Pacific. In the space of the Black Pacific outside of the parameters of the research question and the case studies, a "black identity" need not be tied to an African American perspective and can encompass similarities and differences in African, Melanesian and other viewpoints. To this end, a Brown Pacific is one route delineated by Pacific Studies scholar Damon Salesa that needs to be mentioned here.

A major goal of my research is to highlight how a Pacific perspective on blackness can dovetail or not with an African American position. Consequently, I look to Salesa, who is himself a New Zealand-born Samoan man. He defines the Brown Pacific as the past and continuing "relationships that Samoans and islanders had with themselves and each other,

relationships that were never constant but specific, historical, and changing."[14] He further explains that the Brown Pacific travels and is created by "a circuitry, a network through which the movement of people, material and communications was directed."[15] Salesa's perspective specifically highlights the Samoan and generally pinpoints the Islander interconnections across Oceania. Salesa writes, "A rewired Samoa was part of a wider Pacific island circuitry and it was a circuitry that was filled with people who were not white, nor European, nor American: a 'Brown Pacific', so to speak."[16] To this, I put forward the notion that "allies" of the Black Pacific are of and can be from other ethnicities. Those who are members of the groups that Salesa excludes—white, European, American, etc.—can be allies if they acknowledge the creative catalyst that blackness can be for Pacific artists and people and vice versa. I suggest that the Brown Pacific and the Black Pacific are aspects of Oceania that refer to connections (of experience) and communities (of allegiance) in similar or distinct ways to those outlined by Gilroy for the black Atlantic.

My overarching concern in this dissertation is mapping the Black Pacific female identity as it is formed and represented through circuits of modernity—mainstream musicals, educational guidance and mentorship, and slavery conditions—that intersect in the Pacific and African diasporas in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand as a site in Polynesia. Therefore, I look to Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* as the foundation for my discussion of an expanded notion of blackness that includes the Pacific rather than an essentialized view that excludes the region. Here in the Introduction, I clarify the

[14] Damon Salesa, "'Travel-Happy' Samoa: Colonialism, Samoan Migration and a 'Brown Pacific,'" *The New Zealand Journal of History.* 37, no. 2 (2003): 171.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 176.

conceptual parameters of my research, further explore my debt to Gilroy, situate his concept of modernity into a frame of alternative modernity theory, clarify my use of "diaspora" in the dissertation, and finally, give an overview of each chapter, the first of which is an exploration of the theoretical frames of identity that I employ.

A Theoretical Mapping of the Black Pacific

To begin this investigation, I start with an example of what I call "Black Pacific" poetry to highlight the wide waves of identities that the Black Pacific must traverse. In her poetry and scholarship, scholar and poet Teresia Teaiwa writes from the personal experience of growing up as both black and Pacific. In the closing stanza of *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad)*, Teaiwa reveals how her family's experience of blackness is situated in Oceania. Not only is her family of African American descent, she and her sisters also identify as Pacific Islanders. In her poem, after linking Malcolm X to Hawaiian nationalism, and reggae music to politics in Fiji, Teaiwa muses that "black/is a state of mind/like the colour of an island."[17] In another example, in relating the story of how her parents met in the 1960s at the East-West Center at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, Teaiwa situates their blossoming love story against the backdrop of American foreign policy on the international stage:

> They couldn't have come from more different worlds. My mother was a light-skinned blue-eyed African American U.S. army brat … My father was the first person from his island to attend university and the first person in his family to ever go beyond primary school. He was a displaced Ocean Islander, or Banaban, who was born in Kiribati but grew up in Fiji.[18]

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[17] Katerina Martina Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transormations since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fullagar, Kate (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 276.

[18] Teresia Teaiwa, "Mānoa Rain," *Pacific Places, Pacific Histories: Essays in Honor of Robert C. Kiste*, ed. Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 217.

She then relates that locale and religion brought her parents together at a crucial time in American and Pacific history: "All my parents had in common was being in the same place at the same time and being Catholic. … In moments of frustration my mother sometimes blames the Catholic priest at Mānoa's Newman Center for not counseling [them]…about the follies of seeking to resolve at a personal level the structural inequalities of Cold War international politics."[19] Reading her anecdote, it becomes clear that understanding how the lived experiences of being "black" (blackness) and/or of being "Pacific" (Pacificness) coexist among individuals, families, and communities, is a necessary endeavor.

In *black in the blue pacific*, Teresia Teaiwa links what I call a *Black Pacific identity* to locations such as Hawai'i and Fiji, islands in Polynesia and on the edge of Melanesia, respectively. She evokes lyrical images of Melanesians who "believe/in/democracy/they've inherited/dreadlocks/from ancient/ancestors".[20] This poem can be considered a written account of a Black Pacific perspective, exploring as it does, how one scholar envisions the experience of blackness and Pacificness from her personal and academic perspectives. It is just one of myriad views on the scope of the Black Pacific from a simultaneous African American and Pacific Islander viewpoint. If her poem can be considered poetry of the Black Pacific, how do scholars and critics understand visual accounts, particularly of and by women of African, Pacific, or mixed descent, that overtly or indirectly reference either the female body of color or her subjectivity?

To answer, in this dissertation, I take the female body of color as my starting point in this critical intervention in American, African American, and Pacific art history. Utilizing portraits

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[19] Ibid.

[20] K. Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," 275.

and representations of women or those created by women, I illustrate the convergent and divergent ways that these images reflect the experience of black female subjectivity in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand. I foreground the female voice because photographer and art historian Deborah Willis calls for "the visualization of new images and perspectives" about the black female identity.[21] Here I present a perspective in which the black female identity intersects with a Pacific female identity to provide a much-needed counterpoint to the masculine narrative already in place about Oceania as relayed through the voices of Abel Tasman, Captain Cook, Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Gauguin, among others. Moreover, in this dissertation, I look to the Pacific for meaningful constructions of black identities rather than the usual contexts of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe.

I have chosen the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand as the sites for my case studies because both are home to large populations of Pacific Islanders who were born there or immigrated there. While it is well-known that many Pacific Islanders migrated to Aotearoa/New Zealand after World War II, it is not common knowledge for most Americans that the U.S. has a fast-growing Pacific population, making the country a key site in the Black Pacific. The number of Americans self-reporting as Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with another race grew 35.4% between the 2000 and 2010 censuses. That is, over 870,000 Americans self-identified as Pacific then and a decade later, over 1,167,000 Americans identify in this way.[22] Yet, Pacific art history is under-represented in academia in the United States. As "traditional" Oceanic art created before World War II, it is subsumed in museum

[21] Deborah Willis, "Picturing the New Negro Woman," *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body* (Hood Museum of Art; Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), 243.

[22] United States Census Bureau, "2010 Census Brief, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population," 2, accessed October 26, 2015, http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf.

collections or art history programs under African, Native American, or Pre-Columbian art categorizations. This lack of recognition in museums and art history programs is in direct contrast to the significant cultural contributions of the growing Pacific population in the United States.

Accordingly, the project is bracketed by key moments in American culture and history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that also serve as milestones in the Black Pacific historical trajectory. My case studies begin in 1948, the year that writer James Michener won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for *Tales of the South Pacific*, an anthology of short stories written while he was stationed in the Pacific theater during World War II that was subsequently adapted in 1949 for Broadway, and again in 1958 for Hollywood, in both instances by Oscar Hammerstein II, Richard Rodgers, and Joshua Logan. My case studies extend through 2008, the year that the United States elected its first black president (who grew up in Hawai‘i) and the news traveled globally across airwaves and "e-waves." The case studies end in 2016 in the last year of President Obama's tenure. I see these historical moments as key milestones in locating Black Pacific history.

To theorize Black Pacific art, I draw from scholarship in anthropology, cultural studies (including Pacific studies and African American studies) and art history. In the last two decades, scholars such as Andrew F. Jones (East Asian Studies), Bill V. Mullen (American Studies), Yuichiro Onishi (African American and African Studies), Nikhil Pal Singh (Social and Cultural Analysis), and Shannon Steen (Performance Studies), have mapped Afro-Asian studies, a field in which a defining dynamic is the relationship between Japan and African Americans after World

War II.[23] Yet, the field of Afro-Asian studies overlooks Oceania as a separate region with its own histories and concerns; this is definitely an oversight. I fill this gap by constructing a theoretical model that can be utilized by art historians to investigate how blackness and Pacificness intersect in visual art, whether through imagery, intent, or viewer response.

Diaspora and Modernity

African Diaspora theorist Brent Hayes Edwards has previously referred to the "black Pacific" in which he frames it as parallel to the black Atlantic:

> … [w]e have started to see a reductive kind of 'serial logic' at work in studies of black transnational circuits of culture, in which the 'black Atlantic' would have to be set beside a parallel oceanic frame of the 'black Mediterranean' or the 'black Pacific.' I remain unconvinced that such oceanic frames can be thought of as separate in any consistent manner...[24]

Edwards's use of "oceanic frame" is provocative as it opens the way for discussion of blackness in the Pacific and acknowledges that geographical determinations are limiting in understanding "circuits of culture" that have always existed. I agree with Edwards' argument that there is no consistent separation between the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific. Yet, I disagree that this move in scholarship is "reductive" or simply "serial logic." I posit that introducing the Black Pacific and its art to the conversation amplifies rather than just echoes the "lived blackness" of the black Atlantic as I interpret Edwards to mean.

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[23] Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Andrew F. Jones and Nikhil Pal Singh, eds., *The Afro-Asian Century: A Special Issue of Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, *AfroAsian Encounters Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[24] Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," in *Diaspora Memory Place: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z*, eds. Salah Hassan and Cheryl Finley (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 100.

As a complement to the black Atlantic, the designation Black Pacific has previously been used by Gerald Horne and Heidi Carolyn Feldman in the fields of sociology and ethnomusicology, respectively.[25] In her analysis of Afro-Peruvian music, Feldman envisions the Black Pacific as a new space that is predicated on the space of Peru and its immediate oceanic vicinity because, she writes:

> Although Gilroy's influential book *The Black Atlantic*… challenged the public to imagine a cultural world that connects Africa, Europe, and the Americas through the circulating expressive forms … it left uncharted the somewhat different experience of countries in the Black Pacific like Peru. Expanding upon Gilroy's important model, I use the term 'Black Pacific' to describe a newly imagined diasporic community on the periphery of the Black Atlantic.[26]

I, too, am influenced by Gilroy's seminal work in that my theorization is a complementary counterpart to his Black Atlantic. Unlike Feldman, I do not visualize the Black Pacific on its periphery but as a stand-alone yet still-connected realm that has much to offer the world. Key to Gilroy's sense of modernity is the idea that two opposite positions can be occupied at the same time and be productive. I suggest that these "affinities and affiliations" mark the inspirational space of the Black Pacific, a space that continues to foster collaborations between people of many backgrounds. Several dissertations have been completed in which the term is used in reference to Japanese and African American relationships, especially after World War II, and the larger Afro-Asian discourse but in these instances, Oceania, or the Pacific Ocean is a blank space that the scholarship does not touch.[27]

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[25] Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

[26] Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 7.

[27] Yasuhiro. Okada, "Gendering the 'Black Pacific' Race Consciousness, National Identity, and the Masculine/Feminine Empowerment among African Americans in Japan under U.S. Military Occupation, 1945-1952" (PhD Diss, University of Michigan, 2008); Michael Cullen Green, *Black Yanks in the Pacific: Race in the*

Returning to Gilroy, he stresses that the "embeddedness" that black intellectuals experience creates the "rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation that [he calls] the black Atlantic."[28] The notion of embeddedness evokes a deep entanglement or a concrete entrenchment in a symbiotic relationship. Gilroy describes the black Atlantic as "rhizomorphic" which echoes the "rhizome" as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari.[29] I suggest that the Black Pacific shares this fractal, rhizomatic nature which can be found in the layered visual, aural, oral, and written narratives, such as that of Teaiwa and others, that crisscross the history of Oceania and flow into that of the black Atlantic. This "liquid" nature is also foundational for Gilroy in that he is interested in the "…flows, exchanges, and in-between elements…" of the black Atlantic. This "in-betweeness" is often characterized as hybridity or liminality and for the Black Pacific, the flowing quality is inherent in its visual culture.

This process of revising the definition of modernity is an example of alternative or comparative modernities theory. I argue that Gilroy's black Atlantic can be considered an example of alternative or comparative modernities theory. For this purpose, I find philosopher Marshall Berman's groundbreaking *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* to be a key starting point for discussion.[30] Berman's notion of modernity as "a mode of vital experience—experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils…"[31] is applicable to my theorization of Black Pacific art because the women

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Making of American Military Empire after World War II, The United States in the World; United States in the World. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[28] Gilroy*, The Black Atlantic*, 4.

[29] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *On the Line* (New York, N.Y.: Semiotext(e), 1983).

[30] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

[31] Ibid., 15.

discussed here, Juanita Hall, Lonnie Hutchinson, Jewel Castro, and Faith Ringgold, are of either African, Pacific, European, or a combination of descents, and their work links the individual to their communities through time and space. Marshall's framing of modernity's spatio-temporal subjective self allows an exploration of how the lived experience of these four women, not limited to, but encompassing both Pacificness and blackness informs the visual representations of or by them. Viewers versed in both Pacific and black cultures then read the imagery through these lenses. While modernity in Berman's volume is fluid, there are still critiques of what is left out in his story of lived experience. Berman's definition of modernity is critiqued by British historian Perry Anderson in that a "multiplicity of modernisms" is not addressed.[32] I acknowledge this critique and look to the discourse of alternative modernities as theorized by Dilip Gaonkar (Rhetoric and Public Culture), Naoki Sakai (Asian Studies), and other scholars. In this section, I outline the key ways in Gaonkar's arguments inform my work and return to Sakai's influence later in Chapter Three as it pertains to the work of Castro and Ringgold.

In "On Alternative Modernities," Gaonkar posits two streams of Western modernity: societal modernization and cultural modernity. Societal modernization is "associated with capitalism in the West that called into existence not only a distinctive mode of production but also a new type of subject—an agent who was set free from constraints imposed by tradition to pursue its own private ends" whereas cultural modernity "turned its attention to the cultivation and care of the self. Self-exploration and self-realization were its primary concern."[33] While these two may seem similar in terms of "self," cultural modernity is predicated in realizing

[32] Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution," *New Left Review*, no. 144 (April 1984): 102.

[33] Dilip Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 3.

expressive urges rather than capitalistic ones. This urge to express is the key to understanding the motivations of the four women under discussion.

Gaonkar's delineation of alternative modernity is such that it is "a culture-specific and site-based reading [that] complicates our understanding between the two strands of modernity—societal modernization and cultural modernity."[34] The mechanism of mediation between alternative modernity and the strands of societal modernization and cultural modernity is the mode of "creative adaptation," according to Gaonkar: "[I]n the face of modernity one does not turn inward, one does not retreat; one moves sideways, one moves forward. All of this is creative adaptation. Non-Western people, the latecomers to modernity, have been engaged in these maneuvers now for nearly a century."[35] He writes:

> Creative adaptation…is not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity; rather it points to the manifold ways in which a people question the present. It is the site where a people 'make' themselves modern, as opposed to being 'made' modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny.[36]

This is a profitable notion that I want to clarify in one respect. In terms of a culture-specific alternative modernity for those of African descent, Gilroy eloquently discusses this in *The Black Atlantic*. Yet, in addition to addressing a Black Pacific, as I stated in the Introduction, I want to bring the Brown Pacific to the table, most specifically, its ongoing movement in and out of Oceania. "Creative adaptation" in Oceania, inclusive of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Australia, is not a new process in response to modernity and its manifestations. If creative adaptation is a consequence of modernity, Pacific peoples are not "latecomers" as Gaonkar generalizes and have been practicing creative adaptation for millennia as they have interacted

[34] Ibid., 14.

[35] Ibid., 17.

[36] Ibid., 16.

across the "sea of islands."[37] Many scholars, including art historian Anne D'Alleva write of this ongoing process. She explains:

> Although Western audiences may rightly perceive a connection to a post-modern sensibility that values multiple interpretations and pastiche as strategies of representation, this is not a new process in the Pacific. In many ways, this approach can be seen as a new expression of a long-standing Pacific practice of exploring the relevance of history and tradition though the visual arts." [38]

When taking these two ideas into account, Gaonkar's idea of alternative modernities is more fully realized as applicable to the Pacific region and its art. Accordingly Pacific art that is directly or indirectly related to notions of blackness, either rooted in Africa and its diaspora, or not, can be examined through the frame of alternative modernities as well.

Gilroy presents several case studies in *The Black Atlantic* and one of which is the African American novelist Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. Gilroy argues that the work of Morrison is an example of a "minority modernism":

> [h]er work points to and celebrates some of the strategies for summoning up the past devised by black writers whose minority modernism can be defined precisely through its imaginative proximity to forms of terror that surpass understanding and lead back from contemporary racial violence, through lynching, towards the temporal and ontological rupture of the middle passage.[39]

I posit that this methodology is evident in both Lonnie Hutchinson's video *Black Pearl* (2004) and Faith Ringgold's early *thangka* paintings of the *Slave Rape Series* (1972-1973). This is important because, while artists, thinkers, and writers contribute to this counterculture discourse, it is not just their work that frames the formation. It is the impetus at the heart of the work that consistently questions what it means to be modern, to be a participant in the Black Pacific.

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[37] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, eds. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau′ofa (Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific, 1993), 7.

[38] Anne D'Alleva, *Arts of the Pacific Islands* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1998), 156–57.

[39] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 222.

The Black Pacific shares the same underlying assumption of the black Atlantic. Specifically, both are active in reshaping notions of modernity through an "expressive counter-culture not simply as a succession of literary tropes and genres but a philosophical discourse which refuses the modern, occidental, separation of ethics and aesthetics, culture and politics."[40]

Along these lines, the Black Pacific has an overarching philosophical framework of what Gilroy deems "affinities and affiliations."[41] These linkages are, as Gilroy claims: "[the] basic desire is to conjure up and enact the new modes of friendship, happiness, and solidarity that are consequent on the overcoming of the racial oppression which modernity and its antinomy of rational, Western progress as excessive barbarity relied."[42] The selected visual images in this dissertation are the markers of the many ways in which the four women reach across their respective black or Pacific perspectives to impart courage to their peers. Here I use the Black Pacific as a unit of analysis. Along these lines, this dissertation takes this comparative impulse in order to understand how lived black experience and lived Pacific experience aid and amplify each other; therefore, the Black Pacific, as is the black Atlantic is built on "affinities and affiliations."[43] The Black Pacific is a space of choice and community for those who recognize that the condition of blackness, a historically "othered" perspective that linked both those of African and Pacific descent, is a catalyst for creativity and change in spite of naysayers.

To compare the black Atlantic with the Black Pacific, the following questions must be explored: What does identity mean in each formation? What are the spatial and temporal forces that gave rise to each perspective, particularly in reference to the notion of diaspora? What are

[40] Ibid., 38–40.

[41] Ibid., 2.

[42] Ibid., 38.

[43] Ibid., 2.

important political and social concerns for the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific? And, how are those concerns expressed in art and culture? In short, in each chapter I answer one or more of the framing questions of who, what, where, when, and why vis-à-vis the Black Pacific by teasing out the same in Gilroy's argument about the black Atlantic's participants, their concerns and their inception, how those concerns are expressed, where these processes take place, and their point in time. Each of these points is addressed throughout the chapters and is linked through discussions about the body and identity formation through processes of genealogy, diaspora or indigeneity.

Before continuing, I want to mention a few words about the influence of Paul Gilroy, Brent Hayes Edwards and others on my framing of diaspora. In a special edition of *Radical History Review* the editors argue for "reconceptualizations of the African Diaspora" to better "capture not only historical migrations and movements but also the political consciousnesses generated from such movements, especially when they produce populations who fit uncomfortably into the racial boundaries and gendered norms of particular receiving societies and states?"[44] The focus of this edition of *Radical History Revie*w is to offer "frameworks for thinking about the African diaspora as a contemporary intellectual formation and as a lens for viewing the history of the present - a post-Cold War, postcolonial, postapartheid, and, to use [Christopher] Lee's provocative phrasing, 'post-diasporic' world'."[45] Notions of mobility, dispersal, transformation and exile underlie the concept of diaspora.

[44] Erica Ball, Melina Pappademos, and Michelle Ann Stephens, "Introduction to Reconceptualizations of the African Diaspora," eds. Erica Ball, Melina Pappademos, and Michelle Ann Stephens, *Radical History Review*, 103, 2009, 1–5.

[45] Ibid., 3.

According to Edwards, when one moves beyond origins and focuses on multiple circuits of identity, "… we are forced to think not in terms of some closed or autonomous system of African dispersal but explicitly in terms of a complex past of forced migrations and racialization – what Earl Lewis has called a history of 'overlapping' diasporas."[46] I draw attention to Edwards' claim against racialization and point to a similar stance by Gilroy who argues:

> Diaspora accentuates becoming rather than being and identity conceived diasporically, along these lines, resists reification. Foregrounding the tensions around origins and essences that Diaspora brings into focus, allows us to perceive that identity should not be fossilized or venerated in keeping with the holy spirit of ethnic absolutism. … Its almost infinite openness provides a timely alternative to the authoritarian implication of mechanical – clockwork – solidarity based on outmoded notions of 'race'."[47]

With these sentiments by Gilroy and Edwards in mind, it becomes clear that an expanded framework of blackness is a consequence of opening up the "implication" of diaspora. It is important to give an overview of notions of blackness in relation to racial quantifications and explore this in terms of Oceania. I give this overview in Chapter One.

This dissertation opens the dialogue between the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific as mediated by visual art. In this dissertation, I am concerned with how these women relay the experience of blackness and/or Pacificness. Like Gilroy, I understand that artists such as these women have a special role to fulfill: "Perhaps black artists experience community through a special paradox. It affords them certain protections and compensations yet it is also a source of constraint. It provides them with an imaginative entitlement to elaborate the consequences of racial adversity while limiting them as artists to the exploration of adversity."[48] This "special paradox" is evident in different ways in an examination of the life and imagery of Juanita Hall,

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[46] Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," 100.

[47] Paul Gilroy, "…'to Be Real': The Dissident Forms of Black Expressive Culture," in *Let's Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance*, ed. Catherine Ugwu (Seattle: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1995), 24.

[48] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 182.

and a close reading of the practices and intentions of Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold, and Lonnie Hutchinson.

Chapter One, "Shades of Blackness in Oceania," considers both insider and outsider views on blackness in Oceania. First, I present a rationale for considering Black Pacific art. Second, I survey historical notions of blackness based on theories of scientific racism and centered on the equation that Africa "equals" Melanesia. Yet, in their decolonization efforts after World War II, Melanesian intellectuals embraced African diaspora and African American political movements. I present examples of this linkage. Third, I then move to an analysis of Black Pacific portraits of African American women in Hawai'i before World War II. With this history in place and a sample analysis of how Black Pacific theory can be applied to art, I conclude the chapter with a close reading of Teaiwa's poem *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad)* as a way to frame how blackness is perceived in Oceania and what challenges are faced when studying Black Pacific art.

In Chapter Two, "Juanita Hall: The Black Pacific in *South Pacific*," I excavate the visual archive (publicity photography and studio portraits) of Juanita Hall, the Tony Award-winning actress, who in her portrayal of the Tonkinese merchant, Bloody Mary, in *South Pacific* alternately charms and confounds the U.S. military stationed on an unnamed island in Melanesia during World War II. The imagery of her in and out of character associated with the Broadway production (1949) and the Hollywood film (1958) most exemplified Oceania for mainstream American audiences after World War II. Yet, notions of blackness and Pacificness are stereotypically reproduced and do not demonstrate the nuances of these subjectivities. This is surprising because the source material, *Tales of the South Pacific*, written by ex-serviceman James Michener and the adaptation by collaborators Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II

claim to serve two agendas—promoting racial tolerance abroad in Asia *and* supporting the African American Civil Rights struggle at home. Unfortunately these two simultaneous concerns erase "the Black Pacific in *South Pacific*." To refute this erasure, I present evidence from an untapped archive—the postcards, personal correspondence, and informal photographs of, to, and from Juanita Hall—that demonstrate how in her life, she "restages" her female body of color and in doing so, speaks to the "affinities and affiliations"[49] that reside in the Black Pacific are comparable to those in Paul Gilroy's black Atlantic theory.

In Chapter Three, "Jewel Castro and Faith Ringgold: Black Pacific Art in the United States," I discuss artist and educator Jewel Castro. As a contemporary American artist, Castro has a multitude of influences upon which to draw. Key among these are: Samoan art; Samoan culture and her mother's family's role in the religious community; the religion of her father; the history of American Samoa, Samoa and the United States; other American artists from differing ethnic and racial backgrounds; and in particular, the guidance of African American artist Faith Ringgold. With this rich background to draw from, she creates paintings, drawings, and sculpture, each work displayed on its own or within a "storytelling" installation environment in which she draws in the viewer who is then allowed to experience the atmosphere on their own terms. Castro states that she is trying to create a holographic, spatiotemporal, space. A key to understanding this is looking at it through the lens of alternative modernity because the space-time that she refers to has not always been acknowledged in the art world of the West. Therefore in two ways she is connected to the Black Pacific: the black lived experience of her mentor catalyzed her own already strong growth in Samoanness; and as Gilroy stated, the African diaspora is a key part of modernity. In this way, so too, is the work of Jewel Castro and other

[49] Ibid., 2.

Pacific diaspora American artists a part of modernity. Tradition is one of the entry points for this discussion because it is often tradition that is invoked to leave artists like Jewel Castro out of the equation. I use it here as an intervention into the discourse.

Chapter Four, "Lonnie Hutchinson: The Art of Blackness in New Zealand," discusses the artist Lonnie Hutchinson who lives and works in Aotearoa/New Zealand and traces her ancestry to Maori, Samoan, and *pakeha* genealogies. This web of influences results in visually layered art—short films, sculpture, installations, performances and outdoor public art. In March 2015, the Gus Fisher Gallery at the University of Auckland hosted *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird*, a retrospective exhibition of her signature "black" artworks. Hutchison has become known for cut-outs wrested from black builder's paper with the provocative titles of *Black Ladies* or *Black Lace*. In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, "black" in her practice is not in reference to African, African diaspora or African American culture. Instead, it parallels the efforts of the 1970s Black Women's Movement that was spearheaded by Maori and Pacific Islands women. Or, it marks the passage of the pigeon, the black bird hunted by Samoan chiefs in the past. Yet, in Hutchinson's depictions of women's bodies, she presents art that speaks to the black experience outside of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is especially true in a comparison of her short video *Black Pearl* with two examples from Faith Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* which I undertake after surveying the historical and political context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, pinpointing the installation and performance background of Hutchinson, and examining several works from the retrospective exhibition. Key to this discussion is the written material on the connotations of black that accompany Hutchinson's artwork. They reflect an effort to recall urban youth culture, a major influence on art in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Overall, the Black

Pacific in Aotearoa/New Zealand speaks to life within the country and reaches out to life outside of the country.

I conclude the dissertation with an entreaty for continued research in the visual arts of the Black Pacific.

This cross-cultural comparative dissertation is prompted by my own experiences as an African American woman researching Pacific art in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Before traveling there to research the Pacific Sisters, my experience of Blackness was that of my own life in the United States. While there, however, through mis-identifications of my body as Melanesian, I learned that Blackness is also a condition of life in parts of the Pacific. Pacific Islanders greeted me with "Bula Vinaka!" I didn't know what this meant until my *pakeha* flatmates explained it was Fijian for "Hello" and that I was being mistaken for Melanesian. My body was understood as being black but not African American. As a result, I became curious about how blackness is represented differently in Oceania than in the United States. I realized that the shared physical characteristics between Melanesians and African Americans might provide the starting point for a conversation about how artists in these cultures talk about the Black identity. The conversation opens in Chapter One.

CHAPTER ONE

SHADES OF BLACKNESS IN OCEANIA

> *The Global Africa Project* is not about defining an overarching African identity or aesthetic. … If anything, the exhibition reveals stories of individuals working in the psychic and physical space that is known as "Africa" in the world today. Collectively these stories reveal certain commonalities…about being black, African, or Afro-centric in the world today.[50]
>
> —Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond

Writing in the opening essay of the exhibition catalogue for *The Global Africa Project*, curators Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond explain its premise: "This exhibition asserts the strong and influential presence of creators of and in Africa and portrays the truly global—and extraordinarily variant—nature of being African, or African-descended, in the contemporary context."[51] They explain that these commonalities are what the African American abstract expressionist Al Loving called "agreed assumptions" and it is these concerns that I would call affinities and affiliations.[52] Namely, that double-consciousness in the Black Pacific parallels that in the black Atlantic as discussed in Chapter Two; that blackness and Pacificness provide creative catalysts for each other as explained in Chapter Three; and that shared histories of slavery and the resultant trauma are represented in visual art as explored in Chapter Four.

In the case of *The Global Africa Project*, the co-curators stress an "origin of African identity in relationship to place rather than cultural difference."[53] I begin with this exhibition because this chapter is predicated on the notion that Oceania is also a "psychic and physical

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[50] Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, "The Global Africa Project: Contemporary Design, Craft, and Art," in *The Global Africa Project*, eds. Sims, Lowery Stokes and Leslie King-Hammond (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 10.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

space." The dissertation highlights how blackness is not just framed in reference to Africa, but is the "psychic and physical space" in Oceania that I call the Black Pacific. As such, it is a point of entry for discussing blackness vis-à-vis Oceania. While *The Global Africa Project* exhibition did not feature art from Oceania, Black Pacific art would be a logical addition to future reiterations.[54] An exhibition of the magnitude of *The Global Africa Project* demonstrates that an expanded notion of blackness beyond that of the American viewpoint, is needed.

A focus on the African American viewpoint is one critique made of Gilroy by postcolonial studies scholars.[55] Within *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy critiques a one-sided viewpoint on diaspora. In academia in the United States, the most common understanding of the African diaspora is of the African American experience but this is problematic. Gilroy writes, "… Africentricity might be more properly called Americocentricity. Its proponents frequently struggle to place their histories onto a bigger diaspora web but have no inhibitions about claiming a special status for their particular version of African culture."[56] As an African American woman, I am aware that I am predisposed to Americocentricity. To combat this position, I bring as wide a viewpoint as possible of blackness that is not linked to African American culture in this chapter.

In the 2013 exhibition, *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia*, opened at the Queensland Art Gallery of Modern art and included the work of one hundred artists. An American reading the exhibition title might assume that African or

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[54] The exhibition included two patchwork quilts created by the Siddi Women's Quilting Cooperative. The Siddi are descendants of East Africans who arrived in India through choice or coercion for at least fifteen hundred years. For information about the collective see page 240 of *The Global Africa Project* catalogue. Their website is located at http://www.henrydrewal.com/sales.html.

[55] Fionnghuala Sweeney, "The Black Atlantic, American Studies and the Politics of the Postcolonial," *Comparative American Studies* 4, no. 2 (June 2006): 115–33.

[56] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 191.

African diasporic artists created the art in the show. Yet, by referring back to *The Global Africa Project's* idea of "identity in relationship to place," it is important that blackness in Oceania be identified to determine how notions within the region differ from ideas outside of it. Incidentally, the participants in this exhibition are confident in their identifications as aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander artists.

Overall, I am interested in women's bodies as markers of blackness because according to international social studies scholar Wendy Harcourt, "Women's bodies are the first level of place. It is the female body that defines women as the other…. It is the body through which women mediate all gendered interactions, including those from which they defend and evolve their identity."[57] The artists under discussion go beyond a commonality of appearance to a collaboration of intentions and outcomes. While this dissertation focuses on the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand as an example of the Black Pacific in Polynesia, notions of blackness are located in Micronesia, Australia, and Melanesia that may or may not overlap with an African diasporic or African American perspective.

When I talk about "affinities and affiliations" I refer to what could be called *transcommunality*, according to anthropologist John Brown Childs. He writes, "By transcommunality I mean the constructive and developmental interaction occurring among members of distinct groups, cutting across race/ethnic and organizational links, while maintaining the integrity of these different advantage points."[58] I want to stress that I do not consider the Black Pacific a utopia. Childs would agree, as he writes, "Transcommunality is a

[57] Wendy Harcourt, "Rethinking Difference and Equality: Women and the Politics of Place," in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 299.

[58] John Brown Childs, "Beyond Unity: Transcommunal Roots of Coordination in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Model of Cooperation and Diversity," in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 269.

process, rather than a magic goal to be reached."[59] Therefore, I want to emphasize instead that the art and direct or indirect actions of the women under discussion are a process of trying to regain agency in relationship to bodies that were othered as "black" in the past and were assumed to have no choice. Juanita Hall's openness to the Pacific experience via her time in Hawai'i and her *South Pacific* career, Jewel Castro's "Samoanness"[60] found through blackness, and Faith Ringgold's and Lonnie Hutchinson's subject matter that confronts slavery and racism are the methods that the women utilize to shape Black Pacific art.

In this chapter, I present the rationale for a consideration of Black Pacific art and survey historical viewpoints on blackness from those outside of Oceania. The primary case studies in this dissertation are dated after 1948. However, there is a history of Black Pacific photography in Hawai'i that predates World War II. After I unfold the narrative of Black Pacific history to the starting point of my case studies, I bring several of the insights from this history into play in an examination of portraits of four forerunners to the women under discussion: missionary Betsey Stockton, educator Carlotta Stewart Lai, nurse Elizabeth Brown and scientist Alice Augusta Ball. The lives of these women marked the Black Pacific in Hawai'i long before the *Tales of the South Pacific.* After presenting their narrative, I conclude the chapter through a close reading of Teaiwa's poem, *black in the blue pacific*, to present contemporary perspectives on the intersections of blackness with Pacificness and the possibilities and problematics that result from the conjunction.

[59] Ibid., 272.

[60] Jewel Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," *Pacific Studies* 30, no. 1–2 (June 2007): 122–29.

Why Consider Black Pacific Art?

In *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, anthropologists Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard write that historically, outsider, or Western notions of blackness in Oceania have been embedded in the region since Spanish explore Inigo Ortiz de Retes pinpointed "Africa's ghostly presence [in Oceania] … when he named the main island of the Papuan archipelago 'New Guinea', reflecting ... the perceived similarities between the people of New Guinea and West Africa."[61] By the nineteenth century, the entire area of 2000 islands covering over 350,000 square miles was known as "Melanesia" meaning "black islands" for the "dark skin of its inhabitants."[62] In both cases of naming, Douglas and Ballard perceptively label this linkage as an "alchemy of appellative association"[63] and in this dissertation, I endeavor to take the appellation beyond a descriptive level of visual sameness based on skin phenotype to a theoretical level that takes into account the artistic, sociopolitical, and personal circuits that have converged to build a layered perspective on blackness and how it is visually represented. As previously mentioned, this focus on circuits mirrors the interests of Salesa in his framing of the Brown Pacific. Regarding the Black Pacific particularly, it is clear that an essential reading of blackness that ignores the linkages with Oceania leaves much to be desired. Specifically, by relying on an essential definition of blackness, there is no possibility of understanding how blackness and Pacificness work together to create an antidote to modernity through creative outlets. This chapter outlines the parameters of blackness vis-à-vis Oceania that I will use going forward.

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[61] Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, *Foreign Bodies : Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra, A.C.T.: ANU E Press, 2008), 162–63.

[62] K. R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste, and Brij V. Lal, eds., *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 7.

[63] Douglas and Ballard, *Foreign Bodies : Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, 163.

Historically Pacific Islanders, regardless of cultural affiliation, were considered "black" relative to the colonial administrators and from the colonial perspective, there was a presumably logical linkage between Oceania and Africa because of a perceived shared physical phenotype. As a result, in this cross-cultural study, I must define blackness inclusively because race is a social construction mediated by lived experience and historical context. Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue that the formation of race is a "process by which social, economic and political forces determine … racial categories … Crucial to this formulation is the treatment of race as a *central axis* of social relations …."[64] Colonial administrators needed an effective strategy to control the social, economic, and political relations between themselves and their colonial subjects. The imposition of blackness as difference was a method to circumscribe the role of the colonial subject. This difference was a "central axis" in colonial strategy to maintain dominant relationships of power in the colonies. This methodology is not left behind in the past; power relationships are still in play and contemporary art tackles this phenomenon as an antidote to the scientific racism as described above by Douglas and Ballard.

According to Gilroy, there are "hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity."[65] These fissures lie along the dichotomies enforced by "scientific racism [which is] one of modernity's more durable intellectual products."[66] Yet, scientific racism is countermanded in the black Atlantic. Gilroy argues that "… the overcoming of scientific racism … and its post-war transmutation into newer, cultural forms that stress complex difference rather than simple biological hierarchy may provide a telling, concrete example of what scepticism towards the

[64] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 61–62.

[65] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 38.

[66] Ibid., 44.

grand narrative of scientific reason adds up to."[67] I focus on this portion of Gilroy's argument because I suggest that Black Pacific art exemplifies skepticism against the narrative of scientific racism that was the beginning of othering Oceania—the naming of a Melanesian island group after perceptions of African people.

This does not mean that "race" does not play a role in the Black Pacific. It plays a role in the black Atlantic and in this way, these two epistemologies intersect. Gilroy acknowledges that discussions on "race and racism" are necessary "… in contemporary debates around the philosophical, ideological, or cultural content and consequences of modernity."[68] Modernity in the Black Pacific in the sense that I argue offers choice rather than coercion. Now instead of shunning blackness because of this colonial legacy, Pacific artists in the postcolonial era utilize blackness as a strategy for their own self-expression. This does not mean that they identify or call themselves "black." It means that Lonnie Hutchinson employs black silhouettes that suggest more than physical bodies. It means that "black/is a state of mind" that cannot be separated from the islands, according to poet and scholar Teresia Teaiwa.[69] I concur with their intentions in my examination of Black Pacific art.

Just as the black Atlantic offers perspective on living in the world, so, too does the Black Pacific. Or, the Brown Pacific, as described by Damon Salesa. It may seem problematic that I use Black Pacific and mean Brown Pacific. It is a way of stating both my outsider perspective as well as the insider perspective from another scholar. It is a way of acknowledging that I am on the same page with his ideas and to honor those ideas but come to it from my corporeal existence

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] K. Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," 276.

as "black" because my shade of brown embeds me in this category. In the Brown Pacific of Salesa, there are many factors inherent in the region that are influential including the recent (in the long history of Oceania) cultural achievements in the African diaspora, such as the election of the first black President of the United States, an event celebrated by the circulation of visual images through Oceania and across the globe. Other occasions, such as written and visual accounts of the Civil Rights movement have also offered windows on blackness outside of Oceania to the people inside of the region. The RasTafari religion and political stance are significant as well and this religion in Aotearoa/New Zealand provides the focus for cultural theorist Robbie Shilliam's *Black Pacific: Anti-colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*.[70] Also impactful in the physical sense, the presence of people of African descent in the region from black whalers of the eighteenth century to the twentieth century when the African American service men in Melanesia and Micronesia during World War II would have offered the opportunity for both segments to meet. I now outline four factors in the Black Pacific and its art that position identity formation as connected to but not limited to notions of race.

First, those who participate in the black Atlantic accept that identity is fluid. According to Gilroy, the black Atlantic is important because "[its] history … yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade."[71] Concurrently, there are no essential identities in the black Atlantic. This is important because the lessons of "instability and mutability" have a direct impact on the artistic practices of the women

[70] Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London, UK ; Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). I discuss aspects of his argument as the context for the work of Lonnie Hutchinson in Chapter Four.

[71] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, xi.

discussed here. They work or live in the Black Pacific and they share the same concerns about Pacific identity that Gilroy identifies in the Black Atlantic.

Second, cultural theorist Stuart Hall opens another door to a study of the Black Pacific; namely that blackness is a marker of difference rather than a reified category of identity: "Black…is used here not as the sign of an ineradicable genetic imprint but as a signifier of difference: a difference which, being historical, is therefore always changing, always located, always articulated with other signifying elements: but which, nevertheless, continues – persistently – to register its disturbing effects."[72] In this way, regardless of a person's origin, blackness marks difference vis-à-vis whiteness as inherent in Eurocentrism and the West.

While I discuss the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand in this chapter, within a British context, critic and artist Rasheed Araeen opens the third door to this discussion. He argues:

> … I tried to define the notion of blackness outside and beyond what was, until then, seen to be an experience and expression only of black people originating from Africa. My point was that if we argue that the basis of black experience is white racism, then this experience was not confined only to African and Afro-Caribbean people. Racism was a legacy not only of slavery but also of European colonialism, which subjected all nonwhite peoples through the world.[73]

Araeen links blackness as a marker of difference to racism against those who are or identify as black. In the Black Pacific, racism plays a role as it does in the black Atlantic. While Araeen bears witness to blackness from the viewpoint of Black British artists, art historian Judith Wilson recognizes the political power of this stance from an African American perspective. She writes:

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[72] Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-War History," *History Workshop Journal* 61, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 2.

[73] Rasheed Araeen, "The Success and Failure of the Black Arts Movement," in *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*, eds. David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom, and Sonia Boyce (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 23.

> For me, as an Afro-U.S. observer, the most striking feature of the 1980s Afro-Asian British art movement was its mobilization of blackness as a *multi*racial sign. … Clearly, it is not only racialized binary notions of identity that need triangulation. Diaspora, too, needs to be viewed from more than one cultural perspective in order to approximate "historic 'reality'" with respect to contemporary transatlantic artistic exchanges.[74]

Here, Wilson makes my fourth point. She suggests looking at "diaspora" with a wider lens that expands beyond African America. She refers to "transatlantic"[75] exchanges and in Chapter Three, I discuss a view of diaspora that takes into account "transpacific" collaborations.

Wilson cautions, however, that "[t]he fact that 'black' in the British context encompasses artists of African, primarily (South) Asian, and Middle Eastern descent does not make it synonymous with the U.S. phrase 'people of color'."[76] Nevertheless, she acknowledges, "Afro-Asian self-designation as 'black' during the 1980s represented a strategic act of antiracist coalition and symbolic resistance."[77] She continues with the caveat that "… although other nonwhite groups mimic black liberation struggles, this rarely includes calling themselves 'black'."[78] Polynesian and Micronesian Islanders and artists don't consider or call themselves "black" in the American or European sense unless they share African ancestry. Melanesian Islanders and artists do because they deal with the "fact of blackness" from their own perspective and history. Many of these ways may parallel or differ from a Euro-American sense yet taken together all reflect the Black Pacific, the space where blackness and Pacificness meet.

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[74] Judith Wilson, "Triangular Trades: Late Twentieth-Century 'Black' Art and Transatlantic Cultural Commerce," in *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*, eds. David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom, and Sonia Boyce (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 90.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 93.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

Africa≠Melanesia

From the outside, this is a visual linking as old as the time when the Portuguese explorer linked the skin of Africans with Melanesians. In the twentieth century, curator Susan Cochrane offers insight into how Papua New Guineans understand African and African American political struggles as parallel to their own. She explains:

> In the 1960s-1970s the intellectual climate [in Papua New Guinea] was also stimulated by notions of black power. The struggles of African countries for independence and the oppression of blacks in the USA provided a wider context for Papua New Guinea's own experience of colonialism. These sentiments were fanned by the anticolonial writings of Franz Fanon and Eldridge Cleaver and third world literature introduced into university courses by Ulli Beier and some other academics.[79]

From Cochrane's description, another historical moment appears in which those of Melanesian and African descent come into shared discourse. The Black Power influence cannot be viewed as just an isolated intellectual and political fad. It is a deeply felt and lived ideology that Papua New Guinean intellectuals and politicians embraced during the decade leading to decolonization. Underlying this embrace is a history of being 'othered' much as Africans and African Americans had been through colonialism and slavery.

I wrote earlier that Melanesia means "black islands." I want to go back to this idea to offer more concrete examples of this process of othering. By naming the region "Melanesia" in the nineteenth century, Jules Dumont d'Urville, the French explorer and naval officer, was participating in the widespread Orientalism of the time. Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas writes, "The Melanesians were characterized by their blackness, by their 'hideous' women, by the great diversity of their languages, and by the attenuated character of their polities…."[80] Later,

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[79] Susan Cochrane, *Contemporary Art in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney, NSW: Craftsman House, 1997), 32.

[80] Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 145.

however, as described by Cochrane, Melanesians embraced African and African American philosophy as a celebration of their own experience of blackness. According to Thomas, Bernard Narokobi, an influential Papua New Guinean politician and philosopher, wrote *The Melanesian Way* in the 1980s, now considered the definitive emic view of the region. Many criticize Narokobi for reproducing colonial typifications in this volume but Thomas asserts that any typificiation in Narokobi's statements echo "influences [that] are from African Negritude thought, which Narokobi knew of through a Nigerian philosophy lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea."[81] It makes sense that Negritude would appeal to Narokobi considering the history of subjugation in the Pacific. While not experiencing the horrors of the Middle Passage of slavery, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Melanesians were forced into servitude through the institution of "blackbirding." [82] A literary scholar of Melanesian descent, Regis Tove Stella writes:

> Papua New Guineans were taken, often against their will, to work on sugarcane plantations in Queensland and on the German plantations in Samoa and Fiji. ... In reality, by removing the men from their communities, blackbirders stripped them of their manhood and authority. At the same time, those left behind (mostly women, children, and old people) were denied the presence of the men who worked the land, provided by the family, and defended the tribe from its enemies.[83]

He continues, "European recruiters of Papua New Guinean plantation workers treated them as if they were animals, especially in the methods of recruitment."[84] Stella suggests that colonial commercial interests across the globe resulted in the subjugation of colonized peoples for profit.

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[81] Ibid., 153.

[82] Slavery in the Pacific Ocean is a topic where African and African Americans Studies intersect with Pacific Studies. "Blackbirding" or the capture of Melanesians or Australian aborigines to work on farms in Australia or other countries is frequently studied from a historical perspective. For such a study, see Hector Holthouse, *Cannibal Cargoes* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1969).

[83] Regis N. Stella, *Imagining the Other: the Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 130.

[84] Ibid.

In Melanesia, as in the transatlantic institution of slavery, "[t]he commodification of the bodies of Papua New Guineans represents a significant example of the widespread colonialist strategy of debasement."[85] Here in this chapter, I argue that this colonial strategy opened a circuit for a black subjectivity in the Pacific that echoes that of the black Atlantic. According to art historian Kobena Mercer, "… blackness travels through routes that were initially opened by trade, commerce, and market-based exchange."[86] In Chapter Four, I compare New Zealander Lonnie Hutchinson's *Black Pearl* with African American Faith Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* to look at the impact of blackbirding from the Polynesian perspective and its similarities or differences with an African American perspective.

Melanesians in Polynesia is a topic that is relevant to both my conceptualization of the Black Pacific and Salesa's Brown Pacific. He explains that this encounter occurs because "[l]ocalities are brought into new relations with places and peoples, new mechanisms and formations of power, often on a different scale or different register than before."[87] While travel, social and familial affiliation, and marriage between islands in the regions of Oceania have always been the norm, in the case of the *tama uli* (black boys), German colonial interests in the late 1800s created a route for blackness through indentured labor rather than through blackbirding in the Pacific or slavery as in the African diaspora.

For example, in *O Tama Uli: Melanesians in Western Samoa*, Leasiologi Dr. Malama Meleisea interviews Melanesians who were formerly indentured laborers on German copra

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[85] Ibid., 131.

[86] Kobena Mercer, "Diaspora Aesthetics and Visual Culture," in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, eds. Harry Justin Elam and Kennell A Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 145.

[87] Salesa, Damon, "'Travel-Happy" Samoa: Colonialism, Samoan Migration and A "Brown Pacific'," *New Zealand Journal of History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 172.

plantations in the late nineteenth century. Approximately 20,000 men were indentured to Samoa at one time or another.[88] They were most likely from the Solomon Islands as it was also a German colonial holding but it is not certain. Regardless of their origin, they collectively became known as *Tama Solomona* or "Solomon Island Boys."[89] These men had darker skin than Samoans and Germans and were called "black boys" or "tama uli." After Germany ceded control to Aotearoa/New Zealand, many of the men remained and were not returned home with the compensation specified as per their original contracts. They married into Samoan communities and their children and descendants are known as *O fanau a Tama Solomona* or "Children of Solomon Island Boys."[90] The original Melanesian laborers remained on the lands of the plantation but were relocated when they closed in the 1980s. Geographer Asenati Liki is a second-generation *teine uli* (Solomon Island girl) and she has been active in efforts to secure land rights after the relocation. She has written of the history of *tama uli* in Samoa and traced the migration of second generation female descendants to Aotearoa/New Zealand in the dissertation *Rootedness in 'Aiga: Work and Movement Among Teine Uli in Samoa and Aotearoa/New Zealand*. With histories of *tama uli* becoming more widely known, it becomes clear that cultural theorist Stuart Hall's theories about blackness are expansive enough to encompass notions of blackness from a Pacific viewpoint. He writes:

> What we can say is that 'black' by itself – in the age of refugees, asylum seekers and global dispersal – will no longer do. It has become part of the disseminating axes of difference which provide intersecting lines of identification, exclusion and contestation,

[88] Asenati Liki, "Rootedness In 'Aiga: Work and Movement among Teine Uli in Samoa and Aotearoa/New Zealand" (PhD Diss., University of Hawai'i, 2007), 10. Liki relates that Melanesian women were not contracted to work on the plantations. The women who arrived before Aotearoa/New Zealand assumed governance of Samoa were the wives who had followed their husbands there.

[89] Ibid., 13.

[90] Ibid.

> and which have – as usual- also proved to be both sharply divisive and artistically highly productive.[91]

Here, Hall suggests that by itself, "black" is no longer adequate. This may seem to contradict my argument. It does, if the usual notion is exclusive of Pacific blackness. However, if these notions are included, as I suggest, his theories can be utilized by scholars in the fields of Pacific, African, and African American studies.

For example, Bruce Knauft, an anthropologist studying Melanesian modernity, looks to Hall to describe gendered identity in the region: "… identities are points of temporary attachment that 'suture' an actor contextually to a subject-position—they articulate ego investments situationally among a variety of subject-positions."[92] In addition, performance artist and scholar E. Patrick Johnson alludes to Hall in his exploration of gospel music performed in Australia. He argues, "… blackness may exist as a floating signifier in various cultures, but the consequences of its signification vary materially, politically, socially, and culturally depending on the body upon which it settles."[93] In this discussion of blackness and diaspora, my intent is to highlight the theoretical framework for the artworks under discussion here. A wide range of scholars have called for a different formation for understanding diaspora and many have also acknowledged that blackness, too, is more encompassing than commonly understood. In Papua New Guinea, [94]

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[91] Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain," 22.

[92] Bruce M. Knauft, *From Primitive to Postcolonial in Melanesia and Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 171.

[93] E. Patrick Johnson, "Performing Blackness Down Under: Gospel Music in Australia," in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, eds. Harry Justin Elam and Kennell A Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 80.

[94] The island of New Guinea is approximately 1500 miles north of the continent of Australia. The colonial history of the island includes rule by Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, German, and Australian regimes. It is important to keep in mind that the designation of "New Guinea" refers to the island as a whole, with Irian Jaya to the West and Papua New Guinea to the East as separated but contiguous countries on the island. Australia granted independence to Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1975. Papua New Guinea, which encompasses scattered islands including New

it is clear that an early misidentification of Melanesia with Africa from a European perspective has been transformed into a viable political position in decolonization efforts in the Pacific that echo similar efforts in Africa and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s to the 1970s. Returning to Johnson's sentiment that the experience of "the body upon which [blackness] settles,"[95] I posit that this is key for my argument because I am speaking of women's bodies that have been historically represented by outsiders around ideas of blackness, or duskiness, as art historian Caroline Vercoe has argued,[96] that are negative and derogatory. The women under discussion in the next section, Castro and Ringgold in Chapter Three and Hutchinson in Chapter Four, live and work in a space that is catalytic and creative.

Black Pacific Portraits in Hawai'i

I have chosen Aotearoa/New Zealand as the site for an examination of Black Pacific art in Polynesia yet there are different trajectories of the Black Pacific in this region. For example, African Americans and others of African descent have visited, lived, or worked in the Hawaiian Islands and other areas of Polynesia for a variety of reasons throughout history. It is certain that artists traveled with Captain Cook on his three voyages to Oceania between 1768 and 1779. As

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Ireland and East New Britain, is part of Melanesia and along with Australia, Polynesia and Micronesia can be designated as "Oceania."

The geographical boundaries of Papua New Guinea cover over 178,000 square miles of diverse regions including savannas, swamps, grasslands and mountainous highlands. The population is just under six million with approximately 800 cultural groups who speak just as many languages. Due to political division, Irian Jaya is a province of Indonesia but the division is artificial as historically the Irian Jayans—including the Asmat that Michael Rockefeller was journeying to study when he disappeared—coexisted with the groups of Papua. Irian Jaya falls under the designation of Southeast Asia.

[95] Johnson, "Performing Blackness Down Under: Gospel Music in Australia," 80.

[96] Caroline Vercoe, "The Many Faces of Paradise," in *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific* (Auckland, N.Z: David Bateman in association with Asia Society, 2004), 34–47.

early as 1796, "Black Jack," or Mr. Keaka'ele'ele (literally, Mr. Black)[97] worked in the service of King Kamehameha I.[98] Migration of the African diaspora to the islands escalated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in the 2000 United States Census, over 38,000 residents in the state identified as Black or African American in combination with one or more other races; the statistics held steady for the 2010 census.[99] Portraits and sketches of Native Hawaiians abound and it is encouraging to think that an image of "Black Jack" or other early pioneers of African descent might yet surface. Whaling ships of the nineteenth century carrying black crew members regularly docked in Hawai'i and as scrimshaw (carved bone from marine animals) is an abundant source of images created by the sailors, it may be profitable in the future to undertake a study of these images as a way to locate the African diaspora in the visual culture of the Pacific.

I mentioned the *tama uli* earlier and historian Gerald Horne relates an African American presence in Samoa in the 1870s before the arrival of the Melanesian workers:

> 'Black Tom,' the man some knew as Tom Tilden, was born in one of the southern states as a slave. His master, a Mr. Tilden, was prominent in the United States, but the unimpressed Tom ran away and, like so many exploited Africans before him, went to sea and after a few years got to Samoa, where he developed much influence with the indigenes.[100]

Black Tom's flight to Polynesia was perhaps prompted by the belief that racism there, if not better, was less institutionalized than in the U.S. at the time. The fact of racism against those

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[97] *Ele'ele* translates as "black." *Keaka* was used by English-speakers to mean "jack" as in a deck of cards so there may be two meanings that form the etymology of his name. Translations sourced from www.wehewehe.org, a Hawaiian language site hosted by the University of Hawai'i.

[98] Miles Jackson, "Prelude to a New Century," in *They Followed the Trade Winds : African Americans in Hawai'i*, ed. Miles Jackson (Honolulu Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Dept. of Sociology, 2004), 11.

[99] U. S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder - Results," accessed December 15, 2015, http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk.

[100] Gerald. Horne, *The White Pacific U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 61.

with dark skin through colonial apparatuses created a bond. The Black Pacific is the space in which the common discussion of race is not framed with whiteness at the center. I assert that in the Black Pacific, black and brown people relate to and support each other with joy rather than the shame instilled by colonial powers.

A case similar to "Black Tom" in Samoa can be found in Hawai‘i. Horne writes of two men who made an impact there—freedman Anthony D. Allen in the early to mid-1800s and Civil Rights leader T. McCants Stewart at the dawn of the twentieth century:

> The examples of Allen and Stewart suggest that the Pacific was viewed quite positively by African-Americans particularly, persecuted severely as they were in their ostensible homeland. At the same time, their Euro-American counterparts often viewed the region's indigenes as being quite similar to those who had been enslaved in the United States… This may have been driven by the simple fact that many of the indigenes of the Pacific resembled Africans….[101]

Discrimination was based on skin color as Horne relates: "…those of African descent … looked longingly to the Pacific as a sanctuary from their living hell in the Americas. Pacific indigenes and Africans in the Americas shared a mutual solidarity because both were subject to random kidnappings, dragged from one continent to another to toil as unfree laborers."[102] But, even after the abolition of slavery, the fact of slavery caused some EuroAmerican business entrepreneurs to consider bringing African Americans to Hawai‘i as poorly paid labor:

> Advocates of recruiting African American workers envisioned as many as 30,000 Black workers arriving from the South to work on Hawai‘i's sugar plantations, and by 1899, the hope that Black labor from the American South might alleviate some of the problems faced by the Hawai‘i Sugar Plantation Association had generated some action.[103]

Before this suggestion was made, the labor population consisted of Asian and Portuguese workers but it was thought that the labor that African Americans would provide was more

[101] Ibid., 12.

[102] Ibid., 10–11.

[103] Jackson, "Prelude to a New Century," 58.

"experienced" because of the generations of slavery. This was ultimately not the case but the legacy of not working on plantations in Hawai'i at this time is the exclusion from a "local" identity; a position I examine later in the chapter. Whether through slavery from Africa or colonization in Oceania, Blackness became the signifier of the West's "Other."

Through this triad of slavery, racism and colonialism, cultures were stripped of their self-determination and ways of life, according to cultural theorist Frantz Fanon who writes, "Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality."[104] I return to his argument in Chapter Two but it bears repeating because of its significance for what I call "connections and community." Fanon writes about "the fact of blackness" and in doing so, illustrates the mechanism of colonialism that linked what were originally disparate groups as the "Others" of the West. "Othering" is catalyzed by Reason stemming from Renaissance and Enlightenment attempts to define Man. Humanity was graded on a scale of being, with the White European male at the top. Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, "Negative connotations linked to skin colors increasingly regrouped as "black" had first spread in Christendom in the late Middle Ages….By the middle of the eighteenth century, "black" was almost universally bad. What had happened in the meantime, was the expansion of African-American slavery."[105] With this top-heavy establishment in place, it fell to the slave, often of color, to file into the lowest ranks.

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[104] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 18.

[105] Michel-Rolph. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1995), 76.

This "fact of blackness" was recognized by me, as I described earlier, and by other visitors and academics as well. This includes Horne himself, an experience that prompted his explorations into a White and a Black Pacific: "Speaking personally, as a dark-skinned African-American with 'wooly' hair, I found during my research trips to Hawai'i and Fiji that it was not easy to distinguish my appearance from that of the indigenes."[106] This physical misidentification was built on a heavy system of racialization that was in place in Hawai'i and elsewhere because according to Horne, " … even the otherwise liberal Mark Twain occasionally referred to indigenous Hawaiians as 'niggers' in his journal and observed that they were 'almost as dark as Negroes…' "[107] In Horne's argument, the White Pacific is the mechanism of white supremacy in Oceania that gave rise to practices such as blackbirding, or the taking of Melanesian and Australian men as laborers or women as sex slaves. I discuss this practice in more detail in Chapter Four as New Zealander Lonnie Hutchinson's video installation *Black Pearl* in its various iterations responds to this history.

An identification of blackness as degrading played a role in politics in terms of the United States' annexation of Hawai'i in 1898: "[the opponents of the Kingdom of Hawai'i] whispered that King Kalakaua and his sister were not true Hawaiians but were rather the children of a Negro coachman, John Poppin, who had been their mother's secret lover … there was a certain 'Negro-ification' of Hawaiians with a concomitant degradation."[108] This may be due to the racism that was imported along with the American settlers particularly those who had an economic interest in Hawai'i becoming associated with the United States: "[Black Bill of Fiji] was a symbol of the fact that a pernicious racism on the U.S. mainland had driven many of

[106] Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War*, 13.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 129.

African origin to the four corners of the planet, including the South Seas."[109] In fact, the conflation of people of African descent with darker Pacific people was so seamless that painter and museum pioneer Rembrandt Peale's painting *Man in a Feathered Helmet* is ostensibly of a Polynesian man but it is said that a black man actually posed for the portrait.[110] While it is a racist attitude that would normalize something like this, the fact is complicated by the Hawaiian viewpoint on black as a color or a state:

> Not only was black associated with strength and courage, but for Hawaiians the rich density of the color black may have also served as a reminder both of the power of creation as found in *pō*—the deep darkness that for Hawaiians is the source of all—and of the necessary compassion that comes with an awareness of the creative space of *pō*.[111]

While this dissertation does not focus exclusively on the *pō*, I am suggesting that inherent to the Pacific is a recognition of how creative the state of blackness can be. This gives rise to "connections and community."

In addition to economic reasons such as whaling, African Americans traveled to Hawai‘i for military service. I go into some detail about this in Chapter Two but I want to lay the foundation here by mentioning the case of Cook Third Class Doris Miller, USN, who was commended by the Secretary of the Navy in 1942 for his actions during the attack on Pearl Harbor. During World War II, African American soldiers were stationed in American Samoa (Polynesia), New Caledonia (Melanesia), and Guam (Micronesia), further attesting to the wide-spread presence in and influence (direct or indirect) of African Americans and those of the African diaspora in the Pacific region.

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[109] Ibid., 141.

[110] Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "' Moses Williams, Cutter of Profiles': Silhouettes and African American Identity in the Early Republic," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 2005, 29–30.

[111] Kathryn Waddell Takara, "The African Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century Hawai‘i," in *They Followed the Trade Winds : African Americans in Hawai‘i*, ed. Miles Jackson (Honolulu, Hawai‘i: University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Dept. of Sociology, 2004), 2.

I begin my case studies in 1948, but there is an earlier history of the Black Pacific that can be located in Hawai‘i as a site in Polynesia. I focus primarily on photography in Chapter Two but look at other forms of art in later chapters. Yet, selected photographs of African American women indicate the paths of black people in Hawai‘i between 1839 and 1928—a span that covers the invention of photography through World War I and nearly to the Great Depression. The historical timeline that I delineate encompasses the prelude and aftermath of the annexation by the United States of Hawai‘i as a territory in 1898. This historical juncture is over thirty years after the abolition of slavery in the United States, or approximately one generation away from slavery. It can be argued that these two events, one unfolding in the islands and one centered on the continent, are catalysts for people of all ethnicities to shape identity as they see it and the remaining examples of art and photographs of people of African descent are the material documentation of that process and the legacy that has not been deciphered to any great degree.

Sociologist Miles M. Jackson, editor of *They Followed the Trade Winds: African Americans in Hawai‘i*, has been a leader in the field of tracing African Americans in Hawai‘i. The edited volume is well-illustrated with photographs of pioneering African Americans in Hawai‘i including missionary Betsey Stockton (Figure 1.1), educator Carlotta Stewart Lai (Figures 1.2 and 1.3), nurse Elizabeth Brown (Figure 1.4), and famed photographer J. P. Ball’s granddaughter, Alice Augusta Ball (Figure 1.5), the chemist responsible for a successful treatment of leprosy, or Hansen’s disease. However, the illustrations are only used to give a face to the women under discussion and the authors do not visually analyze the photographs or discuss their inherent properties in the context of the histories they relate. The analysis of this information cannot be underestimated—the circulation, collection, and deposition of the images

are key factors in their art history. I briefly examine portraits of these women in preparation for the analysis in the remainder of the dissertation.

These selected portraits provide a point of entry for an art historical study that complements the available literature and goes far to theorize Black Pacific art. I demonstrate that Oceania, or "the Pacific" is a space in which notions of blackness travel through the physical and cultural journeys of the African diaspora. Oceania is a space in which the black identity is constructed and lived, and a space in which blackness is represented as significant in the past, present, and future of the "sea of islands."[112]

Betsey Stockton

In Figure 1.1, Betsey Stockton is shown in three-quarter profile, her eyes gaze into the distance in contemplation, not noticing the viewer. This image is significant because Stockton is the first known African American woman to travel to and live in Hawai‘i. She was born in slavery in the last years of the eighteenth century—the date is estimated at 1798—and was owned by Reverend Green and his wife. Rev. Green was the president of Princeton College and by 1816, frustrated with what he perceived as her lack of piety, sent her to live with a distant relative away from the temptations of the "city." She returned to his household and duly demonstrated her new-found piety by undergoing baptism. The family freed her and she remained in their household as a hired servant. It is not clear when she decided to join an overseas mission, but upon her expressed wish to travel to Africa on a mission, it was arranged instead that she would travel with Mr. Charles Stewart, a friend of the Green family, and his

[112] Hau‘ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," 7.

family on the second Presbyterian mission to the Sandwich Islands (early English designation of Hawai‘i).

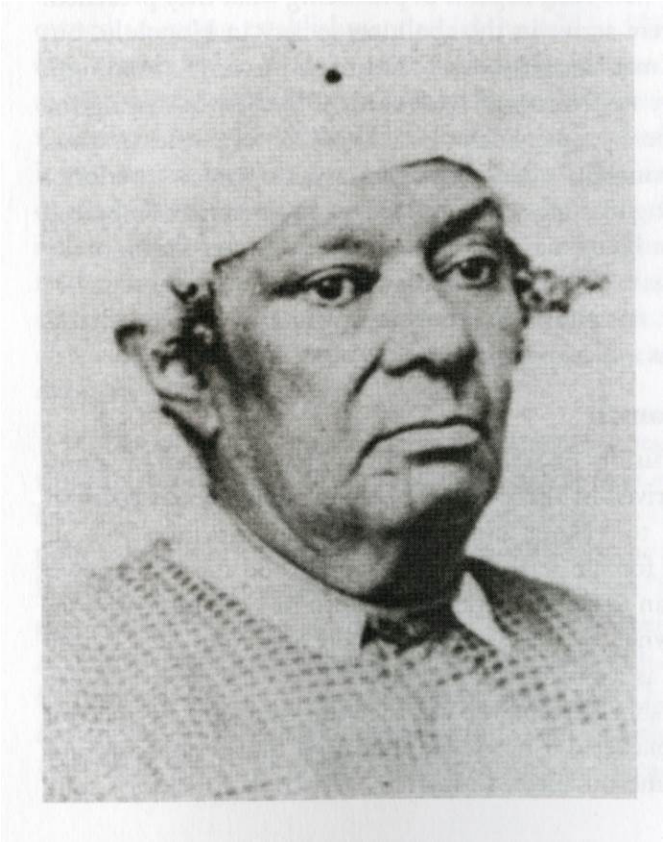

Figure 1.1: Portrait of Betsy Stockton (1798-1865), c. 1863-1864, Collection of Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives.

This was an unusual situation and in its approval in 1823, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), stated, “In this [missionary] family, she is to be regarded neither as an equal nor as a servant but as a humble Christian friend, embarked in the great enterprise of endeavoring to ameliorate the condition of the heathen.”[113] Missionary historian Eileen F. Moffett notes that Stockton is the “first single woman missionary from North

[113] Barbara Bennett Peterson, ed., *Notable Women of Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1984), 359.

America."[114] Therefore, Stockton is a trailblazer in two respects—her single status and her possession of a contract as a freed slave. Creating the contract was a strategy by ABCFM to balance the needs of the mission with the cultural and legal restrictions at the time. Historian John Andrew suggests that the contract offered Stockton protection so that she would be treated equally in the group but it also served to "forestall domestic criticism of the Board for promoting the prohibition of slavery."[115] While under contract, she was a freed slave who held a position as a servant with responsibilities. At the same time, if she had chosen to remain in Hawai'i after the Stewarts returned to the mainland, she could have done so as a free woman. Publicity about her journey was limited receiving some mention in *The Christian Advocate* and *The Missionary Herald* published by ABCFM.[116] Stockton's contract survives as well as mention of her in Stewart's journal.

Betsey Stockton also kept a journal. English Literature scholar Lydia Kualapai highlights the ground-breaking nature of this primary source. She writes:

> Through her cross-cultural writings, Stockton rejected the U.S. missionary interpellation of morally polluting savages; instead she situated Hawaiians within their own cultural context, a narrative gesture that ultimately undermines hegemonic missionary discourse and forces a reconsideration of mission influence in Hawaii.[117]

Kualapai finds evidence for this assertion in the following excerpt from Stockton's journal:

> Two or three canoes, loaded with natives, came to the ship; their appearance was that of half man and half beast—naked—except a narrow strip of *tapa* round their loins…Are

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[114] Eileen F. Moffett, "Betsey Stockton: Pioneer American Missionary," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 2 (April 1995): 71.

[115] John A. Andrew, "Betsey Stockton: Stranger in a Strange Land," *Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985)* 52, no. 2 (1974): 160.

[116] Ibid., 163.

[117] Lydia K. Kualapai, "Cast in Print: The Nineteenth-Century Hawaiian Imaginary" (PhD Diss., The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2001), 70.

> these, thought I, the beings with whom I must spend the remainder of my life! They are men and have souls—was the reply which conscience made.[118]

I bring it to attention here due to the effort Stockton makes to engage with native Hawaiians on their own terms, and also, because this excerpt mentions *tapa* or barkcloth. In Chapter Three, I describe the material, methods, and designs for *tapa*. I argue for its significance over time. Here, Stockton documents the presence of *tapa* at this early moment in Black Pacific history. Another moment in Black Pacific history occurred when Stockton met the aforementioned Anthony Allen on a layover before going to her final destination of Lahaina where over the next two-and-a half years there, she established a school for local Hawaiian children who were commoners and not highborn.

Kualapai writes that even though Stockton accepted Hawaiians on their own terms her loneliness as a single black woman prompted her to return to her birth country. After returning to the mainland, she kept in touch with both the Green and Stewart families. As a young girl, she had formed such a close enough relationship with the two Green sons that she sent the younger son "souvenirs" from Hawai'i. According to Moffett, Stockton sent "a number of interesting and unusual specimens of seashells and insects for his scientific research."[119] She even cared for the young Stewart children after their mother's death and before their father's remarriage. In her own life, she continued to make history, forming a school for black children in Princeton, helping to develop a school for Native American children in upstate New York and acting as a founding member of the First Presbyterian Church of Colour of Princeton.[120] The church, later renamed the Witherspoon Presbyterian Church of Princeton, formed in the 1840s when black

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[118] "AARDOC: Betsey Stockton's Journal (1822-23)," accessed February 29, 2016, http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Betsey_Stockton_Journal_1.html.

[119] Moffett, "Betsey Stockton," 72.

[120] Andrew, "Betsey Stockton," 163–64.

members of the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton decided to form their own congregation.[121]

Figure 1.1 is a later image of her at an advanced age presumably not long before her death in 1865. In publications, the image is cropped just below her shoulders but the original image shows a slope of checked fabric descending to her lower body which is unfortunately obscured in the original negative. A collar tops the checked fabric at her neck, which is the same tone as her head wrap; spirals of grayed hair escape on either side right in front of her ears. The composition is in the classical pyramid shape, a triangle suggesting stability and weightiness is inscribed from the top of her hair to both shoulders and fading away into obscurity in the original image. In Figure 1.1, her gravity is far from Rev. Green's description of the young Betsey who was supposed to be flighty rather than stable. However, the force of her religious awakening was such that it catalyzed for this young woman an extraordinary journey of over 5000 miles—the trip should not be dismissed as inexpensive, either.

Her owners/employers were extremely liberal and lived in the North but this is still an extraordinary gesture at the time. Hawai'i became her path to an uneasy freedom; she was able to travel but had to leave Hawai'i when the Stewarts did as she was still in their care. The stability of the composition belies the ambivalence of her position. In *Cutting a Figure*, *Fashioning Black Portraiture*, art historian Richard Powell focuses on historical representations of black women in which the head and its adornment is brought disproportionately into focus: "… the typical representation of the black woman in mid-nineteenth-century American art is invariably tied, by way of her head-wrap, both to a specific fashion emblem and to scenarios of degradation …"[122]

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[121] Ibid., 164.

[122] Richard J. Powell, *Cutting a Figure : Fashioning Black Portraiture* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2008), 54.

As he points out, this is a way of maintaining social authority over the black female body and as such, the head-wrap had to be worn in portraiture as well: "That the visual and aesthetic difference revolved around each woman's head is worth noting: whether cloth-wrapped, bonnet-clad, or uncovered, this anatomical site, it would seem, communicated black women's social status, cultural identity, and perhaps their soul."[123] Although Betsy was successful in the islands, she was still not free to stay there and had to go back with the Stewarts because of Mrs. Stewart's ill health so the head-wrap does represent her continuing ambiguous servitude and she is still in that position when this portrait is made near her death: "In many New World slave societies the head-wrap was a key part of the female house slave's uniform, identifying the woman's condition of servitude …"[124]

An alternate reading from the Black Pacific viewpoint would bring into focus the status of an elder in Polynesian communities and the *mana* embodied by that person and the life experiences that built that spirit.[125] As *mana* must be protected and adorned, as exemplified the ubiquitous Hawaiian *lei*, the ambiguity of her position can lead to a reading of Stockton as possessing great *mana* in defiance of the head-wrap marker of servitude that she wears. Looking at it in this way recoups Stockton's image from a visual lineage of servitude. Her faith took her far from her birthplace and the work she completed in Hawai'i adds to her *mana* in a Pacific sense. This uncertainty is not uncommon as art and photography historian Brian Wallis claims: "Many of these images of African Americans reflect the ambiguities and precariousness of their

[123] Ibid., 44.

[124] Ibid., 42.

[125] I go into this in greater detail in Chapter Three when discussing the relationship between artist Jewel Castro and her mentor Faith Ringgold.

social position."[126] As demonstrated by the Stockton's life, faith and education were bedrocks for African Americans in the United States before and after the abolition of slavery.

African American women were able to distinguish themselves after the abolition of slavery as educators, according to African American history scholar Darlene Clark Hine:

> …education represented a community investment, and it was clearly understood that the educated children would return to assist in the uplift of the entire community. Early on, innumerable Black women became teachers in one-room schools. And because more was always expected of them, they also held classes in their homes and wrote books. Through it all, Black women have remained abiding champions of education as a means of personal autonomy and public empowerment."[127]

For Betsey Stockton, a missionary urge with an educational vocation creates the circumstances for her to become the first African American woman to traverse the Black Pacific. The case of Carlotta Stewart Lai holds some similarities. Both women excelled in the field of education. Both women spent time in Hawai'i as single women. Both kept journals about their experiences. In other ways, however, Carlotta Stewart Lai is very much a woman in the context of the Talented Tenth.

Carlotta Stewart Lai

T. McCants Stewart was active in the advancement of the black race during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was not born into an elite family in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1850s but his name has become intimately associated with the notion of the Talented Tenth, coined by civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois, according to historian

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[126] Brian Wallis, *African American Vernacular Photography : Selections from the Daniel Cowin Collection* (New York : New York , 2005), 10.

[127] Darlene Clark Hine, "Introduction," in *The Face of Our Past: Images of Black Women from Colonial America to the Present*, eds. Kathleen Thompson and Hilary Austin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xii.

Robert Swan:

> [A] sense of mission is manifest in the career of Thomas McCants Stewart, one of the foremost members of the Talented Tenth to fight the battle for black manhood. His career illustrates the Talented Tenth mission in action in Brooklyn, New York City and Liberia. He associated with major black American leaders and profoundly influenced the Age of Booker T. Washington.[128]

Here, Stewart's presence in the United States and Africa is noted but his activities in Hawai'i are not mentioned. I do not cover his life here but focus on his daughter's life and career in Hawai'i as significant because in her own right, she was as much a black pioneer as her father.

Carlotta Stewart was born in 1881 to Stewart and his first wife and traveled with her father and his second wife when they migrated to Hawai'i after his first visit to Liberia and before his second. After his hopes for political success did not materialize in Hawai'i, he returned to the mainland in 1905 with his wife but Carlotta stayed behind. She entered a career in education after her graduation from Oahu College. Her interest in education as a profession fits into her father's activities to shape an active black identity in the growing United States. In his biography of the family, historian Albert Broussard relates: "The Stewarts were not an ordinary African-American family. Rather they were part of what urban historians have called the 'black elite,' those whom [have been] labeled 'aristocrats of color'."[129] As Carlotta Stewart Lai eventually became a school principal, achieving an influential position in education, she lived up to the promise of education that Darlene Clark Hine previously stressed for African-American women, according to Broussard:

> … the Stewarts were expected to occupy leadership roles, since they were among the most highly educated African-Americans in their community. Unlike most black laborers,

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[128] Robert J. Swan, "Thomas McCants Stewart and the Failure of the Mission of the Talented Tenth in Black America, 1880-1923" (Ph. D., New York University, 1990), 1.

[129] Albert S. Broussard, *African-American Odyssey : The Stewarts, 1853-1963* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 3.

> who worked at unskilled jobs and did not attend college, the Stewarts were employed in the professions, and every member of the family across three generations was college educated.[130]

Her rise in education in the islands was achieved in a population that had relatively few permanent African American residents, as Broussard points out: "[Lai's] career illustrates that Hawai'i was a relatively open society for educated middle class African Americans during the early twentieth century, despite the fact that the Black community represented less than 0.2 percent of the population."[131] This points to the flexibility of class in Hawai'i at this time that still paralleled the rise of institutionalized racism as exemplified by the plan to bring African Americans in to work on sugar plantations at the turn of the century.

However, there do not seem to be any overt incidents of racism in Carlotta's life in her journal and this might "[reflect] a relative absence of serious racial tension and conflict in Hawai'i between Blacks and other racial and ethnic groups before World War II."[132] While this does seem impossible given the racial climate that would have filtered from the mainland, Broussard notes that "[i]f she was aware of the dramatic increase in the African American population or in the accompanying increase of racial tension, she never mentioned it."[133] Whether Stewart Lai was considered a "local" can be debated. I delve into this designation later in the chapter but for now, it is important to note that in many ways, her life at exemplifies the freedom that the Pacific promised to African Americans at this point in history, according to Broussard:

> Although her education, income, status in the community, and family name may have

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 83–84.

[132] Ibid., 84.

[133] Ibid.

> insulated her from some forms of class or racial proscription, it may also be that Carlotta simply did not experience serious racial conflict in Hawai‘i because race relations truly were not as strained as on the Mainland. The relative absence of racial tension permitted Carlotta to be valued and appreciated as a gifted individual rather than as a gifted African American, a luxury she would not have been permitted on the Mainland.[134]

Stewart Lai's life choices show self-autonomy and her decision to remain in Hawai‘i alone, although she pondered it in her lowest times of loneliness, demonstrated that she was cognizant of her path in life, according to Broussard:

> When Carlotta landed in Hawai‘i, she looked at her new environment through the eyes of a young woman who had made a conscious decision to come to a new land where she might pursue her education. She arrived neither as a refugee nor as a worker; she arrived as one who knew she had a future. In 1898, a Black woman of such determination was uncommon in Hawai‘i. Few Black women had come to the Islands during the nineteenth century, and fewer had stayed.[135]

Betsey Stockton arrived in Hawai‘i before the abolition of slavery and her life circumstances required her to leave after only a short, but very successful, stay in Hawai‘i. Carlotta remained, succeeded in a career, married interracially—her husband was of Chinese descent—and died in Hawai‘i.

Even in the public presentation of her Self, she was very meticulous as Broussard recounts:

> Because she had been reared in a society that denigrated all black females, irrespective of their education or class standing, Carlotta Stewart was exceedingly conscious of both her public and professional image. Oral interviews with both surviving family members and teachers who knew her professionally reveal that Carlotta was a refined, cultured, and attractive African-American woman who insisted on decorum and formality.[136]

This is clear in her image in a photograph taken of her around 1900 (Figure 1.2). This is but one of many photographs of her life and career that survive. A photograph of her graduating class

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid., 71.

[136] Ibid., 157.

from Oahu College and many photographs of Stewart Lai as principal with fellow teachers and students as well as others were placed in the care of her niece Katherine Stewart Flippin upon Stewart Lai's death in 1952.

In Figure 1.2, she looks very much the way her niece (who remained on the mainland all of her life) describes her: "[She] was an elegant lady. She had an air about her. Because she lived in the islands so long most everyone took her for one of those kinky-headed Hawaiians."[137] In the portrait here, Carlotta has good posture. She looks straight at the viewer unflinchingly; she is the lone young woman making her way in the West. As for being mistaken for Hawaiian, this

Figure 1.2: Portrait of Carlotta Stewart Lai, c. 1900, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

photograph does not provide visual support for the claim. Her niece continues, "She didn't do anything to her hair, and it was real crisp and full, and she wore it like they used to wear it, up, so it looked like, not hair but [a] hat. And then she'd sometimes wear a little circlet of shell or a

[137] Ibid., 158.

circlet of brightly colored feathers around the top for decoration.[138] Her niece's description is a good one and can be taken at face value yet I would suggest that Carlotta Stewart Lai adopts some Hawaiian and Pacific concerns about adornment.

Figure 1.3: Group Portrait of Carlotta Stewart Lai with Class of 1928, Anahola School, Kaua'i, collection of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

Indeed, in Figure 1.3, a celebratory portrait of Stewart Lai and the graduating pupils of 1928, flower *lei* suggest the *mana* inherent in such an occasion. Arranged in a semi-circle with their principal in the center, the students of various ages are heavily adorned with *lei*. The students hold what is most likely their diplomas in front of them and each arm is ringed with flower *lei* as well. The effect is one of heft, solemnity, and gravitas. The body and head must be protected and body adornment is significant and this is perhaps what Katherine Stewart-Flippin

[138]Ibid. The Katherine Stewart Flippin collection contains correspondence between Carlotta Stewart Lai and the Madam C. J. Walker Company regarding her query about caring for her hair as she enjoys surfing so much. The company provides suggestions and a list of available equipment for hair maintenance.

is picking up on when she describes the flowers as decoration—it is more than that, *it is adornment within the performative aspect of the black body.*

This performative aspect is a characteristic of the Black Pacific and this attention to respecting the Self's appearance as a component of shines through in the photographic portrait, a means to counteract savage images of women of color found elsewhere. Art historian Deborah Willis elaborates:

> Photography has served as a space to perform or imagine since the medium's invention in the mid-nineteenth century. Many African Americans, in particular, used photography to focus on the goal of racial uplift and the notion of being seen as they desired to be seen. They recognized immediately that they could communicate a sense of self-worth and counter prevailing stereotypes with photographs that celebrated their dignity and achievements.[139]

Carlotta Stewart Lai documented her life meticulously. Not only do formal portraits of her survive but so do informal candid images of her on the beach or with friends. Photographs of the houses she owned survive with detailed descriptions of the rooms and scenery on the back in her handwriting. At her death, Stewart Lai named her sister-in-law as beneficiary in her will and Katherine Stewart Flippin, her nearest surviving relative was not mentioned. However, at some point, the images and correspondence discussed here were donated by Stewart Flippin to the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University in Washington, DC. The portraits and documents give insight into this pioneering woman of the Black Pacific. This case study highlights one path of the circulation of Black Pacific images within families.

Elizabeth Brown and Alice Augusta Ball

Nurse Elizabeth Brown is visible but without voice in the pages of *They Followed the*

[139] Deborah Willis et al., *Let Your Motto Be Resistance : African American Portraits* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institute; Distributed by HarperCollins, 2007), 15.

Trade Winds. Her portrait (Figure 1.4) is included in the section on healers in Hawai‘i but no information is given about her in the text. Under her image however, is the caption that it is held in the On Char collection at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. On Char was a Chinese photographer who owned the City Photo Studio from approximately 1915 and donated over 90,000 of his negatives in his collection to the museum upon his death. This intriguing information illuminates how the subjectivity of the photographer paralleled that of the sitter. Hawai‘i is discussed as a melting pot of many ethnicities, and although the sovereignty of Native Hawaiians is still contested, the racial atmosphere during Elizabeth Brown's life, while not utopic did have perhaps a frontier flexibility that was not found in most parts of the mainland during the time before and after slavery. Due to increasing restrictions on Chinese immigration to the United States and an eventual prohibition under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Char would also have faced bias on the mainland. The United States did not annex Hawai‘i until 1898 so his immigration to Hawai‘i was possible because the American government did not reach as far as Hawai‘i before that time. It seems likely that both Brown and Char benefited from an atmosphere of tolerance.

It is interesting that a woman of African descentis photographed by a Chinese photographer, begging many questions about who gets to represent whom. *The Crisis* symposium in 1926 asked this question: "When the artist, black or white, portrays Negro characters is he under any obligations or limitations to the sort of character he will portray?"[140] Educator and minister Robert T. Kerlin gives this answer: "No. The artist, black or white, must be in sympathy with his creations, or creatures, be they what they may be ethically and

[140] Henry Louis Gates and Gene Andrew Jarrett, eds., "The Crisis Symposium," in *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 190.

ethnically. If he is in sympathy with them, he has nothing to fear regarding the effect of his work. His art will justify itself."[141] It does appear as if On Char is in sympathy with his sitter Elizabeth

Figure 1.4: On Char, Portrait of Elizabeth Brown, 1915, On Char Collection, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.

Brown. In this case, perhaps because the context is Hawai'i, an artist who is not black her with the sensitivity abolitionist Frederick Douglass speaks of, according to art historian Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw: "Douglass argues that until African Americans began to represent themselves they would not find artists capable or interested in portraying them with the sensitivity that the serious representation of individuals represented."[142] I argue that in this image, Elizabeth Brown

[141] Ibid., 198.

[142] Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Portraits of a People : Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century* (Addison Gallery of American Art: Andover, Mass. :, c2006.), 13.

is portrayed with sensitivity even though the photographer is not himself African American. This can be attributed in part to the ease with which African Americans interacted with other ethnicities in Hawai‘i at the turn of the twentieth century.

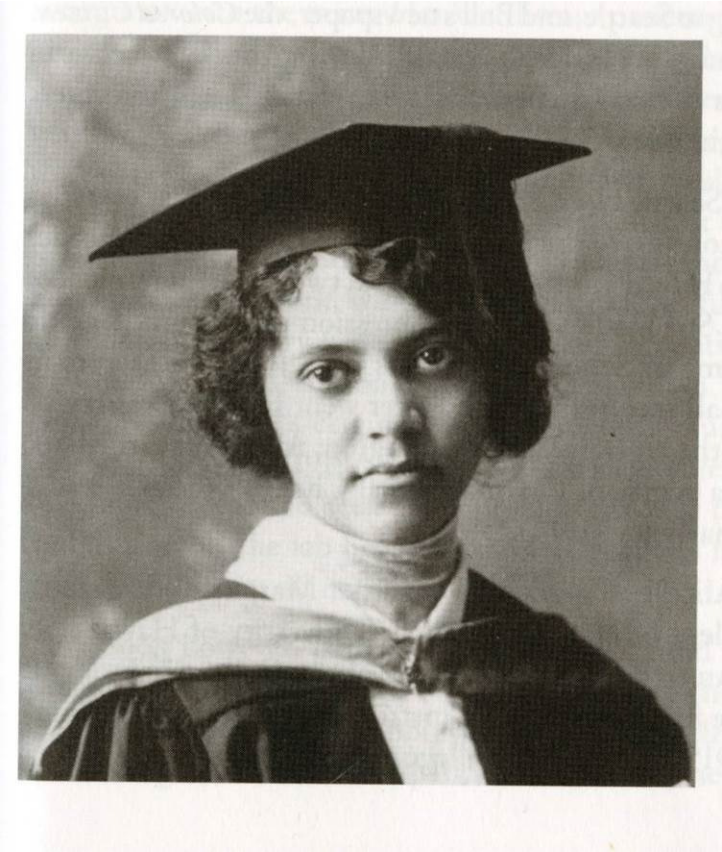

Figure 1.5: Portrait of Alice Augusta Ball upon graduating from the College of Hawai‘i with a Master of Science degree in 1915. Collection of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library Archives and Manuscripts.

The photograph of Elizabeth Brown was taken one year before the death of Alice Augusta Ball who is pictured in Figure 1.5. Her grandfather, James Presley Ball (1825-1904) the African American photographer, is well-known to historians of photography and African American art due to his long and prolific career spanning 1845 to 1904.[143] Continually moving westward across the United States, he opened a succession of studios in Cincinnati, Ohio,

[143] See Deborah Willis' monograph *J. P. Ball: Daguerrean and Studio Photographer* (New York: Garland Pub., 1993).

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, Helena, Montana, and eventually established his last-known studio in Seattle, Washington, in 1900. Soon after, he moved to Hawai‘i for his health, but after this time, with the exception of his documented death in Honolulu, little is known about his artistic career during his remaining years.[144] Although he moved primarily for health reasons, his choice of Hawai‘i was not an unusual one at that time for African Americans. Ball is but one of many who have migrated to Hawai‘i seeking artistic, economic, or social opportunities. While no evidence has been uncovered to establish that Ball opened a studio or made photographs there, his personal journey to Hawai‘i is echoed in the life of his granddaughter, Alice Augusta Ball, who died not long after her graduation from college.

Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands hosts a hospital for Hansen's disease (leprosy). Her close proximity to this institution prompted her research into a cure for the disease. She developed a partially effective cure that was in use until the 1940s when other medication was formulated. Alice Augusta Ball's breakthrough was obscured in history as her white male advisor Dr. Arthur L. Dean, later a president of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, took credit. Dr. Harry T. Hollmann, another scientist in Hawai‘i, had enlisted Ball in his research and actively acknowledged her participation but this knowledge was not widespread even at the university itself. In 2000 Ball's accomplishments were brought to attention and in 2007, the University of Hawai‘i awarded her the Regent's Medal of Distinction.

[144] Paul Wermager, "Healing the Sick," in *They Followed the Trade Winds : African Americans in Hawai‘i*, ed. Miles Jackson, Revised (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014), 203. Wermager asserts that seeking relief from symptoms of arthritis, Ball moves to Hawai‘i as early as 1903 with family members while Deborah Willis in *J.P. Ball: Daguerrean and Studio Photographer* relates that he did not move to Hawai‘i until 1904 right before his death. In this book chapter, Wermager relies on Honolulu city directories to date Ball's residency.

The photograph above is a detail from a graduation portrait that includes Ball who received her Master of Science degree and two men, both receiving Bachelor of Arts degrees.[145] In this image commemorating her graduation, she embodies the goal of the Talented Tenth; not only does she raise the profile of African American women who succeed in education, her work in chemistry contributed to the wellbeing of mankind in general.

The four women discussed here made choices that would be difficult at any time. They made the decision to live and work on an island far away from the continental United States. This distance offered opportunity and it also offered challenges. Photographic portraits of the women mark their presence in the Black Pacific and also provide touchstones for understanding African American photography at this time. The case studies are drawn from the years between the annexation of Hawai‘i by the United States and the outbreak of World War II but the stories do not end there as I argue in the cases of Juanita Hall, Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold, and Lonnie Hutchinson. The remainder of this dissertation focuses on their paths but I take the opportunity in the next section to present a range of thoughts on the Black Pacific by scholars and artists who are engaging with the notion of the Black Pacific today and responding to the history that I outlined above.

Discursive Blackness in Oceania

I return to Teresia Teaiwa's poem *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad*) as I suggested earlier that it is an example of Black Pacific poetry. Specifically, the poem touches upon the difference valences of blackness in Polynesia and Melanesia and can offer a touchstone

[145] "Graduating Class Photographs | University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library," accessed March 1, 2016, http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu/departments/archives/univarch/classphotos/.

for how blackness separates and unites groups in Oceania, how African American and African diaspora cultural forms have influenced blackness in Oceania, and how ultimately blackness can be uplifting rather than divisive and spark creativity in artistic pursuits. This effect is the focus of the next three chapters in the dissertation but as each subsequent case study highlights different factors of Black Pacific art, it is essential to cover aspects here that are not discussed elsewhere.

Teaiwa wrote the poem in 2002 while she was living in Aotearoa/New Zealand and was "reflecting on the impact of the 2000 coups" in Fiji.[146] She and her two sisters are familiar with identity politics in Fiji as they grew up there. She wrote this poem for two of her friends who she'd "worked closely with on cross-cultural politics and multicultural politics."[147] She recalls she "was particularly struck by the odd ways that I was seeing 'blackness' selectively appropriated by indigenous ethno-nationalists, in the service of anti-colonial and decolonization processes that sometimes disavowed solidarity with other people of colour."[148] The poem has not enjoyed the wide circulation of her other poetry as it was first published on a website that is no longer active and later appears in an essay published in 2012 in which Katerina Teaiwa, her sister, suggests that the cultural policies in place for the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States created by the European Union in 1975 might be better served with an understanding of "face-to-face exchanges that occur between the regions" rather than a reliance on "the work of regional and international authorities."[149] She presents the poem as such an example. In this spirit, I examine Teresia Teaiwa's poem to trace differing paths of blackness in

[146] Teresia Teaiwa, "Email Message to Author," December 19, 2015.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid.

[149] K. Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," 256. The poem appears on pages 275-276. This is my source for the poem reproduced here.

Oceania. I utilize the stanzas as points of departure for discussing the possibilities and problematics of the Black Pacific expressed by participants and allies.[150]

The poem foregrounds both the alliance and the tension between notions of blackness as difference. Teaiwa opens with:

> a Hawaiian nationalist/idealizes malcolm x/
> wishes white people would fear Hawaiians/
> the way they fear blacks
>
> my heart skips/a beat/popolo mea ‘uli[1]/
> something’s not right”

It is empowering to contemplate the link between Hawaiian sovereignty and the legacy of Malcom X, as Teaiwa does in the first line. There are many references to music throughout and while there is no specific reference here to hip hop or rap, these two genres are strategically used here by Polynesian musicans and activists, in general and Hawaiian musicians and activits in particular for self-determination. Ethnic Studies scholar Adria Imada tells of the appeal of hip hop for Hawaiian youth and activists. At a protest of the U.S. annexation of Hawai‘i over one hundred years ago, Imada witnessed an audience transformation when the Hawaiian hip hop group Sudden Rush took the stage:

> Many in the audience immediately started dancing: children, sovereignty activists…The first person I saw dancing was a *kupuna*, a Hawaiian elder, who looked like she was well into her seventies. Sudden Rush transformed the sacred steps of the palace into a space of Hawaiian hip hop/techno culture with heavy beats, rapping in the Hawaiian language, and a generous sampling of traditional Hawaiian sampling.[151]

She continues, “Taking a musical form most often associated with urban Black experiences and

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[150] I analyze the poem and position it as an organizing framework for discussing views that have been shared with me about blackness in Polynesia, Melanesia, and/or Micronesia.

[151] Adria L. Imada, “‘Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation “On the Rise,”’” in *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*, eds. Dipannita. Basu and Sidney J. Lemelle (London: Pluto, 2006), 85.

dissent, Sudden Rush has indigenized hip hop."[152] In this example, the musicians pay homage to the African American struggle and find within its musical anthem their own strategies for resistance in the face of the continuing illegal annexation. Sudden Rush's affinity with hip hop is not unexpected as there are similarities of identity politics between the African American condition and the Hawaiian condition, especially in regard to males:

> There is ample reason for Hawaiian men in particular to identify with young African-American men. African-American and Hawaiian men share a similar relationship to the state; both groups have been racialized in the social imagination as violent, oversexualized, and deviant. Since the arrival of Christian missionaries in the islands in 1820, Hawaiians have been constructed as a people unable to exercise self-control or prove themselves worthy of self-governance. In contemporary Hawai'i, Hawaiian men are frequently discussed in the media as hardened criminals, drug addicts, and welfare cases, with infrequent analysis of the neo-colonial context of contemporary Hawaiian struggles for land and sovereignty.[153]

This similar treatment has resulted in two ways to political power—inspiration and alliance. Historian Arif Dirlik writes about the process of inspiration,

> [Haunani-Kay] Trask, who is an eloquent spokesperson for the revival of native Hawai'ian concepts of nature and society, conceded readily nevertheless that the struggle for Hawai'ian sovereignty is a very contemporary struggle, inspired by and similar to the struggles of African-Americans, Africans, and other colonial and indigenous peoples.[154]

As for alliance as a strategy, Imada writes, "By making connections with other colonized and indigenous people, Hawaiians became part of a global political struggle and resisted the construction of themselves as isolated dots in the Pacific Ocean. Through a global medium Sudden Rush has created a politics of attachment."[155] Both methods can be successful strategies either alone or in tandem with each other. In terms of hip hop and rap, what Imada has been

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[152] Ibid., 88.

[153] Ibid., 96.

[154] Arif Dirlik, "There in More in the Rim Than Meets the Eye: Thoughts on the 'Pacific Idea,'" in *What Is in a Rim?: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, eds. Arif. Dirlik, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 364.

[155] Imada, "Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation 'On the Rise'," 95.

describing in Hawai‘i can be seen as a culturally hybrid art form referencing ethnicity and identity. Anthropologists Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg discuss *hybridity* and *borderzones* in *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity*. They write what could be an apt description of Sudden Rush's music: "The movements, flows, and interpenetrations of populations and cultural practices frequently produced startling and creative juxtapositions and cultural fusions…"[156] I propose that Sudden Rush's music is startling because it appeals across status and age as seen with the dance of the *kupuna* described by Imada. Sudden Rush's music is a creative cultural fusion of the strategy of alliance/inspiration and taps into what Lavie and Swedenburg call the "agency of coalition politics."[157] They write, "One minority can form alliances with another, based on experiences its heterogeneous membership partially shares, each in his or her fragmented identity…many minorities are building bridges among themselves based on such overlapping fragments."[158]

Hawaiian identification with hip hop is an important political move because it creates a critical mass across Hawaiian culture. This is important because what is being illustrated in Imada's recollection is the performance of the modern ethnicity described by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai: "Perhaps the most clear index of modern ethnicity is that it draws together groups that by their sheer spatial spread and numerical strength are vastly larger than the ethnic groups of traditional anthropology."[159] The spread and strength here are contained in those who identify with the black struggle as like their own particularly through the cultural form of hip

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[156] Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, "'Introduction: Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity,'" in *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*, eds. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 9.

[157] Ibid., 19.

[158] Ibid., 10.

[159] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 139.

hop. This is a politically powerful identification because "[t]he belief in group affinity, regardless of whether it has any objective foundation, can have important consequences especially for the formation of a political community," according to sociologist Max Weber.[160] Like the link between Hawaiians and African Americans that Imada identified, Pacific Studies scholar April K. Henderson also finds environmental links between Samoan and African American youth. She writes, "Many young Samoans growing up in Los Angeles County struggled in school but excelled in athletics and dance. For Samoan males, in particular, physical size and prowess as football players or dancers led to both status and stereotype."[161] In *Boyz in the Hood* (1991), an eye-opening movie written and directed by John Singleton, four African American friends struggle with teenage pregnancy, literacy and college aspirations, and gang shootings. This is the same environment for Samoans and their link to gangsta rap: "In California, in particular, Samoans tend to share working-class African-American and Latino neighborhoods, sharing as well the economic and social vulnerabilities of their neighbors."[162] As she illustrates, the cultural conditions of Black and Samoan males is similar in some respects and it makes sense that hip hop would provide the voice for both groups.

This sums up several alliances. I have taken pains to uncover how liberating life was in Hawai'i for the women of color in this chapter. As for tensions, however, the cost of freedom was exclusion from a local identity. These lines of the poem suggest that blackness is accepted but not necessarily celebrated in a Hawaiian sovereignty context. African American studies

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[160] Max Weber, *Economy and Society; an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 389.

[161] April K. Henderson, "Dancing Between Islands: Hip Hop and the Samoan Diaspora," in *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*, eds. Dipannita. Basu and Sidney J. Lemelle (London: Pluto, 2006), 181.

[162] Ibid., 185.

scholar Elisa Joy White unravels the equation that excludes "blackness" from a "local" Hawaiian identity. She explains multiple factors that lead to an ambivalent positioning:

> …African Americans do not have a significance presence as players in the local authenticity and belonging debate, which highlights their peripheral position in the Islands and the presumptive incapacity to *potentially* belong. Implicitly, Black identities and Blackness are not considered when articulating the formation of a contemporary local identity.[163]

Elsewhere, she goes into more detail:

> …African-Americans are placed in the outsider position in Hawai'i but cannot articulate it in terms of not being 'of color' (or Whiteness) or even consider themselves in the context of 'Haole' identity. For African-Americans, the consideration of 'skin color' is inextricably linked to their outsider status…the default to a color descriptive *alone* for African-Americans can only be addressed through the lens of racism.[164]

Her overall conclusion is that a "transformation which encompasses Black identities" is possible.[165] Until this happens, the dynamics are reinforced through language as Teaiwa acknowledges in *black in the blue pacific*.[166] The footnote for the fourth line reads: "popolo: Hawaiian word for 'black', used derogatorily towards African Americans; mea'uli: Samoan word meaning 'black thing', used derogatorily towards Melanesians and African Americans."[167] Earlier, I discuss *tama uli* and *teine uli* in Samoa who are descended from Solomon Islanders indentured on copra plantations under German administration at the end of the nineteenth century. The Samoan word for "black" combined with the words for "boy" or "girl" is the word

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[163] Elisa Joy White, "The Unacceptable Local: Positioning African Diaspora and Black Identity in Contemporary Hawai'i," in *They Followed the Trade Winds : African Americans in Hawai'i*, Revised (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 150.

[164] Elisa Joy White, "Representations of Blackness and the Popolo Problematic," in *They Followed the Trade Winds : African Americans in Hawai'i*, Revised (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 268.

[165] White, "The Unacceptable Local: Positioning African Diaspora and Black Identity in Contemporary Hawai'i," 150.

[166] For ethnographic fieldwork among Black Hawaiians, see Nitasha Sharma, "Pacific Revisions of Blackness: Blacks Address Race and Belonging in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 37, no. 3 (January 1, 2011): 43–60.

[167] K. Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," 281.

for these descendants as reported by geographer Asenati Liki. There is a history of difference behind the term in order to set the Melanesians apart from the Samoans then and now. But, combining the word for "black" with the word for "thing" becomes an insult rather than a group identification. In Hawaiian language and culture, *pō* is a generative force and "popolo" is the name for nightshade. "Popolo" does not have to possess a negative connotation but Teaiwa acknowledges "most people who've had the terms applied to them know that they are not exactly terms of endearment or respect."[168]

A similar viewpoint is expressed by Solomon Islander Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, a Pacific Studies scholar. In 2010, *Wansolwara*, the student news publication at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, reported that Kabutaulaka mentioned the racism that Melanesians face from Polynesians in a speech that he delivered on campus. He acknowledges that the issue "is not often discussed openly among Pacific Islanders because it is a sensitive issue."[169] I do not cite this source to be provocative. I present the quote here as one of many perspectives in what I call the Black Pacific. Those perspectives are potential sources for inspiration and action in Black Pacific art.

Again, I reiterate from earlier in the chapter that I do not suggest that the Black Pacific is a utopia. Yet, Teaiwa's observation of the differing valences of blackness that she observed in Fiji in the wake of the coups is a positive step to the transcommunality suggested by John Brown Childs. The first stanza of *black in the blue pacific* highlights the tensions around blackness

[168] T. Teaiwa, "Email Message to Author."

[169] Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "Pacific.scoop.co.nz » Wansolwara: Academic Rues Islander Racism against Melanesians," accessed December 23, 2015, http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2010/06/wansolwara-academic-rues-islander-racism-against-melanesians/.

between cultural groups in Oceania. At the same time that it foregrounds this reality, the poem is itself a call for the "face-to-face exchanges" that Teaiwa's sister suggests in her own scholarship.

A picture of blackness as divisive emerges in the first section of the poem. At the same time, it highlights the unique status of Melanesia in Oceania. The next stanza reads:

> in Melanesia/the islands/are not/black/
> but/the people are/unlike polynesians/
> they believe/in/democracy/they've inherited/
> dreadlocks/from ancient ancestors

I take this opportunity to elaborate on my choice of case studies. A ready example to formulate Black Pacific art is a comparison between Melanesian art and African American art. The question inevitably arises. Is it a repetition of sixteenth century ideology to analyze similarities based on the ways bodies look? In other words, am I making the same mis-identification of the early explorers? The question is answered by my own bodily experience researching in the Pacific. It is a valid concern and worthy of study. An equally hard question is, how are similarities expressed when "black" does not designate skin color yet perspectives on "blackness" do influence art? The remaining chapters of the dissertation tackle this question. Yet it would be remiss to not acknowledge blackness in Melanesia regardless of the simplicity of the equation put in place by colonial strategy.

An example of this is the performance work of artist and scholar Dr. Michael Mel. In April 2007, Mel performed *Il Lamb Nai? Pombral Molga Kundul Al? Who is this Person? Black or White?* at the de Young Museum at "New Guinea Art Since 1875," a symposium marking the first public program of the museum's Jolika Collection of art from Papua New Guinea.[170] In this

[170] The Jolika Collection contains over 4,000 works of art from Papua New Guinea collected by John and Marcia Friede. Four hundred works were transferred to the museum with the rest remaining in the possession of the Friedes as a promised gift. However, the fate of the collection is undetermined as after making the gift, John Friede

performance, the question is directed at the audience who observes his body emerging from a museum crate, moving through an array of Papua New Guinean sculpture set atop white square pedestals. He wears a red printed *lap-lap* (sarong) without any other clothing. Mel's dark skin is highlighted by spotlights and is the embodiment of the answer to this provocative question.

Mel weaves a path in and out of the white pedestals while in the background text rolls across the screen at intervals and images of Papua New Guineans in *bilas* (adornment and decoration) fade in at strategic moments. He emerges from a museum crate and alternately paces, crouches, dances, and jumps in the space which has been staged to appear as if an exhibition of Papua New Guinean sculpture is in the process of being installed or broken down. Plastic bubble wrap drapes many of the sculptures and Mel wears plastic wrap on his head as he emerges from the confined crate as if he, too, were a museum object. White-coated and –gloved attendants stroll through at various points, with one derogatorily yelling epithets at him at one point, driving him toward the crate. At the climax of the performance, Mel brings the audience into the space, selecting three spectators to sit upon the pedestals to have their faces painted. In the de Young performance, he chose the museum's director as a participant, who, as he admits in his welcome speech, has little to no knowledge of Papua New Guinean art.

As for the title, Mel relates:

> Black or white are racial terms and have been used everywhere and they could provide a ready-reckoner reading of people. However there is need to take a caution: Colour is external is not reflective of the within. We maybe the same in hardwire (whether black or white) but the software makes us different. And this we need to celebrate more and more.[171]

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put the collection up for collateral in a family inheritance dispute. To date, the issue is being determined in courts in three states—New York, Florida and California.

[171] Michael Mel, "Email Message to Author," May 24, 2009.

I argue that his performance is a celebration of both "hardware" and "software" of the black body or the body labeled black regardless of skin tone. The movement of Mel from the crate to the performance space and the invitation to the audience to enter the space exemplify Stuart Hall's notion of "… [the] black body, presented as a moving signifier –first, as an object of visibility which can at last be 'seen': then as a foreign body, trespassing into unexpected and tabooed locations; then as the site of an excavation."[172] Hall posits: "This is the body as a space or canvas, on which to conduct an exploration into the inner landscapes of black subjectivity; the body, also, as a point of convergence for the materialization of intersecting planes of difference – the gendered body, the sexual body, the body as subject, rather than simply the object of looking and desire."[173] I suggest that Mel's process of sharing, communicating and questioning in the performance embraces the audience and creates a transformative experience with the black body at the center of the change. I began this section by speaking of the urge to compare African American art and Melanesian art. Michael Mel explains this impulse:

> We share a common history of oppression and suppression at different times in our histories. Even today, the differences are many and while the ideals of democracy are there, the realization of those dreams through success through education, professional growth and so on are very competitive. In the wars we share common ground where lives were lost, bravery shone and courage became indelibly imprinted for many. Allow the histories to remind us that our journey has not been easy and still offers much if we can take the risks."[174]

The examination of the performance and adornment of Michael Mel opens up new understandings of blackness as a position of subjectivity. The black body, in the case of Michael Mel, is a creative vibrant mode of living in the contemporary world.

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[172] Stuart Hall, "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-War History," *History Workshop Journal* 61, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 20.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Mel, "Email Message to Author."

Returning to Teaiwa's poem, the next segment of *black in the blue pacific* makes a clear link between a Caribbean musical form and its meaning for Pacific Islanders:

> contemporary caribbean/music causes waves/raves/
> reggae plays/all over the pacific

Early in her career, Teresia Teaiwa attempted to bring the Pacific and the Caribbean in close conversation as is evident in *black in the blue pacific*. When attempting to draw analogies, she ran into a stumbling block, particularly in terms of diaspora and indigeneity in the two regions. The analogy is useful but incomplete as it serves "to posit not complete identification but rather agreement or similarity in a limited number of features."[175] Yet the analogy is often the tool that scholars outside of Pacific Studies use to position the field in relation to their own. In this case, she writes, "…the Pacific is not brought to the table as an equal partner in any conversation about the nature of humanity or society."[176] This particularly plays out in the process known as "Africanization of the Pacific." This approach is spearheaded by political scientist Ben Reilly who proposes that in some Pacific locales like Papua New Guinea or Fiji that various "factors indicate … that some of the problems that have plagued states in sub-Saharan Africa may well be emerging in the South Pacific as well."[177] Reilly is making a one-to-one correspondence that does not take into account the intricacies of politics and history in these two areas. Historian David Chappell takes a different approach and looks at both Afro Optimism and Afro Pessimism as two types of Africanization. Overall, he argues: "…the presumed causation of 'Africanization' in the Pacific by putting it in a broader context and arguing that it is ultimately an orientalist

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[175] Teresia Teaiwa, "On Analogies: Rethinking the Pacific in a Global Context," *The Contemporary Pacific* 18, no. 1 (2006): 76.

[176] Ibid., 73.

[177] Ben Reilly, "The Africanisation of the South Pacific," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 3 (2000): 263.

discourse, whose negative, timeless imaging of 'others' is still being used to justify metropolitan hegemonies."[178]

I bring up these views to acknowledge that my formulation of Black Pacific art has taken into account challenges such as these in bringing African American and Pacific art into conversation with each other. Teaiwa does not throw out the analogy as a tactic completely. She writes, "After all is said and done…it is better to have attempted an inappropriate analogy and a false homology than to have ignored all possible points of comparison."[179] My discussions in this chapters are discursive explorations into blackness as understood in different parts of Oceania as a way of highlighting the multitude of viewpoints that the Black Pacific is capable of supporting.

Returning to *black in the blue pacific*, the next stanza reads:

> herbs was a band/in aotearoa/new zealand/because of them/more bands/
> in the islands/played reggae/but rasta/was just a front/sometimes
> for fascist ideals/in fiji/a fellow/wrote songs against indians[2]/
> as if they weren't black/as if they were/colonizers/
> as if he was conscious

A footnote accompanies this section as well:

> Indians or Indo-Fijians form a significant minority in the population of the Fiji Islands. Most are the descendants of indentured labourers brought by the British to work in colonial plantations in the 19th century. Indo-Fijians face racial discrimination from nationalist groups claiming to be acting on behalf of all the indigenous people of Fiji.[180]

[178] David Chappell, "'Africanization' in the Pacific: Blaming Others for Disorder in the Periphery?," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 2 (2005): 290.

[179] T. Teaiwa, "On Analogies," 83.

[180] K. Teaiwa, "Cultural Development and Cultural Observatories in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States," 281.

This is the second time in the poem in which music as a link between Oceania and African diaspora or African American cultural forms. In this context, reggae is what Katerina Teaiwa calls an example of *popular kinship* that is created "via cultural production and consumption."[181] She argues that popular culture can create bonds "that transcend…palpable ethnic boundaries and allow us to see each other in more compassionate terms."[182] This connection across boundaries leads cultural theorist Robbie Shilliam to discuss the RasTafari religion to shape the "Black Pacific" as a decolonial space in which "… peoples and projects … have in various ways identified Black and its inferences to Africa – both continental and diasporic – as a key site of struggle for indigenous self-determination in Aotearoa NZ and, to some extent, Oceania at large."[183] Cognizant of Teaiwa's argument of analogies, Shilliam writes, "Less an analogy, these engagements reference Black (and African) as part of a global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity.[184] Shilliam sites the Black Pacific in Aotearoa/New Zealand and examines religion and its expressions but does not analyze in-depth the visual representations as I do in this dissertation.

Key to Shilliam's argument is the notion of "a decolonial science of 'deep relation'."[185] By this he means a process that "seeks to repair colonial wounds, binding back together peoples, lands, pasts, ancestors and spirits. Its great challenge is to bind back together the manifest and spiritual domains."[186] He utilizes the RasTafari faith as the frame for understanding movements

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[181] Katerina Martina Teaiwa, "South Asia Down Under Popular Kinship in Oceania," *Cultural Dynamics* 19, no. 2–3 (2007): 200.

[182] Ibid., 195.

[183] Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*, 10.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid., 13.

[186] Ibid.

around blackness in Aotearoa/New Zealand such as the Polynesian Panthers and the Black Women's movement in Māori and Pacific communities in that country. Alongside these Pacific identifications have been Maori efforts to achieve *mana motuhake* (self-determination) "to ground with Black Power."[187] He uses "ground" in this sense to refer to "grounations," the RasTafari equivalent of *whakapapa* (Maori genealogy).[188] "Grounations" is a portmanteau of ground, foundation, and nation. Grounation, according to Shilliam, "announces the binding together of manifest and spiritual domains guided by the collective pursuit of self-determination."[189] What Shilliam describes here is the synergy between Pacificness and blackness that allows creative production to occur.

The last couplet repeats the references to Fiji and reggae:

> in california/an indian reggae group/sings songs of love/
> for fiji

The locale of California is introduced and the designation "indian" could reference Indo-Fijians, South Asia or its diaspora, or Native Americans. This open-ended quality allows for a concluding discussion of blackness in reference to Micronesia and United States geopolitics and American culture.

The majority of examples in this dissertation are located in Polynesian or Melanesian contexts. Micronesia must also be a site of study for blackness. The notion of "popular kinship" as Katerina Teaiwa defines is a starting point. Chamorro rapper Pete "Badu" Magofna has an active YouTube presence and recounts that he has been influenced by 1990s hip hop and rap.[190]

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[187] Ibid., 45.

[188] Ibid., 27.

[189] Ibid., 28.

[190] MMVcnmi, *MMV Feature: Interview with First Chamorro Rapper Pete "Badu" Magofna, CNMI*, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2fKsdfYV0g.

Or, an examination of military policy and presence on Guam and in Micronesia is another likely starting point for an exploration of blackness in the region. During World War II, late in December 1944, several combat and logistics divisions were stationed on Guam. Tensions between the segregated units lead to incidents that prompted what is known as the Guam Race Riot. The U.S. military still maintains a presence on the island. In late 2015, the *Pacific Islands Report* related that over $245 million was being allocated for military buildup projects on Guam.[191] Of a population of over 159,000 people in the 2010 census, 1540 identified as Black.[192]

Chamorro poet and activist Craig Santos Perez relays that the military complicates "how we think about Black & Pacific affiliations/connections when Black soldiers have been part of the … very structure that is colonizing the pacific."[193] His concern is that "[i]n the Western Pacific & in Asia, we can't turn away from the legacy of Black soldiers and the mixed race children that were left behind.[194] When asked about the Black Pacific, he suggests that "…theorizing the Black Pacific must include both Black decolonial and civil rights solidarities as well as Black military/settler colonialism."[195] As for a framing concept similar to the Hawaiian *pō*. Perez does not recall an equivalent Chamorro concept.[196]

Australia is not always considered a part of Oceania but as it is in close proximity to the islands of Melanesia, having once administered colonies there, and as many Pacific Islanders have made the country their home, a discussion of blackness from that perspective is needed in a

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[191] "US Military Awards Guam Buildup Contracts Worth $245 Million - November 26, 2015," *Pacific Islands Report*, accessed March 12, 2016, http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2015/November/11-26-04.htm.

[192] "Index of /census_2010/10-Island_Areas_Detailed_Cross_Tabulations/Guam," accessed March 12, 2016, http://www2.census.gov/census_2010/10-Island_Areas_Detailed_Cross_Tabulations/Guam/.

[193] Craig Santos Perez, "Email to Author," February 11, 2016.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid.

[196]Ibid. He relates that *mo'na* means "past." I understand that it has cosmogonic meaning.

dissertation on the Black Pacific and its art. Western explorers visually linked Melanesians with Africans and the designation "black" was also applied to Australia's aboriginals due to similar skin tones. In 1885, Mrs. Campbell Praed wrote down what the past was like in Australia and mused that the first stockman on horseback seemed to the "Blacks" like a centaur.[197] The presence of the Black Pacific goes as far as Australia as early as the 1850s, according to sociologist Gerald Horne, insofar as there is evidence of black musicians interacting with aboriginal notions of blackness: "There was also a profusion of minstrel groups operating in the Australian colonies in the gold era that included a number of Negroes."[198] Contemporary evidence of music in Australia and Papua New Guinea linking blackness there with an African American perspective is surveyed by ethnomusicologist Gabriel Solis. In "The Black Pacific: Music and Racialization in Papua New Guinea and Australia," Solis argues that the connections that musicians in both countries feel with the African diaspora indicates "an affirmative politics of affinity between black people, not just a response to whiteness."[199]

As evidence, he points to the lyrics of the aboriginal hip hop group Local Knowledge based in New South Wales. Specifically, a link between racialization of blackness in the African diaspora and Australia is found in their 2005 song "Blackfella," particularly in the lyrics relayed by member Joel Wenitong who declares he is "the blackfella from the cubbie cub-east/Say family roots from the island South Seas/You can track me down from my family trees…"[200] Solis argues that racialization here is an indigenous strategy employed in the pursuit of land

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[197] Mrs Campbell Praed, *Australian Life, Black and White* (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1885), 4.

[198] Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War*, 145.

[199] Gabriel Solis, "The Black Pacific: Music and Racialization in Papua New Guinea and Australia," *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 2 (2015): 308.

[200] Ibid., 301.

rights and sovereignty issues in the southwestern Pacific. While I concede that it is true that racialization is the foundation of the early Black Pacific, that base is being shaken with contemporary art work and exhibitions that acknowledge perspectives on the body as well as the community.

For example, the 2007 short film *Afrophobia* by Melbourne-based Lisa Hilli is a live-action animated exploration of her belief as a child that she "may have had a fear of having an afro…"[201] Hilli is an Australian artist of Papua New Guinean descent and the five-minute film strikes a chord with this viewer. In the first sequence, she is chased through the house by her mother or other female relative who wields a hair pick. Squiggly lines wriggle and writhe around her head as she runs back and forth. In the next scene, she sits in her bedroom brushing ineffectively at her hair. She eventually gives up and sings into the brush while wearing a grass skirt on her head transforming the squiggly hair into blonde straw-like streamers. In the last scene, she sits in a chair at a hair salon while a stylist shaves her hair into a short afro. The background sound is of a lawnmower rather than hair clippers.

The film was included in *Where We're At: Other Voices on Gender*, an exhibition organized by curator Christine Eyene in June 2014 at the BOZAR/Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium. The show included the work of fourteen women of African, Caribbean and Pacific descent. Hilli's work in progress, *Social Conditioner*, consists of nine photographs of the back of Hilli's head arranged in a square. The same black exclamatory lines radiate from her hair in a variety of designs. It is no coincidence that the work is reminiscent of African American artist Lorna Simpson's *Stereo Styles* (1988) as she is influenced by her "work on the black

[201] "'Afrophobia' by Lisa Hilli on Vimeo," accessed March 13, 2016, https://vimeo.com/1356501.

female body & hair."[202] *Social Conditioner* is prompted by the same motivation as *Afrophobia*. In particular, her art is about "issues such as, Pacific diasporic identity cross-cultural identity and the lack of representation of black/noneuropean people in Australian media and history."[203]

While she does not state that African American, African, or African diaspora thinkers helped her discover her "New Guineanness" as Castro states about her Samoanness with Ringgold, Hilli writes that these concerns "led [her] to anger, frustration and to the library to read, critical writers such as Coco Fusco, bell hooks, Michele Wallace and Franz Fanon amongst others."[204] When asked about the possibilities of the Black Pacific, the artist writes,

> I'm leaning more towards Black Oceania, given that I live in Australia and am aware of similar political influences of African American history within Indigenous Australian politics & art history. The possibilities of this framework are that the resistance and cultural empowerment of African diaspora within America is an incredible inspiration to other indigenous peoples, who were colonised by Europeans.[205]

Hilli also shares her thoughts on the problematics of the Black Pacific. She states:

> There are some clear differences here, that being the geographical removal of African bodies to new lands colonised by Americans (British). The issues and complexities are remarkably similar, which is a connecting point, but the danger is that it dissolves individual, social and geographical specifics and circumstances within indigenous groups.[206]

The artist's preferred term is Black Oceania. I do not see conflict in my use of Black Pacific because my theorization allows multiple points of entry and varied starting points for discussion, including the term itself. Hilli describes her physical and cultural positioning in Black Oceania. She explains that in the physical and aesthetic sense, she is "able to relate to and connect to

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[202] Lisa Hilli, "Email Message to Author (1)," December 30, 2015.

[203] Lisa Hilli, "Social Conditioner – Work in Progress," *Lisa Hilli*, July 14, 2014, http://lisahilli.com/2014/07/14/social-conditioner-work-in-progress/.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Lisa Hilli, "Email Message to Author (2)," April 1, 2016.

[206] Ibid.

issues that are similar to African [and] African/American women."[207] She continues, "Culturally I can connect to Pacific Island peoples because of geography[y]. When you say Black Pacific, I think of Melanesia. When you say Black Oceania, I think of everyone island in the Oceanic region, including Australia and it's Indigenous communities."[208] Overall, artist Lisa Hilli's perspective on blackness is sited in the context of a Papua New Guinean (Tolai) woman living in Australia whose art has been influenced by black intellectuals.

To conclude this chapter, I refer again to Teaiwa's conclusion of her poem:

black/is a state of mind

like the colour of an island

Teaiwa states, "Part of what I was trying to say with that line is that an island has many colours so black is not a fixed or singular thing. But black is also a certain kind of racial and cultural politics…"[209] In the wake of #BlackLivesMatter, she is "heartened by the solidarity politics that Pacific people in the US are doing…"[210] Specifically, she finds the work of spoken word poet Terisa Siagatonu inspirational. Siagotonu was one member of the delegation of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, affiliated with AFL-CIO, which was hosted by Hands Up United, the social justice activist group formed in Ferguson, Ohio, after the death of Michael Brown. According to Teaiwa, Siagotonu's poem "Meauli" is the answer to her prayer in *black in the blue pacific*. Teaiwa's concerns are shared by other women as well. She is convening a panel to take place in May 2016 in Guam at the Pacific History Association annual conference. The conference theme "Mo'na: Our Pasts Before Us" references the Chamorro sense of Time. The

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Teaiwa, "Email Message to Author."

[210] Ibid.

panel, "Afro-Diasporic Women Artists on History and Blackness in the Pacific," will include presentations by Teaiwa, dancer and choreographer Ojeya Cruz Banks (Chamorro/African American), visual artist Alvie McKree (Maori/St. Vincent), visual artist Joy Enomoto (Hawaiian/Japanese/African American), and musician-ethnomusicologist Courtney-Savali Andrews (Samoan/African American). Teaiwa writes, "We're really excited about finding each other, and look forward to articulating our own versions of the Black Pacific."[211]

I began this chapter with a description of the exhibition *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia*. I now return to the exhibition in response to this last couplet of *black in the blue pacific*. To be "black in the blue pacific" as a participant or an ally has to occupy a certain frame of reference. This "state of mind" becomes a liberating space. The *My Country* exhibition frames blackness in the space of Australia in reference to "country." Director Chris Saines of the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art writes that "country becomes an avenue for the exploration of history and contemporary political and social issues, as well as physical country itself…"[212] Exhibition curator Bruce McLean further explains the significance of country in the show. He writes, "The 'My country' thematic is the spine of this exhibition, interrupting, punctuating and reinforcing the claims made over history and contemporary politics, reiterating the meaning of country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."[213] I suggest that the "country" that is at the heart of the exhibition of black Australia art is another realm of the Black Pacific. Framing the discussion in this chapter

[211] Ibid.

[212] Chris Saines, "Director's Message," in *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2013), 9.

[213] Bruce McLean, "This Land Is Mine/This Land Is Me," in *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2013), 21.

between two exhibitions that feature black art from two different geographies highlights how an expanded definition of what it means to be black in a global context is needed.

The intent of this chapter has been to foreground the many denotations and connotations of blackness in Oceania. This chapter differs from those that follow insofar as it presents briefly a wide range of examples rather than in-depth case studies. I first presented outsider views on blackness in the region to set up the perspective that Black Pacific art provides in counterpoint. I then analyzed photographic portraits of African American women who made their homes in Hawai‘i. This analysis yielded additional insight into the fields of African American and Pacific photography. The Black Pacific is vast and Teresia Teaiwa's poem *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad)* starts many avenues of conversation. Black Pacific theory must take into account the difficulties of comparing art and culture, the balance between Pacific and black viewpoints, and the reality that blackness can be misunderstood in what is ostensibly a safe space. Overall, Black Pacific art meets these challenges and creatively provides an outlet for an exploration of what happens when blackness meets Pacificness.

CHAPTER TWO

JUANITA HALL: THE BLACK PACIFIC IN *SOUTH PACIFIC*

> … It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.
>
> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.[214]
>
> —W. E. B. Du Bois

Just as the individual in the black Atlantic lives a "double-consciousness," so too does the individual in the Black Pacific. To position the black Atlantic as the gateway to modernity, Gilroy looks at the work of novelist Richard Wright through the lens of W. E. B. Du Bois' theory of double consciousness. Accordingly, Gilroy states:

> Wright's black subject is internally divided by cultural affiliation, citizenship, and the demands of national and racial identity. Yet the process of internal conflict that Du Bois described as the joining of 'two warring souls in one black body' is taken further so that its unconscious aspects become more significant. It acquires an ethno-psychiatric flavour [sic] specific to colonial and semi-colonial life.[215]

Gilroy argues that Wright's "double vision" is akin to Du Bois' double-consciousness which he considers a "Nietzschean idea of perspectival ways of knowing… [that contains] inner ambivalences …"[216] These ambivalences and their reconciliation are the crux of modernity insofar as two subject positions must be occupied at one time. The nature of this process is "ethno-psychiatric" in that one must reconcile self with outdated but lingering colonial

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[214] W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1996, Accessed October 8, 2015, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/408.

[215] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 161.

[216] Ibid.

perspectives of an individual's worth. For example, philosopher Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* defines the ethnopsychiatric subject as: "Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality."[217] The Black Pacific negates the "inferiority complex" referred to by Fanon. It holds ethnopsychiatric significance because it is a form of the "psychic and physical space" referred to by curators Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue for *The Global Africa Project*.[218] Taking the leads of Sims and King-Hammond, Du Bois, Wright, and Fanon, I bring to the foreground the subjectivities of the four women at the heart of this dissertation to demonstrate how their inner creativity is fueled by responding to, participating in, or representing blackness and Pacificness. The women experience double-consciousness and direct or indirect evidence may be found in their lives and practices as it relates to the Black Pacific. Black Pacific art, then, is artistic production that restores creative agency to double-consciousness. Thus, in the case of Juanita Hall, I analyze the visibility or invisibility of Hall's blackness as the character Bloody Mary in selected images from both the musical and film versions of *South Pacific* to uncover what Gilroy calls the "perspectival ways of knowing" on behalf of the mainstream American audience in regards to both blackness and Pacificness.

The real woman, as evinced in personal correspondence and photographs, is different from the character she portrays. Attendant with this "lived blackness"[219] is Gilroy's assertion that many black writers and intellectuals "embraced the fragmentation of self (doubling and splitting)

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[217] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18.

[218] Sims and King-Hammond, "The Global Africa Project: Contemporary Design, Craft, and Art," 10.

[219] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 82.

which modernity seems to promote."[220] I explore this fragmentation in the multiple images and perceptions of Juanita Hall. It becomes clear that "doubleness" is significant in the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific. Gilroy writes, "a preoccupation with the striking doubleness that results from this unique position – in an expanded West but not completely of it – is a definitive characteristic of the intellectual history of the black Atlantic."[221] I posit that this "doubleness" is also a defining characteristic of the Black Pacific.

In this chapter, I shine a spotlight on Juanita Hall's life to demonstrate how the "doubleness" of the Black Pacific is experienced, shaped, and represented by popular entertainment and publications after World War II. Additionally, I bring to the foreground how the imagery is an example of Black Pacific art. Two processes simultaneously take place that render images of Hall as Black Pacific visual culture. First, Hall's professional life in the character of Bloody Mary demonstrates that the female body of color is camouflaged behind ideological policies regarding expansion in the Pacific region. Second, Hall "restages" her female body of color in images which she may have had more control over and in doing so, speaks to the doubling of self—one of the "affinities and affiliations" that reside in the Black Pacific that are comparable to those in Gilroy's black Atlantic.

Erasing Juanita Hall/Eclipsing Blackness in *South Pacific*

On April 7, 1949, *South Pacific*, the musical composed by Richard Rodgers with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and directed by Joshua Logan,[222] opened on Broadway at the Majestic Theatre to rave reviews. The *Los Angeles Times* described how the "enchanted first night

[220] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*., 188.

[221] Ibid., 58

[222] The book of the musical was written by Oscar Hammerstein II and Joshua Logan.

audience… applauded with hardly a pause … [at the] triumphant Broadway premiere… ."[223] The musical was based on James A. Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*, a short story anthology published in 1947 that won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in the following year. Audiences were immediately drawn to the feisty and intelligent character of Bloody Mary, a Tonkinese[224] merchant who tries the patience and tests the morale of Navy seamen stationed on a Melanesian island during World War II. Bloody Mary's story arc was but one of several in the musical yet, as portrayed by African American actress Juanita Hall, she was unforgettable and incomparable. In the *New York Times*, theatre critic Brooks Atkinson declares that her "bustling, sharp-witted performance is a masterpiece."[225] In the musical, Hall, as Bloody Mary, is especially persistent with her attempts to convince Lieutenant Joe Cable to woo her mixed-race daughter, Liat. A Marine officer, Cable arrives on the base to recruit Navy personnel for a reconnaissance mission to gauge the strength of enemy troops in the vicinity of the islands.

Cable is drawn to the young Liat but as an American of his time, his conflicting feelings about an interracial romance lead him to balk at proposing marriage to her and bringing her home to the United States. In a photograph from the original production (Figure 2.1), Bloody Mary attempts to convince Cable (William Tabbert) that his relationship with her daughter, Liat

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[223] "'South Pacific' Scores Hit in Broadway Debut," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, April 9, 1949, sec. DRAMA, 11, accessed July 11, 2014.

[224] "Tonkinese" is an adjective applied to people from "Tonkin." After France took charge of Vietnam as a protectorate in 1885, the country was divided into three provinces, with the northernmost province called "Tonkin." The area is sometimes referred to as "Tonkin China." Japanese forces occupied the region from 1941-1945. The area would later become a site of contest during the Vietnam War and would eventually become part of North Vietnam until reunification with the southern part during the 1970s. Racially, Bloody Mary is Vietnamese and her daughter is of Vietnamese and French descent. For the history of French Indo-China see Spencer Tucker, ed., "French Indo-China.," *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC_CLIO, 2011).

[225] Brooks Atkinson, "WAR IDYLL TO MUSIC:Some Additional Notes On 'South Pacific,'" *New York Times*, June 5, 1949, sec. DRAMA-MUSIC-SCREEN RADIO-TELEVISION DANCE GARDENS-PHOTOGRAPHY BRIDGE-STAMPS ART, accessed July 11, 2014.

(Betta St. John), is inevitable. In Figure 2.1, captured by *Life* photographer John Swope, the close physical and emotional connection between Mary and Liat is juxtaposed against the physical and emotional distance that the suitor tries desperately to maintain. Yet, Mary's clenched fist anchors him visually to the two women. Cable dies during the mission and the fate of the young girl is left unresolved. In his review, Atkinson suggests that there is no need for worry because Bloody Mary "is ambitious more for her daughter than herself and she is full of native wisdom."[226] Indeed, as the audience witnessed in the moment depicted in Figure 2.1, it is reasonable to suspect that Liat's mother Bloody Mary will take the matter in hand and carve out an alternative yet equally strategic path for her daughter.

Figure 2.1: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Betta St. John (Liat), Juanita Hall (Bloody Mary) and William Tabbert (Lt. Joseph Cable) in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Photograph by John Swope. Accessed February 2, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-462f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

[226] Ibid.

On April 9, 1950, approximately a year after *South Pacific* opened, the American Theatre Wing, the originators of the Tony Award for Excellence in Theatre recognized the talent invested in the musical *South Pacific*. The Antoinette Perry Award for Excellence in Theatre, named for its' recently deceased former director—"Tony" is the masculinized version of her nickname—was in its fourth year and its rules determined that *South Pacific*, as it opened after the first of March, was not eligible for consideration at the Tony Awards for 1949. However, the organizers made up for the exclusion and in the following year, bestowed nine of the twenty awards to the hit Broadway musical.[227] Rodgers, Hammerstein, and Logan, as well as the leads Mary Martin (Nellie Forbush), Ezio Pinza (Emile De Becque), and the supporting actor, Myron McCormick (Luther Billis), received recognition. Most significantly, Juanita Hall won the honor of Best Actress, Supporting or Featured in a Musical, for her portrayal of Bloody Mary. She was the first African American and the first African American woman to win a Tony Award. Indeed, her performance, her characterization, and her depiction prompt a discussion of how the author and his plot and the creative team and their adaptation treat race in the United States after World War II. This demonstrates the fraught sociopolitical conditions in which Black Pacific visual culture is embedded.

While the interracial relationship between Liat and Lt. Cable under Mary's guardianship was significant, it was not the main plotline about racial harmony. Hailing from Arkansas, Ensign Nellie Forbush must decide if she can accept the mixed-race children of French planter Emile De Becque because in doing so, she accepts that love can cross racial lines and create

[227] At the 62nd Tony Awards in 2008, the first Broadway revival of *South Pacific* garnered eleven nominations and won seven, one of which was for Best Revival and for Best Director to Bartlett Scher. Catherine Zuber also won for Best Costume Design for a Musical. Loretta Ables Sayre was nominated for Featured Actress for her role of Bloody Mary but did not receive the award. The recognition of the musical and its performers many decades later attests to the significance that it still holds for the Black Pacific in the twenty-first century.

families, albeit untraditional ones for the time, but most especially for a Southern woman with rigid notions of black-white relationships and the perceived pitfalls of miscegenation. I discuss aspects of this plot because it was the main crux of *South Pacific* but within these levels of conflict in the two romances, the portrayal of a Tonkinese, or Vietnamese woman, by an African American woman begs questions about representations of blackness and Pacificness in a musical with the avowed intent of promoting tolerance for diversity.

It can be argued that by collapsing one ethnicity into another through the body of one woman is an example of racial harmony; that, in this case, the message about a woman's life trumps that of her origin. However, official postwar messages about Asia, because of the Allied victory, are as equally ambivalent as those about blackness due to the history of and context of race relations at that time in the United States. This proliferation of written material as mediated by Michener is examined by American Studies scholar Christina Klein in *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middle Brow Imagination 1945-1961*.[228] I suggest that in the musical, the result of the "paraphrasing" is that the portrayal of an Asian character by an African American actress can never fully address the concerns of both allies and citizens. In *South Pacific's* presentation of positive racial dynamics, while the Asian perspective is fore-grounded, the Black Pacific is ultimately "paraphrased" to use a term coined by Klein, in the pursuit of the larger official message of tolerance for Asia, specifically East Asia, after the rigors of the Pacific theatre in World War II. By "paraphrasing," I mean that the processes of exchanging one race for another, not recognizing differences in individuals, and generalizing in stereotypical categories are methods in orientalizing blackness and Pacificness inside and outside of the United States, in

[228] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). In her overall argument "Asia" is a construct and variously references East Asia, south Asia, and Southeast Asia depending on the specifics of her discussions. My references are to this construct as well unless otherwise stated.

much the same ways that Klein argues are prevalent in shaping an imaginary Asia in the decades following World War II.

In the intertwined Cold War and Civil Rights contexts, blackness is not easy for the mainstream American public to reconcile and this is clear in the progressive casting of Juanita Hall that is complicated by the regressive visual images of Bloody Mary. At the same time, images of the Pacific are not easy for American audiences to wrap their heads around either. This becomes clear in the ways that the Pacific is "paraphrased" in the musical as well through the frequent use of souvenirs mostly notably the fetishized boar's tooth necklace sought by Luther Billis or the shrunken head that fascinates and repulses the men. Understanding blackness and Pacificness are monumental tasks on their own. Understanding the Black Pacific is predicated on the same challenges and success that each of its components contains. While audiences may not have realized it at the time, Juanita Hall, in her personal and public lives demonstrated how blackness and Pacificness have a symbiotic relationship. The visual images under discussion in this chapter bear witness to the presence of the Black Pacific.

As in Figure 2.1, the imagery of Hall in her portrayal of Bloody Mary in the original Broadway production[229] and Hollywood film is central in my argument that blackness is "paraphrased" as a response to the changing perceptions and position of African Americans in American society after World War II. The images of Hall as Bloody Mary are the first mainstream instances of the Black Pacific in American culture. I am drawn to the term *paraphrase* because of its "double" utility as both a verb and a noun. It is fitting to employ such a word in the explication of the Black Pacific as this space is shadowed by Du Bois' notion of

[229] Subsequent actresses of different ethnicities have filled the role. I highlight how this factors into my argument later in the chapter.

double-consciousness. As a verb, it means that a person sums up or otherwise imparts another's words or ideas in their own voice. As a noun, it is the product of such an activity. "Paraphrase" would seem to be a straightforward concept, yet the original meaning can be lost, distorted, or changed in the process of translation. I point out in Chapter One that the first recorded paraphrase in the Black Pacific is the process through which a perceived physical likeness creates a noun—the portmanteau "New Guinea"—that links Africa with Melanesia. While the end result of paraphrasing should be a model of clarity, it is not uncommon, as in the instance of New Guinea, for the ensuing effort to be incomplete or "miss the point" because the exact wording can never be used unless it is quoted and cited. Yet, Klein's notion can only capture so much and I use it here in conjunction with my idea of "camouflage" as discussed later in the chapter.

In the case of Juanita Hall, the paraphrasing is only half of the picture. In images that Hall had more control over and in personal correspondence, a glimpse appears of how the Black Pacific is a position of creativity rather than one of no agency and passive acceptance. This becomes clear through a discussion of the following: 1) the diplomatic agenda of reconciling Asia for mainstream audiences as outlined by Klein; 2) an examination of the implications of her notion of "paraphrasing" for my argument as linked to the concept of camouflage that I pose; 3) the camouflaging role of the military as well as Michener's role in the paraphrasing of the Black Pacific; 4) the choice of casting and content by those who paraphrased Michener in song; 5) the iconicity of the Bloody Mary images and its effect of erasing Hall's personality particularly in media images geared to both white and black audiences; 6) this continuing process in the more formal portraits by the notorious photographer Carl Van Vechten; and 7) her recuperation of her

image through visual agency and through other methods under her control, such as personal correspondence with Van Vechten and the poet Langston Hughes.

The Art of the Paraphrase/Camouflage in Asia-America and the Black Pacific

Klein argues that postwar popular culture representations of "Asia" through novels, mass market magazines and other forms of visual media, such as *South Pacific*, served to "reinforc[e] the famed 'Cold War consensus,' the domestic hegemonic bloc that supported the postwar expansion of U.S. power around the world."[230] She points to "a steady stream of stories, fiction and nonfiction, that took Asia and the Pacific as their subject matter."[231] From this "stream," she draws out the narrative of racial tolerance underlying *South Pacific* and other popular musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein such as *The King and I* (1951) and *Flower Drum Song* (1958), which also featured Hall, once again cast as an Asian character. Additionally, Klein argues that the politico-tourist novels and short stories of ex-serviceman Michener, such as *Tales of the South Pacific*, on which the musical is based, are particularly successful and memorable examples of indoctrination.

Key to my argument is the role that Klein attaches to Michener: "As a well-known private citizen who explained the government's position on events in Asia, Michener served as the quintessential 'paraphraser' … he translated Cold War ideology into popular narrative and explained it in terms that the man on the street could understand and accept."[232] She specifically cites his paraphrasing in *The Voice of Asia* (1951), a collection of short stories similar to *Tales of*

[230] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 7.

[231] Ibid., 2.

[232] Ibid., 126.

the South Pacific but focusing solely on his experiences in Asia. Klein reads the novel as a paraphrasing of "a series of National Security Council documents that laid out American 'objectives, policies, and course of action in Asia'."[233] She means that his novels are travel guides, so to speak, to help the tourist abroad and the citizen at home, assimilate Asia as an ally in the Cold War rather than as an enemy as was the case in World War II. Klein posits that popular culture novelists like James Michener, as middlebrow, or mainstream cultural producers, were instrumental in producing this discourse. Michener did not just reiterate his experiences in Asia; he actively shaped what readers thought about Asia and how they reacted to Asia under the authority of those impressions. Klein points out that "Michener became famous not for writing about Asia and the Pacific per se, but for narrating America's encounter with Asia and the Pacific … ."[234] Yet, while Michener directly shapes discourse about America and Asia, the fact that his work comments on blackness and the Pacific is overlooked. This is clear in an iconic image from the end of the musical (Figure 2.2).

Emile and Nellie are reunited after his successful mission. She has come to realize that love is indeed color-blind. In Figure 2.2, the two protagonists hold hands across a low coffee table, while Emile's two children are safe in the middle. A similar scene is featured at the end of the 1958 film; the family is outside and Emile and Nellie clasp hands under a dinner table. The setting has changed somewhat; they are now outdoors in the stunning tropical landscape of the island in the second image. Of course, filming on location offers visual opportunities not possible on a theatre set but the core message is the same: A perfect nuclear mixed-race family is a method to contain and/or integrate Asia and the Pacific after World War II, according to Klein.

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[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid., 120.

Figure 2.2: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Ezio Pinza (Emile de Becque), Barbara Luna (Ngana), Michael or Noel DeLeon (Jerome) and Mary Martin (Nellie Forbush) in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Photograph by John Swope. Accessed February 2, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7d9deb7c-95f6-b574-e040-e00a1806465b.

Against this visual backdrop, the story argues for a familial embrace of Asia—an elision in both the musical and film as the characters of the children are meant to be Polynesian, i.e., Pacific. In her analysis of *South Pacific* Klein focuses on the romantic relationships between Nellie Forbush and Emile De Becque as well as the one that I have described between Joe Cable and Liat. Klein's interpretation of how these parallel romantic relationships mirrors foreign and domestic policy is compelling:

> *South Pacific* brings … themes of antiracism and global expansion together via the tropes of family formation and adoption. … The scene [at the end of the musical] triumphantly resolves Nellie's moral crisis: she has overcome her racism and decided to marry Emile and accept his mixed-race children as her own. … This final scene serves as the musical's ideological center, because it shows that Americans can overcome their racism and that this will enable them to move into the Pacific with a clean conscience. Overcoming

> racism becomes here a precondition for successful expansion, and expansion the reward for overcoming racism.[235]

The theme of antiracism was not lost on African American constituents and this circle of familial and political harmony does not include them, neither literally nor figuratively; surprisingly or not, as both musical and film are embedded in the early and middle Civil Rights era. Yet, visually, as in Figure 2.2, it is hard to find blackness in the musical and film; therefore, against this scenery, it is necessary to also read what the absence of blackness means.

Klein does not discuss this particular issue which is why I am examining how Juanita Hall is erased and blackness is eclipsed in the musical and film. This takes place through what Klein describes as "global imaginaries."[236] While not referring to the Black Pacific in particular, she argues these key foreign and domestic policies were articulated in 1947 by President Truman and in 1957 by mid-level government bureaucrat Francis Wilcox. The timing could not be more apt in the framing of the case study of Juanita Hall as the musical opens two years after the former speech and the film debuts one year after the latter. I argue that Figure 2.2 demonstrates what Klein would call the "global imagery of containment" proposed by Truman and the "global imaginary of integration" as championed by Wilcox."[237] It would seem that the two methods contradict each other. Indeed, Klein writes that "integration generated an inclusive rather than a policing energy."[238] Yet, this contradiction did not preclude both stances providing the impetus for Cold War foreign policy. Klein writes, "Far from being opposed to each other, the containment of the Soviet Union and the integration of the 'capitalist free world' are best

[235] Ibid., 163-164.

[236] Ibid., 23.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

understood as two sides of the same coin."[239] In addition to integration, a policy of containment worked to bind the globe in terms that the United States preferred. The writings of Michener and other mainstream cultural producers use "sentimental education" to reconcile these methods and in the process both become understood as being important to domestic policy as well. I agree with this finding and see integration and containment as applicable to the role of race especially in terms of blackness and Pacificness.

I posit that the global imaginaries of containment and integration work to eclipse blackness and by default, Pacificness in the production. By this I mean that, racial tolerance of Asia is promoted and audiences can take from this that racial tolerance of African Americans is implied as well. In American culture, understanding of Pacific cultures is not deeply formed at this point which shows in the stereotypical imagery of Bloody Mary. While Klein sees containment and integration as either a policing or including process, she argues that both are important for the United States' domestic and foreign policy. I want to look more at the contradictions because it is in this clash that the Black Pacific is both lost and regained.

I suggest that *camouflage* is the process by which the global imaginaries create the paraphrase. As a noun, camouflage is widely seen as clothing or equipment that visually changes the original in order to conceal it. As a verb, camouflage is the process of doing such a thing. "Stealth" surrounds both meanings of the word. In nature, chameleons change color for protection and in war, both sides utilize clothing or equipment that conceals or blends their presence into the background to escape detection. In terms of this case study, "camouflage" is on par with "paraphrase" and both work together in this argument to highlight the tension inherent in selectively choosing one aspect or the other of the Black Pacific to make the point. While

[239] Ibid., 24.

paraphrase serves linguistic purpose, camouflage sharpens the idea of invisibility or visibility that I tease out in the following discussion. In Figure 2.3, there is at least one black serviceman, dancer Archie Savage,[240] in the original production and yet while the black dancer takes center stage in this production photograph, blackness is almost nonexistent in the movie; in one key scene, only one black soldier is barely visible on the beach in the crowd of sailors that will at any moment, break into song and dance, harmoniously following the lead of Nellie Forbush, portrayed by Mitzi Gaynor.

Figure 2.3: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Archie Savage (Abner) and Seabees in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Photograph by John Swope. Accessed March 19, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-4640-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

[240] Archie Savage was a renowned dancer with over five Broadway plays on his resume at the time of *South Pacific*. He was a dance partner of choreographer Katherine Dunham and a protégé/rumored lover of vocalist and actress Ethel Waters. See Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (University of Illinois Press, 2002).

In the film, Nellie Forbush is surrounded by enlisted men, the face of the black soldier is barely discernible as he leans in to look at her impossibly white laundry, done in a role-reversal by Luther Billis. The black serviceman's cap is tilted over his eyes, further obscuring his image. While in the song and dance scene, he is more visible, he is overtaken by the dynamism of the other swirling and harmonizing actors/dancers. This overshadowing is in complete opposition to the reality that about 200,000 black servicemen served in Asia and the Pacific Theater in World War II as shown in Figure 2.4.[241]

Figure 2.4: "Enlisted men serving on Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides...placing 6-inch shells in magazines at the Naval Ammunition Depot." From left to right: S1/c Dodson B. Samples, S1/c Raymond Wynn, S1/c Edward L. Clavo, and S1/c Jesse Davis. N.d. 80-G-123941. Photo courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed March 19, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures/images/african-americans-wwii-072.jpg.

Anthropologist Margaret Jolly also finds significance in this omission:

> Despite its pretensions to racial tolerance, the film can hardly be read as avowing equality of race, sex, or class. There is not only the extraordinary absence of Islanders, except as

[241] Geoffrey M White and Lamont Lindstrom, eds., *The Pacific Theater : Island Representations of World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 18.

> part of the lush backdrop, but one of the singular features of the Pacific war—the large number of black American soldiers—who figure prominently in Islanders' memories and myths—are virtually absent … There is one lonely black American soldier.[242]

While Jolly writes about the later film, the absence of Pacific Islanders or African Americans, or what I would collectively call the Black Pacific, is equally true in the earlier Broadway production. The original text by Michener describes those who are "black" and/or "Pacific" but I see this as a description and not an acknowledgment of a Black Pacific identity or visual culture.[243] Nevertheless, the struggle of African Americans for equality in the United States urgently loomed. The decision in 1954 to end segregation in public schools handed down in *Brown vs. Board of Education* is neatly bracketed at one end by the publication of Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific* in 1947, and at the other end by the fight of the Little Rock Nine to integrate Little Rock Central High School in 1957 in opposition to the political agenda of Governor Faubus of Arkansas. One year after this crisis, the Hollywood film version of *South Pacific* opened in 1958 with its optimistic blonde heroine hailing from Little Rock, Arkansas, scene of this devastating clash, images of which still linger in the public memory from the Civil Rights movement. In this atmosphere, it is not surprising that while the intent is to promote racial harmony, the representation in the musical, film, and its accompanying publicity, portrays a broad rather than nuanced representation of blackness and other lived experiences that is not Euro-American.

Blackness should be acknowledged in *South Pacific* for three reasons: first, Michener comments on both African Americans and Melanesians in his anthology; second, the story is set

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[242] Margaret Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali' Ha'i: Eroticism and Exoticism in Representations of the Pacific," in *Sites of Desire/Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 116.

[243] I focus on the Black Pacific yet the Brown Pacific as outlined by Damon Salesa is equally camouflaged in the different versions of *South Pacific*. See the Introduction for a discussion of Salesa's theory.

in Melanesia which has its own notions of blackness that may or may not be linked to those elsewhere in Oceania or African-descended world; and, third, Juanita Hall's performance is embedded in the context of her life as a woman who identifies as African American. I acknowledge that blackness is present but is camouflaged behind the ostensible message of racial tolerance toward Asians in the Cold War struggle. The levels of camouflage build upon each other: Michener writes of his experiences in Melanesia and describes both Melanesians and African Americans; his anthology becomes emblematic of the forging of ties with Japan and other Asian countries after World War II; Rodgers, Hammerstein, and Logan adapt the anthology and elaborate on this process and capitalize on America's concern with Civil Rights; the three cast Hall in the Bloody Mary role to indicate their commitment to this cause; yet, her experiences of an African American woman in the United States at this time is an adjunct to the overall message in mainstream magazines, except those targeted at African American readers. The factors combine to exaggerate and fetishize Pacific culture. Japanese and Asian cultures receive the same treatment.

The character of Bloody Mary is the key representation of this phenomenon. Klein touches briefly on this aspect of the musical and the movie, as the same actress played the role in both: "The casting of the African American actress Juanita Hall as the Tonkinese Bloody Mary facilitated the show's conflation of Asian-white relations abroad and black-white relations at home."[244] Later, in her discussion of *Flower Drum Song* in which Hall also played the role of an Asian character, Klein writes that in interviews, Hall stresses her status as an American. Klein concludes that this insistence on American-ness demonstrates the shift to embrace nationality rather than race or ethnicity as defining characteristics. Indeed, mainstream discussion of Hall's

[244] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 172.

many portrayals of Asian women is also paraphrased in black publications. *Ebony* magazine features at least three photographic essays of Hall and the cast of *South Pacific* between 1950 and 1959. An examination of several examples of magazine images as related to paraphrasing and camouflaging the Black Pacific is discussed later in the chapter.

While Klein is cognizant of the Orientalizing of Juanita Hall in the *South Pacific* context, she does not undertake a contextual analysis of why that specific process comes to be nor, as a literature and cultural studies scholar, does she perform formal analyses of the visual material specifically in reference to Juanita Hall and Bloody Mary. Here, I undertake a visual analysis because, by leaving the discussion at a choice of nationality over ethnicity also erases the subjectivity of the black female primarily because there is not an opening to visually analyze blackness and Pacificness in *South Pacific*. In other words, the Black Pacific component of Juanita Hall's life and portrayal is not touched upon and this is a dire oversight.

While the verb *camouflage*[245] has the denotation of to "hide or disguise the presence of (a person, animal, or object)…" or to "conceal the existence of (something undesirable)," and the verb *paraphrase* has the denotation of "expressing the meaning (of something) using different words,"[246] I use both to create a lens through which to track the eliding and eclipsing of blackness in the "complex" of Michener's novel, the original movie and musical, in the service of a Cold War policy of racial tolerance in Asia while at the same time erasing the problem of equality for African Americans domestically. In his role as narrator, it is hard to separate his representations of blackness from his beliefs about blackness as relevant to the Cold War mission

[245] "Camouflage: Definition of Camouflage in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)," accessed November 5, 2015, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/camouflage.

[246] "Paraphrase: Definition of Paraphrase in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)," accessed November 5, 2015, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/paraphrase.

he actively pursued. It is important to now to survey how Michener depicts blackness in the anthology because this plays into later visual representations of Bloody Mary.

The Master of the Paraphrase and the Role of the Military for the Black Pacific

Earlier, I referred to Jolly's observation that "the large number of black American soldiers [in *South Pacific*] … are virtually absent."[247] Here, I want to explore this phenomenon in-depth to demonstrate how the absence of black servicemen in the film version of *South Pacific* is revealing, not only as a comment on the ongoing absence of black actors and roles in Hollywood, but also as a reflection of the institutionalization of racial discrimination against Americans of African descent in the military that predates World War II and continues during that conflict. And for institutional racism in the military, the same can be true for those of Pacific descent and I focus on one Polynesian American family's story about relatives in the military in Chapter Three. The discrimination against black Americans is a significant factor because it is out of military life that *South Pacific* is born. Michener served in the Navy and was inspired to write his short stories describing his experiences. Scholarship about the short stories, musical and movie do not overlook racial discrimination as formative to the storyline. In fact, the racial aspect is the paramount argument in many analyses. However, an analysis of how the military's policies on race is not always linked to the space of the Black Pacific. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapter One, the Black Pacific can be traced back to the sixteenth century and herein lays the historical context of the Black Pacific in *South Pacific*.

In addition, while it is the sandy beaches of Polynesia, especially of Hawai‘i, that most can envision when thinking of "enchanted evenings," the conflict in the Pacific also crossed into

[247] Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali' Ha'i: Eroticism and Exotcism in Representations of the Pacific," 116.

Melanesia and this is where Michener was stationed. The islands in *South Pacific* are unnamed but it is clear that French colonial control is or was in play during the story. While many know that Gauguin escaped to idyllic Tahiti, a French colony, just as many do not realize that France held colonies in Vanuatu and New Caledonia, both islands in Melanesia and the indigenous islanders would have been blessed with dark skin and hair with attitude. All of this reinforces that while blackness underpins the environment and story of *South Pacific*, there is a gaping silence about its presence in the film and musical. Consequently, the formation of blackness within Oceania and the understanding of its similarities and differences outside of the Pacific are not fully articulated in the musical and film. In Chapter One, I survey notions of blackness in Oceania and here, in order to deepen my theory of Black Pacific art and visual culture, I look at how blackness is represented in Michener's anthology as well as how it reflects the burgeoning movement for Civil Rights within the military and its implications outside of the armed forces.

I have chosen case studies of women to build my argument in this dissertation. The female voice needs to be foregrounded. Yet, the visibility and invisibility of black men in the Pacific during World War II is not insignificant. I first touched upon the presence and absence earlier in this chapter and here, I highlight that for Pacific Islanders, particularly Melanesians, the visual recognition of black American servicemen was powerful. Beyond my specific discussion of Juanita Hall, my examples in this chapter focus on the black male experience in the military in the Pacific because although my immediate intent in this dissertation is to examine female agency in the Black Pacific, another goal is to theorize the possibilities of the Black Pacific for all participants. Additionally, I must extrapolate form accounts of African American men in the Pacific Theatre because although African American women served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, none of their battalions went to the Pacific. No evidence can be found to shed

light on indigenous Oceanic thoughts about black women. [248] Yet, numerous sources look at the policies about and perceptions of the black male in the military and I draw from them to summarize the historical context of the Black Pacific in *South Pacific*.

As for the long struggle for equality in the military, it was only during World War II in which palpable change began to take place. As early as 1797, an edict was put in place specifying that "No Negro, Mulatto, or Indian" could join the Marines.[249] This discrimination continued through successive military conflicts and into the twentieth century through World War I in various branches of the military. With mobilization during World War II, the effects of Jim Crow laws were felt because several training bases were located in the southern United States. Ronald. Culp, Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel, relates the experience of Marine recruit Glenn J. White as he arrived for training in North Carolina:

> Train and bus tickets to Montford Point meant a return to the South. White joined many of his fellow black Marines in the common experience of changing to a Jim Crow car before crossing the Mason-Dixon line. He left the train at Rocky Mount to find a seat at the back of the bus bound for Jacksonville. From the bus station in Jacksonville, White made his way to the main gate at Montford Point Camp. The gate guard greeted him with a genial, 'How you doin', son? Have you come to see your father or to shine shoes?[250]

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[248] For an examination of African American gender in Japan during and after World War II, see Yasuhiro Okada, *Gendering the "Black Pacific": Race Consciousness, National Identity, and the Masculine/feminine Empowerment Among African Americans in Japan Under U.S. Military Occupation, 1945-1952* (PhD Diss., Michigan State University, History, 2008). For oral histories of black men and women serving in World War II, see Maggi M. Morehouse, *Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). For the story of the first African-American female officer in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in her own voice, see Charity Adams Earley, *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1989). While a WAC battalion was stationed in New Caledonia, I found no evidence that any were African American most likely due to segregation. Alyce Dixon, who passed away at age 108 in February 2016, served with Earley most famously in the 6888th Postal Battalion, which included about 800 African American women who expedited mail in Europe after the Battle of the Bulge in only three months. Sue Sophia Dauser, a young Caucasian woman, joined the Navy Nurse Corps in World War I, and served until the end of World II. She spent much of WWII in the Pacific theatre as Navy Nurse Superintendent, but no such success story can be found for African American women because segregation denied them enlistment.

[249] Ronald Culp, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942-1946* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007), 11.

[250] Ibid.

The tension was present as well on bases outside of the continental United States. Some black servicemen compared "Guam to a city in the southern United States because of the discrimination [they] found there."[251] Guam was and still is an important military base in Micronesia as I discussed in Chapter One in my argument about blackness and the military in Micronesia. Even in this realm of "small islands," racism is felt during the conflict in the Pacific theater.

Even after the end of the war, racial discrimination continued as the troops deployed. For example, one serviceman "… found himself in San Diego on liberty, in uniform, proud of the overseas ribbons on his chest. He walked into a bar to get a drink only to hear, 'Sorry, you'll have to leave.' Segregation was still the rule, and in 'white' bars, blacks were not served. It made no difference if a man was a returning war veteran."[252] As this anecdote reveals, even decorated men still faced attacks after fighting on the side of the Allies. This is extremely ironic as one of the first heroic acts in the dawn of World War II was committed by Doris "Dorie" Miller during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The twenty-one-year-old mess attendant, after his station was destroyed by a torpedo, continued fighting with an anti-aircraft machine gun until he ran out of ammunition. Miller received a Navy Cross for his efforts. Unfortunately, Miller was later killed in 1943 in the Gilbert Islands at the Battle of Makin. This is an extraordinary set of circumstances: a young African American serviceman who is assigned to kitchen duties fights heroically at Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i at the beginning of the war and dies in a battle in Micronesia two years later. His story demonstrates that the lives and deaths of black people, whatever their origin, has contributed to the history of Oceania. Granted, his service and death

[251] Ibid., 207.

[252] Ibid., 217.

were in the mission of the United States but it is poignant that the site of his heroism and death is Oceania.

The military's role in catalyzing the Civil Rights movement is analyzed by historian Gary A. Donaldson. He asserts that, contrary to its own desires or those of American society "… from 1919 to 1941… [i]t became clear at this time that the military would be the leader (albeit a reluctant one) in changing attitudes toward blacks nationwide, that desegregation and an end to Jim Crow would come first in the military and then spread to society in general."[253] After the declaration of war and in spite of the heroic acts of black servicemen such as Doris Miller, "It became increasingly obvious that the Army would use black troops only when it had to, a revelation that was probably not surprising considering the Army's record on that point in past wars."[254] Donaldson writes of the conservative outlook that spanned generations:

> [I]t is truly strange that the armed forces, a traditional bastion of American conservatism, should take the lead here in this very conservative period in American history and achieve desegregation before it could be achieved in American society. But the politics of the times, coupled with a need for greater efficiency in the Cold War years, won out over the age-old traditions of racism in the military. It was a new dawn for the armed forces, and for America.[255]

Donaldson highlights here the confluence of forces that merge to activate the Cold War imperative. Cold War policy had to be enacted on a global scale and the United States had to put its best political foot forward, so to speak; and, this meant moving toward equality for African Americans. Donaldson explains: "If the war was the great catalyst that began the movement for racial equality in America, then it was politics that was the prime mover. … Black leaders made

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[253] Gary Donaldson, *The History of African-Americans in the Military: Double V* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Pub. Co., 1991), 99.

[254] Ibid., 117.

[255] Ibid., 139-140.

it clear that they wanted concessions for black soldiers in exchange for black votes."[256] The overt message of racial tolerance in the film *South Pacific* may have reflected on the struggle for equality but the message was partially motivated by acceptance of Asian allies in the Cold War fight to halt the spread of Communism. This is due in part to what Klein articulates is the tension between "global imaginaries of containment" and global imaginaries of integration."[257] This mixed message about blackness as represented in the original production and later film is a result of an institutionalized reluctance to end the long era of Jim Crow and reconciling racial tolerance of black Americans in service to Cold War policies of containment.

Turning to Michener's short stories, there are several instances in which he refers to black military men and his characterization is patronizing. Born in 1907, six years after Juanita Hall, and approximately a generation after the end of Reconstruction following the Civil War, Michener, although raised by Quaker adoptive parents and with an open mind, would still have been bound by current vocabulary at the time. While well-intentioned, the portrait of blackness and Pacificness in *Tales of the South Pacific* is written with broad strokes of description. Although his heroine, Nellie, overcomes her racism, Michener, as an author, writes as a product of his times. For instance, in "A Cemetery at Hoga Point," the culminating story in the novel, his description of the black caretaker is couched in terms of deprecating amusement:

> It was then that I noticed a tall, very thin Negro ambling toward me. He walked like one of the mechanical ducks which dull-eyed men sell on the street corners of New York, a waddle-walk obtained by never lifting either foot completely from the ground. But the Negro gave the shuffle a certain dignity.[258]

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[256] Ibid., 132.

[257] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 23.

[258] James A. Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 379.

While the black man is concluded to be dignified, all of the descriptors suggest slowness rather than purposefulness—an ambling, shuffling, wind-up toy.

This character's conversation with the narrator is sprinkled with servility. When the narrator asks to enter the cemetery, the black caretaker says, "'You certainly kin, suh! ... Won't you please come in, suh? … Me n' Denis, we doan' see much people up dis yere way. Please to come in!'."[259] The perceived indolence of the Negro caretaker is reiterated in later dialogue. Speaking of Cable, whose death is different but no less heroic than the movie version, the black man says, "He got hisse'f into some kind of trouble down south,' the Negro droned on, pointing at the grave with a lazy thumb."[260] In this instance, he is referring to "trouble" on the southern part of the island but this statement can be read as reinforcing the notion that Cable was ambivalent about his relationship with Liat and the implications of it if he had, indeed, taken her back home. While it is never clear that the narrator throughout the stories in *Tales of the South Pacific* is indeed Michener—the voice switches occasionally to that of some characters—the voice of the characters can only be developed from the author's imagination or his elaboration of what he saw, heard, and felt.

In other instances in the collection, the black and brown female characters are treated with contempt and represented with hyperbole. As mentioned previously, the anthology, musical, and film are set in the South Pacific, most likely on a previously French-controlled island in Melanesia and in encounters with the military, the Melanesians are treated poorly. For example, in the following scene, Michener describes how a traveling doctor treats the Melanesian girls in "Fo' Dolla', the story of the triangular relationship between Joe Cable, Bloody Mary and Liat:

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[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid., 382.

"He patted all the Tonks on the head, tried to pat the shy black girls on the bottom, and smiled at the sedate sisters who stood on the stone steps."[261] His treatment of the Asian and Pacific black women is very different from the deference he pays to the Catholic nuns who also live on the island of Bali Ha'i. It would seem that military hierarchies translate into how the inhabitants of the islands are treated, depending on their ethnicity. Not surprisingly, the white women in the military are treated marginally better.

In the musical and film, Nellie has no relationship with Bill Harbison. However, in Michener's short story, she does have a relationship with him that is not helped by military rules that declared nurses are officers and as officers are not allowed to fraternize with the enlisted men: "As a result of this involved social system, military nurses frequently have unhappy emotional experiences."[262] Harbison attempts to rape Nellie but she determines that he may actually wish to marry her and was momentarily affected by the moonlight on their drive. Unfortunately, as he does not take the initiative to do so, she proposes only to learn that he is married. While Nellie does have some (dubious) agency to interpret the attack as a misguided proposal, the Black Pacific women, as I have defined, in the novel do not have the same power. In a survey of travel writing and imaginaries, English Literature scholar Justin D. Edwards describes *Tales of the South Pacific* as "[a]n untroubled Orientalist fantasy… [that] illustrates an American tradition of imperial control and sexual adventure…."[263] This appears to hold true in this excerpt.

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[261] Ibid., 62.

[262] Ibid., 47.

[263] Justin D. Edwards, *Exotic Journeys : Exploring the Erotics of U.S. Travel Literature, 1840-1930 /* (Hanover : University of New Hampshire, published by University Press of New England, c2001.), 17.

Other plot points surrounding interracial romance in the three versions demonstrate the extent of camouflaging and paraphrasing of the Black Pacific in mainstream perception after World War II. Nellie is already mistrustful of men and the secrets they keep when she falls for Emile. The incident with Harbison in the short story serves to make her suspicious, a state of mind that is compounded in her relationship with De Becque due to the issue of race. She is already closed off emotionally to men because of the near-rape and rejection and transfers to another island where she meets Emile. The emotional turmoil that she experiences on her first assignment is compounded by the evidence of De Becque's sexual relationship with several women of different races. I focus on this analysis of Michener's text because it provides deeper insight in how the Black Pacific is camouflaged and paraphrase than its' subsequent adaptations.

When Nellie recognizes her attraction to Emile, she is very much a proponent of true love that is fated. While in the movie, Emile introduces Nellie to his two children, a boy and a girl, in the novel, she finds out from another serviceman, who often acts as narrator, about De Becque's oldest daughter who is half-Javanese. The impact of his bawdy story—"The Frenchman's Daughter"—falls on Nellie's already numb heart; she is not certain who is trustworthy and who is not. She acts as if nothing is wrong but she is in shock. Her first response is to rationalize the relationship she has discovered by thinking that it is Emile's power in the colony that the women are attracted to: "De Becque was a man of the islands. He had lived there for twenty-six years. He was a powerful man, and women were plentiful. Through him they saw a chance of rearing fine daughters, half white, and they eagerly took that chance. … the De Becque girls were fine and beautiful. Latouche, the eldest, was apparently wild, but she was smart and lovely."[264] Perhaps De Becque never means to keep the children a secret from Nellie in either the movie or

[264] Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*, 136.

the novel. But it is an omission of information that he only reveals after he has secured her love and cooperation in their relationship.

In "Our Heroine," Nellie meets the girls and her calm veneer breaks down. It is significant that De Becque has had no male children with the women who may displace the legitimate white male heirs he will have with a white wife whom he legally weds. While Nellie was only aware of the older girls from the aviator's story, there is a surprise for her: "Nellie looked in astonishment at four little girls who stood behind one of the teakwood chairs. … Then they came forth, in gingham frocks, pigtails, and curtseys."[265] While she knows that the older girls are Javanese, it is no surprise that the younger ones are Tonkinese: "Two were Tonkinese, that is they were half Tonkinese, and they were beautiful as only Eurasian girls can be. They were seven and nine. Their almond eyes were black. Their foreheads were clean and high. They had very white teeth and golden complexions."[266] What confuses Nellie and breaks her frozen emotions is that the two younger girls are very nearly *black*:

> The two other girls were half Polynesian, daughters of that strange and proud race. They were round of face and darker than their sisters. Their eyes were black as pools at night, their hair the same, long and straight even in pigtails. They had rich mouths and splendidly proportioned bodies. They were ten and eleven.[267]

De Becque takes her astonishment in stride and proudly shows her a photograph that he carries with him: "From an envelope he produced a well-thumbed photograph of four tall, thin, sharp-eyed girls. The first and third were exquisite beauties … The second and fourth were handsome girls, and only their sisters' storybook charm made them seem plain. It was noticeable that each

[265] Ibid.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid., 137.

had a quizzical smile on her lips."[268] Emile carries a photograph of his older daughters and is proud of his family.

In the next instance, all of the issues concerning race in the 1940s comes to the foreground of the short story:

> Nellie Forbush, of Otolousa, Arkansas, could not speak. She was glad her mother had taught her never to make up her mind beforehand. … But before her were indisputable facts! Two of them! Emile De Becque, not satisfied with Javanese and Tonkinese women, had also lived with a Polynesian. A nigger! To Nellie's tutored mind any person living or dead who was not white or yellow was a nigger.[269]

Nellie's mind is "tutored" to feel this way by a Southern upbringing: "Her entire Arkansas upbringing made it impossible for her to deny the teachings of her youth. Emile De Becque had lived with the nigger. He had nigger children. If she married him, they would be her step-daughters … She suffered a revulsion which her lover could never understand."[270] Here, Michener is not coy about Nellie's feelings or the language he uses to describe her *revulsion*.

In the short story, musical, and film, race is marked by appearance of features. Additionally, race is marked by comments to the effect of physical appearance. When meeting Emile's children for the first time. Nellie is astounded by their eyes—it is almost as if there is something magical about the eyes of these non-white children. Skin tone is noticed and categorized. While there are only two small children in the movie who are adorable and in need of mothering, in the short story, the descriptions and dialogue about both the older and younger girls suggest exotic, wild girls who are at the whim of fickle nature and are not easily controlled.

Lieutenant Cable also has a moment of truth about his relationship to Liat. Again, in the novel, physical evaluation marks their first encounter: "… her oval face looked exquisite against

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[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid., 138.

[270] Ibid.

the dark hair … Her white teeth shone clearly. Her firm chin looked resolute. She was altogether delectable, and Cable knew it. From that moment there was no uncertainty'."[271] Much as Nellie faces a decision about parenting, Joe does as well, although he is not physically confronted with the issue. To Liat, he says, "'I was thinking … that it would be heaven to have children with you. To live somewhere together. Somewhere like Bali Ha'i.' Then soberer thought overtook him."[272]

I have selected the above examples of text and dialogue to demonstrate the Michener is straightforward in his approach to racism even though he just repeats common tropes at the time about blackness; whereas, the director of the movie literally uses soft-focus to blur the message about blackness. In a discussion of the lasting impact of *South Pacific* and the differences in the versions, American Studies scholar Nicolaus Mills writes: "… [W]hat makes Michener's approach to racial prejudice so relevant for today is that he was much more willing than Rodgers and Hammerstein were in their music to acknowledge racism's depth and resistance to ideological solutions."[273] I agree with Mills and the above comparisons between the short stories and the later adaptations bear out this assertion.

Looking at the text, I am not suggesting that Michener is not anti-racist, but I am suggesting that his handling of black characters and the dialogue attributed to them in the novel can only be linked to his positioning in a changing, but slowly changing, United States. What becomes clear is that Michener is farsighted in recognizing that racial tolerance must be put in place in Asia while at the same time, even with his statements to the contrary, the issue of African American equality in the United States is one that even he can't quite articulate without

[271] Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*., 153.

[272] Ibid., 180.

[273] Nicolaus Mills, "Reviving James Michener," *Dissent*, Fall 2008.

contradiction due to the climate of racial tension that was ready to explode during the Civil Rights movement.

But, the music and lyrics of Rodgers and Hammerstein are not ineffective tools to comment on racism in 1940s and 1950s America. Consequently, popular music theorists Paul Filmer, Val Rimmer, and Dave Walsh explain the efficacy of musicals in communicating values. They write, "Musicals, like all popular texts, and forms of art have an explicitly reflexive relationship with the societies from which they stem. As well as reflecting the historical and cultural character of society they voice society's own sense of its life and values."[274] They write in reference specifically to *Oklahoma*, an earlier musical helmed in 1943 by Rodgers and Hammerstein but the idea can be extended to other of their musicals, like *South Pacific*, and to American society at this particular time. They continue, "… [T]he musical…has been a primary and widely accessible voice through which the American way of life has expressed itself to people in the USA and to much of the rest of the world."[275] This value dissemination plays out in "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," a key song from the movie and musical. Scholar Patricia O. McGhee discusses how songs such as this one in which Joe berates both himself and Nellie for their biases, is received by audiences:

> Were the record-breaking audiences unaware of the fact that prejudice was intrinsic to the music and the play? A group of protesters did object to the song 'Carefully Taught,' calling it a form of propaganda…In a newspaper interview, Oscar Hammerstein II defended his lyrics, insisting they were not propaganda but definitely a protest against racial prejudice.[276]

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[274] Paul Filmer Rimmer, Val, Walsh, Dave, "Articles - Oklahoma!: Ideology and Politics in the Vernacular Tradition of the American Musical," *Popular Music.* 18, no. 3 (1999): 381.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Patricia O. McGhee, "South Pacific Revisited: Were We Carefully Taught or Reinforced?," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1988). Also see Andrea Most, "'You've Got to Be Carefully Taught': The Politics of Race in Rodgers and Hammerstein's South Pacific," *Theatre Journal* 52, no. 3 (2000): 307–37.

The lyrics sung by Joe Cable focus on how culture teaches people to react in particular ways to each other and are highlighted as a key antiracist message in the narrative:

> You've got to be taught to be afraid
> Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
> And people whose skin is a different shad—
> You've got to be carefully taught.

Although she does not use these same words, this is the message that Nellie tries to impress upon on Emile when she rejects him because of his children. This scene between Nellie and Joe, with Harbison and De Becque arriving later, is a pivotal moment in the movie; Lieutenant Cable leaves for his mission and doesn't return. His relationship with Liat is truncated and the hypothetical children disappear. After this, Nellie does reunite with Emile, as revealed in the last scene in the musical (Figure 2.2) and film with such a striking composition and in the novel, she joins the happy family of five as they sing. Nellie has made her decision and has reacted against all that she was carefully taught growing up in Arkansas. This happy reconciliation is an example of the "sentimental education" that Klein locates in Cold War efforts of simultaneous integration and containment.

In a sentimental education, the role of love is paramount in the narrative and various categories of love are represented: paternal and maternal love, love between friends, love as loyalty, and of course, romantic love. This last category is the theme that Rogers and Hammerstein keep returning to throughout their careers. American Theatre historian Bruce McConachie pinpoints this recurring mode as the overarching message of the composers in their musicals and in this one in particular strikes a chord with audiences:

> … [I]t's the ideology of romantic love, understood as the natural expression of an inner self beneath an outer façade of cultural and racial difference, that really anchors Rodgers and Hammerstein's attack on prejudice. Their plea for tolerance…rests on the conviction

> that all people are fundamentally the same underneath the container of race. Culture is only skin deep, especially in matters of the heart.[277]

If culture is only skin deep, what significance is found in the casting of African American singer Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary, a Vietnamese matriarch and businesswoman? I ask to highlight how sentimental education aids in camouflaging and paraphrasing the Black Pacific in *South Pacific*. In specific reference to Bloody Mary, Michener's description is ambivalent and I suggest that this is one of the origins of the paraphrasing that is seen in a range of images that I will discuss in this next section of the chapter before pinpointing the absence of Hall and the Black Pacific in publicity images.

Introducing Juanita Hall

Born on November 6, 1901, in Keyport, New Jersey, Juanita Hall found her vocal talent early on, singing in the choir at her Catholic church before attending The Juilliard School where she was classically trained. Until her death on February 28, 1968, she pursued a varied and successful career with highlights ranging from musical roles, such as Julie, a mixed-race character passing as white, in *Showboat* in 1928 to positions directing choirs during the 1930s and 1940s, including the Hall Johnson Choir, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Chorus, the Westchester (New York) Chorale and Dramatics Association and her own Juanita Hall Choir. She was applauded for these achievements and many publicity photographs at this time focused on Hall in action. A WPA Theatre Photo from the 1930s (Figure 2.5), shows Hall guiding the Negro Melody Singers. In Figure 2.5, her back is to the viewer causing her facial features to be hidden from view. She gestures to conduct the choir and all of its members focus

[277] Bruce A. McConachie, "The 'Oriental' Musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the U.S. War in Southeast Asia," *Theatre Journal* 46, no. 3 (October 1, 1994): 385–98.

on her. Her dress appears to complement that of the female choir members and appears to be the same color or in the same tonal range. Her shoes are dark, perhaps suede, and it seems that while the women chose the same dress color as a uniform, there was more latitude in their choice of footwear.

Figure 2.5: WPA Theatre Photos, Juanita Hall conducting the Negro Melody Singers, 1930s, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Overall, the effect is of a unified group working together under the leadership of Hall. I infer that she is a capable leader but there is not much to draw on to know about her as a person, as an African American woman. Not being able to see her face adds to this mystery. Images created by various artists and photographers after the success of the musical feature Hall in character; Bloody Mary's familiar costume of military jacket and capri-length pants continue to perpetuate the unknown quality about the woman behind the portrayal. As becomes evident in my discussion of Michener's conception of the character, there is ambivalence embedded in how

she is perceived and the imagery supports this stance. Before embarking on this discussion, however, I would like to highlight again how the casting of Juanita Hall was a radical act by Rodgers and Hammerstein at this time. They could have chosen a white actress but it was in their choice of a black actress that they participated in the Black Pacific, albeit unknowingly.

The casting of an African American actress in *South Pacific* as an Asian woman elides the black female body with that of the avowed Asian ally. Yet, what is an "Asian" perspective on this elision? The viewpoint is fraught from that angle as well. For example, English literature scholar Ma Sheng-mei writes about the "chopsticks" musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and looks at the same productions that Klein analyzes, specifically *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, and *Flower Drum Song*, the latter two which featured Hall, the black actress. The camouflage and paraphrase succeed so well that Hall is mis-recognized and mis-identified from Sheng-Mei's perspective. An American scholar of Taiwanese Chinese descent, he argues against music historian Joseph Lam's contention that the song "Chop Suey" in *Flower Drum Song* is "Asian-American music."[278] Sheng-Mei writes:

> But Auntie Liang who performs "Chop Suey" is played by the Hispanic Juanita Hall. It is one thing to contend that the American "home-grown" dish of Chop Suey epitomizes Asian/American problematics. It is quite another to offer a simplistic solution by eliding 'all Asian/Asian-American cast' with ethnically-sensitive Asian-American expression particularly when a Hispanic passes as a yellow face who passes, ideologically, as white American. [279]

In this reading of Hall's body, she physically comes across as a Hispanic actress, who portrays an Asian character who espouses a white viewpoint. There are several matters here. First, it is interesting that Sheng-mei pinpoints "passing" as a mechanism in the musical as "passing" is a

[278] Ma Sheng-mei, "Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'Chopsticks' musicals," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2003): 17.

[279] Ibid., 23-24.

sociological process in which a member of one ethnic group is accepted as a member of another group, most often aided by similarity in physical appearance. From my perspective, it is a term most often used when a black person "passes" as white. But, based on the way Hall looks, she can be mis-taken for another ethnicity and the fact that this scholar deems her Hispanic speaks to her versatility and success in acting as someone other than herself. It also speaks to her particular corporeality in that her ethnic and racial identity is ambiguous.

Second, the misidentification simultaneously points to the paucity of information about Hall and her life that has been available widely. Third, the adaptations of Rodgers and Hammerstein frequently touch upon race and ethnicity and positioning within groups and their casting of Hall aids the progressiveness of their views while pinpointing the limitations of vocabulary for discussing such concerns. Fourth, the role of camouflaging and paraphrasing of blackness and Pacificness in the Black Pacific takes place in other racial and ethnic worlds and in this way, participants in the Black Pacific do need allies who can see beyond the misdirection.

As for the original musical, Hammerstein, due to his championing of racial tolerance, ostensibly promotes black actresses yet eclipses their subjectivity to tell the story about Asian-ness. According to Klein, Oscar Hammerstein II fought against racism through many different channels including the Popular Front and the Communist party. But it was through his lyrics that he made the most impression: "… Hammerstein didn't simply 'preach' against racism, he wrote stories and songs that turned the principle of antiracism into sentimental structure of feeling that audiences could embrace."[280] This desire on his behalf might be linked to his position, and that of Rodgers, as Jewish Americans. Scholar of American literature and Jewish Studies Andrea

[280] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*.

Most sees *South Pacific* as "a story of Cold War anxieties and Jewish assimilationist desires."[281] She argues:

> On the surface *South Pacific* paints an extraordinarily bright picture of a human community that knows no barriers of race or culture. In this liberal utopian vision we learn through education that we are all the same under the skin, with the same basic beliefs, needs, desires, and impulses. Whether we are American, Tonkinese, Polynesian, or French, the play implies that as long as we all believe in the fundamental American values of romantic love, marriage, freedom, and equality, we all deserve (and can achieve) happiness.[282]

What becomes clear from her argument is that an idealized notion of Americanness that embraced all races and ethnicities was desired after World War II. Accordingly, with its many layers of inclusion, the versions of *South Pacific* are a vehicle for these wishes to be made known. This is in direct opposition to the travel monologue nature of the original *Tales of the South Pacific*. The novel is more overt about blackness, linking a Melanesian caretaker to southern black dialect while the musical and film need to be more inclusive because of the role it needed to serve. Michener may have been a paraphraser but the creative minds behind the adaptation, Hammerstein II, Rodgers, and Logan resorted to camouflage to make the production resonate with any viewer—except arguably the black or brown viewer, whether African American, of African descent, of Melanesian descent or other Pacific descent.

Yet, the desire to include a black perspective is present in their intentions if not consistently fleshed out in their creative actions. For example, Klein looks at Hammerstein's interest in propelling black stars into the spotlight. The musical *Carmen Jones* (1943) was a big hit for African American singer Muriel Smith and as was the case with the *South Pacific* productions, the later film of *Carmen Jones* (1954) was successful for actress Dorothy

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[281] Most, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught."

[282] Ibid., 312.

Dandridge. As for Smith, she portrayed Bloody Mary in the London production and her voice was later dubbed in for Hall's when it was determined that she could not deliver the vocal power that she did earlier. Hall had aged and suffered from diabetes and its complications for years. Later, Logan cites Hall's illness as a reason for not working with her on a project idea she proposed during the interim between the musical and the film.[283] While dubbing is common—in fact, John Kerr, the actor who played Emile De Becque in the film is dubbed—it is curious that the voice of one African American actress fills in for that of another. I suggest that this is another layer of camouflage perpetuated on behalf of the creative team to further its own interests.

Until this point, I have focused on Hall as an African American woman, an identity that she publicly identified with. Yet, unlike Julie, a character she portrayed in the musical *Showboat*, Hall is mixed race and does not pass as white. Hall's father was African American and her mother was Irish American. She was raised by her mother's Irish American parents and raised in their Catholic faith; hence, her early start singing in Catholic mass services. While she got her start singing in church, the familiar trope for a successful African American female vocalist is that she starts singing in a gospel choir in a Protestant denominational church. From the start, Hall's life is more complicated and nuanced than that presented in mainstream media for middlebrow America. And the choice to cast her as Bloody Mary by Rodgers and Hammerstein is necessarily complicated as well.

I look at Michener's description of Bloody Mary because many of the visual cues of paraphrasing and camouflaging are embedded in this origin point. First, Michener gives a

[283] Joshua Logan letter to Juanita Hall, 21 March 1953, Joshua Logan Papers 1723-1992, Box 24, Folder 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

detailed description of the Tonkinese woman when he introduces her in "Fo' Dolla'". As narrator, Michener recalls:

> She was, I judge, about fifty-five. She was not more than five feet tall, weighed about 110 pounds, had few teeth and those funereally black, was sloppy in dress, and had thin ravines running out from the corners of her mouth. These ravines, about four on each side, were usually filled with betel juice, which made her look as if her mouth had been gashed by a rusty razor. Her name, Bloody Mary, was well-given.
>
> Like all Tonkinese women, Mary wore a simple uniform: sandals on her feet, a conical peach-basket on her head, black sateen trousers, and white blouse. And like all Tonkinese women, she was graceful, quick in her movements, and alternately grave and merry. Her oval face was yellow. Her eyes were Oriental. Her neck was beautifully proportioned. Around it she wore a G.I. identification chair from which hung a silver Marine emblem.
>
> Because of her ill-fitting sandals, she rolled from side to side as she walked and the Marine emblem moved pendulumlike across her bosom. But her little peach-basket always remained steady above her white blouse. She had a sly look as she approached the jeep. Her almond eyes were inscrutable, but jesting.[284]

In this description, Michener relies on innuendo about her "sly" character in counterpoint to her unkempt and uncaring appearance. Elsewhere, Michener pays close attention to physical detail, description, and reaction to alert the viewer that a message about race is being imparted. Here, in the novel, Bloody Mary's ethnicity is not in doubt. In contrast, the musical and film portrayals collapse real-life mixed-race African American subjectivity into embodied Tonkinese perspective. While Michener's description does not explicitly underline thoughts about blackness, the description works in conjunction to other scenes about the narrator's interactions with Melanesian and African American characters that I have already described to give palpable traces of the ambivalence in American culture about equality at this time.

In other moments, descriptions of aspects of her appearance are used to mark her regard for Joe Cable. In the anthology, Bloody Mary's relationship with Joe Cable is alternately aggressive and passive in the novel in comparison to her anger and dominance toward him

[284] Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*, 139.

throughout the musical and film. She is always eager to see Joe Cable in both, but in the novel, she adjusts her demeanor to communicate this: "Perhaps it was Bloody Mary's frank hero worship that attracted him. Whenever Cable appeared, she would jump up, brush her clothes, straighten her ridiculous hat, knock the sand out of her shoes, and smile pleasantly. It was almost as if she were standing at attention."[285] In many instances, however, there is a certain rapport between the two in the novel that is poignant: "Here was a man. She smiled at the lieutenant, a real, human, warm smile. Her old face, weathered in Tonkin China and the seas between, hardened in the plantations, beamed."[286] While her dominance in the musical and film and her softness in the novel as seen in this quote are a way to manipulate him into marriage with her daughter, it is clear that Michener, his narrator, the other characters, and the readers and audience are supposed to focus on Mary's physicality and her humanity is secondary.

The description from the libretto is similar. In Act One, Scene Two, the setting is, "The curtain depicts no specific place but represents the abstract pattern of a large tapa-cloth. … ."[287] I go into greater discussion about the meaning of *tapa* in Chapter Three. Here the cloth acts as a backdrop rather than a vessel for *mana*. To the sound of "Bloody Mary is the Girl I Love," the character's entrance is described thusly:

> The object of this serenade who has been hidden during the song, by two sailors, is now revealed as they move away. This is BLOODY MARY. She is small, yellow, with Oriental eyes. She wears black sateen trousers, and a white blouse over which is an old Marine's tunic. On her head is a peach-basket hat. Around her neck is a G.I. identification chain from which hangs a silver Marine emblem. At the end of the singing, she gives out a shrill cackle of laughter with which we shall soon learn to identify her.[288]

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[285] Ibid., 144.

[286] Ibid.

[287] Richard Rodgers, *South Pacific; a Musical Play,* (New York: Random House, 1949), 18.

[288] Ibid.

And so enters Juanita Hall, leaving an indelible impression in popular culture in the role of Bloody Mary and it is her performance that is the standard for all others after her. And the image of Bloody Mary is set in stone becoming an iconic figure that is loaded with all of the ambivalence in Michener's text and the impotent idealism of the adaptation by Hammerstein, Rodgers, and Logan.

The Icon Paraphrases/Camouflages the Black Pacific

So far, I have summarized Klein's argument about paraphrasing in relation to Cold War policies that affected racial interactions, added my formulation of camouflage to her theory, outlined the history of African Americans in the military and the result of their presence in the Pacific Theatre, examined Michener's text for his perspectives on blackness in the Pacific and how he couches the characters in an American viewpoint, compared selections of his text to plots in the musical and film, and looked at the casting of Juanita Hall and the role of *South Pacific* in idealizing and limiting understandings of race and difference. I turn to a closer examination of images from the musical production as these are the originals that set the tone for misconstruing the Black Pacific in *South Pacific*.

There are three key visual scenes that are inevitably reproduced in visual form regardless of the production: 1) Bloody Mary enticing the servicemen to buy woven grass skirts; 2) Bloody Mary anchoring the center of the love triangle between her daughter and the Marine; and 3) Bloody Mary holding up a shrunken head as an enticing souvenir for the men with Cable nearby.[289] While the second type is compelling and I discuss it in reference to Figure 2.1, in the

[289] I refer to the types as Trope 1 (T1), Trope 2 (T2), or Trope 3 (T3) throughout the remainder of the chapter.

following section, I primarily focus on the first visual trope because it is the introduction to the character. I then move to a discussion of the third type as indicative of the many factors that go into visually camouflaging and paraphrasing the Black Pacific.

Trope 1 is used not just for the portrayal by Juanita Hall (Figure 2.6) but also for photographs of other actresses such as singer Diosa Costello (Figure 2.7) and actress Irene Byatt (Figure 2.8). In Figure 2.6, Hall is caught midnote; her head is held back, opening her lungs to deliver the power needed for the notes. Her expression is not worried; the viewer might even suspect that the actress is enjoying herself. This is a production photograph from 1949 taken by John Swope, a photographer for *Life* magazine who had already worked with director Josh Logan when he accompanied him on a trip to South America for *Harper's Bazaar*. Swope was a Navy pilot who also photographed war scenes. He is well-known for the unusual angles that he used which is seen here; the viewer looks up at Bloody Mary, perhaps approximating the view from a front row seat. The sleeves of her unbuttoned military coat are rolled up. She wears what appears to be a *lei* or neck ornament in Hawaiian visual culture. It is not clear from the image if it is made of closely strung shells or small plastic flowers; both materials may be used. Either way, it is looped three times around her neck, almost obscuring the dog tag but it is there in a faint glint under the second loop of the *lei*. The chain almost creates a v-neck on the blouse but it is in fact, a garment with a high collar. She wears a scarf looped around her neck as well as one shell bracelet on her left wrist. Her hair is pulled back into a bun; its effect is that her face is dominant in the image.

The meaning of the *lei* can be overlooked by audiences not familiar with Pacific notions of the body. In Polynesia, the head and shoulders are sacred and must be protected as well as adorned. The *lei* signifies rank or status yet, out of context here, there is no sense of what it

means. Bringing a Pacific art perspective to the image, I read it as indirectly pointing to the maturity and cunning of Bloody Mary in making the best of the situation in which she finds herself. From an African American Studies position, the image is embedded in a history in which men and women posed with props to signify the details of their lives. I examine this notion in greater detail later in the chapter. At this juncture, I want to point out that the convergence of a Pacific impetus and a black one is a process that takes place in what I call the Black Pacific.

Figure 2.6: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Juanita Hall (Bloody Mary) in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Photograph by John Swope. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-4644-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

In several ways, the actress embodies much of the description from Michener's text and in other ways her characterization for audiences has been changed. The libretto gives a general description based on the book and it is not certain how much influence Hall had with the

costume designers or the creators when the costume was created. The props that are not included are the conical peach-basket hat and she does not wear shoes. In fact Hall says in one interview that she had to learn to walk bare-foot.[290] At this time, Hall was forty-eight, seven years younger than Michener's description. She is 5'1 which is one inch taller than she is described in the book. Her weight differs the most from Michener's text; newspaper reporter Helen Ormsbee refers to her as "stout"[291] with newspapers reporting that she weighed 65 pounds at her death.[292] The character on stage as played by the actress is heavier than in the anthology. It can be argued that an actress who is heavier would command the stage more. I suggest that there are some traces of a mammy or an Aunt Jemima characterization that bleed through in the interpretations.

The moniker "Bloody Mary" might have no context for those who are not familiar with Melanesian customs. The betel or areca nut is from a type of palm tree and its nut or quid, along with the leaves and lime is chewed by men and women in south Asia, Southeast Asia, Melanesia and the practice has traveled with the diaspora and caught on outside of it. Betel nut can be consumed with tobacco. When chewed, a bright red liquid results and stains the teeth, lips, and other parts of the face that it comes into contact with.[293] Michener writes that on Bloody Mary's face that there were "ravines, about four on each side [of her mouth], were usually filled with betel juice, which made her look as if her mouth had been gashed by a rusty razor."[294]

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[290] Helen Ormsbee, "Bloody Mary Has Arrived," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 12, 1949.

[291] Ibid.

[292] "Juanita Hall, 'Bloody Mary' of Stage, Screen, Dies," *Jet*, March 14, 1968.

[293] World Health Organization and others, "Review of Areca (Betel) Nut and Tobacco Use in the Pacific: A Technical Report," 2012, accessed November 15, 2015, http://iris.wpro.who.int/handle/10665.1/5281; Alejandra Núñez-de la Mora, Fahmida Jesmin, and Gillian R. Bentley, "Betel Nut Use among First and Second Generation Bangladeshi Women in London, UK," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 9, no. 4 (March 13, 2007): 299–306.

[294] Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*, 139.

In Hall's portrayal, the red gashes are missing and continue to be absent in subsequent portrayals. In this respect, Hall did participate in the decision to leave out this aspect of the original character's behavior as newspaper reporter Arthur Pollock writes: "Bloody Mary in the book always had a mouth oozing the red fluid and it got all over her face. … her face [in the musical] is as handsome and as unmarred as Juanita Hall's own. That is because Miss Hall likes her teeth and when rehearsals began had an idea for conserving them."[295] Here Pollock states that Hall was active in determining not to include evidence of Bloody Mary's betel-juice habit in the character's portrayal. He quotes her reasoning: "'I didn't want to stain them,' she says. 'I played a little trick on Joshua when there was a question of betel juice. I got liquid lipstick one day and came to rehearsal with my teeth and lips running with it, and Joshua looked at me and said, 'My God! No betel juice!'."[296] The actress and the director decided to not include "betel-juice" in the makeup for the character. In the later film, the betel-juice staining is not evident either. It does make her moniker of Bloody Mary a non sequitur without context. By labeling the character *bloody*, Michener does describe her use of it and the fact that the use is clearly obvious on her body. After the musical opened, Pollock relates that a G.I. in the audience did comment about the lack of staining around the character's mouth.[297] I question whether the lack of betel-juice is a problem.

On one hand, it would be more authentic and be a clear nod to the Melanesian locale. On the other hand, coupled with the other stereotypes, it might have pushed the way the audience perceived the character into even more hyperbole. To smear a red material on the actress's face

[295] Arthur Pollock, "Juanita Hall Talks About Self and Bloody Mary," *The Daily Compass*, July 15, 1949, sec. Theater Time.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid.

to stain it would double-down on the exotic nature the character is supposed to possess. Yet, its lack renders Bloody Mary a more sinister character in that individual audience members can then project varying levels of associations between bloody, death, harm, and injury. Their suppositions might be out-of-proportion to the reality. In both cases, by choosing not to include the red staining, the production erases rather than just camouflages or paraphrases a practice in Melanesia and some parts of Asia.

Yet another perspective on the absence of betel-juice is offered by both Hall and Logan in that they did not want to cause offense, according to Pollock: "…as they talked over the playing of her role, Logan said, 'I don't want to offend Oriental women.' Miss Hall replied, 'Neither do I. I don't want to offend anyone.'"[298] This demonstrates a conscious choice on behalf of Hall and Logan to not disrespect cultural mores. She has agency in this decision and her reasoning is sound and admirable. In retrospect, the decision from today's perspective is problematic in that within her agency, she, too, camouflages the Black Pacific. Overall this image is documentation of the character in rehearsal and performance and its formal composition and elements are adapted in many ways to suit the particulars of each production, as seen in the following examples. Taken together—the *lei*, military costume, props such as grass skirts and the active singing—create an icon; that is, a representative image of Bloody Mary. "Icon" in the religious sense is a painting that aids in the veneration of Jesus Christ, Biblical figures, or saints. There is no religious content in the Bloody Mary photograph, yet, the image of Bloody Mary in Figure 2.6 is an "aid" to the paraphrase and camouflage of blackness and Pacificness in *South*

[298] Ibid. "Oriental" was the descriptor in use at the time for anyone of Asian descent from any country in Asia.

Pacific until the 2008 revival in which the costuming and representations of Bloody Mary better reflect Oceania while still containing problematics related to Asia and blackness.

Figure 2.7: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Diosa Costello (Bloody Mary replacement) in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Photograph by Alfredo Valente. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7adda956-4dd5-eca6-e040-e00a1806591b.

In Figure 2.7, the photographer places Diosa Costello as Mary in the crowded scenery of the production. She stands in front of her merchant's stand that is draped in *tapa*-like fabric and packed with items and sundries for sale. She, too, holds out a grass skirt and is caught mid-note. The jacket is missing here; she wears a loose blouse with what appear to be toggles or embroidered frogs (ornamental fastening) on the side. She also wears a scarf. Her feet are not bare; she wears T-strap canvas shoes. The *lei* adorns her neck but the military tag is not discernible. This image projects more movement than the previous one. This effect is characteristic of the photographer, Alfredo Valente. Originally from Italy and trained as a fine

artist and opera singer, he found success with his photography, making a name for himself by becoming a staple artist on Broadway. In general, his images were printed full-size and were appropriate for the theater magazines, such as *Stage*, the main source for Broadway news and features. He was known for photographing actors and actresses in costume but *not performing*, and as a result, captured more of them than the role they filled.[299] Yet, Figure 2.7 stands out because there is little sense of Costello the actress. His signature "look" is the dynamism created by the pose of the performer as shown here and is what gives the sense of movement so different from the tableau effect in Figure 2.8.

Born in Puerto Rico, Juana de Dios Castrello was selected to portray Bloody Mary in the first touring company and then replaced Hall on Broadway when she stepped down from performing in *South Pacific*. Anthropologist Fred Gleach writes that Costello was reluctant to step into Hall's shoes: "She remembers having to be strongly persuaded by director Josh Logan to take the part; she didn't see herself as that Pacific Islander character, especially since her own style was very different from that of Juanita Hall…"[300] Gleach has made a study of Costello's career and notes that when she performed in *Miss Sadie Thompson*, a film featuring actress Rita Hayworth in the story of Caucasian travelers set in Samoa, her ethnicity as well as that of Hayworth and Jose Ferrer was camouflaged for the role. He writes:

> This ethnic invisibility characterized Diosa's entire career, as it did many Latin - and especially Puerto Rican - performers in the US through most of the twentieth century. She was seldom billed as Puerto Rican, more often as "Latin", but also as Cuban, Brazilian, and Mexican. In Diosa's case it is even more ironic, as she became best known for playing a Pacific Islander.[301]

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[299] "Alfredo Valente | Broadway Photographs," accessed January 2, 2016, http://broadway.cas.sc.edu/content/alfredo-valente.

[300] Fredric W. Gleach, "Diosa Costello: The Original Latin Bombshell," accessed November 5, 2015, http://www.gleach.com/.

[301] Ibid.

In this chapter, I focus on how the Black Pacific in photography and other print media is camouflaged or overlooked, but it is important to also consider what happens in the case of Costello as Bloody Mary. In this case, a Puerto Rican actress portrays a Tonkinese woman whose character was initially established by an African American woman with Irish roots. I focus on the Black Pacific to stress the overarching idea is that blackness and Pacificness taken together are platforms for discussions about such situations when identities don't fit neatly into categories.

As an actress, Hall held some agency in the mechanics of the production. While the romance between Liat and Cable in Trope 2 images is important and shown in their body gestures, it is Bloody Mary in her iconic costume that holds the symbolic weight of the trio. Juanita Hall played a role in the striking and enduring pyramidal composition of this scene as presented on stage. Shortly after the musical opened, Richard Rodgers wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* about how many aspects of the production came to be.[302] He attributes much of the success of the staging to cooperation between the principals. In this iconic scene, it was the actor William Tabbert, who played Lt. Cable, who suggested that Betta St. John get an opportunity to shine when they performed "Happy Talk." In addition to the catchy tune, the hand gestures of the three, especially those mirrored between Liat and Cable, visually support the lyrics. Of the origin of this staging, Rodgers remembers, "Actually Juanita Hall started singing and I asked Betta to place Joe Cable in a sitting position, facing her."[303] He continues, "In other words, one person say something in the work of another person that made that other person think

[302] Richard Rodgers, "'South Pacific': A Novel of the Islands in War-Time Becomes a Musical Play," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 3, 1949, Sunday edition, sec. 5.

[303] Ibid., 3.

of something else. That gave still another person [an] idea. If you think this is complicated so is putting on a musical."[304] I include this anecdote to highlight how Juanita Hall did play some role in creating the visual icons of the play. Her intent to not offend sits side-by-side with the overall effect of camouflage.

In Figure 2.8, performer Irene Byatt is featured from the 1967 revival at the New York State Theater which starred Florence Henderson as Nellie and Giorgio Tozzi as Emile. It is interesting that Byatt portrayed Bloody Mary at the time that Hall was sick. A small notice in the *New York Times* from August 28, 1967, states that "contributions will be collected from the audience by members of the cast, and from actresses who have played Bloody Mary, to aid Miss Hall…"[305] This is important because it demonstrates that during her lifetime, Hall was recognized by ensuing productions as an important part of the role's history.

Figure 2.8: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Irene Byatt (Bloody Mary) in the 1967 revival of South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed March 20, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7ae07aaa-7449-0186-e040-e00a18061de6.

[304] Ibid.

[305] "Benefit for Juanita Hall," *New York Times*, August 28, 1967, 37.

In the photograph, Byatt as Mary wears a jacket which appears to be longer than the one worn by Hall. It boasts ragged cuffs. She is smiling down so it appears she is talking with someone about the skirt she holds. She has been photographed not when she is singing like the other women have been. She wears the *lei* and viewers can assume she has the dog tags as well but they are not necessarily visible against the *tapa*-pattern of her blouse. She wears a ring on her right hand as well as two flowers positioned around the bun in her hair. The effect is a wardrobe choice that pushes the image into the Oceania/Pacific realm rather than to Asia. The inclusion of *tapa* as part of the clothing is an extension of using *tapa* cloth as wall coverings and props to create atmosphere and not necessarily to signal the presence of *mana*. The background curtain features what appear to be stylized trees. The camera artist for this photograph is not given yet a possible attribution is to the photographers Leo Friedman, Sy Friedman and Joseph Abeles, In the 1960s and 1970s, the three used a hand-held Rolleiflex and 35-mm camera which allowed them to achieve shots that previous stage photographers could not get with bulky equipment.

Juanita Hall died in 1968 after the benefit performance in 1967. Over the ensuing decades, productions took their cue from her portrayal. Each had its own perspective on race and identity as befits the unique nature and locale of each production. The first revival Broadway revival of *South Pacific* opened at the Lincoln Center to a "rave review" by *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley, who proclaims that he cannot find "one serious flaw in this production."[306] Almost immediately after this definitive statement he relates that the director "implicitly underscores the theme of racism by quietly having the few African-American sailors in the company keep apart from the others."[307] In this one line, Brantley brings into the present the

[306] Ben Brantley, "Optimist Awash in the Tropics." Rev. of *South Pacific*. *The New York Times*. Published 4 April 2008. <http://theater.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/theater/reviews/04paci.html>.

[307] Ibid.

specter of racial discrimination that Rodgers, Hammerstein II, Logan and Michener actively denounce in the aftermath of World War II. Brantley almost seems to suggest that "quietly" marking racism is the best way to handle the problem in the first decade of the twenty-first century, particularly at a time when Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States, was on the path to election. After the election, it became clear that the state of Hawai'i proudly claimed him as its own with over 70% of the state voting for him.[308] This is an entirely different context for the revival than the Cold War anxieties that blanketed the original production.

The choice of Loretta Ables Sayre, a Hawai'i-based actress with mixed ancestry including Filipino and Chinese, to play Bloody Mary the Tonkinese entrepreneur, is also indicative of an entirely different racial climate in 2008 than the years immediately following the victory of the United States and its Allies in a war with global implications on economy, culture, and politics. Although audiences are enlightened in the twenty-first century, audiences in 1949 when the musical opened and in 1958 when the movie aired would have had vastly different perspectives on race and discrimination. I discuss these two images briefly as the focus of the chapter is on Juanita Hall yet there are choices made by the costume designer Catherine Zuber and the actress that highlight Oceania in general more so than the original production.

Figures 2.9 and 2.10 reflect how the iconicity of Juanita Hall has been updated. Both photographs are taken by Joan Marcus who has thirty years of experience photographing musicals and plays on Broadway and off-Broadway. She relates that she is "inclined to go with more moody pictures…but I understand that they can't always be used. Producers want pictures

[308] "President Map - Election Results 2008 - The New York Times," accessed November 5, 2015, http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html.

that look great in print, and that's what I try to supply."[309] I do not assign a trope categorization to the examples as more information is needed about when, how, and where they were taken. In Figure 2.9 Caucasian sailors hoist Sayre onto their shoulders. The mood is a jaunty one. In this image, Bloody Mary wears boots which a modern audience might interpret as "tough."

Figure 2.9: Joan Marcus, Loretta Ables Sayre as Bloody Mary held by sailors in Lincoln Center Theatre production of *South Pacific*, reproduced with permission of photographer. Accessed October 30, 2015, http://www.playbill.com/news/article/diva-talk-chatting-with-south-pacifics-loretta-ables-sayre-plus-news-of-cat-150672.

Both Sayre and Zuber stress that Mary would likely have sourced much of her wardrobe from the castoffs of the men stationed near her. The effect is much different than if this scene had been presented with a barefoot Mary. Of the overall look, Sayre recalls, "I believe we were looking for an honest portray of an edgy look for her. There is nothing glamorous about her. She

[309] Robert Viagas, "Photographer Joan Marcus Captures Theatre History, One Click at a Time," *Playbill*, September 5, 2011, accessed March 20, 2016, http://www.playbill.com/article/photographer-joan-marcus-captures-theatre-history-one-click-at-a-time-com-329659. An internet search did not yield images of Sayre holding the shrunken head prop.

was all about work and making a living for herself and for her daughter in a finite amount of time with a heavy dose of desperation thrown in."[310]

Figure 2.10: Joan Marcus, Loretta Ables Sayre as Bloody Mary in Lincoln Center Theater production of *South Pacific*, reproduced with permission of photographer. Accessed October, 30, 2015, http://www.playbill.com/news/article/diva-talk-chatting-with-south-pacifics-loretta-ables-sayre-plus-news-of-cat-150672.

In Figure 2.10 Sayre is highlighted as she sings and gestures across her face with one hand. It has most likely been cropped in this source as the actress who plays Liat is shown at her side in other images. The mood of Figure 2.10 is somber. The mood change is reflected by the costuming. Sayre gives her impression of the design change: "As the show goes one we see a more relaxed costume for Bloody Mary when she is introducing Lt. Cable to Liat. So Catherine Zuber's design change has her evolving from a working woman on the beach to a mother dressed for the hopeful marriage of her daughter."[311] Here there is an overt reference to Pacific

[310] Loretta Ables Sayre, "Email Message to Author," February 25, 2016.

[311] Ibid.

adornment, according to Zuber: "The necklace was created from references to historical jewelry of the Pacific…"[312] The dog tag is missing from this photograph but Zuber stresses that I the costume, "…there were also dog tags within the mélange of Bloody Mary's jewelry."[313] In both photographs Sayre's makeup is subtle rather than exaggerated as seen in some of the portraits of Bloody Mary from the 1950s. Zuber explains, "Loretta's rendition of Bloody Mary was so emotive we didn't want to cover her up with a make-up design that would diminish her own facial expressions."[314]

The production chose to represent the betel-juice as described in the short story by Michener. In the example above, there are faint smudges at the corner of her mouth but unfortunately, it is not more obvious in the images I studied or those chosen for inclusion here. Sayre recalls,

> …Bart [Sher] did want to show the effects of betel nut chewing on her teeth and lips. … I did spend a couple of months working in Micronesia in the 80's where there is rampant use of betel nut and was able to see first hand what effect it has on your mouth and your teeth. … So we decided to go with that look including the red rivulets dripping from the side of her mouth. If you see any close up photos from the LCT production, you will see the look. We also went as far as using tooth paint to darken my teeth and a blood stain for me to rinse my mouth with right before I went on state so my mouth, tongue and gums would look blood red.[315]

While the 2008 revival chooses an actress who lives in the Pacific with some Chinese ancestry, restores the presence of betel-juice, includes more African American actors, and references Pacific adornment forms, the sense that the musical is set in and shaped by Melanesia is still missing.

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[312] Catherine Zuber, "Email Message to Author," February 26, 2016.

[313] Ibid.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Sayre, "Email Message to Author."

To sum up, Michener describes Bloody Mary based on his fictionalized experiences in Melanesia during the latter part of World War II. Bloody Mary is of Asian descent but there are also descriptions of African Americans and Melanesians in his anthology. Those descriptions are then transferred over to the musical production and carried over into the later Hollywood film. The immediacy of the stage offers the opportunity to bring Bloody Mary to life as it were, and in doing so, features from the book are paraphrased in the costuming to act as camouflage so that other concerns come forward rather than the recognition of the Black Pacific. As many of the production images catch the actress in motion, it is the costuming and the gestures that are then represented visually for audiences who may or may not have seen the musical. Many props such as the shrunken head are included in these images to further cement the exotic and dangerous nature of this woman and this region. Two other layers are added on: welcoming Asians who are no longer combatants as they were during the war—the character Bloody Mary—and integrating African Americans—the actress Juanita Hall—into a previously segregated society. It is not a surprise that the fraught layers lead to caricatures and even more distinct paraphrasing in media images. This process continues almost six decades later into the revival. But to be successful, it has to resonate with the image that the audience already has. In the next section, I focus on the Bloody Mary imagery with the shrunken head as exemplified in a caricature and the images by Carl Van Vechten which have a related trajectory.

Caricatures of Juanita Hall/Bloody Mary

Heretofore, I have discussed three scenes that are invariably repeated in images of Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*: the introduction of Bloody Mary in which she sings and proffers a grass skirt to the men; Bloody Mary as the center of a trio between the two lovers; and, Bloody Mary holding up a shrunken head as yet another enticing souvenir. This last one is the most blatant example of the camouflage/paraphrase process that exoticizes the art and obscures the possibilities of the Black Pacific. It takes place in photographs as well as drawings and images in newspaper and other print media. In the ensuing reproduction of tropes, either blackness or Pacificness is overlooked or overshadowed by the other perspective or both are obscured, or in a more telling maneuver, the interconnections between the two are overlooked and not celebrated.

When *South Pacific* opened on Broadway, it was a massive success. It is necessary to quantify the audience for the images. Word of the musical's entertainment value was spread through feature stories, individuals' columns, editorials, and advertising in newspapers, magazines, and other print sources. For example, in Figure 2.11, Juanita Hall in a modified variation of Mary's costume is seen in an edition of the periodical *House and Garden* that was published August 1949, about four months after the musical opened. She is surrounded by woven baskets and other straw items including purses and dolls. The accompanying text is titled "There is nothing like a basket."[316] The magazine ties this heading to the lyrics for the song "There is Nothing Like a Dame" sung by Luther Billis, Nellie Forbush, and the chorus of men. At the same time, it pulls the introductory song about Mary into comparison with a partiality of Hall's tastes:

> 'Bloody Mary is the girl I love,' sing the sailors and marines in the Rodgers and Hammerstein hit, *South Pacific*, and here is Juanita Hall, barefoot and brazen as *Bloody Mary*, surrounded by wonderful baskets which she loves. But you don't have to live on a

[316] "Juanita Hall of South Pacific," *House and Garden*, August 1949.

> Pacific island to get them for yourself. … All in New York. They will add a summery note to your life.[317]

There is a subtle syllogism here: Bloody Mary sells grass skirts in the musical. The skirts are souvenirs and commodities. They are similar to straw items such as baskets, purses, and hammocks. All are exotic, as is the grass skirt. Juanita Hall has exotic tastes. A consumer can buy the exotic items that are linked to the woman and the character right in New York City. And, in the process, the consumer owns or participates in the exotic locale of the south Pacific. Therefore, the Black Pacific, in the form of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary in *South Pacific* can be owned if not exactly understood. The advertisement editorial (advertorial, as it has become known) would have been an extension of the word of mouth and official publicity about the musical. For those viewers who would never see the production, it would be a gateway for purchasing items that evoke the far away place in which *South Pacific* is located. This is a paid magazine advertisement. The visual cues suggesting exotic authenticity make it an example of imagery that obscures the creativity found in Black Pacific art.

A look at the number of people who viewed *South Pacific* is in order to grasp the magnitude of how many more were reached through advertisements such as this. The musical ran for 1,925 performances between 1949 and 1954. At any one performance, approximately 1600 to 1700 people, depending on the theatre—it moved to the Broadway Theatre in 1953—would have viewed the musical. Assuming a full house, a rough calculation of the number of performances (1925) multiplied by the available number of seats in the Majestic (1645) would yield at least an audience of 3, 166, 625 of people that would see the musical. But the number of people who knew about it through at least one advertisement would expand that number.

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[317] Ibid.

For example, Figure 2.11 was published in *House and Garden*, which had a circulation of 406,104 by 1950 so that it would be impressed upon many households that the image of the woman from the hit musical who loves baskets *is* engaging to those who subscribe to a periodical covering house architecture and garden topics. That means from this one publication, over 400,000 people—it was a consumer magazine geared to women but perhaps men were subscribers—saw this actress in costume outside of the actual stage production. This feature in *House and Garden* is presented as straightforward and the photography appears documentary. Nevertheless, it is a carefully staged advertisement for home goods that would delight the magazine subscriber and at the same time, give broad strokes about *South Pacific* and one of its most visible characters and the performer behind that portrayal. This is but one image. What other types of imagery was circulated and in what specific printed sources?

Figure 2.11: Advertisement/article about Juanita Hall in *House and Garden* magazine, August 1949, page 50.

Figure 2.12: *Newark Evening News*, December 1, 1949

A rich resource is the array of newspapers in the New York region that featured material geared to the theater crowd as well as a more general audience. One line drawing (Figure 2.12) and three caricatures (Figures 2.13, 2.14, 2.15) from area newspapers provide a sample of what images were being disseminated. For example, Figure 2.12 is a naturalistic line drawing from the *Newark Evening News* from 1 December 1949. Upon its demise in the 1970s, the newspaper was nostalgically remembered as "The New York Times of New Jersey."[318] Hall was born in Keyport, New Jersey, and this mention in this short section in this edition would be a fitting way for her home state to honor her in a prestigious way. At the time, Newark had a population of 400,000, and as the hometown newspaper, it is conceivable that many residents had access to the newspaper whether they had individual subscriptions or not. In this naturalistic line drawing,

[318] "The Once Great Newark Evening News: A Remembrance & Obituary," accessed September 28, 2015, http://www.oldnewark.com/memories/newspapers/bodiannnews.htm.

Hall faces left in ¾ profile. Her hair is glossy and her smile is bright. It is not photographic but is a close rendering of her facial features and the texture of her hair. The image focuses on her head, face, and the top of her shoulders with a simple outline of a *lei* around her neck. The remainder of her costume is not visible and there are no props included. In comparison to this straightforward drawing from December 1949, other images both before and after its publication veer into exaggeration and caricature of the woman and the character.

Figure 2.13 is a seven-column-wide caricature titled "Supporting Players Whose Numbers 'Stop' Their Musical Shows" drawn by famed artist Al Hirschfeld that sits above a three-column article of "News and Gossip from the Rialto" compiled by theatre critic and columnist Lewis Funke.[319] The newspaper's circulation in the late 1940s reached approximately half a million readers, many of whom would be theater-goers interested in the milieu's news and gossip while others would happen upon this section by chance. There are four musicals represented in four adjacent vignettes depicting key moments from each.

Bloody Mary, Liat, and Cable perform "Happy Talk" in an off-center triangle flanked by scenes from the three other musicals. Race is on display yet invisible in the caricature. The African American performers Lorenzo Fuller, Eddie Sledge, and Fred Davis dance in arabesque gestures. The men's shaded trousers match their shaded skin. Next to them, Mary and Liat are darker figures who gesture but their movements appear awkward in contrast. Carol Channing is depicted in outline with black lines delineating her body, face, and clothing. With the exception of her bold lips and rippling ruffles on the bottom of her skirt, the "color" white delineates her and places her in ethnic proximity to Lisa Kirk, Kathryn Lee, and Bill Callahan, the remaining

[319] Al Hirschfeld, "Supporting Actors Whose Numbers 'Stop' Their Musical Show.," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1949, Sunday edition, sec. 2, 1.

three performers in the image. It wasn't until her 2002 biography that Carol Channing identified as black with African American ancestry on her father's side. This dissertation focuses on camouflaging and paraphrasing of blackness and while Carol Channing is not one of its subjects, it is serendipitous that her depiction appears in conjunction with that of Juanita Hall who portrays Bloody Mary and is a subject of this argument. Overall, facial and bodily features are over-emphasized in the caricature. Visual and physical stereotypes are exaggerated to positively identify actors as characters and a comedic effect is a by-product. In this way, "stereotypes" per se are not in play but the viewer can nevertheless take away a sense of one-dimensionality of the figures.

Figure 2.13: Al Hirschfeld, "Supporting Players Whose Numbers 'Stop' Their Musical Shows," The New York Times, Sunday, June 26, 1949, Section 2, page 1.

As in Figure 2.1, the women in Figure 2.13 are physically close to each other with Cable as on onlooker. The way he is drawn makes it appear as if he is in the space/scene with Channing. His nose is long and his head appears heavy as if it is sinking into the shaded mass of his seated body. Mary and Liat gesture to him as he watches. Liat's body is drawn as thin and angular. Her face is long with a high forehead that is accentuated by a low bun of hair on her

neck. Behind her, Mary is solidly rendered. She is pear-shaped and her face echoes this with a small bun perched atop her head. Her eyes and brows are depicted with two sets of lines one above the other that create a small v and a larger V below. This detail in the eye approximates a stereotypical "Asian" look that relies on slanting lines to mark difference. A curved squiggle forms her nose and her rose-bud lips pucker in a movement that echoes the pinching gestures of her fingers. As the character of Bloody Mary is meant to be Tonkinese, or Vietnamese, focus is placed on her "Asian" features, most notably in the portrayal of her eyes as in Figure 2.13. She is drawn silent rather than as the talented mezzo-soprano that Hall is in real life.

When examined in isolation, Figure 2.13 appears loaded with problematic imagery that suggests a heavily biased view on the cartoonist's behalf. To place this exaggerated drawing and the following one in context (Figure 2.14), it is important to keep in mind that "caricature" is a staple of theatre promotion, particularly in images that accompany reviews or on posters announcing the cast and production. The theatre section of newspapers regularly featured caricatures and it was expected that the reader would be treated to a comedic perspective on main and supporting players. The theater-goer who perused this section is a savvy reader and might dismiss some of the more blatant characterization. However, a casual viewer might read the image as "true" in appearance and content. This caricature is grotesque and serves to highlight how the Black Pacific is paraphrased and camouflaged. Yet, this was most likely not the intent of the famed caricaturist Al Hirschfeld best known for his likeness of celebrities and Broadway stars.

Literary scholar Michael Patrick Hearn surveys the history and visual development of posters created for Broadway shows and has this to say about Hirschfeld: "Theatrical caricaturists have always had a place in Broadway advertising, and none has been more prolific

as a poster artist than Albert Hirschfeld, the modern master of the form. Hirschfeld, however, objects to the term 'caricature'; he prefers to call his work 'character drawings.'"[320] Director Elia Kazan is quoted as comparing his work to Japanese calligraphy.[321] Actress and politician Glenda Jackson is reported to have declared, "He's not a sentimentalist. What he sees is what is there."[322] Looking from this perspective, the caricature is not intended to be demean; it is meant as a snapshot of a scene in which this actress performs. With Liat and Cable, she is but one of many other secondary characters that merit attention through a drawing in the *The New York Times*. Drawn in 1949, it is a "signature" Hirschfeld. The arabesque lines he employs to suggest movement and interaction. As a group image, there is not space for fine detail, but he has captured what a prospective audience member or prospective audience member would imagine the characters to look like and be like. Figure 2.13 is hard to read just as a simple image in the context of *South Pacific*.

A later caricature, "Every Evening is Enchanted Over At South Pacific," was printed in the Sunday magazine edition of *The Daily Compass* on 23 July 1950, demonstrating the musical was relevant over a year after it first opened (Figure 2.14). This edition of *The Sunday Compass*, as it was called to differentiate it from the daily version, features a half-page caricature of four characters—Nellie, Emile, Luther, and Bloody Mary—from the musical. Its tagline acknowledges that the show will "probably run forever at the Majestic…"[323] The characters are arrayed along a stylized beach with the mystical island of Bali Hai framed at the center of the

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[320] Michael Patrick Hearn, *The Art of the Broadway Poster* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), 4.

[321] New York Times News Service By MERVYN ROTHSTEIN, "STARDOM NO CARICATURE FOR ARTIST HIRSCHFIELD [sic]," *Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)*, July 17, 1988, ALL EDITIONS, 5F.

[322] Ibid.

[323] "Every Evening Is Enchanted Over at South Pacific," *The Sunday Compass Magazine*, July 23, 1950.

image by the triangular bend created by Emile's left arm. He and Nellie are the largest figures with Luther and Mary flanking the two on their left and right, respectively.

Mary is depicted here with the scarf and *lei* of her customary costume present but without the grass skirt and shrunken head. Her upper body is solidly shaped with dark lines that provide a contrast to the dark shading of her capri pants covering short legs that are out-of-proportion to her upper body. The whole body is supported by thin feet that are curiously out-splayed. The geometric lines in her left arm seem awkward in conjunction with the bony feet. Her face is most exaggerated, particularly the lips. The whole effect is of a top-heavy body supported by insubstantial legs.

Figure 2.14: "Every Evening is Enchanted Over at 'South Pacific'" from *The Sunday Compass*, July 23, 1950.

Her left hand cups her mouth in a calling gesture; this gives no suggestion of the powerful singing she can deliver. While Figure 2.12 is focused on her face, in Figure 2.14, her head is not the focus but attention is drawn to its caricaturized facial features. Her hairline is high, creating a flat and slanted forehead. Her eyes are closed as she calls through large lips that are thick and duck-like. The whole effect is to portray the character as foreign and grotesque. She

is drawn slightly shorter than Luther Billis who is placed opposite of her on the other side of the couple. Luther, too, is drawn solidly but rather than appear dumpy like Mary, he puffs out his chest in a bragging stance, showcasing the tattoo of a ship on his stomach. As a result of her height—the shortest in the quartet—and the gainliness she presents across from Luther's machismo, she emerges as the least important character in the hierarchy. Her status is less than that of the elusive Bali Hai, seen here in the caricature's center, framed by the triangle of Emile's left arm.

The artist portrays both Emile and Nellie in geometric certainty in contrast. Emile sports a dapper outline of a tailored suit and Nellie's body of opposing triangles is delicately balanced and cinched with the ribbon belt at her waist. The bandbox neatness of the two further throws Luther and especially Mary into uncivilized shadows. It follows then that Mary, as the lowest on the hierarchy, is barely worthy to enter Bali Hai, the special island, guarded by the planters represented in the caricature by Emile. Only the innocence of her daughter who is sequestered there as well allows her access. The caricature is misleading as there are no scenes in which all four characters are present together. I posit that the caricature then is a tunnel-vision image. Much is left out in order to focus on the lead characters as the "big draw' to the production.

In the context of a discussion of the Black Pacific, this image unequivocally attests to the denigration of Black Pacific participants. As a caricature, it is not an example of Black Pacific art but it does present the exaggeration that artists in the Black Pacific must respond to. It is tempting to view the image in isolation and to assume that the intent of the creator was to purposefully participate in paraphrasing the Black Pacific. Yet, this assertion needs to be unpacked because it is a single figure that works together with the other three exaggerated figures to form a caricature. As seen with the motivations of Michener, Logan, and Rodgers and

Hammerstein, the effort is being made to cure the social ills of prejudice and segregation. The artist's intent here is most likely to acknowledge the creative talent of the musical and the drawn features used to do so are embedded in ignorance or "unknowingness" that is endemic to the system. In addition, it is but one of other caricatures that contain problematic elements. To unravel the nuances of this image, I turn to one more example of a caricature that merits discussion as it extends farther than the realm of caricature to the grotesque.

Figure 2.12, "Supporting Players," is a modification of Trope 2 imagery in that the trio of Mary with Liat and Cable is placed amidst characters from other musicals. I have not placed Figure 2.13 into a category as the grouping of figures in "Every Evening Is Enchanted" do not appear on stage together. It focuses on Mary, as in Trope 1 where she brandishes a grass skirt although the skirt is not included here. Her calling gesture focuses on her as an individual and overlaps with Trope 3 (T3) in this respect. It is not fully T3 imagery as is Figure 2.14 as the shrunken head is missing but the exaggerated lips symbolize primitivist undertones. Figure 2.15 drawn by artist Sam Norkin, known for his caricatures in the *New York Herald Tribune*, highlights the grotesque caricaturizing inherent in Trope 3 due to the inclusion of a shrunken head souvenir. This caricature must tell several stories about Bloody Mary's origin and identity and so the slanted lines of her eyes and the high, flat forehead are present, as seen in previous images, and for good measure, a shrunken head is included because in the musical, Mary makes a good profit selling shrunken heads as souvenirs.

The iconic military shirt and capri-length trousers are present but the *lei* and scarf are missing. The preserved head in the caricature is outlined in bold dark lines. In comparison to Bloody Mary's face, more realism has been applied to it perhaps signaling that the souvenir is more exotic than the person and therefore more interesting. Either way, they are interconnected

for the view. The focus on the stereotypical eyes and the "primitive" head is coupled with the exaggerated bodily proportions of the actress, a move which serves to highlight the comforting body of the black mammy with which audiences would be familiar. The mishmash of tropes in Figure 2.15 demonstrate that Melanesian blackness is equated with African American blackness and both are misunderstood and misrepresented in visual culture in post-war United States.

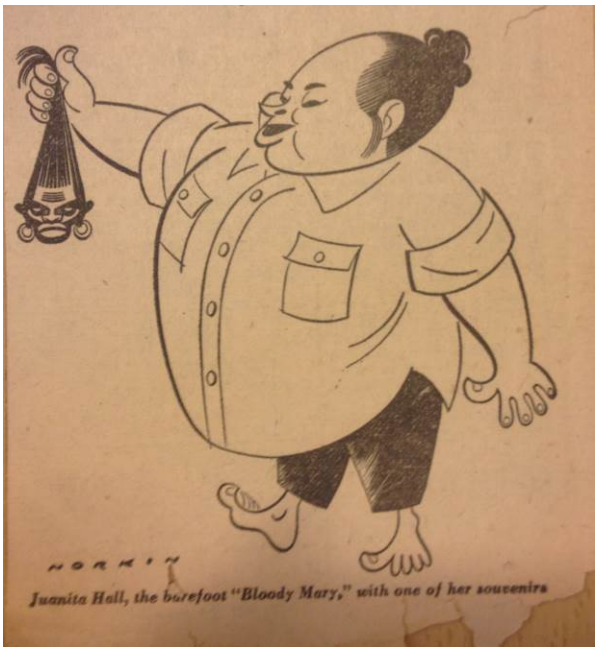

Figure 2.15: Sam Norkin, Caricature of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary, published in *New York Herald Tribune*, June 12, 1949.

Before recounting the cultural context of the shrunken head in Figure 2.15, I want to place these three caricatures in dialogue with photographs, portraits, and anecdotes appearing in publications geared to specifically African American audiences. As noted with Sheng-Mei's reading of Juanita Hall's ethnicity, audiences after the 1950s will take away different perceptions of the racial body of Juanita Hall and Bloody Mary that may be prompted by their own perspectives. Subsequently, during the late 1940s when the musical was first performed, and to

some extent in its later film version, it is important to look at how *at that time* black audiences would understand, recognize, and/or participate in the paraphrasing of blackness and Pacificness.

Ebony's Audience and the Black Pacific

Ebony magazine, founded by African American entrepreneur John H. Johnson contains paraphrased and/or camouflaged visual images of Juanita Hall on at least two occasions. The first example is found in its July 1950 edition that featured three interlinked segments (Figure 2.16).[324] The second example appeared in the March 1959 edition and highlighted Hall's role in *Flower Drum Song*, another Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that "camouphrases" Hall's blackness for the second time on stage (Figure 2.17).[325] "Camouphrase" is the term that I'll use for the remainder of the chapter to suggest elements of erasure as well as elements of disguise.

Both features are set within advertising that ranges from beauty products (Vaseline) to breakfast cereal (Kellogg's All-Bran). This link between celebrity and the consumer occurred because *Ebony* served a particular purpose. Africana Studies scholar Noliwe Rooks writes, it was "[a] magazine that catered to and portrayed the exceptional personalities, opinion leaders, and their followers in African American life [that] provided a suitable nonthreatening medium in which advertisers could promote their products and further enhance industry profits."[326] To this end, Johnson intended *Ebony* to parallel the publications *Life* or *Look*. Magazine magnate Henry Luce, the founder of the weekly *Time* news magazine, purchased *Life* and positioned it as a format for photojournalism. In 1942, weekly circulation figures for *Time* and *Life* were 1.1

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[324] "Audiences Often Mistake Juanita for Real Oriental," *Ebony* 5, no. 9 (July 1950): 30.

[325] "Broadway Oriental: Juanita Hall Scores Her Second Stage Hit in Eastern Role," *Ebony* 14, no. 5 (March 1959): 128–30.

[326] Noliwe M Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them* (New Brunswick N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), https://muse.jhu.edu/.

million readers and 4 million readers, respectively. *Look*, published in Iowa and helmed by the executive editor of *The Des Moines Register* and *The Des Moines Times*, possessed the same format as *Life* but catered to a more mainstream, or middlebrow, audience. The circulation of *Look* grew from 2.9 million in 1948 to 3.7 million in 1954.

Figure 2.16: "Audiences Often Mistake Juanita for Real Oriental," *Ebony,* July 1950

Ebony was first published in 1945 with an initial audience of 125,000 readers. By November 1959, its subscriptions numbered 350,000 and its total circulation was 650,000 readers. These statistics show how *Ebony's* audience grew in the years between the appearances within its pages of Figure 2.16, timed to the opening of *South Pacific* in 1949, and Figure 2.17, pegged to the opening of *Flower Drum Song* in 1958. Between these two editions, *Ebony* reported on Juanita Hall's expertise on Chinese cuisine and on the success of the film *South Pacific* (June 1958). Due to its particular purpose, the magazine's coverage of Juanita Hall from

the frivolous (her go-to recipe for spare ribs) to the sublime (her successful performances in the musicals and film) is logical. The choice to stress the "Asianness" of her performance–the application of her eye make-up to change the appearance of her eyes—and her life—her habit of shopping for food in Chinatown—is the result of the influence of *Time* magazine's ambivalence of the Black Pacific as embodied by Hall and *Ebony* magazine's advocacy for African American culture, also predicated on the actress's corporealityIn the first instance, *Time* is paradoxically congratulatory and derogatory of Hall's triumph in the musical *South Pacific*:

> At 14, a fat, bright-eyed little Negro girl from Keyport, NJ, rolled into Manhattan with a high-school diploma in her hand, and an idea in her head that she would become a 'high dramatic soprano.' But the big time was hard to break into: Juanita Hall was 35 before she padded onto a Broadway stage as Bloody Mary, the betel-chewing Tonkinese mama in South Pacific …"[327]

Even while praising her, the magazine diminishes her accomplishment by framing her as a child with impossible dreams, little education, and no shoes. It is not evident that this was the magazine's intent. I argue that audiences of all racial backgrounds engage with contradictory visual representations of black and/or Pacific bodies in performance and print that are in turn conceived by creators who must engage with the global imaginaries of containment and integration from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. Within this milieu, *Ebony* published articles that disseminated Black Pacific stereotypes while promoting African American success and dignity.

In the second instance, *Ebony* is duly proud to present an extended feature on the accomplished actress. Opening the special segment is a half-page, nine-paragraph column titled "Juanita Hall" with the subtitle "As Bloody Mary, she helps make 'South Pacific' biggest hit in

[327] "After 21 Years," *Time*, June 6, 1949, 76.

Broadway history."[328] The story of Hall's casting in the musical is accompanied by a large photograph of Juanita Hall in costume applying eye makeup set atop a large photograph of an "after-theater party" at Hall's home attended by cast members and the poet Langston Hughes, her close friend. Sandra Deel (Mary Martin's understudy) and Myron McCormick (Luther Billis) sit on the end of a sofa while Betta St. John, Hall, and Hughes share in their laughter from kneeling and sitting positions on the floor. Ending the in-depth coverage is the half-page, eight-paragraph story, "She Once Directed Own Choir on New York WPA,"[329] describing Hall's expertise as a choir director. It starts by mentioning her ethnic background—"Anglo-Saxon, Negro and … full-blooded Chinicock Indian"[330]—and concludes with the outlook, "Now a success in *South Pacific*, the character of Bloody Mary has become second-nature to her and every night around 9 she enjoys being the strident hawker of shrunken heads and beads."[331] A photograph that appears to be taken the same evening as the first sits above the text. Again, Hall is in the company of cast members and Langston Hughes plus another guest. The first part contains text and two photographs with no advertising on the page while the second part consists of one photograph and three advertisements, the largest of which is the boxed ad for the Chicago School of Shoe Rebuilding. These two reports accomplish several objectives. First, Hall and her accomplishments are praised. She is pictured as a close and congenial friend of Langston Hughes. She is also shown at ease in the company of her white colleagues. *Ebony* presents her as a role model whose example the reader can follow. Second, the ads—in addition to the promotion for the shoe rebuilding, readers are prompted to seek government jobs or learn

[328] "Juanita Hall," *Ebony* 5, no. 9 (July 1950): 29. The first and last story here are described rather than reproduced.

[329] "She Once Directed Own Choir on New York WPA," *Ebony* 5, no. 9 (July 1950): 32.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

photography—offer access to jobs. Obtaining one leads to the success of Hall and Hughes. Third, the mentions of *South Pacific* are couched in stereotypical language yet *Ebony* presents mixed-race children, as Hall once was, as acceptable.

Figure 2.16, "Audiences Often Mistake Juanita For Real Oriental," appears between these two bookends. The text here is the shortest of all three, containing just five paragraphs. However, camouphrasing of the Pacific with the African American reader as actor and recipient is evident in two anecdotes. First, *Ebony* writes, "Her characterization of an Oriental type has been so convincing that many a *South Pacific* patron still refuses to believe she is not a real import from a Pacific island."[332] Second, the magazine relates that after one show, a little girl did not believe Hall could speak English even after her mother says otherwise. Her surprise after asking in English for Hall's autograph is recounted: "She *must* speak English almost as good as we do."[333] Another anecdote relates how Bloody Mary is perceived by a Chinese theater-goer, the daughter of a diplomat. It was the "greatest compliment" when the woman proclaimed that Hall reminded her of her *amah* (nursemaid).[334] Finally, much as in the *New York Times* article discussed earlier, Juanita Hall's desire to not repeat stereotypes is explained, "My aim…has been never to offend the Chinese people."[335]

Hall's intent is never to cause harm with her performance. This desire sits side-by-side with the visual representations that accompany *South Pacific*, an example of which is the production photograph featuring Hall as Bloody Mary with Liat and Cable in the T2 formation that leads the article. There is only one other image related to the musical in this set. In it, Hall

[332] "Audiences Often Mistake Juanita for Real Oriental," 30.

[333] Ibid.

[334] Ibid.

[335] Ibid.

consults with the production's musical director. The remaining three images present Hall as an accomplished, confident performer in her own right. In the uppermost image, she is shown consulting with a producer from RCA Victor. In the lower two, she is shown working as a team with Benny Morton, jazz trombonist and conductor, and with Langston Hughes. This is the second instance in which she is presented with Hughes. The two visual images reinforce the idea that she is a close friend and respected collaborator. The text and image in Figure 2.16 balances the wide-ranging advertisements in this part. Among other possibilities, readers are offered the opportunity to receive a free brochure detailing recipes based on the whiskey cordial, Southern Comfort. They are encouraged to entrust their future with Milton N. Alleyne, the conscientious field auditor for the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company. And, the cherubic face of an African American baby reminds them to only choose Vaseline for their youngest loved ones.

I suggest that the selection of ads here most closely meets the needs of Johnson Publishing Company and its advertisers. According to Noliwe Rooks, "African Americans were taught about particular types of acceptable identity, right along with the advertising executives who provided the financing necessary to keep Johnson's publishing empire afloat."[336] The layout is a balance of *Ebony's* desire to tout Hall and the success of African Americans while at the same time proving that its readers are a lucrative market for consumer goods. This placement of text and image with advertisements is what Rooks deems Johnson's "… method, rationale, and rhetoric for selling major manufacturers on the possibility of making more money from an untapped African American consumer market."[337]

[336] Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them*, 131.

[337] Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them*., 130.

In lavish new Broadway musical, *Flower Drum Song*, Juanita Hall, interpreting role of Madam Liang, sings *Chop Suey* with ensemble background. Her method in achieving authentic Oriental quality for part of Bloody Mary in *South Pacific* was to play the part as nearly Chinese as she could. As Madam Liang, she says, "I am Chinese."

BROADWAY 'ORIENTAL'

Juanita Hall scores her second stage hit in Eastern role

JUANITA Hall's theatrical destiny seems to lie in the direction of the East. Two times in the last decade, the engaging actress from Keyport, New Jersey, has been cast as an Oriental in hit Broadway musicals.

After 22 years in show business, she reached star status in 1950 as Bloody Mary, the raucous Tonkinese woman who endeared herself to millions with her singing of *Bali Ha'i*. Now, at 44, she is again delighting Broadway audiences with a spirited performance as a mature Chinese lady named Madam Liang, one of the principal roles in *Flower Drum Song*, the newest offering by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Flower Drum Song deals lightly and cleverly with the clash of Oriental and Western ways in San Francisco's Chinatown. Madam Liang, played with great authority by Juanita, is the dignified and most emphatic sister-in-law of a widower. Throughout the show, she delivers a series of sage observations on men, women and teen-agers. Musically, Juanita has never been better presented. Dramatically, she proves she is an actress of charm and real talent.

Juanita Hall is the lone Negro in the cast of 50, which includes only one white actor, Larry Blyden. Before the Broadway opening, an ad for the show in New York Chinese language newspapers caused the child of Chinese friends of Miss Hall's to exclaim triumphantly to her parents: "You see, Juanita Hall is Chinese after all. She's been passing for colored all the time!"

C. Y. Lee, Chinese author of the novel from which the musical was adapted, was so impressed with Juanita's convincing performance as a Chinese lady that he told her: "You have a good deal of Chinese blood in you, don't you?" I ask because I think you are more Chinese than any one else in the cast." There was a time when she quickly corrected such mistaken impressions by explaining proudly, "I'm a Negro." Now, a little older, wiser, more tolerant, she smiles, says, "I'm an American."

As Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*, Juanita Hall scored Broadway triumph as Tonkinese woman. She is shown in scene with Betta St. John and William Talbert.

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BREAK THE CHAIN LAXATIVE HABIT

Kellogg's ALL-BRAN

Millions find gentle, safe relief with Kellogg's All-Bran and milk

For irregularity caused by lack of bulk

Wouldn't you like to rid yourself of harsh laxative drugs and find a safe, gentle way to natural regularity?

You can, you know, because there is a way—a very delicious way—the Kellogg's All-Bran way. And every year more and more people discover that this good cereal food can do for them what laxative drugs never could.

Actually, there's a good reason why Kellogg's All-Bran works when laxative drugs don't. You see, one of the common causes of irregularity is lack of bulk in the diet. And laxative drugs which contain no bulk can do nothing to correct the cause of the trouble.

Kellogg's All-Bran, on the other hand, is a whole bran cereal. And since bran is nature's best bulk-forming food, just a half-cup of Kellogg's All-Bran with milk provides all of the good bulk food needed for consistent, natural regularity. (Wonderful old-fashioned bran muffin flavor and good nutrition, too!)

If you would like to try this common-sense way to get back on schedule—without the use of harsh laxative drugs—we'd like to make this offer. Enjoy Kellogg's All-Bran with milk every day for 10 days. Then, if you are not completely satisfied, just return the empty carton to us. By return mail we'll send you double your money back and that's a promise from Kellogg's of Battle Creek.

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Figure 2.17: "Broadway 'Oriental'," *Ebony* March 1959.

Ebony's blending of text and photographs with advertisements is repeated in March 1959 with the presentation of "Broadway 'Oriental'" regarding Juanita Hall's success as Madame Liang in the recently opened *Flower Drum Song* on Broadway[338] based on a novel written by Chinese author C.Y. Lee. Figure 2.17 illustrates the first two pages of the three-page spread subtitled "Juanita Hall scores her second stage hit in Eastern role."[339] No ads appear on this first page. A half-page photograph graces the top of the page. Hall is dressed in a costume of silk dress and white gloves with a short cropped wig and stands in the center of an ensemble number of the musical production. Underneath, a two column-wide photograph is placed. It appears to be

[338] Much as she did with Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*, Hall reprised her role as Madame Liang in the 1961 film version of *Flower Drum Song*.

[339] "Broadway Oriental: Juanita Hall Scores Her Second Stage Hit in Eastern Role," 128.

a “file photo;” it is the same one used in the article from 1950—Hall portrays Mary with Liat and Cable in the T2 pose.

Unlike the text in Figure 2.16 where race and exoticism are discussed when relating the story of the little girl asking for an autograph, the text in Figure 2.17 shows a more nuanced presentation of ethnicity and racial relations. For example, in Figure 2.16, “oriental” in the title is not quoted on the page whereas in Figure 2.17, the editors and copywriters have written the same word in the main title in single quotes—‘oriental.’ Additionally, Chinese people are said to “claim” Juanita Hall as one of the actress’ friend said to her parents, “You see, Juanita Hall is Chinese after all. She’s been passing for colored all the time!”[340] Here, even C. Y. Lee, the author of the book that the musical is based on, attributes Hall’s “convincing performance” to the “good deal of Chinese blood” that she surely possesses. In return, according to the article, Juanita Hall “proudly” states, “I’m a Negro.”[341] Yet a shift takes place in her identification that the article does not precisely date: “Now, a little older, wiser, more tolerant, she smiles, says, ‘I’m an American.’”[342]

The power of this concluding statement is dimmed a bit by the placement of ads on the following page which also features two photos of Hall placed atop each other in the left column of the design. The uppermost photo is of Hall’s profile with the caption explaining that she wears a custom wig for the role, her real hair was dyed red, and that she purchased the kimono she wears in the photograph in Hawai‘i. The lower photograph depicts Hall on stage as Madame Liang in a duet with performer Keye Luke. For the reader, *Ebony* shares in this caption that Hall earns $700 per week as a principal performer in the musical.

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[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid.

[342] Ibid.

True to its consumer purpose, *Ebony* demonstrates the bankability of the black audience. The remaining half page is dedicated to one large ad for Kellogg's All-Bran cereal. This is an intriguing pairing between the congratulatory piece on Hall and the scare-mongering title of the ad: "BREAK THE CHAIN LAXATIVE HABIT."[343] Paradoxically, the image and caption below are more discreet. An older distinguished African American woman in a pert suit wears ornamental jewelry as she pours milk from a pitcher over cereal in a cut-glass bowl. The caption lets the reader know that this discerning consumer chooses All-Bran for "gentle, safe relief" of "irregularity caused by lack of bulk."[344] The juxtaposition between the elegance of Hall's life and performance and the difficult digestion of the discerning consumer is jarring.

Not pictured here, the last portion of the story is subtitled "CHINESE LIKE PERFORMANCE." Five photographs of Hall preparing for and celebrating after the production dominate the space reserved for the text. Previously, the 1950 article states that a Chinese diplomat's daughter praised Hall for her performance; likewise in this 1959 report, the writer draws attention to the "steady stream of Chinese visitors [that] has appeared at her dressing room to congratulate her warmly on a believable and dignified performance."[345] In the three paragraphs, the *Ebony* writer also acknowledges that Hall's portrayal could be seen as offensive but her "profound respect for Chinese people and their culture will not allow her to caricature Chinese types on stage."[346] This is the third instance in this chapter where published accounts state that Hall approached her Asian roles with dignity and cultural awareness. Although caricatures of Hall as black/Pacific accompany two of these articles, Juanita Hall, herself, never

[343] Ibid., 129.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Ibid., 130.

[346] Ibid., 131.

participated in the caricaturization. While today, it may appear that she does, I suggest that within the context of her life and work, Hall publicly demonstrated a genuine interest and concern for the Black Pacific. A variety of ads buttress the small story. Two ads suggest careers in the entertainment industry or as a detective. Curiously, this segment focuses on Hall's physical appearance and the remaining ads on the page relate to personal appeal and beautification, advertising Arrid deodorant, Formula K process cream for men by Kongo Chemical, Co., Inc., and various smaller ads about asthma and weight-gain formulations.

I herewith conclude my analysis of these engaging ads and now I want to specify that *Ebony* was not the only African American publication that included a mention of *Flower Drum Song* and Juanita Hall in its pages. American Studies scholar Kathryn Edney writes that a review in Chicago's *Daily Defender* in 1960 "emphasized that Hall's character was an 'American citizen'."[347] This statement echoes Hall's own feelings as reported in *Ebony*. While the *Daily Defender* was not the advertising vehicle that *Ebony* was, it was geared to black audiences and stressed the Americanness, in this instance that the audience could claim. This stance is one of strength, as Edney argues:

> Like the character of Madame Liang, Hall negates neither her race nor her heritage. Instead she stakes a wider claim of belonging to a nation that purports to be about individuality and difference. In doing so, Hall and her African-American spectators wrote themselves and their political struggles for integration into the fissures of a musical, that, on its surface, denied that any struggle was occurring at all.[348]

The struggle of *Flower Drum Song* is presented on stage about ten years after *South Pacific* opens in 1949. Although progress has been made in that time, African American audiences, like its white counterparts, would see that both are about integration. I argue that while it appears that

[347] Kathryn Edney, "'Integration through the Wide Open Back Door': African Americans Respond to Flower Drum Song (1958)," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 4, no. 3 (2010): 261–72.

[348] Ibid., 264.

the *Daily Defender* is espousing integration and that *Ebony* is reiterating stereotypes, I attribute their intentions to an effort to build solidarity with Asian audiences along the lines of what Rooks argues, "Race, and by extension, racism, was an issue in the magazine only so we can be told of the narrowing difference between the races, or shown how African Americans had absorbed U.S consumer culture sufficiently to be viewed as non-threatening 'good consumers' and ideal U.S. citizens."[349] Edney also acknowledges that Hall's "light skin tone meant … [she was able] to defy characterization… [and] she did not always explain her blackness in expected ways."[350] I argue that the camouphrasing in *Time* that I describe above is due to the publication's inability to respond to this unexpected blackness.

This lack was not limited to the magazine. As I have outlined, the simultaneous camouflaging and paraphrasing is present in the different versions of *South Pacific* which reflect anxieties in American culture and politics. *Ebony* followed the template of sorts put in place by *Time* and other Luce publications. In this way, it mirrored some of the formatting and content. However, the magazine did not merely copy *Time's* intent; *Ebony* was conceived out of a desire to uplift African American achievements and acknowledge equality with white America. Part of participating wholeheartedly in America is the engagement with people of many ethnicities. The ambivalent references in *Ebony* to Juanita Hall and her "Asian" roles is couched in the language and mores of the time but shows an attitude that is perhaps more progressive than white America's view. The returning black men from the Pacific Theater did not just impart ideas about blackness; they absorbed them from the Melanesian and Pacific cultures they would have

[349] Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them*, 134.

[350] Edney, "'Integration through the Wide Open Back Door,'" 264.

passed through. Their front-line experience translates into an acceptance that *Ebony* magazine is acting upon although the images are not as nuanced as they could be.

Cannibalism and Primitivism

In the musical, all of the men stationed on the island know that Bloody Mary sells shrunken head trinkets and other souvenirs. Luther Billis is particularly keen to acquire a boar's tooth necklace. The shrunken head motif plays heavily in both the Broadway musical and the Hollywood film but while the boar's tooth dance is a lavish spectacle in the latter, it is absent in the former, most likely due to the space limitations of the stage. Yet, the film's dance sequence by famed American choreographer LeRoy Prinz, is also an example of how Melanesians, Africans, and African Americans continue to be physically and culturally interchanged. In her discussion of the problematics of the film *South Pacific*, Margaret Jolly states:

> [T]he … dance is performed to drums which sound African rather than Pacific and choreographed with masked men from New Guinea, Rapanui bird men, Fijian firewalkers, and Polynesian hula dances. There are a few darker men in laplaps, with shells or pigs' tusks on their breasts, who are played not by ni-Vanuatu, but by whites blacked up, who bear names in the credits like 'Chief—Archie Savage.'[351]

Jolly is on the mark when she senses but does not name the Black Pacific in this scene. In the last instance, African American blackness is camouflaged so well that dancer Archie Savage, from the original production, the lone black man pictured in Figure 2.3, is not recognized but presumed to be a white actor with makeup. Peggy Dave, an African American dancer, also performs in the film's dance sequence which was shot in Los Angeles, rather than in Hawai'i. Peggy Dave is the cover girl for *Jet* on its 19 June 1958 issue. Also owned by Johnson Publishing Company, *Jet* is a sister magazine to *Ebony* covering news, sports, entertainment and

[351] Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali' Ha'i: Eroticism and Exotcism in Representations of the Pacific," 112.

other tidbits about "everything [that] is moving along at a faster clip."[352] There is the same acceptance and categorization of the Pacific that I identified in *Ebony* earlier in this chapter. For example, the magazine announces to the reader that "the caramel-colored girl from Los Angeles"[353] appeared "in the torrid, high-pitched boar's tooth ceremonial dance in *South Pacific*."[354] This proclamation, accompanied by a small photograph of Dave's upper body in a bikini top, is placed in a text box outlined in red. It spreads across the lower half of two pages of the compact magazine that is 5 1/8 wide by 7 3/8 inches high. Astutely placed above the blurb on Peggy Dave, by accident or design, is a 56-word announcement of Juanita Hall's casting in *Flower Drum Song*. A small photograph of Hall's face completes the segment. On this two-page layout, *Jet* exhibits pride in the accomplishments of Hall and Dave while at the same time accepting common stereotypes about the Pacific in general and Melanesia specifically.

Returning to the discussion of Melanesian cultural practices in *South Pacific*, Billis is obsessed with bringing home a boar's tooth because while he may not know the specifics, he knows of the islanders' reverence for the power inherent in the impossibly long incisor. Nicholas Thomas writes about the equation between tusks and status in Vanuatu:

> Knocking out the upper incisor permitted the lower to grow through a curve and eventually one, and sometimes two or three, full circles. Such a boar would become incapable of foraging for itself and would need to be hand-fed, but was understood to accumulate male soul-substance that would in turn be acquired by the male sacrificer at the moment when the boar was killed. Such sacrifices … [were] fundamental to relationships of status and political authority in the area. …[355]

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[352] John H. Johnson, "Why Jet?," *Jet*, November 1, 1951, 67.

[353] "Pretty Los Angeles Dancer Shows Talent in 'South Pacific,'" *Jet*, June 19, 1958, 60.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Nicholas Thomas, *Oceanic Art*, World of Art; World of Art. (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 27.

The role of pigs in Melanesian societies is knowledge that Billis and the audience do not possess. While the boar's tooth necklace is fetishized by Billis, the shrunken head is the motif that is overwhelmingly included in visual representations to signal the "primitive" nature of Bloody Mary and other Pacific Islanders that she stands in for. To give "depth" to the flat image of the shrunken head of Figure 2.15, it is important to examine the role of headhunting and pigs in Melanesian societies.

Headhunting maintained cosmic balance according to Thomas: "Acts of violence, for instance, may be understood as moments in specific cycles of revenge, perhaps simultaneously as individual and collective accomplishments that transform the status of a renowned warrior and enhance the vigour of his community."[356] It is not surprising that he uses the word "vigour" as it suggests vitality and abundant growth. Thomas writes, "It might be pointed out that in the Sepik, agricultural fertility was similarly believed to depend upon successful head-hunting: it was thought that unless heads were taken, the yams so central to male prestige would simply rot in the ground."[357] For the Asmat, the life cycle of trees is coupled with the passage of human life. This is depicted in the *bisj* poles they erect. According to Thomas, "The generalized association between trees and human life was expressed more specifically in identification between tree-felling and life-taking practices."[358] In the Asmat origin myth, the trees become humans. Fumeripits, the only human at the beginning of time, danced alone on the beach. Feeling lonely, he created companions by carving them from trees. They did not dance so he then carved a drum to bring them to life. As he played it, the new humans began to dance with him. Life begins and ends through rupture and performance.

[356] Ibid., 79.

[357] Ibid., 82.

[358] Ibid.

For Western ethnographers, visitors, and observers, headhunting would have been perceived as horrific and much more so if they didn't know, understand, or disapprove of the societal structures that predicated it. In contrast to the destruction of life that outsiders saw in headhunting, Thomas outlines the regenerative nature of the practice:

> Heads were required not only for vengeance and reinvigoration, but were also central to initiation rites for young men. Initiates had to take a head, which they would cradle and meditate upon for a few days, absorbing the enemy warrior's power, before undertaking a canoe journey towards the sea, the domain of the dead; in the course of the trip the youth became frailer and frailer, mimicking senility, before being plunged into the sea by an older sponsor, to die and be reborn as a man. Killing was therefore, in manifold ways, a precondition for growth and life.[359]

Fear of headhunting was widespread in Western culture and even as late as 1961 the supposed death of Michael Rockefeller, of the storied family, at the hands of "cannibals" suggests that this was a taboo and frightful subject. The images in which Bloody Mary brandishes a small, wrinkled head reinforced what *South Pacific* viewers thought they already *knew* about the practice of headhunting. In reality, the shrunken head souvenir is not a "true" Melanesian art form. Melanesian headhunting practices called for a complete cleaning of the skull and placement in the men's house. The cleaned skulls of enemies would not be traded or sold. The first photograph of skulls from a headhunting raid was taken in 1886 by Charles Woodford, the Resident Commissioner of the British Solomon Islands. He acted as a naturalist and took photographs as he traveled for his duties. A shrunken head would most likely be a "faked" souvenir to please the unsuspecting tourist like Luther Billis.

Michener would have included the detail that Bloody Mary sold shrunken heads garnered from an unknown source, as a way to further highlight the "otherness" she would have presented to American servicemen stationed on the island. In the short stories, betel-juice is visible on her

[359] Ibid., 83.

lips. It would not be hard for a reader to equate the red substance on her face with blood and assume that Mary herself killed to procure the heads. In the musical and film, she lacks the visible marker of betel-chewing and in effect, the "bite," so to speak, is taken away by Western forces. In the face of the military, she must continually back down when ordered to sell wares elsewhere. She becomes a figure of jest and a source of humor in the story and its adaptations. In this way, she is contained and through caricaturization, she is embraced and integrated although ultimately she and her daughter are not truly integrated through marriage and children.

I highlight how Michener describes the native girls because I think this plays into why the image of Mary with the shrunken head is so durable. His description of the women is very much in the vein of classic Orientalism: "[Atabrine Benny, Joe's guide,] loved seeing brown young girls, black girls with firm bosoms, trim French girls with white frocks, sedate sisters in long black. The tragically slim strip of land was part of the South Pacific and he reveled in its strangeness."[360] All of the women are for visual pleasure and all ethnicities are indistinguishable along a spectrum of desirability. Michener lingers on the nudity of the women:

> For this was the first time in his life [that Joe] had seen so many women … walking about with no clothes on above their hips. He was not a prurient fellow, but the natural interests of any young man demand that he know as much about women as he properly can … Above him stood not less than thirty native girls ranging in age from twelve to twenty. They bore melons and pineapples and bananas and mangoes and split coconuts and yams and breadfruit and everything else that grows in such prodigal quantities in the South Pacific.[361]

Joe, too, perceives the women and the island as "strange" and although he is ostensibly anti-racist, with a East Coast background and Ivy League education, his interior thoughts reveal that

[360] Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*., 149.

[361] Ibid., 250–51.

he still holds on to what he has been carefully taught in the North and it is no different from Nellie's Southern outlook.

Through her entrepreneurship, Bloody Mary is the gateway to the pleasures isolated on the near but fabled Bali Hai. She teases access through the haunting ode she sings upon meeting Cable. Upon his arrival on the island, he encounters visual, sensual, and later with Liat, sexual delights. Not content with just juxtaposing breasts and fruit in his description, Michener makes a reference to Post-Impressionism: "Cable was truly enraptured. The frieze of women looked like models awaiting the immortalizing brush of Gauguin. Unaware of their forbidding ugliness by American middle class standards, they were equally unaware of their surpassing beauty by the artist's immortal standards."[362] In this instance, Michener directly references Gauguin and that artist's portrayal of Tahitian women becomes a template for his own foray into Orientalism and Primitivism. Michener imagines that Cable would inevitably muse upon the notion of Beauty when contemplating the women. To him, they are both ugly and beautiful at the same time, depending on whose standards are in play.

This same duality appears later in Joe's story when he and some friends are talking about which photographs are appropriate to send home to convince their girlfriends that they aren't surrounded by tempting women: "From his shirt pocket Eddie produced a horrendous picture of a Melanesian woman with frizzled hair, sagging breasts, and buttocks like a Colorado mesa. She was wearing a frond of palm leaves."[363] After discussing the photo, the men joke about "going native" and sleeping with the women; De Becque is perhaps the unnamed subject of their incredulous conversation: "What I don't get … is how traders out here and planters can marry

[362] Ibid., 151.

[363] Ibid., 160.

these women. Or even live with them?"[364] Dialogue such as this is straightforward in demonstrating prurient curiosity that is perhaps not just limited to the pages of the novel. The photographs are owned by the men and shown to their friends. Although they deem the Melanesian women unattractive, they are not loathe to speculate about physical and emotional relationships with them.

As seen in the array of examples in this section of the chapter, in magazines and publicity, Hall is portrayed as more human than Bloody Mary but still stereotyped as simplistic in her demeanor, thoughts and feelings. The fascination with and ambivalence about "other" culture is best exemplified by writer, photographer, and critic Carl Van Vechten who converted many of his photographic portraits into postcards and thought nothing of sending them across Manhattan in the care of the United States Postal Service. Van Vechten would argue that through his "signature correspondence," he is introducing his friends in the city and across the country to the beauty of black life and blackness. I counter that in his multiple portraits and resulting postcards of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary, Van Vechten objectifies the Black Pacific. I assert that Juanita Hall, both as accomplished actress and singer and in her role as Bloody Mary, is the herald of the Black Pacific as it comes into increased visibility after World War II. The question is, was Van Vechten an ally? Can his motives for affinity and affiliation be trusted?

Carl Van Vechten: Camouflage in Black Pacific Photographic Portraits of Juanita Hall

In the previous six sections, in addition to surveying the presence or absence of blackness in the United States military and the racial atmosphere after World War II, I have introduced the significance of Gilroy's use of Du Bois' double-consciousness for my argument, clarified my

[364] Ibid.

deployment of Klein's notion of paraphrasing while introducing my own theory of camouflage, examined how the visions of Michener, Rodgers, Hammerstein, and Logan combined in the multiple versions of *South Pacific*, introduced Juanita Hall and determined the iconic elements of visual portrayals of her in character and the effect on ensuing representations of actresses of many ethnicities, uncovered the prominence of caricature in theatre writing at the time, pinpointed the significance of the shrunken head in many of these caricatures, and examined how black audiences perceived the Black Pacific through the influence of black publications that took their cue from mainstream publishing rivals. At this time, I summarize Carl Van Vechten's life and career before turn to a grouping of images that provide a point of entry for discussing the extent of camouflage of the Black Pacific in his images of Juanita Hall.

Born in 1880 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in the midwestern United States, Carl Van Vechten was a "dandy,"[365] in the Baudelairean sense of the word who delighted in the spectacle and vitality of life, his own and particularly that of black America. He was the youngest of three children; his brother was eighteen at his birth and his sister was sixteen. A suffragette and close friends with abolitionists, his mother spoiled her surprise child. Additionally, his father was a co-founder of Piney Woods School in Mississippi that was established to educate African American children at the primary and secondary school levels. Even before leaving his small town, he had relatively few biases to shed compared to others without his upbringing.

Nevertheless, as a photographer and writer, among other pursuits and passions, he presents a riddle of contradictions in regards to black life and identity in the United States before, during, and after the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Also known as the "New Negro

[365] Keith F Davis, Carl Van Vechten, and Inc Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer: Photographs by Carl Van Vechten* (Kansas City, Mo.; Albuquerque, N.M.: Hallmark Cards ; Distributed by the University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 11.

Movement" in reference to the 1925 anthology, *The New Negro*, edited by writer and educator Dr. Alain Locke, this era provided numerous opportunities for black American arts, culture, and philosophy to bloom with the New York neighborhood of Harlem as its center. There are many descriptors of Van Vechten that orbit around his intentions toward African Americans. In 1926, he published a novel under the title *Nigger Heaven*. Discussions about the "n-word" and its repercussions reverberate today and the title was scandalous during his lifetime. The work had split reactions in the black Civil Rights community with activist W. E. B. Du Bois denouncing it and Van Vechten's friends, activists Walter White and James Weldon Johnson, and poet Langston Hughes supporting him and his work. Van Vechten knew Walter White through their mutual publisher and it was he who introduced him to Hughes.

Van Vechten's friendship with Johnson, an early leader of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP), was so close that upon Johnson's death in a car accident in 1938, Van Vechten committed to donating his collection of correspondence, photographs, negatives, and other material to the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library at Yale University. This would later become the James Weldon Johnson Collection of Negro Arts and Letters and houses the postcards and letters discussed in this chapter that give insight into the relationship differentials between Van Vechten and Hall, and Hall and Hughes. The friendship between the latter two is first explored in the earlier discussion of *Ebony's* audience and the Black Pacific.

Van Vechten has many monikers. In the catalogue to accompany the 1995 exhibition *The Passionate Observer: Photographs by Carl Van Vechten*, art historian Keith Davis refers to him as "a visible white booster"[366] in Harlem which he frequented. "Booster" is used here in the sense of an avid supporter insofar as "[h]e introduced many of his peers to the culture of black

[366] Ibid., 17.

New York…"[367] His interest was not superficial. Davis states, "The frequency of black faces in his grand portrait collection, for example, reflected his deep interest in African-American culture. No other white photographer of this period devoted anything approaching Van Vechten's energy to the sympathetic portrayal of black writers and artists."[368] In academic discourse, Van Vechten is seen as a vital force in the Harlem Renaissance in spite of, or because of the fact that he is Caucasian.

His support was so great that it paralleled that of the *négrophilia* of the white avant-garde in Paris in the 1920s who upheld black culture as fashionable and modern.[369] A member of this group saw it as a positive thing to be known as a *négrophile*. While not describing himself as such, a look at Van Vechten's life reveals the commitment of his interest. Art historian Petrine Archer-Straw writes that he "… immersed himself in black culture to the exclusion of his white friends."[370] Accordingly, Van Vechten's relationships with his white compatriots was vexed as a result of his support and the seemingly simultaneous stereotyping of his black colleagues shown by the title of his notorious novel.

He was a *bon vivant*[371] as befits his coming of age in the 1890s. Davis describes him as "eternally 'star-struck,' and his photographs in many ways are about the aura and manifestations of fame."[372] He threw lavish parties with Fania née Marinoff, his wife of fifty years. She was his second wife, after a short marriage when he was younger, and Fania was equally fiery about life

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[367] Ibid.

[368] Ibid., 23.

[369] Petrine Archer Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 9.

[370] Ibid., 171.

[371] Davis, Van Vechten, and Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer*, 6.

[372] Ibid., 30.

and its pleasures. From the outside, they had an unusual marriage. They fought, slept in separate bedrooms, and it was widely acknowledged that both had extramarital affairs with Van Vechten having a series of male lovers. It is not confirmed that he and Hughes were lovers. Despite what would appear to be challenges to the marriage, their relationship was a committed one and lasted for five decades.

Van Vechten's photographic practice was conducted on his own terms, according to English Literature scholar Emily Bernard:

> Van Vechten chose subjects only according to his tastes. He never exchanged photographs for pay, so he was not beholden to anyone. He saw the process through from beginning to end, and enjoyed the developing and printing most of all because it required absolute solitude.[373]

Van Vechten may have loved the solitude of developing his prints in a room added to the apartment he shared with his wife but as he had many famous friends, both black and white, his photographs took on historical implications. Davis writes that his work was not just the "recording of a few notable friends. It become clear to him, in fact, that his goal was to construct a visual register of the leading creative talents of his time."[374] Van Vechten strategically kept on hand a massive array of props, costumes, and scenery "… to ensure that each sitter would be treated in a suitably unique and expressive manner."[375] Davis reiterates, "The often lively backgrounds Van Vechten used for his portraits were very carefully considered. The idea for them had been borrowed from the paintings of Matisse, and they became an important element of Van Vechten's style."[376] An examination of two photographic prints (Figures 2.18 and 2.19) held

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[373] Emily Bernard, *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance a Portrait in Black and White* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2012), 233.

[374] Davis, Van Vechten, and Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer*, 22.

[375] Ibid., 26.

[376] Ibid.

by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library sheds light on Van Vechten's use of backdrops as well as the props he chooses to suggest "the Pacific" in portraits of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary. While I discuss two specific images here of Hall sitting down with the shrunken head prop, she appears standing in others or holding a large bundle of silk flowers; Van Vechten's sessions lasted hours and he captured Hall and others in an endless variety of poses with an equally abundant supply of props with both color and black-and-white film.

Figure 2.18: Carl Van Vechten, Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary; South Pacific with Shrunken Head, June 25, 1949, 25 x 18 cm, Photographs of Blacks

In "Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary; South Pacific with a Shrunken Head" (Figure 2.18), the contrast of shadows of the black-and-white film provides a dramatic setting for the actress as the formidable merchant. A geometric pattern zig-zags its way across the backdrop behind her. Thin cross-hatched lines alternate with thicker skeins of half-moon shapes. This cloth is utilized many

times and here, serendipitously, it resembles barkcloth, or *tapa*, and it is tempting to seek genealogical or land-based imagery in the pattern with no success. A solemn Hall stares into the distance, a shrunken head cradled in her hands. Long hair dangles from the head but this is barely discernible as if fades into the shadows, merging with the dark textures of her scarf. A heavy set of shell necklaces encases her neck.

Figure 2.19: Carl Van Vechten, "Juanita Hall Singing Happy Time; South Pacific," 2x2 in color slide, March 26, 1953, color Kodachrome, Color Slides of Blacks

The upper half of the actress's body is featured here as in the next image, a color photograph "Juanita Hall Singing Happy Time; South Pacific" (Figure 2.19),[377] in which Juanita Hall/Bloody Mary holds the head up to point at it but looks away from it into the distance in the studio portrait. Her face and the head are juxtaposed against a flowered backdrop. The head casts

[377] The photograph incorrectly refers to the song as "Happy Time" rather than "Happy Talk." To avoid confusion and positively identify this particular image, I will use the title it is filed under.

a small shadow across her right shoulder. Strung necklaces of shell drape heavily around her neck and left wrist. The effect is different than in the three caricatures Figures 2.13, 2.14, and 2.15 discussed previously.[378] In those examples the caricaturists depend on shaded line to create an "othered" character and although shaded space is present in Figures 2.18 and 2.19, Van Vechten's technique is to link Hall's face with the head to suggest the "other" is present. There are no overt Asian references made with her makeup or props as in the caricatures. The slightest suggestion of physical alteration is present in Figure 2.18; her eyebrows are shaped into tiny wings that lift away from her eyes. In Figure 2.19, her eyebrows are fuller and longer, now curving over her eyes rather than lifting away.

With the same prop and pose, it is not obvious that these two photographs were made at two different sittings. Figure 2.18 is dated June 25, 1949, and Figure 2.19 is dated March 26, 1953. Hall sat for Van Vechten as Bloody Mary on at least two occasions. I do not illustrate them here but the floral backdrop in the later image is also present in several of the photographs taken in 1949. This is a possibility as Van Vechten stored his props and scenery through time. While Figure 2.18 does not immediately bring to mind a Matisse setting, the backdrop in Figure 2.19 could suggest the lush locale in which the artist placed his female figures. The background boasts a field of neutral-toned flowers with leaves and branches. The beige shade of her tunic is just slightly lighter than the background. Here, a vaguely lush tropical setting is suggested.[379]

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[378] June 1949 is a banner month for reviews and images of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary. Brooks Atkinson's review in the *New York Times* is published on June 5, 1949. Helen Ormsbee's article, "Bloody Mary Has Arrived," was published on June 12, 1949, in the *New York Herald Tribune* accompanied by the Sam Norkin caricature (Figure 2.15). The caricature by Al Hirschfeld appeared in the *New York Times* on June 26, 1949, one day after the portraits with Van Vechten were made.

[379] The same fabric was in his studio as early as 1935 as it is the backdrop for Van Vechten's portrait of actor John W. Bubbles as the character Sportin' Life from Porgy and Bess. The fabric creates different moods depending on the subject.

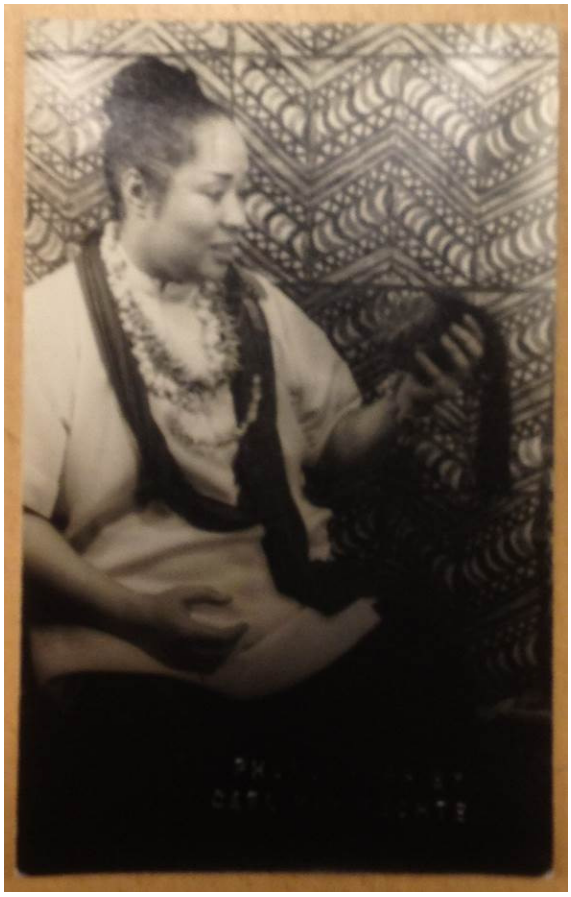
A discerning viewer of these two photographs would pick up on the Pacific, or Oceanic, elements—the shrunken head and the body adornment. An informed viewer would separate the two out into their respective cultural areas, understanding that the head is symbolic of regeneration in some Melanesian cultures including the Solomon Islands and the *lei* form of body adornment can be found across Oceania but has come to symbolize Polynesia and Hawai‘i in particular. The viewer would know that body adornment, like the necklace, or *lei*, beautifies the body and protects his or her *mana*. The scarf is a military cast-off but combined with the *lei*, it creates even more status for the wearer as it associates her with American military forces. All of these elements are combined in the image with no reference points—the viewer would have to recognize this as Bloody Mary, and if not, the image may be mistaken for a documentary one rather than a posed one if the title was not given. While different from the poses in Figures 2.15 and Figure 2.18, the placement of the shrunken head nearly on plane with Hall's in Figure 2.19, cements ideas of primitivism and orientalism.

As I have established, imagery of Bloody Mary is iconic and Figure 2.20 featuring actress Diosa Costello in this black-and-white photograph taken by Bloom (Chicago) is in the same vein. Previously, I highlighted how similar poses and costumes linked the many actresses who portrayed Bloody Mary. In an examination of Figures 2.6 and 2.7, I presented how one photograph echoes the other. This studio portrait, Figure 2.20, also echoes Figure 2.19. Again, Hall and Costello are photographed in similar poses and clothing. In Figure 2.20, Costello sits giving the viewer a ¾ profile. She gazes at the head and turns toward the shrunken head gingerly held in her left hand. She points at it with her right forefinger. The gaze and the point are gestures included in both the caricature and the Van Vechten pose.

Here, the scarf falls off her right shoulder and along with the shell *lei*, they are both obscured by the positioning of her hands showing off the head. An oblique shadow hits the side of her face to travel over the top of her right shoulder. While Juanita Hall's stage makeup does not exaggerate her "Asian" features, here, Costello's hair is pulled back tightly and her stage makeup exaggerates the line of her eyebrows and eyes, giving her the "Asian" look that so many of the images reproduce. Her lips are downturned as if she is mimicking the countenance of the head or expressing disgust at its features. She sits in front of a plain backdrop with a thin palm frond between her and the background which creates a spiky shadow. This setting is more neutral with its pointed shapes than the verdant flowers behind Hall in the Van Vechten image.

Figure 2.20: Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. "Diosa Costello (Bloody Mary replacement) in South Pacific" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed March 21, 2016, http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7adda956-4dd6-eca6-e040-e00a1806591b.

Again, the viewer without knowledge of the character might mistake this for a realistic portrait. An informed viewer would understand that Costello is a Puerto Rican actress portraying a Vietnamese character that was originated by an African American actress and based on a character sketch from Michener's time in Melanesia during World War II. The degrees of separation represented in this portrait of Costello originated in the musical *South Pacific* with the well-intentioned casting of Juanita Hall. Unfortunately, in terms of awareness of African American culture and Pacific cultures, the musical falls short of presenting an encompassing viewpoint. The musical mis-conceptions of the musical are in turn conceived in the anthology by the well-intentioned Michener.



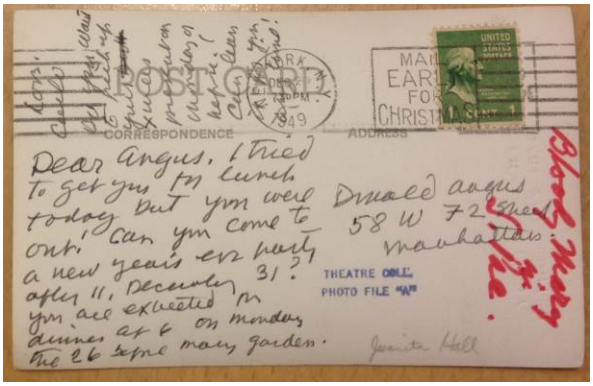


Figure 2.21: Front and back of Postcard of Portrait of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary in South Pacific with Shrunken Head, June 26, 1949, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center.

They also follow through into a postcard that Van Vechten printed from one of his many portraits of Juanita Hall (Figure 2.21). The front of "Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary; South Pacific; With Shrunken Head" features a variation of Hall's pose with the shrunken head as in Figure 2.18; in the latter the difference is that she holds the head in front of her chest and stares straight out into the distance ignoring the head. In Figure 2.21, she looks straight into the eyes of the head, a slight smile on her face. She appears to not notice the viewer or photographer as she quizzically contemplates the head. In Figure 2.18, the souvenir is held in the middle of her chest as if she is either in the act of moving it away or bringing it closer. In Figure 2.19, Hall positions the head next to her own face. In Figure 2.21, her intent is not obvious because the expression in her eyes is not clear. I suggest that the mystery caused by her looking away projects that her thoughts on the character and her portrayal can never be clearly known by outsiders.

In this and the previous photographs by Vechten, the lighting, the film selection, the repetitive pose act as the signatures of his style. American Studies scholar Rudolph P. Byrd explains, "Van Vechten's appreciation for the dramatic possibilities of shadow and light, his calculated expression of positive forms and negative space, his sensitivity to the value of creating and preserving a mood are discrete factors that together yield a nuanced statement."[380] Archer-Straw frames the shaded values in another "light." She writes, "Black-and white photography, with its delightful play of tonal values, was the perfect accomplice to négrophilia, itself a flirtation between blacks and whites."[381]

In the examples of "Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary; South Pacific," "Juanita Hall Singing Happy Time; South Pacific," and the postcard of "Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary; South Pacific;

[380] Carl Van Vechten and Rudolph P Byrd, *Generations in Black and White : Photographs* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), xxv.

[381] Archer Straw, *Negrophilia*, 81.

With Shrunken Head," the formal elements are striking yet in their contrived nature, they are of a similar type of camouflage of the Black Pacific as the advertorial from *House and Garden* (Figure 2.11) in which Hall was the central figure amongst exotic baskets. Another factor to consider here is whether Hall instinctively took the pose or was encouraged to take it. The poses of his sitters are Van Vechten's hallmark according to Byrd. He continues, "The pose is perhaps the primary locus of meaning. It is in the pose that one encounters the mystery, the personality, and the force of the subject."[382] In the three images of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary under discussion here, the pose unequivocally equates the women with an object that is, in itself, a cipher that stands in for "othered" cultures.

Conversely, Keith Davis praises the give-and-take between the subject and Van Vechten the photographer. He writes, "Van Vechten's subjects are understood to be willing participants in the creation of their media personas. They collaborate with the photographer as active, willful beings at once open, and resistant, to interpretation."[383] He created many iconic images of African American women that were received with praise. Photographer and art historian Deborah Willis writes that Zora Neale Hurston, after viewing his images of her, said, "The pictures are swell! I love myself when I am laughing. And then again when I am looking mean and impressive."[384] Many critics concur with her delight. On 10 June 1978, a friend of Van Vechten's, Natalie Hays Hammond, director of the Hammond Museum in North Salem, New York, declares:

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[382] Van Vechten and Byrd, *Generations in Black and White*, xxv.

[383] Davis, Van Vechten, and Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer*, 32.

[384] Deborah Willis, "The Photographic Portrait: Constructing an Ideal," in *Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits* ([Washington D.C.]: National Museum of African American History and Culture Smithsonian Institute ;Distributed by HarperCollins, 2007), 17.

> Carl had the imagination and heart to know people and catch their spirit in phrase of photograph. … His perception and sensitivity as an artist went beyond the simple image to explore the complexity of the soul of his subject. His eye spotted the twinkle that no one else saw, the tear that was unshed, the emotion that was meant to be suppressed but would never elude his penetrating gaze.[385]

I agree this conclusion may be true in some of the photographs but in those of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary, there is little of her personality to be seen in many of the photograph. In several not picture here, she stands barefoot laughing down at the head. The viewer can sense an innate joy but in general in Van Vechten's images, this is rare. In these more spontaneous examples, there is a delight in the role and the encounter with the Pacific, even if it is through a stereotypical head. The effect of erasing her is even more pronounced when considering that the photographs became flat postcards that were written on and processed through the United States Postal Service.

An alternate theory to what I am proposing is argued by Davis, among other scholars. Primarily, they argue, the contradictions with the heads as props is an intentional choice made with the women's cooperation that speaks to racial injustice at the time. The argument is filtered through the two images of the jazz greats Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday which are considered some of his best work by Van Vechten and others. "Portrait of Bessie Smith" (Figure 2.22) was taken by Van Vechten on 3 February 1946. Jazz great Bessie Smith wears an evening gown with wide straps over the shoulders. An earring dangles and sparkles over her left shoulder. Her hair is pulled back in a bun making her expression visible to the viewer as she looks slightly upwards.

[385] Quoted in Carl Van Vechten, *Portraits, the Photography of Carl Van Vechten* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), n.p.

Figure 2.22: Carl Van Vechten, *Portrait of Bessie Smith*, February 3, 1936, gelatin silver print from negative, sheet 35.6 x 28 cm, https://www.loc.gov/item/2004663576/

Perched on her right shoulder is a mask made of black material of a man's face with wide eyes short cropped hair, wide smile, and short nose. The woman and mask are posed in front of a draped background with a prominent shadow visible on their right and intervening between the pair and the background. What appears to be a white sculpture is partially visible over her left shoulder. "Portrait of Billie Holiday" (Figure 2.23), shot on 23 March 1949, about three months before he photographed Hall, is of jazz great Billie Holiday in a gray two-piece suit in front of what looks like the same backdrop. This time no shadows encroach over the image. A swath of

gingham cloth is draped behind her leaving part of the plaster wall bare. She stares straight ahead holding what appears to be an African mask of a woman whose hair is pulled back as well.

Returning to "Portrait of Bessie Smith," the African bust is perched uncertainly on Smith's shoulder. Its' cast shadow on the backdrop provide its own kind of presence. Here, Byrd's view of the Van Vechten's use of shadows comes into play. English literature scholar Miriam Thaggert reads the image as one of irony. The juxtaposition of Smith's head with the African head is a knowing wink to modernism's use of African artifacts. For example, Van Vechten's composition in both images has been compared to the iconic modernist photograph *Noire et Blanche* (1925) by Man Ray. To Thaggert, the portrait of Smith is successful at embodying irony as a (modernist) style and by citing 'the codes and artifacts' of black modern culture."[386] In the same photograph, Davis also perceives Van Vechten's nudging elbow against societal strictures. He writes, "Van Vechten considered himself a reasonably objective witness to his era—an historian of its manners and spirit. This double role as both participant and observer gives his work an unexpected dimension. He celebrated the high life and good times while remaining gently skeptical of them.[387] Unfortunately, the camouphrasing in the original source material, *Tales of the South Pacific*, the musical and film's adaptation, the commercial images and Van Vechten's artistic ones, serve to render the world of the Black Pacific as "flat."

[386] Miriam Thaggert, *Images of Black Modernism: Verbal and Visual Strategies of the Harlem Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 140.

[387] Davis, Van Vechten, and Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer*, 6–7.

Figure 2.23: Carl Van Vechten, *Portrait of Billie Holiday*, March 23, 1949, gelatin silver, sheet size 33.2x23 cm

As with Figure 2.22, I do not find irony in "Portrait of Billie Holiday." The bust here is different. Rather than looking it, Holiday looks out at the viewer and photographer. Thaggert writes, "The juxtaposition of Holiday and the mask invites not seduction but comparison, and the mask fails to match up or hold the viewer's interest."[388] This line of thinking fits in with the argument that the modernist gesture erases the negative pairing of a woman with a mask. Years later, Van Vechten recounts that the session with Holiday wasn't going well. She seemed distant, as befits a subject who knows that the image is being taken specifically for posterity. It wasn't

[388] Thaggert, *Images of Black Modernism*, 136.

until Van Vechten showed her the images of Smith—her inspiration and a friend of her mother—that she loosened up, changed from her gray suit to one of his costume drapes and shared her life story with him and his wife. She did leave for a break but came back with her dog, a pet boxer, to be photographed again. When Holiday, as a viewer, looked at the image of Bessie Smith, the irony was not important for her as an African American woman and artist. I argue the *presence* of Bessie Smith held significance for Holiday.

As an exercise in questioning modernity, the image is apt, according to Thaggert. However, Van Vechten ignores the legacy of photography for African Americans. His quick thinking saved the session when he showed Holiday the images of Smith but this was just as much an act of desperation as of purpose. In many ways, this is the most famous image of either Smith or Holiday yet it ignores all precedents for African American photography. Art historian Deborah Willis argues:

> Many photographers used composition and studio setups to establish spaces where African Americans could express themselves visually, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally…. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for white and black sitters alike, props such as drapery, classical columns, and parlor furniture offered a class-based and gendered reading of an individual subject and were used as signifiers of achievement. Such props served as symbols of social status, wealth, and intellect, and empowerment…[389]

Willis's argument illuminates that Van Vechten, like Rodgers and Hammerstein, was a supporter of African Americans but his effort is one that is rooted in his white experience not the "lived blackness" of the women. By this, I mean, that Van Vechten chose a modernist intent over a nuanced reworking of the legacy of photography for African Americans. A viewer not versed in modernist tropes would see a one-to-one correspondence between the African American women and the African art. Literature scholar Dorothy Stringer points out the there is no known

[389] Willis, "The Photographic Portrait: Constructing an Ideal," 17.

provenance for the bust—it was one of many props that Van Vechten employed over and over. She writes, "the bust is not contrasted to, but integrated with [Van Vechten's] exposition of his sitter."[390] She finds that "'blackness,' or 'Africanness,' [is] a pressing question that cannot be answered clearly or easily."[391] I concur and posit that the effort here backfired, except for the most erudite of his audience. The majority of the audience would make the same assumptions that the viewer of the advertisement of Hall with baskets in *House and Garden* would make. The essence of the woman, of blackness, of Pacificness, of Black Pacificness is accessible.

Art historian Petrine Archer Straw pinpoints the search for blackness in Van Vechten's writing. She compares his work with that of Nancy Cunard and finds similarities in both their practices insofar as they shared an "… intimate interest in, and desire for, blackness … that was latent in the Parisian surrealist circles."[392] I am in accord with Archer-Straw but lean away from the arguments of Miriam Thaggert and Keith Davis. Thaggert writes, "The photographs do not make the body specific or essential to blackness."[393] Davis points this out in a different way: "Thoughtful study of these portraits suggests the tension between presence and presentation, and the process by which photographer and subject collaborate to create a likeness."[394] Both of these arguments reflect the paraphrasing and camouflaging that I find in the representations of Hall as Bloody Mary.

While Smith and Holiday are not the subjects of my theorization, I parse these images to understand the photographs of Juanita Hall with the shrunken head. While African art is utilized

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[390] Dorothy Stringer, *Not Even Past: Race, Historical Trauma, and Subjectivity in Faulkner, Larsen, and Van Vechten* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 134.

[391] Ibid., 136.

[392] Archer Straw, *Negrophilia*, 172.

[393] Thaggert, *Images of Black Modernism*, 136.

[394] Davis, Van Vechten, and Hallmark Cards, *The Passionate Observer*, 30.

in the Smith and Holiday images, it is Melanesian culture that is employed in that of Hall. With the first two, Thaggert, and Stringer, to a certain, extent see a modernist effort at irony in the interactions between the female sitters and the art work. This may be true in the earlier images of Holiday and Smith. Both were taken before that of Juanita Hall; in the case of the Holiday image, it was only mere months before the latter's photographic session. I see a change taking place between the sittings of Smith and Holiday and that of Hall because while the first set of photographs may search for blackness in an ironic manner, the introduction of the Pacific elements to reference the musical and the character in the Juanita Hall image, erases the irony and becomes camouflage for not understanding either blackness or Pacificness, and taken together, Black Pacificness. While the images of Smith and Holiday were well-known at the time—Van Vechten wrote about his session with Holiday in the December 1962 issue of *Esquire*—the images of Hall would not have been exhibited or referred to except perhaps in casual mention in letters or in his daybook where he recorded all of his activities. And of course, they would be transformed into postcards for delivery to his friends, chief among them, painter Karl Priebe in Wisconsin. As a postcard, her image would be hypervisible and invisible at the same time leading to what Willis writes of Frederick Douglass's statement in 1849, "…negroes can never have impartial portraits at the hands of white artists…"[395]

According to Archer-Straw, while Cunard was more serious in writing style, Van Vechten was more light-hearted as seen in his claim that his favorite image of himself was a caricature of him in black face by artist Miguel Covarubbias.[396] I argue that in his preference for this portrait of himself, he pledges allegiance to caricature so it is no accident that he would

[395] Willis, "The Photographic Portrait: Constructing an Ideal," 15.

[396] Archer Straw, *Negrophilia*, 172.

choose to recreate its essentials in one of his photographs of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary which has already been stereotyped before he photographs her. An outlier image from 1953 (Figure 2.24), taken between the musical and the film, is straightforward and contains no props.

Figure 2.24: Carl Van Vechten, Portrait of Juanita Hall, March 26, 1953, black and white print, 25x18 cm

While there is no stereotyping here, "the complexity of the soul" or "twinkle" in the eye that writers esteem is not present.[397] It seems that without the props of *South Pacific*, he doesn't quite get Hall. She sits on the edge of her chair, her hands are just out of range of the camera. I can imagine that she is on verge of pushing herself off the chair and walking away from Van Vechten's studio. This image cannot be seen in isolation away from his other images. It is not as lighthearted or as successful as the photographs of Hall with Hughes in the *Ebony* extended feature.

[397] Van Vechten, *Portraits, the Photography of Carl Van Vechten*, n.p.

Nevertheless, these images offer vision into the possibilities of the relationship between sitter and photographer. The relationship with Van Vechten is one-sided. Anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston enjoyed her images but she does not pose with an Africanesque mask or bust. I do not mean that the image is an insult to Holiday, Smith, and Hall. On the contrary, it is an honor but a one-sided honor because there would have been no exchange of what Natalie Hays Hammond calls "the complexity of the soul."[398] Archer-Straw points out that négrophilia is a two-way street but this would not be the case with Van Vechten and these women. She writes, "In the negrophiliac relationship both Europeans and Africans owned stereotypical views about each other. They formed what can be called and 'other' relationship whereby their attraction fed off their differences rather than their similarities. The process of 'othering' allowed both partners to act out myths and fantasies."[399] Or I would add that it allows them to act out creative possibilities.

Van Vechten would argue that he was helping his black and white friends meet each other to support their artistic endeavors. Yet, still he acts within the confines of primitivism as English and Ethnic Studies scholar Emily Bernard claims because of "…[t]he dynamic of racial sameness and racial difference at the heart of" his work.[400] It was also important for Van Vechten to encourage his black friends to be transgressive, according to Bernard: "Van Vechten had one message when it came to race and the arts, and he hammered it home with the conviction of a missionary: black artists should manipulate white stereotypes, fears, and fantasies about black people for their own benefit." [401] As I mentioned earlier, Edney writes that Juanita

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[398] Ibid.

[399] Archer Straw, *Negrophilia*, 14–15.

[400] Bernard, *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance a Portrait in Black and White*, 71.

[401] Ibid., 104.

Hall performed blackness in unexpected ways.[402] If the blackness of Hall is unexpected and Van Vechten has tunnel vision on blackness, there is no clear answer to my question, is Van Vechten an ally of the Black Pacific? Bernard, too, views his motives as murky: "Van Vechten has been viewed with suspicion… people ask me whether I consider Van Vechten a racial voyeur and sexual predator, an acolyte of primitivism who misused his black artist friends and pushed them to make art that fulfilled his beliefs in racial stereotypes."[403]

For purposes of the Black Pacific, the answer is not clear. Van Vechten's understanding of the Pacific was second-hand through the figure of Bloody Mary. Photographing her as an African American woman and her blackness would take precedence over an exploration of Pacificness. This is true of American society at large at the time due to familiarity. In terms of the Pacific, I look again to Figure 2.19. Here, Hall points to the shrunken head recalling the exotic trinkets that Bloody Mary sold to the servicemen in the musical film. She holds the studio prop near her face, suggesting an analogy between herself and the disembodied head. However, the analogy falls flat because I uncovered the voice of the real woman in her own words on a postcard that she mailed to Langston Hughes from Hawai'i. While the photograph portrays blackness through problematic stereotypes, the postcard reveals this pioneering woman in the Black Pacific as a warrior woman in her own right.

Letters and Postcards from the Black Pacific

Van Vechten is known for his correspondence over his lifetime. His gift to Yale University includes his letters and other materials filed under the rubric "Letters from Blacks."

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[402] Edney, "'Integration through the Wide Open Back Door,'" 264.

[403] Bernard, *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance a Portrait in Black and White*, 1.

Two documents sent to Van Vechten and his wife from Juanita Hall are included in this category. Examining the letters in conjunction with the selected photographs bears upon my argument that the cordial but distant relationship between the two is reflected in the camouphrased Black Pacific photographs of Hall by Van Vechten. This seeming distance is supported by the literal distance his postcard photographs of Hall traveled away from his studio.

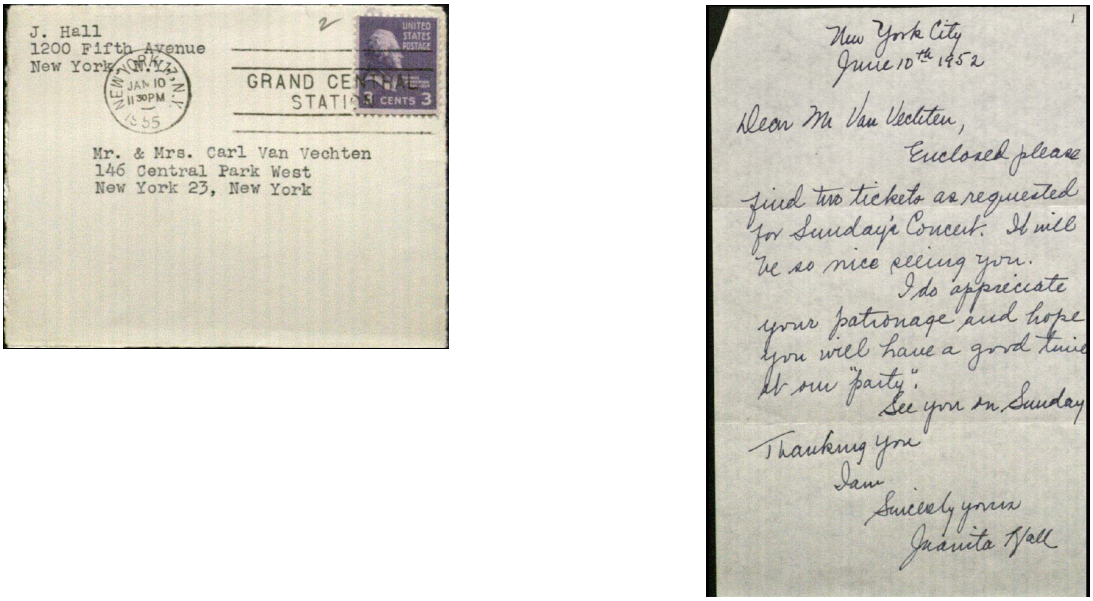

Figure 2.25: Letter to Carl Van Vechten from Juanita Hall, June 10, 1952. The envelope that accompanies it is addressed to "Mr. & Mrs. Carl Van Vechten."

In 1952, Hall sent tickets to Van Vechten for a concert on an upcoming Sunday in June. It is not clear from the archive what concert she refers to. Her brief handwritten note (Figure 2.25) thanks him for his patronage which aligns with what is known about his relationships with black luminaries. It is not clear if he purchased the tickets. The second example is a "Thank You" note (Figure 2.26) sent in January 1955 thanking both he and his wife for a telegram they sent on a recent opening night. It is not clear from the archive what performance is under discussion. In the archive, the note is accompanied by a matching postmarked envelope. From these two examples, an entire picture cannot be gleaned yet the letter and note are formal and

there is no indication of intimacy beyond that of a patron and but one of his mentees. The feeling is very different in the postcards she mailed to Langston Hughes. Before examining those, however, I focus a bit longer on the context and meaning of Van Vechten's postcard portraits.

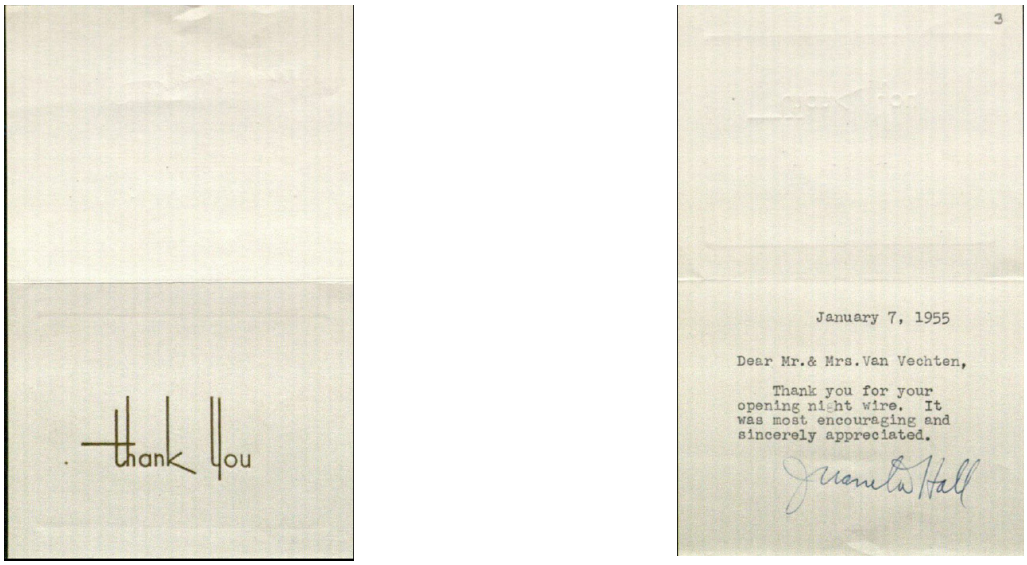

Figure 2.26: Front and back of Thank You note to Carl Van Vechten and his wife from Juanita Hall, Carl Van Vechten Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Figure 2.21 was originally mailed to one of Van Vechten's lovers, Donald Angus. This close relationship may explain why the postcard remained in or returned to Van Vechten's possession and ended up in the archival collections of the New York Public Library. In Figure 2.21, Van Vechten writes of his regret for not catching up with Angus for lunch. He also extends an invitation to dinner and a New Year's Eve party. This is a mundane missive in the sense that it is a casual communication about upcoming events. Other postcards were mailed to his friend, painter Karl Priebe or to Priebe's partner, Frank Harriot. Priebe was an artist and fellow aficionado of African American culture. About 2400 postcards went to Marquette University as part of the Karl J. Priebe Papers. Priebe's return postcards, many hand-drawn, are held in the

Van Vechten collection at the Beinecke.[404] Of the 2400 cards in the Priebe Collection, seventeen feature portraits of Hall in the poses discussed here as well as others where she sits, stands or holds props. There are also multiples of Hall as pictured in Figure 2.24. Only one is postmarked and dated April 20, 1953, and contains a short note to Harriott wishing him better health among other tidings. Fourteen of the cards do not have a message to Priebe or Harriott on the back; they just identify the sitter as Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary in South Pacific. The remaining two are undated and intended for Priebe. With no postmark, they were most likely bundled into a package with other letters and correspondence. But their contents can give an approximate date. The first reads with brackets added by the archivist: "Dear Karl, Did I tell you Jacob Lawrence is sick? Romare Bearden is the new member of the Art [Commission?] at Fisk[.] The party last night was wonderful[.] Love, Carlo".[405] The second one is addressed to "Karlo" and relates a message that could only be comprehensible to Priebe. It is signed "Carlo." This grouping of postcards relays the easy camaraderie between the three men and their ability to communicate in terse sentences across distance.

The messages themselves do not relate to the Black Pacific. They are milestones for tracking the biography of African American artists Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden but as the text does not relate specifically to Hall, they do not mark how blackness intersects with Pacificness. The images they bear are an example of Black Pacific art as they communicate the many ideas I have put forth here about Juanita Hall and her portrayal of this role. The dissemination of the postcards has two phases with two audiences. The first is the passage to

[404] "Postcards from Manhattan: The Portrait Photography of Carl Van Vechten," accessed October 15, 2015, http://cdm16280.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p128701coll2.

[405] "Juanita Hall 08 :: Postcards from Manhattan: The Portrait Photography of Carl Van Vechten," accessed March 12, 2016, http://cdm16280.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p128701coll2/id/1204/show/1203/rec/23.

Priebe and Harriott in Wisconsin in the 1950s. The second is the global audience with internet access. Very few members of this audience will travel to the archives to view the images and the messages. At their inception, the postcards mark the invisibility of the Black Pacific in favor of Van Vechten's focus on African American culture and communication with his friends. While not depicting nude native women in grass skirts, this postcard is in the category with others that circulate stereotypes of the "other." According to art historian Caroline Vercoe, postcards, by reiterating stereotypes, easily "become the visual signatures of place."[406] In this example, the postcard, "Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary in South Pacific," is the marker of the absence of the Black Pacific. Today, this place is recouped in this dissertation.

As "signatures of place," the postcards that Juanita Hall mailed to Langston Hughes are more indicative of the connections between blackness and Pacificness. They project a warmth that is missing in her notes to Van Vechten and his wife. Hall and Hughes worked together so would have had more creative intimacy that she would have with Van Vechten although Hughes, himself, was a close friend of the photographer and writer. The closeness between Hall and Hughes is glimpsed in the photographic feature in *Ebony* that I previously discussed.

[406] Caroline Vercoe, "Postcards as Signatures of Place," *Art AsiaPacific* 3, no. 1 (1996): 89.

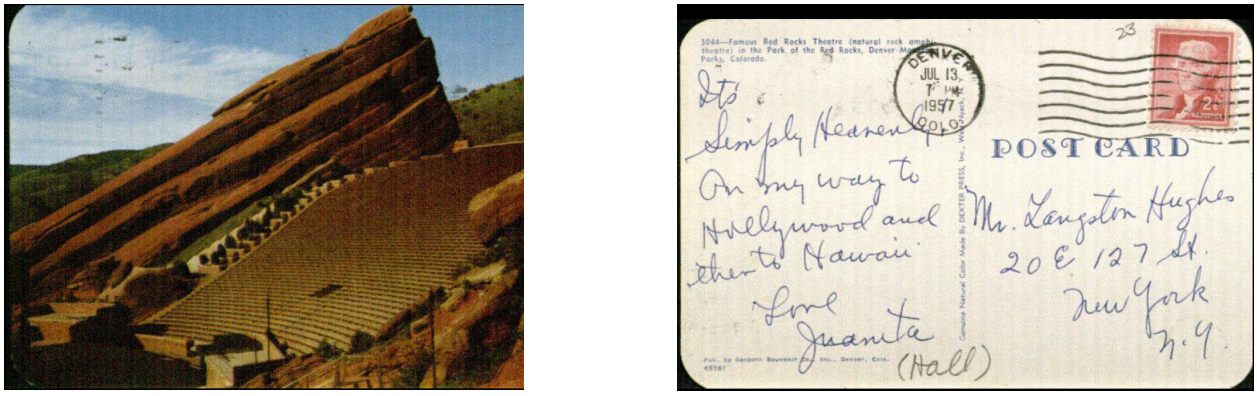

Figure 2.27: Front and back of postcard to Langston Hughes from Juanita Hall, 13 July 1957, postmarked Denver, Colorado, Langston Hughes Papers, Yale American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Her closing to Van Vechten is "Sincerely Yours" while she signs off with "Love" to Hughes on both postcards.[407] Her relationship with Hughes was such that she mailed at least two missives to him while she was traveling west, most likely to Hawai'i to film *South Pacific* in 1957. The first postcard from Denver (Figure 2.27) is of the majestic Red Rocks amphitheatre. Here is where Juanita Hall emerges as an inhabitant of the Black Pacific. She has her own lively correspondence with Hughes that is much warmer than her exchanges with Van Vechten. Here she refers to "Simply Heavenly," a musical written by Hughes that contains one song, "Love Can Hurt You," that he co-wrote with her.

The second postcard from Hawai'i (Figure 2.28) gives the second glimpse of her engagement with the Black Pacific. Specifically, an African American actress who starred in a film about the Pacific region sends a postcard of the Hawaiian *ku* figure, a significant god for Hawai'i, to an African American poet. That postcard is then preserved through the efforts of Van Vechten, an ambivalent figure for the Black Pacific. This postcard features Ku, the symbol of King Kamehameha who united Hawai'i before the arrival of Captain Cook. Anthropologist

[407] Her last name has been added in parentheses by the archivist.

Adrienne Kaeppler writes that Hawaiian sculpture such as that of Ku demonstrated Hawaiian sense of place in relation to gods, other humans, nature and the environment.[408] *Kaona* or hidden bodily meaning is located on sculptures.[409] One such is that of the "mouth of disrespect"[410] that characterizes Ku who is the war god and a fitting guide for King Kamehameha in his effort to unite the islands. Kaeppler writes, "In the mouth of disrespect, the chin juts forward and the mouth is opened wide (*ʻoleʻole*). To push the chin forward (*hōʻauwae*) indicates, scorn, indifference, and disrespect."[411] It is unclear what Hall knew about the sculpture beyond what was printed on the postcard. Ku would have lived at sacred sites like temples (*heiau*) such as the one pictured here. The temple would be governed by notions of *tapu* and *mana*. Kaeppler defines these two terms:

> The underlying set of principles through which Polynesians interpreted their world and organized their social lives included the concepts of *mana* and *tapu*, intertwined with ideas of rank based on descent from the gods. *Mana* is a supernatural power linked with genealogical rank, fertility, and protocol; it was protected by restrictions (*tapu*).[412]

The process of maintaining *tapu* and *mana* meant that status was maintained by physical, spiritual, and cultural boundaries that could not be crossed. The temple site on this postcard would be governed by these rules. In this context, the placement of Ku is not necessarily an insult. Instead, it clearly lets those who approach know their status in relationship to the god, to other humans in the vicinity, and to the site. In choosing this image, Hall may not have known about the meaning of the sculpture beyond what the postcard communicated but it can be read as

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[408] Adrienne L. Kaeppler, *The Pacific Arts of Polynesia and Micronesia*, Oxford History of Art; Oxford History of Art. (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2008), 70.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Ibid., 71.

[411] Ibid., 72.

[412] Ibid., 5.

a message for existing in the Black Pacific. An attitude of assertion is needed to move in spaces where camouflaging and paraphrasing takes place.

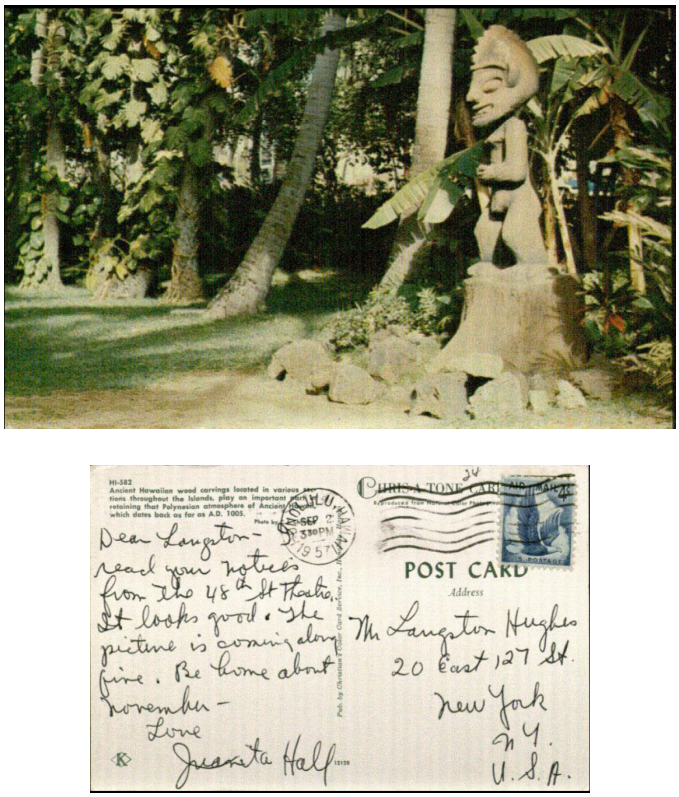

Figure 2.28: Front and back of postcard to Langston Hughes from Juanita Hall, 2 September 1957, postmarked Honolulu, Langston Hughes Papers, Yale American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Agency and Interiority in Portraits of Juanita Hall

This chapter has focused on many images of Bloody Mary in which she is shown to be cunning, concerned about her daughter's future, flirtatious with Lt. Cable, or mysterious when singing of Bali Hai. Other images have presented Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary posing with flowers, shrunken head props, or donning makeup right before going on stage to portray the character. With the exception of the enthusiastic postcards she mailed to Langston Hughes, the "real" Juanita Hall is elusive in the midst of multiple images found in multiple places. An

examination of selected photographs and portraits of Juanita Hall demonstrates that she possesses confidence in her career and shares her interiority in several of those images. Her intentions and motivations are firmly grounded in the history of photography in general and reflect key concerns of African American photography in particular and especially that of black women. The interiority that I speak of references Visual Studies scholar Ginger Hill's argument that Frederick Douglass "spoke of pictures as a metaphor for, and expression of, human interiority."[413] She continues:

> Douglass celebrated photography because in viewing photographs, one had to grapple with the complexity of what it means to live an embodied existence. Douglass's lectures were concerned first and foremost with processes of exchange, the confrontations, accommodations, and accumulations that forge and transform sensate beings into something of a self.[414]

The following portraits of Juanita Hall at different stages of her life and career demonstrate that the Bloody Mary, *South Pacific*, and *Flower Drum Song* photographs are but a portion of her story. Her interiority shines through in Figures 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, and 2.32.

To demonstrate my argument, I return to Deborah Willis's scholarship on African American women and photography. She writes, "Over the decades photographs of black women became symbolic vehicles of personal and public reinvention….Later, black women entertainers used portraits on record covers, on sheet music, and as advertising materials."[415] This is evident in portraits from the beginning and middle of Hall's career. The first example is a portrait from the 1930s that illuminates the fact that Hall was an intriguing subject for leading camera artists throughout her life (Figure 2.27). In this instance, a younger Hall is pictured, with little makeup

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[413] Ginger Hill, "'Rightly Viewed': Theorizations of Self in Frederick Douglass's Lectures on Pictures," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 43.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Willis, "The Photographic Portrait: Constructing an Ideal," 17.

or makeup that does not identify any stage character. Her pose is casual as is her clothing; she wears a knit top with striped sleeves and a skirt with pockets. She wears a beret, a pendulum necklace and her smile is engaging. She comes across as a jaunty young woman on the edge of an adventure. The back of the photograph bears the red stamp of "Simon Photographer" with a New York address written in the boxed space. Underneath is stamped "Stella F. Simon."

Figure 2.29: Stella F. Simon, Portrait of Juanita Hall, c. 1931-1941, New York Library Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Simon attended Clarence A. White's School of Photography from 1923-1925 where she was immersed in Photo-Secession, a movement that had been founded by White and renowned photographer Alfred Stieglitz. This style is characterized by an emphasis on the photograph as fine art. The photographer might use soft focus or bring out warm tones when developing the film. These techniques enhanced the pictorialism, or the creative aspect, of the image rather than

its documentary nature. Simon spent several years in Berlin during the late 1920s before returning to New York and establishing a commercial studio in 1932.[416] In 1928 in Berlin, she made a film titled *Hands: The Life and Loves of the Gentler Sex*. Art historian Jennifer Wild argues that the film is "an early instance of modernist-feminist filmmaking practice" due to her engagement with modernism through White and Stieglitz and her choice to narrate a story with only the hands of actors and actresses. Wild suggests that the avant-garde nature of this film mirrored the same impulse that moved Stieglitz to make his photographs of artist Georgia O'Keefe's hands. In these images, Wild writes, Stieglitz equates the hand or hands with the female identity. Wild posits that with this influence in mind, in her film, "Simon's attempt to renew the inherited paradigm of narrative by appropriating the symbol of hands for the female perspective…"[417]

In her repositioning of Simon's career as a successful example of moving from photography to film and back to photography, Wild relates that reviewers of Simon's work in the 1930s, like Ruth Harris Greene of *The New York Times*, found her portraiture very affecting. Harris writes, "Whether it is a head or a still-life, Miss Simon has a way of getting the best out of her sitters."[418] Harris's statement is rather short, only eleven lines in one column, so yields only an overall impression of the portraits and photographs in the exhibition. Yet, the influence of pictorialism and modernism are evident in Figure 2.29. Simon layers textures and shades. The

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[416] Lori Pauli, "Stella F. Simon 1878–1973," *History of Photography* 24, no. 1 (March 2000): 80, doi:10.1080/03087298.2000.10443370.

[417] Jennifer Wild, "An Artist's Hands: Stella Simon, Modernist Synthesis, and Narrative Resistance," *Framework* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 98.

[418] BUTH GREEN HARRIS, "A ROUND OF GALLERIES: Biberman, Aronson, Mme. Barjansky, Lahey And Other Artists Show Their Work," *New York Times*, January 25, 1931, sec. Arts & Leisure. Quoted by Jennifer Wild at "Stella F. Simon – Women Film Pioneers Project," accessed May 8, 2014, https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-stella-f-simon/.

focus has several strata as well emerging from the dark empty background. Hall's clasped hands on the bench where she sits are an integral part of the composition.

This is most likely a portrait of Juanita Hall when she was a chorus member in *The Green Pastures*, a play with music written by Marc Connelley that featured an all-black cast. The photograph bears no date except the archival stamp on the back proclaiming that it was filed in the collection after September 15, 1941. The evidence—her apparent youth in comparison to Figure 2.31 and the lack of obvious costuming—is in favor of this identification rather than the three other possible circumstances when Hall engaged with Broadway between 1931 and 1941. Other options are that she is photographed by Simon as Bertha Williams in *Stevedore* written by Paul Peters and George Sklar (1934), Dode Bronson in *Sailor, Beware!* written by Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson (1935) or as the choral director for *Sweet River* (1936) written by George Abbott and adopted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The third factor in my dating of this image as 1931 is that Simon had returned to the United States by this time and had just begun making commercial photographs. Her later photographs featured cast members in costume. For example, she created a photographic portrait of actress Olga Burgoyne in costume as Mother Kanda from *Run, Little Children*. This image of Hall is not in character and the deep black tones seem to point to Simon's recent artistic experience abroad. Even at this apparent early stage in Hall's career, the photograph holds more personality and is the opposite of the camouphrased flatness evident in portraits like Figure 2.18 by Van Vechten that I discussed earlier.

The second example of career confidence is found in Figure 2.30 where Hall smiles into the distance and holds a magnolia to her face. Photographer James J. Kriegsmann photographed Hall in many poses to foreground the notions of glamour and star power. For example, another

pose not illustrated here features Juanita Hall laughing into the camera wearing a fur-collared coat over a v-necked blouse that shows just a hint of cleavage. The glossy fur wraps around her neck and trails across her shoulders over her crossed arms. Her left hand rests on top of the right arm and a shiny ring with a bright stone winks at the viewer. While the focus on Hall's hands in this second example contrasts in tone with the photograph made by Stella F. Simon, I chose to illustrate this image where she holds the magnolia. I suggest that in the hands of this photographer, the presence of the flowers does not signal the camouphrase that was clear in the images of Hall with flowers taken by Carl Van Vechten. The difference is that Hall's career prospects are the focus and not Van Vechten's interest in transgression. This is clearly an example in which Hall participated in a portrait session for what Willis deems "advertising materials"[419] for advancement.

Figure 2.30: James J. Kriegsmann, Publicity Photograph of Juanita Hall while under contract to MCA Artists

[419] Willis, "The Photographic Portrait: Constructing an Ideal," 17.

Kriegsmann made publicity stills of her as early as 1947 but this example was most likely made between 1950 and 1954 because in addition to Kriegsmann's signature, the photograph has branding by MCA Artists Limited but does not include Hall's dated autograph as do other examples. I date this image to this time period due to evidence gleaned from one photograph in the *Ebony* feature from July 1950 and from announcements in *Billboard* about Hall's contracts with different agents. In Figure 2.16, the caption for the uppermost photograph on the page identifies Hall in company with Elle Kofler. According to *Billboard* she was signed with Kofler from at least February 1950 but had signed with Lew Walters Enterprises in April 1954 after leaving MCA.[420] The logo for MCA clearly suggests the portrait was made between these two dates.

Other portraits of Juanita Hall give a glimpse into her individual interiority. In Figure 2.31, Juanita Hall stands under a palm tree on an isolated beach. Hotels and other buildings appear in the distance but she is alone with the exception of an alert dog standing to attention in front of her. The dog wears a *lei* and appears relaxed at the end of the leash held by Hall. She wears a halter top and high-waisted shorts, both printed with flowers. The waistband of the shorts meets the bottom of the halter top so only the skin on her arms and legs is on view. She sends "A.lo_ha"[421] to Mrs. Felix Morris and signs, "Juanita." The back of the photograph reads verbatim: "Taken May 2, 37. Waikiki Beach. These [sic] in stage shorts. So i looked natural just as i am seen at Waikiki Beach."[422] In the message accompanying this image, Hall stresses the

[420] "Billboard," February 18, 1950, 41.; "Billboard," April 24, 1954, 9.

[421] It is not unusual now to hear the word for "hello" drawn out into three distinct syllables. Perhaps Hall has written it the way she heard it pronounced even then.

[422] Written faintly at the bottom, whether by Hall or the archivist, is "143 Mildred Morris."

casual nature and location of the pose. She seems on familiar terms with Mrs. Morris, not overly mindful of grammar or punctuation.

However, this is perhaps deceptively casual. A photographer, although unnamed, would have been present and while the photo does not appear overly "staged," some planning was needed to coordinate the actions of the dog and the serendipities of beach weather. The nature of her relationship with Mrs. Morris is unknown but even if they were close confidantes, Hall had a more active role in the conception of this image than the casual language she uses suggests. I see this photograph and its message as an example of the interiority of Hall's thoughts, motives, and actions that is missing from the many images discussed as examples in which Hall and the Black Pacific is "camouphrased." The photograph is held in the Langston Hughes Papers at the Beinecke so would have made its way from Hall to Mrs. Morris to Hughes and then to the archive. It holds a view of her intentions as a woman and an artist that is missing elsewhere.

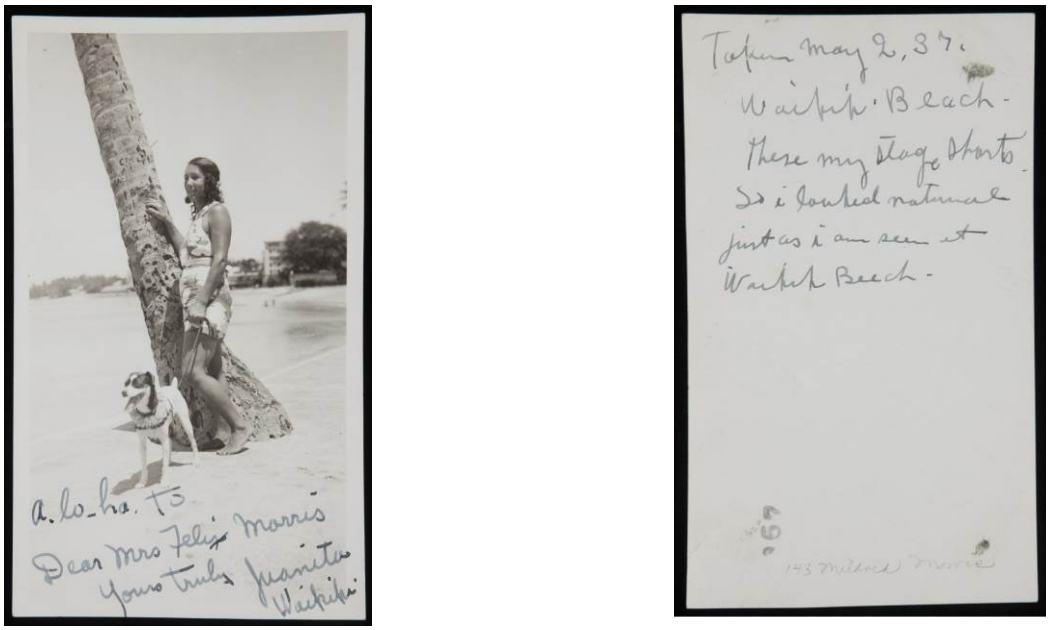

Figure 2.31: Anonymous, Photograph of Juanita Hall, Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawai'i, May 2, 1937, James Weldon Johnson Collection, Langston Hughes Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

I return to Caroline Vercoe's assertion that postcards, by reiterating stereotypes, easily "become the visual signatures of place."[423] In Figure 2.31, Hall's written signature and textual thoughts create a different type of signatory place than the postcard mailed by Carl Van Vechten. The intentionality of this photograph is in contrast to the passive image created by Van Vechten While not a postcard, this photograph holds the literal and visual signature of Hall and marks her place in history. The scenic nature of the image is also important in discussing how Hall opened up the Black Pacific. This was seen on another postcard—the one she mailed to Hughes of the *ku* figure. It also transforms one aspect of African American photograph from aspiration to reality. Of a photographic album of anonymous African American portraits, art historian and photographer Cheryl Finley writes, "To have one's portrait made was a way of creating a visual signature for one's individual and class identity."[424] She continues, "In many ways, the simulated studio settings allowed sitters a means of escape: a space to assume other identities, social standings, or to travel to unknown places by posing before a painting backdrop."[425]

What Finley writes becomes manifest in this photograph of Hall. The actress explores Hawai'i and the real beach is her backdrop. The strategy used to engage a photographer and create the portrait speaks to her savvy in creating an identity and cultural standing as a successful entertainer. Additionally, the careful balance of strategy and spontaneity in representing one's self in images recalls Hill's argument that Douglass upheld "…photography because it is proof of a process of thinking through potentialities…"[426] I am interested in these "potentialities"

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[423] Vercoe, "Postcards as Signatures of Place," 89.

[424] Cheryl Finley, "No More Auction Block for Me!," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 343.

[425] Ibid.

[426] Hill, "'Rightly Viewed': Theorizations of Self in Frederick Douglass's Lectures on Pictures," 69.

because it is another way of expressing my argument. That is, the Black Pacific opens up possibilities—"potentialities"—for creativity when blackness and Pacificness meet. I am drawn to this aspect of Hill's argument about Douglass because it touches upon the exchange between the two states of experience in a manner that increases the power of the interchange. I suggest that in these ways, this photograph of Hall at Waikiki is her "visual signature" counterbalancing the stereotyping that Vercoe writes of, the achievement of goals that Finley describes, and the movement between interiority and exteriority that Hill finds in Douglass's lectures.

Before concluding this chapter, I look at one last photographic portrait of Juanita Hall created by African American photographer Griffin "Griff" Davis (Figure 2.32). In it, Hall participates in a long-standing tradition in African American visual culture of breaking stereotypes through portraiture. Deborah Willis writes:

> I would argue that black photographers and their subjects believed that defining their own identity and beauty through photography was a significant step in the fight against negative representations. Photography played a role in shaping people's ideas about identity and sense of self; it informed African American social consciousness and motivated black people by offering an 'other' view of the black subject. In a sense, photography was used as what I call 'subversive resistance.'[427]

The "subversive resistance" lies in the choice of photographer and the staging of the photographic composition. First, Griff Davis actively used his creative talent to make African Americans in the United States and Africans in Liberia more visible on the global stage. He began his career as a "roving editor"[428] for *Ebony*, the same magazine that featured the stories on Juanita Hall and her success. He was close friends with Langston Hughes as the writer had been

[427] Deborah Willis, "The Sociologist's Eye: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Paris Exhibition," in *A Small Nation of People: W .E. B. Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress* (New York: Amistad, 2003), 55, https://books.google.com/books/about/A_Small_Nation_of_People.html?id=RzAcLrs--MMC.

[428] Anonymous, "Photog Griff Davis Dies in Atlanta at 70," *Jet*, August 16, 1993, 15.

Davis's professor at Morehouse College.[429] Later, while attending Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, the young photographer rented a room from Hughes in Harlem.[430] After serving in the military during World War II, he joined what would later become today's United States Agency for International Development. While working for the government, he made photographs in Liberia, Tunisia, and Algeria documenting decolonization efforts.

According to *Jet* magazine, his photographs of "Liberia's effort to replace its primitive, tribal society with a western culture" were exhibited at New York's Museum of Natural History in 1952.[431] Perhaps it was through Hughes that Hall became acquainted with Davis. It is not known if she commissioned the portrait or if he initiated it, but this portrait by the renowned photographer further cements Hall's desirability as a subject that was signaled by the portrait made by Stella F. Simon. As a subject, Hall fits into modernism, avant-garde photography, and African American photography after World War II. In the last instance, her appeal as herself is just as great as it is when she is in character.

In this photograph, Hall looks upward into the distance, suggesting that the passive-aggressive positivity about her the media is ephemeral. This brings me to my second assertion: that the photograph's pose and composition is subversive. She is surrounded by the treasures of a lifetime—pictures and other items. She is immaculately groomed, almost in contrast to the casual hominess of the room around her. Her nails are polished and her lips are highlighted with

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[429] Ibid.

[430] "Press Release for PHOTOS BY GRIFF DAVIS PRESENTS LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE AFRICAN DIASPORA EXHIBIT AT CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS 33RD ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 24 – 27, 2003, AT CONVENTION CENTER IN WASHINGTON, D.C.," September 26, 2003, accessed March 22, 2016, http://www.griffdavis.com/press/prcongressionalblackcaucus.pdf.

[431] "N.Y. Museum Exhibits Griff Davis Photos," *Jet*, September 4, 1952, 53.

carefully applied lipstick and earrings glint from her earlobes. She perhaps mocks the "Oriental" label applied to her; she wears a tight silk dressing gown with embroidery around the toggles.

Figure 2.32: Griffith Davis, Portrait of Juanita Hall, the original Bloody Mary, 1949, Accessed March 21, 2016, collection of ARTstor Slide Gallery.

But most significantly, she is holding a book, a common trope in African American photography as a symbol of "subversive resistance." This image of Hall is in contrast to those in which she is typed as Bloody Mary and in contrast to the archetype of Bloody Mary in Michener's book. Figure 2.32 echoes the poses that activist Sojourner Truth assumed in her *cartes-de-visites* where she holds knitting materials with a closed or open book resting on a table near her elbow. The silent subversion in this portrait of Juanita Hall is one act of resistance to the camouphrase discussed throughout this chapter.

Concluding the Camouphrase

The actress Juanita Hall is visible as one of the "faces" of the musical and film productions of the musical and film versions of *South Pacific*. Rodgers and Hammerstein adapted James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific* for Broadway and Hollywood and choose director Joshua Logan to helm both productions. Casting Juanita Hall was par for the course for these men interested in advancing Civil Rights for African Americans and others. The short stories grew out of wartime and post-war anxieties about enemies and allies and then infiltrated conversations about race and ethnicity that audience members in 1949 and 1958 had amongst themselves. Unfortunately, aspects of Melanesian and other Pacific cultures are lost in the overall message about Asia and desegregation at home.

There is a rich visual archive of Juanita Hall in character as Bloody Mary that speak to the demands of postwar ideology regarding East Asia and domestic policy about African Americans. This chapter has unpacked the camouphrase that takes place in these images. Influenced by Christina Klein's notion of paraphrase and my own reading of the verb/noun camouflage, I use camouphrase to discuss images and situations in which blackness and/or Pacificness is abridged or masked.

There is an equally rich visual archive of Juanita Hall as a successful actress in the social scene of New York City. However, these images are not as well-known. This is unfortunate because it is in this latter set of photographs that Hall's engagement with the Black Pacific comes to the foreground. This becomes evident in a photograph she mailed to a fan in 1937 and postcards she mailed in 1957 to her close friend on the New York social scene, Langston Hughes. I have analyzed this evidence in the last section of this chapter to highlight the double-consciousness that I asserted existed in the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific at the beginning

of the chapter. In the case of Juanita Hall, she had to convince audiences she was Chinese or Tonkinese while navigating the social and economic strictures she faced as an African American woman. She had to proclaim her blackness or Americanness depending on which publication ran the interview in question. She needed to maintain autonomy when working alongside Hughes, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Logan as well as be a role model for young black actresses and performers. In any one role, there were two or more objectives demanding her allegiance. Yet, through this continual doubling, her innate desire to connect with people regardless of their origin, is her enduring legacy beyond the role of Bloody Mary.

CHAPTER THREE

JEWEL CASTRO AND FAITH RINGGOLD:

BLACK PACIFIC ART IN THE UNITED STATES

In the mid-1990s, Jewel Castro earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from San Diego State University and was introduced to the artwork of African American artist Faith Ringgold by her professor, Janet Cooling, a contemporary artist who instilled in her students an appreciation for both thoughtful content and exacting technique in their practices. It was Cooling's insistence on both content and technique that served Castro well when she applied to the progressive conceptual art department at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Castro felt an immediate connection to Ringgold's work and upon applying to the department at UCSD, impressed the well-known artist with her paintings so much so that Ringgold became her advisor and mentor in the Master of Fine Arts program.

Both artists are influenced by textile traditions; barkcloth (*tapa*) contains deep levels of significance for Samoans and other Pacific Islanders much like quilts hold profound meaning for African Americans. Ringgold's quilt-like *thangka* paintings are woven through with acrylic paint to depict personal and cultural narratives that reflect crisscrossing nodal points in American history such as the Civil Rights movement and the Women's movement. Castro's *Assimilation Series*, first begun in 2001, approximates the texture of *siapo* (Samoan *tapa*) and tells the story of another narrative in American history—the migration of her family from American Samoa, a United States territory since 1899, to the mainland United States after World War II. Of their shared methodology of illustrating American history, Castro writes in "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection:"

> [Ringgold's] process is a synthesis of her western European art education, her investigation of African art forms, and her experience as an African American woman/artist. Once I understood that, a revolution took place in my own creative process. It allowed me to relax. To feel secure about working from a more intuitive place. Once that happened, my Samoanness began to spill out.[432]

Today, Faith Ringgold is "very proud to hear" Castro's tribute.[433] Ringgold states that she urges her students to find their own path and not adhere to her footsteps: "I always tried with my students to get them to not necessarily look around and imitate what other people are doing. Do yours. Let me see how you feel what you see what you want yours to look like and let's have that."[434] Yet, I do not claim that the connection between Castro and Ringgold is the only formative influence in Castro's practice. Indeed, Castro is an established artist in the field that I call *Pacific American art*. This is one pillar of my argument in this chapter.

Ringgold is not just an artistic guide; she is a mentor in activism as well. She actively supports community-building. In the 1970s, Ringgold was simultaneously active in both the *Where We At* collective for black women and the *Ad Hoc Women's Art Committee* which counted the cultural critic Lucy Lippard among its members. The former group worked to secure more exhibitions for black women in the art world and the latter focused specifically on the inclusion of women of all races in the Whitney Museum of Art Sculpture Annual and its prestigious Biennial. Over thirty years later in 2006, in an effort to bring artists from across Oceania to the attention of American audiences on the continent, Castro curated *Turning Tides: Gender in Oceania Art* at the University of California, San Diego. In 2007, with co-curator Dr. Peri Klemm, she reorganized the successful exhibition into *Island Affinities: Contemporary Art in Oceania* at California State University, Northridge, and received favorable mention in media

[432] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 124.

[433] Faith Ringgold, Interview by Bernida Webb-Binder, February 10, 2015.

[434] Ibid.

covering Pacific culture. The activist projects by Ringgold and the curatorial initiatives taken by Castro notate another similarity between the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific. The urge to support community with creative self-expression is a feature of the black Atlantic, according to Gilroy. I reiterate his statement here:

> Perhaps black artists experience community through a special paradox. It affords them certain protections and compensations yet it is also a source of constraint. It provides them with an imaginative entitlement to elaborate the consciousness of racial adversity while limiting them as artists to the exploration of that adversity. [435]

He argues that these same restraints, conversely, create the ideal conditions for creativity in the black Atlantic. Gilroy explains that "artistic and aesthetic experience [is] not just as a form of compensation, paid as the price of an internal exile from modernity…"[436] Rather, it is "the favoured vehicle for communal self-development" explored by artists with like concerns.[437]

My second argument is that artists in the Black Pacific break free from external constraints by utilizing blackness and/or Pacificness as creative catalysts rather than insurmountable road blocks. For example, Ringgold is an artist who is propelled by her story of blackness and womanhood in her practice. Castro was her student and advisee who observed that journey and became true to her Samoan heritage as a result. This reciprocation is an example of the collaborations that I find in Black Pacific art. Through an exploration of the relationship of Ringgold and Castro, an analysis of Castro's influences, and a comparison of selected works by the artists, I demonstrate the artistic resilience of artists in the Black Pacific and the ensuing concern for community that ensues in this space.

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[435] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 182.

[436] Ibid., 124.

[437] Ibid.

Accordingly, I engage in five discussions in this chapter to give insight into Jewel Castro's contemporary practice. First, I present how Castro signals respect for her mentor in a revealing portrait of Faith Ringgold that highlights the Pacific notion of *mana*. Second, I argue that two installations created in 1997—*Talaleagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa* and *Red House//The Daughters of Salamasina*—demonstrate how Castro works within the Samoan space-time continuum that is the *vā*, or "the space between." Third, I examine her *Walking With My Grandmothers* drawings (1999) to illustrate that the artworks are visual accounts of how she sees her life and practice shaped by her immediate female relatives. They give insight into how Castro reworks notions of tradition into an alternative modernity that is not always recognized of "non-western" art. Fourth, I analyze selected paintings from her *Assimilation Series* to highlight how notions of diaspora and indigeneity do not quite capture the nuances of her family's experience nor her life and work. Rather, *diatopic* or *pluritopic*[438] are apt terms that speak more precisely to the position of Pacific American artists such as Castro and two of her contemporaries, Reggie Meredith, who also engages with *siapo*, and Dan Taulapapa McMullin, an artist whose poetry speaks to concerns of the Black Pacific. Finally, I compare Faith Ringgold's *Matisse's Chapel* (1991) from her *French Collection* with Jewel Castro's *The Pastor's Wife* (2011) from her *Grandmother Series* to trace how African American and Pacific American artists weave genealogy into portraits with individual and cultural significance.

The Meeting of Black Art and Pacific Art

Rereading Castro's statement, that Ringgold's guidance "allowed [her] to relax. To feel

[438] Robert Warrior, "Afterword," in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*, eds. Tiya Miles and Sharon Patricia. Holland (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 324.Warrior discusses the term *diatopic hermeneutics* as formulated by Raimundo Pannikar who formulates the term from Walter Mignolo's term *pluritopic hermeneutics*.

secure about working from a more intuitive place,"[439] it becomes clear that she holds great respect for her mentor. Castro embeds this respect in a portrait of Faith Ringgold in which she employs expressive gestural lines to outline her mentor's face, give depth to her hair, and stress the strength of her clasped hands (Figure 3.1). The three-quarter profile is set in the foreground of an ambiguous space. Castro's handling of ink suggests two spaces at once—a room in which the figure sits or a landscape in which the figure looms large and majestic.

Figure 3.1: Jewel Castro, *Portrait of Faith Ringgold*, c. 2000, India ink on paper, 18 inches x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

This suggestion of multiple times and spaces is what Castro strives for as becomes clear in this chapter. The wispy strokes in the upper left corner could be folds in a backdrop or clouds in the

[439] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 124.

distance. Equally, the rounded daub of black ink behind her right shoulder might be the rise of a hillock in the distance or the rounded headrest of an armchair. Ringgold's fingers are intertwined. The play of soft ink strokes and sharper ones make her hands appear as timeless as a rock formation further suggesting a landscape drawing.

Although the figure in the drawing is at rest, Castro has captured the dynamic spirit of Ringgold. Indeed, the viewer gets the feeling that only a tiny sliver of her momentous life is captured here. Castro describes her observations of Ringgold while she is working:

> Faith does not simply go to a canvas and work. While she was creating her *American Collection*, I studied her technique very closely. When Faith is painting, a wide grin settles on her face and she literally loves her work up until it's done. After stirring colors into new colors in little paper cups, she pushes the watery pigments deep into the fibers of her canvas. Layer upon glittering layer. Stirring up color, swaying to and fro, pushing color on, urging the composition into life. Faith Ringgold definitely has *mana* (emphasis added).[440]

I emphasize *mana* in the above quotation to highlight the connections between these two artists as they participate in the Black Pacific. I contend this because *mana* is a powerful phenomenon in Polynesian and other Oceanic cultures that can be wielded by people, objects, ideas or places. Consequently, ascribing *mana* to people, like Ringgold, is a mark of respect for their being and is earned after great achievements and can only grow stronger with continued accomplishment. Blackness and Pacificness meet in this manner.

In Chapter Four, I discuss *mana* in a Maori context but as I mentioned in Chapters One and Two, its meaning is so important across Oceania, that its definition bears repeating. I also return to anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler's definition of *mana* and *tapu*:

> The underlying set of principles through which Polynesians interpreted their world and organized their social lives included the concepts of *mana* and *tapu*, intertwined with

[440] Ibid.

> ideas of rank based on descent from the gods. *Mana* is a supernatural power linked with genealogical rank, fertility, and protocol; it was protected by restrictions (*tapu*).[441]

Kaeppler continues by speaking of how *mana* may be communicated through art, such as Hawaiian featherwork, a form of body adornment that was time-consuming to make and reserved for the highest ranking individuals:

> In Hawaii, the divine was transmitted genealogically from the gods to the chiefs, whose bodies were vessels of divine sacredness (*mana*). The most sacred parts of a chief's body were the head (especially the top part of the head) and the back (especially the backbone). It was necessary to protect these body parts during dangerous or sacred situations, and feathered helmets, cloaks, and capes protected and drew attention to them.[442]

Much as brightly colored red and yellow Hawaiian featherwork contains and signifies *mana*, so do other Samoan arts such as fine mats (*'ie toga*) and *siapo*. These arts are time-consuming as well and therefore made more valuable by the labor as well as continued use and reverence. That fine mats and *tapa* inspire Castro is not surprising because the gifting of such items was important historically and continue to be so today, as Kaeppler explains, "The most important valuables, especially in west Polynesia, were fine mats, usually plaited from specifically prepared pandanus strips—sometimes as many as thirty to the inch—which were named and imbued with their owner's *mana*."[443] The *mana* only increases through time: "Traditionally works of art were visual and oral symbols of status, rank, prestige, and power, and were passed as heirlooms from generation to generation, gaining *mana* as they were used on successive occasions."[444] Ringgold's career spans over sixty years and this accumulated wisdom makes her worthy of *mana*.

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[441] Kaeppler, *The Pacific Arts of Polynesia and Micronesia*, 5.

[442] Ibid., 89.

[443] Ibid., 13.

[444] Ibid., 16.

Historically, portraits are utilized to commemorate people, moments, and monuments. This is the case here with the added nuance that by concentrating on Ringgold's upper body, as the head and shoulders are the most sacred yet vulnerable, Castro is illustrating the sitter's *mana* for all to see. When Castro writes that Ringgold has *mana*, it is certain that she is applying a high mark of respect from Pacific culture to an African American woman who has forged an artistic career in spite of the restrictions society imposed upon her because of race and gender. Castro's words are indicative of one strand of the many "affinities and affiliations" in the Black Pacific that this dissertation explores. In this chapter, I see these connections as being forged through educational mentoring and mirroring.

However, Jewel Castro does not copy her mentor; she traces Faith Ringgold's path through the European and American art worlds and makes these spaces her own. English Literature scholar Caroline A. Brown frames Ringgold's teaching strategy in this way: "Carrying on concomitant and multifaceted conversations with her own work, with other black artists, and with the mainstream Western art tradition, Ringgold creates a space not only of reinscription but of innovation."[445] This is a technique that Ringgold has always championed. She asserts, "When you're teaching art, you're constantly being expected to follow the Western tradition and then you have to make [students] understand that's not the only way and it may not be your way."[446] She asserts, "Let's find YOUR way and it's very difficult to do that…It was very difficult for some and not some so difficult for others. Jewel was one of those who was ready to be herself and that was wonderful."[447]

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[445] Caroline A Brown, *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art: Performing Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 237.

[446] Ringgold, Interview.

[447] Ibid.

Consequently, this portrait is an example of what I call *Black Pacific art* because while Castro does not overtly reference Samoan art or culture (although the texture of the line is a feature of *siapo*) and she does not use include any "black" imagery in the portrait, she creates a sure and deft rendering of an African American women filtered through her experience as a Samoan American woman, a personal identity that she owns because of her life experiences as well as an artistic identity that is amplified by the similar path of a woman of color. Therefore, in the similarities in the way they negotiate an American identity through an "othered" artistic heritage, one artist of African American descent and one of Samoan American descent, mark the orbit of Black Pacific art. Jewel Castro entered this space through her path as an artist with Samoan ancestry and professional experience in art and broadcast media.

Walking the Path of Samoan Art and Culture

Castro's pre-MFA career included graphic design and illustration work as well as a stint in programming at a public television broadcasting station in the San Diego area. While still a student at San Diego State University, she mounted her first solo exhibition, "Bingo Babies," at its Flor y Canto Gallery. Castro already had a significant number of artworks that she was ready to exhibit and advisor Janet Cooling happily sponsored her application for the gallery space. She recounts: "Most of it was paintings but some of the paintings were also installations…with things strewn near them to extend the composition. Each painting and/or installation stood alone…i.e., they did not relate to one another."[448] Very early on, Castro is interested in how her paintings occupy space and although the works did not deal with Pacific identity, they were formative in

[448] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)," October 11, 2014.

her growth as an artist. Castro remembers this significant experience: "After the exhibition I felt like for the first time I was onto something for myself."[449]

Next, she was honored by an invitation to participate with the Border Arts Workshop/Taller De Arte Fronterizo at *inSite94*, a site-specific program of art around San Diego and Tijuana. The Border Art Workshop/Taller De Arte Fronterizo, which was founded by a group of binational artists including Guillermo Gomez-Pena, confronted the consequences of the border between Mexico and the United States in their thought-provoking conceptual art projects. At various times Castro has lived and worked in both San Diego and Seattle, therefore, she recognizes the tensions that "border dwellers" face at many locations, and wanted to bring awareness to these issues.

Thus, the influences on Castro's work spread out from her Samoan heritage at the center of her practice. Curator Sean Mallon describes how, for Samoan people and artists, the personal path can be intertwined in the cultural impetus: "Samoans' creativity has been shaped by the mixture of influences and conditions specific to them at different times. While it is important to see the broader historical context for an art form or work, the arts of one so-called homogenous group can also develop differently at different locations at the same time."[450] In her work Castro is inspired by her foundation as a Samoan American woman with strong family ties and a rich artistic education. As such, her creativity is embedded in the continuum of Samoan art, an art that makes the abstract concrete, as Mallon describes:

> If there is [a distinctiveness to the Samoan arts,] it probably lies within the way things are done, the structuring principles underlying the surface manifestations that we are conditioned to see as constituting art. In Samoa some of these structures are found in the

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[449] Ibid.

[450] Sean Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 10–11.

> abstract conceptualism of space, the way a village is laid out, the way food is presented, the positioning of *matai* in the *fale* and the ways arts such as dance and oratory are performed.[451]

It is not just the form or content or technique that makes her artwork Samoan. It is in the environments that she creates. Jewel Castro uses Samoan forms and ideas, buttressed by influences from other sources, to tell her story and invite others to share in it. Mallon continues:

> Her work is influenced by the Samoan art forms of weaving and siapo, but also often features the colours of Mexican muralists and of Chicano and Native American art. Jewel filters these influences through sculpture, sound and lights to make all-encompassing storytelling installations. The installations are layered environments that speak of Samoan identity and history.[452]

He points out how Castro is influenced by a range of cultural arts that she reworks in the service of relating Samoan identity. This does not mean she merely repeats the forms or copies the art; she shapes them so that even if an audience is not familiar with Samoan culture, the space she creates with sight, sound, smell, and other sensory elements becomes a place where they become part of the "unity that is all."[453] This skill is described by Mallon in this way: "These [artistic skills] include imagination, an appreciation of form, and an ability to see and conceptualise the world in three dimensions and in a range of materials."[454]

The germination of her inspiration from Samoan forms and ideas is found in *Talalelagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies*, *Samoa* her MFA review exhibition and comes to fruition in *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*, her multisensory installation for her MFA thesis exhibition. *Talalelagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa* was her first foray into installations and her process of creating environments inhabited by two-dimensional art that does three-

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[451] Ibid., 25.

[452] Ibid., 100.

[453] Albert Wendt quoted in Sina Va'ai, *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia: Colonialism and Indigeneity* (Le Papa-I-Galagala [Samoa]: National University of Samoa, 1999), 46.

[454] Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa*, 88.

dimensional work (Figure 3.2). The installation "completely wrapped the gallery space from top to bottom, side to side."[455] She structured the entrance "to act as a transition space from the outside reality to an alternative space inside."[456] As it becomes clear throughout this chapter, much of her art is inspired by her lived experience.

Figure 3.2: Jewel Castro, Installation view of *Talalelagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa*, at the University of California, San Diego, approximately 600 square feet. *Suitonu and Me* painting on wall, acrylics on canvas, 72 inches x 96 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

In particular, this installation references time spent with her maternal grandfather, Reverend Suitonu Galea'i, in the year before his death. In the 1960s he established the Samoan

[455] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[456] Ibid.

Congregational Church in San Diego, California.[457] She felt honored to be the grandchild who accompanied him on this regular trip back to the Samoan islands. Of this journey, she remembers: "…*Talalelagi* is about a trip I made with my grandfather to American, and then Western Samoa. I made a pathway of mats that meandered through the space in curved ways. There were found objects in the space, including an iron bed, and other things besides the paintings that helped tell that story."[458] The dominant color in the space and the paintings is blue. Castro chose this palette to suggest the sky within the space. She writes of her trip: "And often the sky and sea defined the perimeters of a room, saturating everything in layers of blue, and making them distant, yet certainly clear."[459] In the drawn portrait of Faith Ringgold, Castro manipulates space to suggest temporal multiplicities. In this installation, she shapes space with color, rendering the boundaries permeable between inside/outside and here and now/there and then.

She further describes the space of this "Samoa story":

> For *Talalelagi* I painted the walls of the gallery first in swirls of blue that were about the thick, water laden air in Samoa. For the entrance I had built a funnel-like tunnel that was wider at the beginning and narrowed at the entrance to the space. The walls of the tunnel were blue and hung on them at varying heights were small paintings on shards of found objects, a lot of small pieces of found metal. They represented fragmented memories. The ceiling of the tunnel was made of swirls of cargo net that smelled like fish. And there were colored lights in the space to suggest sunset or sunrise, depending and these shined through the cargo net causing interesting shadows in that entrance space.[460]

In Figure 3.2, a cerulean blue gauze drapes this corner of the installation, framing a small table topped with flowers and an awaiting typewriter. While on this particular trip to Tutuila, her

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[457] Jewel. Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina" (MFA Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 1998), vii.

[458] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[459] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

[460] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

grandfather took her to see his brother. In real life, both men owned identical manual typewriters on which they wrote letters to each other. The room is empty but it is easy to imagine that the owner of the typewriter is about to arrive or has just stepped away. I suggest that the quiet setting builds anticipation. And then the wait is over with the arrival of the male elder wearing a *lavalava* (sarong) with the young woman in casual clothes walking just behind him. The painting, *Suitonu and Me*, becomes a portal created through Castro's use of *siapo* aesthetics. Hung from floor to ceiling, the image bursts into the installation space, the man and his granddaughter actively walking into the scene. However, Castro has chosen to hang the painting just above the ground, the gallery floor evident underneath the figures' feet. With this technique, the artist references the time of the visit and the time *between* the visits when the men are still connected. The typewriter in this installation links the two men, according to Castro: "When I was making this installation, I wondered what thoughts were exchanged between these brothers on those old twin typewriters."[461] The connection is bound by the gauze that has been placed under the chair, its folds reaching out toward the painting that activates the spatiotemporal shift.

I posit that the strength of *Talalelagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies*, *Samoa* lies in how she reinforces the remembrance of her visit, symbolized by the portrait of her grandfather and the typewriter, with structural (the draped entrance), directional (the marked pathways) and sensual elements (the smell of fish) that draw the viewer into the memory. She recalls, "I think of this installation as a memory space and dedicate it to him. It has to do with family initiation; walking through our lands; learning where the spirits are; meeting a trickster; and textures in the natural environment."[462] I argue that she is creating a space called *vā*, the space where the present, the

[461] "Jewel Castro: Sculptures," accessed March 26, 2016, http://jewelcastro.com/installations.html.

[462] Ibid.

past, and the future meet. Samoan author and literary scholar Albert Wendt has stated that the *vā* represents a space in which identity can be mapped:

> We each have preferred maps, learned maps—what we believe our cultures, our nations, ourselves were and are. Our maps may be our neighbor's fictions, we read one another through what we believe, through the mirrors of who and what we are. Those maps and fictions are all in the spiral which composes the story of us in the ever-moving present, in the *Va*, the space between all things which defines and makes us a part of the unity that is all.[463]

That Castro explores the *vā* is not surprising as she is influenced by Samoan culture; the liminal space of the *vā* reflects and shapes Samoan personal and familial relationships. As discussed previously in this chapter, art works such as fine mats and barkcloth embody the *vā* and mark the path of its *mana* in the world. The mats and barkcloth themselves are connections to *lived*, *living*, or *to be lived* bodies. In this way, brown and black bodies through time and space do not lose importance in Black Pacific art.

The body's ability to conjure history, monuments, and genealogy is found in *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina* (Figure 3.3). With this installation, Castro reaches a decisive point in her practice: "It wasn't until *Red House* that I realized that paintings could have a two-dimensional aspect and at the same time function as a painting or more specifically, an architectural device."[464] The effect is not lost on viewers. Adria L. Imada writer of the impact of its staging in *Island Affinities: Contemporary Art in Oceania*:

> A brilliant red sanctuary merging generations of Samoan women, *Red House* invites us into an interior where the most ancient of these women convene. They are like red islands sitting stoically in an ocean, suggesting that Samoan women are connected through water, despite the passing of time and migration to points afar.[465]

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[463] Albert Wendt quoted in Va'ai and National University of Samoa., *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia*, 46.

[464] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[465] Adria L. Imada, "Island Affinities: Contemporary Art of Oceania (Review)," *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008): 278.

Red House was inspired by three generations of Samoan women and is an installation of fabric, drawings, and sculpture that recreates the sacred or communal space of the *fale* (open house with shutters that can be raised or lowered). In particular, the space recreates the *fale ula* (the "red house") that gets its name from the rich tones of the breadfruit timber used in its construction.[466]

Figure 3.3: Jewel Castro, Four staggered *Siva* panels installed in *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina* at the University of California, San Diego, black media on red Plexiglas, each is 48 inches x 90 inches. The panels feature a woman sitting or a *taupou* (highest ranking young girl, chief's daughter) dancing. Courtesy of artist.

Orators would recite the village's past and present within its open walls.[467] Such stories would include the tale of Queen Salamasina. In a rare occurrence in the sixteenth century before colonization, Queen Salamasina held all four ruling titles, united all of Samoa, bringing the four familial lines into one person, one female body. The space of *Red House* is draped with red transparent cloth and the interior is bound by near life-size drawings of women engaged in daily and ceremonial activity. Within the *fale*, faceless draped forms sit, crouch or stand depicting the

[466] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," x.

[467] Ibid.

generations of women in the lineage, with the tallest and most majestic representing Salamasina. When describing this installation, Castro expands upon the elements that Imada describes:

> For *Red House* I always made a sort of vestibule space. All of the art in that area was black media on a red surface of some kind. Even the floor covering is that way. When you leave that space and go into the larger interior everything is full color on red canvas, both on the walls and on the floor. The ceiling is treated with the same fabric that the sculptures are made of.[468]

The components of the installation are framed drawings, hanging Plexiglas panels, three murals created by different groupings of twenty-four paintings, and eight sculptural forms representing female figures (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Jewel Castro, installation view of sculptures in *Red House/Daughters of Salamasina* in *Island Affinities: Contemporary Art of Oceania* exhibition at California State University, Northridge, 2007. The *Fa'amatagi* mural is to the left and the Missionary mural is to the right. Each mural consists of panels (58 inches x 96 inches) hung closely together. The Kava mural is not included in the illustration. Courtesy of the artist.

The sculptures are women/landscape/spirits, according to Castro: "…[T]he sculptures were inspired by ancient Samoan funerary practices, which entailed wrapping the dead in *tapa*.

[468] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

They were also inspired by striated rocks and peeling tree trunks as these also remind me of ancestors."[469] I equate the sculptural forms here to the body of Faith Ringgold in Figure 3.1. Specifically, I suggest that the drawing is like a landscape insofar as Ringgold's "hands appear as timeless as a rock formation," as I wrote earlier in this chapter. The sculptures of *Red House* are rocklike. It follows that the female body of color is strong and endures the vicissitudes of time in Castro's visual art.

Sound also links generations in *Red House*. According to Castro, the installation "has various recordings of women speaking about Samoan culture and history. All of the women are related in some way to my grandfather's church. The entire installation is about Samoan women."[470] As an artist, Castro relates the specific story of women in her grandfather's church yet with the sights, sounds, and shapes in the installation she evokes a link between Samoan women across time and space and opens a space for viewers to interact through their diverse bodies. Art historian Stacy Kamehiro offers this view: "[Castro] combines layered textures and images, color, light, sound, scent and sculptural forms to guide viewers through the time and space of her stories and to render her memories, which are grounded in, and evoked through, bodily experience."[471]

Therefore, I focus on "bodily experience" as a method of communication by the artist *and* a method of comprehending by the viewer because I propose that this dual nature of an experience of and through the body is a strong component of Black Pacific art. The premise of this dissertation is a focus on women, women's corporeality, and representations of that corporeality as it pertains particularly to the Black Pacific specifically in terms of racial or color

[469] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

[470] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[471] Stacy L. Kamehiro, "About the Artist: Jewel Castro," 2008, vii.

categorizations. Along these lines, Castro's employment of the senses is a strategy for mediating the "special paradox" that Gilroy names. The audience's reception and participation in this strategy is the "communal self-development" that is so potent in the Black Pacific and its art.

Overall, these two installations create physical and cosmogonic spaces in which female bodies generate, preserve, and comprehend individual and collective memories. Jewel Castro arranges the painted and sculpted elements to suggest corporeal and structural architecture. She writes, "By the time I made *Red House* I was using painting to architecturally define the space. Was it a landscape? Was it an interior? I wanted the work to visually change the configuration of the existing space and cause the viewer to feel transported to another location and INTO the art."[472] Her words point to my earlier assertions that Castro is exploring the *vā*. She points out how her work meshes different spaces and times, a process that can be accomplished in the *vā*:

> … I always spoke of the holographic presence of time and history and the notion of ancestors living with us in the present…that is how Pacific Islanders perceive the world really. What I understand now is that I wanted to transform the space so that the viewing audience would have that holographic sense of space…history and the present blended together.[473]

The blending together of simultaneous experience is prompted by her concern for tradition, a process that can be rooted in bodily experience. The artist states, "I try to tease as many senses as possible in order to assist viewers to access altered states of reception. I do this because when I think of tradition—its sights, sounds, smells, and tactile qualities—I think of an all-encompassing internal and external environment."[474] She continues,

> Tradition is my muse. I look for the variety of places where tradition manifests. For example, it is present in the inflection of speech, the smell of skin, the body's posture, the style of clothing and hair, the choice of food. It is in choice of color, style of warfare, of

[472] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[473] Ibid.

[474] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 124.

> music, of making art. Tradition is holographic, blending time and space and experience. It is present in every human culture. For this reason I have found it fruitful to use the search for Samoan tradition in my art. People viewing my work may not understand Samoan culture. But there is a universal understanding of tradition. And so a mutual flow of communication can begin. I communicate tradition as I understand it, and viewers are receptive to the degree that they can relate it to their own experience.[475]

I quote Castro at length here because this statement explains her strategic use of "tradition." For her, it is ultimately a method of communicating with viewers.

Castro's reliance on tradition might cause pause for the audience. This is because the word has so often been used to preserve Oceanic art and cultures as frozen in time before European contact. The culture is believed to be intact and timeless. Those who are inspired by tradition are seen as locked in a space of timelessness. Mallon assigns the notion of tradition to the process of stereotyping. To combat this he introduces the notion of choice when it comes to tradition:

> To understand processes of change in art and culture we have to remember that the meaning or significance of things is not necessarily imposed on people, but created by people themselves. New ideas, products and materials are introduced or made available in Samoa throughout its history, but Samoan communities modified or rejected them to suit their own situations and purposes.[476]

The codification of tradition in Samoan society rests in the "Samoan Way." That is, according to Mallon, "A Samoan notion of authenticity and 'tradition' is best encapsulated by the concept of *fa'asamoa*."[477] *Fa'asamoa*, or the Samoan Way, while followed and upheld, is not set in stone, as Mallon explains, "…[A]s a set of cultural practices and values, *fa'asamoa* is regularly contested and reformulated to suit the needs and criteria of those who practise it."[478]

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[475] Ibid., 123.

[476] Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa*, 24.

[477] Ibid.

[478] Ibid.

Accordingly, for Pacific people, in Oceania, or its diaspora, the idea of tradition is powerful but has received a bad reputation because of colonial contact. Noting this in the black Atlantic, Gilroy urges readers to "…rethink the concept of tradition so that it can no longer function as modernity's polar opposite."[479]

I argue that in the Black Pacific, the same is true and is supported by an excavation of selected theories of alternative or comparative modernities. In Black Pacific art, the creations mark the alternative modernity. In the Introduction, I touched briefly upon this idea and return to it here. I argue for "alternative modernity" rather than "comparative modernity" as I see this term most accurately signifying art that does not maintain the status quo of modernity. More often than not, tradition has been argued to not be a part of modernity. I posit that tradition, for Jewel Castro, is her *strategy* for closely cementing the term to alternative modernities frameworks.

Tradition, Modernity, and Female Genealogy in *Walking With My Grandmothers*

In this section, I want to concentrate on what can be considered the equivalent of continuum, only called here "gradient" by Asian Studies scholar Naoki Sakai. In Sakai's essay, "Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities," he outlines *humanitas* and *anthropos* as two modes of knowledge-production whereas the West engages in the two-fold process of producing and applying theory known as *humanitas* and the Rest engages in *anthropos* in which they are the subjects of theory rather than the producers of theory.[480] In the case of Jewel Castro, ostensibly a member of "the Rest," she would fall into the *anthropos* category according to this

[479] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 188.

[480] Naoki Sakai, "Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities," in *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, eds. Salah M. Hassan and Iftikhar. Dadi (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2001), 199.

schema. Instead, she participates in *humanitas* because she creates theory through her art practice. I suggest that the foundations of Pacific American art and the expression of Black Pacific art are conveyed in her practice.

Sakai also introduces the notion of the "gradient" in that "the West is one term of the West and the non-West binary that serves to co-figure spatially the relation of one subjective position to another. Rather than designate a bounded territory, it expresses the orientation or *gradient* at a specific place."[481] The term "gradient" has implications for an alternative modernity because it exponentially increases the number of positions that a subject can occupy outside of the binaries set up by Western linear modernity. Sakai writes, "Neither the West nor the modern is ever determined by one single qualification or gradient. The gradients in which one is caught are never singular, and one always engages with multiple gradients.[482] Sakai's term opens up space to analyze the American and Pacific space that Castro works within—a gradient of tradition that is formed by both Euro-American and Samoan cultures and amplified by African American art.

In this way, I view her work through the prism of alternative modernity insofar as this framing allows concepts of time and space that are not rooted in solely Western thought. She writes, "There are many other things about my family and Samoan culture that influence my work, but all of my work is designed to suggest my sense of ambiguous time and space in relation to the multi-present aspects of tradition."[483] I argue that her use of tradition is a method of connecting the past to the present not to reify it but to expand on future possibilities bolstered by this link. This is a key motivation for Black Pacific artists; that is, they find inspiration for

[481] Ibid., 207.

[482] Ibid., 210.

[483] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 129.

their contemporary art in the history of African Americans, the African diaspora, and Oceania and its diasporas, and project a future for all participants and allies of the Black Pacific.

Her description of tradition as holographic adds a spatio-temporal connotation to the term gradient. She clearly exemplifies Sakai's statement that "one always engages with multiple gradients.[484] In her practice, tradition traverses multiple gradients. It is not fixed in a historical past; instead it is a vibrant contemporary practice in the present with future implications. Curator Susan Cochrane points out how "tradition" in the Euro-American sense is not appropriate for describing contemporary Pacific art: "[T]the terminology of Western art history used to describe the recent, innovative art of the Pacific region is inadequate. Many are questioning the polarisation between the terms 'traditional' and 'contemporary' and the tendency to place all art objects somewhere along an imaginary line between them."[485] Gradient breaks the polarization described by Cochrane and adds depth to an understanding of a contemporary practice that is influenced by tradition and foundational for the future.

The gradient of influence and tradition is further expanded when examining Castro's professional and personal relationship with African American artist Faith Ringgold. In studies of the black Atlantic, tradition is often as binding it is for those in Pacific cultures. Both experience what Paul Gilroy calls tradition's "strange, mesmeric power…"[486] However, Ringgold innovated the medium of the quilt and textiles are a major component of her visual and performance art. She turned a "traditional" material upside down. Castro signals allegiance to Samoan art, gains knowledge from Euro-American art pedagogy and receives influence from an African American

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[484] Sakai, "Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities," 210.

[485] Cochrane, "Art in Movement across the Pacific," in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline. Turner (Canberra, ACT: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, 2005), 452.

[486] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 187.

female artist who has carved a lasting place for herself in contemporary art history with her distinctive narrative paintings. Castro picks up elements as she needs to represent her identity, like other Pacific artists who, as writer and researcher Jen Webb states that although they "may draw on alternative traditions, they do not, in that process, necessarily lose or jettison their own."[487] Webb continues, "The flow of cultural images and ideas, then, is never one-way, but more like a spiral—one that in its movement always (re)turns on itself. This is productive for art and artists."[488] In this case, tradition is one point of the spiral in which Ringgold and Castro work. They have similar experiences in this gradient although other nodes for each of them may be different in their individual experiences of modernity.

As seen earlier, Albert Wendt identifies "the spiral which composes the story of us in the ever-moving present, in the *Va*…."[489] One example of the "spiral effect" is in the textural qualities of Castro's work vis-à-vis that of Ringgold. Ringgold's distinct *thangkas* hark back to the quilts passed down through families of all ethnicities but particularly important to African American families for symbolic protection and record-keeping, among other purposes. For example, the appliqued *Bible Quilt* (1885-1886) by Harriet Powers features vignettes of Adam and Eve as well as symbols—Jacob's ladder and Masonic forms—that possibly hint at her knowledge of the Underground Railroad quilt code.[490] Runaway slaves applied keen observation to spot quilts which were hung over clotheslines and fences to mark "safe-houses" that offered shelter on their journey to freedom in the North. This legacy as well as Tibetan *thangka*—usually

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[487] Jen Webb, "Art in a Globalised State," in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline. Turner (Canberra, ACT: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, 2005), 36.

[488] Ibid., 40.

[489] Va'ai, *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia*, 46.

[490] Lisa E Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39.

small, portable, foldable wall hangings depicting Buddhist deities used for prayer—informs Faith Ringgold's work.

Many cultures in Oceania make *tapa* and it is known by similar-sounding names, like *hiapo* from Niue or *siapo* from Samoa and American Samoa. The knowledge of its construction is passed on in families by female relatives. In her own life, Castro is influenced by her family legacy as well as Mary Pritchard (1902-1995), considered the greatest and most innovative of contemporary *siapo* makers and attributed with cementing its position as a vital ongoing art linked to the past. *Siapo* is made by pounding out the bark of the paper mulberry tree into flat sheets that are then printed with natural dyes through designs cut into a wooden board or drawn by hand. The natural dyes such as turmeric, which gives the rich yellow considered sacred in Polynesia, are used to color design motifs that may reference the natural environment (centipedes, worms, pandanus or breadfruit leaves, for example), or aspects of *fa'a Samoa* such as Christianity.

There are two types labeled according to whether the motifs are painted in freehand (*siapo mamanu*) or rubbed on a carved wooden board (*upeti)* to create the images (*siapo tasina* or *siapo 'elei*). There is also a connection in her immediate family to the freehand technique, Castro recalls, "… [Five] years ago I discovered that my great-great-great-grandmother made *siapo*. In the *mamanu* method.[491] Even before this serendipitous discovery, Castro approximated the *mamanu* method with the wall paintings for *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*. She recalls, "Like the process for *mamanu tapa*, I did not draw the figures onto the canvas first. …The notion of spontaneity has made a tremendous impression on me as it seems so perfectly

[491] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

related to the idea of ancestors visiting, and time passing. It also seemed to suggest the sense of movement and time and panoramic space."[492]

Overall, *siapo* is at the center of Samoan life and is exchanged and given at special occasions, particularly funerals, weddings, and other ceremonies. The resulting *tapa* is then handed down within families or exchanged as gifts with great meaning of status and prestige. Looking again at the sculptural forms in *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*, it is important to keep in mind that they were inspired by the Samoan practice of wrapping the deceased in *siapo*. Seen in this context, it becomes clear that *siapo* is significant in Samoa, American Samoa, and the Samoan diaspora, serving as a component of the Samoan Way, holding great *mana* in formal and informal settings. This translates into Castro's body of work, particularly in the visual tactility of her paintings and drawings.

The artist writes: "Texture is also important to me. I usually try to emulate the texture of *siapo*, that rough, wrinkled, and uneven quality of hand-beaten mulberry paper."[493] In fact, she "primed" the canvas for the paintings in *Talaleagi* so that the texture was inherent to the artworks. She writes, "After a process of stomping and wrinkling, the paint resisted the uneven surface."[494] Later, she adapted the physical stance and stamina need to make *siapo* when creating the wall paintings for *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*. She explains, "I painted these on the floor, allowing very thin acrylic paint to pool and run according to the wrinkles. Once a layer dried, I pooled more and pushed it around until the figure took form."[495] I highlight this to note that by recreating three-dimensional texture on a two-dimensional surface, Castro honors the

[492] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

[493] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 128–29.

[494] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

[495] Ibid.

process of *siapo*-making and brings its temporal moment and spatial sensibility into her contemporary practice.

An analysis of her *Walking With My Grandmothers* (1999) drawings reveals the palpable presence of time, space, and ancestors in her work. The series consists of six mixed media drawings[496] on paper that feature the artist, her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Tinei Galea'i, and her paternal grandmother, Mrs. Gertrude O'Connor Rasmussen. They visually depict Castro's close relationship with her grandmothers as evidenced by the tight composition that is repeated throughout with Castro placing herself physically and spiritually close to the two older women. It is important to understand that while the figures in the drawings appear to literally walk, it is the figurative aspect that lends *mana* to the drawings. Castro explains, "'Walking' with them means they live in me. They live in all I do because of the things they taught me. The things they taught me resonate in my understanding of the world and how to navigate through it."[497] She elaborates, "This idea of 'walking' with them also has to do with 'walking with my ancestors'….the tradition that is handed down from generation to generation, especially through the women…It has to do with the oceanic mindset that we do not go forward alone. We go forward WITH our past---side by side with it."[498]

"Side by side" appropriately describes the placement of the grandmother and granddaughter in *Walking With My Grandmother* (Figure 3.5). At first glance, Castro appears young and as if she is wearing short overalls. Yet, the placement is hierarchical and while she is depicted at different moments in her life in the images, she is a young adult woman. Throughout the series, she draws herself smaller to show deference to her elders because "[i]n old Samoan

[496] Castro used oil and/or chalk pastels, India ink, a variety of ink pens and Nupastels.

[497] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)," February 7, 2015.

[498] Ibid.

tradition, it is bad manners to have your head as high or higher than an elder…So, I'm showing myself smaller out of respect for these two elders. I show myself seeming like a child because I sensed myself a child, even though an adult in [my maternal grandmother's] presence."[499]

Figure 3.5: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmother*, mixed media on paper, 1999, 9 inches x 12 inches, Courtesy of the artist.

The histories of her grandmothers are the foundation of the drawings. Castro asserts, "I am a product of a number of migrations."[500] In brief, her father's family on both sides immigrated to Chicago. Her father, Robert Rasmussen, is the son of Henry (Hank) and Gertrude Rasmussen. Hank arrived from Denmark and Gertrude moved from Ireland with her family. Her

[499] Ibid.

[500] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

mother, Elizabeth Suitonu Davis, is the daughter of Rev. Suitonu and Tinei Galea'i who have deep roots in American Samoa. This legacy is intertwined in her artworks.

In the drawing, the two clasp hands and the young woman walks slightly in front of the older woman. Castro's hair is curly and she appears to wear glasses. It appears that both she and her grandmother are barefoot. There is only the faintest outline of their facial features. Castro creates visual harmony with the repetition of purple throughout the composition: in her long-sleeved shirt, in the bright hue of the skirt of the *puletasi*[501] that complements the orange of her grandmother's long tunic and the flower in her hair, and in the geometric pattern of the background. A deep brown hue is used in their arms and hands. This image, as are all in the series, is slightly wider and taller than a letter-size sheet of paper—approximately nine inches wide by twelve inches high. This intimate size reinforces the tight bond between the older and younger generation. Castro has written "FA Samoa" in the geometric frame. She engaged with notions of *fa'a Samoa* in her MFA exhibition: "I am of a generation who was raised perpendicular to a culture. As a child, I was a witness to the *fa'a Samoa* more than a participant."[502] This position as witness-yet-not-participant manifests itself in her artistic mission. She writes, "…[A]s a Samoan artist, I am keenly interested in expressing my experience of the culture in hopes of balancing the limitations of ethnographic works produced by outsiders, and celebrated as truth in places of higher learning."[503] In this example, she places the figures against a *siapo*-like background that seems to move backwards as the figures move forward. This

[501] A two-piece *puletasi* is worn by Samoan women and girls. They are appropriate for formal and everyday wear and are made from a variety of fabrics in a single color or contrasting/complementary colors or prints. The skirt is usually ankle-length and the collar of the blouse varies according to personal taste and style. Fashion designers also utilize the *puletasi* in their collections.

[502] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," viii.

[503] Ibid.

visual motion marks that she goes "forward with her past."[504] Additionally, the half-circle slices that comprise the background echo the backdrop seen in the postcard of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary with the shrunken head taken by Carl Van Vechten (Figure 2.12). The deliberate utilization of *siapo* patterning here contains the symbolic weight that is missing in Van Vechten's postcard and the "*tapa*-like" materials used in costumes and set design in the musical *South Pacific*.

Figure 3.6: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmother I*, 1999, 9 inches x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

In *Walking With My Grandmothers 1* (Figure 3.6), her paternal grandmother joins the duo. She passed away when Castro was a young child. Her maternal grandmother passed away when Castro was a young adult. However, in this drawing, all three women share the same space

[504] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

and time. Here, the geometric background becomes a net that supports the women. Together the three figures dominate the composition even through the skein of shapes. Similar angles are found in Figure 3.5 but in that instance, the shapes form the background rather than permeate into the female figures as seen here in Figure 3.6. The three woman morph into/from the angled background in this example whereas the geometry in Figure 3.5 creates a frame for Castro and her maternal grandmother to walk through. The same "breakthrough" quality is present in the painting *Suitonu and Me* in the *Talaleagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa* installation.

Figure 3.7: Jewel Castro *Walking With My Grandmother 2*. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3.8: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmother 6*. Courtesy of the artist.

Again, in *Walking With My Grandmothers 2* (Figure 3.7), Castro has depicted the same trio. While this composition mirrors the previous two examples I have discussed, the foreground and background begin to hint at themes and motifs that appear in the *Assimilation Series*.

Specifically, notions of national belonging and the flag symbol are foreshadowed. Castro steps slightly forward of the women onto a crimson swath that evokes a red carpet. Or, the bold shape might symbolize a misshapen red stripe from the American flag. A star pattern floating in the background further suggests an American flag. There is a small female figure drawn in the left corner. She appears cornered by the intersection of the blue background and red foreground. I interpret the figure as being one of the sculptural forms of the female ancestors in *Red House* that joined the trio in this drawing in order to support their paths.

Her paternal grandmother, Gertrude, stands on Castro's left. She wears a crown-like hat on her head and her flowing gown is draped with a sash that reads, "Miss Chicago" across it. Two narratives are drawn into the figure. First, the sash and crown are reminiscent of the mien of the Statue of Liberty. Both sides of Castro's family moved from their homelands to the United States. The Statue of Liberty is a potent symbol of pride and belonging. Second, the sash and crown represent family lore that at one time, Gertrude was crowned "Miss Chicago" when she was about seventeen in the 1920s.[505] It is not certain if or when Gertrude reigned over the Windy City but Castro possesses a postcard portrait of her grandmother.[506] This studio portrait features the young woman wearing a Grecian-inspired gown with soft ballet-like slippers. She holds an American flag around her shoulders, the length of its material frames her on either side. She stares intently into the camera, her head held high. A wide band with a star in the middle holds back her hair. In the drawing, Castro has transported her grandmother from the postcard to the space of the drawing so that both grandmothers guide her.

[505] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (10)," April 2, 2015.

[506] The studio portrait postcard is a nice contrast to the postcard of Juanita Hall by Carl Van Vechten. The postcard of Castro's grandmother hints at more interiority than was found in the depictions of Hall by Van Vechten,

There are similarities between *Walking With My Grandmothers 6* and Figure 3.7. As the drawings suggest multiple times and places simultaneously, it is possible to discuss them out of sequential order. In *Walking With My Grandmother 6* (Figure 3.8), Castro is again in the middle with Gertrude and Tinei in the same positions to her left and right, respectively. Tinei wears the familiar orange and purple *puletasi* from Figures 3.5 and 3.6. However, Castro wears different clothes—white shorts paired with a blouse that boasts ruffles around the V-neck collar—suggesting that yet another moment is depicted. Gertrude's gown is the same but rendered more gesturally so that only the word "Miss" on the sash is just visible. Her crown's star is more articulated than in Figure 3.7. The lone star in this example contrasts with the grouping of stars in the previous example. As a result, Figure 3.8 does not take on the patriotic undertones found in that drawing. The focus is on the relationship between the three female figures. The grandmothers each hold one of her hands. Their fingers are intertwined and she walks/lives/creates confidently between them.

The mood of *Walking With My Grandmothers 3* (Figure 3.9) is very different due to the composition, the bold colors, the scale of the figures, the inclusion of architecture and landscape, and the suggestion of a narrative. The two older women *are* the background and dominate the space. The granddaughter is held aloft in the hands of her grandmothers. Their hands support Castro who wears a tank top and shirts that complement the colors of the women's dresses. The assured line here recalls the portrayal of Ringgold's hands in Figure 3.1. Additionally, the lines delineating each finger recall the inspiration for the sculptural forms of the ancestors in *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*. Castro states that the forms, which were like "striated rocks and peeling tree trunks [because they] also remind me of ancestors."[507] A vignette at the

[507] Castro, "Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina," n.p.

bottom of the drawing draws attention to the scene at Castro's feet. The buildings in the lower panel are purple and mauve and extend the space created by the bright clothing of the grandmothers above. In this instance, Gertrude wears a ruby red dress instead of a draped gown. The square neckline and white orbs at her ears suggest evening wear. The formality of the occasion contrasts with the storm underneath the granddaughter's feet. The palm trees bend toward each other as if composed of pliable rubber rather than bark. The bodies of the women of the background are the shelter against the storm.

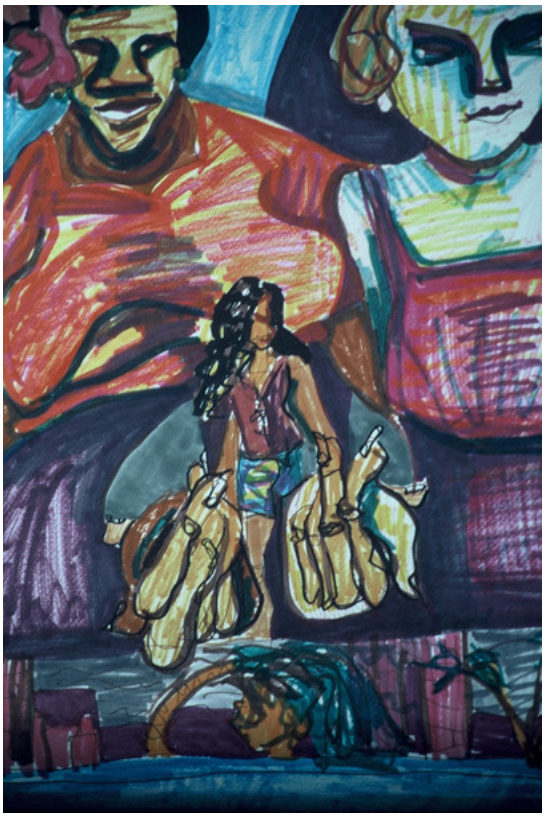

Figure 3.9: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmothers 3*. Courtesy of the artist.

In *Walking With My Grandmothers 4* (Figure 3.10), Castro, her maternal grandmother and her paternal grandmother sit rather than stand. In the previous compositions, she represented herself in the middle of the two women. Here, her maternal grandmother is placed in the foreground with her maternal grandmother just over Tinei's right shoulder. The artist has placed

herself lower than either woman to signify the *mana* of their age. Castro sits at her knees intent on the flowers they hand to her. The folds of the flowers suggest roses and the color of the petals is echoed in the background. The emphasis is on the pyramidal shape of the three women leaning towards each other. Their faces are more abstractly rendered and rather than the bright colors of the previous images, the women wear lighter hues.

Figure 3.10: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmother 4*, Courtesy of the artist.

The line is just as expressionistic as in previous examples. Yet, they are thin and more densely placed which more than in any other of the drawings suggests a sense of memory. They appear to me like the visual haze that I associate with representations of memory. Therefore, Castro weaves multiple times and places into her art and in this case, her technique underscores

that the encounters between the three are more than just physical. The placement of figures in space and their integration into the background as well as the presentation of ahistorical narrative supports an argument that Castro works within the *vā*.

In this space, her female ancestors, both biological and spiritual, guide her hand. The spontaneous but dense line actuates the kinship she feels with the process of making *siapo* in the freehand method. She states, "BOTH Faith (my great teacher) AND my ancestors (especially tattoo and siapo artists using the *mamanu* (freehand) method, particularly my great-great-great-grandmother) have art making processes that are SIMILAR in some ways and those similarities have and still are influencing my process!"[508] *Walking With My Grandmothers* is tribute to the women who have created the past/present/future for her. A similar link between generations is evident in the *Grandmother Series* paintings, one of which is also titled *Walking With My Grandmother*. This painting, along with *The Pastor's Wife* and *The Pastor's Widow*, is discussed following the next section which focuses on the *Assimilation Series.*

American History in American Samoa Affects Pacific American Art

In the future, artists with ties to American Samoa, like Jewel Castro, will be particularly treasured as cultural patrimony. With this future in sight—a future in which Pacific American art has gained phenomenal visibility—it is extremely important to understand the underlying political and historical forces that have affected the development of this field because of American Samoa's status as a territory of the United States. Accordingly, I isolate key historical and political events in the relationship between American Samoa, the United States, and the

[508] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

Independent State of Samoa[509] to foreground how Castro responds to this past through her contemporary practice. In doing so, she is one of many emerging and established Pacific artists building a Pacific American art presence in the United States. I do not mean to suggest that the relationship between the United States and American Samoa is the defining factor in her practice. Rather, I include a historical survey in order to provide the background for my use of the designation, *Pacific American art*.

According to Captain J. A. C. Gray, the first contact between Europe and the Samoan islands was in 1722 when two ships of the Dutch West Indies Company landed in the islands of the Manu'a group, located to the northeast of what is now American Samoa.[510] Over forty years later, the French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville landed in Manu'a to barter before continuing on with his explorations.[511] Gray relates that the French commander Comte de La Perouse was the first known European to set foot on Samoan land in 1787.[512] That same year, outside of Tahiti, the crew of the *H.M.S. Bounty*, commanded by Captain Bligh, mutinied and set their captain and his supporters adrift before attempting to return to Tahiti, as they had become fond of the lifestyle there. In 1791, a British Admiralty ship, in search of the *Bounty* mutineers for punishment, landed at Tutuila, the main island of American Samoa, for supplies.[513] The arrival of Christianity markedly changed the social practices of the Samoans and the heaviest era

[509] Historically American Samoa was known as Eastern Samoa and the islands to the west were known as Western Samoa. Western Samoa gained independence from Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1962. In 1997, Western Samoa officially changed its name to the Independent State of Samoa, or simply, Samoa. This is contested by American Samoans because it affects the positionality of the U.S. territory.

[510] John Alexander Clinton Gray, *Amerika Samoa: A History of American Samoa and Its United States Naval Administration* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1960), 3.

[511] Ibid., 5.

[512] Ibid., 7.

[513] Ibid., 8.

of missionization took place from 1820 to 1847; the London Missionary Society (LMS) played a significant role in converting Samoans to Christianity.[514]

Official contact with Samoa by the United States took place in 1839 through the United States Exploring Expedition led by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. The journey lasted four years (1838-1842) and the six ships traversed the globe from Virginia to South America, into the Pacific, over to Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia, swinging down to Antarctica, moving toward California and concluding on the Pacific Northwest coast of the United States. The purpose was to chart whaling routes and other commercial paths through the Pacific and to scout the French military presence in the area of Tahiti and the area now known as French Polynesia. It was hoped by the organizers that such a journey would result in a vast collection of "specimens" and illustrations that would further scientific knowledge of the islands, the people, and the environment. Historian Barry Alan Joyce contends that the Wilkes Expedition was "the most extensive and far-reaching American scientific endeavor of the nineteenth century.[515] He argues that this naval expedition was foundational in building an "American ethnological and anthropological" practice.[516] He continues: "… [The] Americans on this expedition filtered their observations of the world's indigenous people through the lens of their peculiar constructions of 'savagery' as shaped by the American experience."[517] Specifically, the Wilkes Expedition is but one of many voyages during this time in which "American observers … including scientists … ordered *their* world through their perceptions of what *others* are like."[518] The Wilkes Expedition

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[514] Ibid., 32.

[515] Barry Alan Joyce, *Shaping of American Ethnography : The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (Lincoln ; London : University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 1.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid.

[518] Ibid.

included three artists who participated in representing Samoa and the Pacific from *their* viewpoint: Alfred Agate, Joseph Drayton, and Titian Ramsey Peale. Peale, son of Charles Wilson Peale, participated in the expedition as a naturalist, but he was a noted artist as well.[519]

Joyce relates that due to the influence of the American Philosophical Society, Peale, "the sharpshooting artist, taxidermist, and family museumkeeper" was included on the voyage.[520] While Joyce features Agate's illustrations, it can be concluded that Peale's role as an artist and curator at the time as well as his father's role and family's influence in American art and museums establishes how Pacific American art is historically intertwined into the history of American art and visual culture. In 1890 artist John La Farge with his friend Henry Adams, a historian, embarked on a smaller, if not as ambitious, journey. Fifteen months spent travelling to Hawai'i, Samoa, Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Fiji, and Indonesia yielded a trove of watercolor renditions of people and landscapes, many with handwritten notations of his observations. Of course, La Farge, Agate, Peale and Drayton illustrated the Pacific from their viewpoint, but in doing so they leave a legacy of representation that contemporary Pacific American artists directly or indirectly engage with. Pacific American artists dispute the nineteenth century views of race that were disseminated through scientific and artistic explorations such as those undertaken by these men.

With growing economic and colonial interests in the Samoan islands—the profitable export of coconut oil, or *copra*, from plantations began in 1849—and fears that German and British administrations were gaining too much power in the area, the United States sent

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[519] In Chapter One, I discuss how the African American sitter in *Man in a Feathered Helmet* substitutes for a Hawaiian man. Titian Ramsey Peale who traveled on the Wilkes Expedition is the brother of Rembrandt Peale who painted the portrait in question.

[520] Joyce, *Shaping of American Ethnography : The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*, 22.

Commander Richard Meade to investigate the possibility of a naval base in 1871. Meade enacted a binding agreement wherein "[t]he Samoans ceded to the United States the exclusive right to build and operate a naval station at Pago Pago."[521] With this act, the United States established an official presence in Samoa. The tensions between these three powers and their allies in differing local *aiga* (extended family) came to a crisis point in 1889, at which time the Treaty of Berlin was signed between the three to maintain the relationships each had built in the country. However, by 1899, Britain ceded interest in the region and Samoa was divided into a German colony in Western Samoa and a U.S. territory in Eastern or American Samoa. One year previously, the United States acquired territories in Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Hawai'i and its position as an imperial power in the global south and the Pacific was established.

During the ensuing years, American Samoa and Western Samoa maintained a status quo in relationship to each other. The United States Navy administered the territory but this administration did not mandate a military role, according to Pacific Studies scholar Robert C. Kiste: "From the outset, American policy recognised the vitality and validity of the *fa'a Samoa* [the Samoan Way] … and protected the *matai* … system and the Samoan communal ownership of the land."[522] This outcome was desirable, according to attorney Dennis J. Siebold, as the six islands of American Samoa are said to have sought United States protection:

> Seeing the United States as less of an imperial threat than the European nations, the native people appealed to America for treaty protection. They offered their best harbor, Pago Pago, as a coaling station in return for American friendship and its implied protection against the European powers' threat to islands' independence.[523]

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[521] Peter Stuart, *Planting the American Flag : Twelve Men Who Expanded the United States Overseas* (Jefferson N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007), 34.

[522] Robert C. Kiste, "United States," in *Tides of History : The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, eds. K. R. Howe, Robert C Kiste, and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University Of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 245.

[523] Dennis J Siebold, "Delaware and the Key to the Pacific: Thomas F. Bayard, George H. Bates, and the Acquisition of American Samoa, 1886-1899," *Delaware History* 32, no. 2 (2008): 108.

This decision must have seemed well-founded during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919. When the health crisis became evident, Commander John Martin Poyer, Governor of American Samoa, ordered a quarantine of all ships going out or coming into Pago Pago harbor. Because of his actions, American Samoa suffered no deaths during the devastating epidemic. However, at this time Western Samoa was no longer under German control. New Zealand, as it was known then, was the representative of British interests and took over as a result of World War I. Samoa is estimated to have suffered a twenty- to twenty-five percent death rate[524] because N. Z. military administrator Colonel Robert Logan did not order a quarantine and declined aid from American Samoa. He ordered all communications cut off with American Samoa, and there is debate whether these actions were due to miscommunication or purposeful intent. Regardless, families in both Samoas suffered deaths in their *aiga* (extended family) because of the ties across the islands. Logan's actions were decried at the time as misguided and the memory of the devastation lingers in Samoan/American Samoan cultural memory. In 2002, Aotearoa/New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark issued a televised apology to Samoa for detrimental actions, like Logan's, that took place under Aotearoa/New Zealand's administration before independence.

World War II heralded a time of prosperity followed by a downturn in American Samoa, according to Kiste:

> World War Two had few consequences for American Samoa … In anticipation of the war, a crew of more than a thousand American civilians was engaged on various construction projects on Tutuila. They were replaced with military personnel after the attack on Pearl Harbor and a marine training base was established near Pago Pago. The

[524] Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "American Samoa," in *Resistance in Paradise: Rethinking 100 Years of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and the Pacific*, eds. Deborah. Wei and Rachael. Kamel (Philadelphia, PA: American Friends Service Committee, 1998), 91.

> military upgraded the island's infrastructure with vastly improved roads, airfields, and other facilities.[525]

However, he also presents a contradiction by stating that the end of the war was "traumatic" because of the dismantling of the naval base and personnel on American Samoa.[526] During the war, increased construction and projects contributed to a cash economy that disappeared when the Navy left. Anthropologist and social scientist Evelyn Kallen relates that immigration from the island to the continental United States increased in the wake of this deployment.[527]

Other changes took place after World War II; the Navy transferred administration to the Department of Interior. A constitution was enacted in 1960 and revised six years later to include more local control over government affairs.[528] While Western Samoa gained independence from Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1962, the status of American Samoa continues as a territory. A Governor is elected locally rather than by appointment from the U.S. and a non-voting member sits in the U.S. Congress.[529] Kiste argues that decolonization was not considered by the United States in the territory because of its national vision:

> The American inability to see itself as a colonial power had significant consequences. The United States never saw a need to create a colonial service, train administrators to work abroad, or develop an explicit colonial policy. From the American point of view, decolonisation was the business of others, and the United States did not anticipate the need to prepare for the process that formally began when Western Samoa achieved independence in 1962.[530]

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[525] Kiste, "United States," 246.

[526] Ibid.

[527] Evelyn Kallen, *The Western Samoan Kinship Bridge: A Study in Migration, Social Change, and the New Ethnicity* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 53.

[528] Kiste, "United States," 247.

[529] In 2015, The Honorable Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen was the first American Samoan woman elected to the United States House of Representatives. See "Aumua Amata Is Our New Delegate to the U.S. House," *Samoa News*, accessed March 28, 2016, http://www.samoanews.com/content/en/aumua-amata-our-new-delegate-us-house.

[530] Kiste, "United States," 229.

As previously stated, the economic realities of American Samoa are tied to policy set by the federal United States. With the opening of the canneries in 1954 and 1963, Kiste explains the link to the mainland: "Both operations were encouraged by tax and other incentives from the government of American Samoa" that was forwarded by the federal government.[531]

Although the industry has been volatile in the last decade, with facilities closing and reopening, there are currently three companies with vested interests in tuna canneries in American Samoa—StarKist, Tri Marine International which acquired the Chicken of the Sea brand, and Bumble Bee.[532] Various environmental and legal regulations also impact the canneries.[533] In general, this industry is not only significant for American Samoans but is also a draw for other immigrants from the Pacific or elsewhere: "Wages in the territory are much higher than in neighbouring countries, and employment in the two canneries has never been popular with American Samoans. As a consequence, American Samoa has become a magnet to outsiders, many of whom are in the territory illegally."[534] The canneries are not popular because although they generate income, there is a great prosperity gap between the company shareholders and owners and the workers. It is also the *only* industry, creating a state of dependence on the market for tuna.

In addition to the canneries, the only other major source of income is from federal funds for infrastructure and local administration of the territory that is under the auspices of the

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[531] Ibid., 248.

[532] See "American Samoa Cannery 'Not Surprised' By U.S. Withdrawal From Treaty - January 22, 2016," *Pacific Islands Report*, accessed March 28, 2016, http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2016/January/01-22-05.htm. Also see "Bumble Bee Seafood: No Long Term Commitment To American Samoa - November 25, 2015," *Pacific Islands Report*, accessed March 28, 2016, http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2015/November/11-25-09.htm.

[533] "Pacific Islands Ready To Counter US Tuna Treaty Proposal - February 11, 2016," *Pacific Islands Report*, accessed March 28, 2016, http://pidp.org/pireport/2016/February/02-11-01.htm.

[534] Kiste, "United States," 249.

Department of the Interior; tourism did not take off as expected and normally only two flights per week travel to and from Honolulu.[535] Remittances from families in the United States support *aiga* (extended family) in the territory, and in turn, Samoans, who have immigrated to their neighboring islands under U.S. control, send remittances back to their families in the Independent State of Samoa, because although the workers are not paid minimum wage, it is still more money than they could earn at home. This highlights a difference in the government benefits between the two. American Samoans can take advantage of school lunch programs, Social Security, and free public education while Samoans in the independent state do not have such governmental resources. This creates a further divide in the historical and cultural interconnections.

Prior to 2007, the Department of Labor set minimum wage rates in American Samoa separately from the rest of the country; this resulted in lower labor costs for the companies. In 2007, an act was passed to bring the minimum wage more in line with the continent, with increases every year until it reached the national minimum. In spite of delays and policy freezes, as of September 30, 2015, the minimum wage for fish canning and processing is $5.16 per hour.[536] While income has increased, although not at the level it is on the mainland, canneries argue that a higher wage undercuts the advantages they have previously enjoyed. It is argued that due to transportation and other costs—American Samoa is two thousand miles south of Hawai‘i—companies won’t break even. In any case, American Samoans lose because the

[535] American Samoa hosted the 10th Pacific Arts Festival in 2008. Funding was provided in part by the Department of the Interior. See “Festival of Pacific Arts,” accessed March 29, 2016, http://www.pagopago.com/artsfestival/news/sn_doi_grant.htm. Additionally, the number of flights was increased for the travel to and from the Festival. The Department of the Interior is also providing funding for the 12th Pacific Arts Festival in 2016 in Guam. See “Press Release: Nearly Six Million in CIP Funds Granted to Guam,” April 22, 2015, https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/migrated/oia/press/2015/upload/GUAM-CIP-FY2015-Funds-04232015.pdf.

[536] “Minimum Wage Laws in the States - Wage and Hour Division (WHD) - U.S. Department of Labor,” accessed March 28, 2016, http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/americanSamoa/ASminwage.htm.

companies have threatened to leave to protect their bottom line. But, this would result in the collapse of American Samoa's economy.

This history provides one perspective in the framework for analyzing the six paintings of Castro's *Assimilation Series—Auntie's House*, *A Taupou on "A" Street*, *Daughters in the Logan*, *Communion*, *Tales of the Fisherman I*, and *Tales of the Fisherman II*. They contain motifs that point to the complicated relationship between the U.S., Samoa, and American Samoa. Castro intends to return to the series. She emphasizes, "I have more people and stories to cover. But not time yet." [537] Like her *Grandmothers* drawings, these paintings are deeply personal for the artist. She explains: "My *Assimilation* series of painting in a way is a tribute to my mom, and her siblings. …My paintings are about the choices that my mom, her siblings, and other elder relatives made…to assimilate or not to…and what motivated them."[538] Not all are related to military concerns but two paintings in particular, *Tales of a Fisherman I* (Figure 3.11) and *Tales of a Fisherman II* (Figure 3.2) specifically narrate her uncle's story of his service in the military. While there are paintings in the series that relate to her female relatives, it is important to gauge the female artist's perception of the military's effect on Pacific American families. These two examples are ideal for in-depth analysis to uncover references to the United States military. However, lest it appear that Castro's work is only by influenced Samoan culture and her family, I pinpoint other artistic catalysts in the paintings such as Byzantine icons or Cubism.

[537] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (6)," December 13, 2014.

[538] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (1)," May 11, 2010.

Iconic Tributes

In Chapter Two, I argued that the initial visual images from the musical version of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary become iconic and are reproduced in newspapers, magazines, and the advertisements they contain. Here, "icon" takes on a different meaning as Castro intentionally at times structures the compositions and chooses color palettes that reference Byzantine or early Medieval icons. As icons are an aid to memory, the paintings in the *Assimilation Series* signal her respect for her extended family. She states, "I see the paintings as images of my personal 'saints.' I purposefully made them into iconographic portraits…again, as a tribute."[539] The roots, or "routes," of the *Assimilation Series* began in *Red House*. She explains, "*Red House* was the first work in which I understood that all of my figures were meant to be iconographic. In my *Red House* paintings the figures are large and fill the foreground with very little background. I was looking hard at small iconographic European paintings on wood from the 15th century and before. So although I was working large, I treated my compositions similarly. But I was staining the images into the fabric while it was lying flat the way you would apply pigment to *tapa*."[540] By the time Castro embarked upon the *Assimilation Series*, she "deepened the space to more of a tableau in which the figure stands or sits on a platform of some kind with … symbols surrounding them that were significant to their stories. By then I was and still do look deeply at Titian, Giorgione, and Jan van Eyck."[541]

The paintings were first exhibited in *Coming of Age in Amelika*, an exhibition which also included the art of Dan Taulapapa McMullin. Curated by Adria Imada, this show accompanied the "Pacific Islands, Atlantic Worlds" symposium held in September 2001 at New York

[539] Ibid.

[540] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[541] Ibid.

University's Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program and Institute. This was a momentous time as the organizers continued with the symposium even though it took place less than a month after the September 11 attacks in New York.[542] In spite of the tense atmosphere, Faith Ringgold attended the opening reception for her former student's exhibition held in an "intimate space" designed by architect Maya Lin. The six paintings were next the focus of a solo exhibition titled *Assimilation Love Notes* at the University of California, Irvine, in 2003. In this different space, Castro stresses that her paintings "looked more object like."[543] When asked about the influence of *Red House* on subsequent art, she states that "because of *Red House* I planned my *Assimilation* paintings for those two other exhibitions as both a two-dimensional composition, AND as an object that might define a space."[544]

Her technique for hanging the paintings supports this goal. She places holes on the top and/or bottom of the paintings and reinforces them with grommets. She then strings rope through the holes and attaches each end to the wall. She repurposes rope so often it adds an enveloping smell to the exhibition space. It is clear that her two-dimensional paintings contain three-dimensional intentions that extend into the space in which they are exhibited. Additionally, if the paintings shape space, they also gather and treasure time. Of her interest in the conjunction of time and space in Samoan art, Castro explains another link to *Red House*:

> Starting with the paintings in *Red House*, by the time I was doing the *Assimilation* paintings, I was thinking carefully about Samoan art forms (the architecture, the texture and application of media for *tapa*, the architectural function of mats, the staining and pattern and repetition in *tatau*)…As objects, I saw them as a cross between windows, fine mats, *tapas*, and most recently I see them as sails.[545]

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[542] Ibid.

[543] Ibid.

[544] Ibid.

[545] Ibid.

This conjunction of two- and three-dimensional space and time is embedded in *Tales of a Fisherman I* and *Tales of a Fisherman II*. Both give a glimpse into how her uncle's service in the U.S. military as formative to his personal and familial identity.

As previously mentioned, the relationship of Samoans and American Samoans with the U.S. military is long and complicated. In 2007, Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, outlined the role of Samoans in the military from World War II to the Iraq War: "In 1940, the Marine Corps was authorized to raise a battalion of Samoans to be incorporated into the Marine Corps Reserve as the 1st Samoan Battalion. When the unit was disbanded in 1944, it had nine Marine Corps officers, thirty-two American Marines and 494 Samoan Marines."[546] He then describes the actions of Sergeant First Class Konelio Pele who received the Silver Star for bringing a comrade to safety during heavy gunfire in 1966 in Vietnam.[547] As of 2007, "[S]even residents of American Samoa have been killed in Iraq as well as five Americans of Samoan ancestry residing in the United States,"[548] according to Chu. These numbers make the casualties for American Samoa the highest per capita for any state or territory.[549] The story of Castro's uncle can be interwoven into this narrative and the fact that she uses *siapo* texture to reference the role of the military in defining modernity is significant because she expresses the reality through tradition, often seen as the counterpoint to modernity. *Tales of a Fisherman I* (3.11) relates his decision as a young man to enlist in the military while

[546] "Press Release: Under Secretary Pays Tribute to Samoans' Military Contributions," accessed December 5, 2008, http://www.manuatele.net/amata/amata-2q07b.html.

[547] Ibid.

[548] Ibid.

[549] "Defense.gov News Article: Defense Department Honors Asian Pacific American Servicemembers," accessed March 29, 2016, http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=46257.

Tales of a Fisherman II (3.12) refers to his civilian life that was shaped by his experience in the Vietnam War.

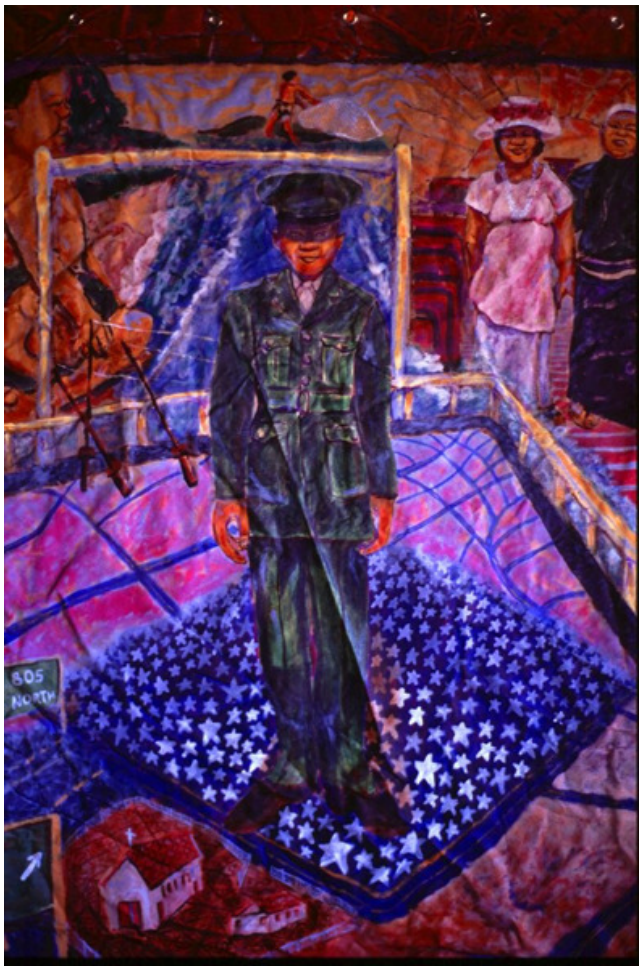

Figure 3.11: Jewel Castro, *Tales of a Fisherman I*, acrylics on canvas, 2001, 48 inches x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artists.

In Figure 3.11, her uncle, Keneti Suitonu Galea'i, dressed in uniform occupies the center of the painting. The brim of his uniform hat shades his face. He stands on a floating "carpet" of white stars spangling a blue square banded by darker blue lines at its border. The carpet is set askew as it hovers above what appears to be a church topped by a white cross in the lower left hand corner. The artist also presents the view of the inside of the church on his right as a man and a woman watch him in front of what appears to be church pews. The skill of navigation

aided the Pacific migration across a "sea of islands" and the knowledge of how to travel by star position was important. More directional cues are rooted in the image. In the lower left corner, a white arrow points in the direction of northeast. Immediately above it, a green road sign, much as would be seen on any highway, announces "805 North." Whether it is a destination before him/the viewer or behind him/the viewer is not clear. Common motifs for navigation in contemporary Pacific art include abstract or realistic frigate birds but with Castro's use of stars, I suggest she references both navigation and the American flag. Here, rather than just fifty stars, a multitude of stars symbolizes the islands of Oceania and the multitudes of Pacific Islanders that have been enveloped in the "American Way" since before the nineteenth century.

In the near background, fishing poles lean against/through a portal created by a post-and-lintel formation. The way they lean and tilt merges with a seated figure in the far background. It appears as if the figure is rowing with the fishing poles/oars. The structure created by the post-and-lintel creates a type of enclosure as it intersects a low railing that runs from the lower right of the painting and takes a sharp turn left before leading out of the composition. It appears as if her uncle stands in a room with walls but with no roof. There are seated figures in the background glimpsed through the square created by the bones of the open building. The blue field with stars under his feet is echoed by the blue stream/road leading past the seated figure to a tiny boy clambering on rocks in the background.

Jewel Castro narrates the story in this painting: "[My uncle] stands on the family church grounds in San Diego. I placed him there because it was like a little Samoa once you were inside the church property gates. In the background I show him as a little boy, learning to fish."[550] She continues, "Uncle Keneti is a master fisherman who was taught by master fishermen. In the most

[550] Castro, "Email Message to Author (1)."

distant view is a man fishing with a net, and I imagine this to be my uncle's original teacher."[551] This painting depicts her uncle who is "just barely older than a boy."[552] The beaming couple looks over him: "His parents are seen standing in their church and smiling at him at the top right. And the whole scene rests on the top of a large fishing boat, referencing his commercial fishing later in life as an adult."[553] Here, Castro continues to show respect to elders in her figure placement. Her uncle is shorter than either of his parents. Yet, he floats above "little Samoa" that is inside the gate. The formal elements in the painting include reverse perspective, variegated patterning, complementary color pairings, and physical texture. Castro explains the effect of these factors: "My painting compositions are often collage like—the images varying across the surface in terms of time and space to tell a story. I have looked at the Mexican muralists particularly [David Alfaro] Siqueiros and of course Diego Rivera…and Cubism…The muralist idea of panoramas, and the Cubist method of things spilling down and out toward the viewer."

The play between the times and spaces and people and level of detail is somewhat of a symphony. As Castro sees tradition as bodily based, it makes sense that her visual compositions would approximate the back-and forth aurality of sound. At UCSD, Faith Ringgold introduced Castro to the work of artist Romare Bearden who is renowned for his collage work depicting African American life. Castro states that she "immediately fell in love with" his work.[554] She especially found his spontaneity inspiring as it echoed her familial legacy of *siapo mamanu*. She writes, "I completely understood his improvisational/spontaneous call and response like process, his repetition of shapes and division of space…all made sense and related to my research into

[551] Ibid.

[552] Ibid.

[553] Ibid.

[554] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

siapo processes."[555] While Figure 3.11 does not contain the border often found on *siapo*, this feature is prominent in *Tales of a Fisherman II*.

Figure 3.12: Jewel Castro, *Tales of a Fisherman II*, acrylics on canvas, 2001, 48 inches wide by 60 inches high, courtesy of the artists, reproduced with permission

Figure 3.12 more directly references *siapo*. The flowered "edges" of the painting are bounded like quilts. This technique serves to "frame" the composition which is active in the background, mid-ground and foreground. Castro worked with unstretched canvas before

[555] Ibid.

enrolling at UCSD and this technique dovetailed with the methods of her mentor. They share similarities in narrative scope and composition. Castro writes, '…[T]he single painting communicating a large story is very much influenced by Faith Ringgold's work…Even my attention to painting a frame around each image in this series is influenced by her work…"[556] The frame here links the silhouettes in the background to the star designs in the foreground. Castro states that she envisioned the double formation in the middle as her grandparents. They are embracing.[557] These silhouettes directly above Uncle Keneti's head resemble the sculptural forms from the interior heart of *Red House/Daughters of Salamasina*. They are suspended in a swirl of blue pigment that is broken up by the solid architecture of the post-and-lintel gate seen in Figure 3.11. The tone of the blue acrylic that she chooses takes on the appearance of the sky in the space above the figures and suggests the ocean underneath their feet at the same time. Again, as in her portrait of Faith Ringgold (Figure 3.1), Castro shapes these bodies in the background to suggest solidity and gravitas.

The horizontal beam of the purple gate is secured to the vertical posts with lashing, which according to Sean Mallon, provided "the final touch, the important detailing"[558] of architecture. Mallon continues, "There was a skill, a patience and an appreciation involved in tying a lashing."[559] I suggest that the detail given to the lashing in the painting is not only the way that Castro recreates the enclosure around her grandfather's church, but it also acknowledges the importance of the skill itself and her allegiance to Samoan art and architecture. In the context of a painting about her uncle, the lashing signifies the skills he possessed as a master fisherman and

[556] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

[557] Jewel Castro, Interview by Bernida Webb-Binder, April 1, 2016.

[558] Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa*, 54.

[559] Ibid.

the security of familial ties that bind. It is significant to notice the detail especially as Castro has pointed out the iconicity of her figures. Each detail adds to the tribute, according to Castro: "I [set] each character on a pedestal or stage of some kind, surrounded by symbolic objects to help tell their story." Here the story is told through the lashing, the military uniform, the IV pole and the duffel bag. These become his attributes. Through these attributes, the viewer understands the impact of the military on his life and that of his family as well as the ties that bind them to American Samoa. Castro remembers, "He WANTED to assimilate into American society. And his way of doing that was to join the Marine Corps and fight in Vietnam….Our family saw its men as warriors. His becoming an American warrior brought pride to all of the family and in a way made his parents and siblings feel more American."[560] The price for being American was steep after the Vietnam War. Uncle Keneti paid with his health. The three purple posts that create the gate represent the three Purple Hearts that he was awarded for his service in Vietnam. She writes that he received "[v]ery serious wounds. Kept going back to Vietnam because his buddies were still over there."[561]

In the mid-ground, her uncle's uniform now hangs next to an IV pole. Although it resembles a coat rack, thin tubing snakes from it to the man almost as if it is tapping him on the shoulder.[562] This symbolizes ill health and frailty. In the foreground, the center of the composition, her uncle is represented holding a small baby in his right arm (his namesake grandson) and a young girl (Jewel Castro) wearing a red dress and shoes leans against his left knee. Her uncle sits in the center on a folding chair that has a canvas back stretched over a wooden frame. This pyramidal composition was also found in *Walking With my Grandmother 4*.

[560] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

[561] Castro, "Email Message to Author (1)."

[562] Castro, Interview.

This solid construction belies the instability of his life after the military as symbolized by the duffel bag that sits askew to his left side and that features a starched shirt peeking out of it. He wears dark glasses and I suggest that his feelings about the circumstances of his life are unclear because his eyes are hidden. There was a similar mystery in the portrait of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary by Carl Van Vechten (Figure 2.21).

In the closer foreground, suggesting distance yet proximity, *siapo* motifs divide a scattering of blue stars. Castro relays that she does not use any particular design. Yet, an informed viewer might pick out what look like starfish, sandpiper, and breadfruit leaf patterns in the bands that divide into three, gradually grow closer to each other as they reach into the distance. Faintly underneath, red and white stripes lay over and under the designs. Again Castro references the American flag; this time, the stripes complement the nebula of stars. However, the stars also symbolize the traditional female tattooing (*malu*) on the knees and thighs; her grandmother's *malu* is an element of one of the paintings discussed later in the chapter. The duality of Castro's motifs point to her positioning as a "diatopic"[563] artist, an interpretation I clarify in the following section.

Notions of Indigeneity and Diaspora=Diatopia

In this chapter, I suggest the term "Pacific American" as a viable designation for art that is made in U.S territories in Oceania and on the continental United States.[564] In addition, I locate key historical moments in the development of contemporary Pacific American art. Specifically,

[563] Warrior, "Afterword," 324.

[564] Art made in Hawai'i by artists who claim Pacific descent but not native Hawaiian descent is included in this term. But art that is made by artists in Hawai'i who claim native Hawaiian descent belongs more rightly to the field of Hawaiian art as the annexation of Hawai'i by the US in 1898 is still contested and the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is highly active.

the long presence of the U.S. Navy and federal policy regarding economy influences the art of Castro's *Assimilation* series. Also, from this historical exploration, it becomes clear that American Samoa's relationship to the United States and the Independent State of Samoa is heavily determined by a colonial history that separated what was once an interconnected body of islands. In a postcolonial context in which one's connection or disconnection to land gains primacy, notions of indigeneity and diaspora do not quite capture the nuances of this three-fold relationship. To highlight this conundrum, I deem Castro's work, specifically the two fisherman paintings, as "diatopic"[565] art rather than diasporic or indigenous art.

Castro's star symbols relate to both migration across the Pacific before the arrival of Europeans and to the inherent movement under the stars and stripes. The exhibitions *Turning Tides* and *Island Affinities* also pinpointed the migration of Pacific Islanders through Oceania and across the globe. But, the artworks created in this diaspora are not easily interpreted within the usual postcolonial framework of diaspora because of the longstanding tradition in Oceania of acknowledging both the importance of land *and* the importance of the ocean in tracking genealogy and belonging. For example, Regina (Reggie) Meredith's mixed-media work titled *Self-Portrait* (2006) was included in the *Turning Tides* and *Island Affinities* exhibitions. Currently, Reggie Meredith lives in Leone village in American Samoa and has taught at American Samoa Community College since 1988 and is the head of the Art Department there. Born in San Diego, California, home to a significant population of Pacific Americans, Meredith first attended elementary school in Hawai'i before moving with her immediate family to join her extended family in American Samoa. She later returned to the continent for her undergraduate education in Pennsylvania but chose to return to American Samoa to teach at Samoana High

[565] Warrior, "Afterword," 324.

School. She then earned her MFA degree in Painting and Drawing from San Diego State University with a thesis titled *Visual Dynamics of Change through Acculturation*.[566] It is clear that while she makes her home in American Samoa and learned the art of *siapo* from female relatives,[567] a significant portion of her art training was obtained in the forty-eight contiguous United States.

Her mixed-media *Self-Portrait* gives a tantalizing glimpse of how the conditions of diaspora and indigeneity collapse in a Pacific American context due to historical colonization and the emergence of globalizing and transnational forces that have gained more traction in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. In its complexity of formal qualities, motifs, imagery, and meaning, *Self-Portrait* occupies a notable position in the center of a triangulation of influences that spans the relatively narrow cultural and geographic distance between Samoa and American Samoa and traverses the wide Pacific Ocean to the continental United States. In this way, she works within a continuum of creativity that continually navigates tradition and contemporaneity and back again and again and yet again. This is also true of Castro and is seen in *Talaleagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa* and *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina* which were her first installations. In the case of Meredith's *Self-Portrait*, working from a photograph and drawing with black gesso onto the Plexi, she physically inserts her features over the immediate story of her family and conceptually interleaves—the photos are overlaid with vellum—her innovative art into the narrative of *siapo*-making as well as that of the self-portrait in the Western tradition.

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[566] Reggie Meredith, "Email to Author," January 15, 2010.

[567] Her aunt is Marylyn Pritchard Walker who along with her sister Adeline Pritchard Jones is the daughter of Mary Jewett Pritchard. It was important that her Aunt Marylyn give her approval for *Self-Portrait* because *siapo* is not customarily used to make portraits. She and her cousin Tupito Gadalla learned *siapo*-making from Marylyn.

Her use of Plexiglas explicitly points to a contemporary material and her use of *tapa* ostensibly points to Samoan traditional *siapo*. And yet, the effect of simultaneously not seeing and seeing-through the Plexi to the *tapa* and photographs creates a double-image of Meredith's identity as an artist and as a member of a family of artists and a member of Samoan culture, as *siapo* IS one of the primary symbols of Samoan culture. Using natural dyes on the *tapa* underneath the portrait Plexi, Meredith has created a *mamanu* example of *siapo*. A larger triangle that builds the middle ground of the layers represents a net, a key Pacific motif, and the smaller triangles symbolize trochus shells. A centipede design bounds the top and bottom of the frame while the diamond shapes throughout represent banana pods, worms and pandanus leaves. The six photos are personal to the artist and depict her brother, great-great aunts and uncles, great-great grandparents, grandfather, and mother.

The photo under what would be her left cheekbone is that of her father who passed away in 2003. *Self-Portrait* is a memorial of his memory. Atualevao Heinrich Anthony Meredith, known affectionately as "King Kong" because his mother enjoyed the movie almost immediately after she gave birth to him in 1933, was a Chief Petty Officer in the U.S. Navy who met his wife in San Diego while stationed there.[568] He was also an ordained minister, and held a chiefly title in his *aiga* or family. She signs the work in the lower right corner as "daughter of Kong," as she is known in her community. Prompted by a feeling of loss after his death, Meredith creates a visual family "*tapa*" tree that represents not only the growth and spread of her immediate and extended family but also the deep roots that have been anchored in a legacy of art-making, creativity, and service to community.

[568] Meredith, "Email to Author."

Is Regina Meredith a diasporic artist because she was born in the United States but lives in American Samoa? Or, is she an indigenous artist because she lives, works, and creates on American Samoa, and acts as one of the many stewards of the land on American Samoa that has belonged to her family through generations?

Before answering, I present another case—that of artist Dan Taulapapa McMullin who is accomplished artist in a range of media and formats. A 2002 film titled *Sinalela*, places a Samoan *fa'a fafine* (man living as woman) in the role of Cinderella looking for her prince. In 2013, *Coconut Milk*, a selection of recent poetry, charted as one of the Top Ten Books of the Year on the American Library Association Rainbow List. In 2001, his works were included in *Coming of Age in Amelika* alongside those of Jewel Castro. Since that time, he has exhibited at many museums and venues including the De Young/Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Bishop Museum of Honolulu. His large-scale project, *100 Tikis*, consists of video, installation, sculpture, and paintings that explore "the intersection of *tiki* kitsch and indigenous sovereignty."[569] The visual work is accompanied by McMullin's *Tiki Manifesto*. This artist's statement/poem pulls no punches in bringing black, brown, and queer bodies into full view. He situates Tiki not as a kitsch god but as an ancestor of Pacific Islanders:

> Can I remind us that Tiki
> Whom we call Ti'eti'e and Ti'iti'i
> Some call Ki'i, some call Ti'i
>
> That Tiki was beautiful, jutting eyebrow, thick lips, wide nose
> brown skin in some islands
> black skin in some islands
> brown black deep, thick thighs
> jutting eyebrow, thick lips, wide nostrils, breathing[570]

[569] Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 29, 2016.

[570] Daniel McMullin, "Tiki Kitsch, American Appropriation, and the Disappearance of the Pacific Islander Body," *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013): 2–3.

His presentation of the skin color spectrum in Oceania is purposeful. He writes, "I make the distinction between black and brown in part because I assumed some readers may not realize that there is a range of skin color in the Pacific Islands."[571] And additionally, the choice is motivated by McMullin's critique of tourism, militarism, and colonial history. He writes:

> [P]artly it was a reference to how colonialism made a distinction between Melanesia and Polynesia and Micronesia, but personally, and in reality, I think the generalization of blackness and brownness is just that, a generalization. I also in my work, attempt to define colonization as a form of anti-blackness, and anti-blackness as the foundation of racism.[572]

With this manifesto, McMullin declares allegiance to the Black and Brown Pacific.

He also places himself into an artistic, cultural, and visual genealogy rooted in these spaces. The opening reads:

> Tiki mug, tiki mug
> My face, my mother's face, my father's face, my sister's face
> Tiki mug, tiki mug
>
> White beachcombers in tiki bars drinking zombie cocktails from tiki mugs
> The undead, the Tiki people, my mother's face
> The black brown and ugly that makes customers feel white and beautiful[573]

When asked about the poignant "punch" delivered with these lines, McMullin responds:

> [Y]es, it is a kind of genealogy, I hadn't so much thought about that but I think that was in my mind at the time…it also refers to the Samoan *feagaiga* which refers to the Polynesian family structure of the brother-sister relationship, the sacred body…and yes, "mug" was a play on words meaning thug mug, mug shot, and how the drinking mug references being consumed, how objects, and people in objects, become something for the consumer…in that sense it refers to the abject body, in a sense the slave body, the black body, the brown body, the appropriated body…[574]

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[571] Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 23, 2016.

[572] Ibid.

[573] McMullin, "Tiki Kitsch, American Appropriation, and the Disappearance of the Pacific Islander Body," 2.

[574] McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 23, 2016.

Altogether, this manifesto speaks to the concerns of Black Pacific art: the uplift of the black/brown body, the response to historical legacies of colonialism, the negotiation of present conditions of globalization, and the need to cement connections between the black and brown body politic.

In Chapter One, I discuss in detail the scientific racism that permeated discourse about Africa and Oceania historically. *Tiki Manifesto* is but one response by McMullin to this legacy. Earlier, I mentioned his visual art and film within the body of work he calls *100 Tikis*. One painting, in particular, *Where Are We Now? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* calls this fraught history to account through a direct challenge to Gauguin's painting with a similar title, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* The first question of McMullin's title suggests a bright future in spite of the past whereas the first question of Gauguin's title seems to bemoan the industrialization and progress that in his mind, drove the artist to the South Seas in search of redemption. McMullin is not alone in calling Gauguin to task. In her poem, "Guys Like Gauguin," scholar and poet Selina Tusitala Marsh thanks Bougainville, Balboa, and Vasco[575] for their dubious accomplishments on behalf of the Global South. She writes:

> thanks for making the South
> an erogenous zone
> corporeal and sexual
> emotive and natural
> waiting in the shadows
> of dark feminine instinct
> populated by the Africas,
> the Orient, the Americas
> and now us.[576]

[575] Selina Tusitala March, "Guys Like Gauguin," in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, eds. Tracey Banivanua-Mar and Penelope Edmonds (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England] ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 25.

[576] Ibid., 26.

I bring this poem to attention because these are concerns that many scholars and artists in Oceania are exploring.

For Dan McMullin, "guys like Gauguin"[577] heralded "erasure" in Oceania. McMullin explains:

> [I]n the painting…the seated figure is female, she is compounded from … different photographs from the colonial era of Samoa and is both positioned forward in the upper body, and to the side in the lower body…[T]he missing head does represent erasure, but also the passage of time, and rebirth, that nothingness we go to and come from…[S]he also represents the mind, and a turning around from being seen to seeing…and she's a sort of mother figures although they also represent colonialism…[578]

The "smaller figures" include Disney characters. Two Minnie Mouse figures sway in *lei* and grass skirts, and two Betty Boop representations, one brown, one cocoa, pose in *lei*, grass skirts, and high heels on the sand in front of the surreal body/figure. True to the manifesto, McMullin utilizes kitsch imagery to voice and visualize his concerns. My discussion on McMullin is part of an overall examination of the possibilities in the practices of Pacific American artists. I want to stress here that one of those possibilities is the connections between Pacific Americans and African Americans, much as what took place between Castro and Ringgold.

In one of his poems from *Coconut Milk*, McMullin relates how his Aunt Tutasi encountered the "race glass ceiling" at Paramount Studios.[579] Upon seeking guidance from actor, George Raft, on how to get more close-ups than actresses like Dorothy Lamour who were cast as Polynesian characters, he suggested a meeting with actress Bette Davis, his ex-girlfriend. Upon arriving at the meeting at Davis' house, McMullin writes in *Sa Moana Poem Number Five*:

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[577] Ibid., 25.

[578] McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 23, 2016.

[579] McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 29, 2016.

As soon as they walked in Bette handed her baby to Tutasi to babysit
Putting her arm in George's heading out to dinner without my aunt
Later Tutasi overheard Bette say to George

I can't help her
She isn't one of
us[580]

I relate this poem for several reasons. First, it is an example of Black Pacific poetry alongside that of *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad)* by Teresia Teaiwa. Second, it yields insight into how McMullin's aunt faced discrimination then that African Americans still face in Hollywood as exemplified by the #oscarssowhite campaign about Academy Award nominations, for instance. Third, it is an example of Pacific American poetry insofar as it speaks to the concerns of Pacific Islanders trying to find work in the United States at a particular time period. Fourth, McMullin, as a *fa'a fafine*, offers perspectives on bodies of color that complement those voiced by the other artists in this dissertation.

Can Pacific American artists like Meredith, Castro, or Dan Taulapapa McMullin, be both indigenous and diasporic at the same time? I argue that occupying more than one subject position is inherent in being a Pacific American artist, particularly when it is recognized that the United States is homeland for many and as such, is a node in the vast "sea of islands" as theorized by Epeli Hau'ofa. In addition, I suggest that rather than relying solely on reified positions of only diasporic or only indigenous subjectivities that art historians frame the work of Pacific American artists as possessing diatopic subjectivity, as discussed by Native American Studies scholar Robert Warrior who synthesizes *diatopic hermeneutics* from Raimundo Pannikar, a priest and

[580] Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "Sa Moana Poem Number Five," in *Coconut Milk* (University of Arizona Press, 2013), 10.

scholar of comparative religions.[581] He, in turn, shaped this term through his reading of semiotician Walter Mignolo's *pluritopic hermeneutics.*[582]

I return to Epeli Hau'ofa's seminal essay, "Our Sea of Islands," in which he recuperates the notion of Oceania as a "sea of islands" rather than "islands in a far sea."[583] Of Tongan descent, Hau'ofa (1939-2009) was born in Papua New Guinea and recounts an affinity to the sea surrounding his home island: "The sea and the chain of islands along the horizon were ever present. We frequently travelled around these islands on small vessels that were always subjected to the whims of the sea. Whenever at home, we as children spent most of our time in and by the sea."[584] His memories evoke a reciprocal relationship between sea and people but a similar connection to land is not discounted in other memories. He expresses a sense of exile, a frequent theme in diasporic studies, and describes the palpable and inseverable link to the land he calls home:

> Wherever I am at any given moment, there is comfort in the knowledge stored at the back of my mind that somewhere in Oceania is a piece of earth to which I belong. In the turbulence of life, it is my anchor. No one can take it away from me. I may never return to it, not even as mortal remains, but it will always be homeland. We all have or should have homelands: family, community, national homelands. And to deny human beings the sense of homeland is to deny them a deep spot of Earth to anchor their roots.[585]

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[581] See Raimundo Panikkar, "What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?," in *Interpreting across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, eds. Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36.

[582] See Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (University of Michigan Press, 2003).

[583] Hau′ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," 7.

[584] Epeli Hau′ofa, "A Beginning," in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, eds. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau′ofa (Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific, 1993), 136–37.

[585] Epeli Hau′ofa, "Epilogue: Pasts to Remember," in *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts an Invitation to Remake History*, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 470.

Stewardship of the "deep spot of Earth" is also important to Regina Meredith and in *Self-Portrait*, she references the geographic coordinates of her homeland on Tutuila, American Samoa. Meredith relates that the numerical notations that march along the borders of many of the motifs mark the geographic coordinates of Sina, the land that her family has cared for and lived on for many generations.[586]

For many Pacific American families with relatives in American Samoa and/or Samoa, there are specific places that are recognized as home to their *aiga* (extended family) in contrast to all of the other places designated historically and currently under the *matai* system that straddles the Independent State of Samoa and American Samoan islands. Artist and writer Dan Taulapapa McMullin explains that stewardship of land in the U.S. territory is acknowledged by the federal government—ninety percent of land in American Samoa is communally owned and its care and lineage is mandated by Samoan custom: "In maintaining land ownership by *aiga*, Samoa ensured that it would not be entirely dispossessed of its sovereignty."[587] He continues: "Samoans have maintained their culture in part by maintaining *faasamoa*, the Samoan way. *Faasamoa* includes communal land ownership; almost all of the land in Samoa is owned by *aiga* (family groups) and is administered by *matai* (family chiefs)."[588] He continues, "Although Samoa and American Samoa are divided politically, the people of Samoa have always considered all these islands to be one homeland."[589] As these quotes demonstrate, with the territorialization of American Samoa by the United States, ties to land are not dissipated under the waves that traverse the distance between the geographical places.

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[586] Meredith, "Email to Author."

[587] McMullin, "American Samoa," 90.

[588] Ibid.

[589] Ibid.

Native Pacific Studies scholar Vicente Diaz (Chamorro) and American Studies scholar J. Kehaulani Kauanui (native Hawaiian) are active in promoting an understanding of the Pacific from the viewpoint of the islands and concur with Hau'ofa about the significance of land. They write, "To lose one's place, to not know where one's island is, or to no longer be possessed by that island, is to be perilously lost at sea."[590] In this statement, they reference both "island" and "sea" as an interlocking whole. Accordingly, being "Pacific" means being indigenous to the ocean no matter how far away you live and the *topos* of this homeland is a continuum of land and sea. During the *Native Pacific Studies on the Edge* conference held in 2000 at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the participants "sought to explore notions of Pacific indigeneity as they circulate through geographical, cultural, political, and historical flows of people(s), things, knowledge, power—between islands and continents."[591] The link between "islands and continents" applies to the careers of Pacific American artists. In addition, "flows" is significant in mapping this continuum from water to land and back again that is present in Pacific American art.

At the symposium, anthropologist David Welchman Gegeo, of Solomon Islands descent, gave a keynote speech providing an indigenous perspective on the notion of place. Gegeo asserts: "The notion that identity and place are portable … opens the possibility of resolving the tension" that is inherent in an indigeneity/diaspora dichotomy.[592] Still other views on diaspora are represented in academia. For example, historian Paul Spickard, in his introduction to *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*, argues for keeping three

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[590] Vicente M Diaz and J Kēhaulani Kauanui, "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001): 317.

[591] Ibid., 315.

[592] David Welchman Gegeo, "Cultural Rupture and Indigeneity: The Challenge of (Re)visioning 'Place' in the Pacific," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001): 501.

models of migration in tension: the Immigrant Assimilation Model, the Transnational or Diasporic Model, and the Panethnicity Model.[593] However, the approach in this edited volume is more sociological or anthropological and incorporating artistic or visual evidence within these models leaves interpretations that do not adequately address the intent of artists.

It is the voice of the artist that I want to privilege and posit that "diatopic hermeneutics" opens ups space for the artist's voice. According to Warrior, "Diatopic hermeneutics develops then, in the 'existential encounter,' mediated through languages, of course, but happening in specific locations, an art as much a science, a praxis, as much as a theory. It is a creative encounter, and there is no blueprint for creativity."[594] Warrior recognizes the creativity inherent in linkage to place and with his recognition of praxis as a vital component, I argue that he opens up space for discussion of Pacific American artists like Castro as diatopic denizens of the "sea of islands" of Oceania that encompasses the continental United States. Castro and others work from this place or in response to this place and in doing so, work from subject positions that are neither wholly diasporic nor wholly indigenous but of two or more places. This subjectivity prompts new vocabulary to acknowledge the collapsing of the categories of diaspora and indigenous within the Pacific United States in the last five to six decades.

Historian James Clifford also gave a keynote at the conference that discussing *articulated sites of indigeneity*.[595] This approach is synthesized through the writings of cultural theorist

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[593] Paul R Spickard, "Introduction," in *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and across the Pacific*, eds. Paul R Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

[594] Robert Warrior, "The Native American Scholar: Toward a New Intellectual Agenda," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1999): 52.

[595] James Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001): 472.

Stuart Hall and Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci. Clifford had presented "articulation theory" in an earlier interview. He argues:

> When one thinks about articulate sites of indigenization, the appeal to land is more than simply a discursive one. There is a nondiscursive reality of attachment and belonging as well. Even when expelled from a certain land, it often remains in one's memory, is often part of one's exiled condition. This attachment to land, this grounding, adds a sense of continuity to the diasporic hookings and unhookings that have occurred with Christianity, modern technology, commercial commodities, tourism, and so on.[596]

In this passage, Clifford highlights the multiple subject positions that Pacific Islanders occupy in the global arena. For a Pacific American artist, that subjectivity also encompasses a triple relationship between the United States, American Samoa, and the Independent State of Samoa. Due to various histories of colonization in the Pacific, Pacific Islanders can be indigenous or diasporic depending on their life situations and choices. One Islander's indigeneity may be another's diaspora with both conditions framed in reference to Oceania as the center within the periphery and if the continental United States is the homeland or base of operations for the mobile Pacific Islander artist, Oceania is the center, making the U.S., even though it is a continent with two noncontiguous states, one of the "sea of islands." From this relationship, Pacific American art emerges.

At this juncture, I would like to address the notion of nationalism because diaspora and indigeneity are predicated on geopolitical boundaries between the three distinct spaces according to citizenship or nationality. In *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, editors Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik, both historians, write in response to situations of nationality among Pacific Islanders as I have described:

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[596] Robert Borofsky, "Valuing the Pacific—An Interview with James Clifford," in *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts an Invitation to Remake History*, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 98.

> Indigenousness at one location may translate into ethnic status at another…and indigenism itself, articulated as a general ideology, may partake of the abstractness of cultural nationalism …. To Hau'ofa, the diasporas of South Pacific peoples are signs of Oceania once again asserting its vastness. He does not tell us how a Samoan relocated to Los Angeles retains his/her Samoanness, but there is an assumption here nevertheless of the expansion of indigenism into a cultural nationalism of sorts.[597]

Prazniak and Dirlik suggest a nationalism that is of Oceania itself as a whole. While Prazniak and Dirlik state that Hau'ofa does not give specific examples in his essay, I suggest that the artwork of Jewel Castro and her contemporaries as Pacific American artists of Samoan descent is a process of retaining "Samoanness" on and off continent. My theorizations can be adapted to other Pacific American artists regardless of where they were born or where they choose to live. My focus in this chapter is not on nationalism as Oceania can be considered larger than boundaries between countries and governments, yet I use the term Pacific American because this art, while within the context of Oceania, is also within an American context just as African American art or Asian American art and many other areas are fields in American art history. In this way, the continental U.S. does become one of the "sea of islands" in which Pacific American artists work.

The land coordinates in Meredith's *Self-Portrait* and the directional cues in *Tales of Fisherman 1*—"805 North" is the highway that runs through San Diego and southern California—greatly illuminates how a consideration of place, or *topos*, exponentially expands the notion of Pacific diaspora, which from its root words, dia-spora means dispersion across two (or as is evident in contemporary history) or more places.[598] Within Oceania, there is a longstanding tradition of continual movement through and to the differing regions of Polynesia, Micronesia,

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[597] Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik, eds., *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 9.

[598] In the theory that I outline here, Warrior's term "pluri-topic" can be applied.

and Melanesia. While the ocean is a primary visual and culture resource, the stability of land and strength of genealogy and quality of stewardship of both is equally important and influential in how Oceanic people and artists view themselves in relationship to self, family, culture, and environment. The Pacific American/Samoan/American Samoan art that is created by Castro within this tripartite system within the overall space of Oceania challenges perceptions about the mechanisms of diasporic or indigenous art.

Before moving to a comparison of *Matisse's Chapel* and *The Pastor's Wife* and examining *The Pastor's Widow*, I want to end this section with the words of Hau'ofa. At the end of his essay, "Our Sea of Islands," written in the early 1990s, he concludes with the farsighted pronouncement that, "Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us."[599] In spite of aggressive colonialism and earnest efforts to the contrary, the United States has become enveloped by Oceania due in no small part to the efforts of Pacific American artists such as Jewel Castro. The *Assimilation* series represents the phenomenon of the continental United States joining the flows of people, culture, ideas, and art in Oceania.

Ancestry and Sanctuary

I return to the portrait of Faith Ringgold (Figure 3.1) created by Jewel Castro shortly after earning her Master of Fine Arts from the University of California, San Diego. In it, while not using overt reference to either Pacific or African American identities, in her statement acknowledging the role of her mentor, she participates in blackness through Samoanness, a process that celebrates blackness as a creative space. In other words, as an American artist of

[599] Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," 16.

Samoan descent, Castro utilizes a traditional emphasis on textures to create the powerful presence of her sitter, illuminating Ringgold's strength which arises as a result of black subjectivity negotiated as an artist and woman. How would this portrait be categorized? Would it be African American because the subject is black? Is it Pacific because the artist is of Samoan descent? Yet, the artist is also of Danish descent. This is what the notion of diatopia gets at that neither diaspora or indigeneity can touch because the works go beyond nationality and are indicative of an affinity and alliance between the artists around issues of otherness that can be encompassed under the rubric Black Pacific art because in the past, the ancestors of both women artists would have been othered as "black" or "dusky" regardless of skin color due to regimes of control by colonial processes of maintaining power. In the practices of Faith Ringgold and Jewel Castro, both artists pay respect to their artistic and familial genealogies.

One of Jewel Castro's methods to share knowledge about her family and Samoan culture has been through the curation of exhibitions. I mentioned earlier that *Turning Tides: Gender in Oceania Art* and *Island Affinities: Contemporary Art of Oceania* were efforts to bring Pacific art to American audiences. In her review of *Island Affinities* in *The Contemporary Pacific*, Adria Imada astutely observes: "Unlike New Zealand/Aotearoa [sic], Australia, or the United Kingdom, where Pacific Islanders have realized solo or group shows at private galleries and state-sponsored museums, the U.S. continent has not afforded contemporary Pacific Island art significant visibility."[600] Both *Turning Tides* and *Island Affinities* are significant recent efforts to redress the imbalance observed by Imada. In particular, in addition to Castro's work, the inclusion of artworks by Reggie Meredith, Dan Taulapapa McMullin, and others, brought the

[600] Imada, "Island Affinities," 277.

under-represented field of Pacific American art to public and scholarly attention, prompting discussions about its possibilities. [601]

According to Castro, a principle that guides her artmaking, teaching, and curating is Oceanic at heart: "A compelling aspect of the contemporary art movement is collaborative determination, an ancient Oceania mindset that has to do with community members working in concert for the success of the whole."[602] To this end, she is a mentor for the National Pacific Islander Education Network (NPIEN). When asked about what lessons she wants to share with her students through her artwork, she refers to the bedrock of ancestors on which her practice is built:

> I haven't thought about lessons being present in my work before. Maybe the lessons are just for me. It might be that in order to understand the present or go forward toward the future, sometimes you have to go backwards into the past…and back there you might find why you are who you are, and why you are making certain choices or being given certain paths to follow now. Acknowledging my ancestors in my art, their presence on my world, makes me feel like everything I do in this life has more intention and meaning than just satisfying my ego. It makes me feel accountable. It isn't like, "tah-dah! I got here all by myself."

This quote is important as one of her artistic ancestors is Faith Ringgold, who also gives tribute to her forebears in *Matisse's Chapel*. The methodological example of Ringgold complements the technique, skill, and intention that she gains from her family. She explains:

> [W]atching Faith's process and thinking about it for years has led me to understand appreciate historic Samoan art making processes beyond how they marked their surfaces (skin or bark cloth)…because their physical process is visually present in their work to me now and helps to communicate the story of our people…in other words the artists' physical action helps create the cultural narrative…my own physical action when I make art now makes me feel engaged with my ancestors…the physicality of [it] makes me feel

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[601] *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific* was held at the Asia Society Museum in 2004 and is also significant as the first exhibition to bring contemporary Pacific art to an American audience. However, I do not discuss the exhibition in depth in this essay because the majority of artists included did not live in the United States.

[602] Jewel Castro, "Without Boundaries: Contemporary Oceania Artists, A Movement Happening Now," in *Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World*, ed. Karen Stevenson (Masalai Press, 2011), 160.

> connected to them and I feel like we are in a way having conversations, so to speak during that time.[603]

In the *Walking With My Grandmothers* series of drawings, Castro re-presents the conversations she had with both of her grandmothers, whether on the phone or in person. In the paintings of the *Grandmother Series*, she shares her bond with her maternal grandmother with viewers. She states, "Tinei and I were VERY close….To be sure she inspires me to get to work in my studio. So as I made these they started to become all about my talks with just her."[604]

The four paintings in her *Grandmother Series* pick up where the conversations in the drawings left off and introduces new avenues of discourse. Ostensibly, the case studies in this dissertation span 1948 to 2008. However, as I have demonstrated with Castro's work, creativity knows no spatiotemporal constraints. Her expressed intention is to evoke "holographic space—multiple times present in the same space, layered together."[605] In this vein I find it imperative to follow her lead and analyze her paintings "out-of-time" vis-à-vis the dates of the case studies. Before embarking on the comparison of *The Pastor's Wife* and the related *The Pastor's Widow* with *Matisse's Chapel*, I describe the other paintings in the series.

Walking With My Grandmother (Figure 3.13) features Castro and her grandmother in the middle ground of the painting. They walk from the frothy blue water to the beach. Strips of moist pandanus leaves create stripes in the sand. The leaves meet the beach at an angle, creating a geometric pattern reminiscent of the weave of fine mats. Castro wears rolled up jeans with a fleece jacket. The grandmother strides in front and the granddaughter follows behind. This arrangement of figures echoes the positioning of Castro and her maternal grandfather in *Suitonu*

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[603] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

[604] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[605] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

and Me whereas the six drawings in the *Walking With My Grandmothers* series are small and intimate, the larger scale of Figure 3.13 allows Castro to place her figures in a landscape. The blue of the sky blends into the lighter green of the ocean dotted with rock formations. This visual motif links to the sculptures in *Red House* and the silhouettes in the background of *Tales of Fisherman II.*

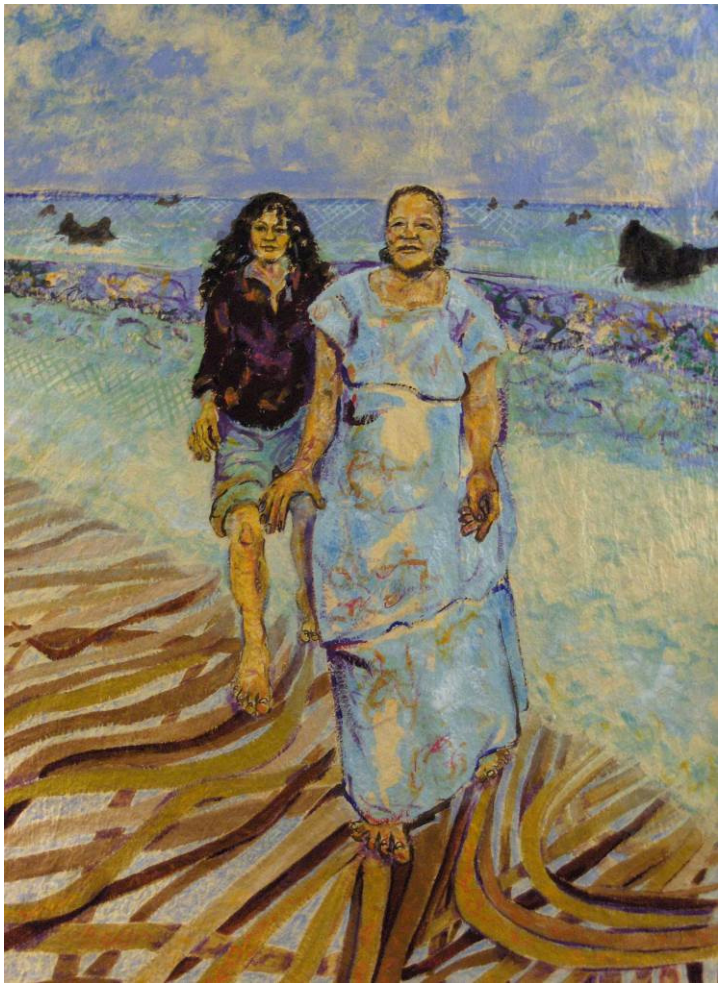

Figure 3.13: Jewel Castro, *Walking With My Grandmother*, acrylics on canvas, 40 inches x 57 inches high, 2011. Courtesy of the artist.

A dark blue wave crashes from the background into the smooth foreground in which the two women appear. The interplay of blues in her grandmother's dress match the tones of the sky and ocean. In effect, she has become part of the sea, the sky, and the land after her death. Faint

cross-hatching suggests the grain of *siapo* and the weave of fishing nets. The grandmother stands more fully on the shore and Castro has placed one foot on the beach with one foot in the water. I suggest that the placement of these figures and the gradations of colors from the top to the bottom of the painting muses on the connections between generations in a family and how a connection to nature solidifies that relationship.

Figure 3.14: Jewel Castro, *The Day of the Malu*, acrylics on canvas, 40 inches x 57 inches, 2011. Courtesy of the artist.

The Day of the Malu (Figure 3.14) is a recreation of a formative event in the young Castro's life. In the image, the grandmother and granddaughter form a pyramidal composition,

one which suggests stability of lineage. It is almost like a Madonna and Child image insofar as the older woman sits serenely, her draped garments falling over her lap. She is a stately maternal woman and at her feet is a young girl in profile view. While it is like a Madonna and Child image, there is a difference as well. Castro is not a small child in her arms and instead actively engages with the woman by caressing the dark pattern of the *malu* that wraps around her grandmother's left leg. She remembers the incident that prompted this image:

> There was one thing about my grandmother that fascinated me more than anything else. She had the *malu* (ceremonial women's tattoo). … One day when I was quite small I noticed that she had blue-green marks just above her calves. To my amazement they traveled in patterns over and around and above her knees. They traveled to the top of her thighs and were intricate, and in some places the pigment covered large areas. I asked her about her malu and she said she had received it at about thirteen years of age. As she described the painful procedure, it made me squirm. I asked her about the designs, and she said they told stories about the family. The notion of these designs communicating information about my family has truly influenced my art making. Here was story-telling in the skin, not just on top of it.[606]

As Castro is interested in creating multiple spaces and times, the background composition supports this intent. They look as if they sit on the floor, but the reverse perspective makes it appear as if the floor is tilted. It forms a path that extends from the seascape, similar to the path of blue on which the uncle sits in *Tales of a Fisherman II*. The impressionistic dreamlike tone of this work, the tilted perspective, and the color combinations are reminiscent of Vincent Van Gogh's *The Bedroom at Arles* (all three versions from 1888-1889). I make this claim because a key way that Van Gogh creates atmosphere is through the tilted paneled floor. The same device is key in Castro's image. The effect is that time and space merge reach out to the viewer who is able to witness the moment between grandmother and granddaughter in which bodily expressions of identity are affirmed.

[606] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 127–28.

Figure 3.15: Jewel Castro, *The Pastor's Wife*, acrylics on canvas, 40 inches x 57 inches, 2011. Courtesy of the artist.

The Pastor's Wife (Figure 3.15) presents a different view of her maternal grandmother. Here she is flanked by congregants who are perhaps also family members. The pastor's wife stands in the center of the composition. Linear perspective is created by the span of white columns with Romanesque arches marching into the background. Their slant mirrors that of the wooden roof that angles into a point far beyond the church wall. There are more women than men depicted in the image as the sanctuary is dotted with the round white hats that are *de rigueur* for church services. The clothing of Castro's grandmother and that of all the congregants visually mark them as corporeal architecture of the church. The egg shell hue of the women's *puletasi* and the shirts of the few men present blend almost seamlessly into the white walls of the

vestibule. The tones are yellow with beige that is highlighted by the black Bibles and the similar tone of the coffee-colored *lavalava* worn by the man in the far right and by the man in the deep background.

Much as she does in the examples so far discussed, in Figure 3.15, Castro quotes yet reconfigures Samoan art forms and cultural concepts. First, weaving is referenced. The figures stand on a fine mat.[607] Therefore, the Samoan art becomes the foundation. Second, the bordered band that frames the composition boasts a distinct edged border much as might be included in *siapo* made by Mary Pritchard. It appears that breadfruit leaf or sand piper motifs mark these edges. Again, Castro does not reference any particular motif as she has not learned the designs. Third, something intriguing happens when the border meets the fine mat in the foreground. The two foremost columns are one and the same with the border. These two verticals are the starting points for the linear perspective that continues through the arches and the wooden roof. The diamond shapes made by the weave of the floor mats now appear like cobblestones. A film of water separates the feet of the figures from the mat itself. It appears to be the edge of a wave rolling back into the distance. The green and yellow dappling anchors the figures to the far wall of the church. A mountain appears in the distance. Is it a mural? Is it an open window? Is it stained glass spilling light onto Castro's grandmother and the church? All of these are possibilities in *The Pastor's Wife* and all become the distinct visual signature of the artist. Stained glass fascinated her as a child and it does figures here. She states:

> By the time of *Red House* I understood that my Catholic upbringing was without a doubt influencing my art. When I was a kid I would stare at the stained glass windows in St. John the Evangelist Church in San Diego, and study over and over all of the

[607] Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa*, 76.

> pieces/division of colors that made up each window composition….I was also influenced by the stained glass windows in my grandfather's church.[608]

She asserts that this early fascination translates into an interest in Cubism and the collages of Romare Bearden.[609]

Detail of Figure 3.15

Yet, the image in the background might also be an indication of Jewel Castro's interest in time and space with multiple points of origin and destination. This was evident in *Talaleagi*, *Red House*, the *Grandmothers* drawings, and in this *Grandmother Series* painting. She continues: I'm thinking of holographic space—multiple times present in the same space, layered together … I like to explore ways to express that. Between people. Between spaces."[610] And still another factor is her interest in the point at which architecture, landscape, and figures become a phenomenon in itself. She explains, "The landscapes visible inside of architecture represent

[608] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

[609] Ibid.

[610] Castro, "Email Message to Author (9)."

where the people inside come from---and how they carry 'home' or 'the islands' with them."[611]

In Figure 3.15, the fine mat and water signal environmental genealogy. She states, "I'm showing a Samoan fine mat and a shore line in the foreground under the women's feet. The water is rolling in from Manua, the oldest part of Samoa where my family is from…in fact the island depicted is where my mother is from, Ta'u."[612] I want to add here that the presence of the fine mat imbues the image with a high level of *mana* because fine mats are so culturally valuable. In everyday life, true fine mats would not rest on the floor.[613] But because the space of the painting honors the past and beckons the future, it is the *vā* rather than ordinary space and therefore, thefine mats on the floor are appropriate in this instance. The church itself is the embodiment of place, according to Castro: "I removed the true wall of the church in other words and opened it up to show the place where the people are from."[614] Shaping architecture into landscape and vice versa is evident as well in *Tales of the Fisherman I* and *Tales of the Fisherman II*. Here, Castro is creating a family portrait with her grandmother as the bond between past generations and future generations and religion links them. The church acts as a church, a memory, a tribute and a staging platform for genealogy.

The same genealogical motivation is true of the sanctuary in *Matisse's Chapel* (Figure 3.16). Unlike the church in *The Pastor's Wife* that features linear perspective and orderly figures arranged to flank her grandmother, the chapel in Ringgold's story quilt is created by vignettes spread across the canvas. The mural of the Virgin with Child looms behind the central characters to punctuate the solemnity of the image. The stained glass windows on either side of the couple

[611] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (7)," December 14, 2014.

[612] Ibid.

[613] Floor mats (*papa laupaogo* and *papa laufala*) are different from fine mats and would be used in this capacity. See Mallon, *Samoan Art and Artists = O Measina a Samoa*, 76.

[614] Castro, "Email Message to Author (7)."

as well as those slightly in front of them and behind create a "kick" in the image that is enhanced by the irregular diamond pattern on the floor arranged in reverse perspective. They stand at an uneasy conjunction of space as configured by Ringgold to reflect Matisse's original juxtaposition of images drawn in black on white tile and only given color by the green, yellow, and blue of the stained glass. The vertical windows on the right closest to the altar represent an abstract "Tree of Life." In front, a small family grouping sits where the altar would be if this were a literal representation of the space. Slightly ahead and to the left of this grouping, six people assemble in a box formation. In the group immediately behind them, a group of men and women sits with one man standing on the far left. They are positioned in front of another grouping of stained glass that forms the right bookend the central characters in front of the mural.

Figure 3.16: Faith Ringgold, *Matisse's Chapel* from the *French Collection, Part 1*, #6, acrylic on canvas, tie-dyed, pieced fabric border, 74 inches x 79.5 inches, © 1991 Faith Ringgold. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist.

The French Collection consists of twelve story quilts with eight in Part I and four in Part II. *Matisse's Chapel* is sixth in the sequence. Willia Marie Simone—her daughter Marlena narrates *The American Collection*—is the alter ego of the artist. The daring protagonist is a young African American woman who seeks her fortune in the Paris of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso in the early 1900s. She models for the artistic giants, celebrates with Josephine Baker on the singer's birthday, and lunches on the grass at Giverny with art historians from the late twentieth century who have joined her for the occasion. Willia Marie keeps her Aunt Melissa, who cares for Marlena back home, informed of her adventures through letters which are handwritten onto the story quilts. They are framed with cloth borders that punctuate the radical narrative in which Ringgold, according to Richard Powell, "suggests that the genesis of French modernism is female subjectivity, and its development is akin to an interracial (or intercultural) liaison."[615]

I liken Powell's notion of female subjectivity to the interiority espoused by Frederick Douglass and described by Ginger Hill. Willia Marie is Faith Ringgold's alter ego and her transition from passive model to active artist mirrors the moves that Ringgold takes to make blackness/black womanness a strength rather than a drawback. I see this as recouping subjectivity and interiority. Jewel Castro takes heart from this process and shares her Samoanness with audiences. In terms of *Matisse's Chapel*, English Literature scholar Caroline A. Brown shares Powell's assertion and phrases it in this way:

> An autobiographical portrait of Willa Marie, *The French Collection* ultimately becomes a meditation on the pleasures and costs of female power and artistic agency, and of shifting from a position as an object of the gaze—even when a rare privilege for a black woman, who is usually rendered invisible within Western aesthetic canons—to asserting a self-

[615] Richard J Powell, "Introduction: Faith Ringgold's French Connection," in *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts*, ed. Dan Cameron (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

> aware subjectivity. In the process, it requires the reconfiguring of aesthetic genealogies, of the very concept of tradition.[616]

Brown's emphasis on "tradition" has implications for my argument. Specifically, in the artwork of Faith Ringgold and Jewel Castro, both artists transform tradition from ballast to creative buoyancy. That Faith Ringgold achieves this by transforming *La Chapelle du Rosaire*, the building in Vence, France, considered by Henri Matisse to be his masterpiece, into a family portrait, of sorts, as well as a commentary on the legacy of slavery, is nothing short of phenomenal. It is the greatest act of interiority and subjectivity. This act is in the service of family and communal identity. It is a visual genealogy of Faith Ringgold's family. *Matisse's Chapel* is also a genealogy for African Americans as the accompanying story discusses the history of slavery. The painting is also a visual genealogy for women who dare to make art.

Each figure in *Matisse's Chapel* is identified whereas only the central figure, Tinei Galea'i, is identifiable in *The Pastor's Wife*. Figure 3.16 was included in the 1998 exhibition titled *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and other Story Quilts* and in the accompanying catalog, Ringgold's daughter, feminist scholar and writer Michele Wallace, names each male and female ancestor or relative and recounts that all are deceased.[617] She points out that the grouping in front of the "Tree of Life" windows is "Faith's entire family of origin—her mother, her father, her two brothers, and her sister…"[618] I mentioned earlier that the family sits in the position where an altar might have stood. This placement signifies the love and respect that Ringgold holds for her immediate family, particularly her mother. It also represents that the

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[616] Brown, *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art*, 241.

[617] Michele Wallace, "The French Collection: Momma Jones, Mommy Fay, and Me," in *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 23–24.

[618] Ibid., 24.

grief she feels for the loss of her mother is central in her thoughts at the time she created the painting. Wallace stresses, "*Matisse's Chapel* is quite honestly about mourning and death, at the same time it is clearly a celebration of a tradition of resistance and a legacy of hope."[619] In *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold*, the artist shares, "*Matisse's Chapel* embodies my dream of seeing Mother again, but it equally seeks to explore the treacherous history of slavery."[620] This second intent is found in the story in the upper and lower border between the image and the quilt frame.

Each story quilt in the *French Collection*, and later in the *American Collection*, is accompanied by a story told by Ringgold's alter ego, Willia Marie. For this story quilt, she recalls a dream about deceased ancestors, all of whom correspond to Ringgold's relatives and carry the same name as they do. In the story quilt, Grandma Betsy tells the gathering about a story told to her by her mother, Mama Susie, of a fateful meeting between a slave ship and an ocean liner. Caroline A. Brown sums up and states the importance of this story:

> Revolving around the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and its ensuing cultural trauma, the narrative becomes a defiant assertion of agency, in which Susie, through her interlocutor/daughter, refuses to accept either racial subordination or the internalization of white shame transmitted via emotional proxy. Susie, instead seeks truth to power, using a bellicose candor to put the white man who would guilessly ask her how it felt to be a descendant of slaves in his place and by extension, redeem the memory of the dead, of whom she is one. The dream and epistolary narrative end with the applause of those assembled.[621]

My intent is not to compare *Matisse's Chapel* and *The Pastor's Wife* in terms of slavery in the United States. My purpose in relating these aspects of Ringgold's painting is to set the stage for the discussion in the next chapter. While the primary comparison in my argument is of

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[619] Ibid.

[620] Faith Ringgold, *We Flew over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 80.

[621] Brown, *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art*, 241.

Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* (1972/1973) with Lonnie Hutchinson's *Black Pearl* (2004), I refer back to this story quilt's reference to slavery in order to deepen my analysis. Moreover, my overarching intent is to demonstrate how Castro and Ringgold create portraits that are individual and collective.

Additionally, my choice of paintings for this comparison must be explained, particularly as the black and brown female body is one of the focuses of this dissertation. In *Matisse's Model* which precedes this example and in *Picasso's Studio* that follows, Ringgold has included nude representations of Willia Marie. As art historian Lisa Gail Collins points out, "[t]he absence of the black female nude in African American art is telling."[622] Other scholars have covered this aspect of the *French Collection*. What I offer is a focus on a family portrait comprised of individual portraits that refute the horrors inflicted upon the body of slaves. Additionally, this history is juxtaposed with personal grief. A sense of grief also permeates *The Pastor's Wife* and *The Pastor's Widow*, its companion in the *Grandmother Series*. Both artists take a step toward healing and remembering by presenting portraits of deceased family members in situations that offer comfort and strength.

For this chapter's comparison, it is important to note that *Matisse's Chapel* works on multiple levels. Its focus on family and community ties through time is one level on which it coincides with *The Pastor's Wife*. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of Ringgold's extended family in these particular groupings. No one is alone, each individual is part of a group that occupies a position in the chapel. The couple stands by themselves but they are bookended on each side by descendants. Ringgold's immediate family is in a symbolic position under the tree

[622] Lisa Gail. Collins, *The Art of History: African American Women Artists Engage the Past* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 55.

that gives life. In Castro's painting, her grandmother stands in the center of a depiction of an extended church family backed by a portrayal of the island that her family calls home. Their interest in portraying genealogy as foundational is one similarity between these paintings by these two artists. Other similarities abound. Both reference multiple times and spaces but by different means. One way that Ringgold achieves this is through the inclusion of Willia Marie's story as an important element of the story quilt. Also, she gathers family members together who would have passed away at different times and places them in one location. Castro reworks architecture and includes landscape to suggest multiplicity. Castro replaces the back wall of a church in San Diego with a vista of Manua which hadn't been home in at least ten years at the time of the church's founding.

The church as a setting is important in both paintings. Both Ringgold and Castro recreate the architectural details of the church buildings yet transform them. As mentioned previously, the back wall of the Samoan church becomes a window. Ringgold shapes the space of the church to her family. For example, the original mural of the Virgin and Child is rectangular with horizontal emphasis. Here, she chooses to show only part of the mural in a vertical strip that bolsters the solemnity of her paternal grandparents. In Castro's case, it makes sense that her grandmother is depicted within the church. She was as much a leader of the congregation as Castro's grandfather. It is the setting that she chooses to represent the moment when they sent Uncle Keneti off to the Vietnam War. The setting for Ringgold's painting, *La Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence*, is significant not only because of the beauty of Matisse's design but also because its designer is central in the canon of modern art. Placing an African American family in this setting speaks volumes about the artist's intent to widen the parameters of Euro-American art. In addition, the church has been important in general in African American life, culture, and political

movements. The choice of a malleable setting and the emphasis on family and history is important in both artworks.

Earlier I mentioned that grief figures in the personal history of each artist. Ringgold is open about *Matisse's Chapel* bringing her closer to her mother. Curator Dan Cameron writes of this story quilt: "In the most direct and literal sense, it is a tribute to Ringgold's mother, Willi Posey."[623] In the same way, both *The Pastor's Wife* and the *Pastor's* Widow (Figure 3.17) are tributes to Tinei, Castro's grandmother. In the former painting, her maternal grandmother is at the center of the church congregation. She looks confidently out at the viewer from this position in a setting in which she thrives. *The Pastor's Widow* depicts a time much later in her life when she must cope with the loss of her husband, Rev. Suitonu Galea'i. Castro writes, "She's back in the church but it's a close-up. The darkness around her represents the emptiness. … [W]hen I painted it I was remembering my grandmother at the time my grandfather passed."[624] As the wife of a *faife'au* (Samoan pastor), Tinei held great responsibility. At his death, the responsibility was laced with grief:

> My grandmother … held vigil I think almost 24 hrs a day. Over 3000 people flew in from the islands. My grandfather had high standing within the Samoan community both on the U.S mainland and in American and what was then Western Samoa. Many speeches were made by important dignitaries. Many fine mats and other things were gifted by our family to others…"[625]

Castro relates that Tinei was very affected by the death of her husband and "died shortly after he did."[626] At his death, she was required to leave the home she had lived in with him. It was on the

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[623] Dan Cameron, "Living History: Faith Ringgold's Rendezvous with the Twentieth Century," in *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 9.

[624] Jewel Castro, "Email Message to Author (8)," December 19, 2014.

[625] Ibid.

[626] Ibid.

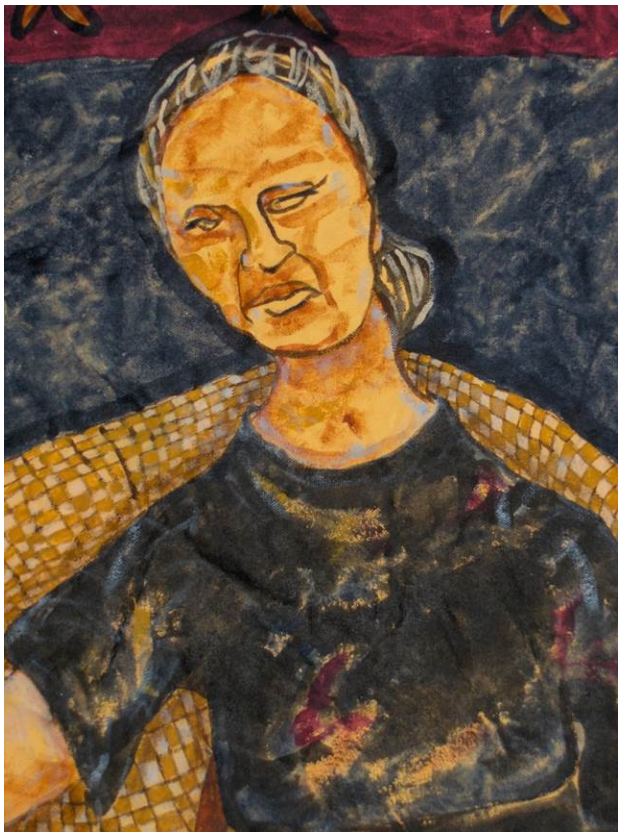
church grounds and her husband and church members had built both. Castro continues, "Losing him broke her spirit and heart. Losing her home finished her….This was a GRAND woman. She was not able to pull out of mourning."[627] The painting reflects Tinei's grief.

Figure 3.17: Jewel Castro, *The Pastor's Widow*, acrylics on canvas, 2011, 48 inches wide by 60 inches high. Courtesy of the artist, reproduced with permission.

She is isolated in the center of the painting. Her stance is awkward, almost sitting but not quite standing. The composition offers conflicting clues. A sliver of brown under her right arm could be the back of a chair; yet, her feet are planted on a tilted floor that gives the painting its reverse perspective. Castro leaves her grandmother's eyes blank. Castro explains, "There is a deafening silence to [grief]…I think that feeling of that silence, that end, that blankness, is

[627] Ibid.

present in this painting."[628] In the two *Tales of a Fisherman* paintings, Castro includes a duffel bag, an IV pole, or a highway sign to signify her uncle's life. She carefully chooses the attributes here to signify the depth of her grandmother's grief.



Detail of Figure 3.17

Tinei's head is bare as she huddles under a massive fine mat, the physical weight of which mirrors her grief. But, in her left hand, she grips a round hat. It is the same swirling somber color of her dress. This is a far different mood than the purples and oranges of the *puletasi* that she wears in the *Grandmothers* drawings. Utilizing dark colors is a similar way that Ringgold expresses the grief in *Matisse's Chapel*—all of the family members are dressed in their formal "Sunday best" but the dark colors contrast with the yellows, blues, and greens that

[628] Ibid.

Matisse chose for the stained glass windows. In this painting, the hat is the clear sign that all is not well. Castro explains, "She never went without a hat in church. But in my painting I show her holding her hat in her hand. It signifies the end of an era…"[629]

There are only two iconic objects in this image, both providing impact. The missing hat leaves her head bare to the elements and represents the vulnerability brought on by grief. The fine mat becomes an extension of her body. Castro stresses the message this gives: "In this one, I'm showing her pulling a fine mat around herself…helping herself through 'tradition.'" Castro describes her grandmother as a "Madonna figure."[630] In this instance, the rendering of the fine mat speaks to this notion and references Samoan art forms.

First, Castro utilizes yellows, browns, and golds to outline each triangle in the weave of the mat. It is folded over on itself and she uses the acrylics to layer colors so that the weight and the bend is evident. A glittering effect is produced. Castro is influenced by Byzantine icons and I suggest that this comes through in the way she depicts the mat. As the eye moves across it, the rapidly changing tones mimic the effect of mosaic glass sparkling in early Byzantine churches. Second, this careful application of color attests to the importance of the fine mat in gift exchanges in Samoan culture. To spend the time on the layers of tones and placement of diamond shapes parallels the skill, time, and talent possessed by weavers of fine mats. In a related vein, it attests to the great skill possessed by Castro in portraying grief so profoundly and representing a mourning body.

Also, by not including any other scenes or any other objects, she shows that there is only one time and one place referred to because that's how singular the grief is for this widow. In this

[629] Ibid.

[630] Castro, Interview.

painting, Castro remembers her grandmother and shows her at her most vulnerable. Vulnerability, along with resistance, is embedded in *Matisse's Chapel*. Overall, with intriguing narratives, complicated compositions, and artistic intent in *Matisse's Chapel, The Pastor's Wife*, and *The Pastor's Widow*, the artists invite the audience to share in their ongoing conversations with history, genealogy and grief.

Faith and Jewel Can Fly in the Black Pacific

Faith Ringgold reworks the quilt and the *thangka* to narrate personal and cultural stories. Lisa Farrington explains, "Works such as *Mother's Quilt* and the thangka paintings are, without doubt, vital material records of Ringgold's feelings about her life and her world; and like her forbears, Ringgold transformed a traditional medium into a new visual language—an incomparable fusion of intellectual and aesthetic aims."[631] The form of both connects the artist to her mother, whom she paid tribute to in *Matisse's Chapel*. Farrington states, "For Ringgold, the medium of the painted quilt provided a superior means of self-expression; and it served as a bond that linked her to her own mother as well as to a long line of matrilineal ancestors."[632] Castro's body of work discussed in this chapter—the *Walking With My Grandmothers* drawings, the *Assimilation Series*, and the *Grandmother Series* of paintings—feature her maternal grandmother and in one instance, her paternal grandmother as well. She, too, is linked to female ancestors. *Talaleagi, Samoa/Stories of the Sky, Samoa* and *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina* signify both familial and cultural links through time and space. The Samoan art forms of *siapo* (Samoan

[631] Lisa E Farrington, *Faith Ringgold* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2004), 70.

[632] Ibid., 67.

barkcloth or *tapa*) and fine mats (*'ie toga*) provide the foundation for her contemporary two- and three-dimensional work but they do not trap her into timelessness.

I argue that Castro's portrait of Faith Ringgold (Figure 3.1) marks the Black Pacific insofar as the experience of an African American woman and a Samoan woman meet and their art and lives are stronger due to their interactions. Each woman possesses the "heterogeneous multiplicities" that Paul Gilroy finds in his analysis of W. E. B. Du Bois *Dark Princess* in *The Black Atlantic*.[633] The Black Pacific provides a framework, an opportunity, and a motivation to reach across cultural and artistic divides as a show of strength. Castro relates that audiences respond to her work positively. During her "Walking with Ancestors" residency in July 2013 at the de Young/Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, she invited museum visitors to make drawings and visual representation relating to *their* ancestors and personal histories. The collected images were then curated into a mural by the artist. With such an extemporaneous project, Castro had no idea what to expect. However, there were so many submissions, some by repeat visitors, that the limited time frame did not allow her to incorporate all of them. This courageousness in her actions and art impresses Faith Ringgold. She states, "She's very free with her imagery. Her compositions, they take off and fly. And her colors are wonderful. And she's bold with the way she puts colors together. She's not afraid of size. She doesn't care if she takes up the whole room."[634] The expansive quality of Castro's work is built on the bedrock of her family and ancestors, those by blood or affinity.

In this chapter, I have emphasized that the mentor-mentee relationship between Faith Ringgold and Jewel Castro is durable. It is a connection that works in synergy with Castro's

[633] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 144.

[634] Ringgold, Interview.

identity as a Samoan American artist. This interaction is at the heart of what I call Black Pacific art. When asked her thoughts about a Black Pacific, Faith Ringgold responds:

> Nothing is white. No one is white which is what I'm saying because man was born in Africa. So he left there and went all over the world and did things now...if you understand that then so it's not so amazing to say black pacific…there's black people all over the world.[635]

Her matter-of-fact statement about the Black Pacific reiterates what her art has communicated all along; *blackness* is a position of strength. The art of Jewel Castor communicates that *Pacificness* is a position of strength. Within the space of the Black Pacific, creativity is squared.

[635] Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

LONNIE HUTCHINSON: THE ART OF BLACKNESS IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

> History is the *kaupapa*, where it all comes from. A lot of my work has to do with my *Ngai Tahu* history and my mother's Samoan history. I'm trying to overlap—not hybrid, but different worlds.[636]
>
> —Lonnie Hutchinson

Artist Lonnie Hutchinson lives and works in Aotearoa/New Zealand and traces her ancestry to Māori, Samoan, and *pakeha*[637] genealogies. She expresses her intentionality as an artist when she states that "history is the *kaupapa*" of her practice. In the Māori language, *kaupapa* is defined as "principles and ideas which act as a base or foundation for action. A *kaupapa* is a set of values, principles and plans which people have agreed on as a foundation for their actions."[638] In this respect, Lonnie Hutchinson utilizes Māori, Samoan, New Zealand, Pacific and Euro-American art and history to reframe the indigenous and diasporic female body of color. As such, her practice coincides with the motivations of the Black Pacific especially as it pertains to the body. Active as an artist from the late 1990s, Hutchison has become known for her cut-outs that she shapes from black builder's paper. She bestows upon them intriguing titles like *Black Ladies* or *Black Lace*. In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, "black" in her practice is tied to notions of indigeneity and diaspora. Specifically, her "black" artworks simultaneously

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[636] Sally Blundell, "Lonnie Hutchinson," in *Inner Landscapes: 15 New Zealand Artists with Canterbury Connections* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2009), 57.

[637] *Pakeha* is the Maori word for New Zealanders of European descent. It is a designation in contrast to *tangata whenua* which means "people of the land." Maori refer to themselves as *tangata whenua* because they are the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

[638] New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage Te Manatu Taonga, "8. – Papatūānuku – the Land – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand," Web page, accessed December 27, 2014, http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-8.

echo the *vā* and the *wā*, the space-time continuum in Māori thought.[639] However, in her depictions of women's bodies in, Hutchinson presents art that can illustrate the black experience outside of Aotearoa/New Zealand as well.

This is especially true in a comparison of her short video *Black Pearl* (2004) with Faith Ringgold's *Fight: To Save Your Life Slave Rape Series #3* and *Help: The Slave Rape Series #14* (1973)[640] which I undertake after surveying the historical and political context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, pinpointing the origin of her "cut-outs", and examining two of these earlier works, *Sista 7* and *Sista Girl* in the context of Māori and Pacific spatio-temporal concerns and African American vernacular. I then turn to the *Black Bird e*xhibition which I use as the platform to parse out how Hutchinson's work speaks of blackness in New Zealand and its connections to blackness elsewhere. Part of this discussion is the poetry and written description by curator and writer Stephanie Oberg on the connotations of black that accompany Hutchinson's art work at several venues. They acknowledge urban youth culture, one of the major influences on art in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Overall, Black Pacific art in Aotearoa/New Zealand speaks to life within the country and reaches out to life outside of the country.

Topos and History in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In Chapter Three, I described Jewel Castro's visual art as *diatopic*. The bicultural government and culture of Aotearoa/New Zealand predicates a diatopic perspective encompassing both Māori and *pakeha* viewpoints. However, the diasporic and New Zealand-

[639] Karl Chitham and Ioana Gordon-Smith, "Voids and Veils," in *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird* (Auckland: Centre of Art Studies at the University of Auckland, 2015), 6.

[640] Lisa Farrington identifies this image as #15 in the series. See Farrington, *Faith Ringgold*, 53. Vivien Green Fryd identifies the same image as #14 in the series. See Vivien Green Fryd, "Faith Ringgold's 'Slave Rape Series': A Counter-Narrative to African (American) Women as Victims," in *Revisiting the Sixties: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on America's Longest Decade* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2013), 26. I refer to the image as #14 in the series as well.

born Pacific populations also contribute greatly to politics and culture. As a result, *pluritopic* as a designation might best capture the many paths that converge in Hutchinson's practice due to the historical narrative of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Located just over 2500 miles to the southeast of Australia, the country consists of two large islands. The capital, Wellington is located on the North Island as is Auckland, the largest city in Polynesia. The largest city on the South Island is Christchurch where Hutchinson lived for several years and whose landscape informed her *Sista 7* sculptures. Once considered the most English of New Zealand's cities in this corner of the realm, Christchurch was settled in 1848, over 200 years after the islands were first sighted by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman.

However, long before the arrival of Tasman, those who would become the Māori people migrated through Polynesia into Aotearoa/New Zealand over 1000 years ago. Traveling from their homeland of *Hawaiki*, the people journeyed in *waka* (canoe) to Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud. The first people were said to have been created when Rangi and Papa were separated by one of their children, forever putting the sky at a distance from the earth. The North Island was created when Maui pulled a great fish from the sea. Leaving his catch to retrieve a priest to bless it, Maui admonished his brothers not to touch the fish. They did not heed his request and once they began to scale the fish, it grew in size, its flesh becoming mountainous and forming the North Island. The South Island took on the shape of the prow of Maui's canoe.[641] From the origins of these gods, humans would trace their descent based on the canoe from which their ancestors arrived. The largest groupings are known as *iwi*, or tribe. Hutchinson's father is of

[641] "2. – Whenua – How the Land Was Shaped – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand," accessed April 7, 2016, http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/whenua-how-the-land-was-shaped/page-2. All details about the formation of Aotearoa come from this source.

the *Ngai Tahu iwi* which conquered most of the South Island by the seventeenth century so they would have been established at the time of Tasman's arrival or sometime after.

The first European settlements began in earnest after Captain Cook's exploratory voyage there in 1769. By the 1820s in New Zealand, tensions over indigenous Māori land and settler *pakeha* land had escalated into a series of battles known as The Musket Wars. The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 was signed to resolve some of the disputes. The result was to solidify the land claims in place as of that year. Theoretically, Aotearoa/New Zealand became a country with a bicultural government and many government and public institutions now carry both English and Māori designations. This is a change from the time when speaking Māori was punishable by law. It wasn't until the 1970s that conditions of the treaty were held to account. Treaty settlements began then and as there were competing land claims among Māori *iwi* in the years prior to 1840, many claims are unresolved or pending as of 2016.

After World War II, decolonization efforts began in Oceania. In 1962, Samoa was the first Pacific island to gain independence in the region, separating itself from New Zealand. Others followed suit in the ensuing decades. Pacific Islanders left their home islands and moved to larger areas for better economic and educational opportunities. Aotearoa/New Zealand was one such destination as was the United States. In both instances, these moves were facilitated by historical relationships. As a member of the British Commonwealth, Aotearoa/New Zealand's nominal head of state is Queen Elizabeth II and the government is represented by a Prime Minister who serves with parliamentary support.[642] Recent immigration from India, China, Japan, and countries in Africa have made Aotearoa/New Zealand an antipodean country with an

[642] As of April 2016, John Key is the 38th Prime Minister of New Zealand. In office since 2008, he represents the center-right interests of the New Zealand National Party.

international outlook. Aotearoa/New Zealand beckons visitors and immigrants from all over the globe. As of the 2013 census, the country counts over 4,000,000 residents. A fourth of the population—close to 1.5 million—live in Auckland. Of the total population, close to 600,000 identify as Māori. Nearly 145,000 reported Samoan ethnicity. Other figures reveal residents who identify as Fijian (14,445), African (13,464), Fijian Indian (10,929), Papua New Guinean (807), Solomon Islander (603), African American (510), Australian Aboriginal (432), and Hawaiian (336).[643] With this diversity from multiple origins, a Black Pacific can be located in Aotearoa/New Zealand that speaks to one or more of these ethnicities and others in multiple ways.

She Ain't Heavy, She's My *Sista*

On her father's side, Lonnie Hutchinson is of *Ngai Tahu* ancestry. *Ngai Tahu* call South Island home. Hutchinson lived in Christchurch on the South Island for several years in the late 1990s. Hutchinson, the first woman to do so, completed an artist's residency in 2000 at the MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury. As a self-taught artist, she earned a Bachelor of Design degree in 3D at Unitec, Institute of Technology in Auckland, where her coursework included automotive, furniture and computer-aided design (CAD). While looking out of her studio window at the Christchurch landscape, Hutchinson called upon her printing and illustration backgrounds, among other inspirations to bring the first

[643] "Ethnic Group Profiles," accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx.

I have mentioned these identifications throughout the dissertation and provide these numbers as counterpoint. Other selected census figures: North American Indian Native (750), South African Coloured (255), Mauritian (423), Ghana (207), Ethiopian (1245), Eritrea (243), Somali (1617), West Indian (807), Nigerian (294), Jamaican (387), Kenyan (216), Ni Vanuatu (492), Indian (155,178), and Niuean (20,148). Note that the "African" category is not differentiated by country of origin.

The total number of African residents would also include those who marked categories by country and ethnic groups in addition to this undifferentiated category. "2013 Census QuickStats about Culture and Identity," accessed April 11, 2016, http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/tables.aspx.

cut-outs to life. The technique was developed alongside other artists, according to Hutchinson: "Two artists I know were using oilstick on building paper and I thought I'd have a go. Later that night I started cutting the paper. It just happened."[644] The cut-outs become foundational in her practice.[645] One of the first to be conceived, *Sista 7* (Figure 4.1) recalls a body of water, reinforces *Ngai Tahu* lineage, hints at the *vā* and the *wā* to audiences, and reinscribes the female body of color.

Figure 4.1: Lonnie Hutchinson, *Sista 7*, 2003, black building paper, 98 inches x 39.3 inches x 3.93 inches. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Pua o Waiwhetu, purchased 2003.

From her studio, Hutchinson could see the calderas of Lyttleton Harbour (*Te Whakaraupō*) as she worked. Lyttleton Harbour provides water access to Christchurch and is one of the gateways to the city and the Canterbury region. *Sista 7's* doppelganger is this locale. Writer and curator Stephanie Oberg states, "Since moving to Christchurch, Lonnie has been inspired by the local landscape and the way it relates to her dual heritage and sense of spiritual

[644] Blundell, "Lonnie Hutchinson," 37.

[645] When asked about her cutting technique, Hutchinson declined to give specifics.

belonging."[646] I suggest that *Sista 7* is a three-dimensional landscape drawing, revealing as it does Hutchinson's strong ties to her Māori heritage. It is also a collective portrait of Māori and Pacific Islander women as well as those who relate to the experience of living in a body that is not white and deemed "other." The artwork was included in the exhibition *Te Puawai o Ngai Tahu* in 2003 which honored the *iwi* connection to the site of the museum. One of the galleries was renamed *Te Puna Waiwhetu*, a compound of three Māori words meaning "wellspring of star-reflecting waters."[647]

Within this context, the seven towers of cut builder's paper echoed the seven caldera spread around the harbor and elicited *Matariki*, the Pleiades, or the "Seven Sisters" in Greek mythology. *Matariki* is also the Māori New Year. The accordion folds of *Sista 7* are pierced with dense lace patterning that recalls Māori carving or weaving.[648] From afar, they appear to be constructed of metal. Up close, the viewer is netted by the intricacy of the designs. Art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, honorary Māori curator of the gallery, is quoted in a review of the exhibition: "I like to have a wow factor…so that people are jolted into a new level of receptivity…"[649] In particular, *Sista 7* is the antenna that allows the viewer to be receptive to the presence of *vā* and *wā*.

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[646] Stephanie Oberg, *The Loni & Roni Show - Lonnie Hutchinson & Veronica Vaevae* (Christchurch: The Physics Room, 2003), Accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/archive/oldsite/publications/2003/lonnieandronnieshow/LonnieAndRonnie.pdf.

[647] Rosa Shiels, "Allstars of Ngai Tahu on Show," *The Press (Christchurch, New Zealand)*, August 6, 2003, C1.

[648] Writer Ane Tonga lists these arts as "*tukutuku … hiapo and tivaevae*." See Ane Tonga, "Spectral Visions," in *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird* (Auckland: Centre of Art Studies at the University of Auckland, 2015), 17. "Tukutuku" are lattice-like carved panels in meeting houses, *wharenui*. "Hiapo" is the Niuean form of *tapa* (barkcloth). "Tivaevae" are Cook Islands quilts.

[649] Shiels, "Allstars of Ngai Tahu on Show," C2.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the *vā* as a factor in Jewel Castro's work. I defined it as "the space between." I return to this notion now because Hutchinson underscores the importance of *vā* to her practice. She explains, "The cut-out spaces are really important. I liken them to the *vā*, the space in between, where other things can happen."[650] The potentialities of this space are infinite. Curators Karl Chitham and Ioana Gordon-Smith offer yet another perspective:

> … [T]he Samoan notion of *vā* … refers to the relational space between two places, things, or people. The *vā* is also used to articulate a belief in connections across time. … There is a sense then of reciprocal relationships that span a vast totality, not only between people in the material world, but even further beyond, into a spiritual place where ancestors and spirits reside. This correlates with the term *Wā* used by Māori, which references similar understandings of space and time as a moving and interchangeable continuum.[651]

Closely linked to the *wā* is the notion of *turangawaewae*, or "place to stand." The stewardship of land is vital to preserve one's strength on the physical plane because it is one of the links to the spiritual realms of the *vā* and *wā*. Hutchinson explains her viewpoint: "…*Te Wai Pounamu* [South Island Aotearoa] is still my *turangawaewae*—it's where my ancestors are. Their blood's in this earth. I remember someone at a *hui* saying no one can hurt you on your *rohe*. I've kept that with me, even when I'm travelling…"[652] It is clear that Hutchinson shares the concerns of Jewel Castro and Reggie Meredith regarding connection with ancestors and stewardship of land.

Her creative process is also inclusive of ancestors. She explains her approach: "When I'm working, I do a lot of research. I often ask my ancestors to guide me. I never used to talk about this but working with other indigenous artists—Native Americans, Native Canadians, Australian

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[650] Blundell, "Lonnie Hutchinson," 37.

[651] Chitham and Gordon-Smith, "Voids and Veils," 6.

[652] Blundell, "Lonnie Hutchinson," 37. "Hui" translates as meeting or assembly. "Rohe" means area.

Aboriginals—I've been surprised that a lot of them work that way."[653] A ritual connecting her to ancestors is part of her life and practice:

> I have incorporated some ritualistic ceremonies into my life style for some time now and my studio is part of that. Yoga and meditation are the vehicles that stimulate both my physical body and spiritual body. My Polynesian ancestors practised forms of meditation faithfully to reinforce their belief and faith in the relationships between the physical and spiritual worlds.[654]

Hutchinson's *kaupapa* strives to keep body and soul balanced. *Sista 7* arises out of a desire to document landscape that is concurrent with portraying the bodies nourished by the same landscape that is the legacy of ancestors. *Sista 7* marks the tantalizing point when spiritual, celestial, and physical bodies maintain an almost perfect balance.

The fifteen-piece *Sista Girl* (Figure 4.2) is installed in a flying V formation[655] whereas the seven forms of *Sista 7* stand shoulder-to-shoulder approximating the ring formed by the calderas in Lyttleton Harbour. In both instances, each component boasts a unique pattern. Yet, the effect from afar in both cases is a sense of solidarity among the forms. In photographs, it appears that *Sista 7* is backlit. On the contrary, lighting in the exhibit space is planned to spotlight the artwork from the front. *Sista Girl* makes a dense angled shape on the wall with the exhibit lighting creating enigmatic shadows as it filters through the variegated cuttings along the edge of each dart-shaped "body." Art collector Warwick Brown describes the range of patterns and shapes: "The cutting out can be fine, like lace, or broad, like a rope ladder or wrought-iron gate."[656] Altogether, the fifteen pleated and puckered handkerchiefs become the shadow itself.

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[653] Ibid.

[654] Lonnie Hutchinson, "Email Message to Author," December 27, 2014.

[655] In the *Black Bird* exhibition at Gus Fisher Gallery, half of the veils were displayed. The entire formation was exhibited at The Dowse Art Museum later.

[656] Warwick Brown, "Lonnie Hutchinson," in *Seen This Century: 100 Contemporary New Zealand Artists : A Collector's Guide* (Auckland, NZ: Godwit, 2009), 192.

The individual "bodies" have been described as veils. I suggest they are like birds in formation; earlier exhibit stagings included cut-out birds gathered in a pattern nearby or one placed at the point of each veil. The bodies in this artwork travel toward a common goal, connected in intent yet any can fly off in a new direction at any time. I suggest *Sista Girl* contains abstract renderings of female bodies of color. The inner and outer pleats contrast the inner perspective and outer perception of each figure. The formation is very precise yet not binding. The shadow it creates symbolizes the influence of the women as they move through the world. In its variety, the sculpture affirms that there is no one template for a woman of color and each of the shapes may be reflective of its nearest peer but it is never identical.

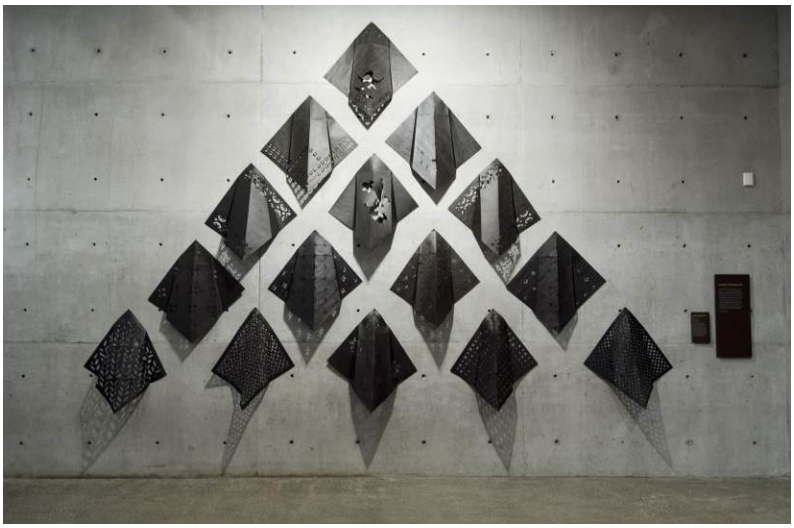


Figure 4.2: Lonnie Hutchinson, *Sista Girl*, 2004, black builder's paper and metal pins, each 39.3 inches x 23.6 inches. Courtesy of Jonathan Smart Gallery.

The title itself is suggestive of complementary cadences. For pop rock and soul aficionados, "sista" might conjure up the song, "Sisters are Doin' It for Themselves," a self-empowerment anthem from the mid-1980s written by Annie Lennox and performed by the Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin. When asked about the origin of the title, Hutchinson explains,

"I collect and play a lot of vinyl and a lot of the lyrics do end up inspiring titles for works."[657] Indeed, "Sista Girl" is a single on the debut album, *This is Who I Am*, of Trinidadian-American vocalist Heather Headley.[658] And, as Hutchinson's art works on several valences, other references come to mind. The title might reference "sista,' a reference among African American women to describe the women who stand beside you through thick and thin. Hutchinson experiences the word in a similar sense. She states, "The title's…a direct reference to sistas/women of colour and we recognise that greeting."[659] Additionally, in an essay about *Sista Girl*, Stephanie Oberg refers to Hutchinson "as a girl in the hood" who "does a shout out to the people at home."[660] Linguistically and culturally, parallels are drawn between the Māori and Pacific communities of youth in New Zealand and urban youth in the United States.

Moreover, in many churches, the formal "Sister" prefaced the first and/or last name of every adult woman in the congregation while "Brother" prefaced the names of the men. Or, "Sister" is the honorific for nuns in the Catholic Church. While *Sista 7* has no direct denominational precedents, the form and intent of *Sista Girl* stress the importance of Christianity for many Pacific Islanders. Hutchinson describes *Sista Girl*, related in materials and technique to *Sista 7*, as a tribute: "My series of black builders' paper cut-outs *Sista Girl* pays homage to the black veiled women at Sunday mass, Pacific craftswomen, my ancestors, and the land. …The work alludes also to the introduction of the Catholic religion as a vehicle for the colonisation of

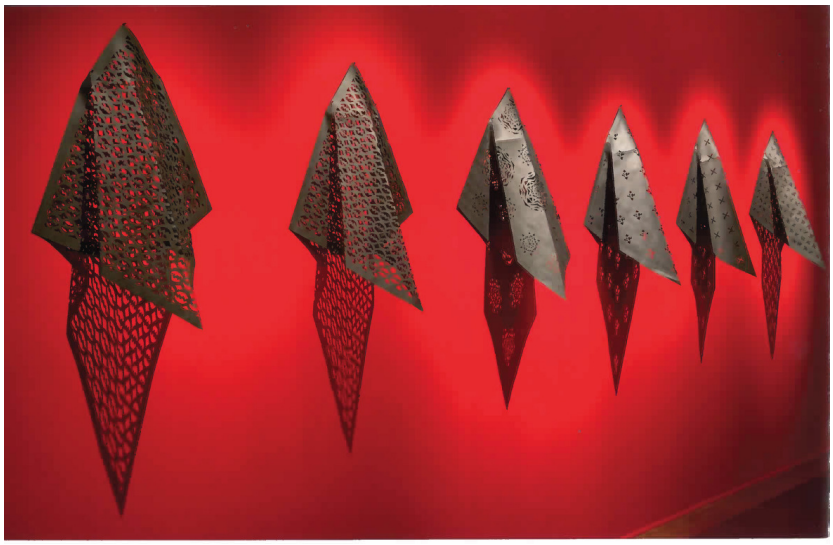
[657] Hutchinson, "Email Message to Author."

[658] Linda Tyler, "Casting Shadows," in *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird* (Auckland: Centre of Art Studies at the University of Auckland, 2015), 25.

[659] Hutchinson, "Email Message to Author (December 27, 2014)."

[660] Stephanie Oberg, "Lonnie Hutchinson: Sista Girl," in *Scape: From a Different Angle : New Zealand Community Trust Art & Industry Urban Arts Biennial 04*, ed. Sarah Pepperle (Christchurch, N.Z.: Art & Industry Biennial Trust, 2004).

the Pacific."[661] In this regard, the artwork is "tragic and funereal," according to Warwick Brown.[662] Religion weighs heavily in the peaked forms of *Sista Girl*. While Lonnie Hutchinson features the veil and Jewel Castro who focuses on the hat, both artists pin identity to head coverings.



Detail of Figure 4.2 as seen in *Black Bird* at The Dowse Art Museum.

Throughout this dissertation, I have referenced the importance of *mana*, a pan-Oceania phenomena that is located in both Māori and Pacific Islander history, culture, and art. The process of *tapu* is the counterbalance and mediator of *mana*. Earlier I quoted Adrienne Kaeppler and here I want to recognize an indigenous female perspective, that of writer and scholar Ngahuia Te Awekotuku who states:

> *Tapu* has many meanings, references, and interpretations. It may be a descriptive or prescriptive condition, making an object, person, or environment restricted and inaccessible to human contact, prohibited and out of bounds. It may also be a framework defining particular behaviors or sensations, ensuring a certain response. Sacred items may

[661] Lonnie Hutchinson, "Le Folauga Exhibition," Accessed December 27, 2014, http://www.lefolauga.co.nz/Auckland/Lonnie_Hutchinson.html.

[662] Brown, "Lonnie Hutchinson," 192.

> be regarded as *tapu*, for example, those associated with death ritual… or the body parts of a chiefly person, particularly the head.[663]

The three artworks—*Sista Girl, The Pastor's Wife*, and *The Pastor's Widow*—reflect the *mana* embodied in women. By focusing on the hat as a motif, the two artists signal that cultural rituals or personal motives are at play in the lives of the women in question.

In their form, content, and motivation, *Sista 7* and *Sista Girl* give insight into how Lonnie Hutchinson navigates *vā* and *wā*, solidifies *turangawaewae*, and delineates *mana* and *tapu*. While *Sista 7* has no religious undertones, in *Sista Girl*, Hutchinson purposefully reproduces the veil, part of the required dress code for women for church services held on any day of the week, not just Sunday. The choice of black paper is a practical one, is a stylistic choice, and concurrently brings up issues of the female body of color as well as race—the black and white shadows are evocative of racial harmony or inequities. Stephanie Oberg writes of a black-white divide between the secular and the religious that is ethically- and racially-based. In the same essay in which she refers to Hutchinson "as a girl in the hood," Oberg writes that in Figure 4.2 Hutchinson gives "…[a] special shout out to Virgin Mary for her 'whiteness', to Mary Magdalene for her 'blackness' and to Jesus Christ for not caring about the difference."[664] This statement and this artwork lead into a discussion of the varieties of blackness in play in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Black Bird **Fly**

Throughout the *Black Bird* exhibition (Figure 4.3), Hutchinson's *kaupapa* of "overlapping" is evident in each artwork. Curator and writer Linda Tyler describes this

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[663] Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, "Maori: People and Culture," in *Maori: Art and Culture*, ed. D. C. Starzecka, 2nd ed. (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Press, 1998), 26–27.

[664] Oberg, "Lonnie Hutchinson: Sista Girl."

interaction. She explains, "Hutchinson's Māori (*Ngāi Tahu*) and Samoan heritage inform her interest in pattern, the play of light and shadow as well as the navigation between space and time."[665] The title of the retrospective exhibition, *Black Bird*, is apropos both because of the soaring shapes she creates from black builder's paper and because of her ongoing research interest in *manumea* (tooth-billed pigeon) and *le ma' oma' o* (black honey eater)—two rare birds with black feathers that figure prominently in Samoan history and culture.

Figure 4.3: Lonnie Hutchinson, installation view of *Black Bird* exhibition, August 22-November 15, 2015, The Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, New Zealand. From far right to far left: *She Could Taste Salt On Her Lips* with *Black Pearl* video, 2015; *Comb (white)*, *Comb (black)*, *Comb (red)*, all from 2009; and *Milk and Honey* (2012). Photograph by Jonathan Lake. Accessed April 21, 2016, http://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/lonnie-hutchinson.

In pre-colonial times, high-ranking men would snare pigeons from star mounds—*tia seu lupe*¸ or rock formations with arms, like rays, reaching from the center. While the sport was banned by missionaries, the significance of the hunt and the pigeon has not been lost. In 2012, with Niki Hastings McFall (Samoan and *pakeha*) and Lily Laita (Samoan, Māori, and *pakeha*),

[665] Linda Tyler, "Foreword," in *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird* (Auckland: Centre of Art Studies at the University of Auckland, 2015), 5.

Hutchinson undertook a Creative New Zealand artist-in-residence position at the National University of Samoa. While all three artists focused on studying one or both of these birds to incorporate into their art, Hutchinson specifically looked at connections between pigeons, navigation, and mythology. Altogether, the three artists look to pigeons as symbols of "divinity, femininity, spirituality, and desirability…"[666]

In respect to femininity, Hutchinson's black cut-outs give insight into contemporary Pacific and Maori female identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand and additionally, open up a space for a discussion of the female body in Black Pacific art. Lonnie Hutchinson's focus on the body of color in her art practice is longstanding, according to artist and curator Ane Tonga. She explains, "Deconstructing representations of indigenous female bodies is an ongoing exploration within Hutchinson's practice explored first in the performance series titled *Can You See Me*?"[667] Art historian Karen Stevenson explains the high stakes for identity representation in this performance:

> Enveloped in brown packaging tape, Lonnie positioned herself—a brown figure—in public places in Auckland. The performance posed the question 'Can you see me?' The response, for the most part, was 'No'! She was ignored and literally walked over. In this simultaneously subtle *and* bold performance piece, she questioned the position of Pacific Islanders in the world's largest Polynesian city, and their relationship with their palagi compatriots.[668]

On the occasion of this retrospective exhibition, mixed-media artist Darcell Apelu (Niuean and *pakeha*) and arts advocate Amiria Puia-Taylor (Cook Islands Māori) performed the work anew, asking assistants and onlookers to tape them to the doorway of the Gus Fisher Art Gallery, one

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[666] "Samoan Artist Trio Awarded Artist-in-Residence. | Creative New Zealand," accessed December 27, 2014, http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/news/samoan-artist-trio-awarded-artist-in-residence.

[667] Tonga, "Spectral Visions," 15.

[668] Karen Stevenson, *The Frangipani Is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985-2000* (Wellington, N.Z.: Huia, 2008), 140.

on either side of the entrance. The *Black Bird* exhibition had only been open for about a week when the women placed themselves at the threshold of the building. In a turnabout, rather than the public stepping over Hutchinson to carry out their daily tasks, in this case, if the public wanted to see the retrospective exhibition beyond this threshold, they had to step over the two seated women reinterpreting the piece.

The shades of the black builders' paper and the brown packaging tape are intrinsic to each material. Yet, as Stevenson pointed out, Hutchinson's performance piece touched on notions of belonging in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This dissertation takes as its premise that Black Pacific art need not be made by artists of African or African diaspora descent. It suggests that Pacific artists can be creatively inspired by blackness, whether it refers to notions rooted in African, African diaspora or Oceanic frameworks. In Chapter One, I summed up Robbie Shilliam's history of RasTafari and Māori self-determination movements. It is important to trace political organizing by Māori and Pacific Islands women in Aotearoa/New Zealand around blackness from an indigenous and diasporic viewpoint. Political scientist Erina Okeroa has undertaken such a study. In brief, for the Black Women's Movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand between 1978 to 1982, Okeroa argues that the collective used a Black identification (in reference to African American identity) because "it allowed for an articulation of their particular oppression, but also that it was strategic, in that it promoted solidarity of Māori, Pasifika and Indian women's voices."[669] Consequently, Lonnie Hutchinson's artworks are created in a locale in which indigenous activism galvanized specifically around an African American notion of blackness to reach goals. While this history is not a direct influence on her work, knowing this

[669] Erina Okeroa, "Unfurling Routes of Self-Determination in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Black Women's Movement 1978–1982" (M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2012), 7–8, Accessed April 21, 2016, http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/3009.

history allows a close discussion of African American blackness with strategic Māori and Pacific Islands women's notions of blackness from a particular time period.

Karl Chitham and Ioana Gordon-Smith indicate the political context of blackness in New Zealand as it pertains to Hutchinson's body of work:

> Her ongoing use of black as a motif, alongside the deployment of a now outmoded building material, seems to inadvertently reference an earlier time when race politics in Aotearoa included issues such as immigrant labour, Treaty claims and social injustice where the Black Panthers and Black Power were symbols of activation and a reclaiming of identity. Now, they have been replaced with issues of extreme poverty and homelessness, particularly for Māori and Pacific Island communities and the notion of 'blackness' has morphed into a complicated morass of cultural stereotyping.[670]

Much as Shilliam and Okeroa, these writers equate blackness with activism in the latter part of the twentieth century and suggest that socioeconomic factors lead to misrepresentation of Māori and Pacific Islanders in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the first part of the twenty-first century. Against this background, writer Stephanie Oberg's poetic and musing accompaniments to Lonnie Hutchison's cut-outs, films, and installations add a poignancy around linguistic and cultural meanings of "black."

For the 2005 exhibition titled *This Show is What I Do*, Stephanie Oberg wrote the following in the catalogue for *Sista Girl*:

> In Lonnie's work black resonates. Black can be the shade of concealment, the lure of difference, passion, the time of creation and the presence of her ancestors (Samoan/Māori/*Ngai Tahu*), the politics of race. However, the politics of 'blackness' are not so presiding that they are angrily confrontational. Rather, they are a point of pride that adds power and chiaroscuro to the subtle representations of space and the intercultural crossings of everyday life.[671]

The tone is assured and confident. Yet, a later essay to accompany the 2007 exhibition titled *Black As*, is not so much confrontational as forceful and "cheeky." *Black As* featured distinct

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[670] Chitham and Gordon-Smith, "Voids and Veils," 8–9.

[671] Stephanie Oberg, "This Show Is What I Do" (Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, December 10, 2005).

components including *Black Ladies*, *Black Lace*, and *Black Circles* which were hung on the exhibition walls. *Black Circles* consisted of seven circular cut-outs—seven becomes a significant number after *Sista 7*—and *Black Lace* draped the corner of the gallery to form the backdrop for *Endangered Species*, a tableau of three-dimensional cut-outs spread across the gallery floor. *Black Ladies* are lattice-like forms approximately three feet high and two feet wide. I suggest they can refer to the body in isolation or more likely as a link in a communal chain. The exhibition also included *Licourice County*, three acrylic cut-out oblongs mounted on the gallery wall, and *Fish Eyes*, a three-camera film that captured Hutchinson's mother and two of her nieces giggling and laughing after school one day.

The first level of commentary on blackness resides in the title. Here, *Black As* is a superlative. In New Zealand informal speech, adding "as" to the word that immediately precedes it heavily emphasizes the word. In some respects, one sets up a comparison. Two meanings come across; the artist challenges herself to go beyond her previous explorations of blackness in her work, and, the artist challenges the viewer to consider the limits of his or her experience of, knowledge of and engagement with blackness. Of these bold visual statements displayed on white gallery walls, Stephanie Oberg's bold verbal statements read:

> **Black As**: meaning as can be? How black is that? As the night - the ace of spades- as my sweet ass. Let me spell it out for you…as…tokens of extreme chocolatiness, oreo-like: they are dark little gems, each one carrying a load of cocoa flavour, jacked up with cinnamon, black pepper and cayenne. Ridiculously good with cold milk...or dunked in hot coffee.[672]

The essay moves from color comparisons to consumables that are sweet and then spicy. I suggest this is a comment on the commodification of the female body of color. Oberg then makes

[672] Stephanie Oberg, "Jonathan Smart Gallery - Black As," accessed December 27, 2014, http://jonathansmartgallery.com/content/view/89/38/.

specific New Zealand references: "**As** Jack Black, spider man, black as himself. Black as expected! As Black Grace, Black Pearl, Black Rose; as Tar Builders Paper, Black Beauty, black star, liquorice, acrylic, the All Blacks.[673] Within this snippet, the following are mentioned in order: Black Grace, a modern Māori and Pacific Islands dance group; Black Pearl, Hutchinson's short video from 2004; Hutchinson's art medium (builders' paper); black star, a reference to *Sister 7*, *Matariki* (Māori New Year), the Seven Sisters/Pleiades or the visual-verbal poetry of Albert Wendt's *The Book of the Black Star*; and the All Blacks, the New Zealand rugby team that performs a Māori *haka* (war dance) at the beginning of each match.

Oberg then moves from the vernacular to the theoretical: "**Black As:** to challenge our chromatic expectations and cultural sensitivity, playing with positive and negative elements - the black and the white of it."[674] She continues:

> **In Black As** Lonnie has made black treats for the eyes and not the taste buds. Her "high-end" sellers are often indigenously branded, marketed and distributed internationally. They define the space as black and blackness is a fertile thing, bound to a creation story - a space defined by the love and union of Rangi and Papa. Black is the absence of colour, the colour of peace and reflection. Yet it carries the vocal tones of street resistance, hip-hop and youth culture. While also speaking of vitality, beauty and the stories encoded in the dual relationships of negative and positive space, of presence and absence.[675]

I quote Oberg here at detail because she writes a manifesto, of sorts, for the artist. She moves from blackness as consumable to high art—"black treats for the eyes and not the tastebuds."[676] She expresses the intentionality of Hutchinson as an artist with commercial appeal—"[h]er 'high-end' sellers often indigenously branded…"[677] She references the creation story of Rangi

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[673] Ibid.

[674] Ibid.

[675] Ibid.

[676] Ibid.

[677] Ibid.

and Papa, as I did in the beginning of this chapter. She also pinpoints that blackness in Lonnie Hutchinson's practice is influenced by "street resistance, hip-hop and youth culture."[678] These elements bind together in the art of Lonnie Hutchinson and the *Black Bird* exhibition surveyed this palpable body of work from the last twenty-plus years.

Oberg ends the essay with what I suggest is a gesture towards the affinities and affiliations of the Black Pacific: [Lonnie Hutchinson's] growing visibility internationally is allowing a new sense of fellowship and belonging."[679] I argue that the black builder's paper of *Sista 7* and *Sista Girl* creates fellowship among women of color on a metaphysical level. Creating works for and of the body is a strategy for building *mana*. Creating elaborate strong artworks in black builder's paper that can alternately be seen as landscapes, figures, or both at the same time, adds *mana* to passage of the black and brown female through time and space.

Before embarking on the next discussion, I want to end this section with complementary commentary about blackness both by Oberg and Hutchinson. For the *Black Bird* exhibition, Oberg was commissioned to write a poem. Naturally titled *Black Bird*, one stanza reads:

> I watched you struggle for language
> and find it in black paper[680]

In this line Oberg observes Hutchinson linking language to the blackness of this particular paper. In many ways, black builders' paper has become Hutchinson's visual signature. While it is not the only medium that she works with, black builders' paper holds a particular resonance. When asked about how her works reflect race relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand, she writes:

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[678] Ibid.

[679] Ibid.

[680] Stephanie Oberg, "Black Bird," in *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird* (Auckland: Centre of Art Studies at the University of Auckland, 2015), 21.

> [A]ll I can say is that Black is the dominant color in my practice. I think I'm probably one of the very few and possibly only female artist [in New Zealand] that makes predominantly black coloured works. Does it reflect race relations in New Zealand? It reflects me and my blackness and everyday experience of being. I tell stories that talk about Māori and Samoan histories from a female perspective and a contemporary bent. I believe that self determination through sharing my stories, findings, responses…that also includes my family and family history is key to my/our survival and development as Polynesian women in a global age. And we know presently in today's world we are always having to navigate our own values and beliefs in a white patriarchal world. And we come off losers more times than not, or are forced into a position where we have to be satisfied with the crumbs and told we should be grateful.[681]

With these words, Lonnie Hutchinson states her *turangawaewae* (place to stand) vis-à-vis personal and cultural blackness in her "black" artworks.

Cutting and Casting Shadows

Lonnie Hutchinson, like Jewel Castro, is influenced by a range of precedents in art history. In particular, her cut-outs might bring to mind the work of nineteenth-century Impressionist Èdouard Manet, twentieth-century Impressionist Henri Matisse, or contemporary African American artist Kara Walker. Yet there are differences in terms of medium, message, and narrative, respectively, between Hutchinson and the three artists. First, in *The Fife Player* (1866), Manet, clearly differentiates the figure of the young man in uniform from the stark background. This effect has been called a "cut out" because if the figure were literally cut from the painting, only the background would remain and no trace of the young man would be visible. In this case, Manet's "cut out" is the result of his handling of line, color, and lack of shading. In contrast, Hutchinson's paper figures *are* the medium and the negative space resulting from the cuts is an integral aspect of the work.

[681] Hutchinson, "Email Message to Author."

Second, in the 1940s, Henri Matisse began to cut paper painted with gouache as the raw material for his compositions—at first small but growing larger—that were then pinned to the walls by his assistants. Ill health affected his ability to paint but beyond this fact, Matisse, as an early Fauvist had always been interested in the conjunction of color and line. The later cut-outs allowed his draftsmanship to flourish in the service of his artistic interests. In fact, his design for *La Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence*, the site of Faith Ringgold's innovate family portrait, was created concurrently with his cut-out work. The defined swaths of only three colors found in the "Tree of Life" stained glass window were at first cut paper shapes that he arranged to his satisfaction on his studio walls. For Matisse, the jubilance of the flat cut-outs is a continuation of the fanciful expressionism of his *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, or *The Joy of Life*, painted from 1905 to 1906. For Hutchinson, through their three-dimensionality, the black cut out forms speak of history and trace the passage of women of color in the world and beyond into the realms of *vā* and *wā*.

Third, called a "conceptualist" by art historian Lisa Farrington,[682] Kara Walker's debut wall installation in 1994 titled *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of a Young Negress and Her Heart* is one of her many silhouette tableaux that "depict fetishism, slavery, death, interracial violence, and biological and sexual depravity acted out by characters from a lost antebellum era…"[683] This first work and its successors in various media have implications for all audiences as, according to Farrington, "all of the protagonists are demeaned, and the entire history of slavery becomes, within this context,

[682] Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image*, 229.

[683] Ibid., 227.

a ghastly farce."[684] In *Gone*, the black figures are mounted on the white wall and while there is no particular chronology, they can be perceived as sequential. In effect, the Southern belle kissing the Southern gentleman whose sword tip juts against the buttocks of the young child who wrings the neck of a water bird….etc., become a visual narrative that confronts the viewer through the fraught and ambivalent silhouettes. In contrast, while Hutchinson's use of black and white—she also uses a red powder pigment on works after 2008—may be similar to the monotone palette of Walker's figures, it does not suggest narrative continuity as does Walker's work. In both cases, the artists utilize ambiguity but while it's not clear who is the antagonist in Walker's antebellum scenes, it is clear that the cut-outs in Hutchinson's work are females who exhibit agency. Additionally, Hutchinson's precisely placed cuts, hollows, and openings have an orderly quality that is not present or desired by Walker in her sprawling epic visual tales. However, both artists share an interest in visually representing the consequences of slavery. Walker refers to slavery of African Americans while Hutchinson in her short video *Black Pearl* (Figure 4.4) gives the audience but a glimpse of the plight that Pacific women faced aboard pearling ships in the nineteenth century.

"Black Pearl … Let Me Put You Up Where You Belong"

Created in 2004, Hutchinson's *Black Pearl* is a stop-motion animation video that runs one minute and fifty-nine seconds. Taking a series of drawn nude studies, which can and have been exhibited separately, Hutchinson animates the short film so that the women, already in sexualized positions, move jerkily with every fade in and fade out. The viewer puts on a headset that immerses them in a watery world of repetitive waves punctuated by bird cries and human

[684] Ibid.

coughs. Originally installed sans cut-outs, it has been exhibited since 2007 with *She Could Taste The Salt on Her Lips*, a curtain cut-out installed a few feet in front of the monitor that allows just enough room for the viewer to stand. The option is provided of seeing the video through the screen if desired. Hutchinson approximated this effect in the original image by shooting the drawings through a cut-out curtain placed on top of them but this element is not included later. The virtual and physical curtain add to the voyeuristic effect intended by the work. If a viewer chooses to look at the screen without the curtain's intervention, he or she would have to get uncomfortably close to the monitor to avoid seeing the curtain. In either instance, the viewer feels uneasy.

Figure 4.4: Lonnie Hutchinson, *Black Pearl* video with *She Could Taste Salt on Her Lips*, installation view in *Black Bird* exhibition, The Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.
Photograph by Jonathan Lake, Accessed April 21, 2016, http://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/lonnie-hutchinson.

Three cut-outs were displayed across from the video in the first exhibition in 2004. The works were connected to the *Black Pearl* imagery but are considered works of art in their own right: *Princess Pearl*, a large single cut-out in the vein of *Sista 7*; *Fanny and the Four Girls*, the cut-out version of the screen images; and *Lucy*, the physical curtain used to create the sense of voyeurism in the video. In this iteration, *Black Pearl* in conjunction with the related cut-outs becomes the body open to the voyeuristic gaze. The video is the whole body and the cut-outs across the room can be considered to be like elements of an autopsy on display. This is especially affecting as Hutchinson asked a sex worker to pose as a life model for the drawings.[685] In 2006, reviewer Mary O'Brien writes, "The image flickers insistently on the screen. It's a naked woman, kneeling, scrubbing, subservient. She looks as if she is doing some strange erotic dance, caught in an eternally repeating pattern. But when you put on the headphones the eerie sounds of the sea, the creaking and groaning of a ship, add a sinister tone."[686] Here, Hutchison coerces the viewer into witnessing the effect of blackbirding on women in Oceania.

By including the viewer in this way, this video can be considered installation art but on a smaller scale and with a different purpose than the installations created by Jewel Castro. Art historian Claire Bishop writes that installation art "presupposes an *embodied* viewer…"[687] She further elaborates that the viewer's "senses of touch, smell, and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision."[688] When *Black Pearl* is exhibited, sound is key to the experience and with the addition of *She Could Taste The Salt*, Hutchinson invites the viewer to choose a position from

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[685] A Different View, *A Different View - Lonnie Hutchinson*, 2013, Accessed April 21, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aI-ESB8Cugc#t=172. Hutchinson relates this information at the 2:20 mark

[686] Mary O'Brien, "Slaves to Anti-Culture - Arts - Entertainment - Theage.com.au," accessed December 27, 2014, http://www.theage.com.au/news/arts/slaves-to-anticulture/2006/04/02/1143916408274.html?page=fullpage.

[687] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

[688] Ibid.

which to view the video. Despite not including all of the senses, *Black Pearl* is an installation because it "insist[s] on the literal presence of the viewer."[689] That is, even if the viewer chooses not to use the headphones provided, the stop-motion of the video demands engagement in that the gaps between the images must be reconciled in order to get a clear picture of the plight of the women in captivity. To go further, I argue that *Black Pearl* is embodied racial discourse in that the body is object and subject. According to art historian Jennifer A. Gonzalez, "[t]he visual discourse of race involves a conceptual and categorical slippage between the body as object and the body as subject."[690] Historically, the captive body of Pearl was the commodified object. In the contemporary video, Pearl's body is the subject that prompts the viewer, regardless of race or gender, to consider the physical and spiritual limits of the body.

Of its 2015 iteration in the *Black Bird* exhibition, Ane Tonga states, "Hutchinson's complex assemblage of historical, visual and audio references re-present Black Pearl as seductive and political; reclaiming suppressed narratives of sex slavery in the Pacific, both in the past and present."[691] The title of the video links it to popular music in Māori, Pacific and African American communities. In 1969 Sonny Charles and the Checkmates released the single "Black Pearl." In 1991, Moana and the Moa Hunters, a New Zealand Māori hip-hop group released a popular cover of the song. Tonga writes that the lyrics of the song "metaphorically and eloquently articulate the assertions of indigenous feminisms…"[692] In *Black Pearl*, Hutchinson

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[689] Ibid.

[690] Jennifer A. González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 5.

[691] Tonga, "Spectral Visions," 16.

[692] Ibid., 17. The lyrics in questions are: "Black pearl precious little girl let me put you up where you belong. Black pearl pretty little girl you've been in the background much too long."

places one narrative of Māori and Pacific woman up where it belongs—in the center of conversations about race and gender.

Earlier, I compared Hutchinson's cut-outs to Kara Walker's figures. Walker has started making moving images that cover many of the themes of her visual art. Art historian Vivien Green Fryd argues, "…Kara Walker creates in her film and video work a repetitive traumatic site that surrounds, involves, and challenges the viewer to witness, acknowledge and remember the individual and transgenerational trauma of slavery and contemporary racism in the United States…."[693] She deems this an act of *postmemory*—dire memories that are passed through generations "so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right, though they can never be fully understood nor re-created."[694] *Black Pearl* is an example of postmemory in contemporary Pacific art.

Pearls and Hatchets

Throughout this chapter, I have drawn out the many levels of blackness in the art of Lonnie Hutchinson and how it reflects specific notions of blackness in an Aotearoa/New Zealand context. In Chapter Three, I compared *Matisse's Chapel* by Faith Ringgold with *The Pastor's Wife* and in a small part, to *The Pastor's Widow*, both by Jewel Castro. In this section, I want to expand on the ability of Pacific and African American art to coexist in the Black Pacific by comparing Lonnie Hutchinson's *Black Pearl* with to selected *thangka* from Faith Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* from the early 1970s. This exercise tests the limits of comparing Pacific and

[693] Vivien Green Fryd, "Bearing Witness to the Trauma of Slavery in Kara Walker's Videos: Testimony, Eight Possible Beginnings, and I Was Transported," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 2010): 145, doi:10.1080/10304310903420052.

[694] Ibid.

African American art because while there may be some inherent similarities in the art of the two women in the previous chapter due to Ringgold's mentorship of Castro, there is no such relationship between Hutchinson and Ringgold. I have chosen *Slave Rape Series* because it is one of Ringgold's lesser known series and because she has portrayed the nude African American female body. Additionally, the first three in the series are portraits of Ringgold and her two daughters. While the drawing at the foundation of *Black Pearl* is not a self-portrait or a recognizable representation of the life model, Hutchinson does draw the nude Pacific Islands, Māori, or aboriginal female body to discuss the plight of women at the hands of pearl traders. The terror of slavery in *Slave Rape Series* and the same terror of captivity on boats in *Black Pearl* can be situated under the rubric of the "slave sublime" as coined by Paul Gilroy.[695] I briefly compare the works in terms of the engagement of the female figure with the audience in an artwork with slavery or blackbirding as its topic.

Earlier, I compared Hutchinson's work with that of Kara Walker and here, I chose to compare her art with Ringgold because there is no mentor-mentee relationship. Regardless, as I have pointed out, Hutchinson navigates contemporary art with ease and asserts that Ringgold is "important to black feminist art and artists' practise."[696] Additionally, Hutchinson lists several female visual artists of color who have inspired her—Lisa Reihana (New Zealand Māori), Fiona Foley (aboriginal), Tracey Moffatt (aboriginal), Destiny Deacon (aboriginal), Kara Walker (African American), Carrie Mae Weems (African American), Skawennati Fragnito (Mohawk), and Yayoi Kusama (Japanese). I list these influences in order to highlight the wide range of artists with whom Hutchinson feels affinity.

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[695] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 187–223.

[696] Hutchinson, "Email Message to Author."

Figure 4:5: Faith Ringgold, *Fight: To Save Your Life #3 of 16* from *Slave Rape Series*,oil on canvas, thangka with printed and pieced fabric, 39 inches x 22.5 inches. ©Faith Ringgold 1973, courtesy ACA Galleries NYC. Collection of the artist.

Ringgold started collaborating with her mother in 1972 and 1973 on the first *Slave Rape Series*.[697] She states, "…I created portraits of Barbara, Michele, and me: Barbara in *Fear: Will Make You Weak*, Michele in *Run: You Might Get Away*, and me in *Fight: To Save Your Life*."[698] In this third image (Figure 4.5) Ringgold portrays herself as pregnant. The remaining sixteen are not representations of Ringgold and her daughters and are variations on the following three themes: "Run," "Fight to Save Your Life," and "Help." The compositions include one lone

[697] There is a later painting from 1985 titled *Slave Rape Story Quilt* that includes text and relates an unrelated story. The first three in the 1972-1973 series are painted in oils; she would later switch to acrylics for the remaining sixteen in the series and continue to use this medium throughout her career.

[698] Ringgold, *We Flew over the Bridge*, 96.

woman or two women, and several are pregnant. In *Help #14* (Figure 4.6), two women, one visibly pregnant, tumble in a crowded landscape. Splashes of red tones suggest foliage or blood. The woman face the viewer with expressions of surprise on their faces. Both carry axes or hatchets. Two male legs wearing white trousers tucked into boots run out of the frame. The effect is that he is beheaded, disembodied. This imagery illustrates female agency rather than male agency.

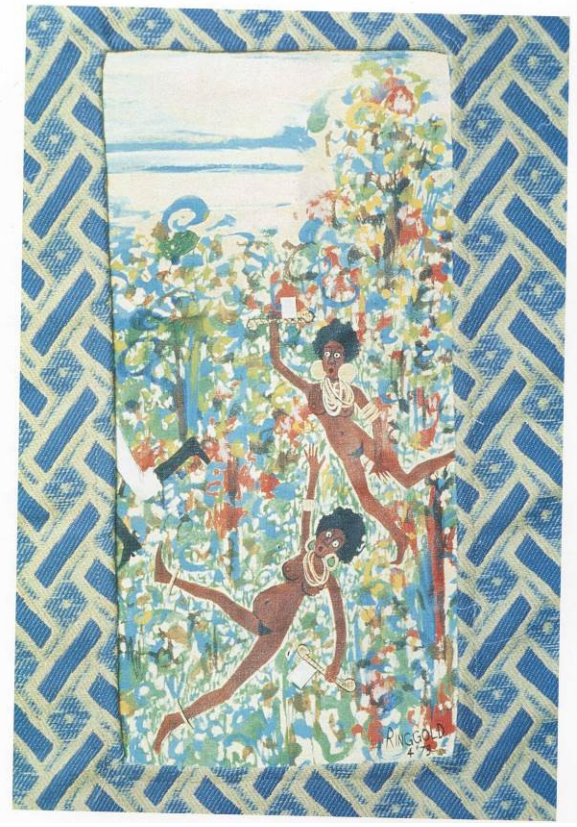

Figure 4.6: Faith Ringgold, *Help Your Sister #14 of 16* from *Slave Rape Series* (detail), acrylic on canvas, thangka with embroidered fabric, 53.5 inches x 30 inches. ©Faith Ringgold 1973. Private collection.

The question arises, why would an artist place herself or any woman of color in the position of ancestors who were raped? Lisa Farrington explains:

> In the *Slave Rape Series*, Ringgold consciously places herself in the time of her ancestors, 'those brave African women who survived the horror of being uprooted and carried off to slavery in America.' By locating herself in the past, Ringgold is able to stand with her

> ancestors, put weapons in their hands, and aid them in avoiding capture. Symbolically, she has traveled back in time in order to alter the future.[699]

This is an important process because these images are an act of defiance against the historical and pictorial conventions regarding the black female body. Farrington explains, "Ringgold's *The Slave Rape Series* is the result of a black woman artist reclaiming that which Western culture had usurped from her—control over her own body and a lexicon with which to speak about it."[700]

This is the same control that Hutchinson claims for "Pearl" in the animated video. Additionally, she uses cut paper as her vocabulary. In doing so, she, too, presents time in a particular way with the past as the future. One difference between *Black Pearl* and these examples from the *Slave Rape Series* is that in Figure 4.4, Pearl's back is turned to the viewer who never sees her face. Additionally, Ringgold places the women in landscapes in Figures 4.5 and 4.6. In *Black Pearl*, the figure is drawn without background. Yet a soundscape is included to suggest locale. By including the women's faces and the landscape setting, Faith Ringgold adds agency and provides a precarious "place to stand" for women in the context of African American history. In contrast, Hutchinson's animation strips the woman of *turangawaewae* which serves to highlight the loss of *mana* in her faceless existence.

It is significant that Ringgold portrays a nude in this series. In Chapter Three, I mentioned that she presents two nude portrayals of Willia Marie Simone in the studios of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. However, years before *The French Collection*, Ringgold portrayed her facial features on a pregnant and nude body in *Fight: To Save Your Life*. Farrington explains the impact of such a depiction: "… Ringgold's figures constitute one of the rare instances in

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[699] Lisa E Farrington and Faith Ringgold, *Art on Fire: The Politics of Race and Sex in the Paintings of Faith Ringgold* (New York: Millennium Fine Arts Pub., 1999), 151.

[700] Farrington, *Faith Ringgold*, 56.

Western art wherein the African female nude is portrayed. Even more exceptional is the fact that, unlike traditional nudes, which have proliferated since antiquity, the women in *Slave Rape* are active, and they are armed."[701] This arming is very powerful because Ringgold is subverting the usual role of the female artist of color as adjunct to the male artist of any color, according to Farrington: "In the *Slave Rape Series*, a woman (the artist) now holds the 'penis/paint brush' and with it she safeguards her erstwhile sisters from rape."[702] When asked what her *Slave Rape Series* can say to others who have historically experienced slavery, Ringgold responds, "Well, I would hope they would give, give them a sense of freedom. Freedom is the most powerful thing we have. We can use wherever there's denigration to be free. So *Slave Rape* is in that category."[703]

From her own cultural history and personal concerns, Hutchinson sheds light on the denigration of women like the fictitious Pearl and reclaims her story. Stephanie Oberg writes of this important work:

> Pacific pearls are a treasure, known for their deep colourful luster and luminosity. *Black Pearl* – a Scary Spice outline; a media screen star; a captive native and peepshow goddess getting off on herself….Her movement creates an awkward tension between expressions of sexual power, liberty and voyeuristic collusion that plays so close to the skin's sensual surface, the skin crawls in both embarrassment and delight. Yet her story, heard through the sounds of the sea and swollen timber, is of 'black birding' – cruel blood-stained histories of human deprivation and slavery in the Pacific, which caste [sic] long deep shadows into the exotic portrayal of Pacific women today.[704]

In *Black Pearl*, Hutchinson presents a portrait of a historical woman whose embodied experience is repeated over and over on the screen. Unlike the woman in Ringgold's *Fight*, she does not

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[701] Farrington and Ringgold, *Art on Fire*, 137.

[702] Farrington, *Faith Ringgold*, 56.

[703] Ringgold, Interview.

[704] Oberg, "This Show Is What I Do."

carry an axe. However, her lineage includes the black bird, the pigeon, "the intermediaries between the gods and humanity."[705] With such a powerful genealogy, the spirit of Pearl is protected.

The artworks under discussion in this last section demonstrate affinities and affiliations in terms of portraiture that places the nude body of color at the forefront of visual and racial discourse. What links the two artists in the Black Pacific is the desire to reclaim the body on behalf of women of color. One path is taken by an African American female artist in reference to the history of slavery in the Middle Passage. Another path is taken by a New Zealand artist of Pacific and Māori descent that relies on the color and shapes in black paper to decenter and activate the viewer. Slavery and blackbirding link the black perspective and the Pacific perspective and in the Black Pacific space that these women work in because of this link, they are choosing to honor the body rather than degrade it.

[705] Ibid.

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF BLACK PACIFIC ART HISTORY

"We're *helping each other*."[706]

—Faith Ringgold

As I begin in the Introduction, a prominent roster of scholars have begun to address the concerns of the Black Pacific in their respective fields including sociologist Gerald Horne or ethnomusicologist Heidi Carolyn Feldman, among others.[707] Many like ethnomusicologist Gabriel Solis have traced Black Pacific music in aboriginal Australia.[708] Others like cultural theorist Robbie Shilliam have surveyed the legacy of RasTafari religion for self-determination movements in Aotearoa/New Zealand.[709] With the designation "Black Pacific," it is clear that this trove of scholarly research owes a great debt to Paul Gilroy's black Atlantic outlined in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness.*[710] As an art historian working at the intersection of African American, Pacific, and Pacific American art history, I define the Black Pacific as the space that develops when people of black, Pacific, or mixed descent, together or separately explore structures, forms, and situations that arise from but are not limited to concepts that originate in African, African diaspora, African American or Oceanic communities historically and develop into the present and the future. The Black Pacific, then, arises from the creative space in which blackness and Pacificness meet. Black Pacific art visualizes the

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[706] Ringgold, Interview.

[707] Gerald Horne, "The Revenge of the Black Pacific?," *Callaloo* 24, no. 1 (2001): 94–96; Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*.

[708] Gabriel Solis, "The Black Pacific."

[709] Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*.

[710] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

intersections of blackness and Pacificness. The voices of the Black Pacific are varied and in this dissertation, I take special care to present the perspectives of female performing and visual artists. What do Juanita Hall, Faith Ringgold, Jewel Castro and Lonnie Hutchinson have in common? They are creative women who engage with the point at which blackness and Pacificness meet. In particular, African American actress Juanita Hall, Samoan American artist Jewel Castro, African American artist Faith Ringgold, and New Zealander Lonnie Hutchinson, of Maori and Samoan descent, are pioneers in exploring how the black and brown female body is represented in photographic portraits, painted tributes to ancestors, and sturdy black paper scissored into intricate forms that reflect bodies, land, and space-time.

The context for their innovative work is deep and far-ranging. In this respect, in the Introduction, it was important to present many of the strands of theory, practice, and analysis that would be woven together throughout the dissertation. Accordingly, I acknowledge that my viewpoint as an African American woman is but one sliver of the story. One goal of this research project is to highlight the voices of Oceania artists and scholars. As such, I outline how Damon Salesa characterizes what he calls the *Brown Pacific*, or "a wider Pacific island circuitry…that was filled with people who were not white, nor European, nor American…"[711] Another voice that deserves privilege in this dissertation is that of Teresia Teawia whose poem titled *black in the blue pacific (for mohit and riyad)* lays bare both the joys and sorrows of blackness in Oceania in its relatedness to and divergence from African and African American politics and cultures. I undertake a close reading of the poem in Chapter One.

One strand to consider is that notions of diaspora and indigeneity are foundational in discussions of the Black Pacific. Brent Hayes Edwards refers to "the 'black Pacific'" as

[711] Salesa, Damon, "'Travel-Happy" Samoa: Colonialism, Samoan Migration and A "Brown Pacific'," 176.

reductive insofar as it, like the black Atlantic or "the 'black Mediterranean'" is a geographic formation that is limiting and reflects "a reliance on an obsession with origins."[712] This dissertation explores the Black Pacific as expansive rather than limiting. It is a space that is obsessed with collaborative futures. The discussion about intersections of diaspora and indigeneity continues in Chapter Three. Another such strand among several is the notion that "tradition" limits creativity in contemporary Pacific Islands art. Therefore, in the Introduction, I broach alternative modernity theory in a discussion of *gradient* as conceived by Naoki Sakai.[713] Like diaspora and indigeneity, this concept will prove important in Chapter Three in my analysis of Jewel Castro's work, especially her *Walking With My Grandmothers* series of drawings.

The "stitch" that links the various strands is my employment of "affinities and affiliations" throughout the dissertation. To make this alliterative appellation my own, I call them *connections and community*. They play out in the three case study chapters in the following ways. First, both the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific require a Du Boisian sense of double-consciousness. Second, the creative catalyst between blackness and Pacificness is "a special paradox"[714] that is expressed through "communal self-development"[715] in artistic pursuits. Third, slavery in the black Atlantic parallels blackbirding in the Black Pacific. All three factors inform Black Pacific art.

Chapter One tackles the possibilities and problematics of the Black Pacific and its art. The comparative methodology relies on analogies a great deal of the time. Teresia Teawia regrets that in comparative studies with Oceania as one constant in the equation, it is often the

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[712] Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," 100.

[713] Sakai, "Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities."

[714] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 182.

[715] Ibid., 124.

Pacific that gets short shrift. Unfortunately, the comparative thrust of Afro-Asian Studies focuses on Asia Pacific rather than Oceania. This might reflect, within American academia, at least, the grouping of Asian Pacific Islanders in the United States Census. Furthermore, the employment of the black Atlantic in comparative studies often privileges the African American viewpoint over other perspectives on blackness. My directive as an African American woman is to avoid "Americocentricity."[716] Recognizing this challenge, I structure the first chapter as a survey of blackness from multiple viewpoints within Oceania. It is an initial effort because this topic deserves a dissertation of its own. Accordingly, I rely on focused examples of Black Pacific art and poetry in this chapter in comparison to the deeper case studies found in the remaining three chapters.

Within the chapter, I present historical viewpoints, beginning with the visual linking between Africa and Oceania, traversing the impact of scientific racism, and arriving at strategic employment by Oceania artists of the numerous nuances of blackness inside and outside of the region. Along the way, I relay how Papua New Guineans found an affinity with African Negritude. This dissertation, in its initial conception, was an *ambitious attempt* to map all of Black Oceania. In this iteration, Chapter One does this work by bringing together as many viewpoints as possible to demonstrate the rich context for Black Pacific art. The primary nodes of my comparison are the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand. I stress the latter's positioning as a country located in Polynesia with significant ties to the United States. Yet, other Polynesian islands, such as the Independent State of Samoa possesses histories of blackness, the *tama uli* and *teine uli*, for example, which are not linked in any way to the United States. Additionally, the state of Hawai'i, originally annexed by the United States in 1898, provides an

[716] Ibid., 191.

early glimpse of Black Pacific interactions in Polynesia. I take the opportunity to present portraits of African American women who forged their lives in Hawai‘i before the advent of World War II.

In 1823, Betsey Stockton, freed African American slave, set out on an extraordinary journey to be a missionary in Hawai‘i, or what was then known as the Sandwich Islands. Her journal documents her journey. There is only one photograph taken just before her death. In it, she stares out at the viewer, her thoughts on being black in the Pacific hidden in time. In 1898, perhaps in response to Hawai‘i’s annexation, T. McCants Stewart moved with his family to the islands to further his political career. He was soon disappointed and journeyed to yet another destination but his daughter, Carlotta, remained in Hawai‘i. A photographic portrait taken around 1900 illustrates the young woman at the beginning of what would become a successful life in Hawai‘i. A group portrait of Carlotta with beaming students laden with *lei* arrayed on either side of her demonstrates that almost thirty years later, her *mana* is respected in the community. Portraits of Elizabeth Brown and Alice Augusta Ball, the granddaughter of photographer J. P. Ball cement the impression that African American women succeeded in Hawai‘i before World War II.

I then return to Teaiwa’s poem, *black in the blue pacific*, as the framing device for concluding discussion of this chapter. With it, she covers geographies of blackness from Fiji to reggae music to Hawaiian nationalism and beyond. This expansiveness allows multiple points of departure to cover artists not discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. I sought out Craig Santos Perez for his thoughts on blackness in Oceania from a Chamorro perspective. I include a brief overview of Michael Mel’s performance work around blackness in Papua New Guinea. The primary case studies focus on women. But it is necessary, in this mapping of Black Pacific

theory, to demonstrate its wide applicability. Having said that, I include the thoughts of Melbourne-based artist Lisa Hill who is in the initial process of becoming the critical voice for Papua New Guineans in Australia. In another respect, as Teaiwa discusses both tensions and alliances in her poem, I take the opportunity to cover some clashes around race and ethnicity that are present in the Black Pacific. I understand that the Black Pacific is not a utopia. However, I stress the collaborative effort that spurs its creativity in the remaining chapters. Overall, Chapter One is a discursive travel into the many flows of blackness in Oceania.

As an African American actress, Juanita Hall become the "poster" girl for the "exotic" Vietnamese Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*, a musical and later film that cemented ideas of Oceania in the minds of many Americans. Juanita Hall is not a visual artist per se. However, as a subject of visual culture representations, she was photographed by leading camera artists like Stella F. Simon and Griff Davis at the beginning and middle of her career, respectively. Yet it is important to begin the case studies with her as she embodies the Pacific for a generation struggling to make sense of postwar America especially in respect to Cold War ideology and Civil Rights politics. *South Pacific* became a cultural phenomenon, helped perhaps in no small part by the Pulitzer Prize awarded to James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific* on which it was based. The musical spawned a wave of kitsch—ties, scarves, and assorted clothing with "Pacific" motifs—that was advertised widely and heavily in newspapers and magazines. Hall became familiar as Bloody Mary through all of these avenues.

Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Joshua Logan eagerly cast the mezzo-soprano and asked her to reprise her role in the later Hollywood film adaptation. But, for reasons that are unclear, Muriel Smith, another African American actress who portrayed Bloody Mary in London performances, dubbed Hall's singing in the film. Hall's mixed heritage offered a female

body of color upon which varied dreams and desires were projected. However, a deeper sense of the woman is not readily apparent in the reams of articles written about her and the montage of images that represented her in character. Hall was formidable in her own right. She graduated from Julliard, directed her own WPA choir, and collaborated with close friend Langston Hughes. Yet, at the end of her life, she was seemingly abandoned by those who profited most from her versatility and talent. The fact that a benefit was given in her honor in 1967, one year before her death, by the current *South Pacific* cast, attests to the reality that while *South Pacific* was profitable, there is no indication that she shared in its continuing financial and critical success at that time.

I suggest that the case study of Juanita Hall is the most visible moment at which mainstream America was introduced to the Black Pacific. The iconicity of her portrayal offers the opportunity to examine how Michener's source material and its adaptations reflect the United States' myopic view of blackness at home and Pacificness abroad. In particular, these two concerns are symbolized in the character of Bloody Mary as representative of American concerns in East and Southeast Asia after World War II. Christina Klein studies this phenomenon in the wider context of Michener as a *paraphraser*[717] of American policy in regards to and notions of Asia. She argues that in his anthology *Tales of the South Pacific*, Michener was one of the cultural producers who utilized *sentimental education*[718] to disseminate ideas about Asia.

Accordingly, Chapter Two unpacks the many perceptions and representations of Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary within this framework. I complement Klein's notion of *paraphrase* with

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[717] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 126.

[718] Ibid., 19.

my own concept of *camouflage*. First, I establish a categorization system of "tropes" that accompany images of Hall as Bloody Mary across media. I identity three types: Bloody Mary attempting to sell a grass skirt to the servicemen on the island, Bloody Mary entreating Joe Cable to commit to her daughter Liat, and Bloody Mary holding up a shrunken head as symbolic of a financial and cultural exchange with the American military and the United States by extension. While most scholars argue that the audience equates this exchange both with Cold War policy and Civil Rights issues, Margaret Jolly is one of the few that examines this moment for what it says about Melanesia and Melanesian black bodies. My concern is to demonstrate how the Melanesian blackness of the plot's setting is ignored in the musical,[719] the African American blackness of Juanita Hall receives scant attention, and the ethos of Oceania, or "the Pacific" is completely missed. In the first two respects, I embark on a discussion of the role of headhunting in Melanesia and misperceptions of the practice thereof as well as a discussion of *Ebony's* representation of Hall for African American readers within the context of mission to merge culture and consumerism. These two discussions give rise to my own portmanteau of "camouphrase."

These discussions inform the visual analyses I undertake throughout the chapter. I examine production photographs of Hall and other actresses of different ethnicities who fill the role. The conventions of Broadway posters and the prominence of caricatures are also covered in the chapter. While exaggeration and overemphasis are staples of caricature drawings, ideas rooted in primitivism and Orientalism inform the depictions of Hall as Bloody Mary by several

[719] Conversely, Melanesian and African American blackness are conflated in the Boar's Dance ceremony that is a set piece of the film version.

caricaturists. I find that stressing how *mana* is present in many of the images allows an interventionist reading of their embedded tropes.

Juanita Hall was one of many African American cultural and artistic luminaries that Carl Van Vechten photographed. Van Vechten occupies a singular position in African American art and literature insofar as the man and his work are simultaneously notorious and renowned. Although his novel *Nigger Heaven* created a scandal, his photographic portraits of jazz greats Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday are considered by himself and others to be among his best work. Zora Neale Hurston enthused about his portrayal of her. Nevertheless, I argue that while he may have been well-versed in African art and culture in modernism, his knowledge of Oceania was demonstrably lacking. As a result, his portraits of Juanita Hall are particularly problematic because they do not capture what Ginger Hill relates is Frederick Douglass's fervent stance that photography offered the potential to capture the interiority of African American subjects.[720] One conclusion that I draw from this discussion is that unfortunately Van Vechten did not realize exactly how special it was for him to participate in the Black Pacific. In his search for African and African American blackness, he missed the deeper exploration of Pacificness that photographing Juanita Hall as Bloody Mary may have provided for him in those sessions.

His practice of printing the portraits of his subjects as postcards attests to the lack of agency afforded to Hall in this particular relationship. Her formal correspondence with Van Vechten bears this out. Conversely, the last third of the chapter focuses on "postcards and portraits" from the Black Pacific that demonstrate Hall's interiority especially in respect to her prominence as a sitter for renowned photographers, her savvy use of images to suggest

[720] Hill, "'Rightly Viewed': Theorizations of Self in Frederick Douglass's Lectures on Pictures," 43.

connections with others, and the synchronicity between the image on a postcard to mailed to Langston Hughes from Honolulu, Hawai‘i, and her own *mana* as a Black Pacific art pioneer.

In Chapter One, I describe Lisa Hilli's engagement with African American intellectuals as she established her artistic practice. My own establishment of a career in art history progressed the opposite way. While in the Pacific, I became aware of my blackness in an empowering yet isolated way. While Pacific Islands artists welcomed me and I engaged with Maori art within this context, I felt bereft because as an African diasporic subject in the United States, I had no genealogy or *whakapapa* that was rooted in an indigenous relationship with land and ocean. The opposite is true for Jewel Castro who writes that she found her Samoanness through her mentoring and educational relationship with Faith Ringgold.[721] I examine connection in Chapter Three. African American visual artist Faith Ringgold carved her career out of roadblocks based on her race and gender. As an educator at the postsecondary level, she has guided many students to find their own voices. Castro heeded this advice and as a result, her installations and paintings evoke the Samoan *vā.* Nevertheless, only discussing her art in comparison with Ringgold's does her practice a disservice. As a result, while a comparison between Castro's *The Pastor's Wife* and to a smaller extent, *The Pastor's Widow* with Ringgold's *Matisse's Chapel*, concludes the chapter, it is very important that the cultural and familial foundations of Castro's practice are documented. This is a key goal for several reasons. Primarily, this is arguably one of the first art history dissertations to explore the practice of a Samoan American female artist based on the mainland United States. Second, in this context, it is vital to establish the field that I call *Pacific American art history.* I do not suggest that the arguments here are definitive. For example, Castro refers to herself as a Samoan American artist

[721] Castro, "Communicating Tradition in Samoan American Art: An Artist's Reflection," 124.

who creates Oceania art. My intent is to formalize a discussion of art created by Pacific Islands artists in the United States who express their own concerns that may coincide, or not, with larger discussion about American identity. I deem this necessary for comparative studies of American art.

Moreover, Castro utilizes customary arts like *siapo* in her strategic reworking of notions of tradition. As a result, Samoan arts become the language in which she relates histories and aspirations of bodies and families to her audiences, as seen in her earliest installations *Talaleagi, Samoa/Story of the Skies, Samoa* and *Red House/The Daughters of Salamasina*. According to the artist, her practice is informed by "the holographic presence of time and history and the notion of ancestors living with us in the present…"[722] Her multi-media installations reflect this and the compositions of her visual art such as her *Walking With My Grandmothers* series of drawings demonstrate her interest in two-dimensional art that suggests or carries out the work of three-dimensional art. This principle is especially prominent in her *Assimilation Series* of paintings in which she layers markers of landscape, narrative, history, professions, religions, and family in her visual tributes to her Samoan family members from American Samoa who faced the challenge of becoming American without flinching. For example, *Tales of a Fisherman I* and *Tales of a Fisherman II* honor her Uncle Keneti. Of all her mother's siblings, he undertook the task of fighting in the Vietnam War so that his family and extended family could unequivocally assert their allegiance to the United States and their affiliation to the American Way. It is especially fitting that the entire *Assimilation Series* and the work of her contemporary Dan Taulapapa McMullin was on display in the *Coming to Amelika* exhibition that opened in New York City just weeks after the events of September 11 in 2001. Together, Castro, McMullin and

[722] Castro, "Email Message to Author (3)."

Reggie Meredith are the establishing artists of Pacific American art. In Chapter Three, I examine Meredith's *Self-Portrait* to highlight particular concerns of American artists with ties to Samoa and American Samoa. Also in this chapter, I closely examine selected stanzas from McMullin's *Tiki Manifesto* to illustrate how his practice as a Pacific American artist advocates against "antiblackness as the foundation of racism."[723] I suggest that the strands of influences, intentions, and positioning as diasporic or indigenous are aptly discussed through the notion of *diatopia*.[724] The practices of the three artists also have activism as one of their goals. I begin this conclusion by quoting Faith Ringgold. At the end of our interview, she affirmed, "We're *helping each other*."[725] This sums up what I mean by the "affinities and affiliations" in Gilroy's black Atlantic, or rather what I see as *connections and community* in the Black Pacific.

Returning to Castro's body of work, her *Grandmothers* series of drawings features both her maternal and paternal grandmothers. Her *Walking With My Grandmother* painting series attests to her maternal grandmother's influence in her immersion of Samoan culture. Two examples from this series, *The Pastor's Wife* and the *Pastor's Widow* provide both complement and contrast with Faith Ringgold's *Matisse's Chapel* from *The French Collection*. Both artists weave tribute, grief and loss into the paintings whose compositions reflect the textile traditions of *siapo* in the former and African American quiltmaking and Tibetan *thangka* in the latter. The comparison of Castro's paintings with *Matisse's Chapel* allows insight into formal artistic characteristics, cultural stories, and personal grief. The initial visual prompt for this dissertation

[723] McMullin, "Email Message to Author," March 23, 2016.

[724] Warrior, "Afterword"; Raimundo Panikkar, "What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?"; Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.

[725] Ringgold, Interview.

was the striking portrait of Faith Ringgold drawn by Jewel Castro (Figure 2.1). From this initial impulse, this chapter fleshes out the affinity and connection I felt within and to that drawing.

Chapter Four focuses on how blackness is understood and represented in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In 2015, *Lonnie Hutchinson: Black Bird*, a retrospective of the artist's work over the past two decades was exhibited in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the Gus Fisher Gallery at the University of Auckland and the Dowse Art Museum. Hutchinson is known for her intricate "cut-outs" shaped from black builder's paper. *Sista 7*, the first cut-out, was an abstract depiction of the seven caldera of the Lyttleton Harbour in Christchurch that she could see from her studio window. One of the successor cut-outs, *Sista Girl*, references the impact of Christianity's in Oceania. While Hutchinson's work is influenced by a multitude of factors, the anthropomorphized titles of these two sculptural forms combined with the historical colonial-settler strategies of othering through color difference suggest female bodies of color. This is not so far amiss as women's bodies in the art historical canon are linked to landscapes. Yet, there is a more celebratory intent in Hutchinson's work. In the *Black Bird* exhibition catalogue, Karl Chitham and Iona Gordon-Smith assert that Hutchinson works within the Samoan *vā* and the Samoan *Wā*.[726] I suggest that in this context, the linkage between bodies and landscapes is indicative of the Black Pacific concern of uplifting black and brown bodies rather than the denigration expressed in settler-colonialism.

Hutchinson is a music aficionado and her titles reflect an affinity with vernacular language in African American communities and others where urban youth culture is a dominant force. Such is the case in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The essays in the exhibition catalogue reflect this artistic and cultural influence. For example, Ane Tonga quotes the lyrics to the song "Black

[726] Chitham and Gordon-Smith, "Voids and Veils," 6.

Pearl" first performed in 1969 by Sonny Charles and the Checkmates and more recently covered in Aotearoa by Moana and the Moa Hunters, a Maori hip-hop group. Tonga argues that in the song's lyrics combined with the video's subject matter, blackbirding in Oceania, serves to "metaphorically and eloquently articulate" how the artist asserts "indigenous feminisms."[727] I suggest that the song-like titles and the essays by Stephanie Oberg cement the link between music, pop culture, and youth culture in the Black Pacific. Each subsection heading in this chapter references my own riff on the musico-visual harmonies in Hutchinson's work.

Hutchinson's cut-outs can be placed in conversation with the practices of Edouard Manet, Henri Matisse, and Kara Walker. In the chapter's culmination, I compare *Black Pearl* with two examples from Faith Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* to posit that the terror of slavery in Ringgold's *Slave Rape Series* and the same terror of captivity on boats in Hutchinson's *Black Pearl* can be situated under the rubric of the "slave sublime" as discussed by Paul Gilroy in his theorization of the black Atlantic.[728] Taken together, Chapters Two, Three, and Four argue that double-consciousness, a concern for community, and the utilization of the slave sublime in visual depictions of blackbirding in Oceania are the common points of crossover between the black Atlantic and the Black Pacific. In conclusion, I have utilized these case studies of Juanita Hall, Jewel Castro, Faith Ringgold, and Lonnie Hutchinson to theorize Black Pacific art. From my examination of portraits, multi-media installations, animated videos, sculpture, paintings, drawings, and performances, it is clear that the future of Black Pacific art is already unfolding across Oceania.

[727] Tonga, "Spectral Visions," 17.

[728] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 187–223.

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