

REMAKING PACIFIC PASTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHIC THEATRE FROM OCEANIA

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This dissertation explores selected plays from Hawai'i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji that critically engage aspects of colonial and postcolonial Pacific histories. This historiographic drama, produced primarily by indigenous and diasporic playwrights, forms part of a broader theatrical genre that has flourished throughout Oceania since the late 1960s and is coeval with a phase of significant social change in the region, with the decolonization and independence of many Pacific Island nations, as well as changing responses to globalization, and increased migratory and diasporic movements within and beyond the area.

Drawing upon discussions in theatre and performance studies, historiography, Pacific studies, and postcolonial studies, I examine contemporary historiographic theatre in Oceania as a varied syncretic form that draws from and negotiates between Western and Oceanic frameworks, foregrounding heterogeneity and debate. I read this body of work as a consciously critical genre that contributes to the project of “decentering” the practice of history in Oceania (Hanlon) by interrogating and revising repressive or marginalizing models of historical understanding developed through colonialism or exclusionary indigenous nationalisms, and by providing outlets for the expression of counter-discursive Pacific histories. In so doing, these plays function as tools to help define the present Oceania, facilitating processes of creative nation-building and the construction of modern regional imaginaries.

The chapters are structured around certain moments in the Pacific's colonial and postcolonial history that have affected and helped to shape the region more broadly, without being the story of one particular nation. Chapter Two examines early cross-cultural encounters between European voyagers and Pacific peoples, focusing on contemporary plays from Hawai'i and New Zealand that revisit the voyages and concomitant legacies of the British explorer, Captain James Cook. Chapter Three explores the impact of colonial conflict through Māori plays about the New Zealand Wars of the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter Four moves away from the indigene/white settler relationship to investigate theatrical responses to recent and ongoing conflicts in a multicultural, post-independence Pacific context in which repressive social structures are occasioned by a dominant indigenous nationalism, treating plays that engage the event and aftermath of the 1987 Fiji Coup.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diana Looser is from Aotearoa New Zealand, and graduated from Canterbury and Lincoln Universities before moving to the United States for her graduate studies in Theatre.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This dissertation explores selected plays from Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji that critically engage aspects of colonial and postcolonial Pacific histories. This historiographic drama, produced primarily by indigenous and diasporic¹ playwrights, forms part of a broader theatrical genre that has flourished throughout Oceania in the period since the late 1960s, and is coeval with a phase of significant social change in the region, with the decolonization and independence of many Pacific Island nations, as well as changing responses to globalization, and increased migratory and diasporic movements within and beyond the area. Although Pacific Island cultures have a long tradition of a wide variety of highly evolved indigenous performance forms, including oral narrative, dramatic performance, ritual, dance, and song, scripted drama is a relatively recent phenomenon. The drama produced since the 1960s emerges from a politically aware, postcolonial consciousness and the desire to reassert marginalized Pacific voices, perspectives, and performance techniques in ways that take advantage of, and also challenge, modify, and undermine, Western theatrical conventions and their attendant cultural representations.

Bringing together discussions in theatre and performance studies, historiography, Pacific studies, and postcolonial studies, I examine contemporary

¹ “Diasporic” in this context does not refer to peoples of white, settler-colonial diasporas, but instead to the Pacific-based descendants of (predominantly) Asian immigrants who came to the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as part of labor diasporas, such as Indians in Fiji or Japanese in Hawai‘i. Their work tends to emphasize non-Western perspectives, to cite repression or marginalization within and/or resistance to colonial structures, and in some cases, may engage indigenous Pacific Island themes and imagery. “Diasporic” here also designates indigenous Pacific Islanders who, due to a confluence of several political, economic, and cultural factors in the post-1960s period, have migrated from their local communities to larger cities of the Pacific Rim and beyond, such as Auckland (New Zealand), or the West Coast of the United States.

historiographic theatre in Oceania as a varied syncretic practice that draws from and negotiates between Western and Oceanic aesthetic and epistemic frameworks, foregrounding heterogeneity and debate. As such, I read this body of work as a consciously critical genre that contributes to the project of “decentering” the practice of history in Oceania (Hanlon) by interrogating and revising repressive or marginalizing models of historical understanding developed through colonialism or exclusionary indigenous nationalisms, and providing outlets for the expression of counter-discursive Pacific histories. In performing interventions that enable Pacific Islanders to “engage with, understand and act upon history” (Tuhiwai Smith 34), these plays function as tools to help shape the present Oceania, facilitating processes of creative nation-building and the construction of modern regional imaginaries.

Situating Oceania

In developing one of the first cross-cultural comparative studies of recent drama and theatre in Oceania, it is helpful at the outset to define the parameters of the region as they pertain to this project; to foreground some of the cultural, historical, geographical, and political connections that validate arguments for conceiving of an area of such vast expanse, cultural and linguistic diversity, and varied colonial histories and postcolonial statuses as a “region” that supports comparative analysis; and to acknowledge a persistent emphasis on national interests that both complements and complicates regional constructions. Geographically and conceptually, “Oceania” and “the Pacific” are rather flexible categories; they are sometimes used interchangeably, but each term also has its own inflections and semantic histories. Christopher Balme notes that “the Pacific” is “discursively uncontainable” and indeed “transgressive” in its evasion or blurring of definitional boundaries (*Pacific Performances* 10), operating in the post-war years as a replacement for the obsolete

(and exclusionary) “South Seas,” but in the past few decades elided increasingly with the geopolitical entity of the Pacific Rim (10-11). As Paul Sharrad argues, an emphasis on economics and politics since the 1970s has produced a distinction between the countries of the “Pacific Rim” and the islands of the “Pacific Basin” (“Imagining” 597) – a distinction that is, on the one hand, perhaps important to prevent island communities being subsumed within the “Asia-Pacific” conglomerate (Hau‘ofa “Ocean in Us” 45-6), but on the other, figures the Basin problematically as “the void that gives substance to what surrounds it [...] subordinate to the Rim’s dynamic, though still fundamentally insubstantial, terrestriality” (Connery 288), and risking the islands’ subsequent disappearance “into the black hole of the gigantic pan-Pacific doughnut” (Hau‘ofa “Ocean in Us” 42). The term “Pacific Islands” has also been invoked strategically as a way to differentiate smaller nations from larger neighboring Western settler nations, sometimes omitting and sometimes including Aotearoa New Zealand (Keown *Pacific Islands Writing* 16), and also determined by the (artificially imposed) geocultural subcategories of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia.

“Oceania,” the regional term currently favored by the United Nations and other international organizations and anthropologists, is a similarly elastic concept, resisting the overt Asia-Pacific identification but designating a territory that sometimes incorporates the Australian continent and/or parts of Indonesia as well as Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. Indigenous Pacific scholars, such as Epli Hau‘ofa, have preferred “Oceania” over “the Pacific” in centering a regional imaginary around the ocean as a common heritage, but it is worth noting that despite Hau‘ofa’s antipathy to elisions of the Pacific Islands and Asia, his vision of an empowered Oceania draws its very strength from its permeable boundaries: “The world of Oceania [...] certainly encompasses the great cities of Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada. And it is within this expanded world that the extent of the people’s resources must be

measured” (“Sea of Islands” 12). Hau‘ofa’s comments also point to the region’s diverse cosmopolitanism situated in a context of migration and globalization (DeLoughrey 4), comprising diasporic movements of indigenous Pacific Islanders within and beyond the islands (Spickard 1-8), and waves of immigrant non-indigenous Pacific Islanders, which, in addition to various white settler migrations, also include considerable, established Asian populations, especially in Hawai‘i, Fiji, and Aotearoa New Zealand. These different perspectives and considerations point to the geocultural complexities of mapping the Pacific/Oceania. Acknowledging this, in the current study I use both terms interchangeably to refer to the geographical region that encompasses the three subcategories of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, or – perhaps more appropriately – the area that extends from Hawai‘i in the north to Aotearoa New Zealand in the south, from Guam in the west to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east. Whereas my conception of Oceania does not include Australia, as the ethnic and linguistic origins of Australian aboriginal peoples are distinct from those of the island communities in the Pacific Ocean, it does include Aotearoa New Zealand, as despite its white settler dominance and neocolonial interventions, the islands were settled by Polynesians with close ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties to other Polynesian peoples, and, as I shall show, these regional ties are being asserted more strongly.

A key aspect of any mapping of Pacific regionalism is an acknowledgement of the relationship between the regional and the national. This is a complex dialectic that emerges as a central tension in this study because, although the works discussed here form part of a broader regional phenomenon and can be described in terms of cross-cultural and regional commonalities, they are primarily concerned with interrogating national histories and emerge largely from institutional initiatives and artistic projects with nation-building emphases. These regional and national paradigms are not

mutually constitutive, so while I consider the useful possibilities of each framework, I also acknowledge the limits of either model for understanding the drama and theatre of Oceania. While the complicated relations between regionalism and nationalism are not fully resolvable within the scope of this dissertation, my comparative approach focuses on how national projects operate at the local level while also constituting particular regional dialogues. In the paragraphs that follow, I elucidate some different arguments for Oceanic regional formulations and how these are complicated by nationalist agendas, as a context for the broad tensions that my project animates.

There are pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial experiences and frameworks that support arguments for Oceanic regionalism. Such regional initiatives and ideologies have been invoked as means of emphasizing broad cross-cultural and interisland connections, but also operate to inscribe a distinct and specific regional sensibility, a tactic of resistance in an era of global capital that threatens to overwhelm cultural difference, enabling Islanders to claim a “space of their own whereby they can prevent the closure of the Oceanic world by its reabsorption into the global paradigm” (Subramani “Oceanic Imaginary” 161). Different formulations of regionalism – which are not necessarily ideologically or geographically congruent – have been constructed around one or more of the following: shared socio-economic and political circumstances; geographical similarities, especially the importance of the ocean to island communities; historical and contemporary patterns of migration; an investment in a common cultural heritage (traditions, ancestors, sea and land); and, as I shall explain in greater detail later, an artistic output that has emerged across the Pacific in the past several decades. The impulse toward regional co-operation for social and economic development, which began with post-war colonial alliances, gathered pace in the 1960s and 1970s as island nations gained independence, formed new coalitions among themselves as sovereign states, and established several major governmental

organizations (Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 1). This process was accompanied by the development of regional ideologies such as the philosophy of the “Pacific Way,” which emerged during the 1970s, recognizing a commonality in developmental problems requiring cooperation to combat colonial powers (Keown *Postcolonial* 4; Va‘ai 32-3). Based on the assumption of Islanders being part of an “ideological brotherhood” (Va‘ai 33), the Pacific Way emphasized indigenous histories, cultural principles and practices, and collaborative contexts that foregrounded “the Pan-Pacific person [...] predominantly persons of multiple worlds” (Crocombe in Va‘ai 33), and was instrumental in supporting the pan-regional University of the South Pacific, the South Pacific Forum (now the Pacific Islands Forum), and the South Pacific Creative Arts Society (Va‘ai 32; DeLoughrey 129).

An alternative conceptualization of regional identity has turned upon the trope of transoceanic voyaging, tracing complex migration patterns before and after colonialism (DeLoughrey 6), and finds its most well-known articulation in the work of Epli Hau‘ofa. Developing in part from Pacific Way ideologies, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (which allowed island states to claim large exclusive economic zones, engendering a distinctive kind of collective action based on guardianship of the ocean (Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 8)), and in line with the critical move in Pacific cultural studies to emphasize the mobile “routedness” of indigenous identities (Diaz and Kauanui, Jolly, Clifford, et al.), Hau‘ofa’s consciously hopeful (and not uncontested²) vision advocates a “substantial regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance of [...] the Pacific Ocean” (“Ocean in Us” 41) – an identity that recognizes diversity but transcends the requirements of international geopolitics or narrow national self-interest and enables Pacific peoples to act together

² Hau‘ofa’s essay was originally published along with the comments of nineteen other respondents – not all of whom agreed with his thesis – in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands* (1993).

for the advancement of their collective interests (“Ocean in Us” 42). Hau‘ofa points to the importance of reconnecting through the memory of pre-contact processes of interculturalization (trade, kinship, navigation, and settlement) that constituted the region prior to its arbitrary break-up through the parcelling of colonial possessions, imposed borders, and cartographic delineations and marginalizations. For Hau‘ofa, this historical interconnectedness between the islands – as well as its related contemporary manifestations in diasporic movement, trade, and travel – are key to an empowering regional imaginary that emphasizes links between Islanders beyond and within nation states, making the difference between viewing the Pacific in Western terms of “islands in a far sea” – small, powerless, and remote – and in terms of “a sea of islands,” a more holistic and cosmopolitan perspective that assesses the region in terms of the totality of its relationships (“Sea of Islands” 7-8).

In their recent volume, *Redefining the Pacific?: Regionalism Past, Present and Future*, Jenny Bryant-Tokalau and Ian Frazer take a different approach in their socio-economic discussion of regional formulations, emphasizing the extent to which, in an era of decolonization, Pacific regional co-operation has been based on respect for national sovereignty and national economic development (6). Due to emergent nationalisms, diverse political and economic circumstances (compare, for instance, Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and MIRAB³ states), and the fact that many island states are still primarily oriented toward their extant or previous colonial powers, there has been no attempt to integrate a regional market, labor force, or product, as has happened with regional coalitions such as the European Union. Even during the 1990s, “States were too protective of their national sovereignty, too occupied with nation-building, to start thinking about some kind of supranational structure or community”

³ Certain Pacific Island states reliant economically on Migration, Remittances, Aid, and Bureaucracy.

(Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 11), with regional organizations seen primarily as a resource to assist national development planners. Accordingly, Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer's comments point to a persistent tension between a regional sensibility and a national focus, with efforts at co-operation "largely aimed at enhancing national interests without diminishing national integrity" (11), and these priorities continue to be expressed, even within the trend toward supranationalism and a more developed regional consciousness outlined in the Pacific Islands Forum's 2005 Pacific Plan (Huffer 158).⁴ The intractable issue of sovereignty has indeed put up barriers to regional connectivity (as seen, for example, with the lack of response to the 1987 Fiji Coup, discussed in Chapter Four). This dialectic between region and nation is manifested in the regional phenomenon of Oceanic play production, which negotiates between the representation and assertion of broad cultural affiliations and a "cultural politics of place-bound identity" (Wilson 134).

The Drama and Theatre of Oceania⁵

Written drama in Oceania is a relatively recent phenomenon, arising mainly as a result of, and in response to, colonial intercession; however, the theatre currently being developed in Oceania draws upon (as one strand of its hybrid genealogy) a rich tradition of indigenous performance in Pacific Island cultures. Pre-contact communities featured an abundant variety of oral and physical performance genres, such as song, dance, storytelling, playing musical instruments, religious ceremony,

⁴ The 2007 version of the Pacific Plan makes it clear that "Regionalism under the Pacific Plan does not imply any limitation on national sovereignty. It is not intended to replace any national programmes, only to support and complement them. A regional approach should be taken only if it adds value to national efforts" (3).

⁵ Throughout, I distinguish between "drama" as the scripted, literary work, and "theatre" as the larger performance and production framework that includes a range of non-literary elements. Another descriptor sometimes used for Oceanic or Pacific Island theatre and other cultural productions is "Pasifika," an indigenized term meaning "of the Pacific."

oratory, and formal displays of combat skills, as well as – in some areas – more representational theatrical forms such as puppetry⁶ and dramatic sketches.⁷ While many of these forms continue today and/or are revitalized and reworked within contemporary plays, examples such as puppet narratives and sketch performances are of especial interest in a study of Pacific Island theatre because they point to the presence of various formal theatrical structures in the pre-contact repertoire. This becomes significant when “the common belief is that there is no indigenous Pacific theatre” (Aoki 81), and that the process of “putting on a play” is a concept gleaned solely from colonial culture and education. Indeed, pursuing this question further, my re-examination of evidence from eyewitness accounts by late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century European and American missionaries, traders, whalers, military

⁶ In the New Zealand Māori performing arts tradition there are references to karetao, or “jumping-jack” puppets made of wood with moveable arms and moko (facial tattoo) to differentiate the characters, manipulated with cord in accompaniment to songs and stories about the ancestors (Royal *Te Whare Tapere* 175; Farrimond 413). Further support for the existence of Polynesian puppet performance is supplied by Katharine Luomala, who mentions examples in Mangaia (Cook Islands) comprising strings and rods (Luomala “Moving” 28) and, more extensively, in her fascinating study of hula ki’i (Native Hawaiian puppetry, lit. “image dance”), involving assembled and manipulable anthropomorphic figures, about 1/3 human size, carved from wood and decorated with shell and tapa cloth, which danced hula and performed narrative plays behind a tapa screen (Punch-and-Judy-style), sometimes in concert with a live dancer (Luomala *Hula Ki’i* 81-2, 170). These performances, often satiric and irreverent (*Hula Ki’i* 71), were described as “the nearest approximation made by the Hawaiians to a genuine dramatic performance” (Emerson in Luomala *Hula Ki’i* 91), and seem to have been indigenous, with figures extant prior to James Cook’s first visit in 1778, although Luomala admits that it is uncertain the extent to which foreign contact and cultural cross-pollination stimulated sculptors and hula masters to experiment with and to elaborate the patterns of use of these figures (*Hula Ki’i* 170).

⁷ A number of indigenous performance genres are receiving renewed attention from scholars, but the chief scholar to focus on dramatic performance is Vilsoni Hereniko. In his study of Polynesian “clowning,” Hereniko has identified a wide variety of comic performances throughout the region, both secular and sacred, which ranged from short, spontaneous episodes of interpersonal clowning to prepared comic sketches/plays driven by a plot (“Clowning” 15-28). Sketch comedy, which Hereniko suggests may have evolved from dance, given its audience participation and improvisatory elements (*Woven Gods* 150), was probably very widespread throughout the pre-contact Pacific. Caroline Sinavaiana has paid particular attention to the fale aitu comic sketch form in Samoa (192-218), while Geoffrey White has analyzed the thukma and bina boli sketches of the Santa Isabel region of the Solomon Islands (139-56), and Ingjerd Hoëm has written on dramatic sketches in Tokelau (*Theatre and Political Process*).

personnel, mutineers, beachcombers, scientists, and explorers in the Pacific⁸ registers the existence of a variety of different performances that, although independent of and distinct from Western play forms, employed plot, embodied characterization, spoken or sung dialogue, costumes, props and/or sets, and sometimes incorporated song or dance to supplement the action. They treated social affairs and historical events, and served educative, commemorative, and political purposes, as well as providing entertainment. As more research is undertaken in this field and its contemporary and historical traditions are better documented, we might argue that whereas contemporary theatre in Oceania is a distinctive form, and certainly arises from a unique set of circumstances and aesthetic impulses tied to processes of (de)colonization, we can also understand these plays as implicitly referencing, and resonating with, a tradition tied more directly to indigenous cultural histories.

After several decades of colonial influence throughout Oceania, in which the languages, customs, and social structures that supported indigenous performance were submerged in many communities, a new wave of scripted drama began to emerge in the late 1960s, stimulated by indigenous self-determination movements, changes in political structures in decolonizing societies, and the development of new institutional infrastructures, such as regional universities. This predominantly anglophone⁹ drama

⁸ Despite the fragmentary and highly mediated nature of such evidence, for many communities these early written ethnographic accounts remain the sole records of pre-colonial societies that soon afterwards changed irrevocably.

⁹ There is a growing body of work by indigenous francophone playwrights in French Polynesia and French Melanesia, some of which has been published in recent years. In New Caledonia, the early drama *Kanaké* (1975) by Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Georges Dobbelaere was an important force in stimulating the Kanak renaissance, and more recently, Kanak playwright Pierre Gope has authored thirteen plays addressing controversial social issues in local communities, such as *Où est le Droit?* [*Where is the Law?*] (1997), *Le Dernier Crépuscule* [*The Last Nightfall*] (2001), *Les Dieux sont Borgnes* [*The Gods are Blind*] (2002), and *La Parenthèse* [*Bracket*] (2005). In Tahiti, Mā'ohi playwright John Mairai is a productive writer, adaptor, and director; and Ra'iatean playwright Jean-Marc Tera'ituatini Pambrun has written the stylized, mythic verse drama *La Nuit des Bouches Bleues* [*The Night of Blue Lips*] (2002) and a historical play set in the Marquesas Islands at the time of Paul Gauguin's death, *Les Parfums du Silence* [*The Perfumes of Silence*] (2003), published under the pseudonym Étienne Ahuroa. A very few works have been translated into English, but the majority

started to flourish across the region at approximately the same time. For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, Harry Dansey's *Te Raukura* (1972) is coeval with Aboriginal drama in Australia (Kevin Gilbert's *The Cherry Pickers*, 1968/70); with the establishment of the Kumu Kahua Theatre in Hawai'i (1971); and with the first Fijian play, *Rachel* (1973), by Pio Manoa. These come only a few years after the first play from the Solomon Islands, Francis Bugotu's *This Man* (1969), and the first published English-language plays from Papua New Guinea (Turuk Wabei's *Kulubob* and John Wills Kaniku's *Cry of the Cassowary*, both 1969). As an emergent form that was also a literary endeavor, early Oceanic drama was in touch with and enabled by developments in Pacific literature during the 1960s and 1970s,¹⁰ such as creative writing classes offered at the University of Papua New Guinea and the University of the South Pacific, organizations such as the South Pacific Creative Arts Society, and the institution of literary journals like *Mana*, *Kovave*, *Ondobondo*, *Bikmaus*, and *Mānoa*, which have offered forums for the publication of short plays and the development of a critical discourse about them.

Significantly, this widespread output has also been instrumental in forging and reinforcing regional solidarity in Oceania. In 1976, Samoan scholar, writer, and playwright Albert Wendt claimed that “across the political boundaries dividing our countries an intense artistic activity is starting to weave firm links between us. This

remain in French. In addition, there are a growing number of indigenous language theatres being developed throughout Oceania: in Aotearoa, Taki Rua Theatre has instituted regular Te Reo Māori Tours to promote Māori-language theatre; in Hawai'i, Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker's Hawaiian-language theatre company, Kā Hālau Hanakeaka, is touring widely; and in Micronesia, Guam playwright Peter Onedera's work has been an instrumental conduit for the expression and revitalization of Chamorro language and culture. One of the most prolific playwrights in the Pacific, Onedera has written seventy-five plays ranging from one-act to full-length plays in both Chamorro and English, thirty-five of which have been produced publicly.

¹⁰ For more in-depth discussions of the development of Pacific literature during this period, see Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*; Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing and Pacific Islands Writing*; Susan Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific*; Subramani, *South Pacific Literature*; and Sina Va'ai, *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia*.

cultural awakening, inspired and fostered and led by our own people, will not stop at the artificial frontiers drawn by the colonial powers. [...] Our ties transcend barriers of culture, race, petty nationalism, and politics” (17, 19). In form and content, these plays offer counter-discourses to imperial hegemonies and stereotyped views of Oceania, and attend to the ideological biases and cultural assumptions embedded in traditions of Western theatre, while also examining and critiquing repressive indigenous structures and local conflicts within Pacific Island communities. Broadly, then, these plays stage what Steven Winduo calls an “unwriting” (599) and repositioning of Oceania, not only reclaiming cultural memory by “reinstat[ing] what has been crossed out, but is visible even in erasure” (600), but actively inventing new ways of seeing.

Formally, these plays are characterized to greater or lesser extents by their blending of “the ‘received goods’ of the West with those of [the authors’] own indigenous homelands” (Va‘ai 30). In the inaugural issue of *Mana*, published the year after the first South Pacific Festival of the Arts in Fiji in 1972, Chris Plant called for the creation of a theatre that “must avoid being a meaningless copy of yet another European institution, primarily because it will not be aimed to appeal to a European audience” (58), and advocated “making selective use of Western theatre traditions and adapting them to the Pacific” (58). This “amalgam of Western and Island traditions” (58), argues Plant, is useful not only for keeping indigenous cultures living, but the form is relevant for portraying life as influenced by Europeans (59). Plant’s model is something that Christopher Balme recognizes in postcolonial theatre more broadly, and calls “syncretic theatre” (*Decolonizing* 1). Syncretic theatre questions the basis of normative Western drama and its focus on dialogue and realism by incorporating other cultural texts such as songs, dances, masquerades, costuming, oral stories, indigenous languages, ritual, and experiments with theatrical and dramatic space and time (*Decolonizing* 3-23), producing not simply a body of work but a “theoretical discourse

which questions some of the fundamental principles of Western theatrical aesthetics” (*Decolonizing* 23-4). This general process of resistance and reformulation also enables the plays to be read in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms as “autoethnographic texts,” entailing a partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the dominant or metropolitan culture, in which extant genres are merged and transformed by infusion with indigenous modes (6-7). Autoethnographic texts should be understood neither as “authentic” self-expression nor “inauthentic” assimilation, but as transcultural texts in “dialogic engagement with western modes of representation” (102), and important in unraveling histories of imperial subjugation and resistance as seen from the site of their occurrence (9).

Despite strong connections to literary developments in Oceania, playwriting and theatrical performance have developed in unique ways, reflecting theatre’s status as an embodied, collaborative activity. In *South Pacific Literature*, as recently as 1992, Subramani could still ask the “inevitable question: Why are there so few written plays?” (68). Subramani puts this situation down to the specific demands of playwriting for performance, which require “knowledge and skill beyond those expected of a writer” (68) such as dramaturgy, stagecraft, and design; the need for external institutional support for play development, which is not always available in smaller centers; and the fact that theatre as a literary genre and live medium was, until relatively recently, a foreign concept in many Pacific Island communities with their own oral cultural and performance traditions that “still satisfy the entertainment needs of both the literate and the non-literate” (68). To these considerations, I would couple playwrights’ attitudes with the economics of print production. For many playwrights, performance is publication, so there is not the same impetus to have the work published (or even documented fully) in written form. The script is, after all, usually only a blueprint for performance and can only ever be a partial record of an

ever-changing performance event. Moreover, there is often a long lag between the writing of a play and its eventual publication (if it happens at all), and plays are not considered to sell as well as novels or poetry, often resulting in small print runs and single editions, many of which are not easily accessible outside of their respective geographic areas. These considerations also present evident challenges for the establishment of an archive of playscripts and documented performances from which works for critical study can be drawn. In the more than fifteen years since Subramani published his book there has been a greater efflorescence of Oceanic drama, but it is important to note that this development has not occurred equally throughout the region,¹¹ nor has this output occurred at the level of other literary genres, for the same valid reasons mentioned above.

Nevertheless, there is a strong case to be made for a dynamic and growing body of Oceanic drama. An increasing number of works are being produced throughout the region, in many areas the infrastructures that support playwright training and theatrical production are developing, more works are being published and represented in educational curricula, and playwrights are winning awards and attaining fellowships and professional residencies. A larger number of plays are touring internationally, being featured at regional and international arts festivals, and being produced by Pacific-oriented overseas companies, such as the Shaky Isles Theatre

¹¹ Clearly, some island communities are more well-equipped for the production of drama than others, either because of access to resources or because they do not suffer from political conflicts that inhibit artistic endeavors. But beyond that observation, Aotearoa New Zealand and Papua New Guinea offer good examples of some of the other distinctions I am talking about. In New Zealand, 1975 is often seen as the flashpoint for an indigenous self-determination movement and a renaissance of Māori language and culture, including a Māori theatrical tradition that has grown and – generally speaking – become better sponsored, resourced, and more diverse in subsequent decades. Papua New Guinea, on the other hand, had its major outpouring of indigenous drama from the late sixties up until the nation's independence in 1975. After independence, there was something of a sense of political objectives having been met, many writers abandoned their creative projects to take up positions as politicians or civil servants, and there has been a decline in the drama being produced post-1975, which continues with the recent demise of the National Theatre.

Company and the Pacific Playhouse in London, and the Australian Aboriginal Theatre Initiative (which frequently showcases Pasifika plays) in New York City. Given also that Pacific Islander identity can reach far beyond the borders of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, it is important to acknowledge work developed and staged by people in communities on the West Coast of the United States, throughout Australia, and in the United Kingdom. Significantly, too, several of these plays have staged social and political interventions that have been registered in sites throughout the Pacific and beyond. These achievements point to the timeliness of studies that seek to examine this work and help further the aims of the playwrights and performers through a supporting critical discourse.

The field of Oceanic drama is marked by a lack of critical reception within the broader field of postcolonial studies and academic publishing. To some extent, this situation is occasioned by the issues of visibility, access, archive, and genre outlined above, but it has also, as Michelle Keown has suggested of Pacific literature, to do with prevailing conceptions of who and what “postcolonialism” represents, with the tendency to privilege certain regions, authors, theories, and critics over others. Keown mentions, for instance, Robert Young’s concept of “tricontinentalism,” which restricts the postcolonial world to Latin America, Africa, and Asia (*Postcolonial* 8), and I have already mentioned the inclination to subsume the Pacific into Asia. Oceanic drama is generally absent from the major anthologies of “World Theatre” and primary Theatre History textbooks.¹² Theatre encyclopedias that treat the Asia-Pacific region, such as the (generally commendable) *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*:

¹² For example, the *Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* (2007), *Longman Anthology of Drama and Theater: A Global Perspective* (2000), *Norton Anthology of Drama* (2008), and *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2006). Local anthologies have been published in several Pacific sites, such as *Five New Guinea Plays* (1971), *Beyond Ceremony: An Anthology of Drama from Fiji* (2001), *He Reo Hou: Five Plays by Maori Playwrights* (1991), *Kumu Kahua Plays* (1983), and *He Leo Hou: A New Voice – Hawaiian Playwrights* (2003), but there is, as yet, no pan-regional anthology, and Pacific Island plays are rarely anthologized elsewhere.

Asia/Pacific (2001), allot the majority of their space to Asian theatre, and in the case of the *Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (1993), elides these distinctions altogether. Even Keown's recent survey volume, *Pacific Islands Writing* (2007), aside from briefly mentioning drama in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, assigns only nine pages to a section on "Drama" in the book's conclusion.

A number of critical discussions of Oceanic drama and theatre have appeared in academic journals, focusing mainly on indigenous Māori and diasporic Pacific Island theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand, Hawaiian theatre, and theatre from Fiji – a concentration that reflects the comparatively rich theatrical output of these sites. Traditionally, chief fora have been regional journals such as *Australasian Drama Studies* and *SPAN*, but the purview is widening, with articles appearing occasionally in a range of international theatre and performance journals. Aotearoa New Zealand has received the majority of critical attention, although much of this includes analyses and histories of Pākehā¹³ playwriting, which emphasize connections with other anglophone or Commonwealth drama. Marc Maufort and David O'Donnell's edited collection, *Performing Aotearoa* (2007), offers a rich array of perspectives on fresh developments in New Zealand theatre, covering the spectrum of Pākehā dramaturgies, Māori playwriting and performance, and theatres of the Chinese and Indian diasporas.

¹³ The term "Pākehā," which I reference repeatedly, especially in Chapters Two and Three, is defined most usefully in this context as a "non-Polynesian New Zealand-born New Zealander" (Orsman 567). Earliest mentions of the term occur in the early nineteenth century and also in the preamble to the Māori version of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (see Chapter Three) as distinguishing Māori from Europeans. The term has been adopted (although not universally or without controversy) as an ethnic descriptor for New Zealanders of European descent, and is now usually capitalized, as a congener of the forms "Māori" or "European." Pākehā should not be considered a monolithic ethnic category – especially as one defined in opposition to a diverse Māori (or other) identity – as remains the case in some postcolonial scholarship. This approach reduces the complexity of cross-cultural interactions in the New Zealand context, and I remain attentive to these heterogeneous dynamics in my work on Aotearoa New Zealand (including my discussions of plays that deliberately reconstruct these binary oppositions for political purposes). For a more detailed discussion of one perspective on this issue, see Michael King, *Being Pakeha: An Encounter with New Zealand and the Maori Renaissance* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

Discussions of Oceanic drama also comprise sections of longer works dealing with Pacific literatures: Sina Va'ai's *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia* (1999), for example, contains an examination of drama from Fiji, and Paul Lyons' *American Pacificism* (2006) includes a discussion of playwriting in Hawai'i, as does Josephine Lee's *Performing Asian America* (1998). Several cross-cultural studies of postcolonial theatre treat Māori drama, placing it within what Marvin Carlson calls the "Trans-Pacific axis" (*Speaking* 137), which links New Zealand, Australia, and Canada (but bypasses the islands in the middle), as in Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins' *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), Christopher Balme's *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama* (1999), and, centrally, in Marc Maufort's *Transgressive Itineraries: Postcolonial Hybridizations of Dramatic Realism* (2003). Anton Carter, however, provides a different spin on New Zealand theatre and its relationship to Oceania with a chapter on Pacific Island theatre in Aotearoa in the arts and culture compilation, *Pacific Art Niu Sila* (2002). Introductions to published plays and play anthologies, moreover, often provide important critical and contextual information. In the main, however, longer, more sustained studies of Oceanic drama and theatre, especially ones that emphasize regional connections, are very rare.

There are several unpublished doctoral dissertations that represent important studies of dramatic traditions in single Pacific sites, including Mei-lin Te-Puea Hansen's examination of the representation of women in contemporary Māori theatre, *Aroha's Granddaughters* (2005); Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal's *Te Whare Tapere: Towards a New Model for Māori Performance Arts* (1998), Justina Mattos' *The Development of Hawai'i's Kumu Kahua Theatre* (2002), and Kirsty Powell's *The First Papua New Guinean Playwrights and Their Plays* (1978). Likewise, Janinka Greenwood's monograph treats the *History of Bicultural Theatre* (2002) in New

Zealand, and Ingjerd Hoëm focuses on two plays performed in Tokelau and New Zealand by the theatre group Tokelau Te Ata in her book *Theatre and Political Process* (2004). In addition, there are two published comparative studies of playwriting and performance in the Pacific: Christopher Balme's regional complement to Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead, Pacific Performances* (2007), paints circum-Pacific connections in very broad strokes, treating a wide range of cultural performances from the eighteenth century to the present; and Astrid Betz's German-language study, *Die Inszenierung der Südsee [The Production of the South Seas]* (2003) surveys a large number of dramatic texts by and about Pacific Islanders produced over two centuries through the lens of staged "authenticity." Both of these are valuable, but more work needs to be done to establish the field in more depth by offering more detailed comparative analyses of contemporary Oceanic drama and theatre. There is evidence from related disciplines that the Pacific is no longer "the marginalised backwater of non-European studies" (Borofsky 25), with a recent flourishing of comparative studies of contemporary, postcolonial Pacific literature (Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* (2005); Susan Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific* (2006); and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Roots and Routes* (2007); along with Juniper Ellis' book, *Tattooing the World* (2008) that engages literary and performance studies), which give the field a critical visibility unavailable even five years ago, and point to the possibility and desirability of similar studies in drama.

In acknowledging Oceania as a "complex, contradictory, and mult centered space of production" (Wilson 139), any attempt to address Oceanic theatre in its entirety is clearly an impossible task. Consequently, I begin my exploration of this field with a select examination of historiographic theatre produced in Hawai'i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji.

Remaking Pacific Pasts: Historiographic Theatre

The topics treated by Pacific playwrights are diverse, and yet a significant number of plays are preoccupied with a critical engagement of aspects of the region's past, especially the circumstances of its colonial histories. In this manner, this study contributes to a broader scholarly discourse on the variable genre of the "history play." Here I ask what might be at stake in representing or challenging "history" in the theatre, and tease out some of the historiographic, political, and aesthetic issues that such projects involve. In many ways, historiographic drama offers a productive starting point for examinations of postcolonial Pacific Island theatre if we admit that the Western discipline of history has been a powerful discursive dimension of the colonizing process and, subsequently, that a key aspect of the critical pedagogy of decolonization has involved "questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts" (Tuhiwai Smith 28). Greg Denning's reminder that "History is not the past; it is a consciousness of the past used for present purposes" (*Performances* 72) points to the way that this recognition and reclamation of the past emerges vitally as a tool to understand, restructure, and reformulate the present and the future; consequently, in its broadest sense, looking at treatments of Pacific histories simultaneously allows insights into pressing concerns about local and regional identities in the contemporary Pacific.

In the Pacific context, as Epeli Hau'ofa argues, "People with powerful connections have presented us in certain ways, which have influenced our self-perceptions and the ways in which we have been perceived and treated by others. [...] In order for us to gain greater autonomy than we have today and maintain it within the global system, we must in addition to other measures be able to define and construct our pasts and present in our own ways. We cannot rely heavily on others to do it for us

because autonomy cannot be attained through dependence” (“Pasts to Remember” 453-54). This drive for a greater measure of self-determination through reclamation of the past has been part of decolonization discourse in the Pacific since the 1970s, and some of these calls have taken on a deliberately utopian character in response to histories of belittlement and estrangement. For example, writing in the mid-1970s, Albert Wendt explains that “Any real understanding of ourselves and our existing cultures calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us,” in order to “heal the wounds it inflicted on us and with the healing return pride in ourselves – an ingredient so vital to creative nation-building” (10). Wendt contends, “we must rediscover and reaffirm our faith in the vitality of our past, our cultures, our dead, so that we may develop our own unique eyes, voices, muscles, and imagination” (11). Importantly, for Wendt, the turn to the historical past is not about a resurrection of an idealized pre-colonial culture but about “the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts. The quest should be for a new Oceania” (12).

Writing twenty-five years later, Subramani takes a differently critical view of the state of play in Oceania; in contrast to earlier decades when “intellectuals believed that the writers’ task was to unravel and discover myths and metaphors that would reflect the true essence of their culture, at the close of the twentieth century the world has become too heterogeneous, too complex for that task” (“Oceanic Imaginary” 161). Nevertheless, Subramani continues to emphasize the necessity of Pacific-centered epistemologies, the tracing of “diverse and complex forms of knowledge – philosophies, cartographies, languages, genealogies, repressed knowledges” (“Oceanic Imaginary” 151), that would shift the relations of power and knowledge in Oceania and “break out of the distorting, deforming organization of Eurocentric historiography and modernist projects that view the west as their center” (“Oceanic Imaginary” 151).

Consequently, despite changing approaches to reading Oceania, there has been a common emphasis on the recovery and redeployment of cultural histories and knowledges as a counter to Eurocentric paradigms – an undertaking that involves not only resistance to the restricting and disparaging attitudes, cultural assumptions, and entrenched power structures of colonialism at the national level, but takes on the broader project of reinventing a modern regional imaginary based both on counter-colonial interisland commonalities and regional difference in the face of global hegemony.

The assertion of alternative historical viewpoints dismantles the concept of history as a universal, totalizing discourse; negates the notion of a single, coherent explanatory narrative and the myth of progress that it encodes; and subverts its guise of ideological neutrality to reveal its constructed and interpretive nature. Such interventions have been advanced by postmodern and poststructuralist developments within the wider Western discipline of history since the 1960s, following the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Michel de Certeau. This dissolution of a centralized perspective and admission of a wider range of perspectives and enunciations has occurred along with a moral agenda to “be engaged in a systematic analysis of coercive and disciplining modes of representation” (Kolbiaka 6). As Michal Kolbiaka observes: “With the proliferation of alternative histories and local rationalities, history has acquired a new ethical dimension of needing to be aware of, and to expose, the conditions under which its knowledge becomes legitimate and hegemonic” (6).

Part of the displacement of the objective authority of documentary history has involved an acknowledgement of history’s literary and performative qualities. Hayden White emphasizes history’s “origins in the literary imagination” (*Tropics* 99) and its expression as “a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse”

(*Metahistory* ix), while Greg Denning claims that “writing history is a performance,” and that histories “are not just the stream of consciousness about the past but that knowledge made dramaturgical in its forms of expression” (*Performances* 30, 37) – positions that are potentially productive for thinking about how forms of literature and performance may in turn be historiographic. Also important to this study is how this general approach to historical understanding undermines binary distinctions between history as an objective, reliable, written discourse based on facts, and memory as embodied, oral, subjective, and unreliable, thus legitimating personal and cultural memory as forms of historical knowledge. Subsequently, this encourages an exploration of the multiple ways that such memories are transmitted. In addition to a focus on personal memories conveyed through witnessing, testimony, and oral histories, I also consider the various ways in which “cultural memory [as] the collection of wisdom, history and tradition that provides us with the basis of cultural action” (Poumau 195), is experienced and disseminated. Performance studies scholars Diana Taylor and Joseph Roach, for instance, emphasize the significance of a wide range of embodied practices, both verbal and non-verbal, in storing and transmitting knowledge, and preserving and reinventing communal identity and memory, comprising a rich “repertoire” that exists in contrast and complement to the “archive” (D. Taylor 18-9). Roach, moreover, points to “genealogies of performance” (25) that “document – and suspect – the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations” (25), and among other functions, attend to “‘counter-memories,’ or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences” (26).

These various issues are especially pertinent to current debates in Pacific studies about the possibilities of productively “decentering” the practice of history in

Oceania through admission of, and engagement with, more diverse models of historical understanding and vehicles for their expression. Postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty contends that, for subaltern communities, the task of representing oneself in history is not simply an issue of returning the European gaze within an asymmetrical power structure, but involves a more complex teasing out of the ways in which the production of historical knowledge continues to be infused by European influences (28), whereby even local histories become “variations on a master narrative” (27) that posits Europe as the sovereign, theoretical subject – a recognition that, as Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins have argued, “demands not only a rethinking of history’s content but also a reworking of its axiomatic forms” (109). Discussions about the process of decentering Pacific history have transpired as part of a significant broader move in Pacific studies over the past two decades towards foregrounding the relevance and cultural utility of indigenous epistemologies.¹⁴ Scholars have asked how the practice of history could be made more relevant and meaningful to indigenous peoples of the Pacific, given that, as David Hanlon points out, “the practice of history in Oceania is something quite different from what is commonly understood to be the practice of history in the Euro-American world, as well as something inherently variable and particular within this ‘sea of islands’” (29). Hanlon argues for the necessity of recognizing written expression as only one means of historical understanding; to separate from the places, people, academic criteria, and institutional practices that are essentially colonialist; and to pay attention to different epistemologies and ways in which this knowledge is validated and transferred, such as through weaving, painting, sailing, and tattooing (29-31). Vilsoni Hereniko, similarly,

¹⁴ See, as examples, the work of Greg Dening, David Hanlon, Epeli Hau‘ofa, Vicente Diaz, J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Vilsoni Hereniko, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Teresia Teaiwa, Konai Helu Thaman, Elise Huffer, Ropate Qalo, James Clifford, ‘Okusitino Māhina, ‘I. Fetu Helu, Lilikalā Kame‘elehiwa, Haunani Kay Trask, Selina Tusitala Marsh, and Margaret Jolly.

makes the case for stories, dances, theatrical performances, ceremonies, rituals, and poetry as valuable conduits for historical information (“Indigenous Knowledge” 80-2), but admits that, “When I read historical accounts by Western scholars about the Pacific, I am often surprised by the lack of serious consideration of these sources, particularly the oral narratives and performance” (“Indigenous Knowledge” 82).

Alongside the acknowledgement of diverse forms of history-making beyond the text, key aspects of decentering history also include the recognition and deployment of alternative concepts of time and space, and I shall outline some examples that are treated in this dissertation. One indigenous temporal construct, common throughout Polynesia and to the three sites included in this study, is the concept of the past appearing in front of us as we move backwards into the future.¹⁵ As Hau‘ofa notes, the past going ahead of us into the future that is behind us foregrounds a notion of time as circular (which is in common with cycles of natural phenomena), or as a spiral, if we engage lineal movements alongside cyclical ones. Hau‘ofa argues, “That the past is ahead of us, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and to be aware of its presence. [...] The past is alive in us, so in more than a metaphorical sense the dead are alive – we are our history” (“Pasts to Remember” 460). In addition to cyclical or spiral time, certain Pacific cultures also

¹⁵ Fijians use the term “*gauna i liu*” (the time in front, ahead) to refer to the past; and in Māori cosmology, the events of the past appear before one (*ki mua*, in front) as one walks backwards into the future (*kei muri*, behind). Similarly, as historian Lilikalā Kame‘elehiwa explains: “It is interesting to note that in Hawaiian, the past is referred to as *Ka wā mamua*, or ‘the time in front or before.’ Whereas the future, when thought of at all, is *Ka wā mahope*, or ‘the time which comes after or behind.’ It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas” (22-3). Interestingly, this positional orientation has a European analogy in Walter Benjamin’s famous Angel of History, who also faces the past with his back to the future; however, unlike Benjamin’s critique of historicism, in which the Angel sees history as “one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet” (257) as he is blown back violently, out of control, by the storm of “progress,” the Polynesian perspective reappraises Western narratives of linear progress by referencing an indigenous past that is “rich in glory and knowledge” (Kame‘elehiwa 23); as Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio affirms: “We face the past, confidently interpreting the present, cautiously backing into the future, guided by what our ancestors knew and did” (7).

emphasize liminal spatio-temporalities, as with the Māori concept of “te wheiao,”¹⁶ which denotes a richly resonant in-between space and time of transition that works against binary distinctions and notions of segmented, linear time and entelechy. Recently, indigenous scholars have also returned to a serious consideration of myth or mythic structures as the source of historical factualities or hypotheses about the past (Helu, Māhina), creating enriching historical understandings that may operate counter-hegemonically; as ‘Okusitino Māhina contends: “the appeal to the historical fact of myth has the power to challenge history” (Māhina 80). An important example that relates to several of the aforementioned concepts is “genealogical history” (Kama‘elehiwa), an indigenous mode of historical understanding that connects people and places through a phenomenological, spatio-temporal language of kinship, and plots origins and destinations as well as dis/connections in the relations between divine beings and past ancestors, and living descendants (Jolly 514). Genealogical histories are told across much of the Pacific, but are explored here specifically through the Māori tradition of “whakapapa.”

Many of these models involve a recalibration of colonially inscribed and hierarchized space, and point to the relationship of history to indigenous cultural inscriptions of the land and the sea; as Hau‘ofa reminds us: “We cannot read our histories without knowing how to read our landscapes (and seascapes)” (“Pasts to Remember” 466). As opposed to “mimetic” responses to the landscape that retain imposed linearity and colonial inscriptions, indigenous models tend toward what Paul Carter calls “methexis,” an understanding that involves participation with the land (or ocean) rather than representation of it, a fluid relation to topography, and a taking account of the history of the landscape and its users (Carter in Tompkins 10-11).

¹⁶ In Samoan culture, the related concept of the “vā” is an important cultural trope, although I do not engage it directly in this current study.

Notably, in acknowledging the importance of historical models that offer alternatives to centralizing, repressive structures, it is important to recognize that local histories can also be expressive of power and privilege (Hanlon 29) and that it is important not to idealize indigenous histories but to retain a critical posture – an issue that becomes especially pertinent in the chapter on Fiji.

These examples of the practice of “decentering” history in aid of the development of a “new Oceania” lead us into a discussion of how theatrical performance might function as one productive mode for engaging and expressing versions of Pacific histories that create counter-discourses to historical narratives developed through colonialism or repressive indigenous nationalisms. Janelle Reinelt observes that, “In periods of crisis or flux, theatre is especially well-suited to influence as well as reflect the course of history by providing imaginative mimesis, transformative models, and observant critique” (228). Formally, as an expressive medium, theatre’s temporal, spatial, and embodied aspects offer useful frameworks for this renegotiation. Theatre integrates a repertoire of oral and physical communicative modalities, sublating the supremacy of the written document as it exists in colonial discourse and Western academic practice. As Diana Taylor reminds us, “Part of what performance and performance studies allows us to *do*, then, is to take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge. The repertoire, on a very practical level, expands the traditional archive used by academic departments in the humanities” (26). Theatre’s embodied cultural production generates a range of meanings that exceed the boundaries of the written text, allowing for concurrent, non-sequential readings of aural and visual signifiers (Gilbert and Tompkins 109). As Hereniko observes, “Dance, drama, public rituals, and ceremonies communicate multiple messages about a culture simultaneously [...] implicit in the kinds of costumes being worn, the way space is negotiated, the

arrangement of dancers, the hand, feet, and facial movements, and other elements of a performance that embody a culture's aesthetics and values" ("Indigenous Knowledge" 88-9). Performance's flexible structure, moreover, allows for friction between actors and social roles, subverting existing embodied scenarios that may encode repressive formulations and assumptions (D. Taylor 29), and the live format enables a participatory reciprocity between performers and audience, encouraging active interpretation, debate, and negotiation. That theatre unfolds synchronically in space as well as time lends itself to temporal and spatial ambiguity, taking place as it does in a here which is not "here" and a now which is not "now" (Gilbert and Tompkins 139), enabling representation of modes of time-space that are not bound to notions of telos or which refute conventional segmentation and spatial logic (Gilbert and Tompkins 109, 139).

In form and function, we can read theatre as an important repository of cultural memory; whereas Taylor and Roach stake central claims in the ability of many different kinds of embodied performances to convey cultural memories across time and space, Marvin Carlson points explicitly to the theatre as an exemplary site in this regard, citing theatre's multivalent processes of recycling, repetition, and reappearance as central to its rationale and effects (*Haunted Stage* 3, 11). In addition, it is important to note that theatre/performance might not only be able to present material that in other disciplines may be considered "un(re)presentable," but may attend directly to the *problems* of representation: exposing the gaps, aporias, or paradoxes that other forms of historiography might elide, subject to narrative formalization, or be unable to register. One example here might be the experience of trauma (which emerges in this study in the relation to the experiences of contact, colonialism and coup conflict). Dominick LaCapra acknowledges how certain forms of art may "provide a more expansive space [...] for exploring modalities of responding to trauma" (*Writing*

History 185), through the role of affect, or the expression of gestures, flashbacks, repeats, and disorientation, “in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral and invalid forms of knowledge and evidence” (D. Taylor 193).

While acknowledging the valuable revisionist possibilities of theatre’s plastic skills, I want to pursue a more critical consideration of how contemporary Pacific Island plays function in their remaking of Pacific pasts. In his book *Performing History*, Freddie Rokem argues that “History can only be perceived as such when it becomes recapitulated, when we create some form of discourse, like the theatre, on the basis of which an organized repetition of the past is constructed, situating the chaotic torrents of the past within an aesthetic frame” (xi). Consequently, we should consider what discourse is encapsulated within the syncretic theatre frame and what this implies in terms of historical engagement. It is vital to remember that, while syncretic plays may incorporate and deploy indigenous rituals, perspectival frames, and other performance forms as conduits for historical information, they are not vehicles for the unmediated reproduction of indigenous genres, but are hybrid cultural products that negotiate between Western and Oceanic aesthetic and epistemological frameworks (a process which may involve borrowing and reformulating both conservative and progressive elements from different sides). As such, they are consciously critical formations that select, adapt, and reinvent – reconstituting the old in the context of the new, and adapting the new, demonstrating “local ways of doing history: ways of history that have always been with us, ways that are reemerging and being transformed in their reemergence, and new ways that appropriate existing technologies from Oceania and beyond in selective, subversive, and complicated manners” (Hanlon 21).

While I shall go on to explain how this approach can generate effective historical reinterpretation, it is also necessary to acknowledge that valid concerns have

been raised about the processes and ethics of cultural hybridity in performance. Rustom Bharucha, for instance, has frequently evinced concern about the danger of intercultural borrowing and recontextualization to subvert cultural identities and inhibit genuine exchange (“Somebody’s Other” 206-07, *Theatre and the World* 13-41), arguing for the need to be vigilant about the cultural assumptions, privileges, and discriminations that obtain in intercultural theatre practice (Bharucha *Politics* 20-44, Zarrilli *Acting* 90-1). Bharucha is primarily concerned with a particular kind of Euro-American theatrical practice involving interactions and borrowings across cultures (typified by practitioners such as Brook, Mnouchkine, Barba, and Schechner) that he sees as potentially exploitative and based in a neoliberal, ethnocentric embrace of the cultures of the world (*Politics* 4), and that may end up reifying the very viewpoints that such an endeavor ostensibly seeks to escape. In contrast, Christopher Balme argues that syncretic theatre, as an appropriation of Western models of theatre by the colonized, avoids such traps through its perspective, agenda, and its respect for the various forms utilized (*Decolonizing* 17), and while I agree to some extent, I suggest that the potential for the problematic de/recontextualization of cultural forms, customs, and protocols (either “Western” or “non-Western”) exists in any intercultural theatrical formulation, including those instigated by non-Western practitioners. Consequently, although I continue to see this heterogeneous format as productive for interrogating monovocal and unidirectional paradigms in historical analysis, my readings try to remain sensitive to the varied dynamics of recombining and redeploying cultural forms in different social contexts.

In this study, I show how the syncretic approach foregrounds the plays’ historiographic function as critical interventions into the complex processes of history-making. While the works are committed to legitimating aspects of Pacific culture and reframing dominant depictions of Pacific peoples, overall, the plays I treat are less

concerned with representing history than *engaging* it (Bechtel 16). Although characters and scenes from the past do appear on stage, in their form and content the majority of the works subordinate the re-enactment of past events to an interrogation of how that past comes to be what it is and to impact present conditions in the way that it does, foregrounding debate, dialogism, multiplicity, and a self-reflexive preoccupation with the indeterminacies of staging history,¹⁷ all of which seek to dismantle repressive discourses and open up space for new understandings of and responses to colonial legacies, national histories, and regional interconnections. Furthermore, the syncretic theatre form also acknowledges that there are other colonizing sites for history outside the academy (Hanlon 33) and that theatre has been, and potentially still can be, one such site; thus, in using theatre as a medium for historical interpretation, these playwrights acknowledge its possibilities and monitor its institutional history. The plays, in these ways, are politically engaged and have an activist potential. Despite being circumscribed by institutional structures and limited audiences, these works have the capacity to step outside their aesthetic frames and become contributors to broader social debates in the contemporary Pacific: expressing the concerns of, and actively connecting with indigenous sovereignty movements; uniting diverse members of the public in times of crisis; and openly revealing, critiquing, and sometimes proposing solutions to, the problems caused by prevailing political structures. As Reinelt avers, “Theatre cannot change the world by itself, but it can contribute its unique embodied and imaged knowledge to express and sustain the social imagination” (228-29), operating to influence not just the future action of its

¹⁷ W. B. Worthen has noted the same of Chicana/o theatre, noting that this indeterminacy sits oddly with their emphasis on historical recovery and revision (“Staging América” 284), but is perhaps an active engagement with the fact that the production of history involves several acts of mediation, such as modes of transmission, and the circumstances of the present (306).

audiences, but “the structure of the audience’s community and the nature of the audience’s culture” (Kershaw 1).

Engaging History in Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, and Fiji

Playwrights from several communities throughout Oceania have produced work that engages historical themes and issues, but in selecting and organizing the material for this study, I have decided to focus on three particular sites, Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji. I have chosen these places not only for the fact that they are three of the most vital sites for the production of drama in Oceania, but because their comparison allows for an examination of connections across imperial boundaries and contemporary political frameworks, thereby enabling a reconsideration both of national histories and regional associations. In this way, this study has broad commonalities with the work of such scholars as Joseph Roach, Christopher Balme, and Alicia Arrizón, who have also focused in different ways on particular geographical sites to point to interlocking discourses and practices that constitute broader regional networks of relation. Whereas Susan Najita has pointed to regional connections beyond colonial nation states to argue for not only the appropriateness of a comparative framework for understanding the histories and cultures of the Pacific, but the decolonizing potential of comparative study (2-3), the similarities and differences between Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, and Fiji point to the need, as Najita also observes, to conceptualize these works within specific historical moments and cultural contexts, as well as within the broader context of Pacific cultural production (13).

Aotearoa New Zealand, an archipelago at the southernmost point of Polynesia, is a country of 4.3 million people, comprising 75% Pākehā, 14% Māori, and growing

diasporic Pacific Islander and Asian populations.¹⁸ As one of the larger, more well-resourced, and politically powerful island nations, New Zealand occupies a position as a “metropolitan state” (Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 2) in the Pacific region, and has also operated as a neocolonial presence. A former British colony, New Zealand was settled by a process of systematized colonization during the nineteenth century, leading to Māori land alienation and a loss of tribal sovereignty. Since the late 1960s, Māori resistance to colonial hegemony, including calls for Pākehā to honor the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (a contract between Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown that – in the Māori version, at least – recognized Māori sovereignty and ownership of land and resources), has established the basis for a bicultural ideology that attempts, however tentatively, to recognize and address historical wrongs. Since the early 1970s, a Māori theatrical tradition has developed alongside a broader renaissance of indigenous language and culture, tied intimately to the pursuit of indigenous self-determination (see Chapter Three).

Placing Aotearoa in dialogue with Hawai‘i invigorates studies of Māori theatre by emphasizing its intra-Pacific connections rather than focusing on the trans-Pacific axis, foregrounding Māori relationships to other Polynesian cultures forged through pre-contact networks and which persist today (see Chapter Two). Like Aotearoa, Hawai‘i’s non-native population outnumbers its indigenous one; with a statewide population of just over 1.2 million people, Native Hawaiians (with other Pacific Islanders) make up less than 9%, in contrast to whites (almost 25%), and descendants of Asian immigrants (almost 40%).¹⁹ Similarly, both Māori and Native Hawaiian sovereignty movements have developed coevally, and Hawai‘i has also witnessed an indigenous cultural renaissance since the 1970s, which includes theatrical production.

¹⁸ Statistics New Zealand <<http://www.stats.govt.nz/people/population/default.htm>>.

¹⁹ US Census Bureau, 2007 results <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/15000.html>>.

However, unlike Aotearoa, Hawai‘i’s dominant ethnic group is not drawn from a European settler diaspora, but from an Asian labor diaspora, which complicates a binary colonizer/colonized relationship and admits a range of distinct “local” identities. A tradition of “local Asian-American” theatre (Carroll “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local’ Theatre” 124) has also developed in complement with Native Hawaiian theatre, centered around the Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu. Hawai‘i is further distinguished from Aotearoa by its ongoing colonization and assimilation within the US nation-state, beginning with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 by an oligarchy of planters descended from American missionary families. As Susan Najita argues, however, as the US’ fiftieth state, Hawai‘i is usually seen as having little to do with British Commonwealth colonial and postcolonial studies, but this viewpoint hides its long and ongoing history as an imperial site produced out of British, French, Japanese, and US colonial claims (9). Looking to Hawai‘i’s complex history of colonial competition, including its ties to Aotearoa and other islands through British voyages of exploration, as well as paying attention to its indigenous regional ties (both considered in Chapter Two), helps position a view of Hawai‘i that goes beyond the claims of its current colonizer.

Fiji is a South Pacific nation of 930,000 people, of which indigeneous Fijians make up 57% of the population, Fiji Indians 37%, and the remaining minority comprise people of Rotuman, other Pacific Island, Chinese, and European descent.²⁰ Like Aotearoa, Fiji has a history of British colonialism, but like Hawai‘i, it has a large labor migrant base (in this case from India) rather than a settler-colonial majority. Fiji, however, has significant differences from the other two sites, and is placed here in complement and contrast. In geocultural terms, Fiji is situated in Melanesia, moving

²⁰ CIA World Factbook <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fj.html>>.

the study beyond the “Polynesian triangle,” which has been the area of focus for the majority of literary and performance scholarship on the Pacific. Independent from Britain since 1970 and a Republic since 1987, the country has not only an indigenous majority, but one that retains the bulk of land ownership and a monopoly on political power. As a result of several factors, including ethnic tension, Fiji has been rocked by a series of military coups since 1987 (the subject of Chapter Four), which have entrenched indigeneous nationalism and resulted in the disenfranchisement of the Fiji Indian population and the voluntary migration of many of its members. This national history necessitates a different interpretive approach from the “Fourth World” postcolonial model more applicable to Hawai‘i and Aotearoa, foregrounding different perspectives on indigenous sovereignty and its social, political, and theatrical ramifications. Post-Coup playwriting in Fiji differs markedly from its pre-Coup antecedents, which relied mainly on Western models and realist presentation, moving into more symbolic, allegorical, and postmodern modes of representation to register and critique the Coup and its effects and to embed calls for social harmony. From a regional perspective, the 1987 Coup was seen as serious blow to regional unity, eroding ideologies such as the Pacific Way (Hau‘ofa “Ocean in Us” 43); consequently, we might read playwrights’ writing back against the Coups as attempts both to heal a broken nation and to revitalize a regional imaginary.

Navigating Pathways: Methods and Approaches

While this study is primarily reliant on, and contributes to, scholarship in theatre and performance studies, I also draw upon critical discourses and methodological approaches developed in literary studies, historiography, and postcolonial Pacific studies. In developing these conversations, I aim for a dialogic approach that takes account of theories and forms developed by Pacific peoples, as

well as drawing from a range of theories by Western/non-Pacific scholars. In doing so, I am attentive to questions about the ways that theories move and change across situation, period, and discursive context (Said 226-47), as well as current debates in Pacific scholarship about the use of “foreign” theoretical models to read the Pacific, but European theories and Pacific cultural products need not be seen as oppositional; as Samoan scholar Selina Tusitala Marsh argues in “Theory ‘Versus’ Pacific Islands Writing,”

[T]o dismiss theory because of its strong Western implications seems senseless. As an abstract framework used to view the world, its mere use is not Eurocentric. Although the construction of the framework may largely have been dominated by Western thought, it is a construction we can also define for ourselves. If we see theorizing (or ways of critiquing) as an exclusively “papalagi ‘white’ construct” we limit our reading physically and mentally. We must continue to create our own theories, indigenize concepts, discover and recover our own “medicinal branches.” (341)

Consequently, my approach (much like the plays I treat) attempts to place different cultural perspectives in productive dialogue to allow for insightful reciprocities between interpretive frameworks and objects of study.

Since my argument involves a consideration of the plays’ social impact in different historical and cultural situations as well as their textual and performative qualities, my approach to examining historiographical theatre engages questions and interpretive frameworks from the discipline of theatre historiography (in which many issues overlap with discussions in historiography more generally). Scholars such as Thomas Postlewait, Bruce McConachie, Erika Fischer-Lichte, S. E. Wilmer, and Jacky Bratton have been helpful intellectual touchstones in my effort to frame the plays’ production and reception within broader social, historical, political, and

national/regional contexts, as well as in my construction of topical theatrical genealogies and histories of dramatic traditions in different Pacific sites. Theatre historiography also becomes useful in drawing attention to many of the plays' self-reflexive engagements with earlier theatrical antecedents, allowing us to read the works not only as revisions of national histories, but as theatre histories, too.

As is the case with many plays produced in Oceania, especially in earlier years, it is often difficult to determine audience responses, as this evidence has not been collated. Some sense of the audiences playwrights write for or against is often present in the play text, as Susan Bennett observes: "The detailed examination of texts and their addressees undoubtedly lend themselves to studies of how playwrights shape their writing to meet, surprise, or thwart the expectations of the intended and/or actual audiences" (53-4). In the absence of other forms of historical documentation, however, I have relied on published performance reviews, although I admit that despite being useful sources of information they do not provide adequate substitutes for audience reactions. Recognizing these limitations, I have made the best attempt to render performance contexts by supplementing my analysis of the play texts with historical research, the experience of live or videotaped productions, and analyses of published or recorded interviews, performance programs, photographs, playbills and other publicity materials, and letters detailing processes of production and publication.

Where possible, to augment this archival research, I have met with playwrights and directors to talk about their work, incorporating their viewpoints as part of the discussion. This interpersonal element of the research process is important in light of recent debates about the responsibilities involved in indigenous research. Indigenous Pacific scholars such as Vilsoni Hereniko and Linda Tuhiwai Smith have pointed to the importance of ethical, respectful, and reciprocal research processes, calling for outsider researchers to pay attention to whose research it is and whose interests it

serves, and to make a commitment to the wellbeing of those researched (Tuhiwai Smith 10; Hereniko “Indigenous Knowledge” 88) – a commitment that includes inviting indigenous people to share the space as collaborators, co-presenters, discussants or respondents (Hereniko “Indigenous Knowledge” 86). In conducting this research on Pacific Island plays and the cultural work they undertake, my aim is to help enhance the efforts of Pacific playwrights and performers through the development of a supporting critical discourse that takes account of my insights and my limitations as a non-indigenous scholar from Oceania.

Part of this project entails an acknowledgement of my status as a Pākehā critic. I am not an indigenous Pacific Islander, but a New Zealander of European descent. In recent years there have been calls for Pākehā to identify more strongly with Oceania and to engage their regional responsibilities; as Māori scholar Ranginui Walker has maintained, “Pakeha New Zealanders are no longer European. They are adrift in the South Pacific and must come to terms with that reality. They have to learn to become Pacific people” (228). In my case, where seven generations of my Pākehā family have lived in Aotearoa New Zealand, this certainly suggests that the Pacific is “home,” and no longer, I would contend, are we even “adrift.” This is no false presumption of indigeneity, but a recognition of a locally-focused identity based both on commonality with, and difference from, indigenous Pacific peoples, and that in both cases requires a responsibility to the region. This project is an aspect of that engagement, undertaken in the belief that it is important to analyze and seek to redress structures that perpetuate inequalities in Oceania, especially as such an examination also intersects with and involves a critical revision of my own cultural histories.

Dissertation Structure and Chapter Outlines

Rather than surveying in brief a large number of plays from the Oceanic archive, I have elected to treat a smaller number of plays in greater detail. In this dissertation, I examine eight plays written in the last thirty-five years (the majority in the last twenty), by ten playwrights from or based in Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji. By circumstance, the majority of these playwrights are what might be termed “scholar-artists,” with nine of the ten holding or having held academic or teaching positions at universities or drama schools in the Pacific and Australia; the remaining playwright was a prominent politician and journalist. This situation probably has much to do with the need for institutional support to sustain creative work, and is not unique to playwrights. Steven Winduo, for instance, points to the existence and importance of “Pacific writer scholars” whose production of both creative writing and critical scholarship from Pacific perspectives are related tasks in the “unwriting” of Oceania (608, 610).

The chapters are structured around certain moments in the Pacific’s colonial and postcolonial history that have affected and helped to shape the region more broadly, without being the story of one particular nation. I have arranged the chapters in a rough chronological order, yet the purpose is not to create a single, linear narrative for the Pacific, nor to claim a “theatrical version” of Pacific history. Chapter Two examines early cross-cultural encounters between European voyagers and Pacific peoples, focusing on contemporary plays from Hawai‘i and New Zealand that revisit the voyages and concomitant legacies of the British explorer, Captain James Cook. Chapter Three explores the impact of colonial conflict through Māori plays about the New Zealand Wars of the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter Four moves away from the indigene/white settler relationship to investigate theatrical responses to recent and ongoing conflicts in a multicultural, post-independence Pacific context in which

repressive social structures are occasioned by a dominant indigenous nationalism, treating plays that engage the event and aftermath of the 1987 Fiji Coup.

In focusing on theatrical responses to historical events that take place after Captain Cook's arrival, it must be acknowledged, as David Hanlon does, that "the danger in focusing on first contacts or cross-cultural encounters is the privileging of the Euro-American presence in the history of the islands of Oceania. If we admit that contact, encounter, and colonialism are the loci through which Oceanic pasts have been approached, we must also admit that these events and processes are but a part of the pasts of this area of the world, and not the only, first, or necessarily most important foci for historical investigations of the region" (26). This is a significant consideration, and I address this colonial history not to valorize these events or to privilege the changes brought by the West and foreign enterprise, or their aftermaths as they are borne out at local levels, but precisely because it is this historical period and its attendant modalities that are under contention from Pacific playwrights, whose theatrical interventions open up productive alternative modes of analysis. Although a future version of this study could include a fruitful discussion about theatrical engagements with mythic histories, especially those specifically developed as counters to post-contact Western historiography, such as Wan Smolbag Theatre's *The Old Stories: A Play About the History of Vanuatu* (1991), Pacific mythologies and pre-contact histories are often woven throughout the works discussed here, frequently engaged as counter-discursive historiographies.

Chapter Two, "Remembering Captain Cook: Restaging Early Cross-Cultural Encounters in Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand," examines the divergent legacies of the British explorer's encounters with Pacific peoples in two different regional sites. Given Cook's status as the foremost European explorer in the Pacific, I explain how the story of Cook's "discoveries" has been reproduced repeatedly in multiple forms in

colonial discourse (including theatrical portrayals) as examples of what Diana Taylor calls the “scenario of discovery,” entrenching dominant assumptions about colonial discovery, national histories, and the Pacific region. In response, I turn to two works by Pacific playwrights who have attempted to dismantle the myths surrounding Cook and to assess the ongoing impact of his exploratory journeys for Pacific peoples: the Hawaiian play, *Way of a God* (1998), by Dennis Carroll and Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker; and the oratorio *Orpheus in Rarohenga* (2002) by Robert Sullivan and John Psathas, from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Way of a God* presents a bilingual re-examination of Cook’s fateful encounter at Kealakekua Bay, revising American colonial ideologies that have demonized Cook and marginalized Native Hawaiian histories, and prompting audiences to question continued structures of US colonialism. *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, conversely, takes on Cook as a national founding father and hero in British colonial discourse, exposing him as a violent latecomer to the Pacific, and subjecting him to a post-mortem journey of atonement that assimilates and reinvents the explorer within Polynesian epistemologies. Drawing upon Greg Denning’s work, I evoke the beach as spatial and metaphorical trope in this restaging of encounter, asking what it might mean to resituate or evoke the charged symbolic and historical space of the beach (beach as a theatre) within the symbolically charged space of encounter of the theatre (theatre as a beach). An examination of these two plays registers the complexities of regional cross-cultural genealogies as borne out in the diachronic social space of the “contact zone” (Pratt), offering a critical reassessment of the ways that myths of discovery and their attendant colonial legacies continue to impact conditions in the contemporary Pacific.

One facet of Captain Cook’s subsequent legacy of exploration and encounter is reflected in Chapter Three, “Me Titiro Whakamuri, Kia Haere Whakamua: Māori Theatrical Interpretations of the New Zealand Wars as ‘Tino Rangatiratanga in

Action.” Arising from conflicting Māori and Pākehā interpretations of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), competing claims for land ownership and sovereignty led to a series of violent campaigns throughout the North Island during the middle third of the nineteenth century. Despite a British “victory,” Māori almost overpowered British forces, demonstrating exemplary tribal resistance against colonization. The New Zealand Wars remain the most important conflict in New Zealand’s national narrative, and have been crucial for the development of subsequent race-relations (Belich 15). Since the 1970s, the New Zealand Wars have regained significance in the context of indigenous self-determination movements, where historical analysis has become central to Māori land, resource, and sovereignty claims. My analysis has two broad objectives: to examine the understanding and treatment of the Wars as a historical event and ongoing legacy in work by Māori playwrights produced in the context of a changing society from the 1970s to the present; and, through these works, to trace key aspects of the development of a Māori theatrical tradition committed to the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty, self-determination). I examine three key theatrical interpretations: the first produced Māori play, *Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross* (1972) by Harry Dansey (Ngā Tuwharetoa, Te Arawa); *Whāea Kairau: Mother Hundred Eater* by Apirana Taylor (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-Apanui); and *Woman Far Walking* (2000-02) by Witi Ihimaera (Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki). I show how these playwrights have engaged the Wars as the basis for colonial mythologies and have thereby sought to dismantle explanatory narratives, models of historical understanding, frameworks of social belonging, and genres of cultural representation that perpetuate Pākehā hegemony. In tracing broader social and aesthetic developments from the specific viewpoint of these plays, the structure of this chapter is not linear but adopts a spiral logic, suggesting different ways in which the pursuit of

tino rangatiratanga has been advanced, challenged, and revised in relation to a confluence of different social forces in Aotearoa over the past generation.

Chapter Four, “Killing the Monster: Revisioning the 1987 Coup on the Fiji Stage,” moves away from colonizer-colonized binaries and attendant interpretive paradigms to focus on a late twentieth-century, multicultural Pacific context characterized by a dominant indigenous population, examining refractions of the 1987 military Coup in three Fiji plays. The May 1987 *coup d'état*, which resulted in the overthrow of Fiji's democratically elected government and the subsequent institution of Fiji as a republic in October of that year, was unprecedented in Fiji's history, rupturing its image as a model multicultural nation, disrupting regional ideologies, and ushering in a phase of economic and political instability characterized by racial tensions between the nation's two dominant ethnic groups: indigenous Fijians, and the descendants of Indian plantation laborers brought to the islands by the British colonial administration. In the wake of the social trauma occasioned by the Coup, some of the most poignant, provocative, and enigmatic responses came from playwrights. The Coup catalyzed a political and aesthetic shift in Fiji playwriting, giving rise to new modes of theatrical expression to register this complex social and psychological experience. Here, I consider three plays by scholar-artists from three main ethnic groups affected by the Coup: *The Monster* (1987) by Rotuman playwright Vilsoni Hereniko; *Ferringhi* (1993), by Fiji Indian playwright Sudesh Mishra; and *To Let You Know* (1997), by indigenous Fijian Larry Thomas. Drawing on the work of Dominick LaCapra and others, I examine how these plays adopt various configurations of allegory and testimony to model strategies to work through the recent historical trauma occasioned by the events of 1987 and to encourage a more ethical and responsible engagement with social life. The plays' calls for social harmony and

reunified national and regional identities continue to have relevance as Fiji currently struggles in the midst of its fourth coup.

In exploring the critical and social potential of historical drama in Oceania, I hope to open up new avenues of inquiry within the larger discourses of theatre and performance studies, Pacific studies, historiography, and postcolonial studies. The plays undertake valuable cultural work in their foregrounding, reconfiguration, and redeployment of Oceanic histories, and in their exposure of the dominant ideological and political maneuvers that regulate national and regional histories and impact present identities. This study offers productive opportunities for considering how existing Western theorizing about historical drama might be extended and developed through looking at these plays in their specific cultural contexts, and suggests ways in which theatre contributes to an understanding of, and functions actively within, the postcolonial Pacific.

CHAPTER 2

REMEMBERING CAPTAIN COOK: RESTAGING EARLY CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN HAWAI'I AND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Introduction

This chapter returns to the earliest phases of colonial history in the Pacific by investigating works that restage seminal cross-cultural encounters between Europeans and Pacific peoples, with a particular focus on the voyages of British navigator, Captain James Cook (1728-79). Cook was the foremost figure of eighteenth-century European exploration in the Pacific and remains one of the most contentious figures in the colonial history of the region. During three major expeditions, Cook helped establish the Pacific in the Western consciousness, but died violently at the hands of Native Hawaiians, shortly after having been accorded the honors of a sacred chief. The proliferation of mythologies that have comprised Cook's posthumous reputation exemplify the malleability of "Captain Cook" in the popular imagination, and since the late 1700s there has been an active discourse through which manifold meanings of Cook's life, death, and legacy have been invented, revised, and propagated.

I suggest that the multiple, iterative restagings of Cook's encounters (including plays for the theatre) that have taken place in myriad contexts and forms over the past two centuries can be read as examples of what Diana Taylor calls "the scenario of discovery," and I consider how its repeated deployment in various cultural situations has contributed cumulatively to the sedimentation of colonial mythologies in the Pacific, at the expense of indigenous identities and regional imaginaries. In response, I examine how, during the past decade, Cook has garnered attention from indigenous Pacific Island writers and playwrights who have attempted to refigure the scenario, dismantling the myths surrounding Cook and addressing the ongoing impact of his

exploratory journeys for Pacific peoples. These works rethink the dynamics of cross-cultural encounter in favor of indigenous perspectives and pre-contact histories, prompting a reconsideration of Pacific indigeneity under contemporary conditions. My discussion focuses on two cross-cultural collaborations: the Hawaiian play, *Way of a God* (1998), by Dennis Carroll and Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker; and the oratorio *Orpheus in Rarohenga* (2002) by Robert Sullivan and John Psathas, from Aotearoa New Zealand.

In both cases, the beach – like the theatre – is evoked as a spatial and metaphorical zone of liminality in which identities can be rethought and dominant readings recalibrated. More specifically, a comparison of *Way of a God* and *Orpheus in Rarohenga* enables an analysis of how the circumstances of Cook’s early cross-cultural contacts have engendered very different (post)colonial legacies in two Pacific “contact zones” (Pratt). While allied to the promotion of indigenous Pacific Island viewpoints, the agenda of each piece, and the cultural work it undertakes, differs in respective Hawaiian and New Zealand contexts. *Way of a God*, a bilingual Hawaiian-English play, adopts an approach akin to a comparative historical ethnographic model, positioned at the interface between Hawaiians and British in the weeks leading up to Cook’s death and attempting a nuanced representation of the complexities of encounter from both sides of the beach. Produced within a context of US colonialism, the play offers a counter to colonial ideologies that have demonized Cook and marginalized Hawaiians, prompting audiences to question structures of American history-making and nation-building. Sullivan and Psathas’ oratorio (with Sullivan as librettist) goes further in its decentralizing of Cook’s status and its centralizing of indigenous concepts of time-space. Taking on Cook as a hero and founding father in New Zealand’s British colonial history, *Orpheus in Rarohenga* condemns Cook’s violent encounters with Māori and other Pacific Islanders, and subordinates his

“discoveries” to an indigenous history of oceanic navigation, trade, and settlement. By foregrounding this prior history of exploration and imagining a post-mortem journey for Cook that incorporates and reinvents the British explorer within Polynesian epistemologies, Sullivan privileges Pacific ways of seeing while offering a model of indigenous identity that moves beyond the land to affirm more fluid relations between people in an interrelated “sea of islands.” *Way of a God* and *Orpheus in Rarohenga* both restage early encounters in ways that encourage audiences to theorize their own societies, prompting a critical examination of the ways that myths of discovery and their attendant colonial legacies continue to impact conditions in the contemporary Pacific.

Beach Crossings: Cook’s Pacific Voyages

Cross-cultural encounters have occurred throughout Oceania for several thousand years as part of the complex interisland connections forged through the routes of Pacific voyagers, and have taken place between Pacific peoples and Europeans since the sixteenth century. James Cook, then, was not the first European explorer to visit the Pacific, but the unprecedented range and scope of his three voyages of discovery (1769-71, 1772-75, and 1776-80),¹ undertaken during the “golden age” of Pacific exploration, arguably have had the greatest influence on the production of “the Pacific” in the Western imagination. In mapping, naming, cohering,

¹ During the first voyage on the *Endeavour* (1769-1771), Cook traveled to Tahiti on a scientific mission to observe the transit of Venus across the Sun, and then journeyed south-west to seek existence of the *terra australis incognita* (the unknown southern land), circumnavigating New Zealand and charting the eastern coast of Australia. The second voyage, undertaken between 1772-1775 on the *Resolution* and her consort, the *Adventure*, was committed largely to disproving the existence of the (now unlikely) southern continent, with the ships zigzagging across the South Pacific ocean between Antarctica, New Zealand, the Marquesas Islands, Tahiti, the western Society Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. The third and final voyage (1776-1780), on the ships *Resolution* and *Discovery*, had as its objective the discovery of a navigable North-West Passage to link Atlantic and Pacific trade routes to the north of Canada. Cook’s expedition charted the western coast of Canada and Alaska, also mapping the Cook Islands and encountering Hawai‘i.

describing, and claiming a vast new area, as well as updating, reworking, and relocating previous discoveries, Cook's journeys signified Britain's imperial power, global reach, and commercial potential (B. Smith "Reputation" 185), and exemplified the European conquest of nature, pushing out the boundaries of the known world and bringing people and their environments under the controlling gaze of Enlightenment science (Salmond *Trial* xix).

Cook's encounters with Pacific Islanders highlight Sudesh Mishra's observation that, as the "contact-point between bodies, moralities and practices," the beach is "the site of an ambivalent transaction" ("No Sign" 339). Far from remaining detached observers, the British explorers were themselves the subject of research, engaged in a range of mutual performances of encounter and possession during which both sides were shaped by what they learned from one another and were incorporated into each others' social systems, histories, and cosmologies (Salmond *Trial* xxi; Denning *Performances* 128-67; N. Thomas). While sometimes enriching, these cross-cultural encounters were also often violent, during which the Islanders were at a disadvantage to the Europeans' superior firepower, as well as susceptible to other beach-crossers such as contagious diseases and shipboard animals and insects (Moorehead). Cook's encounters, moreover, were the catalysts for further imperial interventions, his claims to possession and his accurate and widely circulated maps engendering the trade, missionary, and administrative routes of colonialism in the Pacific during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Both the salience and ambivalence of Cook's reputation have been magnified by the nature of his death, which casts into relief the stakes, ambiguities, and limitations of cross-cultural encounter, and, historically, opened the door to a wave of reimaginings of "Captain Cook," which further reconfigured and distorted European/Islander relations. The circumstances surrounding Cook's death about which

contemporary Cook scholars generally concur are as follows. After returning south from exploring the North-West Passage, and cruising offshore from the island of Hawai‘i for almost two months, the *Resolution* and *Discovery* laid anchor in Kealahou Bay on January 17, 1779. From the beginning, the local Hawaiians treated Cook with extraordinary regard, making obeisance to him and incorporating him in a variety of ritual ceremonies. They referred to Cook repeatedly as “Erono,” the same name as Lono, the god of peace and fertility, whom the Hawaiians were currently honoring as part of their Makahiki Festival. Whether Cook was indeed considered a “god” by the Hawaiians, and in what way, is still a matter of debate.² Although the Hawaiians continued their generous hospitality for a few weeks, they began to show a desire for the ships to leave, which they did on February 4, 1779. Shortly afterward, the *Resolution*’s foremast broke in a storm, forcing both ships back to Kealahou Bay

² During the 1990s, the issue of Cook’s presumed apotheosis and attendant murder resurfaced in a controversial debate between two anthropologists, Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere. The overall debate is more complicated than I have space to outline here, but the major arguments and implications are worth noting. For much of his career, Sahlins had used the example of Cook’s apotheosis as a way to talk about structural reproduction and transformation in culture, arguing that Cook played out the role of Lono, bringing about an enactment of the Makahiki in historical form, and died when he broke the logic of the ritual cycle. A key respondent to Sahlins was Obeyesekere, whose chief agenda was to cast doubt on Sahlins’ argument that the Hawaiians believed Cook was a god, arguing that such an idea was an insult to the Hawaiians’ commonsense, intelligence and “practical rationality” (19), and was instead a European creation designed to bolster an imperialist agenda. Obeyesekere posited that the Hawaiians may have considered Cook a great chief, but not a god. Obeyesekere’s postcolonial revisionism was well received by many scholars, leading Sahlins to publish a stinging refutation of Obeyesekere’s methods and findings, criticizing Obeyesekere’s selective use of evidence and projection of Western concepts of rationality and notions of “godliness” on to Hawaiian culture, which he argued, served ultimately to remove Hawaiians from their own historical record. Nevertheless, many critics felt that Obeyesekere’s skepticism had done irretrievable damage to Sahlins’ hypothesis, and that it was not necessary to consider Cook a “god” in order to explain the homage paid to him or his death (Edwards 611). Ironically, Sahlins’ own remarks point to the fact that this heated argument over Hawaiian culture itself excluded Hawaiian voices. In summarizing the broader upshot of this polemic, Robert Borofsky observes that the debate “involves more than a tempest in a teapot of exotic details” (255) about Cook as either mortal or deity, but has a political investment and incorporates broader issues critical to anthropology (and, I would argue, general race-relations) today, such as who has the right to speak, and for whom; how to evaluate conflicting claims about another’s past; the possibility of making sense of other societies, and on whose terms; the ability to create conversations across cultural difference; and the motives and obligations of conducting research and evaluating evidence (Borofsky et al. 255-78).

for repairs on February 11. This time, the British received a different reception; the Hawaiians did not seem pleased to see them, and theft, insolence, and brawls became much more rife. On February 13 the *Discovery*'s cutter was taken, and Cook went ashore with a group of marines with intention of taking hostage the local king, Kalani'ōpu'u, a custom Cook had adopted on this and previous voyages as a means of having the ship's property restored. A threatening crowd gathered on the beach, and in the melee that transpired, Cook – who could not swim – was struck and fell down into the shallow water; there he was held down and stabbed and clubbed to death, while his crew in the nearby boats looked on helplessly. In the end, Cook, four marines, and seventeen Hawaiians (including five chiefs) were dead (Beaglehole *Life* 646-77; Denning *Performances* 67-72; Edmond 24-5; Obeyesekere 40-8, 102-09; Salmond *Trial* 386-421; N. Thomas 380-93).

As part of Hawaiian funeral ritual, Cook's flesh was burnt from the bones, which were then divided among several chiefs. Later, Cook's bones were mixed with Kalani'ōpu'u's and held in veneration (Salmond *Trial* 426-27). Some incomplete remains of Cook and some of his other belongings were returned to his officers in several portions, who subjected the remains to naval ritual, and immediately began their own processes of historicizing and mythologizing their Captain. Cook's dismemberment and reincorporation into Hawaiian and British social systems provides a motif for his subsequent treatment: the figurative and performative processes of dismembering, re-membering, and reconstitution that would form the basis of the multiple identities and broader discourses that Cook would inhabit and represent after death. As Rod Edmond explains, "Cook once existed, and his life can be described in different ways. While he lived, however, there were limits to the different ways he could be described. From the moment of his death at Kealakekua Bay, these limits were washed away" (51). Over time, "bits and pieces of him were claimed by

governments, missionaries and native populations, among others, and used metonymically. In a way, Cook himself was colonized,” becoming “a floating signifier who does not exist apart from these and other representations” (Edmond 51). As Anne Salmond observes, Cook’s posthumous reputation developed variously to suit the agendas of his inheritors, and in many of the places he visited, his depiction as a revered Polynesian ancestor, hero of the European Enlightenment, national founding father, imperial villain, or base idolater and libertine, continues to impact race-relations and concepts of national identity (*Trial* 429-30).

Scenarios of Discovery: Theatrical Representations of Cross-Cultural Encounters in Cook’s Voyages

Way of a God and *Orpheus in Rarohenga* form part of a theatrical genealogy of staging Captain Cook’s encounters with Pacific peoples that reaches back to the late eighteenth century – a tradition that comprises one of the many avenues through which the manifold meanings of Cook’s life, death, and legacy have been created, contested, and disseminated.³ In the Western tradition, formal theatrical representations of

³ I include here a survey of the main “Captain Cook” plays staged since the late eighteenth century. The late 1700s saw an outpouring of theatrical spectacles treating Cook’s voyages and offering dramatic speculations about Cook’s death, as well as making use of large influx of ethnographic information brought back from the voyages via the journals and visual records, which in turn impacted the works’ styles and forms. These include the French play, *Zorai, ou Les Insulaires de la Nouvelle Zelande* (1782) by Jean Etienne Francois de Marignie; the Italian “dance-pantomime” (ballet), *Gl’inglesi in Othaiti* (1784) by Antonio Muzzarelli, which appeared a year later as an opera, adapted by Umilissimo Vassallo; John O’Keeffe’s “speaking pantomime” *Omai, or a Trip Around the World* (1785), which premiered in London; as well as Jean François Arnould-Mussot’s four-act pantomime, *La Mort du Capitaine Cook* (1788), which opened in Paris, and appeared the following year in a modified, three-act English version, *The Death of Captain Cook* (1789), playing in various centers throughout England and Ireland, and also in the United States and Canada. Such productions depict Cook variously as heroic explorer, gallant lover, martyr, and deity, within a pre-realist stage environment devoted to showcasing new knowledge about the Pacific. As the Pacific Islands became better known, producers were unable to sustain the tension between authenticity and exoticism, and modes of theatrical representation changed (Balme *Pacific* 61). In much the same way, Captain Cook became a less common subject in nineteenth-century European and American drama. In 1888, the Australian theatre impresario Alfred Dampier played the title role in *The Life and Death of Captain James Cook*, by New Zealand playwright, John Perry, to celebrate Sydney’s centenary (Webby 149). July 12, 1897 saw the American production of S.

Cook's Pacific "discoveries" are both iterative and self-reflexive, in that each production offers a conscious restaging both of historical encounters that are already highly theatricalized and formulaic (themselves "citational practices" in which newly-encountered Others are worked into pre-existing matrices of understanding and behavior (Balme *Pacific 2*, 19)), as well as of subsequent performances. Diana Taylor, Greg Dening, and Christopher Balme have analyzed the theatrical format of cross-cultural encounters, reading moments of European discovery and possession as social dramas choreographed in the home country and re-enacted in each "new" place, complete with predetermined plot, roles, speech acts, stylized actions and gestures, props, and spectator-witnesses. Dening describes the Pacific of the late eighteenth century as a *theatrum mundi*, featuring not just the "intensive theatre of the civilized to

W. Forman's musical show, *Captain Cook*, a gigantic spectacle staged at Madison Square Garden, which had much in common with the kinds of Cook spectacles staged a century before. The show depicts the Captain's reception as a god when he arrives in Hawai'i, where he is awarded the princess Ia Ia, much to the chagrin of her admirer, Oponuui, who subsequently leads a rebellion to expel Cook from the islands. The rebellion coincides with the eruption of Mauna Loa, convincing the islanders that the gods are against Oponuui, but the humane and sympathetic Cook reconciles the islanders, gives Ia Ia in marriage to Oponuui, and sails away happily (!). Unsurprisingly, this travesty of historical events did not go down well with American audiences; musical theatre historian Gerald Bordman describes the work as a "freakish affair" that was a "quick failure" (174). In an ironic coincidence, the premiere was attended by the deposed Hawaiian Queen Liliu'okalani, then visiting the United States to protest the American Treaty of Annexation of Hawai'i. The other notable Cook play from the first half of the twentieth century was Jean Giraudoux's *Supplement au Voyage de Cook*, first produced in Paris on November 21, 1935 at the Théâtre de l'Athénée. It was the only play of Giraudoux's to treat a historical theme: the eighteenth-century confrontation between European explorers and natives of Tahiti. Main intertexts included Bougainville's *Voyage*, Diderot's supplement to Bougainville, and Cook's *Journals* (1773) (Norwood 220, 223), though the action was largely fictionalized. The play was later adapted into an English version by Maurice Valency as *The Virtuous Island* (1954). In 1938, *Captain Cook: A Cantata with Specially Arranged Tableaux* was performed in the Sydney Town Hall, Australia, to mark the city's sesquicentennial. The post-1970 period saw a new wave of representation of Cook (brought about largely by John Beaglehole's revisionist scholarship, the new interest taken by post-Beaglehole scholars, and a series of bicentennial celebrations that various plays commemorated), including *Cook* (New Caledonia, 1974) by Michel Camboulives, Aldyth Morris' play *Captain James Cook* (Hawai'i, 1978), Brian McNeill's play *The Naval Officer* (New Zealand, 1979), Don Nigro's *Captain Cook* (USA, 1989), Dennis Carroll and Tammy Baker's play, *Way of a God* (Hawai'i, 1998), the *Endeavour Cycle* from the *Tin Symphony* cultural display for the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, John Psathas and Robert Sullivan's oratorio, *Orpheus in Rarohenga* (New Zealand, 2002), Nick Higginbotham and Gareth Hudson's musical about the life and death of Captain James Cook (Australia, in progress); and John Downie's chamber opera, *Trial of the Cannibal Dog* (after Salmond's book), performed at the New Zealand Arts Festival in March 2008.

the native” but “the even more intensive theatre of the civilized to one another” (*Performances* 109). Each formal encounter constituted “a play within a play” that was “about world systems of power, about reifications of empire, about encompassing the globe, and hegemony” (*Performances* 109). Diana Taylor refers to such performances of encounter and possession “replayed time and time again [...] as part of the discovery project, [and] replayed in the innumerable accounts and representations of the events” (63) as examples of the “scenario of discovery,” drawing upon the concept of the scenario as an embodied “meaning-making [paradigm] that structure[s] social environments, behaviors and potential outcomes” (28), and is formulaic, transferable, but “often banal because it leaves out complexity, reduces conflict to its stock elements, and encourages fantasies of participation” (54), promoting certain views by helping to disappear others (28).

In colonial discourse, repeated theatrical representations of these encounters have a cumulative effect over time, reinforcing the assumptions and viewpoints of the scenario of discovery and connecting to other versions of the Cook scenario that manifest themselves in forms as diverse as site-specific historical re-enactments, monuments, maps and topographical features, films and television series, commemorative events, museum exhibitions, books, postage stamps, tourist paraphernalia, and the replica of the *Endeavour*. Together, these various performative accretions “conflate the historical with the mythological, historicizing myth and mythologizing history” (Wilmer 48), operating to build and entrench dominant beliefs about Cook and Pacific Island peoples, and helping to produce, by extension, the Pacific itself. Indeed, Taylor argues that the scenario of discovery derives its force from its iterability, its “portable framework [that] bears the weight of accumulative repeats” (28), with “each repeat add[ing] to its affective and explanatory power until the outcome seems a foregone conclusion” (31). The scenario structures our

understanding and “haunts our present, a form of hauntology [...] that resuscitates and activates old dramas” (28), making visible again what is already there – ghosts, images, stereotypes – and allowing for the continuity of cultural myths as it is reactivated in multiple forms of transmission, adapting constantly to changing circumstances (D. Taylor 31-2).

It is essential to note here that the flexible, adaptable structure of the scenario of discovery, operating through reactivation rather than strict mimesis, means that it can be deployed in different cultural contexts and generate different meanings, even while it upholds its basic assumptions, perspectives, and power structures. Western and Pacific discourses on Cook are not monolithic; Glyndwr Williams, for instance, notes the “widening divide between his reputation in nineteenth-century Hawai‘i and nineteenth-century Australia [and New Zealand]” (236). In New Zealand, despite a more recent ambivalence toward Cook due in part to Māori resistance movements, the dominant scenario has centered around valorizing portrayals of Cook as a hero of empire, focusing on his inauguration of a national history through discovery, with primacy given to the first *Endeavour* voyage. Rod Edmond sees this tie to Britain through Cook (which persisted into the mid-late twentieth century) as the necessary point of origin for a settler nation at a time when the relation with Britain was being redefined: “The figure of Cook preserved the link with Britain while ratifying the growing independence of those ‘Anglo-Saxon nations’ he had founded” (49). In this schema, less attention is paid to the circumstances of the final voyage and Cook’s death, but when it is represented, it is usually rendered heroic and as a passage to a posthumous apotheosis (a version particularly popular, historically, in theatrical representations).

In Hawai‘i, by contrast, where British claims were overwritten by American colonialism, Cook was condemned as a libertine, bringer of disease and moral

corruption, and an idolater whose death was a just punishment from God – a characterization tied to a missionary ideology that supported conservative Christian values and American political power, and suppressed both Hawaiian tradition and British colonial intervention. Whereas there seems to be no evidence for Native Hawaiian antipathy towards Cook from the time of his death until the 1820s (Salmond *Trial* 426), the influential brace of publications produced after the 1830s by Protestant missionaries affiliated to the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions work consciously to construct an anti-Cook ideology centered firmly around Cook’s visit to Hawai‘i.⁴ Cook was expedient for the missionaries and their colonial descendants, evoked in the contested discourses of nation-building as the initiator of the problems of the Islands – introducing the worst of foreign influences, and bringing out the worst in the uncivilized Hawaiians. As Pauline Nawahineokala‘i King explains, “To the missionaries, Cook represented a British influence as well as the cold logic of the scientific spirit. American influence and Christian faith were to be the emphases of the nineteenth century in Hawai‘i, during which the Hawaiians became identified as an ignorant, barbaric, childlike people who believed that a human being could appear on earth as one of their pagan gods” (107). This condemnation of Cook lent rationale to the missionaries’ presence, mission, and agenda, and was institutionalized in the religious, educational, and political discourses of nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, becoming what John Stokes labels “an “interested case of falsehood becoming accepted, through much repetition, as historical fact” (68).

⁴ See for instance, the inception of the Cook critique in John Ledyard’s journal, *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1783), and its continuation and development in these missionary (sponsored) texts: Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* (1847); Sheldon Dibble, *A History of the Sandwich Islands* (1843); William Ellis, *Narrative of a Tour Through Hawaii* (1826); James Jarves, *History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands* (1843); and *Ka Moolelo Hawaii* (1838) from the Lahainaluna Seminary.

In both the Hawaiian and New Zealand cases, however, the scenario still operates; whether heroized or demonized, Cook maintains a discursive centrality as a founder, discoverer, and initiator. As Nicholas Thomas has argued, “when we damn Cook for inaugurating the business of colonization, we are in underlying agreement with traditional Cook idealizers – we are seeing the explorer above all as a founder or precursor, and judging him according to how we judge what happened afterwards” (xxxiii). Both scenarios, moreover, uphold claims to colonial power and focus on Western agency, maintaining imperialist assumptions about indigenous people who, in both situations, are stereotyped, denigrated, and/or effaced altogether.

If, in its conventional formulations, the scenario of discovery works to reinforce imperial assumptions, claims, and viewpoints, it seems no surprise that among Pacific Islanders Cook’s persistent “ghosting” (Carlson *Haunted* 7) has usually been seen as the thorn in the side of indigenous historical representation, and there has been pressure to sideline his memory so as to reclaim Pacific histories without Eurocentric baggage. Epele Hau‘ofa uses theatrical metaphors in his exhortation to historians to bury the polyvalent specter of Captain Cook, arguing that, “In our reconstructions of Pacific histories of the recent past [...] we must clear the stage and bring in new characters. We bring to the center stage, as main players, our own peoples and institutions. For this purpose we lay to rest once and for all the ghost of Captain Cook. This is not a suggestion to excise him entirely from our histories – far from it”; rather, Hau‘ofa suggests that “we merely send Captain Cook to the wings to await summons when necessary to call in the Plague, and may recall him at the end to take a bow. As long as this particular spirit struts the center stage, our peoples and institutions will remain where they are now: as minor characters and spectators” (“Pasts to Remember” 458).

Importantly, Taylor explains that scenarios also “allow for reversal, parody, and change” (31). The process of embodiment enables degrees of detachment, frictions between actors and social roles, and cultural agency, and can be subverted from within (29). This malleability is significant in relation to *Way of a God* and *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, which intervene in the social script of the scenario of discovery, complicating its simple explanatory narrative; foregrounding unpredictability, ambiguity, and multiple perspectives; and destabilizing the assumptions of cultural authority inherent in many Cook portrayals, including the bulk of theatrical antecedents.⁵ The process of negotiating alterity, of making sense of the Other, is of course reciprocal, as Denning reminds us:

Native and Stranger each possessed the other in their interpretations of the other. They possessed one another in an ethnographic moment that was transcribed into text and symbol. They each archived that text and symbol in their respective cultural institutions. They each made cargo of the things they collected from one another, put their cargo in their respective museums, remade the things they collected into new cultural artefacts. They entertained themselves with their histories of their encounter. (*Performances* 167)⁶

These postcolonial performances, dovetailing with developments in poststructuralist historiography, comparative historical ethnography, and indigenous Pacific studies,

⁵ Notably, Robert Sullivan alludes to the complicity of earlier theatrical portrayals in the process of laudatory mythmaking on the cover of *Captain Cook in the Underworld*, which features the famous engraving of Philippe Jacques deLoutherbourg’s backdrop from O’Keeffe’s pantomime *Omai* (1785), with Cook being raised to heaven on a cloud above Kealakekua Bay, heralded by Britannia and Fame.

⁶ In fact, one of the earliest Cook plays ever to be performed was an indigenous Pacific Island production: a musical play known as a *pe’e manūiri*, or *Visitors’ Song* (sometimes titled *The Drama of Cook*). Composed by a Mangaian (Cook Island) warrior called Tioi in c.1780, the work commemorates and parodies Cook’s attempted (but unsuccessful) landing on Mangaia in March 1777. *The Visitors’ Song* was performed regularly for several decades, and the libretto was eventually recorded in Cook Island Māori and English by missionary and folklorist William Wyatt Gill in 1872. It remains the only known indigenous composition to record a Pacific “discovery” and first encounter from a native viewpoint. See W. Gill, *Historical Sketches of Savage Life in Polynesia; With Illustrative Clan Songs* (Wellington: George Didsbury, 1880), 180-85.

and augmenting “factual” material with imaginative and fictional structures, revise representations of Cook’s voyages and encounters with Pacific Islanders to posit alternative scenarios of discovery that privilege indigenous experiences, transactions, histories, and performative structures, depicting complex “contact zones” that, in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms, situate relations between stranger and native, colonizer and colonized, “not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices,” foregrounding “the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination” (7). Pratt’s formulation also defines the contact zone as a diachronic social space that treats *ongoing* cross-cultural relations, providing a useful framework for these performances that address both first encounters and their after-effects as they are borne out into the present.

Representing two divergent Pacific colonial legacies and attitudes to Captain Cook, *Way of a God* and *Orpheus in Rarohenga* both restage encounters in ways that encourage audiences to theorize their own societies. The choice of works and sites provides comparative regional variation, demonstrating the limitations of attempting to present a totalizing account of postcolonial circumstances in Oceania (Calder et al. 7). *Way of a God* offers a bilingual examination of Cook’s ill-fated encounters in Hawai‘i, attempting to foreground the viewpoints of both Native Hawaiians and British explorers in a complicated and ambiguous moment of engagement that is more in line with recent comparative historical ethnographic models than the “fatal impact” theses advanced by missionary historians. Cook appears here as a conflicted, fragmented figure, undergoing a crisis of identity as he is caught between a British culture he no longer identifies with and a Hawaiian culture that he desires but deeply misunderstands. Positing Cook as neither a god nor an imperial villain but a tragic figure, the play attempts to recuperate both Cook and Native Hawaiian accounts in

response to American colonial ideologies, prompting audiences to question structures of American history-making and nation-building. *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, on the other hand, stages indigenous resistance to British colonial models that heroize Cook as founding father in Aotearoa New Zealand, subverting the view of Cook as a humanitarian explorer by pointing to a history of violence toward Māori and Pacific peoples, and staking a claim in the memory of “fatal impacts.” *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, however, goes further by foregrounding a prior history of Polynesian navigation that displaces Cook’s primacy as explorer and emphasizes indigenous interisland connections throughout a “sea of islands,” and by rewriting the traditional Hero myth, creating a posthumous journey of atonement for Cook that initiates him into a new world order on strictly Polynesian terms. This ultimate cross-cultural encounter and possession, which incorporates and reinvents Cook within Polynesian structures of time and space, reformulates not just a national history, but a regional identity.

I want, finally, to turn to a specific consideration of the “scene” of the scenario (D. Taylor 29), and to foreground the beach as a nodal point for Pacific contact zones, and as a recurrent spatio-temporal and metaphorical trope throughout my analyses of *Orpheus in Rarohenga* and *Way of a God*. As Taylor points out, “The two, scene and scenario, stand in metonymic relationship: the place allows us to think about the possibilities of the action. But action also defines place” (29). As the conventional limit point for islands, the beach is the privileged arena of encounter in the Pacific. Denning observes that “Beaches are beginnings and endings. They are the frontiers and boundaries of islands,” and everything required to build any new society has to cross that beach (*Islands and Beaches* 32). Beach crossings inaugurate national histories, and also link a regional imaginary through colonial experience or through pre-colonial voyaging and intercultural exchange. In Oceanic cosmology and social life, as well as in the context of Stranger-Native encounters, the beach is a highly charged symbolic site,

replete with history and social practice. The beach's topography as a space between water and land, as a mutable physical border – at once “divid[ing] the world between here and there, us and them, good and bad, familiar and strange” (Denning *Islands and Beaches* 32), but “obstinately protean [...] appearing and disappearing” (S. Mishra “No Sign” 338) – figures it as a liminal zone and consequently as a rich arena and metaphor for the improvised, unpredictable, ambivalent, contradictory, and transformative nature of cross-cultural encounters. Theorizing the trope of the beach throughout a series of Pacific ethnohistories,⁷ Denning identifies the beach as a heightened, theatrical place, with its edgy, marginal nature pushing performances to extremes; an uncertain, unresolved space; and as a threshold, a transformative zone. These interpretations lead Denning to read the edginess or in-betweenness of the beach, and the passage of beach crossings, as broader metaphors for life moments defined by abnormality, insight, or reflection; rites of passage, rituals, or theatre. Significantly, beach crossings also function as metaphors for the process and/or challenge of historical understanding: “I want to say that to perform the past we must cross a beach in some way” (*Beach Crossings* 329). Throughout my analysis, I attend to how these various readings of the beach invigorate imaginative restagings of historical cross-cultural encounters, and to ask what meanings are generated when we resituate, recreate, or evoke the charged symbolic and historical space of the beach (beach as a theatre) within the symbolically charged space of encounter of the theatre (theatre as a beach).

⁷ See G. Denning, *Islands and Beaches* (1980), *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language* (1992), *Performances* (1996), and *Beach Crossings* (2004).

Dennis Carroll and Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker – *Way of a God* (1998)

Way of a God was first produced at Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, in April 1998, directed by the Hawaiian theatre practitioner Harry L. Wong III. The play was a collaboration between Australian-born Dennis Carroll, who conceived the script, and Native Hawaiian Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker, who translated the Hawaiian-language scenes and acted as dramaturg and Hawaiian Resource for the production. Carroll, who has been resident in Hawai‘i for almost forty years, is a playwright, director, and Professor of Theatre at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa (UHM), and since the early 1970s has been instrumental in supporting, and helping develop and institutionalize, a tradition of “local” Hawaiian theatre. “Local” theatre has been defined as theatre designed for Hawaiian residents rather than tourists, written mostly by residents of Asian, Pacific Island, and Hawaiian descent, frequently employing Pidgin (Hawaiian Creole English) and some Hawaiian language, and exploring subject matter of direct concern to Hawai‘i’s different ethnic groups (Carroll “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local’ Theatre” 123; Okamura 174). Although a tradition of “local” theatre has existed in Hawai‘i since the late nineteenth century, initially in the form of the historical pageant play and later in early Pidgin plays written after the Second World War, local drama experienced a decline in the 1950s and 1960s, due largely to the entrenchment of American drama on Broadway and the rise of the classical American musical. In the 1970s, this interest was renewed, in part to do with a growing dissatisfaction with “establishment” theatre, and the increasing profile of “minority” identities, including a developing indigenous Hawaiian sovereignty movement (Carroll *Kumu Kahua Plays* x-xvi). Carroll was a central figure in this theatrical revitalization, helping establish the Kumu Kahua (Original Stage) Theatre in 1971, with its mission to stage locally written and locally set plays. Carroll has also mentored other playwrights, encouraging them to produce and to publish, and he has

published an anthology of Kumu Kahua plays and helped to develop a critical discourse about the work. Carroll has directed a wide range of local productions, and his own plays include *Spur* (2000), *Massie/Kahahawai* (2004), *Age, Sex, Location* (2005), and *Ka‘iulani: A Cantata for Theatre* (1987), co-authored with Ryan Page, Robert Nelson, and Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl.

Whereas Pidgin plays have become the mainstay of Hawai‘i’s “local” theatre, scripted plays written solely in the Hawaiian language are a much more recent phenomenon, stemming largely from the efforts of Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker. Baker’s work began with her desire to direct a play written in Hawaiian, but after extensive research she could not find such a play, so she wrote one herself (Cataluna n.p.). Baker’s plays include *Mōhala ka Lehua* (1996), *Nanakuli* (1997), and *Kaluaiko‘olau: Ke Ka‘e‘a‘e‘a o Nā Pali Kalalau* [*Kaluaiko‘olau, the Hero of the Kalalau Cliffs*], the first play ever to be staged in Hawaiian, which was produced by the Lab Theatre at UHM in 1996 and later toured the State (*Way of a God* Program 3). Baker completed an MFA in Theatre at UHM by writing and directing the second full-length play to be acted in the Hawaiian language, *Māuiakamalo: Ka Ho‘okala Kupua o Ka Moku* [*Māuiakamalo: The Great Ancestor of Chiefs*] (1998), which toured Hawaiian-language immersion schools throughout the State, and in 2000 traveled to the Pacific Arts Festival in Noumea, New Caledonia (Wat and Desha 141). Baker subsequently developed the Hawaiian-language theatre company, Kā Hālau Hanakeeka, which has devised and performed a wide variety of Hawaiian theatrical works, sharing the culture and revitalizing the language by having it spoken in new forms (Wat and Desha 9). As lecturers in Hawaiian at UHM, Baker and her husband, Chris Kaliko Baker, currently teach a playwriting class in the Hawaiian language to nurture future playwrights. Both Carroll and Baker are important innovators in Hawaiian theatre, facilitating a varied tradition that reflects key aspects of Hawai‘i’s rich ethnic

composition and cultural history. Their own cross-cultural collaboration in *Way of a God* provides a dynamic convergence of different perspectives to form a theatrical portrait of the highly charged early meetings between Hawaiians and Europeans.

As a result of the multidisciplinary legacies and debates mentioned in the previous section, a play about Captain Cook is a potentially controversial subject for audiences in Hawai‘i. Carroll began work on the script under a different title back in the late 1960s, shelved it until the 1990s⁸ when it received extensive revision, reflecting developments in scholarship (the Sahlins-Obeyesekere debate in particular), and changes in the cultural climate, especially a more visible and vocal Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Carroll recalls that during the 1990s the concern about Cook was much more apparent, as was the need to be correct in matters Hawaiian.⁹ In consultation with colleagues in theatre, anthropology, and Hawaiian Studies, major modifications were made to the Hawaiian scenes and the scenes of intercultural interaction to provide more accurate portrayals of Hawaiian culture and thought. The input from Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker was particularly influential, offering insights into Hawaiian-language source materials and information about Cook gleaned from the Hawaiian oral tradition (Carroll “Path” 2). The most radical change came with the decision to turn the play into a bilingual script, with the Hawaiian characters speaking only in the Hawaiian language. Baker translated six full scenes into Hawaiian, making *Way of a God* the most linguistically experimental play to date

⁸ *Way of a God* was first entered for an international playwriting competition hosted by the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawai‘i in 1975. The competition was targeted specifically at plays about Cook and his fateful encounter with Hawai‘i, but as Carroll recollects, in an outcome that speaks to a simultaneous investment in, and reticence about, portrayals of Cook, “In the event there was no prize awarded – apparently all of the plays, in the opinion of the judges, fell short of being worthy enough to have a monetary prize or any production on Kennedy Theatre mainstage. And none of us ever had any kind of feedback. So I stuffed my play in a drawer and got on with other things” (*Path* 2).

⁹ Dennis Carroll, personal communication, Oct. 2, 2007.

to appear in mainstream Hawaiian theatre.¹⁰ As Carroll points out in the play's program notes, "Our theatre's name is Kumu Kahua – in a local theatre in 1998, we feel it is appropriate and important to present material in Hawaiian" (2-3). Indeed, the play exists in both Hawaiian and English versions, as a printed English synopsis of the Hawaiian scenes was provided for audiences at the performances, as well as a Hawaiian synopsis of the English dialogue. The particular development of *Way of a God* is a good example of changing responses to Cook and approaches to historiography, new demands regarding the cultural representation of Native Hawaiians, and developing expectations for the cultural work undertaken by "local" theatre.

The two-act *Way of a God* concerns the major documented events of Cook's visit to Kealakekua Bay in January-February 1779, and the incident and immediate aftermath of his death. The play's title is an English translation of "Kealakekua," from the beginning drawing attention to the resonances inherent in a layering of English and Hawaiian languages, suggesting the physical importance of place and its social and spiritual significance, and pointing to the contention over Cook's "divinity." In the play, Cook's decision to anchor in Kealakekua Bay coincides with a complicated struggle between religious and political factions on Hawai'i. Far from portraying Hawaiians as "savages" who naively worshiped the European visitors, Cook's investiture as "Lono" is situated within a sophisticated cultural matrix which, throughout the play, is never fully understood by the British. From a Hawaiian perspective Cook is seen as a useful figure; in his representative role as the deity Lono he is able to lend power to the local priests, and in his role as a man with guns allied ceremonially to the King, he has the potential to offer the necessary firepower to

¹⁰ *ibid.*, see also reviews of *Way of a God* by Ed Rampell and John Berger, "Capt. Cook."

defeat the warriors from neighboring Maui and establish the supremacy of the local chiefs. Cook, meanwhile, comes under criticism from his own men for accepting deification (as he interprets it) as an expedient maneuver to push his own civilizing agenda in Hawai‘i. These external social interactions are juxtaposed with, and complicated by, Cook’s interior world, which ventures into the realms of memory and fantasy to present a conflicted man undergoing a crisis of cultural identity, whose experiences in the Pacific have changed his relationship with his past and with England. Cook tries to negotiate between two different epistemological frameworks, but is caught between them, his inevitable misunderstanding and tragic ambition resulting in an impasse that can only be resolved with his death.

Incorporating Hawaiian, British, and American anthropological, historical, and aesthetic materials within a theatrical frame, the play’s interpretive restaging of these “first meetings” aims for nuanced readings of the social interactions between the Hawaiians and the British at this troubled moment of encounter. While Carroll and Baker present a fictionalized work that is not confined to a realist aesthetic, the play’s external social action offers a revision broadly in line with comparative historical ethnography. In *Way of a God*, the embodied performance of encounter helps to overcome what Anne Salmond terms the “disciplinary apartheid” (*Trial* xx) in Cook scholarship that has confined historians to an analysis of the British explorers and anthropologists to Islanders’ experiences, presenting instead a “middle ground, a place at the interface between European explorers and local communities” (Salmond in Williams 242). Through this process, Carroll and Baker undertake a critical examination of an aspect of Hawai‘i’s history that has been constructed in damaging and stereotypical ways in its demonizing of Cook and marginalizing of Native Hawaiians in aid of a missionary-fueled American hegemony. Although I raise questions about the extent to which the play exceeds Western representational

structures, displaces Cook's primacy, and moves beyond Stranger-Native binaries, *Way of a God* seeks to unravel the tidy narrative of this scenario of discovery, and thus to prompt a reconsideration of the continuing structures of American colonialism in Hawai'i. The play's complicated plot, demanding performance approach, and ambitious agenda was acknowledged by reviewers, who noted that Carroll's "counter-legend" is "not a play for all theatre-goers" (Rampell n.p.), and that audiences "may be intellectually challenged by *God*" (Rampell n.p.), which is "a difficult new play for Kumu Kahua Theatre" (Rozmiarek C4).

This "difficulty" is something that I want to pick up on as a recurrent theme in this analysis. I have chosen to focus on *Way of a God* because it presents one of the most concerted attempts to restage and reimagine European-Pacific encounters and to address particular implications of Cook's legacy, but just as importantly, because in so doing, the play acknowledges – both thematically, and in ways that engage and exceed the performance framework – the challenges and limitations of trying to render this history. *Way of a God* grapples with its own subject matter; one reviewer's comment that the play "takes on so many issues it loses a focus" (Rozmiarek C4) is, I think, a response to the ways in which the ambiguities and contradictions of encounter, of knowing, and of history are translated in the play's structure and presentation. The play foregrounds reticence, aporias, and lacunae, seeming most concerned with exploring and manifesting the limits of cross-cultural understanding, the barriers to knowledge, and the circumstances under which uninformed assumptions and miscommunications lead to conflict and tragedy. In the play's logic, as the interface between two cultures, the beach is ultimately uncrossable. To follow Denning, if to perform the past involves crossing a beach or "going native" (*Performances* 124; *Beach Crossings* 329), we might argue that the play also consciously performs its own struggle with the possibility of historical understanding and representation.

The play's political investment in revising pervasive historical characterizations of Cook and Native Hawaiians is made explicit during the play's final scene, which takes place in a malleable temporal frame that presents both the moment of Cook's death and a charged commentary on his legacy in Hawai'i. The death of Cook is figured in a tableau in which Cook kneels at the feet of the Hawaiian character, Paleea (ali'i (chief) and aikane (male consort) of Kalani'ōpu'u), who wields a raised knife. This action of the play's "present" is self-consciously historicized by the unsympathetic character of Lieutenant Williamson, one of Cook's officers, who adopts the role of external commentator in the guise of a missionary preacher. Against the tableau, Williamson delivers a eulogy to the audience that condemns Cook for idolatry, claiming

[E]ven if he thought they were worshipping as we do in this our own land, he did wrong! This man was a Christian. He did wrong to enter an idolator's place of worship. He did wrong to adorn himself with heathen adornments. He did wrong to accept gifts offered before idols and to eat food dedicated to them. [...] [H]e did wrong to succumb to the temptation of tasting the power of divinity! (72)

This address, significantly, is a paraphrase of a passage on Cook written by the nineteenth-century Native Hawaiian scholar, S. M. Kamakau, culminating in the verbatim line, "Therefore – God smote him!" (72), at which point Paleea's knife descends to kill Cook. The use of an ostensibly Native Hawaiian history here, but spoken by Williamson as a composite missionary figure, supports Gananath Obeyesekere's argument that "Kamakau's work *is* native history, but one self-consciously influenced by the Evangelical charter that Kamakau himself, along with other Lahainaluna scholars, helped [missionary historian Sheldon] Dibble to construct" (164), thus pointing to the role of missionary historiography in overwriting

Native Hawaiian accounts or producing conditions that removed Hawaiians from their own historical record. As a Christian scholar, argues Obeyesekere, although Kamakau writes freely and insightfully about other aspects of Hawaiian history, “regarding Cook he reiterates [missionary historians] Ellis, Bingham, Dibble, and others. Thus, native priests offered ‘sacrifices’ to Cook and ‘worshipped’ him, and Cook, the idolater, permitted it” (164). Correspondingly, avers Williamson, if the Hawaiian oral tradition that attested to Cook’s posthumous honoring “*were* true ... it were the truth of bestial heathens!” (72, emphasis and ellipsis in original).

The Hawaiian response to Williamson’s address exhibits a different kind of cross-cultural encounter and conflict in the play, in which Williamson and Paleea embody and enact competing historical narratives. Breaking from the tableau, Paleea speaks in Hawaiian, “address[ing] the audience in a counter-address to that of Williamson, increasingly confident and triumphant” (72), and then “as if invading time and space itself” (72), Paleea strides downstage, hurls Williamson to the floor, and forces him to translate his words into English – for the first time in the play – for the characters onstage and the audience: “It was when he was struck. He gave a cry. [...] A cry of pain, like a man makes. [...] Not a god. [...] None of them are gods. [...] Know then that there is hope for us” (73). Paleea’s counter-history usurps the missionary scenario; in the play’s schema, the acknowledgement that Cook was not considered a god by the Hawaiians gives them “hope” in the face of colonial belittlement, presenting a retrospective indigenous challenge to American colonial ideologies. These closing scenes, in which eighteenth-century action merges into nineteenth-century mythmaking into late twentieth-century indigenous revisionism, theatricalizes the diachronic dynamic of the contact zone, allowing a snapshot of the ongoing colonial relations engendered by contact, as well as the resistance that emerges from the site of those encounters.

A focus on Hawaiian voices is foregrounded from the beginning of the play, which opens with the entire first scene in the Hawaiian language. It comprises a chanted purification prayer of the mo‘o-Lono (rite of Lono) (Malo 160), performed by Ka‘ō‘ō, principal priest of Lono at Kealakekua (representative of religious social institutions), and a monologue spoken by Paleea (representing a competing political faction), who spies the approaching British ships from the beach and hypothesizes about the visitors, noting the ships’ “giant poles and wings on the poles like the Orono poles of the Makahiki” (75), but wondering, “Where is their home? What gives them their power? And how much power do they have?” (75), and asking himself, “Who are they? Spirits? Men? Or both?” (75). This maneuver, clearly, asserts the primacy of Hawaiian customs, cosmologies, and social structures; Paleea’s meditation on the nature of the visitors, subjecting them to his own curious gaze and epistemological viewpoint, initiates the discourse of encounter from a Hawaiian perspective, situating the British – to follow Hau‘ofa – as those who literally emerge from the wings after the Hawaiians have taken center stage. This linguistic strategy, however, also raises inevitable questions about the general audience’s access to the meanings embedded in an unfamiliar language, its effects, and what present commentary is engendered by this particular approach to historical representation.¹¹

In contemporary Hawai‘i, the use of Hawaiian is not simply a device to achieve “authenticity,” but is a political maneuver, functioning as an alienation effect by blocking access to layers of meaning encoded in Hawaiian oral performance, and consciously setting up barriers between the characters onstage, performers and

¹¹ It is true that English translations of the Hawaiian were provided for the audience, but these were only synopses. Moreover, with performance pacing and low house lighting, it is unlikely that audiences could have followed the Hawaiian scenes in translation while the show was in progress. English translations of the Hawaiian dialogue in this chapter are taken from the manuscript of *Way of a God*, courtesy of Dennis Carroll and the Kumu Kahua Theatre Archives.

audience, and between audience members themselves.¹² The performance of Hawaiian as an endangered language pays attention to the power relations encoded in language use, both acknowledging and destabilizing English as a language “inflected with the associations of cultural dominance” (Gordon and Williams 93), allowing the language choice to symbolically “negotiate the relations of privilege and exclusion, challenge and subvert entrenched attitudes of dominance and contest ascriptions of value” (Gordon and Williams 79). Spoken Hawaiian in a theatrespace in downtown Honolulu in the 1990s also operates as a way to acknowledge the loss of a comprehending audience, embedding a critical commentary on the marginalization of indigenous linguistic and cultural histories under colonialism. The assumption that most audiences would not understand the Hawaiian is probable, given that in 2000, native speakers of Hawaiian amounted to less than 0.1% of the statewide population, and although revitalization efforts have generated a growing number of second-language speakers, there is still only a small percentage of people who can speak and understand Hawaiian (Warner 133-44). The performance’s sociolinguistic dynamic is reinforced by the theatre architectonics and the production’s spatial logic. During Paleea’s monologue and frequently throughout the play, the forestage between performer and audience is figured as a beach, part of the *mise-en-scène* and a symbolic zone of encounter. In this case, the beach presents a cultural boundary (Denning *Islands and Beaches* 20), maintaining a dividing line “between here and there, us and them, good and bad, familiar and strange” (Denning *Islands and Beaches* 32), doubling with the theatre as a threshold from one world into another, but denying access on both counts

¹² This approach caused practical problems in production. In the Kumu Kahua premiere, aside from the difficulties of finding Hawaiian-speaking actors to take these roles, the actor playing Kalani‘ōpu‘u grew up speaking a different Hawaiian dialect and could not learn his lines as they had been prepared by Baker, which had to be fed to him by the stage manager via a microphone/earpiece. Dennis Carroll, personal communication, 2 Oct. 2007.

– a position that is reinforced by theatregoing conventions that keep audiences “in their place.” We can read this strategy as a challenge that makes the case for indigenous representation and autonomy in a multicultural milieu, but also, potentially, as an active invitation to the audience to gain access to the full resonances of the performance through linguistic and historical research, and to create themselves in the image approved by the authors and performers (Gordon and Williams 79).

Thematically, the challenges of communicating across cultures and the pitfalls of miscommunication are brought to the fore in the case of Cook’s “divinity.” The information about Cook’s status comes to the British through hearsay and corrupted lines of communication. Cook’s first officer, Lieutenant King, finds a role as an important intermediary, translator and cultural ambassador, but although the Hawaiians’ speech is “close to that of Otahiti” (10), he has only an imperfect understanding of the language. On board the *Resolution*, King tells Cook, “Sir, some of the people trading with our ships offshore have said that you are already thought of as some deity. Some god” (10). He explains, “There are four main gods. You’re one of them” (13), but readily admits that “we don’t know enough” (27) and “I need more time” (13). The potential for bilingual performance to convey the challenges presented by the “space between cultures filled by interpretation, occasions of metaphorical understanding and translation” (Denning *Performances* 195), is exemplified in the scenes where the Hawaiians and British meet with King as interlocutor, which are characterized by linguistic errors, and conceptual slips and gaps:

KING: Part-gibberish. The Hawaiians react accordingly. Aloha kahiki, aloha tahouna. To Cook. His Majesty welcomes you and salutes you.

[...]

KALANI‘ŌPU‘U: Ua lako ka hale i nā pōmaika‘i o ka ‘aina a me nā pōmaika‘i o ke kai i mākaukau ai i ka makahiki; he kalo ‘oe, he pāpa‘i ‘oe, he

‘ulu ‘oe, he mai‘a ‘oe, he pua‘a ‘oe mai ka imu mai, he ‘ilio kālua ‘oe. E ha‘i ia Lono, e ‘ai kākou!

[Translation, not spoken. We have a whole house filled with fruits of the earth and sea harvested during Makahiki; taro, fish of all kinds, white crab, breadfruit, bananas, and young pig from the imu, baked dog, and sweetmeats. Tell Lono it is his to dispose of as he sees fit (78).]

KING: After a pause. There is a house full of produce you have to eat.

COOK: As a test of my divinity?

KING: I might have got it wrong, sir. He must mean for the others too. (15)

Here, the British misunderstanding of Hawaiian language and protocol parallels Hawaiian disagreement and speculation about Cook’s cultural role, demonstrating how the beach as the site of this ritual interface is “a marginal space between two unknowables” (Denning *Beach Crossings* 18). These awkward and reticent interactions undermine a unidirectional scenario of imperial assurance, attempting a more nuanced depiction of both cultural groups and offering a more humanizing portrait of Cook, while setting the stage for future conflict.

One implication of this recurrent technique is that the majority of audience members are likely to be just as confused and as dependent upon King as Cook is, opening up more space for identification with Cook (however discomfoting this default position might be). This is a position emphasized by our privileged insight into Cook’s interior world; after the first third of *Way of a God*, Cook’s psychological drama is juxtaposed with the external action and, as the play progresses, begins to overtake it. This interior drama occupies its own liminal spatio-temporality and is represented by a “more indeterminate area” downstage, “where people from the past materialize” (1). Cook is confronted by his wife Betty, his sponsor the Earl of Sandwich, and King George III, who represent Cook’s personal history and the links

to his homeland, signifying domestic ties, class status, and sovereign imperialism. These scenes contrast stylistically with the predominantly realist presentation that characterizes the play's external scenes, tending towards the surreal and expressionistic, and using lighting effects and exaggerated eighteenth-century costumes to present the characters in distorted form. Carroll's purpose here is to reimagine Cook in a manner that avoids iconographic representations – especially missionary stereotypes – fracturing the coherent “sovereign I” (Richardson 18) of the written *Journals*, and presenting Cook as a flawed and complex figure that deliberately dismantles the view of the historical Enlightenment hero as stable, distant, and monolithic. This negotiation between Cook's private past and present also provides an opportunity to register the impact of the Pacific on Cook, examining the identity crisis brought about by his changing allegiances, and examining the personal desires and cultural misunderstandings that lead to his death. While, on one level, this aspect of the play allows Carroll to bring Cook down to size in his relations with Hawaiians, the concentrated focus on Cook simultaneously threatens to inhibit our engagement with Hawaiian voices as the play advances. In this way, *Way of a God* is a prime example of the contradictions involved in trying to come to terms with “Captain Cook,” grappling with the problem of reworking his pervasive image without reinforcing his centrality in scenarios of discovery.

Whereas Carroll's portrait does not absolve Cook of imperialist fantasies, it attempts to sketch a sympathetic portrait of a man caught between two worlds, belonging to neither one, and seeking a new identity under which to cohere his fragmented self. Cook's internal voices expose him as a man frustrated and enervated by his role as a British explorer and who wants to remake himself in the Pacific, to attempt a metaphorical beach crossing to a new condition. Yet the play insists upon its cultural boundaries, stressing Cook's inability to negotiate this transition because of

his entrapment within a British worldview. Such a viewpoint is cast into relief during Cook's formal investiture as Lono at Hikiau Heiau, a strange rite of passage in which Cook's misinterpretation of his cultural role together with his desire for affirmation spills over into imperial hubris:

I'm more than ordinary, better than ordinary! Twelve thousand miles, I have stamped my name on the unknown, I have brought fathoms and leagues of sea and miles and miles of rugged cliffs and beaches into being, I have given them a name, a form, a line, a shape! I have stamped them into the world, I have made a new world, a larger world, I have swamped the muddy streets of London with its vastness, I – am – [...] A god... (36)

The scene dramatizes two parallel rituals that ironize each other: the Hawaiian rite and Cook's own reinvention as hero-creator; like the God of Genesis, Cook names the features of the earth and they spring into being, rewriting the creation myth through the discourses of exploration, discovery, science, possession, and colonization. After his presumed apotheosis, however, Cook is haunted increasingly by his growing guilt about having thought himself to be a god. The inner voices fuel his guilt, with George III accusing Cook of "Treason!" (41), and Sandwich suggesting that Cook has lost his "character," his "very integrity" (41). In an intriguing development, Cook decides that the way out is to start anew in the Pacific, making the startling revelation to King that he has chosen to "turn my back on England, on Europe, on all my old allegiances, for them!" (58). Cook fantasizes about sloughing off all the trappings of his former life, erasing the past, and making a fresh start among the Hawaiians:

GEORGE III: No god.

SANDWICH: No captain.

GEORGE III: No scientist.

SANDWICH: No navigator.

GEORGE III: No leader.

SANDWICH: No hero.

GEORGE III: Not even a lieutenant.

BETTY: Not even a husband.

SANDWICH: Just a man. (61)

Here, Carroll provides a provocative counter-discourse to conventional Cook myths by foregrounding the explorer-hero's desire to "go native," and live out his life as a sort of beachcomber. Yet once again, the play reiterates the impossibility of forgetting the past and freely traversing cultural and epistemological boundaries; as King explains: "We'll never really meet them, be of them, don't you see? They know the ocean, the tides, the lava rocks, the fish, the gentle wind. We haven't been fashioned by these things. [...] How can we ever cross to them?" (58). Emphasizing cultural difference, King alerts Cook to the fact such a naive remaking is ultimately impossible: "After a lifetime of devotion to them you will not meet them. You will be shut out!" (58). Cook, is caught in a liminal space – between mortality and deification, and between European and Hawaiian cultures – unable to complete this rite of passage and, in effect, trapped on the beach. Ultimately, as a result, Cook comes to the conclusion that death is the only way out of the dilemma of being caught between two worlds, unable to reconcile with the past, nor look forward to a future. Carroll offers an alternative, unorthodox reading of the motivation behind Cook's death, played out on the psychological plane, where a self-sacrifice becomes the only way to escape the current impasse and be born anew.

Carroll's general approach to restaging cross-cultural encounters and his particular trajectory for Cook prompts several questions and considerations. For instance, Carroll's insistence on the failure of discovery – both of the other and the self – is an intriguing motif. What is at stake, or at least implied, in the inability to

cross the beach? On a discursive level, this trope manifests the play's acknowledgement of the hermeneutic challenges involved in engaging historical cross-cultural encounters, its consciousness of its own limits and the prevailing barriers to historical understanding. In more concrete terms, reading the beach in terms of the maintenance of physical and cultural boundaries foregrounds the autonomy of Hawai'i, performing a general resistance to colonial interventions, while the refusal of Cook's beachcomber fantasies subverts stereotypes of the Pacific Islands as exemplary spaces for Western re-creation, pertinent to Hawai'i as burdened tourist paradise. The limits of encounter, cross-cultural understanding and assimilation in the play's context, reinforced by the play's bilingual format, also privileges a Native Hawaiian identity that resists easy assimilation, which would seem to assert contemporary indigeneity in response to American hegemony and a multiethnic milieu. This rather divisive approach perhaps engages issues about the right of outsiders to claim "local" identities, which speaks to Hawai'i as a uniquely contested space where the mixing of cultures and the rights of indigenous peoples have not always been easily reconciled, evincing caution about a discourse of celebratory hybridity.

In terms of its Native Hawaiian representation, *Way of a God* is an important experiment in intercultural and bilingual theatre, with Baker's input helping reconstruct the religious and political intricacies of pre-contact Hawaiian society, highlighting indigenous performative structures and interpretations of encounter. Ironically, however, although Hawaiian voices form the crux of the play's finale, in trying to accommodate so many layers of action in the play in order to register the complexity of this fraught historical moment, Carroll's focus on Cook's psychological drama increasingly displaces external cultural engagements and ends up marginalizing Hawaiian interests. Carroll struggles with the specter of Captain Cook; the very attempt to rescue Cook from a position as a missionary scapegoat by paying attention

to his conflicts and limitations, and downplaying his imperial assurance, operates by default to reinforce his central position in a new scenario. Furthermore, establishing a privileged viewpoint by creating distinctions between interior and exterior action, maintaining language barriers, and pursuing a logic whereby crossing to the Other is impossible, serves to emphasize European subjectivity versus Native Hawaiian alterity, thus reinforcing the very binaries that have formed the problematic bases of Stranger-Native historiographies. These contradictions that characterize *Way of a God* are cast into relief by their simultaneous, embodied performance, suggesting that theatre might have an important role in exposing the messiness of encounter, the problems of representation, and the limits of understanding in ways that written histories might be more inclined to smooth over.

Way of a God attempts complicated interventions into Hawaiian history – and a highly contested aspect of Pacific history – in ways that seek to render the multivalent and problematic processes of trying to come to terms with other cultures, as opposed to conflating this moment of encounter into a formulaic and easily assimilable narrative that privileges the cultural authority of the European viewing subject (D. Taylor 64). Staking a claim in the legacy of Captain Cook in contemporary Hawai‘i, the play’s format allows for imagined characterizations that attempt to subvert stereotypes inculcated in American colonial discourse, but the play also struggles with the challenges posed by its subject matter at both historical and contemporary levels. Although my discussion is concerned with fictionalized engagements with Pacific pasts, I note this issue in Pacific historical studies as it is relevant to theatre’s relationship to historical representation in this chapter. David Hanlon argues that ethnohistories are “strong, persuasive, sympathetic, and even seductive in their search for a middle ground on which natives and strangers might exchange their understandings of encounters and of the even deeper pasts that

preceded those encounters” (27). Importantly, however, “they do not satisfy those who argue for a reconceptualization of Oceanic pasts, and against the distortions created by colonialism and its accompanying practices, including history” (27). As I move into my discussion of *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, I am attentive to the ways in which, as a Māori writer, Robert Sullivan adapts and moves beyond historical categories created, sustained, and reified by colonial epistemologies, employing indigenous cultural models and concepts of time and space to reconceptualize Cook’s legacy in ways that foreground Polynesian worldviews.

Robert Sullivan and John Psathas – *Orpheus in Rarohenga* (2002)

Orpheus in Rarohenga had its premiere performance in the Wellington Town Hall, New Zealand, on 23 November 2002. The three-act oratorio for soprano, tenor and baritone soli, chorus and orchestra was a joint commission from composer John Psathas and poet and librettist Robert Sullivan to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Orpheus Choir of Wellington, and was funded chiefly by Creative New Zealand. As a genre, the oratorio is a choral performance containing operatic and/or dramatic elements. As well as singing, the performance may incorporate other vocal dynamics such as sprechgesang, sprechstimme, shouting, whispering, and free speech. Thematically, the oratorio is traditionally associated with serious, philosophical, or religious subjects.¹³

¹³ This work exists in a variety of forms. There is the complete libretto, *Captain Cook in the Underworld*, which precedes and succeeds the performance version; and the performance libretto, published in the *Jubilee Gala Concert Program*, which is a dramatized and edited version of Sullivan’s original text, closely maintaining Sullivan’s wording, his portrait of Cook and the content of the journey, but tending toward a sparer style of expression more suitable for vocal performance. In addition, there is the facsimile study score, which contains the performance libretto and full instrumental score; the choral score; and a CD of the live premiere, recorded by Radio New Zealand. For this analysis, I focus on the staged performance, quoting the edited performance libretto as the primary text, referred to as *Orpheus in Rarohenga (OR)*. A secondary document is *Captain Cook in the Underworld (CCU)*, which I cite when the phraseology or structure of the full version of Sullivan’s work seems necessary for a more nuanced understanding of Cook’s depiction. The live recording is a

Psathas (1966-), born in New Zealand of Greek descent, studied composition and piano performance at Victoria University of Wellington before continuing his education in Belgium with composer Jacqueline Fontyn. Since returning to New Zealand, he has taught at Victoria University and developed a reputation as one of New Zealand's leading young composers. Psathas' work reflects his strong continued connection with New Zealand as well as his Greek heritage. He garnered international attention with his *Saxophone Concerto*, performed in Bologna, Italy, in 2000; other major works include the double concerto for piano and percussion, *View from Olympus*, which premiered during the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002, and his music for the opening and closing of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.¹⁴

Whereas Psathas composed the musical score for *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, Robert Sullivan wrote the libretto, later published in full as a verse drama with the title *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (Auckland UP, 2002).¹⁵ Sullivan (1967-) is a member of the hapū Ngāti Manu and the iwi Ngā Puhī Nui Tonu of Northland, and is also of Ngāti Raukawa, Kai Tahu and Galway Irish descent. A graduate of Auckland University and a qualified librarian, Sullivan has emerged over the past fifteen years as one of New Zealand's leading poets. His other poetry collections include *Jazz Waiata* (1990), *Piki Ake!* (1993), *Star Waka* (1999), and *voice carried my family* (2005). He was co-editor of the Polynesian poetry anthology *Whetū Moana* (2003); has produced a selection of Māori myths and legends, *Weaving Earth and Sky* (2002); and has also written a graphic novel, *Maui: Legends of the Outcast* (1996). Sullivan

valuable resource for discussing performance features and the additional meanings generated by the vocal and instrumental dynamics. Supplementary primary documents include the full instrumental and choral scores, as the layout of the score allows for for a less linear and more plural presentation of simultaneous moments of action in the piece.

¹⁴ For an extended version of Psathas' official biography, see:

<http://www.promethean-editions.com/php/ComposerBio.php?Composer=John%20Psathas>

¹⁵ *Captain Cook in the Underworld* is a "translation" of *Orpheus in Rarohenga*: in Sullivan's scheme, Orpheus = Captain Cook, Rarohenga = the Underworld.

has won or been a finalist for many national literary awards, and is currently based at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, as Director of the Creative Writing Program. Sullivan’s work arises from a more general renaissance of Māori language, culture, and artistic expression which has developed since the mid-1970s (a movement that will be examined in further detail as the subject of Chapter Three). While Sullivan’s poems range over a variety of topics, key trends in his work include postmodern explorations of the persistent effects of European colonization, a focus on the importance of the Māori historic and mythic past, investigations of Māori-Pākehā relations in the contemporary world, and in his more recent writing especially, the development of mutual connections between Māori and a broader pan-Pacific community.

Orpheus in Rarohenga does not revise the oratorio significantly at the level of form; although Sullivan invokes a range of linguistic registers throughout the libretto, it is not a hybrid work as is Carroll and Baker’s synthesis of Hawaiian language, chant, ritual, and Western theatrical models. Sullivan and Psathas’ oratorio maintains the Handelian three-act structure, retains the traditional theme of the spiritual trial, the orchestra consists of European instruments rather than Polynesian ones, almost all of the libretto is in English, and the cast of the original performance was predominantly Pākehā. We can, however, still view *Orpheus in Rarohenga* as an example of transculturation, as Bridget Orr has argued of Sullivan’s poetry more broadly, “an active appropriation of certain European (and American) cultural goods for specifically Maori and pan-Pacific purposes” (168). As I will show, Sullivan’s reworking intervenes on the traditional oratorio mainly at the level of content, even though his provocative portrait of Cook and his privileging of Māori histories, philosophies, and figures of authority necessarily impacts the oratorio’s conventional format and effects. As I see it, the performance to a large extent derives its subversive

political clout from the fact that sentiments challenging to Pākehā cultural hegemony are expressed in and through the voices of a classically-trained Pākehā cast in the context of a “high art” form with roots in eighteenth-century English culture. But at the same time, existing aspects of the oratorio as a performance form actively enable Sullivan’s complex vision of Cook and Pacific history. In addition to poetic and stylized modes of expression, the oratorio offers dramatic characterization without formal staging, freeing Sullivan from the representational concerns of other kinds of staged performances, and allowing for fluid metamorphoses between character identities and states of consciousness, as well as for scenes that freely traverse and reconceptualize constructs of time and space.

In terms of content, the mingling of Greek and Māori influences is strongly evident in the collaboration between Sullivan and Psathas. *Orpheus in Rarohenga* did not begin specifically as a project about Cook, but the Orpheus Choir Executives wanted a piece that took up “Orpheus” as a theme, that perhaps connected with Māori mythology through the device of the “underworld,” and had some relevance to contemporary life in New Zealand. The Choir commissioned Psathas, and Creative New Zealand recommended Sullivan as the librettist.¹⁶ It was Sullivan who developed the link with Captain Cook; as he explains: “I first wrote this libretto inspired by the name of the Orpheus Choir. Orpheus himself is deeply embedded in poetry. He was an exemplary poet and brilliant at the lyre. He had also accompanied the Argonauts, and so was a voyager. The name conjured up for me Jungian archetypes. It was from this point, moving from a Greek to a New Zealand archetype that I thought of the great explorer and cartographer, James Cook” (*Jubilee Gala Concert Program 7*).

¹⁶ Judith Berryman, personal communication, Nov. 8, 2007.

Given Hau'ofa's public condemnation of Cook, Sullivan ran the risk of censure from fellow Māori and Polynesian scholars and artists for centralizing Cook in creative work rather than concentrating on indigenous histories that keep him at the margins. (Indeed, after reading Hau'ofa's aforementioned commentary on Cook, Sullivan admits that he made the firm decision to make his next work a strictly Polynesian one.)¹⁷ Importantly, however, I argue that in *Orpheus in Rarohenga* it is precisely in Sullivan's decision to treat Cook as a subject and to stake a claim in remembering him that Polynesian peoples and institutions assume a central position. Sullivan's portrayal suggests that one of the ways to lay to rest the ghost of Cook is to exorcise him center stage, but in order to do so, Sullivan reworks the image and character of Cook within these very structures of repressed, indigenous Pacific knowledge to reclaim and renew not only a national history but a regional identity.

Unlike Carroll, who concentrates his play's action on the last few weeks of Cook's life in a specific area of Hawai'i, Sullivan places importance on the first *Endeavour* voyage with Cook's circumnavigation of New Zealand and cross-cultural encounters with Māori peoples. In this lyrical, highly stylized historical revision, Sullivan reads Cook's Pacific voyages primarily in terms of the litany of violent acts wrought upon indigenous Māori and other Pacific Islanders, but rather than closing with his demise in Hawai'i, Cook's death opens out into the third act of the oratorio, in which Cook's soul travels to Rarohenga, the mythic Māori underworld. Here, in a different series of encounters, Cook is called to atone for his sins by facing up to the ghosts of the Māori and other Pacific peoples he has killed. Only once Cook

¹⁷ Robert Sullivan, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2007. Note: Sullivan had already written *Captain Cook in the Underworld* when he came across Hau'ofa's commentary, but felt guilty about having written the work after reading what Hau'ofa had to say and meeting him afterwards. The next work he wrote was deliberately all about Polynesians to take Cook off center stage. It is worth mentioning this incident for what it tells us about the influence of Pacific critics on the work of fellow Pacific authors, and the potential implications of such maneuvers.

acknowledges his wrongdoing and is offered some redemption through an understanding of, and incorporation within, Pacific culture, can he partake of the privilege accorded to Māori spirits and journey to the spiritual homeland of Hawaiki.

In this scheme, Sullivan modifies the concept of the “explorer” to encompass and privilege the feats of early Polynesian voyagers, a move that positions Cook as a violent latecomer to the Pacific but, more importantly, offers a way to redress the legacy of these violent encounters and imposed national categories by highlighting pre-European inter-island connections that reconceptualize the Pacific region as an integrated whole. Revising Cook’s claims by re-authorizing an indigenous history of oceanic navigation, trade, and settlement that precedes and transcends the journeys and arbitrary boundaries inscribed by Western travelers, Sullivan references strong cultural alliances that are both pre-colonial and post-colonial. By foregrounding this prior history of exploration and imagining a post-mortem journey for Cook that subsumes and reinvents the British explorer within Polynesian epistemologies, Sullivan favors Pacific ways of seeing while pointing to a model of indigenous identity that moves beyond the land and the beach to affirm more fluid relations between people in an interrelated Oceanic world.

Sullivan’s project involves both a remapping of space and a reconceptualization of time. As part of his historical revisionism, Sullivan organizes his action according to indigenous models of time and historical understanding that diverge from the teleological chronologies of Western time and national narratives, foregrounding myth as history and drawing upon mythic structures that abandon fixed diachronic sequencing; channeling the experiences of spirit characters that stand outside the temporal boundaries of dominant society and create a more ambiguous relationship between past and present; and placing Cook’s post-mortem journey within the indeterminate time of liminality and transition known in Māori culture as “te

wheiao.” Through these combined strategies, I argue that Sullivan’s work participates in the complex project of constructing what Subramani calls the “oceanic imaginary” – a way of conceiving of the region that “would treat Oceania as a complex, multilayered stage on which island scholars would reinscribe the new epistemologies – their own epistemologies. These would at once involve the critique of oppressive systems of thinking [...] and entail an exploration into ‘Oceania’s library’ (the knowledge its people possess)” (“Oceanic Imaginary” 151).

One further discursive strand essential to an understanding of *Orpheus in Rarohenga* is Jungian psychology, which Sullivan employs – in a move reminiscent of Carroll’s portrayal – as a framework for examining Cook’s interior world and for tracing his personal journey of self-discovery. Sullivan’s choice of Jung as a tool for a postcolonial reappraisal of Cook is an intriguing one, given that Jung’s theories have been largely dismissed by postcolonial and feminist critics because of their essentialism, masculinist focus, and the colonial inflections in his readings of “primitive” peoples. Nevertheless, Jungian theory here provides a central narrative structure around which to organize the work’s many elements, lending thematic depth and cohesion to the libretto, and it is a thread that I weave throughout this analysis, along with a broader view to how, as with other “imported models,” Sullivan appropriates Jung for indigenous ends. Sullivan adopts Jungian psychology¹⁸ to forge a connection between the mythic and the psychological, allowing us to read “Captain Cook” as a European “myth” and structuring Cook’s historical and spiritual journey in

¹⁸ Sullivan developed his interest in Jungian psychology from the work of New Zealand poet James K. Baxter (1926-72), who was a huge artistic influence, and from New Zealand critic Kai Jensen’s Jungian analysis of Baxter’s work. Robert Sullivan, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2007. See Kai Jensen, *Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature*, pp. 128-40, 145-48, for the introduction to Jung and the Jungian analysis of Baxter. In particular, Kai Jensen explains that James K. Baxter’s interest in Māoritanga “derived from Jung’s respect for ‘archaic’ cultures. These were cultures that retained their rituals and folklore, and were on better terms with the unconscious than Western culture with its fetish of rationality” (140).

terms of the journey of the archetypal Hero. In this journey, the mythic Hero (almost always male) proceeds to the threshold of adventure, enters the kingdom of the dark/unknown, faces tests and trials, overcomes an ultimate ordeal, gains a boon/reward, and makes a return or undergoes a resurrection, while the boon that he brings restores the world (Campbell 245-46). In Jung's schema, this paradigm allegorizes the struggle for psychological wholeness, or "individuation." The classic Jungian Hero is representative of ego consciousness, which in the first half of life must establish independence from the unconscious from which it emerged, but in the second half of life (Cook's) must return to the unconscious and reconcile with it (Segal 85). This process is particularly necessary, Jung warns, for the "civilized man" with developed rational consciousness, since "there is all the more danger, the more he trains his will, of getting lost in one-sidedness and deviating further and further from the laws and roots of his being" (*Archetypes* 162-63).

The Hero Quest is a particularly appropriate trope in this context, given that scenarios of discovery and first contact have tended to be imagined in exactly these terms, as an "archetypal drama: the story of discovery and achievement through journey into the unknown, the affirmation of manly character through overcoming of formidable obstacles, the goal achieved or the treasure won through courageous struggle" (Schieffelin and Crittenden 150). As "a scenario that is ever deeply enchanting to the Western imagination" (Schieffelin and Crittenden 150), the Hero Quest in the discourse of discovery demonstrates the paradox that "imperial history condemns myth while at the same time mythologizing itself" (Gilbert and Tompkins 115). This is, as we have seen, particularly the case with Cook – especially because his last voyage/quest ended in failure, which the British then felt the need to compensate for with Cook's posthumous apotheosis. While retaining the structure of the Hero Quest, Sullivan ironizes and reformulates its assumptions and outcomes, paying

attention to Cook's anti-heroic attitudes, exposing the false premise of European discovery, and positing a new goal for the quest based firmly in Cook's penitent encounter with Pacific peoples and his assimilation into Pacific paradigms, through which the imbalance caused by his damaging imperial attitudes can be healed and he can achieve psychological wholeness. Jungian "therapy," then, funneled through indigenized conduits, provides a way to heal the "colonial wound" (Johnston),¹⁹ extending – potentially – a conciliatory message for Māori and Pākehā in the present.

In the first narrative arc of *Orpheus in Rarohenga*, Orpheus appears as Cook's "shadow" archetype, and it is Cook's struggle with, and ultimate surrender to, his shadow that defines the entire period of Cook's historical voyages. In Jung's theory, the initial stage of the process of individuation is the encounter with the shadow archetype, the figure closest to consciousness, and the first to come up in an analysis of the unconscious, standing at the threshold of the passage to self-knowledge. According to Jung, "the shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly – for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies" (*Archetypes* 284-85). The shadow of the Hero can also be a hero, but has different aspects that the Hero might not wish to acknowledge (*Archetypes* 285). Notably, Sullivan's representation of Orpheus as a shadow can be read in part as a critical response to the characterization of Cook as an Orpheus figure, or one identified with Orpheus, that reaches back to the earliest days of Cook's European apotheosis. Eighteenth-century poems and paintings read the death of Cook in terms of the Orpheus myth, particularly Orpheus' death at the hands of the Thracians to whom he

¹⁹ This move to "healing the colonial wound" through a return to Māori knowledge and traditions is a trend apparent in other contemporary Māori musical theatre. See Emma Johnston, *Healing Maori Through Song and Dance: Three Case Studies of Recent New Zealand Music Theatre* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2008).

had brought various arts and alternative religion, characterizing Cook positively as a martyr-hero “torn limb from limb by the very savages to whom he had carried the arts of civilization” (B. Smith 167).²⁰ In Sullivan’s use of the Orpheus myth, Orpheus’ less admirable qualities are also brought to bear on this idealized depiction of Cook. Orpheus, like Cook, is skilled, enlightened, and a civilizing force; Orpheus, like Cook, is also sometimes reckless, unable to restrain his destructive habits, hot-tempered, arrogant, and with a tendency towards hubris. Despite Cook’s awareness of the need for “a balance I fear is lacking within me” (*CCU* 26), the appearance of Orpheus foreshadows Cook’s darker side, which resurfaces in the later part of the *Endeavour* voyage in the encounters with Māori and increasingly during his later expeditions. In Tahiti it is Orpheus, “a Greek claiming he’s a god” (*OR* 9), who speaks to Cook’s disillusionment with duty, fueling the more ambitious, megalomaniac aspects of Cook’s character, and urging him to make new discoveries, to “go onwards, take your destiny and your fame” (*OR* 9).

Jung’s framework thus enables Sullivan’s postcolonial critique of Cook and European discovery by allowing Cook’s struggle with his shadow to function as a motif for Cook’s eighteenth-century imperialist attitudes and violence toward Māori.²¹

²⁰ Anna Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) correlates Cook’s death in Hawai‘i with the violent encounter between Orpheus and the Thracians (15); similarly, James Barry’s painting *Progress of Human Culture* (1783) places Cook in the pantheon along with “Orpheus Reclaiming Mankind from a Savage State” (B. Smith 180).

²¹ The full libretto (published in *Captain Cook in the Underworld*) begins with an “Absolution Chorus,” an opening gambit that foreshadows a critical reading of Cook, but one also framed in terms of reconciliation and tolerance, with a plea to “remember to forgive [...] as Cook and his story unfolds” (*CCU* 1). The Choir suggests that Cook “didn’t know to presume discovery // was a lie, nor did he know the prejudices / of the unborn colony. Forgive the Ulysses / of his day, for the mores of his age, / for overlooking the inhabitants with his claim” (*CCU* 1). In this Chorus, Sullivan resists the anachronistic tendency to hold a single man accountable for entire legacies and wider historical movements; on the contrary, Sullivan argues, Cook can be understood in many ways to be informed and produced by those very structures of power and knowledge that he is seen to represent. Notably, although *Orpheus in Rarohenga* also admits the informing influences of eighteenth-century British culture on Cook, the Absolution Chorus is absent from the libretto, offering a less forgiving approach to Cook in performance.

An important part of Sullivan's postcolonial reappraisal involves breaking apart monologic versions of New Zealand's history and national identity, and rejecting the prevailing view of Cook as "one of the Enlightenment's great 'philosophical travelers'" (Sahlins 10), by cataloguing violent encounters between British, Māori, and other Pacific peoples, in which the indigenous inhabitants are shown to be at a shattering disadvantage to Cook's fickle whims and superior firepower. Here, the beach is evoked as the physical theatre of encounter, with Cook performing the formulaic claims to possession: "We solemnly stake Great Britain's claim / to sov'reignty / over this domain" (*OR* 10), and reveling in "the chance to prove our might! / To place Britain as the star of the world chorus," a star "shining on the / masses ignorant of the wisdom of the West" (*OR* 10). But Sullivan ironizes this heroic scenario of discovery as reiterated in national discourse, instead reading New Zealand's "flag fluttering history set in motion" (*OR* 11) on the basis of gunfire and death.

In particular, Sullivan provides a stylized depiction of the fraught encounters that took place on October 9, 1769, at Tūranga-Nui (Poverty Bay), a wide bay of the East Coast of the North Island, where, by the evening, Anne Salmond records, "at least nine local men had been killed or wounded by musket or pistol fire" (*Two Worlds* 132). In performance, the entrance of the British is signaled by a change in tempo and musical accompaniment: against a strong percussive background representative of the incessant firing of guns, the Choir chants urgently in a syncopated rhythm – the contemporary street register establishing the British retrospectively as imperial gangsters: "Back then they were wow! / Muskets blatting like ghetto blasters, pow! / They were the imperial cool, / Vanguard of the coolest king to rule" (*OR* 11). In response to the pathos of the Māori who make a plea for their own humanity in the face of Cook's sadism, trying to make him understand that they "are frightened / And

ask that you stop killing our young men [...] We bleed when you whip us, / we scream at your fire sticks and we die” (OR 11), Cook demonstrates the fatal consequences of cross-cultural miscommunication in terms deliberately less subtle than Carroll’s:

COOK: [Tenor solo, spoken] What what? can’t understand a bloody word / First mate [shouted] send another volley!

CREW: [shouted *ff*] FIRE!

COOK: [shouted *ff*] and another!

CREW: [shouted *ff*] FIRE! (OR 11; *Inst. Score* 71-2)

During this killing orgy, imperial might overflows into pure hubris, as the Crew decide, in a robust, rousing chorus: “Let’s make Cook a God. / Hail him! / The biggest kill machine!” (OR 11). This *a priori* apotheosis of Cook, which foreshadows the events in Hawai‘i, is premised on Cook’s power to bring death indiscriminately, establishing him as a diabolical figure in these first New Zealand encounters. Significantly, after the confrontation, Cook retires to the ship’s library containing “all the classics, timely homilies / dredged from antiquity” (OR 11), and discovers “Orpheus! / My friend of the vision. Oh hideous / fortune – my only friend a shadow” (OR 11).

Sullivan’s uncompromising focus on the fatal impact of encounter, and the violence and cruelty wrought upon Māori as necessary memories in the dismantling of discourses of nation-building, has been perhaps the most controversial element of Sullivan’s portrait of Cook from the point of view of Pākehā audiences. Indeed, performance reviewer Lindis Taylor noted disapprovingly that Sullivan’s work “handles the facts of Cook’s voyages and behaviour very selectively, viewing history inappropriately through today’s PC eyes” (n.p.). Sullivan’s counter-history argues that the whole discourse of Cook as a national hero is premised on the forgetting of his unfortunate early encounters with Māori in New Zealand, and on the marginalization

of Māori in subsequent colonial discourse, speaking to Ernest Renan's observation that forgetting is a necessary part of nation-building, which is based as much on collective amnesia as on shared memories (11). For Sullivan, the depiction of Cook as a hero, as well as the alternative contemporary impulse to intentionally "forget" Cook in the interests of a harmonious biculturalism (a mandate that Lindis Taylor appears to uphold), are both problematic positions because they disallow appraisals of the nation's past, threatening a permanent erasure of indigenous experiences of encounter.

Sullivan extends this critique of Cook to address his interactions with the broader Pacific community, showing how this iterable scenario of violence and appropriation (the "true" scenario of discovery) is repeated throughout the islands. Wherever Cook goes, "I can shoot the natives and they die, amazed at our power," leaving "bodies on the beaches" (*OR* 11) and blankets turned "black with the blood of these almost men" (*OR* 12). By the time Cook reaches Hawai'i, he is sickened and tired by his explorations, already "haunted" by the "ghosts of these natives" (*OR* 12). In contrast to Carroll's focus on tentativeness and ambiguity in the encounters at Kealakekua Bay, here Cook decides that the theft of his boat "should be settled similarly" (*OR* 12) to New Zealand, and descends as a god of vengeance, crying, "divinely, / retribution is mine! [...] These Hawaiians must pay in blood!" (*OR* 12). Here, however, Cook's lack of balance and understanding is his undoing; the Hero loses the battle with the shadow, is slain, and descends into death.

These violent beach-based moments of encounter and possession are the most obvious anti-colonial revisions in Sullivan's work; taken alone, they amount to a stridently resistant repositioning of Cook in New Zealand and Pacific history. But this is not the only (nor, I contend, the most compelling) angle from which Sullivan stages a critique of Cook and his legacy. I argue that Sullivan is not interested simply in the exposure of an "imperial villain" and a reassertion of indigenous Māori identity tied to

the land. Rather, Sullivan revises Cook's memory and claims to colonial possession by pointing to an earlier, indigenous history of oceanic navigation, trade, and settlement which moves through and beyond the journeys and colonial boundaries inscribed by European travelers. Sullivan points to Cook's complicity in colonial discourse by positioning Cook's voyages within a broader genealogy of the European reinscription of the Pacific through exploratory, military, commercial, and administrative routes that overwrite and erase indigenous modes of relation. Such inscriptions figure the Pacific, as Paul Sharrad argues, "not as a place to live in but an expanse to cross, a void to be filled in with lines of transit" ("Imagining" 598), and render the Pacific a palimpsest of contradictory, fragmented, and discontinuous images: isolated dots of land situated on, and separated by, the margins of cartographic representations that centralize Europe, stridently bisected by the temporal disjunction of the International Dateline, and subject to exclusionary colonial boundaries between island groups with a long history of cultural exchange (Najita 1-2).

In response, Sullivan is determined to forge a rewriting of Oceanic discovery, foregrounding prior exploratory and migratory journeys of Polynesian voyagers and the ocean-based mythologies that accompany them, while reinforcing Māori identity as well as its relation to other Pacific Island cultures. Notably, the trope of Pacific voyaging dismantles the beach as the formal boundary and cartographic limit point of the island nation (especially in its colonial manifestations), moving beyond the beach to incorporate the sea as a valuable intercultural and historical medium. Elizabeth DeLoughrey has written persuasively about the ways in which notions of the boundedness of islands have been central to European colonial discourse, based on an opposition between the confined islander and "the mobile European male who produces world history by traversing space" (20), and she points out how island artists and scholars have turned to the sea to destabilize myths of isolation and reinstitute a

dynamic history of time-space (20). Such an approach, which breaks through containing models of the Pacific, has decolonizing potential, highlighting Pacific Islander agency and referencing strong cultural alliances that are both pre-colonial and post-colonial. In so doing, Sullivan supports Hau‘ofa’s “sea of islands” thesis, pointing to a holistic regional imaginary that “mak[es] nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently, criss-crossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook’s apotheosis” (“Sea of Islands” 6). Although DeLoughrey and others have cautioned wisely that the “sea of islands” cannot function as an unproblematic unifying model for regional identity, suppressing indigenous difference or ethnic schisms in favor of a homogenizing racial oneness (DeLoughrey 135), it nevertheless offers Sullivan a productive alternative to colonial spatial histories and modes of imagining the Pacific.

In place of Cook, Sullivan asserts the primacy of an indigenous presence, mythology, and history in New Zealand, introducing an alternative founding narrative for “these islands already discovered by lovers / Kupe and his wife Kuramarotini” (*CCU* 1), the first couple who made the voyage from Hawaiki. As a spiritual homeland of both origin and destiny, source of the ancestral migrations and gathering place of departed spirits, common to several Polynesian cultures (Orbell 21), Hawaiki functions as an important symbol for constructing a regional imaginary. In migration tradition, which foregrounds myth as/and history, Kupe, not Cook, circumnavigated Aotearoa, gave it its final shape and outline, left behind landmarks, and prepared the way for the ancestral canoes by giving the people of Hawaiki instructions on how to reach it (Orbell 28).

Similarly, Sullivan puts Polynesian science in dialogue with eighteenth-century European science, evoking alternative discourses of astronomy and navigation. After Cook’s botched attempt to observe the transit of Venus on his first voyage, Venus

appears to Cook in a dream. In the Jungian layer of the oratorio, Venus here represents the anima, the feminine archetype that stands behind the shadow archetype. The anima inspires the soul, preventing idleness and giving the inspiration to live life and to achieve greatness. Although the anima is also full of snares and traps, “something strangely meaningful clings to her, a secret knowledge or a hidden wisdom [...] something like a hidden purpose which seems to reflect a superior knowledge of life’s laws” (Jung *Archetypes* 26-7, 30-1), and consequently she can offer inspiration and guidance for the Hero on his journey. Uniting Western and Polynesian cosmologies, Venus aligns herself with the Māori Kopu, the morning star rising in the winter and an important marker for oceanic navigation. She persuades Cook not to be disappointed in the failure of European science, and encourages him to journey on to Aotearoa to “discover your south seas greatness” (OR 9), but counsels him to have a care for “the beauty and dignity of the great peoples you will discover” (OR 9). Venus draws upon a celestial span of history that minimizes human experience and memory, and reminds Cook of her long association with Pacific peoples, telling him, “I know their mana. I am their star too” (OR 10); in establishing an existing interisland community “they have followed me for thousands of years” (OR 10), and she cautions Cook to “remember that you are the new ones here” (CCU 14). While inspiring Cook to quest in search of new discoveries, Venus puts pressure on his sense of primacy and imperial entitlement, offering a different kind of enlightenment and a moral compass for Cook to follow – advice which Cook, unfortunately, does not heed in his dominance by his shadow.

This ocean-based epistemology comes to the fore after Cook’s death at Kealakekua Bay, which ends the second act of the oratorio and looks forward to the third and final act, “Captain Cook in Rarohenga” – a complex segue that draws together many of the strands developed throughout the work. Instead of experiencing

an apotheosis and being carried into a very British heaven, Cook's soul is incorporated within a Polynesian epistemology and travels down into Rarohenga, the Māori "underworld of souls" (*OR* 13) beneath the ocean. In this transitional process, the beach takes on metaphorical significance as "a space of transformation [...] a space of crossings. [...] Beaches are *limen*, thresholds to some other place, some other time, some other condition" (Denning *Beach Crossings* 16-17, 31). Unlike Carroll's Cook who is thrown back on himself and his worldview, unable to cross the beach, this new sort of beach crossing for Sullivan's Cook heralds the beginning of a rite of passage that reworks his historical and mythic status, offering an ultimate cross-cultural encounter that destabilizes assumptions about who "possess[es] the other" (Denning *Bligh* 281). In mythic terms, at this stage of his journey the Hero experiences a descent into the depths that necessitates an initiation into a new world order, entailing trials and ordeals but the possibility of new learning, talents, or gifts – Campbell's gloss for Jung's theory of the death of the rational ego-consciousness which brings about an encounter with the unconscious as part of the process of individuation (*Archetypes* 19). Here, however, while maintaining the structure of the Hero Quest narrative, Cook's descent presents a different outcome from the traditional narratives of European exploration and discovery, heralding a quest that will be realized on strictly Polynesian terms.

Instead of traveling over the water, or skirting it on the beach, Cook finds himself "lying face down in the water / the sea around me / I am part of the sea" (*OR* 13) – absorbed as a part of the (female) element whose surface he had traversed with such intrepid determination while creating history – and joins Orpheus for his descent into the underwater underworld of the unconscious. As Orpheus tells Cook, "You have been taken by the goddess of death / Hine-nui-o-te-pō" (*OR* 13). Jung writes that "The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its

inhabitants, are presided over by the mother” (*Archetypes* 82). In the schema developed by Jung and later by Campbell, the mother in her negative manifestations is the nemesis of the Hero and threatens to destroy him. Orpheus warns Cook: “You are at the lip of the vortex of death. / Slip and your soul will be meaningless” (*OR* 13). Orpheus remains as a spirit guide to help Cook negotiate the dangers and trials of the underworld, and in this guiding, authoritative role, he takes on elements of the “wise old man” archetype. The wise old man is the third of the archetypes in the process of individuation that can be experienced in personified form: “he is the enlightener, the master and teacher” (Jung *Archetypes* 37), and only after utter defeat can we experience this heretofore hidden archetype (*Archetypes* 32). Clearly, the Classical Orpheus myth is evocative of ventures into the world of the dead, but at this point Orpheus himself undergoes a transformation in line with Jungian paradigms. Jung argues that the symbols attached to particular archetypes – archetypes which are common across cultures – will change depending on context (*Archetypes* 5). Consequently, Cook’s shift from a European/neo-Classical epistemology to a Polynesian one is indicated by a change in the symbols attached to Orpheus, who tells Cook, “now I take off that cloak and wear the culture of the Pacific, / your soul’s future. // I sing in my Maui throat” (*OR* 13). In Māori and broader Polynesian mythology Māui is also a hero, voyager and discoverer, civilizer, shadow presence, trickster figure, and dying god; like Orpheus, Māui has his own scores to settle with the ruler of the underworld (Helu 46-7).²² Importantly, Māui is a pan-Polynesian deity, signifying – like Hawaiki – a regional imaginary that connects Māori culture to a

²² In his attempt to break to power of the goddess of death and gain eternal life for humankind, Maui began a passage through the sleeping body of Hine-nui-te-pō, entering through her vagina and intending to exit through her mouth. But the sight of Maui entering the goddess’ vagina was so ridiculous that the watching tiwaiwaka (fantail bird) burst into laughter, waking Hine, who crushed Maui to death between her thighs.

broader Pacific one. In these moments of transition, then, Sullivan makes it evident that Cook's true enlightenment will not take place in the world of eighteenth-century Europe, but in the arena of Polynesian knowledge.

In positing a turn to the arena of Polynesian knowledge, Sullivan brings other indigenous models of historical understanding to intervene on Western models of history and linear time. Here, the fracturing of time works in tandem with the historicizing and remapping of space, introducing separate timescapes that reinforce the fluidity of the temporal past, making possible synchronic apprehensions of historical time (Gilbert and Tompkins 140, 145). For example, the inhabitants of Rarohenga are *kehua* (ghosts), spirit guides, and mythic figures, who stand outside the temporal boundaries of dominant society, and disrupt ready categories between past and present. Sullivan also extends the trope of liminality from the beach into the water-world through the liminal temporality of “*te wheiao*.” In *Tikanga Whakaaro* Cleve Barlow explains that, in Māori culture, the *wheiao* is a transitional or liminal state “between the world of darkness and the world of light” (184), and is a phase that can recur many times in advancing from one particular condition or state to another. There are various conditions and periods of *wheiao*, such as the period of labor before birth, the process of passing from a state of ignorance to one of understanding, and the return of a person's spirit to the gods, where “The spirit enters the place of darkness and awaits the arrival of the guardian spirits which will lead them through the *wheiao* to the world of light beyond, that is, into the spirit world” (Barlow 184). The *wheiao* thus draws attention to an in-between time, an indigenous temporal sensibility that links everyday lived experience and spiritual experience, and offers an alternative to the regular, secular progression of national time. In guiding Cook on his journey through the *wheiao* to the world of light, Orpheus/Māui makes it clear that Cook's passage will not be an easy one, but will be fraught and extended for centuries, and

Sullivan makes this explicit by developing a contrapuntal relationship between the “official” national history in which Cook’s legacy has unfolded – “They built you statues, they named a country after you! / Your reputation is like a navigator’s star” (*OR* 15) – and the soul and the spirit guide in abeyance in the liminal temporality of the wheiao.

Cook must settle his account with his shadow side and undergo a spiritual journey of atonement and discovery, facing up to the worst aspects of himself in the form of the damage he has inflicted on indigenous Pacific peoples. Unless Cook can meet the challenges of the underworld by confessing his sins before the victims of his past deeds, he will fail in his quest, and remain trapped as a lost soul in the purgatory of Māori cosmology. As Orpheus/Māui asks Cook: “Don’t you wonder, explorer that you were, / about the souls you sent to wander here? / The vast descent into death that you began? / For your soul to rest you must meet them [...] Take away the pain, Captain, / of your discovered lands” (*OR* 13-4), not only for now but for the future: “Take away the pain that your descendants will bear!” (*OR* 14). One of Cook’s primary accusers is a Māori chief, “A leader who dared to stare your barrels down” (*OR* 14), who makes his charge against the explorer:

My people suffered your diseases
My people, murdered, mutilated, by your wormy crew. //
I hate you with the passion of the dead,
I hate you with the passion of these bones piled on my head.
I am glad you are a damned nightmare soul. (*OR* 14)

Although depicted initially as a single figure, Sullivan imagines the chief as speaking for many souls;²³ in performance the chief addresses Cook in a “ghostly whisper”

²³ Robert Sullivan, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2007.

(*Inst. Score 120*) staggered by the choir so that the many voices overlap, suggesting a plurality of ghostly witnesses that, significantly, are not limited to Māori. In giving indigenous peoples the chance to speak back to a major colonial figure, Sullivan creates a space for catharsis, allowing a broader Pacific community both to condemn and perhaps to start to redress the Pacific as a colonized space.

Clearly, in these scenes, Sullivan provides a counter-discourse to heroic discovery whereby the Hero must acknowledge his mistakes, limitations, and failures, and accept the judgment of indigenous Pacific peoples. But Cook's task is not simply to apologize, but to be transformed by his new encounters – to divest himself of what Sullivan sees as the damaging baggage of eighteenth-century imperial attitudes. Finally, after centuries of undergoing trial in the wheiao, Cook achieves self-knowledge and balanced wholeness through an appreciation of and openness to Polynesian culture, allowing for his passage to the world of light. At the end of his journey, the formerly rational, secular Cook promises to “turn to my emotions” and receives permission to “take a spirit's leap from the cape” (*OR 15*), following the route of Māori spirits north from the headland of Cape Reinga, down the roots of the venerated pohutukawa tree, and away to Hawaiki – once again connecting the Māori world to a broader Pacific one. As he takes the path through the North Island to his final leap of discovery, Cook sees New Zealand in a new, illuminating way; instead of maps and charts and statistics and colonial possessions, Cook perceives a rich mythic topography: “the crying skyfather” (Rangi), “the face of the earthmother” (Papatuanuku), and “the ridges, the moko / on the face of the great leviathan, Aotearoa” (*OR 15*) (Māui's fish, the North Island). Unlike Carroll's Cook who remains unable to make the necessary connections to cross the beach, Sullivan's Cook is simultaneously possessed and absolved through this journey; it is the ultimate discovery of the great explorer who has journeyed to the “ends of the earth” to be

allowed to traverse the traditional ocean roads of the Polynesian ancestors.

Significantly, then, at the end of his Hero's journey, Cook's ultimate reward is not divinization, but rest.

Yet Sullivan is canny enough to question the efficacy of this kind of reconciliation for contemporary audiences. Can the Hero's elixir extend to Pākehā, too? Can the utu enacted on Cook in the underworld, as Orpheus/Māui suggests, really "take away the pain that [we] descendants will bear?" (*OR* 14). In the end, Cook "truly understand[s]" but expresses this new state "as a soul with little effect on history" (*CCU* 49), realizing that his revelation comes "too late to explore the heart, the soul of the matter, / too late to sew up scores / of bicentennial corpses [...] // too late to revisit, unpick, revise / our deeds (*CCU* 49). Whereas Sullivan acknowledges the problem of dealing with the complex legacy of Cook, and is keenly aware that the material circumstances of the past cannot be amended, he does suggest the potential of alternative models of time and space which refute the linear trajectory and the spatial logic of the settler nation state, and draw upon indigenous histories and mythic structures to gain knowledge from the past and imagine new futures.

Indeed, Sullivan's re-membering of Cook accomplishes several things. The postcolonial reworking of Jung's individuation process and the related Hero Quest subverts the imperialist scenario of discovery, while suggesting the need to arrest the Western rationalism that Sullivan sees as having been so destructive in informing early encounters and colonial policies and balancing it with alternative paradigms that operate on a more emotional, mythical, and spiritual plane, such as Polynesian culture. Cook's journey therefore proposes a model for a cross-cultural connection based on a new respect for and openness to indigenous knowledge, which Sullivan implies might be productive for contemporary race-relations in New Zealand and elsewhere in the Pacific. If Sullivan's goal is to figure Cook as an "integrated whole," then the same

might be said for the Pacific. Subordinating Cook's transoceanic empire-building to the processes of interculturalization engendered by ancient and contemporary voyaging points to a tangible Oceanic identity that moves beyond the boundaries of land and nation to form an integrated, holistic connectivity that reinforces the strength of the region – an alternative “imagined community” (Anderson) that is generated from within, rather than being imposed from without. Importantly, this “sea of islands” view urges consideration of how water can have political, cultural, and historic significance, rather than representing a geographical vacancy – a shift in perspective vital to the support of an “oceanic imaginary.” As Sharrad reminds us: the Basin is full, not defined by its rim but by its contents: “Oceania is not a space but a place; not a blank on the map to be filled in, but a series of habitations” (“Imagining” 605). Ultimately, *Orpheus in Rarohenga* reconstructs “Captain Cook” in ways that go beyond the individual figure to recalibrate a national history and reinforce a regional imaginary, demonstrating performance's capacity to offer readings of the colonial past that provoke new understandings of the contemporary Pacific.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have concentrated on how dominant scenarios of the encounters between Pacific Islanders and Captain Cook have been contested and reworked through theatrical performance in two different contact zones. Moving far beyond stereotypes of the introduction of civilization to savages, or fatal impacts, *Way of a God* and *Orpheus in Rarohenga* take on the recurrent, pervasive specter of Captain Cook to prompt new responses to the ongoing legacies of contact and colonialism, revising national histories and recuperating indigenous regional imaginaries. The drive to imperialize history as colonial claims based on “discovery” are pursued by subsequent waves of settler peoples, and indigenous resistance to this

process, are developed in more detail as the subject of Chapter Three. Picking up on one aspect of the legacy of Cook's encounter with New Zealand, I examine how the nineteenth-century New Zealand Wars have been treated by three Māori playwrights from the early 1970s to the present, in the context of an indigenous theatrical tradition bound strongly to the pursuit of self-determination.

CHAPTER 3

ME TITIRO WHAKAMURI, KIA HAERE WHAKAMUA:¹ MĀORI THEATRICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND WARS AS “TINO RANGATIRATANGA IN ACTION”²

Introduction

In her 1991 article, “A Māori³ Point of View: The Journey from Anxiety to Confidence,” playwright, performer, and activist Roma Potiki affirms that Māori theatre is “Tino Rangatiratanga in action. By that I mean it is a visible claiming of the right to control and present our own material in the way which we deem most suitable, and using processes we have determined” (57). Writing almost twenty years after the production of New Zealand’s first Māori play, and poised at the cusp of a new wave of Māori playwriting and performance that would continue to extend and develop the philosophy and practice of Māori theatre, Pōtiki’s discussion assesses the role of a Māori theatrical tradition in a reassertion of indigenous cultural identity that challenges the ideological construction of “New Zealand” as a national formulation. This chapter focuses on one aspect of this broader, ongoing strategy: the drive towards Māori self-determination through the theatrical reexamination of the nation’s history. Specifically, in an approach that explores one facet of Captain Cook’s subsequent legacy of exploration and encounter, I analyze three plays by Māori playwrights that

¹ One must look to the past in order to move forward.

² Sovereignty, self-determination. I provide a more in-depth discussion of the definitions and implications of this term later in the chapter.

³ A note on the use of macrons: In this chapter, I use macrons in words such as Māori, Pākehā, and other Māori words and phrases containing long vowels, in line with the recommendations of the Māori Language Commission (Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori). Direct quotations from sources that do not incorporate macrons, or instead use double vowels to indicate length, remain as they appear in their original contexts.

engage the New Zealand Wars (1840s-1880s). Arising from conflicting Māori and Pākehā interpretations of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), competing claims for land ownership and sovereignty led to a series of violent campaigns throughout the North Island. The New Zealand Wars remain the most important conflict in New Zealand's national narrative, and have been crucial for the development of subsequent race-relations (Belich 15). The Wars are also significant because Māori almost overpowered British forces, demonstrating exemplary indigenous resistance to colonial imposition, representing "one of the most efficient and effective resistance efforts ever mounted by a tribal people against European expansion" (Belich 299). Here, my analysis has two broad objectives, which are interrelated and pursued simultaneously: to examine the understanding and treatment of the Wars as a historical event and ongoing legacy in work by Māori playwrights produced over a generation; and, through these works, to trace key aspects of the development of a Māori theatrical tradition committed to the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga.⁴

In treating these three theatrical interpretations staged over a thirty-year period, I begin with the first produced Māori play, *Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross* (1972) by Harry Dansey (Ngā Tuwharetoa, Te Arawa), which examines and recuperates two different nineteenth-century Taranaki resistance movements in the context of early 1970s sovereignty initiatives. The play draws upon the modes of address and rhetorical structures of Māori marae⁵ ritual to create a metatheatrical, dialogic approach to past events that questions prevailing processes of both colonial

⁴ I am not arguing that these particular plays about the Wars are wholly representative of every phase and style of Māori theatre, nor that they encapsulate *in toto* the complex relationship between theatre and tino rangatiratanga. Rather, I suggest that looking at the approaches and contexts of these three important plays on a similar theme allows us to register some of the chief directions taken in Māori theatre since the 1970s, and to link them to broader social and political circumstances and developments.

⁵ A marae is an open, ceremonial meeting area in front of a whare runanga, or communal meeting house. It serves both religious and social purposes in a Māori community.

historiography and Māori tradition, clearing a space for historical and cultural reassessments. Whereas Dansey's play is often excluded from histories of "Māori Theatre," I argue that, formally and thematically, the work is an undeniable part of this tradition and encodes more radical potential than has generally been appreciated. Next, I turn to *Whāea Kairau: Mother Hundred Eater* by Apirana Taylor (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-Apanui), a Māori, postcolonial reworking of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) that provides a critical exposure of the social relations that structure the imbricated discourses of war, capitalism, race, and colonialism. Following a period of Māori activism and social change, Taylor's work is representative of the theatrical confidence and aesthetic diversity of Māori plays of the 1990s, but I raise questions about the ways in which the play's politics are both enabled and encumbered by its particular aesthetic framework and its reception as part of a theatrical tradition rapidly achieving "mainstream" status. Finally, I read *Woman Far Walking* (2000-02) by Witi Ihimaera (Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki). Here, the events of the Wars and their consequences for Māori are linked to the history of the nation as a whole, and are remembered and performed on and through the body of the Māori woman, Tiri (named for the Treaty of Waitangi), to offer a complex interrogation of historic and contemporary race-relations. Ihimaera deploys indigenous historical models drawn from Mana Wahine (a Māori-based theorized feminism) and whakapapa (genealogy) to structure Tiri's story, but also demonstrates how these world-building paradigms are complicated by the interventions of historical trauma caused by colonialism. While drawing upon sophisticated theatrical resources and enjoying a celebrated reception in New Zealand and overseas, Ihimaera's play reflects an anxiety among some contemporary playwrights about the receding role of politics in Māori theatre in a climate in which regressive government policies still exist. Thus, despite being the most recent play of the three, *Woman Far Walking* can also be seen

to return to certain thematic, dramaturgical, and political concerns of pre-1990 Māori theatre.

In looking to the past in order to move forward, each one of these plays about New Zealand's seminal conflict stakes a claim in dismantling hegemonic national narratives constructed through Pākehā historiographies and foregrounding indigenous models of historical understanding, reinforcing the importance of remembering both past injustice and indigenous resistance in the continuing struggle for self-determination. Individually, these works by Dansey, Taylor, and Ihimaera are significant for demonstrating how historical drama may function as a mode of indigenous historiography and political activism in a continually changing present. Taken together, they form part of a theatrical tradition whose development is not linear, but iterative, illustrating the reciprocal relations between theatre and its broader social environment, and suggesting some of the ways in which the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga has been both advanced and denied in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past generation.⁶ In this way, the structure of this chapter, like the processes it treats, has a spiral logic, repeatedly gesturing to the past as it moves into the future, a process both cyclical and lineal.

The New Zealand Wars and the Treaty of Waitangi

The New Zealand Wars were a protracted series of campaigns fought throughout the North Island between Pākehā settlers and indigenous Māori during the middle third of the nineteenth century. Some historians define the period of the New

⁶ The core ideas in this chapter were presented in a seminar paper at the American Society for Theatre Research Conference in Phoenix, AZ, in November 2007: "Tino Rangatiratanga in Action': Constructing a 'National' Identity in the Māori Theatre of Aotearoa New Zealand." My thanks to members of the National Identity/National Culture Research Group for their valuable feedback and discussion.

Zealand Wars as 1845-1872, from the beginning of the Northern War against the rebellion of Hone Heke and Kawiti to the final expeditions against, and escape of, Te Kooti in the King Country.⁷ Other studies include earlier outbreaks of violence after 1840, such as the Wairau Incident (1843), and extend the period of the Wars to encompass the attack on Parihaka township in 1881.⁸ In this chapter, I treat this extended period, covering the forty years from the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 until the fall of Parihaka. A large number of conflicts, battles, and incidents comprised the Wars during these four decades – James Cowan’s detailed two-volume account, for instance, records over 200 engagements – but the major battles occurred in Northland, Taranaki, Waikato, and the East Coast, with the height of the conflict taking place during the 1860s, a decade which saw a new turning point in the ferocity of the Wars, more intense and diverse Māori independence efforts, an influx of European immigration, and New Zealand’s early incarnation as a nation-state.⁹

The Wars were a product of colonial contact, but the causes of conflict are many and varied. The name, “Land Wars” (which replaced the unfashionable “Māori Wars” in common usage), suggests that that the main British political and military objective was the seizure of Māori land (Belich 77). However, as the term “New Zealand Wars” more correctly connotes, the Wars were not only about land, but the contest between Māori desire for political independence and the British desire to impose their own law and governance (Belich 77-9, Prickett 14), and are intimately

⁷ See, for example, James Cowan, Keith Sinclair, and James Belich.

⁸ See Nigel Prickett et al.

⁹ For a useful book-length study of this particular decade, see Edmund Bohan, *Climates of War: New Zealand in Conflict 1859-69* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 2005).

connected to the troubled concept of “New Zealand” as a national formulation.¹⁰ The Wars can be seen as a central element in the making of New Zealand as a nation, “as important to New Zealand as were the Civil Wars to England and the United States” and “crucial in the development of New Zealand race-relations,” marking a “watershed in the history of the country as a whole” (Belich 15). Although Māori were ultimately defeated, their resistance to the enormous odds posed by professional British troops remains an exemplar for the struggle of indigenous people against imperial expansion, while the circumstances of the Wars provide an important historical backdrop for present-day Māori sovereignty movements.

Vexed issues of land, political power, and self-determination are bound up in New Zealand’s founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi), a formal contract between the Māori and the British signed in 1840 by Crown representative William Hobson and over 500 Māori Chiefs.¹¹ While it would be misleading to claim that the Treaty was the cause of the Wars, the misunderstandings that arose from its interpretations were contributing factors. From the beginning, the bilingual Treaty was a source of confusion and it soon became clear that “the treaty contained the seeds of continuing conflict, particularly over land, power and authority” (Orange 1), due mainly to inconsistencies between the Māori and English versions of

¹⁰ I agree with Nigel Prickett’s observation that “‘Land Wars’ has always seemed to me rather coy, as if, despite being partial, it explains everything” (14). I do not, however, agree with his position that “‘New Zealand Wars’ is neutral, all-embracing, and devoid of baggage or contention in the rediscovery of a turning point in our shared history” (14). On the contrary, the very term “New Zealand Wars” evokes the contested discourses of nation-building, with its considerable cultural baggage, and it is these very tensions that make the issue worth pursuing in the present. Other names for the Wars chosen by historians over the years include “Anglo-Māori Wars” (Alan Ward *An Unsettled History*), “Colonial New Zealand Wars” (Tim Ryan and Bill Parham), “New Zealand Civil Wars” (Murray Darroch), the “Sovereignty Wars” (Mason Durie), and “The Pākehā Wars” (Peter H. Russell). Various Māori names for the Wars are “Nga Pakanga Whenua o Mua” (the wars fought over the land many years ago), “Nga Pakanga Nu Nui o Aotearoa” (the great wars of Aotearoa), and “Nga Pakanga o Aotearoa” (the New Zealand Wars).

¹¹ The official signing was 6 Feb. 1840, at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands, but subsequent signings of other copies of the document took place at different sites around New Zealand for several months afterwards.

the Treaty. Essentially, the English-language version (signed by only thirty-nine Chiefs) ceded sovereign authority to the British. The Māori-language version (signed by the remainder of the Chiefs) granted “tino rangatiratanga” (sovereignty, self-determination) to Māori, while the British were granted “kāwanatanga” (governance), which implied more abstract authority, with limited control confined mainly to their own people and resources (Orange 39-43; Moon 139-49; Durie 2-4, 177; Walker 90-4). As Ranginui Walker contends, “The Treaty they [Māori] signed confirmed their own sovereignty while ceding the right to establish a governor in New Zealand to the Crown” (93).¹² Assumption of the primacy of the English text led to successive Pākehā governments taking control of land, legislation, and other resources, especially as systematized Pākehā immigration eventually rendered Māori a minority in their own land. (Notably, although colonial administrators initially considered it prudent to make a Treaty, rather than to rely upon James Cook’s “discovery,” in subsequent years this event was invoked repeatedly as the foundation of the British claim to sovereignty.) The Wars were a manifest example of the failure of the principles of the Treaty as many Māori understood them. As Mason Durie explains, “By the end of the sovereignty wars [...] the tribes were left in little doubt that whatever else the Treaty promised, it had excluded them from active roles in the governance of their own country, or even their own tribal territories” (3-4). The Treaty remains a contentious

¹² “Kāwanatanga” (governance) is a missionary neologism, derived from “kawana” (governor), of which there was no model in New Zealand at the time, except for biblical examples of provincial governors, and the term did not imply sovereignty. Historian Paul Moon reads the work of Treaty translator, Henry Williams, as a deliberate mistranslation, designed to transfer power while making the deal seem more palatable to the chiefs (139-49). Several scholars have conducted cross-linguistic comparisons of the entire Treaty (Kawharu, Ross, Walker, et al.) but Moon’s shorter version is worth quoting here. The relevant portion of the English text reads: “The Chiefs ... of New Zealand ... cede to Her Majesty the Queen of England absolutely and without reservation all the rights and powers of sovereignty which the said ... Chiefs ... exercise or possess, over their respective Territories as the sole Sovereigns thereof.” The literal translation of the Māori equivalent reads: “The Chiefs ... give absolutely to the Queen of England for ever the complete government over the land” (ellipses in Moon’s text, 145-46).

subject in New Zealand society, as Māori continue to campaign for public recognition of their rights based on their understanding of the Treaty, as well as for a degree of autonomy within the mainstream of New Zealand life (Orange 2).

Protest and Performance: Māori Theatre and Tino Rangatiratanga

Tino rangatiratanga has its lexical inception in the contested wording of the Treaty,¹³ and the sovereignty promised to Māori has become the foundation for calls for fuller participation in their own affairs and those of the country (Maaka and Fleras 99, Melbourne 11). Tino rangatiratanga is based on a politicization of indigenous presence, evoking original occupancy as a basis for entitlement to sovereign authority (Maaka and Fleras 89), and is tied closely to the social and spiritual kinship links that Māori claim with Papatūānuku (the land, the Earth Mother), as tangata whenua (people of the land) with the right to tūrangawaewae (a place to stand) (Mead 269-72). In te reo Māori, “tino” is an intensifier, and “rangatiratanga,” which derives from the root “rangatira” (chief), broadly translates as the exercise of “chieftainship,” connoting responsibility, control, authority, and sovereignty. The closest, most flexible English translation is “self-determination,” covering a number of possible advances towards autonomy, governance, and cultural validation.¹⁴ It is essential to acknowledge that tino rangatiratanga as political theory and social expression is not monolithic or determined by a Māori consensus, and that there are a plurality of interpretations of its

¹³ Cleve Barlow, for instance, contests the very use of the term “tino rangatiratanga,” arguing that “this is a new word coined by the Pākehā when the Treaty of Waitangi was written and this land was colonized” (131). Barlow proposes the abolition of the term “tino rangatiratanga” in favor of “arikitanga” (from ariki = chief), the term used in his own iwi tradition to describe “the concept of the supreme mana or power of the Māori” (131). Although he may be correct about the history of “tino rangatiratanga” as another missionary neologism, Barlow’s call is driven by his rather specific interpretation of the term as applied to Māori self-determination efforts.

¹⁴ As Alice Te Punga Somerville has argued, the inability of the English language to offer a comfortable equivalent for the Māori-language term is key: “The use of the phrase tino rangatiratanga implicitly challenges the coloniser: it invokes the Treaty, it centres the Māori world, it is about sovereignty, and it unashamedly refuses to be translated from te reo Māori” (92).

meaning, scope, and how it might be pursued, attained, and exercised.¹⁵ Among Māori, these approaches range from the radical (separatism, secession, sovereignty over the entire country, absolute political control),¹⁶ to more moderate views (creation of separate Māori institutions, development of constitutionally-based power-sharing arrangements, partial autonomy, total integration); as well as a conservative Māori element that does not support tino rangatiratanga politics. There are also debates over the purview of tino rangatiratanga and whether it should, in various circumstances, relate to hapū (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe), or Māori as a collectivity (Maaka and Fleras 100). Pākehā opinion, similarly, ranges from support to uncertainty to outright opposition (Archie). Nevertheless, the general goals of tino rangatiratanga include the right and opportunity to control resources, to organize and decide destiny, and to restore and foreground tikanga Māori (Māori customs, values), and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). These developments also entail expanded and differentiated modes and patterns of belonging to society (Maaka and Fleras 97), reconfiguring the form, claims, and trajectory of the nation-state; in these ways, while retaining cultural specificity, Māori self-determination efforts share commonalities with other indigenous movements worldwide.

Although there has always been Māori resistance to Pākehā imposition, it is mainly during the past generation that the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga has led to visible changes in New Zealand's social, political, and aesthetic spheres. During the

¹⁵ Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras note that, at various times, “tino rangatiratanga” has encompassed the following: “Māori sovereignty, Māori nationhood, self-management, iwi nationhood, independent power, full chiefly authority, chiefly mana, strong leadership, independence, supreme rule, self-reliance, Māori autonomy, tribal autonomy, absolute chieftainship, trusteeship, self-determination” (99). Another term sometimes heard in similar contexts is “mana Māori motuhake,” or Māori self-rule or self-determination. A useful range of different perspectives on Māori sovereignty from both Māori and Pākehā points of view – albeit from the standpoint of the mid-nineties – can be found in Hineani Melbourne, *Maori Sovereignty: The Maori Perspective* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995) and the companion volume by Carol Archie, *Maori Sovereignty: The Pakeha Perspective* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995).

¹⁶ See Donna Awatere (*Maori Sovereignty*) as one of the more well-known proponents of this position.

1960s, increased urbanization and educational opportunities gave rise to movements headed by young Māori calling for recognition of Māoritanga and, subsequently, for Māori to be acknowledged as tangata whenua (Orange 245). These Māori protest movements were influenced and energized by a broader international wave of civil rights activism, and were also catalyzed locally by government policies such as the Māori Affairs Amendment Act (1967), which was widely perceived by Māori as compromising the control and protection of Māori land (Metge 111-12). The historical loss of, and renewed struggle for, tino rangatiratanga exposes and interrogates the processes and legacies of colonization, destabilizing the concept of a secure national identity for New Zealand as a whole, and denying the national mythology of British humanitarianism and racial harmony along with the assimilationist presumptions encoded in the “one people” rhetoric of the Treaty (Ward “Treaty” 402-04). At the same time, Māori sovereignty initiatives have had to address challenges to the definitions and developments of “Māori identity.” Asserting Māori identity in recent years has not simply been a case of performing and cementing the cultural norms and values of a cohesive community clearly in evidence, but more of an exploratory process of determining and reinventing the multifaceted meanings of what it is to be “Māori” in contemporary New Zealand; making visible a dispersed and marginalized group by emphasizing strong commonalities while respecting tribal differences; interrogating the actions of the past and their meanings in the present; breaking away from firmly entrenched identity formations projected on to Māori lives and culture; and recuperating and discovering powerful modes of articulation.

While prominent Māori scholars such as Mason Durie and Ranginui Walker have shown how the struggle for Māori self-determination has taken many forms in

various domains,¹⁷ since the early 1970s theatre has been an important medium for the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga through self-representation.¹⁸ As playwright Rore Hapipi confirms, “there is little doubt that the emergence of Māori theatre went hand in hand with the overall emergence of Māori awareness [...] A lot of people saw and wanted to use the theatre as part of this protest” (Samasoni 15). Through theatre, Māori have taken the initiative in “redefining and reinscribing what it means to live in New Zealand in the space between cultures” (Greenwood 29), creating a theatrical tradition that functions “not only as an art form, but also as a social agency that is proactive and forceful” (Greenwood 58), and that attempts to influence not just the future action of their audiences, but “the structure of the audience’s community and the nature of the audience’s culture” (Kershaw 1). Māori practitioners have been attracted to theatre for its vitality and immediacy, its ability to foreground a repertoire of oral and physical communicative modalities, its capacity for social commentary, its collaborative and pedagogical possibilities, and the potential it offers for exploration of, and experimentation with, identity formations, creating hybrid cultural products that synthesize Māori performance traditions and western commercial, pedagogical, and “direct” theatre (Schechner) in increasingly varied configurations. In these ways, Māori theatre amounts to what Baz Kershaw in *The Politics of Performance* defines as a “cultural intervention,” in that the theatre emerges in an environment where other counter-cultures are also emerging and is linked to their methods for subverting the status quo; works to create its own contexts and constitute itself as an institutional

¹⁷ See Mason Durie, *Te Mana Te Kāwanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-Determination* (Auckland: Oxford UP, 1998), and Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, Revised Edition (Auckland: Penguin, 2004).

¹⁸ I offer here only a very brief overview to contextualize the remainder of this chapter. For a more detailed survey, see Mei-lin Te-Puea Hansen’s doctoral dissertation, *Aroha’s Granddaughters: Representations of Māori Women in Māori Drama and Theatre 1980-2000* (Auckland U, 2005), especially chapters two and three, “A Whakapapa of Māori Drama and Theatre” and “Māori Theatre and Tino Rangatiratanga.”

force in the absence of ready-made audiences, venues, and an established tradition on which to draw; and is expansionist, seeking to intervene in a widening range of communities while resisting a populist stance (7).

We can trace during this period a series of developments in Māori political consciousness and aesthetics, from early performative social protests to a diverse theatrical culture treating a range of themes pertinent to Māori lives and histories. Histories of Māori theatre commonly posit the 1975 Land March (a protest in which a large number of Māori walked from the top of the North Island to the capital city of Wellington in protest of Pākehā confiscation of land and contraventions of the Treaty) as the “starting point” for an indigenous theatrical representation tied overtly to the political pursuit of tino rangatiratanga. While we can problematize this theatrical genealogy (as I shall later), the Land March was important for several reasons, perhaps most significantly for tino rangatiratanga because it brought Māori together for the first time as a unified people, performing this unity for each other, for Pākehā, and for a broader international audience. As Roma Potiki explains, the March could not be dismissed as some isolated protest, but was undertaken with the “full support of Maoridom” (*He Reo Hou* 9), emphasising both cultural diversity within the national context, and new kinds of fusion between Māori. This event led directly to the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal to address historical infringements of the Treaty, and was central in catalyzing what has been termed the “Māori Renaissance” – a rebirth of indigenous language and culture which fueled Māori creative expression. The Land March was also significant because of its performative nature, which modeled future Māori theatrical strategies, perhaps suggesting why, of the many activities that would arise from the subsequent Māori Renaissance, theatre would assume such primacy. As Potiki explains:

If we view the Land March as a kind of cultural procession or traveling play we would be able to see it as a form of drama encompassing a number of qualities: it has a spiritual base; it is collective in nature; providing the tangata whenua are respected, anyone irrespective of race, age, disability or gender can have a part; the structure is determined by kawa [custom, tradition], though it remains flexible; its energetic naturalism is the predominant form though elements of oratory, song, stylized movement, dance and monologue intertwine easily within this; the script avoids stereotypes; some of the script is set but much of it is improvised; players can swap some parts as “the play” demands, and players may take several roles, though some are fixed; the accent is on teamwork; there are affirmative roles for both men and women; it combines elements found in both Theatre of the Oppressed and the Theatre of Liberation; audience participation is encouraged; like all good drama it contains conflict. (*He Reo Hou* 9-10)

From the beginning, this connection between performance and protest led to a body of work arguably more aggressive and confrontational than Māori poetry and prose writing of the 1970s; groups such as Maranga Mai, Te Ohu Whakaari, and Te-Ika-a-Maui Players staged provocative agit-prop with minimalist sets (Balme “New Maori Theatre” 151). Seeing themselves more as activists than actors, they sought visibility and aimed to convey their social messages directly, traveling to theatres, schools, and marae, and valuing the vitality, immediacy, and engagement with Māori audiences that theatre afforded (Potiki “Political” 174), while working towards a Māori theatre praxis independent of Pākehā intervention (Hansen 59). The 1980s saw the development of more subtle approaches, with Māori playwrights offering more nuanced observations and a more complex exploration of Māori identities in different contexts. This expanded and deepened scope coincided with a more mature theatrical

sense and a new investment in the medium of theatre in terms of form as well as content. Rather than seeing theatre simply as a platform for the immediate communication of overtly political messages, playwrights and practitioners began to see the theatre as a space for the recuperation and reinvention of Māori cultural spaces, performance forms, and perceptual frameworks, as seen with “marae theatre,” which made use of the rituals and protocols of the marae, drawing especially upon the resources of the hui (ceremonial gathering), and integrating them fully into the play’s action. Such developments and theatrical experiments were facilitated in part by broadening definitions of “Māori theatre” and its relationship to tino rangatiratanga, which allowed Māori theatre practitioners a greater sense of inclusion and more creative scope within the larger, multivalent struggle for self-determination. As Potiki argues, so long as Māori have control of writing, production and performance, and theatre remains “a space we are defining” (60), “I believe that everything that upholds the mana of, and supports Tino Rangatiratanga of Maori in terms of theatre *is* Maori theatre” (“Maori” 58).

These theatrical developments were also linked to larger changes and interventions in New Zealand’s social sphere, such as Treaty reparations for certain iwi, the official acknowledgement of New Zealand as a “bicultural” nation – which, importantly, granted Māori access to an equal “national” identity – along with the institution of Māori as an official language of New Zealand in 1987. While there was still a strong commitment to debunk Pākehā myths, and to “begin to reclaim many of the stories told by Pakeha about us” (Kouka 28), a greater interest in theatre aesthetics lent more variety to the work produced. Accordingly, these impulses were shaped by the development of bicultural theatre companies in New Zealand’s main centers, such as the Depot (Taki Rua) in Wellington, Puawai Theatre in Christchurch, Tai Ao

Theatre in Auckland, and Kilimogo Theatre in Dunedin, which provided new resources for production and performance.

1990 marked the sesquicentennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, engendering another wave of protest and self-examination. Māori theatre had been a visible element of New Zealand culture for well over a decade, and new works responded both to the contemporary social environment and to the preceding theatrical tradition. Māori dramatists began looking critically at the way Māori identity and tino rangatiratanga had been constructed through theatrical self-representation and sought both to strengthen and complicate those constructions through fresh subject matter, situations, settings, and dramaturgical strategies. The decade of the nineties was really the period where “Māori theatre” developed into “Māori theatres,” with dramatists wishing to expand the boundaries of the label “Māori playwright” and push conceptions of what a “Māori play” should be. As leading Māori playwright Briar Grace-Smith observes, earlier theatre was very “issues-driven” in order to educate people about what was happening to Māori, but in the nineties, “the stories were coming out first,”¹⁹ indicating the primacy of aesthetics over politics. During this period, theatrical works became more acceptable to Pākehā critics, entering the theatre mainstream for the first time, winning numerous theatre awards, and being published, circulated, and studied; there was the feeling that Māori theatre had reached the same levels of dramatic complexity as “international” theatre, and many Māori plays began touring overseas.

But we should be cautious about tracing a narrative that appears to offer an unproblematic, linear trajectory for Māori theatre and its actors “from positions as

¹⁹ Comments made by Grace-Smith in a panel discussion during *Write Hard, Play Harder*, Fall Festival of Local and Pacific Playwrights, Department of English, University of Hawai‘i-Mānoa, Honolulu, Oct. 3, 2007.

exotic, passive and decorative objects” in early European theatrical representations to a “vital, influential and confident theatrical position for Maaori within the spectrum of New Zealand’s theatre” (Hansen 24), and to situate this alongside a similar trajectory of the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga in Aotearoa. While there have been obvious breakthroughs, developments, and successes, it is important to consider the recalibrations, setbacks, or conscious returns to earlier exemplars that have been a part of that journey. We must also account, for example, for journeys from confidence to anxiety, such as that articulated by playwright Hone Kouka, who wrote in 1999 that “confidence in our writing and writers is at a high” (*Ta Matou Mangai* 28), yet wrote in 2007 that “Times have changed radically from the 1990s [...] A Māori voice is almost non-existent in any of the state funded theatres of New Zealand. Māori have been once again relegated to the position of ‘talent’ and have very little or no creative and financial control” (“Re-Colonising” 237-38). Kouka’s comments point to the complicated relationships between theatre, self-determination efforts, and the broader social, political, and economic institutions that influence theatrical production, and suggest the need for more subtle narratives that are attentive to the give and take between different groups and forces – narratives, for instance, that allow for recurrent re-examinations of relations between Māori and Pākehā, for moments in the dramatic tradition when playwrights have reassessed and reasserted their political principles by deliberately returning to the strategies of earlier practitioners, and for a recognition of situations when theatrical developments were in play before their acknowledgement in dominant narratives. Such a viewpoint might also help us to understand why particular historical events are chosen for re-presentation in different contexts. Consequently, in this theatre history, and in this chapter more broadly, it is perhaps more appropriate to conceive of the process less as a line than as a spiral, a Māori framework for historical understanding that embeds both cyclical and lineal movements, allowing for a more

iterative and reflective mode of assessment. This process is tied intimately to the Māori orientation to the past as “ngā wa o mua,” or “the times in front,” to which we look to inform the present and shape the future that comes behind us (kei muri). As I turn to plays about the New Zealand Wars as one aspect of the broader relationship between theatre and tino rangatiratanga, I keep this structure in mind, paying attention to form, content, and context to examine how representations of the past change in relation to a changing present.

Theatres of War: Representing the New Zealand Wars on the Stage

Given the dominant interests of Māori theatre, it is not surprising that Treaty issues and the New Zealand Wars appear as theatrical topics. In fact, the New Zealand Wars have been the subject of dramatic treatment by both Māori and Pākehā playwrights since the period of the Wars themselves. Despite Paul Sharrad’s claim that “Theatre history doesn’t show much except some early melodramas and a once-performed radio play” (“Struggle and Strategy” 17), my research reveals that the Wars comprise one of the more popular topics in the New Zealand theatrical tradition, with some twenty plays that represent and historicize the Wars in various ways – many of which were performed widely.²⁰ As a corpus, the plays demonstrate theatre’s

²⁰ In his discussion of prose literature on the New Zealand Wars, Nelson Wattie recognizes some thirty novels, “ranging from so-called ‘romances,’ which use the wars to spice up an otherwise uninteresting love story, to serious novels, which use the literary form as a strategy for examining the moral, social, and political questions the conflict raises” (433). The same is true here of theatre and the theatrical form. Plays of the nineteenth century which feature the Wars include A. Western’s *Philo Maori, or New Zealand as it Is* (1870); Laurence Booth’s *Crime in the Clouds* (1871); Benjamin Mantle’s *The Colonial Trooper* (1892), and *Prudence: or The Wanganui Yeoman of 1868* (1892), later revised as *The Kaiwhakakos* (1899, 1912, 1920); and George Leitch’s sensation melodrama, *The Land of the Moa* (1895) (Harcourt 15-18, McNaughton “Drama” 323-24, 328-29). These early plays, written by Pākehā dramatists, were spectacles, melodramas, and romances, in which historical action was peripheralized or burlesqued as supporting material for central romantic entanglements and exciting adventures, and Māori were included largely as curio value. After a long gap, broken only by Douglas Stewart’s radio play, *The Earthquake Shakes the Land* (1946), plays about the Wars emerged once again in the early 1970s, beginning with Dansey’s *Te Raukura* (1972). The plays of the past generation are part of an increased output of New Zealand drama due to the foundation of community theatres and resources for

participation in the “ongoing representations and debates” about the past from which collective identities are developed, “sometimes contesting the hegemonic understanding of the historical heritage on the basis of which these identities have been constructed, sometimes reinforcing them” (Rokem 3).

While acknowledging the importance of the Wars for Pākehā, it has been Māori playwrights who have provided the most trenchant critiques of the events and consequences of the Wars. Clearly, such a project combats colonialist histories that suggest that there was little or no indigenous resistance to imperial conflict, or posit an unproblematic victory for the colonizer; as Gilbert and Tompkins argue, “Presenting imperial wars within the context of local social history ascribes renewed political agency to the colonized culture itself, not just to the war” (111). Further, however, as Susan Najita has observed, “The project of recuperating culture and identity in the wake of colonization [...] often involves confronting potentially traumatizing as well as alienating representations of the past not only because of the violence of contact but also because these depictions have been produced in literate form from the perspective of the colonizer” (18). This is the case especially in situations where the present is still

the professionalization of writing for the stage, which occurred alongside the development of a more politically-motivated Māori theatre. These plays represent a mixture of “romances” and more serious works, but tend toward critical revisions from both Māori and Pākehā playwrights, including sincere Pākehā attempts to engage a bicultural theatre, which reflect changing intellectual and social attitudes towards the nation’s past. Such plays include Brian Hannam’s satiric documentary-drama, *The Waitara Purchase* (1973) and his one-act play *The Siege* (1976); the bilingual play *Ngāti Pākehā: He Kōrero Whakapapa* (1985) by Paul Maunder and the bicultural co-operative, Theatre of the Eighth Day; Joseph Musaphia’s *The New Zealander* (1988); *Hiroki’s Song* (1990) by Brian Potiki; Campbell Caldwell’s *Day of the Child: A Chronicle of the Land Wars* (1995); Apirana Taylor’s *Whāea Kairau* (1995); and Witi Ihimaera’s *Woman Far Walking* (2000). Other recent New Zealand plays that reference the Wars and their effects, or incorporate them as a period backdrop, are Mervyn Thompson’s *Songs to the Judges* (1975, 1998); David Geary and Wiremu Davis’ *Manawa Tāua* (1994); Stephen Sinclair’s *The Bellbird* (2002); Lorae Parry’s *Vagabonds* (2002); and Brian Potiki’s *A Mutiny Stripped* (2002). Notable films include Geoff Murphy’s *Utu* (1983) and Vincent Ward’s *River Queen* (2005). The New Zealand Wars could also be argued to resonate implicitly with other plays about land loss, colonial dispossession, resistance, and the Treaty, such as Craig Harrison’s *Tomorrow Will Be a Lovely Day* (1975), Rore Hapipi’s latter-day protest *Death of the Land* (1977), and *Maranga Mai* (1979) by Roma and Brian Potiki et al., and indeed, could even be seen to subtly inform many of the broader themes and drives of Māori theatre today.

being determined by ongoing colonial relations and “unresolved and disavowed injustices” (Najita 12-13). Indigenous writing that represents and reclaims these repressed, traumatic histories does not simply narrate and critique the nation, but “gestures toward forms that refuse and imagine beyond the nation” (Najita 19), offering new ways to negotiate the past and imagine the future. Whereas Najita bases her argument on poetry and prose literature, I suggest that theatre, with its public form, oral and physical communicative modes, and flexible structure, is a different yet equally forceful and effective medium for these agentive representations.

The three full-length works by Harry Dansey, Apirana Taylor, and Witi Ihimaera use the theatrical form to break open monologic historical representations and re-examine unresolved issues central to Māori identities in the present, address the amnesia necessary to national mythmaking, and ask critical questions about what Nelson Wattie rightly terms “the conflict at the chronological and moral basis of New Zealand life” (446), while confronting the destructiveness of the past with the effort to create a meaningful work of art (Rokem 3). I argue that by offering skillfully constructed, public re-presentations of the past from Māori perspectives, these plays about the Wars – perhaps more than plays on any other topic – epitomize Māori theatre as “tino rangatiratanga in action,” demonstrating the political potential of looking to the past, and illustrating how theatrical performance may operate as a mode of Māori historiography and social activism. In addition, the time-span of the chosen works, representing thirty years of Māori theatre-making, allows for an assessment of theatre’s role in changing social contexts by tracing the imbricated pathways of Māori theatre and indigenous nationalism from the early 1970s to the present.

Harry Dansey – *Te Raukura* (1972)

Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross was specially commissioned for the 1972 Auckland Festival, and premiered with the more specific title, *Te Raukura: The White Feathers of the Albatross, A Narrative Play of Taranaki 1861-1883*. The commission was part of a plan to identify the Auckland Festival more significantly with Māoritanga, and to move on from the Māori Concerts that had previously provided the bulk of public Māori entertainments to develop a work that spoke more directly to a “New Zealand” identity (*Arts and Community* 13). The play opened at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Parnell (May 23-26) and then relocated to the Mercury Theatre in Newton for an extended season (May 30-June 3), produced and directed by noted Pākehā director, actor, and theatre historian John N. Thomson.²¹ The cast of sixty-five included several Māori and Pākehā actors who would go on to become significant names in New Zealand theatre and politics, such as George Henare, John Tamahori, Paul Minifie and John Geddes, as well as Syd Jackson of the Māori activist group, Ngā Tamatoa. Critically acclaimed, the play was described as a work with “unique relevance to our own age and society” (Harris 9) and a “considerable triumph” that will “assuredly pass into the New Zealand repertoire” (K.W.M. 1), and was published by Longman Paul in 1974. In September 1975 *Te Raukura* was revived for performance by the Te Reo Māori Society, the seminal Māori language advocacy group,²² to celebrate the inaugural Māori Language Week, and coincided with the groundbreaking Māori Land March. Directed by Brian Potiki (Kai Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe), then a student at Victoria University, the play’s cast and crew comprised

²¹ The 1972 performance program and associated reviews are held in the Auckland Festival Society Archive in the Auckland City Libraries Special Collections. I am grateful to Kate DeCourcy for providing access to these materials.

²² In September 1972 the Te Reo Māori society, along with Ngā Tamatoa, presented the New Zealand Government with a petition signed by 30,000 people asking that Māori language be offered in all schools. This action was commemorated by the annual Māori Language Day (later Week).

members of the Society and associated family, friends, and university students, and was staged at the major urban Wellington marae, Ngāti Pōneke Hall.²³ There is no evidence of the full-length play having been performed in its entirety after the mid-1970s, due most likely to the changing political climate and new Māori deployments of the theatrical medium.

The playwright, Harry Delamere Barter Dansey (1920-1979), was well-known in New Zealand as a journalist, cartoonist, writer, broadcaster, and local politician. A soldier with the 28th New Zealand (Māori) Battalion during the Second World War, Dansey settled in Taranaki and Auckland and wrote numerous feature articles on Māori custom, folklore, and Māori and Pacific Island Affairs, and published several books, including *How the Maoris Came to Aotearoa* (1947), *The Maori People* (1958), *The New Zealand Maori in Colour* (1963), and *Maori Custom Today* (1971). In the 1970s Dansey entered politics, working as a Auckland City Councilor and public relations consultant for the Department of Māori Affairs, and in 1975 was appointed New Zealand's race-relations conciliator with the task of promoting racial harmony and equality in New Zealand. Dansey held the belief that New Zealand should develop a culture drawing from the strengths of both Māori and Europeans, and was appointed a member of the Human Rights Commission in 1978.²⁴

²³ See flier in "Programmes and fliers relating to plays and dramatic performances in New Zealand. 1975." Eph-B-DRAMA-1975. Alexander Turnbull Lib., Wellington, New Zealand. Information about the 1975 production is taken from archival sources, as well as from a series of personal communications with director Brian Potiki, February-March 2008.

²⁴ For a more complete biography of Dansey, see H. R. Dansey and Te Rina Dawn Dansey. "Dansey, Harry Delamere Barter 1920-1979." *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Volume Five (1941-1960), 132-33.

Te Raukura is often cited as the first professionally produced and published Māori play,²⁵ but rather than retaining the significance that reviewers predicted, as Paul Sharrad observes, “it receives none of the attention that other ‘firsts’ [...] are given” (“Struggle” 11) in the New Zealand literary tradition. Although the play rates a passing mention in several general surveys of postcolonial literature, it is absent from many formal histories of New Zealand theatre²⁶ and has received very sparse critical treatment.²⁷ Indeed, in a situation that speaks to the perennial difficulties of play publishing generally, as well as the challenges of admitting indigenous creative work into New Zealand’s national print culture in the early 1970s, *Te Raukura* was almost never published at all.²⁸ A series of letters from Longman Paul Editorial Director Phoebe Meikle to Longman Paul Executives and the Secretary of the New Zealand Literary Fund Advisory Committee reveal that *Te Raukura* was denied a \$1,000 subsidy towards publication (Meikle to Jarman, 15 May 1973; 19 September 1973),

²⁵ See, for example, Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative* (115); Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage* (121); Marvin Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues* (140); Colin Chambers, *Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre* (477); Witi Ihimaera and Don Long, Eds, *Into the World of Light* (4, 44); Joan Metge, *The Maoris of New Zealand* (285); and Adam Shoemaker, “Paper Tracks” (249). Quoting Roma Potiki, Shoemaker argues that “Harry Dansey’s *Te Raukura* ... was one of the first to receive wide coverage on stage, radio and television as well as touring extensively” (249, ellipsis in original), but this is a misinterpretation of Potiki’s writing and thus of the way the play is remembered in Māori theatre history. Read in full, Potiki argues instead that it is Rore Hapipi’s *Death of the Land* (1975) which was one of the first plays to receive wide attention, despite Dansey’s play having been performed earlier (see *He Reo Hou* 9). In fact, *Te Raukura* had a comparatively modest theatrical outing.

²⁶ John Thomson’s *New Zealand Drama 1930–1980: An Illustrated History* (Oxford UP, 1984) is an exception, but this is hardly surprising, since Thomson directed the production. Hone Kouka’s excellent introduction to *Ta Matou Mangai* (Victoria UP, 1999) also includes a brief discussion of the work.

²⁷ Paul Sharrad’s article in *Wasafiri* (1997) and his chapter in *Inside Out* (1999) appear to be the main critical treatments, from a predominantly literary perspective. Critical analyses that read the play as “theatre,” determine the play’s place in New Zealand theatre history and emphasize the performance elements of the work are, to my knowledge, non-existent.

²⁸ The unpublished typescript is held in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, MS-Papers-7888-085. It is extremely likely, however, that if the play had remained in this form it would never have received critical attention.

which almost eliminated plans to produce the work in print.²⁹ Sharrad argues, and I agree, that “a particular politics of culture has excluded Dansey’s play from more than a passing note” and “given a different set of critical assumptions [that transcend rigid distinctions between Western and indigenous critical formations] *Te Raukura* can be seen in New Zealand literary history as more than a token landmark” (“Wrestling” 319). My emphasis is on the play’s place in New Zealand’s theatrical history (which, although related and dealing with similar issues, has received less attention and has developed along different axes than the country’s literary history), and on the theatrical aesthetics and performance dynamics of the work as an early experiment in a “Māori theatre,” when socio-cultural and aesthetic models were largely unavailable. It seems to me that, in addition to publication difficulties, Dansey’s exclusion from the Māori theatre canon is due in large part to the way that the Māori theatre movement has historicized its own inception and development, basing its identity in Māori-orchestrated activist agit-prop that developed in concert with certain key social protests of the mid to late 1970s that took place after Dansey’s play was first produced. In contrast, I see *Te Raukura* as very much a part of a “Māori theatre” tradition, modeling several key theatrical and political strategies that would become mainstays of later Māori theatre.

²⁹ Meikle wrote to the Committee that she was “deeply disappointed that the first full-length play written by a Maori in English has been rejected,” and “As a New Zealander who is eager to publish imaginative works by New Zealanders, I am very sad because, unless by a miracle *Te Raukura* sells well at the higher price, it will become even harder for me to persuade our accountants to let me continue to publish imaginative writing” (Meikle to Jarman, 19 September 1973). It appears that Longman Paul decided to go ahead and publish without a subsidy out of a moral commitment to Dansey, and to schools and universities that had already set the work from the stock list (4 June 1973; 19 September 1973). This entailed a higher price and a much smaller print run, and perhaps accounts for the play’s lack of public circulation and sustained exposure. The play was reprinted in 1978, but has been out of print since then, except for brief excerpts in Ihimaera and Long’s *Into the World of Light* (1982), and Hohaia et al.’s *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* (2001). The letters are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in P.C. Meikle Papers (MS-Group-1600): “Papers Relating to Pacific Paperbacks Series,” 2007-087-125; and “Editorial Papers,” 2007-087-073.

While it may seem appropriate that the first Māori play on the New Zealand Wars (or, indeed, on any topic) should have come from a prominent Māori journalist, social commentator, politician, historian, and ex-soldier, the medium and subject matter raise questions about Dansey's choices and models, and what it might have meant to produce a play on the Wars at this time. Outside the specific sphere of Māoridom, many accessible historiographical, theatrical and socio-cultural models were still dominated by Pākehā representations. By the early 1970s the Māori language was in danger of "extinction," discouraged in schools, and prohibited in the courts and in dealings with the government (Durie 60) – partly a result of postwar urbanization, monolingual media, and integrationist government policies which actively discouraged tribal organization (Durie 55, Walker 197-98). As Erik Olssen observes, although the tide was beginning to turn,³⁰ twentieth-century Pākehā historians of the Wars generally "still operated under the beliefs and assumptions of their nineteenth-century ancestors" (56), either tending to ignore the Māori after about 1870, or proposing an evolutionary paradigm whereby the Wars were legitimated in the construction of an adventurous new democratic nation (57).³¹ In the theatre, until the 1970s, as Hone Kouka affirms, "Māori impact was minimal and the stories being told were not ours" (*Ta Matou Mangai* 11). During the 1960s, Pākehā playwright Bruce Mason's work opened up possibilities for the expression of Māori lives and

³⁰ The late 1950s-1960s offered challenges to conservative views: among others, Keith Sinclair's *Origins of the Maori Wars* (1957) and *History of New Zealand* (1959) – also Dansey's sources – were critical revisions of the ways the Wars and New Zealand society were understood, questioning the limits of Victorian humanitarianism, and making the Wars and (problematic) race-relations central topics (Olssen 58).

³¹ James Cowan's introductory comments to his *New Zealand Wars*, written in 1922 and reprinted without revision in 1956, are exemplary: "To-day the two races are indissolubly blended in social intercourse, in national ideals, in a common pride of country, that they can afford to look back on the conflict of race interests in the 'sixties,' finding but a pathetic lesson in the spectacle of the two headstrong independent peoples of our earlier cruder years challenging each other to a death struggle for the prize of the land – in a bounteous country where there was room for twenty times their number. The intense devotion with which the Maori held to his land is difficult, perhaps, for the present generation to realize" (I, 3).

issues, and the Māori Theatre Trust, formed in 1966, gave Māori first-hand experience of the theatre and toured internationally (Kouka 12). Although the Trust employed Pākehā writers and maintained Pākehā “sightlines” (Greenwood 21), the works integrated Māori performance genres which “emphasized movement, ritual and oratory, rather than dramatic dialogue and action” (J. Thomson 58), strategies that would be incorporated in later Māori theatre and are present in Dansey’s work. But the Trust was defunct by the end of the decade, and was deemed to have had “little effect on [mainstream] drama” (J. Thomson 58). There remained very few opportunities for Māori playwrights, and Pākehā representation continued to form the “mainstay of New Zealand drama,” portraying “Comfortable middle-class family life with an evenly matched set of characters” (J. Thomson 58).

Te Raukura can be seen both as a tentative first step and a play before its time. In some ways it appeared equivocal and awkward in its experiments with a new cultural genre, and was eclipsed by a more overtly political use of the theatrical medium after the mid-1970s with closer relationships to the performative social protests that are usually claimed as the ground of Māori theatre. On the other hand, the play integrated its political message and aspects of Māori and European performance traditions with a sensitivity arguably absent in many works until the late 1980s. *Te Raukura* was Dansey’s first and only play, written as a tribute to his wife’s family from the Taranaki region of the west coast of the North Island, with strong ties to the village of Parihaka. Parihaka has always been, and in recent years has emerged more strongly as, a powerful symbol of tino rangatiratanga, due to its role during the later Wars as a refuge and haven for thousands of Māori dispossessed by land confiscations, and as an exemplar for non-violent resistance to injustice and oppression, anticipating by several decades the philosophies and strategies of Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States (Scott 7).

Historically, however, Parihaka remains a moral victory rather than a material one, due to the invasion by settlers' militia and volunteers in 1881, who destroyed the village, arrested its leaders, and dispersed the remaining population. Consequently, as Paula Savage notes, "In a history of denial, Parihaka was virtually wiped out of existence, maps redrawn and history redefined in an attempt to obliterate [its] memory" (11). In the context of a more visible self-determination movement, Parihaka has resumed its role as an emblem of Māori mana: a Parihaka Exhibition was held at the City Gallery, Wellington in 2000 (during which students from Toi Whakaari: The New Zealand Drama School read excerpts from Dansey's play); and Parihaka has become a performance venue in its own right as the site of the annual International Peace Festival.

Dansey's epic play covers almost twenty years of the New Zealand Wars from the perspective of two Taranaki-based Māori initiatives that took very different approaches to resisting the confiscation of land and the imposition of Pākehā governance: the Pai Marire faith and related Hauhau political activism spurred by guerilla millenarian Te Ua Haumene (c.1825-66); and the model of peaceful protest exemplified by the Parihaka prophet, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai (1830-1907). Both Te Ua and Te Whiti were what Bronwyn Elsmore calls "prophets proper" (152), emerging in response to land alienation and an influx of European settlers during the 1860s, and functioning as agents of religious-ethical revelation to lead the people in a social cause. Both prophets advanced indigenized historiographic models of self-determination, syncretizing Māori tradition with Judeo-Christian biblical teaching (Elsmore 146-47), identifying Māori with Old Testament Hebrews and "creating a hermeneutical body of myth-history that linked Māori followers to the Israelites as well as to their Polynesian ancestors" (Rosenfeld 119). This new whakapapa was designed to "bridge the abyss between the intact world of the past and the broken one

of the present” (Rosenfeld 6) and to look forward to a future where Māori would reside free from Pākehā domination. Yet, in the play, while Te Ua assumes a position of more radical separatism, anticipating a divine intervention whereby “the Pakeha will be driven into the sea” (11), Te Whiti maintains that “there is no victory save in peace” (43), advocating passive resistance and Christian values, and upholding an ideal for both ethnic groups to live side by side harmoniously. Although from a British military perspective both movements were unsuccessful, with the downfall and death of Te Ua and the forced dispersal of the inhabitants of Parihaka, Dansey stakes a claim in the enduring relevance of both these campaigns, using the example of these two very different early Māori self-determination efforts to present an ambivalent picture for audiences of the 1970s. While going against the grain of triumphalist Pākehā readings that position the Wars as a necessary and successful enterprise in the founding of the nation, Dansey places in tension the vision of a harmonious bicultural future based on peace, goodwill, and accommodation with a call for more activist intervention, leaving audiences to decide the most efficacious course of action.

On one level, Dansey portrays the prophets and their movements in an attempt to recuperate empowering models from a history of misery and erasure, employing the strategy of reclaiming indigenous figures of resistance as historical sites from which to undermine presumptions of white superiority (Gilbert and Tompkins 118). At the same time, poised on the cusp of a Māori cultural revival, *Te Raukura* looks to the past in order to raise questions for the present and the future rather than to dictate answers. Keenly aware of his role in redressing a hegemonic mythology of national progress, racial harmony, and Pākehā cultural superiority in order to open up a new space for thinking and speaking critically about New Zealand history, race-relations, and the status of Māori culture and self-determination, Dansey takes an approach that is concerned less with a direct representation of episodes from the Wars (what past

events are shown) as with a deliberate critical examination of the ways in which we come to structure and understand “history” (how past events are shown). The primary focus of my analysis of *Te Raukura* is Dansey’s grappling with the problem of historical knowledge, concentrating on the theatrical apparatuses used to foreground the business of “doing history” in the context of early 1970s New Zealand. One of Dansey’s key strategies is to openly position the past as an object of contested scrutiny by foregrounding a “scene of [...] examination” (Dansey 1) presided over by two Māori commentators from the present, Koroheke and Tamatane, who debate the circumstances of the play and the history it treats, subordinating the play’s nineteenth-century content to their own questions and arguments about validity and viewpoint, and frequently explicating or interrupting the action, or swapping one episode for a more “acceptable” one.

In many ways, this is a classic beginning strategy for a postcolonial theatre; as Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins argue, one of the first ways in which cultures address the ideological biases of imperial history is by establishing a context for the articulation of counter-discursive revisions of the past, often foregrounding debates and disagreements as part of this process (110). It is this major feature of the play, however, that I argue ties it most directly to emerging 1970s debates about tino rangatiratanga and its various models, stakes, and strategies. The dialogic approach developed through Koroheke and Tamatane acknowledges the work involved in trying to come to terms with a colonial history, stimulates critical thinking about the circumstances of the past and possible forms of action in the present, and allows for perspectives that refuse a stable position, resist encapsulation within national ideologies, and constantly make room for provocative attitudes – all of which result in a play that is more radical than has generally been credited. Indeed, it seems to me that it is the play’s refusal to dictate a single political standpoint or course of action that

allows it to function as a transitional work that instigates a tradition of postcolonial Māori theatre, able to operate both as an acceptable introduction to “Māori theatre” in a church-based venue in the context of an official civic celebration under Pākehā directorship in 1972, and as a more radical statement in the context of a grassroots Māori activist performance at a major urban marae coinciding with broader social activist events in 1975.

In his otherwise nuanced reading of the play, Paul Sharrad offers a rather dismissive analysis of Dansey’s dramaturgical strategies, critiquing the “wooden dramatics of set scenes introduced [...] by self-allegorizing commentators” (“Wrestling” 330), which are “overly contrived,” and reminiscent of “‘pageant’-style productions from school and teachers’ college” (“Struggle” 12), with the open didacticism and documentary suggesting a “*lack of art*” (“Struggle” 12). For Sharrad, the debate between Koroheke and Tamatane becomes too much about “historical reality,” dislocating the conflict from the stage direction (“Struggle” 12). While the technique may certainly have appeared awkward to some theatre-goers,³² I think Sharrad risks simplifying the non-literary aspects of the work and missing some of the more subtle meanings generated by the framing device. I prefer to describe the framing as “metatheatrical” as opposed to Sharrad’s “extra-literary” because the technique is self-reflexive, existing not beyond the work but consciously encapsulated within the aesthetic frame, pointing not only to the play itself as a theatrical construct, but to the constructed and performative nature of the historical and social discourses that the play’s content engages.

³² One reviewer mentioned that the device was “perhaps over-used throughout the play,” but praised the commentators as being valuable for “enabl[ing] the author to present opposing points of view with equal force” (Harris 9).

For instance, Koroheke and Tamatane work to stage the events of the nineteenth century as a performance-within-the-performance, offering a filter through which the “truth” about the past can be examined and critiqued (Rokem 203). The courtroom is a common trope in historical drama, with the emphases on witnessing, evidence, and confession as modes of bringing back events from the past for the spectators (Rokem 189-90), and is an appropriate trope in the context of vexed legal battles over Māori claims to land, resources and cultural legitimacy. Here, Koroheke and Tamatane function like lawyers, providing an opportunity for witnessing to take place, yet questioning the validity of the testimony of the witnesses they present. In these ways, Koroheke and Tamatane are, of course, also historians, and it is less colonial history than colonial historiographies that are on trial. These discursive maneuvers are not dislocated from the stage direction, but form an intimate part of a dramaturgy that interweaves hermeneutic, historical, social, and dramatic conflict; through performing interpretation, Koroheke and Tamatane highlight interpretation’s performative nature.

Koroheke and Tamatane, importantly, are not just emblematic representations in the “Everyman” vein, but mirror specific concerns within Māori society of the period, placing their discourse on history in cultural and social perspective. To begin with, their dialogue resists the impression of a unified Māori attitude to the past, and draws attention to the fraught intracultural debates engendered by past events. Arguably, showcasing articulate speakers examining the circumstances of their own condition would also have been more likely to stimulate conversation among Māori audiences than a generalized cross-cultural debate between a Māori and a Pākehā.³³

³³ Or, alternatively, this option may simply have appeared too confrontational in 1972, especially if we recall that even thirty years later, Sullivan’s cross-cultural debates between Cook and Polynesians stimulated controversy among Pākehā audiences and critics.

The approach to framing the action with two Māori points of view moreover, may have been useful for negotiating Dansey's own tribal position. Despite his long association and family ties with Taranaki and Parihaka, Dansey was not himself from Taranaki, but was an Arawa – a tribe known for its alliance with Pākehā soldiers during the Wars – so Dansey may well have felt ambivalence towards being seen to “speak for” nineteenth-century Taranaki resistance movements. At the same time, while Koroheke and Tamatane have an obvious investment in Taranaki history, their own specific tribal affiliations are never identified, broadening the resonances of their debate to encompass pan-tribal concerns – a move that becomes pertinent in the 1970s with the development of supra-tribal organizations that stressed a sense of Māori collective belonging as part of the struggle for tino rangatiratanga.

Koroheke and Tamatane also function to register generational differences in Māori society. In Māori, Koroheke translates as Old Man and Tamatane as Young Man.³⁴ While the translations of these names are not directly available to a non-Māori speaking audience, comprehension is enabled by a device that Dansey uses here and throughout of explaining passages of Māori language through context or parallel translation.³⁵ Koroheke introduces himself: “As an elder mine's the task to set the scene of this examination of our people's past that we may see how this extends into the present, how the deeds of those long since departed on the spirit path reach back to warn and teach and guide us in our day and age” (1). Tamatane, on the other hand, is

³⁴ The importance of these figures (the more radical Tamatane, especially) for the play's political rationale is signaled by Dansey's comment that, “If there is one character in the play who speaks for me most, it is not Te Ua the prophet or Te Whiti the man of peace. It is Tamatane, the young narrator who questions the so-called lessons of history and tries to relate the agony of the past to the complexities of the present” (*Te Raukura*, Publisher's Note).

³⁵ Although these techniques appear rather plodding to people with a knowledge of both languages, in early Māori writing in English they were a common way to accommodate (mainly Pākehā) audiences while introducing linguistic and cultural difference into the mainstream. Witi Ihimaera, for instance, uses the parallel translation technique repeatedly in his seminal collection of short stories, *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972).

more circumspect: “Youth, they call me. Mine the role to query, question, break if need be, build anew the world” (1). Both Koroheke and Tamatane are invested in looking to the past in order to move forward but Koroheke, in line with matauranga Māori, stakes a claim in continuity between the past and the present and a faith in the good example of his ancestors, while Tamatane is the revisionist, focusing on the problems of the present moment, which he sees as having been bequeathed from the “wrongs of the past” (2).

The fact that Koroheke is the primary stage manager who instructs us to “listen” or to “watch,” whereas Tamatane is the subordinate but dissenting voice, is reflective both of established traditions and changing relations regarding Māori kinship and protocol. Chadwick Allen points to the importance of the grandparent-grandchild bond in the traditions of passing knowledge on to the next generations in Māori culture, which establishes the elder’s role in a kind of “supervised world-building” (132), setting the contemporary context within a broader context of tradition, but also allowing for the younger generation to question the elder’s teachings and experiment with making a new world – something that Allen sees as having become even more pressing at the turn of the activist 1970s (132-33). Although custom dictates that Tamatane must “listen for a space” (1) to Koroheke, eventually he admits that “complacency and cant shall goad me in disgust to cast aside the cloak of courtesy I wear with such unease” (1). Frequently throughout the performance Tamatane lets this cloak slip, speaking back to what he perceives to be Koroheke’s more conservative or conciliatory approach. For example, Tamatane highlights the danger of buying into the national race-relations legend and accepting a problematic status quo, berating Koroheke “and all your kind who compromise, who gild and twist the bloody facts of history and offer them with smooth, bland words upon the altar of racial harmony, of peace, and of goodwill of Pakeha and Maori, one great people in a

nation where white and brown live as brothers” (1). Indeed, Koroheke is “worse than the Pakeha” who are motivated by “the greed of conqueror and thief” (1), for he “know[s] the rank injustice of it all” and “see[s] our heritage in alien hands” but “take[s] no stand” (1). Elsewhere, Tamatane condemns Koroheke’s understated portrayal of Māori soldiers in the early 1860s campaigns as a “perversion of history! Those men [...] were crusaders, idealists! You have made them sound just like ordinary people” (10); and is particularly defensive in situations where Koroheke appears to select historical evidence that casts Māori in a negative light, “giv[ing] the sneering Pakeha his chance again to snigger and deride” (21), especially in the case of the problematic ambassador Te Ua Haumene. During a scene in which Te Ua exhorts his followers to drink from the severed head of British soldier Captain Lloyd and prophesies that the head will speak, Tamatane orders Koroheke to “Stop this ghastly travesty! What purpose do you serve but to bring our people shame, derision and odium?” (15), and accuses Koroheke of “Play[ing] into the hands of the Pakeha, ever eager to find fault, to sneer, to point to the troubles of today, to say: ‘What do you expect from the sons of savages?’” (15). Tamatane then usurps Koroheke’s authority and manages the action for the remainder of the scene, making the actors present the peaceful Hauhau “Morning Song” to offer a more balanced view of the radical resistance movement.

In these exchanges, Tamatane asserts an alternative kind of Māori identity committed to Māoritanga but directed towards a practical engagement with current politics, emanating from a more contemporary urban experience and, perhaps, from a loss of some of the traditional knowledge, representing a more radical, idealistic generation questioning the decision of the grandparents’ generation to compromise and assimilate with Pākehā culture. In the 1972 performances, the association of the younger generation with radical action was reinforced by casting Syd Jackson (1939-

2007) in the role of Tamatane. Jackson was a member of the Māori protest group Ngā Tamatoa (lit. “young warriors,” active 1970-79), who protested at the Waitangi Day celebrations in 1971 and staged a walkout at Waitangi the following year, only a few months before the play’s opening. Certainly by the time the play was restaged in September 1975, the political significance of this character’s generation had become increasingly clear. The very mode in which Koroheke and Tamatane come to debate the conditions of the past demonstrates Dansey’s appreciation of his own and his play’s place “in history,” cataloguing a place at the beginning of a period of social change. In evoking two specific temporal and social contexts which refer back and forth to one another, Dansey is able to raise pressing questions not only about the Wars, but about the circumstances of a Māori culture poised at the threshold of a new phase in the struggle for self-determination.

The simultaneous acknowledgement and interrogation of Māori tradition in the debate between Koroheke and Tamatane is reinforced by the play’s formal and stylistic arrangements. The play’s syncretic structure enables the assertion of Māori cultural practices and oral histories through an evocation of marae ritual, challenging Western audience assumptions, yet correspondingly, the Western theatrical context engenders possibilities for a dialogue between Koroheke and Tamatane that confronts Māori issues in ways that are not possible on the marae. Koroheke and Tamatane favor a hieratic register that often falls into a formalized iambic rhythm, possibly in part to do with the fact that Dansey wrote much of the script in Māori first and then recast it in English, “Thus here and there I like to think that something of the feel of the Maori situation has remained like an echo among the English words” (Dansey x). The narrators’ poetic addresses and formalized gestures evoke the marae tradition of *whaikōrero* (oratory, speechmaking, debate), especially the aspect known as “take” (special topics), political speeches that generally treat the “history, difficulties, and

aspirations of the Maori people” (Salmond *Hui* 176). Anne Salmond draws attention to the performative accomplishments of Māori orators, noting that “the *marae* is very like the theatre” (148) and the skilled orator is a “consummate actor” (147). Significantly, *whaikōrero* can also be understood to have a prologic function as rituals of encounter (*mihimihi*) between locals and visitors to the *marae* as the preface to a *hui* (ceremonial gathering) (Salmond *Hui* 170). The resonances with *marae* ritual and wider Māori performance traditions are reinforced throughout the play in the use of *te reo* Māori, the presentation of songs and poi dances³⁶ (46-8), chants (57-8), and the formal welcome of the Pākehā government officers at Parihaka *marae* (42-3). The *mise-en-scène* of both productions also enhanced these connections: a bare pine apron stage with the painted stakes of a *marae* in the background in 1972 (K.W.M. 1), and far more overtly in 1975 when the theatre itself was indeed a *marae*. In these ways, *Te Raukura* links the work of the Māori Theatre Trust of the 1960s with subsequent Māori theatre by setting Māori performance in a more determined politico-aesthetic context, akin to the strategies of later work such as the “*marae* theatre” of the 1980s. If the beach functioned as the threshold and privileged zone of encounter in the plays dealt within the previous chapter, in *Te Raukura* it is the *paepae*, the threshold of the *marae*, that provides a spatial and epistemological meeting-point between two cultures. This is appropriate in light of Dansey’s awareness of being positioned at a new phase of New Zealand’s social history and inaugurating a Māori theatrical tradition, offering a rite of passage for actors and spectators to enter not simply into a play about history, but a new way of doing theatre in New Zealand.

Whereas the integration of *marae* ritual provides some context for the style of debate between Koroheke and Tamatane, and foregrounds Māori cultural authority in

³⁶ A poi (ball) dance is a dance performed with balls attached to flax strings, swung rhythmically, and slapped against the performer’s body or arms for a percussive effect.

ways that might legitimately advance tino rangatiratanga, Dansey extends and complicates this picture by taking advantage of the Western theatrical frame to allow for a dialogue between the two characters that approaches Māori issues in ways that travel beyond the structure offered by marae protocol, with its very strict rules about who can speak, how, and what about (Salmond *Hui* 147-78). Although Allen's point about the right of younger generations to question their elders in a pedagogical context is well taken, Tamatane's confrontational challenges to and reinterpretations of an elder's speech in the context of whaikōrero defy protocol, and may well have been shocking for many Māori audience members.³⁷ The Western "play" form, then, enables Tamatane to function as a public provocateur who at once acknowledges the need to maintain Māori cultural practices in the face of Pākehā hegemony, but also questions and subverts them, suggesting that recourse to tradition alone will not be sufficient to bring about a new social order.

Dansey's focus on equivocation, dialogism, and multiple viewpoints is developed further throughout the play in relation to the historical models of nineteenth-century resistance. At first glance, the structure of *Te Raukura* seems to suggest a rejection of the radical politics of Te Ua in favor of Te Whiti's cultural accommodation and harmonious race-relations based on Christian principles – a position also implied by the play's title, which points to the "raukura," or three white albatross feathers, which Te Whiti explains "our old people wore but worn by us with a new meaning [...] Glory to God in the highest [...] On earth, peace [...] Goodwill towards men" (61). The play, however, is more complex, offering both examples of

³⁷ Salmond, for instance, explains that marae orators are normally older men of high status, and that the first rule in the order of speaking is that one man speaks at a time: "Once an orator stands on the *marae*, he should properly be immune to interruption. If someone is not qualified to speak and yet stands, he might be ordered to sit down" (*Hui* 152). Interestingly, writing in 1975, Salmond notes that "Because of this rule of non-interruption, heckling is unheard of on the *marae*, and when some young Maori students tried it recently at the Waitangi Day celebrations, they were criticised for their want of manners" (*Hui* 152).

resistance without committing completely to the vision of either one. The ending of the play emphasizes this ambivalence which is, I argue, one of Dansey's most important theatrical and political maneuvers. The final scene of the play, "Finale at Parihaka," features the return of Te Whiti and his partner Tohu Kākahi from their Pākehā-enforced exile in the South Island, and their reunification with the people of Parihaka. The scene reiterates the chief tenets of Te Whiti's teaching, and confirms Parihaka as an important political, cultural, and spiritual site. During the narration that prefaces this final scene, dissension remains between Koroheke and Tamatane over how to select from the "facts" of history, and how to read the implications of Te Whiti's message of peace in the present day. Here, Dansey moves into sonnet form – a technique that, interestingly, couches indigenous polemic in high European poetic form, and that he employs at times throughout the play to convey highly emotionally-charged ideas. Emphasizing the positive aspects of homecoming, the renewing tie to the land, and the possibility of future reconciliation, Koroheke relates how "at last the exiles were brought home / And saw again the mountain of their dreams / And stood upon the earth they loved so well" (56). Tamatane, conversely, takes up the antithesis within the sonnet form and begins a new stanza in the present tense that focuses viscerally upon the settlers' sack of Parihaka, the heartbeat of the iambic pentameter evoking a living link between Tamatane and his forebears: "Across the years I hear the voices call; / I hear the widows' cry, the sickening crash / Of rafters falling in the burning homes; / The people driven out like drafted sheep" (56). Foregrounding a connection between past and present based on wrongdoing, and underscoring the need to redress persistent injustices that still affect Māori today, Tamatane asserts: "The men who broke, and bent, and turned the law / Have done great evil, not alone to those / Of that far time, but also to our own" (56). Consequently, in an important statement that clarifies Tamatane's politics and his response to the lessons of history, he argues:

“I hold their sons to answer for / The fathers’ sins, and thus I justify / What I may do in this my day and age” (56).

Tamatane’s avowed commitment to radical action remains a contentious element in the final tableau, which is structured by Te Whiti’s wish “that we should live together happily in peace, side by side, the Maori learning the white man’s wisdom and we helping him to overcome his dreadful sin of immoderate greed” (60). Singing an old missionary hymn, the people of Parihaka gather under the sign of the Cross, expressing peace and goodwill to all. Koroheke leaves his place as commentator to become a fully integrated part of the scene of worship, but in a powerful *coup de théâtre*, Tamatane refuses, “shakes his head slowly, turns his back on everyone and walks out” (62), disavowing an easy closure or singular meaning for the play.

It is worth unpacking further the dynamics of this final gambit for what it suggests about Dansey’s message for future action. For contemporary audiences, the hymn-singing people gathered under the material and ideological signifier of the Cross could be read as a kind of *deus-ex-machina*, whereby the complex problems of the past and present are ostensibly resolved through recourse to Christian values. While harmonious, respectful co-existence between Māori and Pākehā may be an ultimate ideal, Tamatane’s refusal to participate destabilizes this position as a solution to the play and the problems of history. As Freddie Rokem writes, the *deus-ex-machina* implicitly “points to a utopian dimension, the aspect which these metaphysical images have traditionally represented on the stage, but which history itself constantly seems to be challenging” (207). In the same way that Tamatane points to the limits of Māori traditional practice as a route to self-determination, “In this my day and age,” Tamatane similarly questions the ability of Christianity to bring about necessary social change; thus, for Tamatane, the *deus-ex-machina* is read as “an expression of a

metaphysical rupture, an attempt to fill a void, something that lacks the redemptive powers it traditionally had” (Rokem 206). The ending of *Te Raukura* seems to suggest a future vision for New Zealand that will be achieved in consecutive stages. While the final goal may be the peaceful race-relations and self-determination for Māori envisioned by Te Whiti, Dansey intimates through the character of Tamatane that the current state of affairs in 1972 does not allow for the realization of such a vision, so peaceful accommodation must be deferred in favor of more activist intervention.

In the 1972 performance at St. Mary’s Church, a historic place of worship, where the signs of orthodox religion formed an integral part of the *mise-en-scène*, Tamatane’s actions may have been read as aberrant, quickly subsumed once he leaves the stage by the more dominant performance of Christian fellowship that ends the play – a reading perhaps more acceptable for the context and audience of the first production. However, in the 1975 marae production under Māori directorship during a pivotal week in the history of Māori self-determination, Tamatane’s exit may indeed have been read as a confirmation of their very ideals. Director Brian Potiki identified the character of Tamatane very strongly with the real-life example of activist Syd Jackson, recalling that “Tamatane was – for me – iconoclastic, informed by Black Consciousness, educated, and angry about the intransigence of his parents’ generation. He rejects the piety and sanctimoniousness of Christianity with forbearance – *aroha*³⁸ – going on to work with others to make the new net that Apirana Ngata proposed.”³⁹ In

³⁸ Affection, love, sympathy.

³⁹ Brian Potiki, email communication, 31 Mar. 2008. Sir Apirana Ngata (1874-1950) was a prominent Māori politician and lawyer, and the first Māori graduate from a New Zealand university. Deeply committed to the advancement of the Māori people, Ngata helped organize the Young Māori Party for “young men and women who desired to work for the uplift and prestige of their race in the new era which was opening before them” (Buck “Te Ao Hou” 14). Whereas the Māori elders were supportive of these aspirations, “they realized that action had to come from the younger and more vigorous generation which was to take their place. They summed up the situation with the old adage: The old net is laid aside, / The new net goes a-fishing” (Buck “Te Ao Hou” 14). The “new net,” then, is renewed with each generation, so Potiki’s comment here refers to the hope that the young generation of the 1970s would take up the continuing endeavor for self-determination.

this way, although Rokem posits that the creative act of the theatre can function as a “dialectical antidote” (192) to the destructive energies and painful failures of history, I suggest that this more cathartic model may not allow fully for the recognition of ongoing struggles and the interventions called for in Dansey’s play, arising as it does from a social situation in which the negative aspects of colonial intercession are not located in the past, but continue to impact present conditions. Indeed the play, and its ending in particular, fail to provide an “antidote” to the wrongs of the past, and instead point simultaneously to theatre’s capacity to incite social action and theatre’s limits in needing to call upon external social action to accomplish its ultimate aims.

In turning literally to *ngā wa o mua* by presenting scenes from the past before us on the stage in dialogic counterpoint, Dansey enables a cogent and timely interrogation of what it might mean to look to the past, and what examples from the past might be useful to both Māori and Pākehā audiences of the 1970s. Although, as a first play, *Te Raukura* may seem tentative or equivocal, an analysis of theatrical form shows that Dansey’s play is a rich text that lends itself to different interpretations in different performance contexts, and indeed encodes and supports more radical action than a surface reading might suggest. Consequently, *Te Raukura* should not be categorized simply as a forerunner that looks forward to a later period of Māori theatrical and political intervention, but as an important intervention in itself, very much a part of a Māori theatre tradition pursuing and modeling *tino rangatiratanga*. We can read subsequent plays as being part of Dansey’s legacy, and as I will show, many of the formal and thematic features in *Te Raukura* continue to be rehearsed in Māori theatre up to the present day.

Apirana Taylor – *Whāea Kairau: Mother Hundred Eater* (1995)

Apirana Taylor's play, *Whāea Kairau: Mother Hundred Eater* (1995), comes twenty years after the last full production of Dansey's play, following two dynamic decades in the development of Māori theatre. In many ways, Taylor's career follows the broad theatrical developments outlined at the beginning of this chapter. A poet, novelist, playwright, and actor, Taylor (Ngāti Porou, 1955-) had his stage debut in Māori Theatre Trust productions as a child and became one of the early instigators of Māori theatre during the late 1970s, working with the pioneering theatre co-operative Te Ohu Whakaari, which was directed by his brother, Rangimoana, one of the first Māori graduates of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School. Taylor spent fifteen years traveling with Te Ohu Whakaari, doing "theatre about issues facing Māori people" (A. Taylor 206) and helping over a hundred Māori theatre practitioners to develop their chosen art form. Taylor's first play, *Kohanga* (1986), about generational differences over a mother's decision to send her child to a "kohanga reo" or Māori-language preschool, arose directly from his experiences while on tour, and was voted Play of the Year by the *Dominion* and *Evening Post* newspapers. Taylor's other plays include *Te Whānau a Tuanui Jones* (1990), which deals with Māori land grievances; his anti-nuclear solo performance, *Message in a Bottle* (1994); and *Kapo/Blind* (1998). In addition to writing and performing, Taylor has taught at Toi Whakaari and has served as Writer in Residence at Massey and Canterbury Universities (1996, 2002). *Whāea Kairau* was commissioned by Pākehā director Colin McColl of Taki Rua Theatre, Wellington, where the play opened in June 1995 as part of the theatre's specifically bicultural Te Roopu Whakaari season.⁴⁰ *Whāea Kairau* was produced in

⁴⁰ Primary source materials relating to the play are drawn largely from the Taki Rua Theatre Papers held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (MS-Papers-5610). I am grateful to Maria Gyles of Taki Rua for granting me access to this archive.

July 1999 at the Otago Museum in Dunedin as a WOW!-Kilimogo co-production, directed by Richard Huber, and was distributed the same year by the fringe Māori/Pasifika publisher, The Pohutukawa Press.

The theme and structure of *Whāea Kairau* is inspired by the 1684 novel, *Courage the Adventuress*, by Hans Jacob Grimmelshausen, which further inspired Bertolt Brecht's 1939 play, *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Although Taylor downplays his indebtedness to Brecht, preferring to "forget about Brecht and write my own play,"⁴¹ the literary and dramaturgical correlations between Brecht's work and Taylor's final production are such that the play was soon dubbed "the Māori *Mother Courage*" (Carnegie), and reviewers readily labeled *Whāea Kairau* as an adaptation of Brecht's play. Taylor relinquishes Brecht's historical setting of the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) in favor of the fractured conflict of the New Zealand Wars during the 1840s-1860s, and reimagines Brecht's Mother Courage as Siobhan Preston, also known as the eponymous Whāea Kairau, a whore, sly-grogger and hawker from the Irish slums who carts her wares and her three children across the battlefields of the North Island in search of profit. Whāea's Māori name, which translates as "Mother Hundred Eater," evokes both her greed and her history as a prostitute. A fluent speaker of Māori⁴² with one Pākehā and two part-Māori children, Whāea uses her liminal cultural position to take advantage of every party to the Wars, until her determination to make money from suffering sees her three children dead: her Māori son Rongo shot by a Pākehā officer; her Pākehā son John beheaded by Māori; and her mute daughter Puawai the victim of suicide after being raped by drunken soldiers. At the play's end, like *Mother Courage*, Whāea continues to support the war that has destroyed her

⁴¹ Apirana Taylor, personal communication, 9 Nov. 2007.

⁴² The London-based New Zealand actress, Barbara Ewing, was brought back to New Zealand especially to take the lead role, as her university degree in Māori and former experience working with the Māori Affairs Department gave her sufficient ability to handle the challenges of the bilingual script.

family, loading up her cart and deciding, “Another war; I’ll go there and set up shop; trading’s all I know; I’ll survive” (187).

As an adaptation of a European classic, *Whāea Kairau* is one of several Māori plays of the 1990s to transfer dramatic “master-texts” to a Māori or New Zealand setting, such as *Nga Tangata Toa* (1994) by Hone Kouka (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Raukawa), an adaptation of Ibsen’s *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1857); *Te Pouaka Karaehe* (1992) by Renée (Ngāti Kahungunu), a revision of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (1900); and *Manawa Taua/Savage Hearts* (1994), by David Geary (Ngā Mahanga, Taranaki) and Wiremu Davis (Ngāpuhi), which reworks aspects of Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604) within a nineteenth-century colonial context. Such works are representative of expanding aesthetic frameworks for Māori theatre during this decade, including a new turn towards canonical counter-discourse. In adapting Brecht’s play to a New Zealand milieu, Taylor retains many elements of Brecht’s Epic Theatre aesthetic and the approach to the business of war found in *Mother Courage*, but pursues three alternative, interwoven objectives. Taylor particularizes Brecht’s “universal” narrative; complicates Brecht’s treatment of a two-sided conflict between Catholics and Protestants by depicting the multifaceted and imbricated conflicts of the New Zealand Wars among and between Māori and Pākehā; and augments the thematic structure and political concerns of Brecht’s critique of war and capitalism by treating race-relations and colonialism.⁴³ In this analysis, I focus on the ways in which Taylor’s rewriting of Brecht enables a postcolonial re-examination of the New Zealand Wars

⁴³ In revising this chapter draft, I came across David O’Donnell’s reading of *Whāea Kairau* in his MA thesis, “Re-Staging History” (Otago U, 1999). Although our analyses are contextualized differently, use different examples and move in different directions, we share the argument about the play’s particularizing of Brecht and its postcolonial emphases, so O’Donnell’s earlier contribution is important to acknowledge.

and national history, while asking critical questions about what this adaptation of Brecht in 1990s New Zealand might accomplish.

Despite Viv Gardner's contention that, by the 1990s, productions of Brecht's plays were dogged by "the dead hand of classicism and canonisation" (in P. Thomson 169), as David O'Donnell has also noted ("Re-Staging History" 53), *Whāea Kairau* differs from other indigenous revisions of the European canon in that its source text is, at base, already counter-discursive. Several of Brecht's themes, structures, and approaches provide Taylor with useful frameworks for tackling hegemonic understandings of the New Zealand Wars in New Zealand history and society, and for stimulating audiences to think critically about present conditions through recourse to the past. For instance, Keith Dickson argues that by deliberately adjusting the historical focus of the Thirty Years' War in *Mother Courage*, "Brecht has succeeded in suggesting a war that has no real beginning and no end, and which bursts the artificial limits imposed upon it by the historian, reaching right through to our own century and probably beyond" (264). As the Army Chaplain remarks in Brecht's play: "There are people who think the war's about to end, but I say: you can't be sure it will ever end" (302). Similarly, Taylor begins his play's action in the late 1840s, after the Wars have officially "begun," and finishes sometime in the 1860s, when the conflict still had many years to run its course, concluding with Whāea Kairau loading up her wagon in search of new pickings in "[a]nother war" (187). In the New Zealand context, this sense of continuous war is rendered not simply as an ineluctable condition of human society, but points to the ongoing business of colonialism and the Māori fight for tino rangatiratanga, which has been engaged since the Wars and is, as Ranginui Walker reminds us, a "struggle without end." Taylor's organization refuses to leave the Wars neatly in the past, but extends their relevance into the present in a mode that is politically strategic.

Formally, Taylor employs features of Brecht's Epic Theatre, such as emblematic characters, dramatic irony, and *Verfremdungseffekte* produced through direct address, songs, and scenes introduced (in place of placards) by a man with a megaphone, intended to work against ready audience identification.⁴⁴ While the historical setting itself was, for Brecht, a ready-made *Verfremdungseffekt* – the temporal distance facilitating the objectivity necessary for putting the circumstances of the past in perspective (Brecht in Willett 190) – the Taki Rua production of *Whāea Kairau* enhanced this strangeness through costume and the general *mise-en-scène*, which reconfigured the scene of the Wars as a seedy vaudeville hall or fairground. Taki Rua's foyer featured an entire wall covered by a canvas curtain on which were painted the attractions of *Whāea Kairau*, and the set was strung with fairy lights, the black walls plastered with dilapidated posters, newspapers, and playbills, and emblazoned with painted slogans that carried Old Testament messages reminiscent of the Māori prophets and evocative of artists Colin McCahon and Ralph Hotere.⁴⁵ The characters were attired in the style of ragged traveling players: Whāea with a red, curly wig; Puawai as a commedia pierette with a white face and painted teardrop; John with a red clown's nose; Amiria, the young Māori prostitute, with the face of a tragic mask; and the policeman, Constable Cheeseman, dressed as a clown. This overt theatricality

⁴⁴ It is worth pointing out that many features of Māori theatre to date have much in common with Brechtian techniques, given that many plays aim to inspire critical thinking and social change through such "alienation" devices as direct address, debate, the integration of song and dance, use of languages often unfamiliar to audience members, non-linearity, non-realist characters, dream sequences, and temporal shifts. Taylor's play is distinguished by the obvious debt to Brecht's play, but it is arguable that these European techniques would have fitted well with existing Māori dramaturgies. As W. B. Worthen reminds us, Brecht took many of his ideas from various popular culture traditions that had affinities and resemblances worldwide, but originated and evolved independently of one another ("Staging América" 292).

⁴⁵ Colin McCahon (1919-1987) is regarded as one of New Zealand's foremost twentieth-century artists, known particularly for the use of (biblical) text in his paintings. Ralph Hotere (1931-), of Aupouri descent, is one of New Zealand's most important contemporary artists. He is well known for his "word paintings," which he began in the early 1960s. (Incidentally, *Te Raukura* was an important influence on Colin McCahon, who discussed the play with Harry Dansey, and later produced a series of Parihaka paintings (O'Brien 196).)

at once offers a self-reflexive acknowledgement of the performative nature of history in general and the conscious project of re-staging these specific historical events, but also operates critically to characterize this period of colonial history as tawdry, deceptive, and both farcical and tragic. Lies, deceit, and blindness are common motifs throughout the play, and here the fraudulent nature of the Wars, the illusory nature of dominant narratives about them, and the uncomfortable implications for a national identity forged in this conflict are cast into relief via the conscious exposure of the constructed nature of theatre.

An important part of Taylor's postcolonial critique involves a particularizing of historical events, in contrast to the more generalized setting of *Mother Courage*, which is designed as a lesson on the nature of "war" as such. As Eric Bentley argues, "There is no concrete locality in Brecht's drama. Place, like time, is abstract" (xl), and it is this flexible framework that allows a seventeenth-century peasant woman to sing and speak of war in a tone of twentieth-century cynicism (Bentley xxxix). Taylor, on the other hand, pays attention to the time, place, and social and racial circumstances of a real conflict with a detail and investment absent in Brecht's version. I find somewhat misleading Taylor's claim that, "Although I chose this time and place, the play based on its themes could conceivably appear on Mars, or the moon, at any time,"⁴⁶ as many of *Whāea Kairau*'s themes are inextricably bound up with the particulars of New Zealand's colonial history and, indeed, the play's political relevance is premised largely on the audience's recognition and appreciation of these specific references. It is unlikely that *Whāea Kairau* in its current form would have the same impact if staged outside New Zealand (and it never has been). Taylor's particular approach reveals his commitment to critiquing the violent actions of the past and to

⁴⁶ Apirana Taylor, email communication, 1 April 2008.

foregrounding a Māori point of view in contrast to dominant histories that have erased or muted the effects of the conflict. Whāea's song, "let us not talk of wars' horror / let us remain mute / say not a word / if we are all to survive" (118) echoes the desire for silence and amnesia in order to get by in a colonial world, pointing – significantly – to the effacement of the oral historical record as an archive of cultural memory.

Whāea's refrain in the Survival Song: "The big shall swallow the small, / And the biggest shall swallow them all" (123-24) reminds us, as does Brecht, that the average individual never wins in wartime. Taylor adopts Brecht's approach to dealing with apocalyptic events of war on an intimate social scale within his own particularized schema, rejecting the big events usually privileged in conventional historiographies and transforming the experiences of a profiteer, her three misfit children, a prostitute, a dishonest missionary, and a sundry collection of Māori and Pākehā soldiers and settlers into events of historical significance. At the same time, this strategy enables Taylor to anatomize a conflict that is much more complicated than Brecht's rendering of the Thirty Years' War, in which Catholics and Protestants remain separate, if interchangeable, entities, and whose interactions are largely confined to the offstage world. Taylor's attention to the social dynamics of the New Zealand Wars (which necessitates a separate expository scene at the beginning of the play) allows him to move beyond reductive characterizations of the Wars as a simple Māori-versus-Pākehā conflict in which one or the other side is to blame, and to examine the Wars as a series of complicated social relationships between many different mutually implicated groups, involving fractious relations between between "kupapa" (government-allied) Māori and "rebel" Māori, and between Māori with differing tribal interests, as well as racial discord between those ostensibly fighting on the same side, and dissension between Pākehā factions (government troops, settler

militia, British civilians, and settlers from other backgrounds, such as the Irish Whāea, who bears a separate history of colonial oppression).

This examination of the nineteenth-century conflict enables Taylor to demonstrate that all parties are complicit in, and degraded by, the dirty business of war and that ultimately everyone loses – even though he takes pains to show that the Māori characters are the ones who suffer most. Taylor’s depiction of the characters in his drama is resolutely anti-heroic. The British characters are figured as a group of sadistic, disadvantaged, and dispossessed individuals whose experiences in their home country have helped shape their violent dispositions. Faltering in the face of Māori resistance, the British army is variously described as “falling to bits” (164), and peopled with “loon[ies]” (116), “hopeless morons” (134) and “cowardly bastard[s]” (134). The Māori characters suffer a range of unfortunate fates, in which racial issues clearly complicate capitalist themes of profit and loss. Unlike Swiss Cheese, Rongo is not killed because Whāea haggles for too long over paying the Sergeant, but because he is Māori, implicated in an attack on the British forces through genealogical ties to his father. In contrast to Yvette, who is the only real success story in *Mother Courage*, Amiria’s affair with Captain Despard does not end in financially secure widowhood, but in death, sliced up with her lover’s bayonet and her breast turned into a tobacco pouch – her continued commodification given a racialized inflection through reference to the nineteenth-century trade in Māori body parts. Similarly, while Katrin dies a heroic death in Brecht’s play, drumming valiantly to alert the Protestant town of Halle to the approaching Catholic army, Puawai’s rape and suicide on the side of a lonely road is tragic. Moreover, unlike Katrin, Puawai’s fate is brought about to some degree by her own moral compromise; following her mother’s example, she tries to sell the drunken soldiers a ring she has taken from a corpse on the battlefield, and suffers an appalling loss from the transaction. The other Māori characters with no direct

equivalent in Brecht are also dealt similar hands: the old man, Koro, is stabbed to death by a British soldier; and Black Jack is rendered mad, his psyche fractured by his inability to reconcile the changes that are taking place in his land. Consequently, Taylor's uncompromising portrait of wartime atrocities, driven home on an intimate scale, subverts the material and ideological underpinnings of the Wars in New Zealand's national mythology.

In Taylor's play it is not only people who are compromised in war, but the land itself – another key means by which the conflict in *Whāea Kairau* is particularized and given a postcolonial emphasis. While land is, of course, one of the commonest contentions in colonial situations, the references to tribal claims and the Treaty of Waitangi ground the conflict in a specific locale. The partnership between capitalism and colonialism in the contest over land is made explicit throughout *Whāea Kairau*, drawing attention to a settler ideology of land ownership that contrasts starkly with Māori concepts of stewardship and indigenous genealogical ties that bind identity, history, and place (Mead 269-73), and which persists as a central tension in contemporary debates about tino rangatiratanga. Settler Jack Winfield contends that “The land's like gold. Ours for the taking. All we have to do is give the Maoris a short sharp knock” (127). The Governor summarizes these injustices and legal breaches when he tells Whāea: “One law for all. Maori point to the treaty. Government take no account. Settlers walk on to the land. Creeping confiscations” (176). Similarly, Reverend Walmsely makes particular reference to Treaty contraventions in a Māori land sale in which the chiefs representing their tribe have refused to sell a 600 acre block at Waikuhu, but “one chief Tere has agreed to sell the block for a hundred pounds and a wagon of tobacco” (135). Walmsely explains that “The sale is unlawful, according to the Maori version of the Treaty. But the Government is determined to go ahead with it. Even I can see it's just an excuse for the settlers and Government to

raise an army for war and get land” (135). These kinds of examples diverge from Brecht’s more generalizable parables about capitalism and social relations during wartime, and veer towards a more pedagogical explication of specific historical events for New Zealand audiences, reminding us of a particular history of injustice that has continued ramifications in the 1990s.

In addition to the diegetic references to land-grabbing, the status of the land is indicated by the settings for each scene, which feature mainly roads, transient spaces, or settlements that are semi-constructed or destroyed. The play’s *mise-en-scène*, featuring a long traverse stage deep with mud to symbolize a roadway, reinforces this effect. For example, the play does not begin in a town, but on “a half built road” which “comes to an end in a deserted plain” (86); other locales include temporary army camps and battlefields, a farmer’s field, a crossroads (123), “a road that seemingly leads nowhere” (164), and a group of *marae*-style huts, “burnt and wrecked as a result of looting” (158). The land is portrayed as scarred and degraded, itself a victim of the Wars, described as “full of lies” (106), “full of death” (173) and “mad and ugly” (141). These transitional settings register the process of cultural change and colonial reinscription of Māori land, with the disorganization, lack of direction, and alienation suggesting the simultaneous fragmentation of people and culture.

This fragmentation finds its most poignant representation in the character of Black Jack. Black Jack is one of the few Māori characters to survive until the end of the play, and is perhaps Taylor’s most complex creation in *Whāea Kairau*, symbolizing the disintegration of Māori culture during the period of the Wars; revealing the problematic relationship between Christianity and colonialism; representing millenarian Māori resistance movements; and functioning as a prophetic figure who registers the madness of his time and foresees its destructive legacies, bringing those past concerns into our present. In Brechtian terms, we could read Black

Jack as the kind of marginal, anti-heroic philosopher and topsy-turvy truth-teller found elsewhere in Brecht's oeuvre, such as Azdak in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944), but there is no real correlate for Black Jack in *Mother Courage*, so this character represents Taylor's turning away from a strict Brechtian paradigm and entering into a more sustained engagement with Māori experiences and epistemologies – a trend very much in evidence in the more surreal and prophetic second half of *Whāea Kairau*. Caught between two worlds, Jack is emblematic of the fracturing of Māori culture on the material, linguistic, psychological, and spiritual levels. Deprived of his own name (Mangaroa) in place of a racist epithet, he is represented visually as an uneasy amalgam of the cultures, wearing a piupiu (flax kilt), bare chest, tail coat, and battered top hat, cranking out Moody and Sankey hymns on a hurdy-gurdy. Black Jack speaks in a whirlwind of English and Māori words, a syncretic oral history comprising a wild catechism of associative references to the Māori world and the institutions and effects of colonial settlement: biblical names and quotations, days of the week, land deeds, numbers, the goods and customs of the Pākehā, the social regulations of the mission schools, and nonsense sounds. Black Jack attempts to name and order the confusion generated by the passing of the old and the influx of the new, but the task evades and overwhelms him, causing a splitting of language and self.

Black Jack tells Whāea that “Mad winds blow across my mind. This way and that. Whispering ragin’ God and Gods” (170). These dual references to wind and religion, as well as Jack's repeated use of the word “hau,” associates Jack with Te Ua Haumene's Hauhau movement and offers a more symbolic way to read his ravings, as corrupt, idiosyncratic versions of the Hauhau chants. Black Jack claims, “I've rubbed shoulders with the Maori prophets [...] I know of them. I know their chants. They chant of the old Maori world and the new Pakeha world, the old and new Gods. War and confusion. Hau hau hau” (172-3). Whereas Dansey also dramatized Hauhau

chants in *Te Raukura* as a way to recuperate them from dismissal by Pākehā historians, claiming that the chants were selections of important words taken from Pākehā institutions and thus rituals that deliberately sought to glean power from English words that were seen to be endowed with special authority (Dansey xi), in *Whāea Kairau* the chants are given a different symbolic resonance, but still retain a powerful logic as a structure for attempting to make sense of a fundamental process of change. Moreover, Black Jack's association with Hauhauism allows *Whāea Kairau* to embed a critique of the complicity between orthodox religion and colonial enterprise. Whāea comments on the hypocrisy of society: "Hell, everyone around here seems to know the bloody Bible. But nobody lives up to it" (171), and the implications of this approach are cast into relief by the gory spectacle of the Reverend Walmsely, dead and with his eyes gouged out as punishment for betraying Māori positions to the Pākehā. Walmsely's death references the historically documented event of the killing of Reverend Carl Volkner at Opotiki in 1865 by Hauhau activists, who accused him of being a spy. Post-mortem, his killers gouged out Volkner's eyes and drank his blood from the church chalice,⁴⁷ and Black Jack's rave, "white ma ma house where God toto mangai toto to to hau hau haaaa haaaa haaa haaa drinkdrink drinkdrink church" (169), when translated, becomes an oblique reference to this event.⁴⁸ Similarly, as in Dansey's play, the decapitated head of Whāea's son, John, evokes the fate of Captain Lloyd at the hands of Hauhau warriors at Te Ahuahu. Sent to Whāea in retribution for her own trading in Māori heads, the accompanying note reads: "Your son's head brought God to our people, and spoke in flaming tongues with the voice of the archangel Gabriel" (179). The passion, fanaticism and violent aspects of Hauhauism

⁴⁷ See James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars*, Vol. 2, pp. 72-6 for a detailed account of this incident.

⁴⁸ ma = white; where = house; toto = blood; mangai = taste, mouth, spokesperson, agent.

are right at home in Taylor's theatrical world, and Black Jack's characterization allows the performance to resonate with the echoes of Māori resistance movements.

Although, in these respects, Black Jack is an emblematic character of the 1860s, he also has a historical memory and prophetic aspect that confounds segmented categories of past, present, and future. Here, the whirlwind that surrounds Jack might be read as a representation of an omnipresent Māori present that contrasts with linear Western temporalities: "To the Maori, the past is the present is the future" (Awatere in DeLoughrey 165). Jack foresees a future New Zealand under Pākehā control, with the land all gone, dictated by capitalism, colonialism, and globalization: "Fast food parlours on our backs. God is money. The land seven million pounds sterling. One billion dollars. Sold! Sign the paper, Maori...." (188). In this way, Black Jack's role as a prophet brings the spectacle on stage relevance in the "now" of the play's production and reception. In production, the play's *mise-en-scène* resisted pure capitulation and suggested a complementary future vision of continued Māori protest, with the broken road sign to which Reverend Walmsely is chained pointing to the sites of Māori resistance efforts from the time of the Wars up until recent years, such as Orakau and Bastion Point.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, despite Jack's millenarian qualities, his vision (unlike his nineteenth-century counterparts) denies any divine intervention to drive out the Pākehā and deliver the Māori as the chosen people, and instead predicts a national history of indigenous struggle under colonial oppression. Jack dreams of his soul being sucked by the Pākehā monster: "a taniwha sits on my chest, sticks its tongue down my throat and sucks up my soul [...] I can see the lizard; it crawls in my mouth;

⁴⁹ Orakau Pa was besieged by British troops in 1864, and became famous as an example of Māori resistance to British forces. During the 1970s Bastion Point was the site of a 506-day peaceful occupation by people protesting the alienation of Māori land. The occupiers were forcibly removed by police and the New Zealand Army in May 1978.

it's drinking my blood, sucking up my wairua taku mauri"⁵⁰ (172, 185), a vision which reinforces the apocalyptic effects of the Wars.

For Black Jack and the other Māori characters there are no happy endings in the face of continued colonial oppression. Here, Brecht's preoccupation with the vision and prospect of death in *Mother Courage* – that which Eric Bentley sees as reflecting “the old disenchantment” of early Brecht (xliii) – is also carried over into Taylor's play and extended and developed in relation to indigenous histories, marking physical death, and the death of identity, language, culture, and the coherent self. In contrast to Dansey's more hopeful vision of a buoying spiritual or moral victory in the Wars, and the possibility of social progress and future racial harmony, Taylor retains Brecht's tragic vision, offering not only the general historical lesson that one does not profit from war, but reiterating the specific lesson that Māori did not profit from the New Zealand Wars, putting pressure on a secure sense of a bicultural national identity and suggesting the work still to be done to redress those past injustices.

In *Whāea Kairau*, Taylor negotiates between Brecht's universalism and specific nineteenth-century concerns, augmenting Brecht's thematic schema with reference to a particular, more complicated conflict, and foregrounding a postcolonial critique. Taking into consideration both Taylor's adherence to the Brechtian framework and his divergence from it, it is worth pursuing further the question of what it might have meant to present a “Brechtian” play about the New Zealand Wars from a Māori point of view in the mid-1990s. Undoubtedly, *Whāea Kairau* is a “political” play, deeply concerned with issues of tino rangatiratanga and national history as much as broader themes of war, profit and loss, and human greed. However, a general survey of the play's reception⁵¹ – which tended to focus on the work predominantly as

⁵⁰ My spirit, my life principle.

⁵¹ Based on 17 published reviews of the Wellington and Dunedin performances.

an aesthetic exercise in adaptation – raises issues of the extent to which these particular messages were communicated to contemporary audiences, and foregrounds the question of how the play’s Brechtian framework both enables and hinders an articulation and interpretation of the play’s politics.

In this analysis, I have suggested several places throughout the performance where contemporary audiences are prompted to rethink the present in terms of the past before them. I argue that we can read *Whāea Kairau*’s revisionist take on the Wars as a salutary critique of the seminal events that have shaped the race-relations and power structures of a contemporary bicultural society, in which broader legacies of war, profit, and greed play significant parts; thus there is a poignant valence in Taylor’s reminder for us not to forget the horrors of war in peacetime (A. Taylor 208). Similarly, the inconclusive and open-ended character of war signifies as an ongoing reminder of the continued Māori struggle for self-determination, so we could read the 1990s as a period subject to a specific heritage that has created social conditions that still remain problematic, a society in which the resolution of issues of ignorance and racism both “has and hasn’t happened” (A. Taylor 207).

Many (Pākehā) critics of the play, however, felt that the play failed as a Brechtian exercise because of a lack of relevance to the spectators’ own time, bypassing the historicizing of contemporary issues that enabled the simultaneous scrutiny of past and present so critical to Brecht’s form of the “history play” (P. Thomson 143). In the instance of *Mother Courage*, written in 1939, the Thirty Years’ War offered an urgently topical historical counterpoint to the burgeoning Second World War, but *Whāea Kairau*’s basis in the New Zealand Wars seemed to many to be without a direct equivalent in contemporary New Zealand society. David Carnegie, for example, commends the play but avers, “It is not clear how far *Whaea Kairau*’s meaning extends beyond the muddy fairground [which he reads as quintessentially

Brechtian] that provides its principal metaphor” (Taki Rua Archive). Jeremy Rose is even more specific, noting the social climate in which Brecht wrote his play, and contending that in this day and age, *Whāea Kairau* “was never likely to carry the punch or urgency of Brecht’s work” (6), because “its political messages are too obscure and too removed from 1990s New Zealand to work as Brechtian-type propaganda” (6).

From an overt standpoint, this is true, and may have to do, in part, with the fact that the play was a commissioned work from a Pākehā director with a prior interest in New Zealand adaptations of European classics, rendering the timing of the work rather arbitrary from a political standpoint. In choosing the Wars as the setting for his play, moreover, Taylor’s adaptation has a different focus from Brecht’s, being invested in a re-examination of the circumstances, ethics, impact, and legacy of the New Zealand Wars in a way that Brecht never was regarding the Thirty Years’ War *per se*. Therefore, while Taylor’s play does engage broader, transferable modes of social relation, he is strongly committed to a more specific history lesson that tends to cast the nineteenth century into relief in comparison to the present day. Nevertheless, aside from the observation that to read the play as a strict adaptation of Brecht downplays the places where Taylor diverges from that model, disallowing a consideration of some of the play’s more obvious postcolonial critiques, the play’s critical reception raises other questions about the relationships between Māori theatre and tino rangatiratanga in the 1990s. To what extent is there an expectation that indigenous plays admitted into the theatre mainstream should submerge their “politics”? What does it mean to say that the issues raised by the New Zealand Wars are no longer relevant? To what extent does that suggest a reluctance to revisit these issues, and what might that mean for directions in future theatre practice?

Apirana Taylor's *Whāea Kairau* is representative of an increasingly diverse and sophisticated Māori theatre of the 1990s, a period during which Māori playwrights (re)turned to a wide range of theatrical and social models in order to express their ideas. Taylor's mapping of New Zealand's nineteenth-century conflict literally exposes the lie of the land, but in this instance we might have to ask whether the play's politics remain entrapped within, or commuted by, the framework of its European theatrical antecedent, especially when it is read only as an adaptation of Brecht, and whether this may not have been a problem for other indigenous plays of the period as their aesthetic frames became more diverse and developed, and their reception became embedded within, and informed by, the expectations of mainstream audiences. These questions, and their implications for the relationship between tino rangatiratanga and theatre, carry over into my discussion of the third and final play, Witi Ihimaera's *Woman Far Walking* (2000).

Witi Ihimaera – *Woman Far Walking* (2000)

Woman Far Walking was commissioned by New Zealand Festival 2000, and premiered during the International Festival of the Arts at Te Papa Soundings Theatre, Wellington, in March 2000, co-produced with Taki Rua Productions and directed by Cathy Downes (Ngai Tahu). The play received international critical acclaim; Rachel House (Kai Tahu), who inaugurated the role of the lead character, Tiri Mahana, received a Best Actress award at the prestigious Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards in 2000, and the play was published by Huia the same year.⁵² *Woman Far Walking* toured extensively throughout New Zealand in 2000, 2001, and 2002, directed by Cathy

⁵² The published version of *Woman Far Walking* is a revised fifth draft of the play, developed specifically for publication, and differs slightly from the scripts used in some of the performances. This is the version I shall be drawing from, as it is the one most accessible to other scholars and students.

Downes, Christian Penny (Tainui), and Nancy Brunning (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngai Tuhoe) respectively. The production also traveled to Hawai‘i in 2001, and to the United Kingdom in 2002, playing in Cardiff, Wales, and at the Cultureshock Festival in Manchester, England, and was performed at the Pacific Arts Festival in Belau (Republic of Palau, Micronesia) in 2004. *Woman Far Walking* offers a mapping of New Zealand’s culture and history from the point of view of the oldest woman in the world, the 160-year-old Te Tiriti o Waitangi Mahana (Tiri), named for the Treaty of Waitangi, and born on the day of the signing.⁵³ The play’s title is a translation of the name given to Tiri on account of her long life and fraught journey: “Te Wahine Haere Roa” (50), and her story records the struggles of the Māori people under colonization, interrogating the ways histories are constructed and nations are built. The work was the first theatrical outing for playwright Witi Ihimaera (Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou), already well established as a novelist, editor, and librettist. Three-time winner of the Wattie/Montana Book of the Year Award, and Professor of English at Auckland University, Ihimaera (1944-) is also celebrated as the first Māori writer to publish a collection of short stories (*Pounamu Pounamu*, 1972) and a novel (*Tangi*, 1973).

It is easy to read *Woman Far Walking* as a critical, artistic, and cultural triumph, representative of a Māori theatre that had, by the twenty-first century, assumed a central, lauded place in the New Zealand theatrical tradition. The production drew upon and showcased the talents of an all-Māori cast and accomplished Māori directors (many of whom were graduates of Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School), offered bold new roles for female actresses, was sponsored

⁵³ In subsequent productions, Tiri would age accordingly: in the 2001 tour she was 161, in the 2002 tour she was 162, and so on.

by the bicultural Taki Rua Productions,⁵⁴ and was scripted by a leading Māori writer now giving drama his imprimatur. Ihimaera's reliance upon sophisticated audio and lighting effects to sustain the performance presupposed the existence of full professional resources for production, a luxury that Māori theatre practitioners had come to expect by the end of the 1990s.⁵⁵ The play's first public introduction as part of an international arts festival based in New Zealand's capital city, at the high-profile cultural center of Te Papa Tongarewa (National Museum of New Zealand) with the "strident promotion of Treaty-based biculturalism" in its architecture, management, and representations of history and society (Williams 81-2), appeared to confirm the importance of the play (and thus of Māori theatre) amid a social environment supportive of Treaty issues and a bicultural national identity – a perspective also suggested by the play's ostensibly inclusive tagline, "Her story. Our history."⁵⁶ *Woman Far Walking's* transpacific and global circulation, moreover, identified the play as one of a growing number of Māori cultural exports taking a place on the contemporary international stage, intersecting with, and forming a part of, a broader Pacific community, as well as making the trip to the United Kingdom – the customary benchmark for successful New Zealand dramatic works. Consequently, the general character and circumstances of the play's transmission and reception would seem to exemplify the distance traveled in Māori theatre since Dansey's first play in 1972.

Woman Far Walking's stellar reception and four years of regular performance, taking

⁵⁴ Tai Rua Productions grew out of the closing of the Wellington-based Taki Rua Theatre in 1997.

⁵⁵ The reliance upon professional production resources made it difficult for the play to travel to smaller venues in the way that earlier, simpler Māori theatre pieces had been able to. Despite Ihimaera's "dream that, one day when I'm traveling around New Zealand, I'll come to a small marae and find an audience grouped around an old woman sitting in her chair telling Tiri's story" and his claim that, "I don't think it [the play] needs to always be done professionally" (Ihimaera in Herrick 53), the current performance approach placed a strain on the resources of smaller centers. As Ihimaera himself admits: "Performing to a capacity crowd jam packed into the local community hall [in the Bay of Islands], the power leads had to be run to the local fish and chip shop up the road in order for the lights and sound to work" (Taki Rua website, Past Productions).

⁵⁶ Taki Rua Productions Tour Program, 2001, 2002.

advantage of professional resources, venues, training, and theatrical antecedents, contrasts sharply with the total of twelve performances of *Te Raukura* during the 1970s, mainly in a suburban church and cultural club hall; the *fait accompli* publication of Ihimaera's play by a prominent Māori and Pasifika specialist publisher seems a far cry from Dansey's precarious route to print; and Ihimaera's confident political standpoint marks significant progress from Dansey's equivocal approach. From this angle, *Woman Far Walking* represents a successful continuation of the growing popularity and mainstream acknowledgement of Māori theatre in the 1990s, and an important step forward in the visibility and acceptance of Māori culture in general.

But looking at the play and its contexts more closely, we might ask critical questions about the agenda of the work and the tensions between its content, its transmission, and its reception. While *Woman Far Walking* was highly commended, several New Zealand critics also noted that the theatrical two-hander – its first production, especially – was “vehement” (Cardy 9), “likely to prove provocative, political, and controversial to audiences” (Longmore 11), and “a very stroppy play” (Ihimaera in Laracy 21) that has “caused a few dramas” (Cardy 9).⁵⁷ *Woman Far Walking* is confrontational. Tiri is often angry, does not shy away from highlighting the wrongs of the past caused by the “goblin Pākehā” with “his Satanic ways” (91), and uses direct address to interpellate a specifically “Pākehā” audience, pointing out their complicity in a century-and-a-half of Māori suffering from violence, war, disease, and crippling government policies, all of which raise uncomfortable questions about what it might mean for “her story” to be “our history.”

⁵⁷ The Hawaiian reception, on the other hand, welcomed the relevance of the play's provocative politics, with reviewer John Berger hoping that, “With luck, ‘Woman Far Walking’ will inspire Hawaii's native playwrights to take an equally well-written look at Hawaiian history” (“Tale” n.p.).

In its commitment to foregrounding cultural politics, Ihimaera's subject matter contrasts with that of many Māori plays of the 1990s in which the politics tended to be embedded beneath the story. In this way, *Woman Far Walking* is indicative of a contemporary turn in Māori theatre which, while drawing upon the sophisticated techniques of a developed theatrical tradition, arguably represents a return to the more provocative style and the thematic concerns of earlier Māori theatre, once again raising social consciousness about the ongoing injustices of colonization and the drive for Māori self-determination. This "renaissance of political themes in Maori theatre" (O'Donnell Foreword viii) is a response, in part, to what is perceived as a greater split between the New Zealand public and Treaty issues (Williams); the government's regressive social policies of recent years, such as the Labour Party's Foreshore and Seabed legislation; and public comments from prominent Pākehā politicians that embed the "notion that Maori have become a 'problem' for New Zealanders" (O'Donnell Foreword x), all of which have led to new initiatives such as the formation of Māori Party to encourage stronger representation and a greater share in the nation's decision-making. The political turn also arises from Māori playwrights' anxieties about the co-optation of Māori theatre as another celebratory cultural product and the extent to which the mainstream acceptance of Māori plays had been premised on the toning down of its "issues" to the detriment of the broader political objectives and efficacy of indigenous theatre. This new development⁵⁸ complicates a teleology of Māori theatre in which Māori plays enter the mainstream, "move on" from earlier struggles, and uphold the myth of a steadily developing bicultural harmony, and

⁵⁸ After Ihimaera's play, such works include Robert Sullivan's verse drama/libretto *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (2002); Mitch Tawhi Thomas' play *Have Car Will Travel* (2001) in which a Māori couple kidnap a Pākehā couple for revenge; Albert Belz's *Awhi Tapu* (2003), which expresses rage over disenfranchised Māori forestry workers; and Miria George's *and what remains* (2005), which imagines a dystopian future featuring an ethnically cleansed New Zealand.

instead points to the complex ways in which the quest for tino rangatiratanga has been both advanced and challenged by the social, political, legislative, and aesthetic developments of the past three decades. Thus, while Ihimaera's play draws upon resources and enjoys a popularity of which Dansey could only have dreamed, the unfulfilled political goals remain.

It is worth noting, further, the paradoxical situation that Ihimaera's play finds itself in as a deliberately provocative work trying to resist elision into the mainstream while receiving an enviable mainstream acceptance – a reception aided by previous Māori theatre efforts and Ihimaera's status as “an icon in this country” (Penny in Cardy 9), that at once enables the success of the play and the dissemination of its messages, and challenges and circumvents them. A case in point was the reaction of Rima Te Wiata (Ngāti Raukawa), the actress playing Tiri's alter-ego, Tilly, who, having become “fired up” and “passionate” in the process of rehearsing the show, undertaken “‘tonnes’ of research into New Zealand history” in preparation for her role, and claiming before the opening that “I can't wait to hear what audiences have to say. I know it's going to inspire conversation” (Longmore 11), “stormed off the stage during one show, after getting sick of cellphones ringing, pagers bleeping and the noise of an audience member unwrapping a lolly” (Cardy 9). Te Wiata's exit sparked a “nation wide debate [...] Was she justified in her actions? How should an audience behave in the theatre?” (Ihimaera, Taki Rua website). This example suggests the difficulties in trying to reconcile the need for audiences' critical engagement with the serious political messages of the performance and the expectations of many mainstream theatergoers who anticipate a position of distanced spectatorship while

enjoying a “good story” presented stylishly, and points perhaps, to the kind of experience “Māori theatre” had come to signify by the end of the 1990s.⁵⁹

My discussion of *Woman Far Walking* picks up several theoretical and thematic strands, examining Ihimaera’s engagement with allegory, Mana Wahine, whakapapa, and historical trauma as models for structuring and complicating Tiri’s story/national history. In his approach to staging the past, Ihimaera presents an alternative to the dominant narratives of the Wars and the development of the nation by establishing the personal, subjective, intimate, female, Māori, and metaphysical as a lens through which to examine public, objective, large-scale, male, Pākehā, and realist modes of historical understanding. In *Woman Far Walking*, the domestic context of the world’s oldest woman commemorating her birthday at home becomes the forum for a sweeping historical survey that encompasses her mythic ancestors’ landfall in Aotearoa, Captain Cook’s encounters, traditional iwi life, the Treaty of Waitangi, the New Zealand Wars, the 1918 influenza epidemic, Māori urban drift, nuclear testing in the Pacific, the Land March, the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, and post-1990 sovereignty struggles. Interwoven throughout these broad events are Tiri’s own personal conflicts and life markers: births, marriages, and deaths. Tiri’s introductory line: “I am 160 years old. I was born on 6 February, 1840” (9), is a heavily loaded statement for New Zealand audiences and establishes Tiri as an allegorical representation of the legacy of the Treaty of Waitangi in terms of the ongoing Māori struggle for tino rangatiratanga under Pākehā domination.

⁵⁹ Judith Dale’s review of the play supports these and earlier comments. She writes: “[T]his was a classy presentation of Maori culture: tickets were expensive, the venue elegant, and the production was very, very stylish” (41), and argues that although the play’s narrative was more politically motivated than some of its predecessors, “The very theatricality of [*Woman Far Walking*] might be thought to work against the political potential of the play, if that is (as I think it is) to re-examine racism and oppression in New Zealand’s post-contact history. [...] I want to see what will happen if the text is produced in a rawer or blunter style [...] with clearer foregrounding on the politics of the story and less focus on elegance and stunning effect” (41).

In his choice of a female figure to represent this history of struggle against oppression, Ihimaera engages discourses of Mana Wahine in an attempt to revalidate women as historians, celebrate the contribution of Māori women in history and Māori society, and affirm the mana of Māori women (Irwin 1). The Mana Wahine movement emerged in the 1970s alongside Māori sovereignty movements and should be read within the context of a growing pan-Māori nationalism rather than as a metonymic extension of white feminism in Aotearoa (Mohanram 101, 105). Tiri does not simply provide a counter to white, masculine national narratives, but explicitly codes tino rangatiratanga as feminine,⁶⁰ centralizing women's experiences and roles in the drive for self-determination. This approach draws attention to an issue that has not been addressed so far in this chapter: the relationship between Māori women and tino rangatiratanga – both in terms of theatrical depiction and action in the broader social sphere. This focus displaces the emphasis of the discussion about tino rangatiratanga from an ethnic debate about the rights of Māori versus Pākehā, and prompts consideration of gender dynamics within Māori culture and their impact on the form and outcome of self-determination efforts. In “Towards Theories of Māori Feminisms,” Kathie Irwin emphasizes the importance of observing Māori women's social contributions, but points also to the need to be attentive to the ways in which the contemporary Māori renaissance has resulted in a revival of Māori cultural practices that privilege male bonding, and indeed “serve the interests of Pākehā men whilst disempowering Māori women, in the name of ‘Māori cultural practices’” (16). Irwin's discussion highlights concerns among Māori women about who benefits from the project of cultural revival, what new forms of power are created or maintained in this

⁶⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes that the Crown's denial of the rangatiratanga of Māori women was in part a matter of translation: “*Rangatiratanga* has generally been interpreted in English as meaning chieftainship and sovereignty, which in colonialism was a ‘male thing’” (46).

process, and the extent to which cultural revival can create space for female agency – their own *tino rangatiratanga* – concluding that “Contemporary expressions of our culture offer little to some Māori women but the shackles of oppression from which others have already freed themselves” (19).

In light of these issues, it is worth considering more critically Ihimaera’s role as a Māori male playwright and how his portrayal both recuperates Māori women in the history of the nation and also problematizes their representation. The project of writing a “women’s history” aims for a different take on dominant narratives, as Tiri explains: “People only remember the big events of history. But for a woman, history is intimate. It has to do with the birth of children [...] the triumphs and failures of their lives. It has to do with supporting them, holding them when they are dying” (86-7). As a result, Tiri avers, women’s memories “hurt more” (49). In the play, this attitude to history is related to a capacity for patient endurance in the face of adversity, which Ihimaera sees as appropriate to symbolize a persistent struggle against oppression. Tiri asks: “Is survival all that a woman ever knows? That we have to keep going, that it all has to do with keeping on going? Keeping on going on? Always onward, and onward? Is this the role of women?” (88). In taking this approach, despite depicting Tiri as a passionate activist and committed warrior, Ihimaera also falls back on stereotyped female roles that exist in Māori culture. In Māori society and on the stage, as Mei-lin Te-Puea Hansen has pointed out, the *kuia* (elderly woman) figure appears as a recurrent trope of history and nationhood (116), and is associated with the roles of mother, caregiver, and leader, supporting and nurturing roles bound strongly to the traditional connection between women and the land (*Papatūānuku*) (118). Tiri’s characterization preserves these conventional ideas; although the play makes a conscious effort to create strong new roles for female characters, Tiri’s existence still revolves very much around women’s traditional duties and *whānau* (family) roles

(Hansen 118). According to Radhika Mohanram, the woman-as-nation figure is potentially problematic in the context of Māori nationalism, as “women function as metaphor for the nation and therefore become the scaffolding on which men construct national identity” (110). Consequently, my analysis is attentive both to the possibilities and limits of Ihimaera’s engagement with Mana Wahine and the implications for women and tino rangatiratanga within and beyond the theatre.

In complement to allegory and women’s histories, Ihimaera employs whakapapa as one indigenous model of historical understanding to organize the play’s spatio-temporal structures. Elizabeth DeLoughrey describes whakapapa as a “layering of ancestry” (163), a rendering of one’s history and identity that resists a linear trajectory from past to present in favor of more lateral connections between identity and place, foregrounding a dynamic interrelation between the temporal and the spatial (162-64). Tiri establishes the convention of whakapapa as a framework for reading her history at the beginning of the play, telling us that “My whakapapa, my genealogy, takes me back to the people of Te Tai Rawhiti, the East Coast. I grew up in a time when the iwi Māori ruled the land. In those days before jet planes my ancestor, Paieka, came to these islands riding a majestic whale. The sky was a man and the earth was a woman – I still greet them both [...] My mountain has always been Hikurangi, the first place in the world to greet the sun” (9-10). Temporally, whakapapa functions as a spiral, a temporality that writer Patricia Grace refers to as a “now-time,” that gestures to the past while moving into the future, positioning historical events in the present so that time becomes coeval or simultaneous (DeLoughrey 188). This orientation helps us understand Ihimaera’s instruction that “The events of Tiri’s life are [...] more appropriately seen as happening in a continuum in which past and present exist as one and at the same time in a single continuous dramatic reality” (4), while suggesting how theatre, as a medium capable of simultaneous temporalities, becomes a prime

medium for representations of Māori time. Whakapapa and spiral time provides a way to connect or combine past and present, national history and cultural memory, interior and exterior, personal and political, movements backwards and forwards. As Ihimaera has explained elsewhere, the double spiral motif “allows you then to go back into history and then come out again. Back from personal into political and back again” (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 242). Consequently, as DeLoughrey argues, “Whakapapa then function as historical, communal, and familial memory, vital counter-narratives to colonial accounts of linear progress and modernity” (165-66).

Whakapapa, then, offers an appropriate framework within which to organize a history of resistance to Pākehā colonization. At the same time, however, Tiri’s symbolic role as bearer of the weight of this struggle has particular implications for her relation to the past and, consequently, for the kind of whakapapa she is able to relate. Ihimaera complicates the concept of whakapapa as an affirmative connection to identity, history, and place by showing how the recitation of her whakapapa is a fraught, yet compulsive, experience for Tiri, and by emphasizing its gaps, ruptures, and inassimilable contents. Tiri has too much knowledge and is burdened and haunted by her memories: “all that life, that history, is like waves of the sea bursting above you, curling you down into the sand” (86). The dead are not integrated into her whakapapa as comforting, sustaining counterparts, but represent an oppressive accumulation, a layering of death upon death: the air “stinks of the dead and they’ve all gone, your generation. The next generation comes and then it too is gone. And the next. And the one after that and they keep on piling up the dead the dead the dead – ” (17). In the play, the past in front of Tiri wears her down, a constant reminder of her never-ending fight. This is also symbolized by Tiri’s decrepit body, which registers the toll of the struggle for self-determination and the breakdown of relations between Māori and the Crown. Tiri’s body and psyche here function as sites for the partial

revelation of the historical trauma of colonization, through which the violence and dispossession of the past resurface as signs of an impossible history that the traumatized person cannot entirely possess. Indeed, that person is possessed *by* that past (Caruth 4-5).

Organizing the historical experiences of Māori under colonization around the experiences of an individual protagonist allows for the examination of traumatic effects manifested on both psychological and broader social levels. Connecting theories of trauma to colonial and postcolonial subjectivity and history, Susan Najita proposes a paradigm that moves through and beyond a model of personal psychology in which traumatic events act on the victim/subject and instead “recognizes trauma as central to the nation, its histories, narrative forms, and subjects” (19). Najita argues that if colonial discourse is grounded in a denial of trauma and its disruptive effects, then by returning to the discursive sites of trauma (such as history), we can begin to decolonize modes of belonging (19). From this point of view, Tiri’s traumatized subjectivity is necessary to expose and critique the effects of Pākehā imposition, and is presented as perhaps the only appropriate indigenous response to this history.

Tiri’s impulse to return to her past, despite her aversion to it, manifests itself in a manner akin to the “acting out” of traumatic memory, which unlike ordinary memory, is not subject to the vagaries of recall, but consists of the compulsive repetition of past scenes, collapsing distinctions between past and present, self and other (LaCapra *Writing History* 21). Tiri describes her memories as candles that “You can blow and blow all you like, but they keep coming back” (58), and as spiders’ webs “so strong and tensile that once caught in their strands, nothing, not even Time, can escape them” (49). Despite her resistance to discussing her past, demonstrated by her demand that the audience leave the theatre at the beginning of the performance (13), Tiri’s memories are elicited by Tilly (an Anglicization of “Tiri”), who is a younger

projection of Tiri's own psyche, and Ihimaera dictates that Tilly "has a congruence with Tiri" and "should be played by two actors who have some physical resemblance to each other" (3).⁶¹ Tilly is a constant and unwelcome presence for Tiri, who confronts her: "Who are you! Why are you always here? Why are you making me remember—" (28), to which Tilly replies, "As long as you're around, I'm around. You know I always come on your birthday" (13), reminding us that this fraught history of colonial oppression is something that Tiri compels herself to repeat regularly. Tilly is a provocateur, berating Tiri for "only tell[ing] some of the story, not all of the story" (29). According to Ihimaera, Tilly "constantly interrogat[es] Tiri's version of events" (3), especially her partiality and evasions, exhibiting "a critical role which sees both characters argue and pull against each other, and sometimes do battle with one another" (3). Dramaturgically, Tilly also embodies a range of satellite characters from Tiri's past as Tiri "relives" them in the present. Through the persistent presence of Tilly, Tiri is caught in her forced re-enactment of the colonial past that possesses her, unable to assimilate it or leave it behind.

For Tiri, traumatic experience is tied intimately to the problem of Pākehā settlement. DeLoughrey points to whakapapa as a flexible structure that can be challenged or revised, can cast off old members and graft on new ones, and can therefore function strategically as a way to reconcile the human conflicts brought about by Pākehā colonization by incorporating Pākehā and their associated belongings into an extended whakapapa (164, 182-83). Tiri, however, is unable to effect this process, feeling permanently displaced within her own whakapapa due to being named for the Treaty of Waitangi. Tiri declares, "what a namesake. A fraud. Full of lies and Pākehā promises. How would you like to carry the name of the document which took

⁶¹ In some productions of the play, Tiri and Tilly were played by a mother-daughter duo, Kahu and Riria Hotere.

Māori land?” (18), and tells us that she would have liked to “spit on the Treaty,” but “to do so would have been to spit on my own name and I couldn’t do that” (18). Situated firmly in her opposition to Pākehā intervention, Tiri instead emphasizes whakapapa’s indigenous structures that encode European colonization as unnatural and ahistorical, positioning Pākehā as an aberration of the natural order of Aotearoa New Zealand (DeLoughrey 166). Throughout *Woman Far Walking*, Pākehā are figured as deeply unnatural and a wrongful and disturbing presence that cannot be accommodated, described variously as “Hairy. White as a ghost. Smelling different” (10); as “devils” (72), “goblins” with “eyes in the backs of their heads” (10), and “like spacemen from the moon” (72); and marked by a “toeless imprint [and] sprays of urine over the land” (31). Pākehā settlement is uncompromisingly destructive: “Wherever he goes he murders people [...] he murders the land and the sea” (76), and from the beginning, Tiri declares, “I have been at war with him” (10). In this way, Tiri is a figure for a nation that renders Pākehā as Other, her continued fighting justified by the belief that Pākehā do not belong.

Probably this is the reason why the New Zealand Wars, as the fulcrum of the fight against Pākehā, assume such prominence. Although Tiri and Tilly narrate a history of struggle against colonization from its formal inception to the present day, the Wars are the most influential, detailed, and compelling part of the story they tell.⁶² The events of the Wars, centering around the resistance movement led by prophet and

⁶² The publicity materials for *Woman Far Walking* also emphasized the importance of the Wars in the play: the tour brochures included a special section on Te Kooti written by historian Judith Binney (the only episode in the play to receive such attention); and the poster for the original production featured a defiant House and Te Wiata dressed for the Wars scene, standing on and driving their peruperu staffs into a stage-sized representation of the reverse side of the New Zealand War Medal, authorized in 1869 and issued to men of the Imperial Army for service in the New Zealand Wars (Ryan and Parham 217). The women’s warlike stance atop the (reversed) medal suggests the other side of the story so often told about the Wars, foregrounding Māori resistance, the strength of female warriors, and ironizing the laurel wreath and the Latin phrase, “virtutis honor.”

guerilla fighter Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki (c.1832-1893)⁶³ in the late 1860s and the Matawhero Retaliation (1868) and Ngātapa Massacre (1868-69), take up almost a quarter of the play and their consequences inform previous and subsequent episodes.⁶⁴ Indeed, Tiri admits that she has been the enemy of the Pākehā ever since Captain Cook’s men killed members of her iwi with their muskets at Tolaga Bay (10), and she sees the Wars as an inevitable consequence of this moment of “discovery.” Tiri tells us that “All my life I have fought the Pākehā” (91), suggesting – like Taylor and Dansey – the Wars’ continuation in the form of the Māori fight for land and sovereignty. Scenes from the Wars resurface throughout Tiri’s life. For example, later in the play, she hears “fragments from the massacre at Ngātapa” (85) when recalling the 1981 anti-apartheid protests against the South African Springbok rugby tour, and the police squad sent to quell the protesters “suggest[s] the [British] soldiers at Ngātapa” (85); after receiving a police batoning, Tiri repeats the monologue she speaks after falling from a cliff during the massacre, once again seeing the “Government Māori coming among the dead scalping them for money” (86); and it is her recollection of fighting in the 1860s that spurs her to confront the Queen of England at Waitangi in 1990, to tell

⁶³ From the Gisborne (East Coast) area, of Rongowhakaata descent, Te Kooti was wrongly accused of collaborating with Te Ua’s Pai Marire forces (sent from Taranaki with the head of Captain Lloyd and in the wake of the killing of Reverend Volkner), and was deported without trial to the penal settlement of Wharekauri in the Chatham Islands. In 1867, divine revelation came to Te Kooti and he effected an escape back to the mainland in July 1868, whereupon he began a campaign of revenge against those who had wronged him. A contradictory figure, Te Kooti has been understood variously as a martyr, a ruthless Māori fighter, and a religious leader, and became a legendary figure in both Māori and European popular imaginations (Elsmore 200-04, Binney 1-3, 35-86).

⁶⁴ Both of these events were battles between the British and kupapa forces, and fighters led by Te Kooti. During the Matawhero Incident, which took place on 9/10 November, 1868, Te Kooti struck the town of Matawhero and other Poverty Bay settlements, killing the colonist commander, Major R. N. Biggs, and over 50 civilians, both Māori and Pākehā (Belich 227-28). The Ngātapa Campaign, carried out in revenge for the attack on Poverty Bay, involved the siege of Te Kooti and his followers at the Ngātapa Pā by combined British, Arawa and Ngāti Porou forces during December 1868–January 1869. Although Te Kooti and some of his followers escaped, they were pursued and many were killed, as were many of those remaining in the Pā. While Te Kooti survived to continue his guerilla resistance, the Ngātapa Campaign is seen by many historians as a turning point for British domination in the Wars (Belich 262-66).

her that “You have failed us. You have dishonoured my name. You have broken the Treaty” (89).⁶⁵ On the one hand, this could be read as an expression of spiral time whereby the past is understood as a continual return, but it also functions as an example of how the traumatic experiences of the unresolved past re-emerge as further enactments and extensions of earlier moments. As Najita argues, in colonized societies, “the shards of the colonial past continue to resurface in the present not as foreclosed and concluded historical moments, but as trauma constitutive of ongoing colonial relations. [...] [T]he legacies of land dispossession, contact, and annexation are not distant, foreclosed moments in history. They emerge because they either remain disavowed aspects of ongoing colonialism and/or they continue to constitute present realities under colonization” (21-2). Therefore, Najita contends, the past of traumatic realism “is only *partly* the past as the initial moment of the inscription of power extends it into the present in an unbroken chain” (22).

Ihimaera’s treatment of the nineteenth-century Wars scenes provides a useful example of his return to thematic and political concerns of his writing of the mid-1980s (a phase during which the play in fact had its initial inception).⁶⁶ In revising the events at Matawhero and Ngātapa, Ihimaera subverts Pākehā historiographies by privileging Māori resistance and Mana Wahine. As Tiri tells the audience, “The man is

⁶⁵ The importance of the earlier events in Tiri’s life was further emphasized by the cuts made to the play for its 2001 run and Hawaiian tour, which condensed the play’s later episodes, leading one reviewer to comment that “The last 80 years of Tiri’s life are told in a rush: [...] Here the character of Tiri becomes too obviously and heavy-handedly a symbol. But in her youth, in her beloved Valley of Rainbows and during the terrible days of the Pakeha Wars, she is a fully-rounded person of flesh and blood with passionate emotions and desires” (Atkinson 9).

⁶⁶ Similar themes are dealt with in Ihimaera’s novel, *The Matriarch* (1986), which also features strong Māori women, and deals with land rights and the wars of Te Kooti from a revisionist perspective. Ihimaera’s idea for *Woman Far Walking* was initially conceived in the mid-1980s, when he saw an old kuia on television receiving a telegram from the Queen – a tradition for Commonwealth citizens who reach 100 years of age – and thought, “If I ever live that long and get a telegram, I would spit on it” (Taki Rua 2001 Tour Program). Ihimaera tried to write the story into a novel but it “wouldn’t gel,” and it still did not work when Ihimaera tried to get it ready for the 1990 sesquicentennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. It was only after following the advice of playwright Raymond Hawthorne that the piece took shape as a play (Laracy 21).

a warrior, so too is the woman a warrior. And when we go into battle, *all of us go*” (35). A leitmotif throughout the play is the women’s haka, *Ka Panapana*, which emphasizes Māori women’s warrior histories. During the “Pākehā Wars” (36), Tiri is a fierce warrior and unsung hero, serving a central role as a lieutenant to Te Kooti during Matawhero, helping him escape from Ngātapa, and seeing three of her children killed violently in his service. Significantly, Tilly is in concert with Tiri during these campaign scenes, the two women operating with a combined force that suggests a singular focus of purpose. This collusion is also one of several dramaturgical effects employed during the Wars scenes to develop a particularly confrontational approach to the theatre audience, directly implicating them in the violent histories that re-emerge forcefully in the present. In the play, Ihimaera presumes a predominantly Pākehā audience (a fair bet in New Zealand theatre, even in 2000),⁶⁷ and takes advantage of the agonistic space of the stage and techniques of interpellation drawn from earlier agit-prop performance to directly unsettle spectators’ assumptions of detached observation and “cultural safety” in the theatre. Tiri makes it clear from the outset that she is at war with the audience, who are figured pointedly as unwelcome guests at a birthday party, and this feeling intensifies as she moves into the Wars scenes, issuing a wero (challenge) to the audience and executing fighting movements with her peruperu staff (35).

Re-enacting the events at Ngātapa, for instance (here renamed the “Ngātapa Massacre” in contrast to the “Ngātapa Campaign” of colonial historiography to emphasize Pākehā violence), Tiri and Tilly take the point of view of victimized Māori

⁶⁷ Dale notes in her review: “Possibly a production with a Maori audience clearly in mind, perhaps specifically for touring to marae, is something that Taki Rua may think of doing; with different audience demographics the present production might itself produce something that reads very differently” (41). I argue that this would necessitate major revisions to the script, as the assumption of a Pākehā audience is deeply embedded in the text, not simply in the play’s performance dynamics.

being forced off the precipice behind the hilltop Pā by Pākehā soldiers, and the stage directions suggest that “Tiri and Tilly advance to the very apron of the stage, as close to the audience as they can get” (43). In this close proximity, the actors stress the audience’s vicarious culpability: “Your Pākehā soldiers took our fortress this morning” (43), and although finding only the wounded, women, and children, “We should have known that you would have no mercy” (44). The women increase the audience’s sense of discomfort by putting them in the position of the sheer drop, while they mime being pushed further and further toward their deaths against a soundtrack of cries of terror and soldiers taking aim with their rifles. Tiri and Tilly stage a public confrontation in a mode more provocative than the majority of 1990s theatrical antecedents, forcing the Pākehā spectators to confront their accusers who implicate them in both the wrongs of the past and their legacies in the present. When Tiri, using the Old Testament metaphors of the nineteenth-century Māori prophets, raises a fist to the audience and cries, “Let our people go, Pharaoh, let them be free from the slavery of Egypt” (44), it is a call that resonates to the present day in calls for Māori self-determination.

The New Zealand Wars sequence is also linked chronologically and thematically to Tiri’s secret, the so far unnamed and unacknowledged event that has inhibited her ability to tell “all of the story” (29). Through the performative device of the peruperu duel to symbolize Tiri’s fraught battle with herself, Tilly forces Tiri to face her repressed memory of her gang rape by four Pākehā colonists. The rape scene, graphically conveyed via the soundtrack, and featuring horns “similar in sound to those used for the Matawhero Retaliation sequence” (93), is situated temporally at the end of the period of the New Zealand Wars suggesting its role as a metaphor for eventual Pākehā conquest, despite Māori resistance, due to sheer numbers; the loss of land and tino rangatiratanga, and the betrayal of the Treaty. Consequently, Tiri’s guilt

and shame register metaphorically the burden of Pākehā dominance on the mana of the tangata whenua. The rape, furthermore, points to the post-war “birth of the nation” as an instance of cultural miscegenation forged in violence, with the subsequent birth of Tiri’s son, Pirimia: “Captain Cook looked like this. A pale child. A goblin’s child” (62). Tiri reveals that she could not bring herself to kill the child, but nurtured it and, ironically, while each of her other Māori children died from Pākehā-engendered war or disease, it is Pirimia who survives and gives life to Tiri’s substantial clan. It is Tiri’s inability to identify with her child, the forced insertion of Pākehā genealogies into her whakapapa that compounds the indignities of the Treaty-naming, and the consequent nature of her mokopuna (descendants), that cause a rupture in the whakapapa that cannot be accommodated, a trauma that disallows assimilation.

Tiri’s traumatized condition and separatist stance allegorizes a strand of national history in which the wrongs of the past are not reconciled within a structure of bicultural harmony, but continue to impact negatively and destructively on Māori lives and experience. The play’s ending, however, offers some framework for reconciliation, if only in terms of Māori self-image. Trauma theorists such as Dominick LaCapra, Saul Friedlander, and Eric Santner have advocated a return to Freud’s notions of “mourning” and “working through” as means of enabling victims/afflicted groups to loosen the grip on traumatic repetition and resume a more productive relation to social life (concepts that will be elaborated in further detail in Chapter Four). LaCapra explains that processes of mourning and working through modify repetition with interpretation, integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock, and reconfiguring the problem in a way that allows for critical judgment and that enables an understanding and acknowledgement of what happened to one’s people in the past, while realizing that one is here, with openings to the future (*Holocaust* 209; *Writing History* 21-2, 65-6). Importantly, it may not be possible nor even desirable to

attain full narrative closure, but the process might counteract the force of acting out and repetition compulsion (*Writing History* 22). We might therefore read Tiri's acting out as a necessary condition of working through (LaCapra *Writing History* 70). Having finally identified the traumatic event, Tiri is able to acknowledge that "What happened was not my fault" (57), and Tilly finally gives Tiri the affirmation she has been waiting for throughout the play: "Forgive yourself, Kui. There is always a reason for everything" (96).

This final acknowledgement (however tentative or inconclusive), opens a space for Tiri and thus for Māoridom to come to terms with the past, allowing for a laying aside of old guilt and grievances, symbolized ultimately by Tiri's death at the end of the scene. In political terms, this final scene also suggests Ihimaera's commentary on the status of Māori self-determination efforts. The old form of the struggle (even if the spirit is vital, as Tilly's characterization indicates), symbolized by Tiri's aged, decrepit body, with its long-held grievances, traumas, and exclusions, needs to die, and the struggle needs to be reformulated for the demands and challenges of the new world. Tiri identifies herself as the old net, out of place and time, "Left high and dry like a waka in a museum where there are no seas" (13), or "stuffed and put into a glass case like a huia with glass eyes and plastic bones wired together" (13-14), a relic whose relevance and efficacy is questioned in the present. In dying, Tiri passes on the struggle to a new generation of activists, signified by her mokopuna, Jessica, who will cast the new net; as Tilly tells Tiri, "It's not just your battle now" (76). This move also enables a recuperation of a whakapapa that, if falling short of naturalizing Pākehā, at least accommodates new, expanded Māori relationships to ancestry, identity, and place. Jessica is of mixed-race heritage and part of a generation situated in a multicultural, mobile, cosmopolitan community, with relatives throughout Aotearoa and the Pacific, and in Sydney and Los Angeles (77). The promise of a new

stage of indigenous self-determination that reflects these new cultural developments and kinship networks closes the play; as Tiri passes into the spirit world, Jessica chants the women's haka, *Ka Panapana*, which "sounds as if it is coming out of the future. Her voice is joined by other young children's voices" (100). In this way, Ihimaera's vision for Māori self-determination moves beyond Māori-Pākehā binaries to place Māori identity within a larger regional and global network.

Tiri's rape, its symbolic implications for Māori history, and its treatment in the play's final scene, are worth re-examining in light of Ihimaera's status as a Māori male playwright and in terms of the issues raised in the earlier discussion of *Mana Wahine*. In his reading of the disclosure of the rape, Dieter Reimenschneider suggests that the play upholds the idea that to overcome the feelings of loss and guilt embedded in the process of mourning, it is necessary to tell the whole story, which, he argues, is the story of the Māori people's implication in the historical process, including their own guilt and failure in their commitment to their own community (219). While the concept of Māori complicity in the process of colonization is something that Dansey and Taylor both address, aligning this complicity with the experience of being gang-raped involves a problematic conflation of gender and race, complicating Ihimaera's message of resistance to Pākehā hegemony. Could the rape somehow have been avoided? Should Māori have "fought harder" (96) as Tiri tells herself? Should Tiri have murdered her own child in the name of Māori "purity" and let her genealogical line die out completely? I am inclined to agree with Judith Dale's review of the play in which she finds "disturbing" (40) the use of a female as a vehicle for colonial history, asking, "what does it mean that guilt for all that has happened is placed in the hands, symbolically, of a woman who 'accepted' rape and then failed to kill her child? [...] the shame that the play presents Tiri as feeling, not only for not killing the child but for being raped by Pakeha, is something that in gender terms remains a matter of

discomfort” (40). Indeed, despite the play’s ostensibly progressive representation of women, in the choice of the rape metaphor for colonial penetration in the context of women’s history, and elsewhere throughout the play, Ihimaera falls back upon curiously reductive female stereotypes: guilty victim, sacrificial mother, fairytale witch. Mei-lin Hansen shares this position, arguing that Ihimaera, like many other Māori male playwrights, offers disruptive representations of Māori women, only to revert to familiar types by the time the curtain falls (116), and notes this especially in the final scene, where these fraught legacies are bequeathed to Jessica. Hansen argues that the ending of *Woman Far Walking* provides only reproductions of stereotyped female roles and simultaneously reduces the capacity for alternative portrayals of Māori women, with Tiri and Jessica replicating the kuia and kōtiro stereotypes that recur in Māori drama, and reproducing the clichéd grandparent-grandchild bond (recall Dansey) in the passing on of cultural tradition. Furthermore, Jessica (an underdeveloped character, represented only by a voiceover) never acknowledges what it might mean to bear Tiri’s legacy – despite its new directions – of historical trauma, guilt, hatred, and self-deprecation (117). This “oversimplification of wāhine roles” (Hansen 117) questions the extent to which the play advances new representations of Māori women, and questions, subsequently, the contemporary relationship between women and tino rangatiratanga.

Ihimaera’s janiform play looks back to New Zealand’s past history and to a Māori theatrical tradition at the same time as it anticipates a future vision for tino rangatiratanga in the “expanded world” of Oceania (Hau‘ofa “Sea of Islands” 12). Although *Woman Far Walking* can be seen to represent a zenith for Māori plays in contemporary New Zealand theatre, and a triumph of tino rangatiratanga in action, the play resists an uncritical celebration of these developments and deliberately returns to a form of more direct political engagement to remind audiences of the necessary and

ongoing struggle for indigenous self-determination, even as it suggests a rethinking of its terms of engagement in the present. The play's portrayal of female characters, however, indicates a disjunction between cultural and gender politics, raising questions about the status of women and tino rangatiratanga through the representations of their histories and identities on the stage and in the broader social sphere. Even though more diverse portrayals of Māori women have been offered by Māori female playwrights such as Renée, Briar Grace-Smith, Roma Potiki, Riwia Brown, and Miria George, the female characters in *Woman Far Walking* suggest that these internal developments have been uneven, and point to the need to continue to look critically at the process of self-determination in gendered as well as ethnic terms. In these various ways, Ihimaera's play demonstrates how theatrical expression can offer a potent means of gauging both the goals achieved and the challenges faced by Māori and Pākehā men and women in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.

Conclusion

I have traced during the period from the early 1970s to the early 2000s key indigenous theatrical interpretations of the New Zealand Wars as the nation's founding conflict, examining how Māori playwrights have engaged the Wars as the basis for colonial mythologies and have thereby sought to dismantle explanatory narratives, models of historical understanding, frameworks of social belonging, and genres of cultural representation that perpetuate Pākehā hegemony. As such, each of the three plays here represents aspects of a theatrical tradition centered around the pursuit of tino rangatiratanga. The arrangement of the works, moving forward into the future but maintaining a view of the past, allowing for cyclical patterns of return or revision, points to the intricate and fluctuating relationships between art, social life, and politics in Aotearoa. As Greenwood observes: "The bicultural space is constantly shifting and

transforming [...] with] a constant refiguring of how the interactive space is conceived and how individuals and groups see their role within it” (8). Obviously, this limited number of texts on a single theme enables only a very partial picture of this complexity, and a fuller picture would necessarily entail a greater number of plays and subjects, including work by Māori women; however, this selected point of entry has allowed for some beginning insights into these broader discussions. In what follows, I move away from Māori-Pākehā conflicts, colonizer-colonized binaries, and attendant interpretive paradigms, and turn to the Fiji Coup of 1987, which situates recent and ongoing conflicts in a multicultural Pacific context where repressive social structures are occasioned by a dominant indigenous nationalism in a post-independence state. The implications of the Coup for Fiji society and its theatrical reflections, and the strategies used by contemporary Fiji playwrights to work through the recent historical trauma occasioned by the events of 1987 in order to restore social harmony and reunify national and regional identities, is the subject of Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4
KILLING THE MONSTER: REVISIONING THE 1987 COUP
ON THE FIJI STAGE.¹

Introduction

In this chapter, I turn away from colonizer-colonized binaries to focus on a late twentieth-century, multicultural Pacific context characterized by a dominant indigenous population, examining refractions of the 1987 military Coup in three Fiji plays. The May 1987 *coup d'état*, which resulted in the overthrow of Fiji's democratically elected government under the rhetoric of indigenous nationalism and the subsequent institution of Fiji as a republic in October of that year, was unprecedented in Fiji's history, rupturing its image as a model multicultural nation, and ushering in a phase of economic and political instability characterized by racial tensions between the nation's two dominant ethnic groups: indigenous Fijians, and the descendants of Indian plantation laborers brought to the islands by the British colonial administration. In the wake of the Coup, some of the most poignant, provocative, and enigmatic responses came from playwrights. Their work arose from the need to make sense of the event and its implications for all Fiji citizens, and to establish an alternate public record in an environment unconducive to resistant political theatre. The Coup catalyzed a political and aesthetic shift in Fiji playwriting, giving rise to new modes of theatrical expression that moved away from the naturalism that had defined Fiji theatre since the 1970s, towards more allegorical and symbolic approaches, and a greater experimentation with the potential of theatrical syncretism – some examples of which

¹ In line with Rory Ewins, I shall be using the adjectival "Fiji," as in "Fiji citizens," "Fiji government," "Fiji drama," to refer to all those in Fiji; and the term "Fijian" to refer to indigenous Fijian. Although the term "Indo-Fijian" is in widespread use, I shall be using "Fiji Indian" to refer to descendants of Indian immigrants born in Fiji, as Indo-Fijian implies a racial admixture that is not always appropriate.

have had a lasting impact on theatrical aesthetics in the broader Pacific. Such works, moreover, are no longer content simply to describe life in Fiji, but are geared toward transformation, seeking to expose and critique repressive political discourses, to give a public voice to citizens marginalized from the country's decision-making processes, and to rebuild polarized communities.

Here, I examine three plays by scholar-artists from three ethnic groups in Fiji, all of whom take unique approaches to their interrogation of the circumstances and effects of the Coup and their calls for renewed social harmony. I read these plays as responses to historical trauma occasioned by the Coup – a trauma which reverberates nationally and also reinforces previous trauma experienced by sections of the Fiji community. Trauma studies is a wide-ranging and complex field, and here I engage primarily with the work of Dominick LaCapra. LaCapra focuses on how trauma can affect collective groups, and extends the process of coming to terms with traumatic experience beyond a purely therapeutic frame to address social, ethical, and political considerations, an approach that provides a relevant framework for the Fiji context.² I investigate how the plays attend to the challenges that trauma poses to history, memory, and representation, foregrounding new questions about what the role of theatre might be in the postcolonial post-Coup context, and what kinds of historical and representational models might be appropriate. I argue that the plays offer attempts to “work through” the traumatic shock brought about by the loss of national identity, democratic government, communal belonging, and social stability in ways that might enable a more socially connected, ethically responsible society, employing various

² I am aware that important aspects of LaCapra's work have focused on responses to the Holocaust. In engaging LaCapra's theoretical models, I am in no way suggesting that the Fiji Coup is an equivalent to the Holocaust. However, I argue (as have others) that LaCapra's discussions of mourning and working through also have relevance for a broader range of situations, and can provide helpful frameworks for reading responses to the crises in Fiji's recent social history.

forms and configurations of allegory and testimony as prime strategies to enable this process. Notably, all three plays were written and performed during or after the first Coups of 1987³ but before the third Coup of 2000 – a historical positioning that impacts their readings of Fiji’s social situation and its possible future course.

The Monster (1987) by Rotuman⁴ playwright Vilsoni Hereniko, staged the same year as the Coup, allegorizes the events of the Coup in terms that acknowledge ethnic tensions between Fijians and Indians, but transcends this singular reading to offer a salutary discourse on the nature of power and ethics. As an immediate reaction to the Coup, the theatrical frame and allegorical approach functions as a way to organize and narrate the Coup turmoil, providing audiences with the critical distance necessary for understanding, self-reflection, and active response. Formally, Hereniko’s incorporation of indigenous dance and clowning techniques as a key element of his critique constitutes a theatrical innovation in the post-1970 Fiji dramatic tradition and a first experiment in the development of a more broad-based “Pacific Theatre” that would become the hallmark of his later work and an influence on other Pacific playwrights. *Ferringhi* (1993), by Fiji Indian playwright Sudesh Mishra, is a complex and wide-ranging allegory that employs a self-reflexive storytelling structure to enable the traumatized characters to overcome their amnesia and aphasia – a process that ultimately involves not just a recollection and articulation of past events but a

³ Most commentators see the events of 1987 as comprising two *coups d’état*, one in May and one in September, while others describe the situation as one coup that began in May and ended in September/October. While the latter position is technically correct, as the second military intervention in September 1987 did not depose a formally recognized government and so does not formally qualify as a coup, I adopt the former position as the more commonly recognized one. Consequently, I refer to four coups in Fiji’s recent history: May 1987, September 1987, 2000, and 2006.

⁴ Rotuma is a small island with a population of 2500, located approximately 300 miles north of Viti Levu. Despite Rotuma’s cultural ties with Polynesia, for colonial administration purposes the island became part of Fiji in 1881 and then opted to remain with Fiji after Independence. Because of their Polynesian appearance and distinctive language, Rotumans now constitute a recognizable minority group within the Republic of Fiji. For an excellent resource on Rotuma, see the website constructed by anthropologist Alan Howard: www.rotuma.net.

transformative, counter-discursive revision of national history in aid of a more ethically responsible, democratic present. The retrospective *To Let You Know* (1997), by indigenous Fijian Larry Thomas, which opened on the tenth anniversary of the Coup, diverges from allegory as a predominant mode, creating a multimedia performance that emphasizes direct testimony from a range of cultural viewpoints to bear witness to and to begin to work through the traumatic repercussions of post-Coup experience. In all three cases, part of the process of coming to terms with the individual and collective past involves critical self-examination and an acknowledgement of the need for Fiji citizens to take responsibility for social change, and the plays continue to have contemporary relevance as Fiji currently struggles in the midst of its fourth Coup.

The 1987 Fiji Coup

In the April 1987 Fiji national elections, the Fijian-dominated Alliance Party headed by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was defeated after seventeen years of near-continuous rule, and was replaced by a recently-formed coalition of the multiracial Fiji Labour Party and the Indian-based National Federation Party, led by Prime Minister Dr. Timoci Bavadra. At ten o'clock on the morning of Thursday 14 May, 1987, after only one month in power, the democratically-elected government in the capital city of Suva was overthrown in a bloodless *coup d'état* conducted by Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka of the Royal Fiji Military Forces and a squad of ten masked and armed soldiers. Initially, Rabuka aimed to hand power over to Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, Fiji's Governor General, whom he hoped would support indigenous Fijian interests, but when Ganilau attempted to negotiate a new government of national unity between the Alliance and the coalition, Rabuka staged a second military intervention on 25 September 1987 (described by some commentators as a "second coup"),

deposing Ganilau and instituting his own government dominated by members of the nationalist Taukei Movement. On 7 October Rabuka abrogated the 1970 constitution, which had been in place since Fiji's Independence, severed ties with the British Commonwealth, and declared Fiji a Republic with himself as Head of State. In December 1987, Rabuka established a new interim government with Ratu Mara as the Prime Minister and Ganilau as President, while retaining several key military and political roles.⁵

The Coup came as a shock internationally, not simply because it was the first military coup against a democratically-elected government in the South Pacific, but because Fiji was seen as an exemplar for democratic self-rule in the so-called Third World, enshrined in the Fiji Visitors' Bureau's famous phrase reiterated by Pope John Paul during his visit to Fiji in 1986: "Fiji – the way the world should be" (Singh and Prakash 69). According to most academic observers, however, the potential for a coup existed in Fiji's colonial history and social and political system, as the legacy of a British colonial administration that guaranteed indigenous Fijians ownership and occupation of over 80% of their lands, and imported over 60,000 indentured Indian laborers in the period 1879-1916 to finance the colony by working on the sugar plantations owned by the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. (CSR), while operating according to a policy of what Victor Lal describes as "benevolent apartheid" (1), keeping separate the European minority, Indians, and Fijians through their different roles and positions in a hierarchically-organized society. After Independence in October 1970, the new constitution entrenched the same principles that had structured

⁵ The information for this précis is compiled from several different sources: R. Robertson and A. Tamanisau, *Fiji – Shattered Coups*; D. Scarr, *Fiji: The Politics of Illusion*; R. Norton, *Race and Politics in Fiji*; B. Lal, *Politics in Fiji and Power and Prejudice*; V. Sagar, *Fiji, The Coup and After*; V. Lal, *Fiji, Coups in Paradise*; and R. Ewins, *Colour, Class and Custom: The Literature of the 1987 Fiji Coup*.

Fiji's colonial politics (B. Lal *Politics* 75). Despite ostensibly amicable relations, Fiji Indians, who comprised descendants of indentured laborers along with descendants of free Gujarati migrants of the merchant class who arrived in the early twentieth century (B. Lal *Bittersweet* 22-3) and now equaled the indigenous Fijian population, continued to be viewed as transient outsiders who were economically privileged in relation to the Fijians, while Indians evinced reciprocal concerns about Fijian land ownership privileges and political authority (V. Lal 32). In this reading, the victory of the 1987 coalition government, which had a majority of Fiji Indian politicians (despite Bavadra himself being indigenous Fijian) was bound to cause a rupture in Fiji's socio-political framework.

The ongoing effects of the 1987 Coup – including the pro-indigenous Constitution of 1990, and subsequent coups in 2000 and 2006 – have had a profound and irrevocable effect on Fiji's infrastructure and national identity. In historian Brij Lal's estimation, the 1987 Coup rejected multiculturalism as a way forward for Fiji, further polarized its dominant ethnic groups, and generated social upheaval, including violence, corruption, censorship, and long-term disruptions to educational, social, and medical services. These problems have been exacerbated by international censure, trade embargoes, a significant decline in the tourism and cane industries, and the mass emigration of skilled Fiji citizens (*Turmoil* viii). In broader regional terms, the Coup was a key socio-political schism that eroded the idealist regionalism of the Pacific Way in the 1980s, shattering “the myth of pan-Pacific tolerance, co-operation, and non-violence [and] radically altering the intercultural politics of the Pacific” (Keown *Pacific* 117).

Although it is clear that racial tension between Fiji's two majority populations was only one of many complicated motivations for the Coup,⁶ the common understanding is that this was the primary cause of political instability. Here it is important to note, however, that the Fijian backlash signifies something other than a manifestation of the wider Pacific movement for indigenous rights. As Robert Robertson and Akosita Tamanisau observe, Fiji was not struggling for independence, nor were Fijians an endangered minority (1). In this way, Fiji's relations between its indigenous, diasporic, and settler-colonial peoples are distinct from those in "Fourth World" situations such as the Māori in Aotearoa or Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i, and consequently, approaches to Fiji's postcolonial politics and their relation to issues raised by Hereniko, Mishra, and Thomas must be framed accordingly.

Responding to the Coup as National Trauma

In light of this description of the circumstances and after-effects of the 1987 Coup, it seems appropriate to characterize the Coup as a traumatic event, and to read Fiji citizens as subject to the effects of "historical trauma," centrally related to historical events that involve losses. Dominick LaCapra observes that, while the traumatic event might be locatable, the experience of trauma as a symptom of, or response to, an overwhelming event is more elusive or delayed (*Writing History* 81), arguing that "Trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and

⁶ Some commentators have argued that the Coup had little to do with ethnic tensions in the country, but was a manipulation of this discourse of tension by those in power and subsequently adopted and naturalized by some indigenous sovereignty supporters. Other possible explanations or contributing factors include issues of class distinction and chiefly power; namely, that the Coup was the result of Rabuka's desire to maintain the power of the ruling class, especially the chiefly aristocracy, whose authority was threatened by Bavadra's government (Robertson 116-17). Some correspondents have also pointed to the involvement of the CIA, claiming that the Coup was a deliberate destabilization effort on the part of the United States because of Bavadra's intention to enforce the ban on visiting US nuclear ships (Ewins n.p.).

perhaps never fully mastered” (*Writing History* 41). Trauma of this sort is not confined to categories of individual psychology: “Conceiving of cultural trauma as a shattering of our collective or communal identity is also one way to understand its ability to transcend generational or other boundaries” (Bechtel 92), opening up ways for understanding how, as in the Fiji context, trauma can affect whole communities, regions, or nations (Bechtel 92). To say that Fiji suffered a trauma with the Coup is not to position Fiji society as homogenous or monolithic; indeed, the very circumstances of Fiji’s Coup situation presuppose that different groups will respond in different ways. Nevertheless, it is fair to argue that the majority of Fiji citizens were deeply affected by the multiple assaults on national identity, multicultural harmony, social stability, political parity, and regional connectivity. In the case of Fiji, moreover, post-Coup traumatic experience reverberates with the pre-Coup past and continues to be compounded in the present: in addition to suffering the general after-effects of the events of 1987, the post-Coup re-displacement of the Fiji Indian community repeated powerfully the historical trauma of indenture, while Fiji society as a whole continues to experience repercussions of traumatic shock with each subsequent coup.

In theorizing about trauma, LaCapra draws upon Freud’s concept of melancholia to describe an arrested process in which the traumatized self (or collectivity) is possessed by the past, compulsively fixated on the lost object, without openings to the future. Usefully, LaCapra expands the concept and processes of trauma beyond a purely therapeutic framework to engage ethical and political considerations (*Holocaust* 209), turning to the related processes of mourning and working through as productive modes of response that elaborate and integrate the loss occasioned by trauma, and reconfigure it in such a way that allows for critical distance, a recognition of the distinction between past events and present and future

options, and thus for the resumption of social life and the renewal of ethical responsibility (*Writing History* 65-6). In the context of Fiji's ongoing social and political situation, especially, it is important to observe that narrative closure is not always obtained, and that trauma to an extent remains unknowable; as LaCapra argues, working through "would not deny the irreducibility of loss or the role of paradox or aporia, but instead of becoming compulsively fixated on or symptomatically reinforcing impasses, it would [...] attempt, however self-questioningly and haltingly, to specify its haunting objects and (even if only symbolically) to give them a 'proper' burial" (*Holocaust* 193).

In the post-Coup Fiji context, public attempts have been made to work through the traumatic experience occasioned by the Coup in order to recuperate a sense of collective identity and an ethical connection to social life, and the majority of these efforts have been instigated by artists. Political commentators from within Fiji and overseas were quick to describe and theorize the events of 1987, rapidly creating an authoritative discourse about the Coup. Alongside these sociology and history books, political articles, and journalistic accounts, a variety of literary and creative responses were tendered by Fiji citizens, often framed as deliberate alternatives to the "objective" tone, detachment, and lack of human affect in the official accounts, which were seen as failing to address the ways the Coup and its aftermath were experienced by ordinary people. LaCapra recognizes that older methods of representation have proven inadequate to take account of the experience of trauma and its after-effects (*Writing History* 26) and acknowledges that, compared to historiography and its constraints, certain forms of literature or art may provide more expansive space for exploring modalities of responding to trauma. He argues that the departure of art from ordinary reality might uncannily provide direct commentary or insight into that reality; in other cases, it may directly engage or illuminate social reality in mutually

provocative ways, or it might offer a traumatic realism that diverges from conventional mimesis that enables an exploration of the disorienting, symptomatic dimensions of responding to trauma (*Writing History* 185-86).

For example, as Arlene Griffen notes in her edited compilation of post-Coup writing from Fiji, the experience of the Coup engendered “the kind of turmoil and confusion which can prove impossible to register fully or to express adequately in ways that are humane and therapeutic” (1), but points to the benefit of creative responses: “writing about such challenging times can afford insight, understanding and catharsis as well as provide the distancing one needs to apprehend change and discover how best to accommodate it” (1). Griffen sees these imaginative and committed forms of Coup-analysis as a “memory guarding exercise” (1) that bears witness to social change and lived experience in a way that “lies outside the scope of the historical and sociological treatment of the same subject” (7). Augmenting Griffen’s therapeutic model with the edge of political activism, scholar-artist Teresia Teaiwa argues that these creative writers and artists, as opposed to other commentators – including those in Fiji politics – offer “humanistic alternatives to the insidious politics of division, denial and injustice that are rapidly becoming entrenched” (84), and “represent resolute challenges to the ascendancy of exclusionary national narratives about Fiji, and open up possibilities for imagining a nation that is respectful of and empowered by its multicultural heritage – instead of one that is handicapped by repressing integral parts of itself” (84). In complement, LaCapra recognizes “a complex, supplementary relation between literary and artistic practice, related theoretical discourse, and historiography which goes counter to formalist or sociological conceptions of discrete spheres of activity and instead calls for inquiry into mutual interactions and resistances” (*Writing History* 186). Vilsoni Hereniko offers a model for this kind of intervention, which he calls an “interdisciplinary”

perspective on past events and sees exemplified in the work of novelists, poets, and playwrights. Unlike many forms of academic historiography, argues Hereniko, this approach is “marked by the following characteristics: first, it puts culture and people at the center; second, it takes into account fiction as well as fact, the irrational as well as the rational; third, it gives voice to the underrepresented; fourth, it draws from sources that cut across the boundaries of disciplines; and finally, it is always open and questioning, rather than closed and final” (“Interdisciplinary” 75).⁷ In what follows, I concentrate on the role of theatre – both its literary and embodied aspects – in the creative process of enacting various forms of working through as part of a political response to the event and aftermath of the Coup, actively modeling new directions for Fiji’s future.

Theatre in Fiji and the Impact of the Coup

The corpus of Fiji drama, comprising work by indigenous Fijian, Fiji Indian, and Rotuman playwrights, is relatively limited in relation to the other Pacific sites considered in this study. As Ian Gaskell acknowledges, “While other genres of creative writing in Fiji seem to have flourished over the years, drama, like a foreign flower, has not blossomed to the same extent” (*Beyond Ceremony* 5). Gaskell cites Subramani’s own reservations in *South Pacific Literature* about drama’s additional requirements in terms of production skills and institutional support for training and resources, but notes that the conditions for the production for Fiji drama have slowly improved in the years since Subramani’s book was first published (*Beyond Ceremony* 5). Despite this gradual progression, the collection of dramatists is still rather small

⁷ Both Teaiwa and Hereniko frame their comments after the third coup of May 2000; however, the social situation they are responding to is a direct extension of the events of 1987 and, as I see it, their observations and arguments are equally relevant to post-Coup artists working today or during the past two decades.

and, ironically, the constraints and circumstances of post-Coup life that in some part engendered creative developments in the Fiji dramatic tradition have also hindered a greater potential flourishing because of limited funding and resources from university and arts administrations. Fiji has never had a professional national theatre (Morrow 5), the two main venues remaining the Selbourne Street Theatre (Fiji Arts Club) in Suva, and, recently, the viable performance space that Ian Gaskell has worked so hard to create at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

In Fiji, the development of written drama and its theatrical presentation is, as we have seen in other Pacific Islands, a postcolonial phenomenon, influenced by the legacies of colonial education but tied intimately to the desire to treat Fiji-specific issues for local audiences.⁸ The production of drama was stimulated by creative writing workshops run by visiting groups from Papua New Guinea as well as through courses offered at USP (established 1968), and in the early post-Independence years various short plays began to be written. Pio Manoa's existentialist vignette, *Rachel* (1973) was one of the first, followed in the later 1970s by Raijeli Racule's Fijian mythic adaptation for radio, *Lasawalevu and Lasawalai* (1977), Jo Nacola's three dramatic sketches collected in *I Native No More* (1976), and Vilsoni Hereniko's series of one-act plays begun in the mid-1970s; as well as Nacola's more substantial *Garudial and the Land* (1978), Raymond Pillai's Fiji Hindi play *Adhuuraa Sapnaa*, begun in 1977, and Hereniko's longer works, *Don't Cry, Mama* (1977), *A Child for Iva* (1981), and *Sera's Choice* (1986). Once again, it is important to emphasize that because of Fiji's particular history and ethnic demographic, Fiji drama does not share the same function and purpose as postcolonial Māori and Native Hawaiian theatres in

⁸ This is the case for both indigenous Fijian and Fiji Indian drama, although it must be noted that the relatively recent textuality of Fijian literature contrasts with the very long history of written literature in the (Fiji) Indian tradition (Va'ai 8).

terms of its relation to the drive for indigenous rights and the corresponding strategic deployment of indigenous performance traditions. Rather, up until the 1987 Coup, most Fiji drama was “local” in subject matter alone, written in English⁹ and employing conventional Western theatrical models with an emphasis on social realism to offer naturalistic portrayals of social life and issues, such as Fijian-Indian race-relations, poverty, intergenerational conflicts, rural or outer-island life versus life in the city, and the tensions between “tradition” and Western influence in its various manifestations. Even Pio Manoa’s work, which began as more experimental, became “more directly concerned with social and cultural problems in Fiji. His career reflects a sort of dialectical reversal; his early writing shows a metaphysical leaning but later becomes more representational” (Subramani *South Pacific Literature* 64).

Significantly, after the events of 1987, it is possible to make a distinction between “pre-Coup plays” and “post-Coup plays.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the traumatic impact of the Coup and the censorship that limited types of venues and modes of communication, a survey of the corpus of Fiji drama demonstrates a change in subject matter and approach, as well as a diversification of theatrical form and style, as playwrights experimented with new ways to register aesthetically and politically this complex social and psychological experience. Many plays performed publicly in Fiji after May 1987 – especially those that deal directly with the event and aftermath of the Coup, such as Hereniko’s *The Monster* and Sudesh Mishra’s *Ferringhi* – are characterized by a shift away from realist formalism toward more oblique, metaphorical approaches, employing allegory, absurdism, a postmodern juxtaposition of elements, and a heightened use of theatrical syncretism that incorporates

⁹ Pillai’s *Adhuuraa Sapnaa* is the exception here, although an English-language version also exists.

performance traditions from both Fijian and Indian repertoires.¹⁰ Those plays that do retain a conventional format, like the early works of Larry Thomas, who epitomized the Fiji-specific realist play with a career that began post-Coup, are marked by a change in focus to address the social problems and new questions of identity and nationhood inherent to what Va‘ai terms the “New Fiji” (9); and, in Thomas’ case, his later work (*To Let You Know*, *The Anniversary Present*) has also taken a more experimental approach to theatricalizing social issues.

In addition to form, the post-Coup plays by Hereniko, Mishra, and Thomas demonstrate changes in the function of Fiji theatre. No longer willing simply to offer social commentary and hold a mirror up to life in Fiji, these plays, written from three distinct ethnic perspectives, begin to explore theatre’s capacity to model and stimulate social action in ways that seek to heal and unite a broken and fragmented nation. In all three examples, but especially in the plays by Mishra and Thomas, which have some temporal distance from the first Coup and tabulate its belated effects, the aesthetic framing and/or symbolic emulation of trauma operates as “a means of bearing witness to, enacting, and, to some extent, working over and through trauma whether personally experienced, transmitted from intimates, or sensed in one’s larger social or cultural setting” (LaCapra *Writing History* 105). Theatre thus becomes one suitable social ritual to help citizens come to terms with melancholia and to regain critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, “notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others” (*Writing History* 70). It must be remembered, however, that this process – particularly in light of the conditions that continue to characterize Fiji’s socio-political

¹⁰ The only play to openly debate the circumstances of the Coup in a realist mode is the polemic *A Matter of Principle* by the late Raymond Pillai, published anonymously in Griffen’s 1997 anthology and, to my knowledge, never performed.

situation – denies any easy closure. Perhaps this is why the endings of all three plays are characterized by a certain ambivalence, modeling a transcendence of Coup-related conflicts in ways that are highly symbolic and somewhat elusive (*The Monster*, *To Let You Know*), or that affirm this vision only to ultimately defer it as part of a process that is ongoing (*Ferringhi*).

Vilsoni Hereniko – *The Monster* (1987)

The Monster: A Fantasy was the most immediate formal theatrical response to the Coup and remains one of the most important documents in the Oceanic theatre archive, not only as an exemplary instance of political activist theatre, but as the proving ground for the development of a “Pacific Theatre,” a new form of theatrical expression drawing upon distinctly Pacific cultural forms and speaking to particular regional concerns. The author of *The Monster*, Vilsoni Hereniko (1954-), is one of the Pacific’s foremost playwrights, born on Rotuma, educated in Fiji and England, and currently Professor of Pacific Islands Studies and Theatre at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa. In addition to his academic writing, which frequently treats Pacific culture, politics, and aesthetics, Hereniko has had over a dozen plays produced in Fiji, Aotearoa, Papua New Guinea, Hawai‘i, the continental United States, England, and France, and in 1997 was presented the prestigious Hawai‘i Elliot Cades Award for Literature for a “significant body of work of exceptional quality.”¹¹ Recently, Hereniko has also turned to filmmaking, writing and directing the first Rotuman-language film, *The Land Has Eyes* (*Pear ta ma ‘on maf*), in 2004.

When the Coup occurred, Hereniko was living in Fiji, teaching at the University of the South Pacific and writing his doctoral dissertation on indigenous

¹¹ For a fuller biography of Hereniko, see <http://www.hawaii.edu/cpis/people_3.html>.

Polynesian clowning and satiric comedy. Hereniko recalls: “It’s an understatement to say that those of us who were in Fiji during the first military coup were shocked. Nothing of the sort had happened in the peaceful Pacific before, and without a precedent, we had no guidelines on how to respond. We each did what we felt moved to do. While many of my colleagues were out on the street protesting and getting thrown in prison, I, coward that I am, started working on another play” (“Interdisciplinary” 80). At first glance, *The Monster*, a brief one-act allegory, presents a simple story that belies its deeper complexity. Two beggars, Ta (Fijian) and Rua (Indian), discover a basket of leftover food and begin to fight over the contents, Ta claiming the right to the basket because she found it first. Rua reminds Ta that they have rules for deciding who gets the basket, and so they enact a series of contests (chosen by Ta) – wrestling, hand-wrestling, juggling – which Ta keeps winning. Rua complains that these contests aren’t fair and suggests that they toss a coin as a more just means of making the decision. In this instance, Rua is the victor and takes possession of the basket, only to be accused of cheating and subsequently terrorized by the ancient gods that Ta summons to her aid in order to force Rua into agreeing to another contest. At this point, Ta and Rua are confronted by a third figure, Folu, who brings them the message of peace and goodwill. Enraged, Ta and Rua chase Folu away, and begin once again to argue about the rules and the ownership of the basket. Ta suddenly jumps on Rua, and they lock in a violent struggle. During the struggle, a vile monster appears and heads toward the basket. When Ta and Rua realize that their lives are in danger, they work together to attack and kill the monster. Transformed by this joint effort, Ta and Rua shake hands, place the basket between them, and feed each other.

The Monster evolved from the core of an earlier piece, initially entitled *Tom, Dick and Harry*, that Hereniko had been working on for some time without a sense of

direction, and when the Coup happened, “what I was struggling to articulate became clear.”¹² In his approach to treating the events and outcomes of the Coup, Hereniko developed anew the theme of interracial conflict registered through a couple’s personal interactions that had formed the basis of his earlier plays, *A Child for Iva* (1981) and, most notably, the prophetic *Sera’s Choice* (1986), in which the ill-fated marriage between Sera (Fijian) and Anil (Indian) functioned as a metaphor for the Fijian-Indian situation and dealt with issues that Rabuka would later cite as key reasons for the Coup (Hereniko in Rampell 37). Hereniko’s response to inter-ethnic conflict in Fiji was also influenced by the liminality occasioned by his status as “A Rotuman who is often caught in the middle of tensions between Fijians and Indians” (“Interdisciplinary” 88), a Polynesian ethnic minority from a country incorporated as part of Fiji under the aegis of British colonialism, occupying neither an indigenous perspective, a diasporic perspective, nor a settler-colonial one. It is, perhaps, this unique point of view that enabled Hereniko to perform an immediate evaluation of the Coup conflict.

As a reading of contemporary history which addresses the confusion and variable responses of Fiji citizens in the “here and now” of 1987, before “meanings” of the Coup had been formally colligated, *The Monster* naturally differs in its perspective and the circumstances of its performance from post-Coup plays written with greater distance and hindsight, contrasting with Mishra’s more removed aestheticism or Thomas’ retrospection. Aside from the obvious practicality of being able to present publicly a provocative reading of the Coup in an environment hostile to such messages, Hereniko decided to structure his response to the Coup as an allegorical play because the form allowed the audience a measure of critical distance

¹² Interview with Vilsoni Hereniko, University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, October 4, 2007.

from which to respond to, evaluate, and perhaps consider solutions to an immediate trauma through identification with an analogous human conflict being played out on stage, while the embodied performance of symbolic action offered the potential for multiple interpretations that would avoid simplistic or partisan readings of the causes and effects of the Coup. Hereniko's approach foregrounded "the human element, the emotional and irrational impulses that drive human action and behavior" ("Interdisciplinary" 88) that he saw as absent from the developing sociological, political, or historical commentaries on the Coup. *The Monster's* visceral and highly physical style, complete with ambiguity and contradiction, privileges "emotional truth" over "historical fact,"¹³ attempting to offer a new understanding of the situation in contemporary Fiji framed in terms that ordinary people could relate to.

Rehearsals for *The Monster* – directed by Hereniko and cast with students from the University of the South Pacific – began soon after the May Coup, and the four performances took place at USP just after the second military intervention in October 1987.¹⁴ In the days before the play's opening, the military passed a decree banning all creative expression, and entrenched the climate of fear and intimidation by placing army checkpoints on the roads to and from Suva and positioning soldiers outside the USP campus gates, as well as plainclothes officers among the play's audience. The performances went ahead nonetheless. Under these conditions, the lack of a coherent theatrical tradition in Fiji and the predominantly realist nature of the small amount of local drama previously produced seems to have been an advantage in that the soldiers

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ I am placing emphasis on this first performance because I am interested in setting the play in its socio-historic context and discussing the dynamics of performing such an exploration and critique in an immediate Coup environment. To my knowledge, a full production of *The Monster* has not been staged since 1987, although, as I shall argue later, it could be; but staged readings have taken place. My analysis of *The Monster* is drawn from the first published edition of the play, an archival videotape of the original 1987 performance at USP (courtesy of Vilsoni Hereniko), and my experience of performing in a staged reading of the play (role of Rua), directed by Vilsoni Hereniko, at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, in October 2007.

had no context for political theatre and, Hereniko surmises, simply did not connect the female cast and the non-naturalistic action on stage with the Coup. He explains: “Theatre, as a medium for raising people’s consciousness, or as a political threat to the status quo, is something that is new to contemporary Pacific. I suppose if the government had been aware of the political nature of theatre in Kenya and Latin America, they would have arrested me. But there has been no precedent in the South Pacific, nothing that would make politicians suspicious of theatre” (*Pacific Studies* 192).

The complexity of *The Monster* is developed through imagery and symbolism, replete with local textual and scenographic references that situate the play for informed audiences, while embedding the potential for alternative interpretations that do not limit the play’s signification to a particular time and space. Rather than attempting to decode each of the allegorical references (which are considerable), I examine how selected references and formal theatrical approaches are developed to offer a multifaceted view of Fiji’s history, contemporary social situation, and political future, with the overall aim of stimulating productive public responses to the impasses engendered by the Coup.¹⁵ The opening sequence, for example, which begins in the evening, evokes a post-apocalyptic atmosphere of national chaos in the wake of the Coup through the offstage sounds of “shooting, screaming, running feet, wailing” (93), while on stage, a burnt coconut seedling signifies the deposed Labor-led coalition government, while a broken bicycle wheel represents the thwarted Alliance Party, and a toppled wooden bench stands for the invalidation of the Judiciary and the suspension of the constitution in the early days following the Coup. Ta (meaning “first” in

¹⁵ For a more descriptive, chronological decoding of the main references in *The Monster*, see Sina Va’ai’s discussion in her book, *Literary Representations in Western Polynesia: Colonialism and Indigeneity* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 1999), 313-20.

Rotuman) and the injured Rua (“second”) may be interpreted primarily as synecdochic representations of the Fijian and Indian populations, although each character evokes more specific political figures, ideas, or affects at various times throughout the performance. In the USP performance, Ta wore pink trousers and a blue top, while Rua wore blue trousers and a pink top, suggesting their potentially complementary roles. Their conversation, which often appears somewhat childish and aimless, and at times reminiscent of the absurdist dialogue of Beckett or Genet arising from a post-traumatic social condition, embeds historical and political depth, as in their initial exchange:

TA: Who are you? What are you doing here?

RUA: You brought me here. Remember?

TA: No, I don’t remember. Anyway, I don’t want you here.

RUA: But what can I do?

TA: I don’t know. Why don’t you go back?

RUA: I can’t.

TA: Why not?

RUA: There’s nothing to go back to. Besides, I was born here. (93)

Here, Hereniko offers a skillfully succinct encapsulation of Fiji’s colonial history and its contemporary predicament, referencing the fact of imported Indian labor to protect indigenous interests; dramatizing the dilemma of the twice-displaced diasporic subject who is no longer wanted, but was “born here” in Fiji and has “nothing to go back to” in the Indian homeland; and – as we shall see also in Mishra’s work – pointing to the strategic forgetting of this history by indigenous nationalists in order to impose a new form of nation-building in the present.

In playing out the series of rules and contests over the ownership of the food basket that comprise the majority of Ta’s and Rua’s interactions, Hereniko is able to

appraise debates about Fiji's post-Independence political system, its informing legacies, and its current implications. In the Coup context we can read the basket itself – referred to as a “burden” (103), echoing the words in Ratu Mara's final election broadcast in April 1987 (Va'ai 317) – as representative of political supremacy and responsibility in Fiji. Ta asserts that “There's not enough food for two people” (94), hence the series of physical contests (read: elections), structured according to the “rules” (94) of the Constitution, about which Rua repeatedly reminds the contrary Ta, with Ta's decisive wins signifying the seventeen-year history of Alliance Party dominance, as well as evoking, more implicitly, a longer history of Fijian dominance through war or chiefly hierarchy rather than democracy. Rua's plea to toss a coin as “the fairest means” (104), resulting in her victory and adoption of the burden, can be read as an analogy of the triumph of the Bavadra Coalition government; here, Hereniko's use of a new symbol, the coin, posits this election as fundamentally different from the previous ones in its true deployment of the democratic process. In this case, Ta's objection to the use of the coin on the grounds that it is “foreign” (107) resonates with Adi Finau Tabakauoro's¹⁶ characterization of democracy as a “foreign flower” unsuited to the Fiji social system (Va'ai 317), and foregrounds the debate about democracy as an imposed colonial process with detrimental effects for the authority held traditionally by Fijian chiefly structures. These competing perspectives come to a head in Ta's final rejection of Rua before she physically attacks her:

RUA: But the rules, it's all we have left. No rules, no justice.

TA: DON'T SAY THAT WORD AGAIN! I'LL KILL YOU IF YOU SAY THAT WORD AGAIN!

RUA: It's our only hope.

¹⁶ Fijian politician and member of a chiefly family.

TA: There's no hope ... for you!

RUA: (*Pause. Suddenly the truth dawns on RUA.*)

Then I've been misled. I've been misled.

(*RUA trembles in fear.*)

I ... I ... will you hold the basket for a while. I have to ...

(*RUA indicates she wants to throw up.*) (111)

This exchange both echoes and develops Ta's disavowal of Rua at the beginning of *The Monster*, drawing attention to more specific historical and contemporary issues. Rua's lines carry a 108-year history of Fiji Indian experience; her acknowledgement, "I've been misled," which she repeats twice, reinforces the double trauma of the migrant population: the nineteenth-century girmityas (indentured laborers) having been "misled" in their utopian hopes for Fiji in the "hell" of the plantations, and their descendants "misled" once again in their hopes for political parity through democratic process, with the possibility of transcending the original trauma and partaking in the postcolonial nation-state smashed by the Coup betrayal.

Importantly, Hereniko allegorizes the causes and events of the Coup in ways that acknowledge, but move beyond, a straightforward racialized reading of the conflict to stimulate Fiji citizens to think more critically about their social situation. It is true that Ta and Rua reinforce political-ethnic divisions and frequently characterize each other in terms that emphasize racial and cultural difference in prejudicial ways: Ta, for example, points out, "Your skin's a different colour. And your hair, and the things you like to eat, the clothes you wear, the colour of your eyes" (97), while Rua notices that "You smell" (102) and "Your hands are bigger than mine" (103), and declares that she "hate[s] rugby" (95)¹⁷ and has never seen a Christian before meeting

¹⁷ Rugby is the national sport of Fiji and a signifier of Fijian national identity.

Ta (101). But Hereniko also admits class distinctions and chiefly power (custom) in Fiji's politics as possible causes of the Coup; namely, that the Coup was the result of Rabuka's desire to maintain the power of the ruling class, especially the chiefly aristocracy, whose authority was threatened by Bavadra's government (Robertson 116-17).¹⁸ In writing *The Monster*, Hereniko was particularly concerned to examine the emotional and economic effects of the Coup on ordinary people (it is not by chance that Ta and Rua continue to signify as beggars even though they sometimes adopt the words and actions of politicians), and the audience is frequently interpellated as, and asked to respond from, this proletarian position. At times, Ta openly contradicts and disregards the audience, leading Rua to ask:

RUA: What the audience thinks is not important?

TA: I don't care what they think. If I let them decide for me, I shall lose control. (97)

Ta draws attention to the relationship between Fijian politicians and chiefly authority, especially in the Alliance Party, a conservative party that drew mainly from the chiefly-bureaucratic class and did little to address the concerns of Fiji's workers, Indian or Fijian (Ewins n.p.). Her response also reiterates the concern about the loss of chiefly power through the use of "foreign" democratic principles that would give a serious voice to commoners. Ta's attitude to the audience thus enables Hereniko to enact a critique of authoritarian chiefly rule and class bias: what the people want is not important; what is important is for the Fijian hierarchy to maintain control of Fiji. Going further, then, we might read *The Monster* as an investigation of the nature of the quest for control and power, in which the struggle between Ta and Rua is not limited

¹⁸ For a very useful distillation of arguments regarding both class and custom reasons for the Coup, see Rory Ewins, *Colour, Class and Custom: The Literature of the 1987 Fiji Coup*, sections three and four.

to racial or even political or class dominance, but assumes a greater ethical dimension as a more abstracted struggle between good and evil, which I shall return to presently.

The drive for power and control, especially understood in terms of Fijian entitlement and authority, is foregrounded metaphysically in the entrance of the ancestral spirits, “ghost-like figures” (106) who come at Ta’s bidding to intimidate Rua with their “war-like dance” (106) once she has control of the basket. In this case, Hereniko’s experimentation with synthesizing Fijian performance and Western theatrical form to provide a display of indigenous power has a very different dynamic from the use of indigenous performance in other examples of postcolonial Pacific theatre, such as in Māori plays. Rather than integrating native performance to assert the social and political identity of a disenfranchised minority in response to a hegemonic (colonial) culture, the indigenous form is employed in this scene to suggest something negative and prejudicial, pressing the advantage of an already dominant ethnic group over a less empowered immigrant one. In this respect, Hereniko deploys the Fijian dance as a way to critique the purview of indigenous self-determination in Fiji, citing its rigid and exclusionary elements.

Hereniko’s particular choice of cultural performance tradition to represent the ancestral spirits, however, offers us more than just a caution against blanket readings of the application of theatrical syncretism in postcolonial drama. In the 1987 USP production, the performers represented what anthropologists Fergus Clunie and Walesi Ligairi define formally as *qica*, *veli*, or *driai* masquers, dancers costumed with garlands of leaves who posed as (or were possessed by) supernatural beings and wore large head-masks called *matavulo* masks (46). These masked performers, which Clunie and Ligairi also term “Fiji clowns,” performed alongside the *meke* or traditional action songs, especially the war-oriented club or spear dances, and excited laughter by mimicking the chiefs and leading dancers (51). Importantly, in addition to

this role, the clowns took the role of the *i vakavotunimeke*, or *velinimeke* (the term *Hereniko* favors),¹⁹ to reveal the spiritual source or inspiration for the dance by representing the *veli*, a species of rustic gnome haunting the Fiji bush that would possess the composer of the *meke*. The clown would dance the dance of the *veli*, thus dramatizing the source of the dance alongside the dance itself, and manifesting the creative process (Clunie and Ligairi 54-5). (In the show, the figure of the *velinimeke* was suggested overtly by the presence of one dancer who danced differently from the others, and was left behind after the others exited, letting out a high laugh before exiting himself.) Consequently, *Hereniko*'s approach allows this part of the play to register several layers of meaning. In introducing the performers, the play evokes the ancestral Fijian world of the past and mythic history, while the references to the war dance foreground Fijian martial aggression and provide another means of dramatizing Coup conflict. Through the masquers, moreover, *Hereniko* excavates the ambivalence that the indigenous form enfolds within itself by pointing to the comic element at an ostensibly serious moment, subverting the claim of indigenous authority in the moment that it is performed. As *Hereniko* has noted elsewhere, in many Pacific societies clowning traditionally functioned as political commentary, offering "avenues through which society inspected itself and commented upon its rules and regulations, and the ways in which the imposition of structure and hierarchy constrained and stifled creativity and individual expression" ("Clowning" 15). The presence of the clowns disrupts the authoritarian structure that *Ta* demands, mocking it from within, and enabling *Hereniko* to incorporate a critique of the Coup from inside this very Coup-related enactment. To read the masquers as *velinimeke*, moreover, lends the performance a self-reflexive quality, revealing and giving recognition to the dramatic

¹⁹ These dancers were also known as *gevanimeke* and *driainimeke*, "ni meke" meaning "of the dance" (Clunie and Ligairi 55).

composition and its creative impulse (both the dance and, by extension, the play itself), and drawing attention to Hereniko's work as a creative response to social circumstances.

Hereniko's deceptively complex play arguably achieves its most open-ended dimensions when it addresses the "solution" to the problem: what does it mean to kill the Monster, and what are the implications of such readings for Fiji's social and political future? Hereniko himself has acknowledged that the ending of the play appears didactic and idealistic, with Ta and Rua shaking hands and feeding each other in the glow of the sunrise, but maintains that, at the time, with the vacuum of information and people's negative imaginings, the play needed to offer some kind of hopeful solution to the situation.²⁰ He argues, "For me, the theater should do more than merely reflect reality. The theater has to be larger than life; it must aspire to improve the human condition, to act as a pointer to other paths that might lead to harmony, otherwise, why should anyone go to the theater?" (*Pacific Studies* 193). Nevertheless, as I will show, the play's ending is far from monosemic; if the outcome is ultimately idealistic, then it is based, potentially, on a difficult and perhaps painful process of soul-searching, and an acknowledgement of responsibility among both Fijians and Indians.

Writing about the reactions of Fiji audiences at the time, both in the immediate performance context and in letters sent afterward, Hereniko says: "[T]he play was open to several interpretations. Some people thought the play was pro-Labour or Coalition; some thought it was pro-Alliance. Those religiously inclined saw it as having a message of love for one another, that the monster was the personification of evil in the human heart. Only when this monster has been killed can we be free to love

²⁰ Interview with Vilsoni Hereniko, University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, October 4, 2007.

our enemies. A few saw the monster as Rabuka himself; others saw it as multinational corporations, dominant foreign powers or the CIA” (*Pacific Studies* 192-93). To read the Monster literally as Rabuka, Ratu Mara, multinational corporations, or the CIA is a valid approach, but lends the play a very specific focus, localizing the conflict and circumstances. This interpretation also externalizes the problem, separating responsibility from Ta and Rua, and prompting little self-examination in the characters or the audience. Ta and Rua need not face up to anything inherently in themselves, but as disenfranchised victims of an outside force must simply band together to vanquish a local dictator or interfering overseas presence. All well and good, but only until the next dictator or intrusive organization. Whereas *The Monster* certainly supports such an interpretation, the play incorporates other readings that provoke more searching questions about the role of Fiji’s citizens in safeguarding Fiji’s future.

In such cases, the Monster might also be read as a manifestation of broader institutional or discursive structures, such as a repressive indigenous nationalism, or as British colonialism – a system that embedded a social divisiveness in its administration of Fiji that was still present in the post-Independence socio-political structure, and thus is something that must be overcome for Fiji to move forward productively. This reading lends more responsibility to Ta and Rua to identify the structures that have given rise to both their positions and to acknowledge their own complicity in perpetuating them, and so suggests a different process of social progress. But the broadest and deepest readings of Hereniko’s play might render the Monster in more abstract terms, as racial prejudice, greed, fear and distrust of the other, or most widely, as a physical expression of the evil in all of us, that which we must overcome to live in harmony. Here, both the problem and its solution are internal, not external; Ta and Rua *are* the Monster, exemplifying how they are both, centrally, part of Fiji’s problem, and foregrounding self-awareness and self-responsibility as the key to

mending a post-Coup nation. This reading also places the character of Folu in context, as the flip-side of the Monster (and played by the same actress in the USP production) who represents the conscience and goodwill that Ta and Rua reject, but is still a part of them, despite the fact that “[Her] voice is faint ... faint” (109). From this perspective, Hereniko’s message is one based on ethical responsibility; perhaps the best way forward for Fiji – and the most difficult – is for people to face up to their own prejudices and limitations, and work to move past them. The multiple interpretations of *The Monster* generate, rather than close off, a complicated debate, holding out various options to the audience and encouraging discussion and self-examination in ways that help Fiji citizens gain critical purchase on traumatic experience and perhaps generate alternate possibilities for the future. Notably, this more abstract interpretation also enables *The Monster* to operate in situations beyond the Coup context; its themes of power, responsibility, and tolerance allowing the play to be staged in other contexts with different valences; for example, in Hawai‘i to comment on American/Native Hawaiian relations, or between a man and a woman, for alternative gendered dynamics.

Anti-Coup protesters urged Hereniko to take *The Monster* to the streets, or to Australia, to help their cause (*Pacific Studies* 196). He refused, and also rescinded permission for the play to be staged by anti-Coup demonstrators at demonstration at Suva’s Sukuna Park on the first anniversary of the Coup. Hereniko’s concern was that the play in these contexts would have been used for political propaganda, the play would have taken on a more extreme partisan character than he intended, and the original messages would have been lost. Hereniko stakes a claim in a different kind of political efficacy by identifying as an artist before an activist, with his aim to use the art of theatre to try to contribute to social healing by warning leaders of pitfalls of

power and reminding them of their responsibilities, rather than discrediting others so that he and his colleagues can secure power (*Pacific Studies* 197).

In the context of Hereniko's career as an artist, *The Monster* represented not only a political statement, but catalyzed a new way of working with the theatrical medium that has characterized his subsequent work in the development of a "Pacific Theatre," which recalls Chris Plant's early prescription for a non-European theatre adapted to the Pacific, comprising an "amalgam of Western and Island traditions" (58) that is useful for keeping indigenous cultures living and is relevant for portraying life as influenced by Europeans (59). Although *The Monster's* particular form was engendered by the constraints of the Coup, after writing the play Hereniko felt "liberated," like "a bird that had acquired wings for the first time. I've never wanted to go back to the style of the early plays. Who wants to be waddling on the ground when you can soar in the sky?" (Levy 8). In his earlier work, influenced predominantly by Shakespeare and Ibsen, Hereniko felt that his "Pacific voice was stifled" but "I didn't know any better" (Levy 7); however, his new interest in Pacific performance techniques, complemented by his academic research in the field, led to a search for a theatre with a distinctly Pacific flavor – notably, one that drew upon many different cultural traditions and pan-Pacific symbols to speak to a broader regional imaginary. This broader purview may also have been encouraged by Hereniko's relocation to Hawai'i, where he has been based since 1991. Plays such as *Sina and Tinilau* (1989), *Last Virgin in Paradise* (1992), *Fine Dancing* (1997), and *Love 3 Times* (2001) integrate music, singing and dancing, clowning and humor, religious and secular rituals, (mis)translations of various Pacific languages into English, improvised sketches, audience participation, mythology, and the supernatural, offering not just a showcase of regional cultural forms in contradistinction to Western cultural

formulations, but astute political commentary about pressing concerns in the postcolonial Pacific.

Hereniko's formal influence is evident in Mishra's *Ferringhi*, and Thomas' *To Let You Know*, the following two plays dealt with in this chapter. In terms of their responses to the events and aftermath of the Coup, however, the plays by Mishra and Thomas are differentiated from Hereniko's in that they were written and produced several years later. Whereas Hereniko certainly bears witness to the Coup as a traumatic event, and seeks to situate the immediate turmoil in a way that stimulates understanding and the possibility of productive solutions, Mishra and Thomas address the belated effects of trauma experienced by Fiji citizens in post-Coup time, modeling alternative strategies to enable processes of working through.

Sudesh Mishra – *Ferringhi* (1993)

A fourth-generation Fijian descended from indentured Indian laborers, Sudesh Mishra (1962-) was born and raised in Nadi, Fiji, and received his higher education in Australia, where he is currently a professor of Professional Writing at Deakin University. In addition to his plays, *Ferringhi* (1993) and *The International Dateline* (2001), Mishra's oeuvre incorporates several volumes of poetry: *Rahu* (1987), *Tandava* (1992), *Memoirs of a Reluctant Traveller* (1994), and *Diaspora and the Difficult Art of Dying* (2002); as well as a considerable body of academic criticism on modern Indian literature, the Fiji Indian experience, and diaspora theory, including the meta-critical volume, *Diaspora Criticism* (2006). Like Hereniko, Mishra's creative work is in close conversation with his critical output, expressing in literary and theatrical terms many of the themes and concerns found in his broader scholarship.

We can read Mishra both as an exiled scholar-artist, permanently displaced by the Coup, and also part of a broader generation partaking of, and benefiting from, the

experience of a contemporary international mobility. Mishra's work resonates with two distinct moments that have generated the "Indian diaspora": that which critic Vijay Mishra terms the "old" (plantation) diaspora of classic capitalist, nineteenth-century indenture; and the "new" (postcolonial), late modern, late capitalist diaspora, comprising people who have entered metropolitan centers of empire as part of a post-1960s pattern of global migration (*Indian Diaspora* 2-3). For those Fiji Indians re-migrating in the wake of the Coup, V. Mishra argues, the "old" becomes part of the "new" in an atmosphere of oppression and coercion, reinforcing the initial trauma through the double displacement from Indian and Fijian "homelands" (*Indian Diaspora* 3-4).²¹

While Sudesh Mishra is in fundamental ways a post-Coup artist, with his work after 1987 acquiring a more critical, ironic tone, and dealing more with themes of trauma and dislocation, his work still offers a broad and complex reading of Fiji Indian experience. Mishra's approach differs in key respects from Vijay Mishra's prominent theorization of the "girit ideology," a state of mind or set of beliefs arising from girit (which derives from, but points simultaneously to the betrayal of, the indenture "agreement"). Girit names an experience engendered by the deeply traumatic disjunction between the positive future promised to Indian migrants and the raw reality of the narak (hell) of plantation drudgery and degradation. V. Mishra reads the Fiji Indian community in this context as self-referential and enclosed, the hope of transcending the original indenture experience through political self-determination shattered by the Coup, but incapable of radical action because of its ambivalence to Fiji (V. Mishra *Indian Diaspora* 23, "Little India" 616). John O'Carroll argues that

²¹ While V. Mishra's binary runs the risk of (and has been criticized for) being too generalized and for polarizing diasporas that in fact have many similarities (see John O'Carroll, "Envisioning the Real" 109-10), his schema is useful both for outlining the history of this specific diasporic archive and for avoiding blanket readings of contemporary diasporas that characterize them in celebratory terms.

there is an overly narrow emotional register in V. Mishra's "girit ideology" essays, tending towards a simplification that restricts Fiji Indian experience to the serious and traumatized ("Envisioning" 117). Sudesh Mishra's work, on the other hand, while acknowledging this turbulent history, explores alternative roles for Fiji Indians than the ones historically circumscribed, situating them as more active participants in the national imaginary; provides more probing examinations of different kinds of Fiji Indian identity and the relations between Fiji Indians and other ethnic groups; and performs relationships to the Indian homeland and diasporic experience that are also affirmative, playful, or comic (O'Carroll "Envisioning" 117). Sudesh Mishra's attention to the potential for redemption and agency within a context of historic and contemporary trauma is not simply a salient feature of *Ferringhi* but is key to its meaning and efficacy, enabling Mishra to "blast open the national repressed and offer ways forward" (O'Carroll "Envisioning" 125) for all Fiji citizens.

Ferringhi: A Play in Seven Lilas was first performed in December 1993 at the Fiji Arts Club Playhouse on Selbourne Street, Suva, directed by Patrick Craddock and featuring Mishra himself in the title role. Situated almost exactly between the coups of 1987 and 2000, *Ferringhi* looks back on the years since the Coup and their toll on Fiji society, yet the play's content seems strangely prescient and its message of remembrance and reconciliation arguably even more pertinent since the coups of 2000 and 2006. Aside from general post-Coup conditions, its performance was an achievement because early readers of the script who had encountered the play's abstraction, fragmentation, and arcane symbolism said that the play simply could not be staged – a symptom, arguably, of the playwright's grappling with an experience that threatens to elude representation, and the subsequent dismissal of realism as an adequate frame. In the end, the play was staged arena-style, with the audience on four sides of the stage, close to the actors. *Ferringhi* opens with a typical Fiji street scene.

Five men sit in a brightly-lit circle around a tanoa drinking kava²² and engaging in talanoa (anecdotal narrative). The rest of the stage is in total darkness. The men represent a range of ethnic groups in Fiji: Seru is indigenous Fijian; Aslam and Mooves are Fiji Indian; Pumpkin may be Fijian or Fiji Indian; and Chan is Chinese Fijian. Each character has forgotten a large part about himself, his history, and the world beyond the circle, suffering from a fear and misperception that prevents him from venturing beyond the light (his darkness) once the kava and the stories run out. The agent of their remembering and self-rediscovery is Ferringhi (from Fiji Hindi “firangī,” meaning foreigner or wanderer), a peripatetic storyteller who enters the circle and begins to weave compelling stories, each one of which bears an analogous relation to one of the characters. As Pumpkin says: “When the fallah tell his stories, things come in my head, like I remember what I been done in another life, or what I gonna do tomorrow” (360). In each lila (scene, or “play,” referencing Indian religious and performance traditions such as the *Ramlila*), a character identifies something of himself in the story and undergoes an epiphany that enables him to liberate himself from the circle. In a mimetic process, each character then becomes a storyteller, passing on these stories to others. Ferringhi has his counterpoint in another storyteller, Puglu (“mad person” in Hindi), an androgynous figure who takes a variety of roles throughout, including that of the radical cultural commentator available to the outsider; when all Ferringhi’s audience has left, it is Puglu who takes up the role of storyteller to Ferringhi, enabling his own liberation from the circle and the stage.

Like Hereniko’s *Monster*, *Ferringhi* is an allegorical play; the five men around the kava bowl represent a masculine microcosm of Fiji society (an issue of gender

²² A tanoa is a bowl made of vesi wood, used as a receptacle for kava. Known locally in Fiji as “yaqona” or “grog,” kava is an intoxicating drink made from the powdered waka (dried root) of the piper methysticum plant mixed with water.

representation that I shall return to later in my analysis), and their amnesia, aphasia and inability to venture outside their enclave and imagine a future are traumatic expressions of the repression, fear, censorship, and loss of identity that followed the 1987 Coup. LaCapra notes that, at its extremes, trauma not only threatens the signifying components of language, but may bar history altogether (*Holocaust* 66), hence recall and articulation are central elements of the process of working through traumatic impasses: “When the past becomes accessible to recall in memory, and when language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance, and perspective, one has begun the arduous process of working over and through the trauma in a fashion that may never bring full transcendence of acting out [...] but which may enable processes of judgment and at least limited liability and ethically responsible agency” (LaCapra *Writing History* 90). In mending the link between “experiencing subject and articulated recall” (Malkin 4), the characters stand for the possibility for personal and national recollection, reconstitution, and renewal, dismantling the alternative imaginary constructed through nationalist violence and enforced forgetting, and modeling a way forward for Fiji based on an informed relation to the past, committed exchange, and meaningful action. As the spur for this transition, Ferringhi-as-storyteller (and, in complement, Puglu) occupies the artist’s privileged viewpoint: witness, social critic, repository of cultural memory, historian, and visionary. In foregrounding self-consciously the redemptive role of the storyteller, *Ferringhi* is a play which not only performs a process of working through for a repressed and amnesiac Fiji, but evinces a profound faith in the role of art and the artist in stimulating productive social change.

Ferringhi is an ambitious play that links personal and collective memory and identity in complex, multilayered ways. The stories themselves repeatedly circle back to the 1987 Coup, whether framed as a specific historical event that must be recalled,

or evoked implicitly through the memory of earlier events in Fiji's national past. Indeed, Ferringhi's tales, while relating immediately to each one of the present characters, has a historical depth that excavates and exposes the structures that have given rise to Fiji's current political and social situation; in this way, *Ferringhi* is also a critical – if fragmentary – account of Fiji's colonial and postcolonial history. Beyond the Coup, the play posits the “official” (colonialist, nationalist) History of the nation as a repressive and traumatic force, and consequently, the play aims for more than the characters' triumph over amnesia and their recognition of their place in “History,” instead enabling their critical interpretation of History-making institutions, and aiding in the reclamation of narratives that run counter to official accounts.

The stories, in the form of personalized narratives, comprise what Mishra himself has described in another context as “an affective, alternative *historia* – a felt narrative based on an authoritative sense of participatory knowledge – that the subaltern agent imposes on a set of officially recorded episodes” (“Time and *Girmit*” 25-6). Here, Mishra revives the Latin etymology in which “history” and “story” are synonymous, foregrounding the enunciative context and the role of the interlocutor in a manner similar to Émile Benveniste's notion of “discours” as opposed to “histoire.” In this alternate discourse, “large-scale emphasis is placed on small-scale participatory subjects – their intentions, encounters, reactions, and affects” (“Time” 26), adding “an extra discursive (sensory, passionate, subjective) dimension to the historical narrative” (“Time” 26), that “transforms the recorded past of data and chronicles into the present ‘dramatic’ time of sentiment, experience, and being” (“Time” 27), and “upset[s] the stylistic attributes (or, more properly, ruses) of dispassion, symmetry, and decorum so dear to strict disciplinarians” (“Time” 26). Consequently, we might argue that the narratives in *Ferringhi* constitute the heterological history of Fiji History. As remembering, enunciating subjects, Mishra's characters (and by extension Fiji

citizens) are thus charged with a responsibility to their personal and collective pasts, not only in terms of facing up to their own culpability in creating and perpetuating the status quo – of acquiescing to “the gameshow hosts who run the motor of history” to whom “we have answered with our silence” (353) – but in remembering honestly, critically, and with an ethical commitment to see more clearly into the past in order to understand and mend their contemporary circumstances. As Ana Elena Puga has argued of Latin American political theatre performed under similar circumstances, this process of retrieving and recreating memory in the contemporary moment of live performance “allows the actor and the spectator to become co-archivists of a psycho-social archive, co-creators of memories that may serve to defy quotidian reality” (21).

I situate my argument in contrast to that of Vijay Mishra, who contends that the narratives in *Ferringhi* are purely “dark narratives of the mind” (45), that *Ferringhi*’s elicitation of these deeper personal recollections is frightening, implying the end of the anecdotal narrative as positive and redemptive, and that after the Coup, “storytelling itself is now a history of trauma, a dark comedy” (45). As I see it, to read *Ferringhi* as a Coup-elegy alone prohibits an appreciation of the social change that Mishra-as-artist is trying to engender. Whereas many of these stories necessarily exhume traumatic memories as part of the process of “translating, troping, and figuring loss” (Santner in Bechtel 93), they also embed examples of victory, courage, resistance, and hope, and point to the richness of an outside world that is possible to grasp. *Ferringhi* allegorizes more than a tale of trauma, with its call for Fiji citizens to take active responsibility for resisting the polarization between social groups, and to end the apathy and amnesia that paralyzes a society, through a critical and committed response to dominant ideological forces.

Mishra’s approach to structuring and staging his parable is complex, eschewing mimetic realism in favor of metaphor, symbolism, and coded references

that both invite and challenge a specifically Fiji audience. Mishra abandons a linear narrative for a proliferation of partial narratives (the stories that provide the play's self-reflexive framework and dramatic impetus) that offer synecdochic snapshots of Fiji's social life and history in language that ranges from the demotic urban street-slang of the kava drinkers, to Puglu's vatic utterances, to the hieratic poetic register of Ferringhi's visionary monologues. The play's temporal ambiguity (the date of the play's setting and the length of the span of its action is never made clear), along with its simple staging and reliance upon worlds evoked through narrative and memory, lend the play a temporal fluidity in which past and present are continuously brought into juxtaposition, conjunction, and imbrication. The key device that grounds *Ferringhi* culturally, scenographically, thematically, and symbolically is the tanoa (kava bowl): a signifier of both indigenous Fijian and diasporic masculine sociality, with the interdependent relationship between ritual drinking and storytelling serving as a means to suture the play's various pieces of action, as the extended kava session functions as a platform for lighthearted sexual and scatological banter, then as a forum for the fraught but ultimately redemptive process of recollection, revelation, and articulation, and finally as a hermetic space of containment and stasis that must be abandoned in order to fulfill the play's social, ethical, and political objectives.²³ The ceremonial function of kava also provides a way to connect the experiences of the audience to the action taking place on stage when Puglu shifts the ontological frame of the performance by offering the kava bilo to several audience members with the words, "Drink deeply, my friend, / For your personal thirst / Is but a national thirst. / What you sip in solitude, / Sips the noisy multitude. / Drink deeply, my friend" (347).

²³ For more information on the trope of kava consumption in *Ferringhi* and other Fiji plays, see Ian Gaskell, "Conspicuous Consumption: Kava as Device and Symbol in Local Drama." *SPAN* 50/51 (April/October 2000): 100-19.

In these acts of communion, the personal pain of each Fiji citizen is placed in connection with that of others, while this ceremonial reciprocity implicates the spectators in the events of the play and the social reality that inspired it, reminding them that each personal action has implications for the whole.

Prima facie, in adopting the trope of communal eating/drinking in the context of inter-ethnic social communion, *Ferringhi* would seem to begin with the vision with which Hereniko's play ends. But although the play opens with the men's shared laughter (334), Mishra quickly problematizes this status quo, as the action moves from the realm of disengaged phatic communion, superficial "chick stories" (334), and anecdotes revealed as having been borrowed from other people or made up (336-37), to the more deep-seated and traumatic revelations necessary to this process of remembrance and accountability. As these stories start to be told, fractures within the ostensibly happy group begin to exhibit themselves, most notably between Seru, the indigenous Fijian character (former member of the Fiji military and a devout Christian), and the rest of the kava drinkers, as Seru's indigenous nationalist sentiments are exhumed and expressed, along with the discovery of his participation in violent racial discrimination during the Coup. After having been sent by the drinkers to fetch more kava, *Ferringhi* returns to the circle to bear witness to a riot in the market, in which "I see this gang coming towards the maarkit out of nowhere. First, they like grey sandstorm, then they take shape. They have sticks and clubs and chains and knives; and they are beating and clubbing and looting and breaking –" (344). As *Ferringhi* tells his story, the Coup scene is dramatized by a mob of rioters who occupy the circle, assaulting invisible Fiji Indian victims; Seru, implicated in this past event, joins the rioters, justifying his violence by hurling accusations of difference:

SERU: Cause you never watch native rugby!

RIOTER A: Cause you never know native custom!

RIOTER B: Cause you on chief's native land!

RIOTER C: Cause you go fish our native fish!

RIOTER D: Cause you never worship native Christ!

SERU: Cause you go urinate on native Sunday! (344)

This passage, which constitutes some of the most direct and forceful language in the play – and which, according to John O'Carroll, seemed to shock Fiji theatre audiences the most (“Remembering Ferringhi” 326) – asserts a prescriptive entitlement that vehemently excludes the non-indigenous from partaking in the approved national imaginary, establishing the divisive racial split between the characters on stage. Seru's situation is exacerbated by the fact that he has repressed these memories, disavowing this violent displacement and his complicity in it. He resists this gradual exposure, abusing Ferringhi: “You fuckenarse, you make it up. You the devil, man. Aslam's right, you put things in our heads so we go believe lies about ourselves. I know no maarkit, no riots, and I never leave this spot” (345). This tension is heightened when Aslam remembers through Ferringhi's story that it was his own grandfather who was assaulted by Seru's mob, and later died, leading Seru to confront him openly: “You must remember your place here. We taukei, you vulagi.²⁴ You breathe when we say you breathe. Otherwise we gonna drive you into the sea.²⁵ We are the indigenous people, you jus an immigrint [sic] race” (345).

This recalled fragment from the Coup's historical moment, which foregrounds the renewed dislocation of Fiji Indians in the post-Coup years, is cast into relief by Puglu's juxtaposed monologue, impersonating an irritated official in an environment where ethnicity has become the chief aspect of identity:

²⁴ Indigenous people; foreigners.

²⁵ Note here the biblical imagery of driving the enemy into the sea also employed by the Pai Marire Māori activists during the New Zealand Wars.

PUGLU: What are you? Fijian, Rotuman, European, part-European, Chinese, Indian, or Other?

(acting the role of addressee) Other.

(as official) What other?

(as addressee) Just other.

(as official, losing his temper) This women [sic] here is Chinese, that man there is Fijian and I here am part-European. What are you?

(as addressee) Your others.

(official, to himself as he writes) Indian. (346)

Puglu drives home this recognition that the diasporic subject is no longer simply “an other” but “The Other,” exposing the raw wound in Fiji society that must be acknowledged and addressed in order for healing to take place.

In telling Seru’s story, the play’s most complicated and sustained narrative, Mishra is able to represent aspects of the 1987 Coup and the interracial violence it engendered, but also delves more deeply into the historical genealogies that supported it, pointing to a history of colonial intervention and the particular triumvirate of British privilege, Fijian paramountcy, and Indian labor (B. Lal *Politics* 75) that affected both pre- and post-Independence social and race relations. This broader historical layer of Seru’s narrative is developed through the arrival of the third outsider to enter the circle, the tuxedo-clad Sir Hen Crusher. Sir Hen’s name evokes that of Sir Len Usher (1907-2003), a New Zealand-born politician based in Fiji for many years and Buckingham Palace’s informant during the Coup and Fiji’s subsequent break-away from the Commonwealth (and, ironically, whose book, *Mainly About Fiji*, which ended with the sentence, “Democracy, clearly, was alive and well in Fiji” (146) was launched on the very day of the 1987 Coup). Here, however, Sir Hen operates as a broader archetypal historical figure, a signifier of colonial paternalism and of

multinational corporate manipulation, encapsulated in his self-congratulatory assessment: “[I]t is indeed encouraging to see everyone living in peace and harmony in Fiji. Sometimes colonialism works, doesn’t it?” (350). Sir Hen, unsurprisingly, is Ferringhi’s antagonist, warning the kava drinkers, “Beware of him, or he’ll pour poison into your ears and, before you know it, you’ll want to go out there. (*points to the darkness, facing the audience*) Do you boys want to live stories?” (351).

Sir Hen introduces another strand of action that unfolds in the play’s present when he leases Seru’s land located under the tanoa for mining, forcing the kava drinkers to relocate to the edge of the circle, but extending the offer for them to work the land as miners. Sir Hen’s justification for favoring “Ratu²⁶ Seru” over the others echoes nineteenth-century colonial administrative decisions: “Of course, the indigenous race must have, er, certain inalienable rights and privileges over the more recent immigrants. It is only fair. After all, they were here first. It’s common sense, isn’t it? Like queuing for food. First come first served” (350). Indeed, as Aslam confirms: “This jus like second girmit” (352). In these scenes, Mishra creates a double historical resonance through a layering of pre- and post-Coup legacies, allowing the instances of colonial indenture and neo-colonial exploitation to mutually illuminate one another. At the same time, Mishra demonstrates how indigenous Fijians have been short-changed by internalizing a colonialist rhetoric when Sir Hen replaces the traditional tanoa and its accoutrements with a psychedelic plastic tanoa, Coca-Cola mat, silver bilo, and kava in flashy packets. In such cases, Mishra’s metaphor suggests, the trade-off is always tawdry and debased, devoid of meaning and value.

Seru’s eventual liberation is deferred until the end of the play, when all the other drinkers have left the circle and he is the one remaining with Ferringhi. Informed

²⁶ Fijian chiefly title.

and renewed by the lessons embedded in the tales of Ferringhi and his companions, Seru reclaims the original tanoa and begins to tell his own story in which he reaffirms a deeply connected, reciprocal relationship to the land – “the vanua was in me and I was in the vanua” (387) – and confronts Sir Hen with the collapse of his own power structure: “You expect us to respect your system as if it come to us from god. That colonial trick as old as indenture, Sir Hen. It don’t work anymore” (387). In this final exchange, Sir Hen is forced to face up to the consequences of a history of his own making, a situation in which, as Ferringhi puts it, “his own discourse go buturaki²⁷ him” (388), and – in a move that registers the broader regional schisms engendered by the Coup – is chased off stage by Puglu dressed as a Fijian warrior, identifying himself as “the Spirit of the Pacific Way gone remarkably wrong [...] the toxic event of your collective multinational chicanery” (387-88). Before leaving the circle, Seru makes the decision to return to his relatives in the hills and to appease the forgotten gods, realizing that, “instead of changing what we had, we borrowed from others without reflection” (389). Seru’s narrative, then, is not simply about a reclaiming of his personal memory of participation in Coup-related violence, but the critical excavation of a deeper cultural memory, the recognition of a set of historical conditions that, in Mishra’s schema, have retarded the development of a productive Fiji. Through Seru, Mishra models a Fijian population aware of that history and their complicity in it, and taking responsibility for that in the present.

Ferringhi does not seek to portray Fiji Indians only as victims of an oppressive colonial administration and latter-day indigenous nationalism, but is concerned to deal with their own responsibilities as historical subjects in Fiji, as well as their own potentially agentive relationship to the “motor of history” (353).

²⁷ To beat up, assault.

Ferringhi's tales for the Fiji Indian characters attend to their experience of traumatic repetition, reaching back from the time of the Coup into the indenture period of Fiji history to reclaim what has been repressed in that past. Mooves, for example, meek and numbed, is introduced as a victim of the circumstances of History, detached from the knowledge that would enable him to understand and recalibrate his position. For Mooves, Ferringhi tells a tale of meeting a 200 year-old man: "He say his name Girmitya; he say he want to teach me history. I think he mean his story" (356). The old man's pedagogical narrative deals with Tota – embodied by the actor playing Mooves – a young Indian man seduced by promises of a paradisiacal existence to cross the dark waters to Fiji in the late nineteenth century. (Tota's name here evokes, but is not limited to, that of former girmitya Totaram Sanadhya, whose book, *Fijidwip men mere ikkish varsh (My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands)* provides an invaluable and impassioned eyewitness account of the indenture system.)²⁸ As a cane cutter, Tota enacts the cyclical hell of indenture, moving slavishly step by stumbling step across the stage to the sound of the disembodied voice of colonial authority, marking the painful passage of time, the gradual subtraction of the "years to salvation" (357), which are rewarded only by a further period of servitude. Although burdened by physical and psychic violence, Tota finally gathers the courage to look behind him to discover that the threats that drive him are non-existent:

(Enraged, he uproots a stalk of cane and javelins it towards the voice.)

FERRINGHI: And, the old man said, as the cane grunted through the air it became a trident, emerald flames igniting around its tail, and it flew across the field, twice around the verandah, smashing the pink gin held up against the

²⁸ Sanadhya, Totaram. *Fijidwip men mere ikkish varsh (My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands; and, the Story of the Haunted Line)*. 1914. Trans. John Dunham Kelly and Uttra Kumari Singh. Suva: Fiji Museum, 1991.

evening sky, plucking the memsahib's punkah of peacock feathers, through the ace of spade [sic] fanned across the coolumber's chest and straight into his heart, pinning him to the rattan chair of his sins. His servants said the coolumber went through all his incarnations before dying: governor, recruiter, arkathi, zamindar, pitaji.²⁹ And in the lines they sang all night about Shiva's vengeance on Tripasura.³⁰ (358)

This elaborate tale of Tota's liberation is far more than a circumscribed act of physical retaliation against the white overseer, episodes of which were not uncommon on the plantations (Mayer 19). Here, wrought in fantastic terms and heightened to a mythic level, Tota's vengeance against the whole colonial system of recruitment, displacement, indenture, profit, and betrayal (with its own cultigen) represents a fundamental change in mindset. Tota recognizes the ideas and images that he has internalized that have made him a "slave of history" (358), and harnesses the power within him to work against the power outside him, rearranging the images to suit himself. In this way, Tota's story breaks open the *historia* of girit; instead of the "eventual transformation of the desiring subject into an antithetical and traumatized body" (S. Mishra "Time and Girit" 29), Tota is able to "fix the motor of his ego" (359) and start behaving like a "free fallah" (259). This lesson, in which Mooves comes to understand his entrapment within History's confines and is empowered to leave the circle in quest of his own story, would seem to offer an alternative to the girit ideology, offering the possibility of taking control of a traumatic past and inhabiting new identities that restore agency and dignity to the subject.

²⁹ Coolumber = white plantation overseer; arkathi = (unlicensed) field recruiter; zamindar = landlord; pitaji = father.

³⁰ In Indian mythology, Tripasura (or Tripura, "three cities" in Sanskrit) were cities of great prosperity and luxury constructed by the architect Mayasura. Because of their impious nature, they were destroyed by the great arrow of Lord Shiva.

The implications of the need for this kind of recollection and resurrection are made explicit in the lila that returns to the recent history of the Coup, and Pumpkin's story, in which he discovers his own past as a politician in Timoci Bavadra's coalition government. Ferringhi's tale, dramatized by several characters who punctuate the here-and-now of the kava circle with historical action, centers on the period in which the ousted Members of Parliament were held hostage at Boron House (here "Moron House") in the wake of the Coup. The scene is contextualized through a series of auditory and visual signifiers: armed guards; Frank Sinatra's song *I Did It My Way* in reference to Rabuka's idiosyncratic takeover; the song, *Isa Lei*, which bids farewell to Fiji; and the book *The Basic Art of Coup-Making*, attributed to Vernon Walters (a tongue-in-cheek reference that suggests the involvement of the CIA in the Coup). Pumpkin's ethnic ambiguity is also appropriate in this context, given the aim of the coalition government to draw upon the strengths of both Fijian and Fiji Indian politicians and to pursue a Fiji politics that moved beyond racial divisiveness. In re-enacting this scene, Mishra uses theatre as a forum to revive Pumpkin's personal memory and Fiji's public memory of Bavadra (here referred to only as "1st Man," or "Doc"), conducting a posthumous apotheosis that foregrounds his courage, humanism, and visionary role in imagining a progressive Fiji that transcends ethnic barriers, and who stands for the resistance to the oppressive forces of History wherein historical "truth" is defined by those who would "make truth anew" (368) in their own image. As the 1st Man/Bavadra acknowledges, "history crushes truth like a juggernaut and I'm but a sliver, a brief irritation to its gathering momentum. Yet truth appears time and again, and is crushed, and appears again, till history must halt forever in wonder at its flowering" (369). Once again, an alternative history and a message of hope is embedded in this memory of Bavadra, holding out the possibility for new directions for Fiji.

But we remain subject to such forces, argues Mishra, because of our fear and our amnesia (both enforced and self-imposed), participants in a post-Coup history in which Bavadra “never happened” (371) and has been “deleted” (371) from the national archive, ensnared in an Orwellian world in which people deny his memory for fear of being “arrest[ed] for infringing the Deletion Act” by “the Director for Mnemonic Prosecution” (372). At this point, *Ferringhi* reaches what may be interpreted as its discursive and dramaturgical apex, presenting an excoriating critique of a contemporary Fiji society defined by anomie, apprehension, resignation, evasion, and erasure, and pointing to the complicity of self-serving politicians and ordinary citizens in killing the promise of a progressive Fiji, which is seen to have died with Bavadra in 1989. Puglu, the mad visionary with extraordinary clarity, cries murder:

FERRINGHI: Why do you cry murder? He died of cancer.

PUGLU: (*shaking Ferringhi*) Are you blinkered? We are his murderers.

(*points to the audience*) Every one of us. We each plundered a drop of rain in our apathy or flight or opposition, and the drops congealed into knives, and 760,000³¹ hands rained on his breasts and rained again till there was nothing left but the sound of rain. (369)

As Chan admits, this is a story that “pull no punches” (375), calling to account the audience/Fiji citizens in their abdication of responsibility to themselves, to the nation, to truth, and to memory. *Ferringhi* models the possibility of taking responsibility for both the past and the present through Pumpkin, who recalls his own guilt and recognizes the amends he must make, sealing his vow through the kava ceremony:

PUMPKIN: Degei, I’ve violated the trust of the people. I, once their chosen custodian, go now to renew that trust, to earn their forgiveness by returning the

³¹ The population of Fiji in 1987.

tale to all tellers, no matter when and how and where they come from: for we know that a tale can be told in as many ways as there are tellers, but it is a teller's love of the tale that holds the listeners, that makes it his and theirs alone – of little consequence is the duration of the telling. Degei, help me return the tale to all tellers who love it. (375)

Here, Mishra's focus turns to testimony; Pumpkin's promise resonates with Paul Ricoeur's concept of the "duty of memory," which entails both a duty to remember and a duty to tell, and is the "duty to do justice, through memories, to an other than the self" (89). It "maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to those others, of whom we shall later say, not that they are no more, but that they were. Pay the debt" says Ricoeur, "but inventory the heritage" (89). In reinstalling the memory and vision of Bavadra within a public discourse, Mishra's play performs an act of justice that models the possibility of a Fiji able to overcome its post-Coup oppression and fragmentation. Through this infectious proliferation of narratives that form part of the socially engaged "memory work" involved in working through (LaCapra *Writing History* 66), Fiji citizens are once again able to bear witness to events and to create an alternative *historia* – embodied, affective, ethical – that offers a way to amend History's gaps and evasions and determine a more connected, responsible society.

It is worth noting that Pumpkin's appeal to Degei is particularly significant in this context not just because kava is supposed to be derived from this deity, but because he represents a synthesis of Indian and Fijian mythologies. The snake Degei, the supreme god of old Fiji, has been identified by Indians with Kāliyā, the serpent defeated by Lord Krishna in the River Yamuna and banished to a distant island (here Fiji). As S. Mishra observes, "By assimilating Degei into an Indian mytheme and projecting Kaliya onto a Fijian one, the *girmityas* brought the different belief systems, topographies, *topoi* and narrative forms into metaphoric alignment" ("The Time Is Out

of Joint” 143). Consequently, Degei is invoked at this point in the play as an inclusive intercultural symbol to underwrite the quest for social harmony, and comprises one of several syncretic examples in which, as with the kava circle, Indian subjectivity is tied firmly to Fiji at the play’s formal level.

Ferringhi is a provocative work that draws attention to a contemporary social crisis and its complex relation to legacies of diaspora, indigeneity, and colonialism, while boldly reconfiguring conceptions of the “Fiji play.” Mishra’s play models the possibility of working through the trauma occasioned by the Coup – a process that ultimately involves not just a recollection of the past and a recognition of responsibility, but a transformative, counter-discursive revision of national history in aid of a more ethically responsible, democratic society. However, perhaps in response to the social conditions of the play’s present, the final scenes of *Ferringhi* back away from any definite closure or final validation of this approach. At the end of the play Mishra retains ambivalence about the potential for theatre to materially impact society. *Ferringhi* and Puglu ponder the ephemerality and duality of theatre when Puglu refers to the theatre as a “camera obscura” (391), and in the final line identifies him/herself as “Maya,” pointing to a mediation between the world of reality and illusion, creating uncertainty about whether the events of the play did or could take place, or whether it is all a mirage. At the very least, the fact that Puglu ultimately takes over the role of storyteller “because *Ferringhi*’s stories are not adequate for *Ferringhi* himself” (S. Mishra in Greet 6), suggests that the process is ongoing and open-ended.

The characters and kava-drinking framework of *Ferringhi*, moreover, present a predominantly masculine version of Fiji society and thus a masculine platform for the resurrection of an alternative national identity. Aside from Puglu’s ostensible androgyny, women appear only as emblematic characters, or as the subject of sexualizing anecdotes – a representation that, on the one hand, seems to displace Fiji

women from recalling, speaking, or reclaiming/recalibrating a position in history and the national imaginary, or, indeed, from taking up a position as a storyteller/artist who stimulates social change.³² This partial vision may be indicative of patriarchal structures that remain dominant in both Fijian and Fiji Indian societies, and points implicitly to the challenges that political upheavals have caused for feminist progress in Fiji – especially when primacy of racial identification has created a situation where “The number of [women’s] organizations that are openly and challengingly multiracial and feminist can be counted on one hand” (Jalal n.p.). Female playwrights in Fiji have yet to make their mark, so it is interesting to consider what women’s theatrical representations of post-Coups Fiji might have to offer in response. But Mishra’s focus on masculine experience need not necessarily be read as conservative. Given the 1987 Coup’s masculine and military character, the play – framed as it is by an emphasis on participation and complicity – may deliberately establish a masculine arena in which the difficult conversations need to take place, and in so doing, create a space in which damaging masculinities can be productively reconfigured.

I turn now to Larry Thomas’ *To Let You Know*, which is similarly invested in the belief that coming to terms with the collective past is important in structuring a legitimate democratic polity (LaCapra *Writing History* 96). Thomas’ play adopts a testimonial framework for addressing the ongoing impact of the Coup on Fiji citizens a decade after the events of 1987, embedding a forceful critique of contemporary Fiji politics, and calling upon Fiji citizens to take active responsibility for social change.

³² This patriarchal bias is also present in Mishra’s later play, *The International Dateline* (2001). The male protagonist’s playful multiplicity of identities is framed within the heteronormative structure of his family life, with his long-suffering, subordinate wife forced to consistently change her own identity to match his ever-changing one.

Larry Thomas – *To Let You Know* (1997)

Larry Thomas (1954-) is Fiji's leading playwright and filmmaker, and the only one of the three playwrights in this chapter still resident in the Fiji Islands. He is almost solely responsible for energizing Fiji's theatre culture in the 1990s and imbuing it with political efficacy (D'Cruz 149). Of indigenous Fijian and European ancestry, Thomas grew up in Raiwaqa, an ethnically diverse working-class suburb of Suva. For many years a Senior Lecturer in English and Pacific Literature at USP, Thomas is currently coordinator of the Regional Media Centre at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (formerly South Pacific Commission), an international organization that offers priority work programs to help develop Pacific Island communities. As well as writing short stories and poems, Thomas has been involved in theatre production since the early 1980s, but his first play, *Just Another Day* (1988), was not staged until after the Coup. In plays such as *Outcasts* (1989), *Yours Dearly* (1991), and *Men, Women and Insanity* (1991, with a US production in 1992), Thomas developed a reputation for naturalistic drama that spoke directly to the culture and concerns of ordinary Fiji citizens, presenting Fiji English patois on the stage for the first time, and taking a critical view of the ways in which the lives of the poor, the dispossessed, the disillusioned, and the aimless were molded and exacerbated by post-Coup conditions. This integration of art and social examination is also manifested in Thomas' turn to documentary filmmaking, which includes the films *Compassionate Exile* (1999) about the leper colony on Makogai Island; *Race for Rights* (2001), based on political upheavals caused by the May 2000 attempted coup; *Bitter Sweet Hope* (2005), which surveys Fiji's sugar cane industry; and *Struggling for a Better Living: Squatters in Fiji* (2007). Thomas' more recent work in documentary film is useful for understanding the turn in his playwriting during the later 1990s, which demonstrates a move away from strict realism toward an exploration of cinematic structures (*Searching for the*

Smile, 1999) and the incorporation of multimedia, documentary, and testimonial elements (*To Let You Know*, 1997), and which we might read, to some extent, as initial experiments with techniques that would eventually find a home in his films.

To Let You Know premiered at the Fiji Arts Club Playhouse under Thomas' own direction on May 14, 1997, ten years to the day since the 1987 Coup. Its commemorative staging situates the play as a retrospective of the decade since the Coup, gauging the Coup's long-term effects on ordinary people and offering an attentive and critical portrait of Fiji society in the particular historical moment of the mid-1990s. Thomas' "most talked about" and most "political" play (Whitney n.p.), *To Let You Know* takes a different direction from the more traditional characterization and scenography of his earlier work,³³ foregrounding metaphorical characters in an abstract, presentational space, bare except for a white projection screen upstage center and desks with chairs placed downstage left and right, suggesting a platform for the transfer of information rather than an enclosed world. The play has a non-linear, epic structure, amalgamating a range of styles and forms, consisting of feelings, impressions, visions, biblical revelations, and fragmentary interactions, developed through brief sketches, monologues, epistolary testimony, chorus work, film clips, ritual, song, dance, and music. The effect, however, is not pastiche, but a collection of heartfelt messages held in tension by a common social condition, and shaped from the point of view of an indigenous Fijian strongly committed to Fiji's future as one defined by social reconciliation and inclusiveness. Thomas sees the purported ethnic tensions in his country as partly a product of self-serving politicians, who play the ethnic identity card for their own strategic advantage (Whitney n.p.), and within its

³³ For a more detailed discussion of scenographic devices in Thomas' earlier, naturalistic plays, see Ian Gaskell, "Framing Reality: Action and Scenography in the Plays of Larry Thomas." *SPAN* 50/51 (April/Oct 2000): 47-56.

broader context of post-Coup degeneration, *To Let You Know* centrally addresses the social divisiveness caused by racial politics in Fiji. As Thomas says: “A part of me tries to be very optimistic that we’ll have a generation that will move beyond the politics of race, that will use its energy to build a country that belongs to all of us [...] Another part of me just sees it getting worse if nothing is done to solve the problems facing the country” (Thomas in Whitney n.p.).

In contrast to the predominantly allegorical modes employed by Hereniko and Mishra, Thomas focuses more strongly on testimony. There is no absolute demarcation between allegory and testimony; as we see in the case of Mishra and his relation to Ricoeur’s “duty to tell,” allegory may incorporate testimony, and in Thomas’ work the testimonial structure also relies on allegory in the representation of certain characters and for other political and aesthetic effects. While it may employ disguise, the testimonial play is oriented toward open revelation, creating an environment in which both the actors and the audience bear witness to that revelation. Testimony does not offer a completed statement or totalizable account of events (Felman and Laub 5), but the process of testimony may function not just to enact or relive trauma, but to work it over and possibly work it through (LaCapra *Writing History* 89, 109). Personal testimonies, moreover, present history as something continually (re)constructed and provisional, and as such may embed resistance to dominant accounts (Gilbert and Tompkins 136), especially those that downplay or deny the effects of trauma. *To Let You Know* differs from “verbatim theatre” or the “documentary play” in that the speakers’ testimonies are not drawn from interview transcripts or from newspaper archives (although heightened verisimilitude is gained through the insertion of documentary film excerpts), but are fictional renderings that speak to specific historical events and social experiences. In this way, Thomas’ play has much in common with the “testimonio,” the Latin American testimonial genre of

political theatre, especially Ana Elena Puga's extended definition of it. For Puga, in testimonio, characters can be fictional, but denounce actual social injustice; position themselves beyond the autobiographical as speakers for a broader class or community; and give the spectator the sense of experiencing the "real" through a greater sense of unmediated communication, whereby spectators are situated as witnesses to a significant event and have the duty to acknowledge and respond accordingly (195-97). Moreover, in line with Thomas' own interest in the impact of the Coup on ordinary people, the twentieth-century testimonial theatre is concerned largely with working-class opposition to social injustice (Puga 194).³⁴ This bolder, more direct interpellation of Fiji audiences is possibly enabled by Thomas' status as an indigenous Fijian, his standing in academic and governmental circles, and his position as a playwright of national renown. In scripting and staging the play, Thomas draws on his insider perspective, his skill in rendering the experiences and speech patterns of everyday citizens as established in his earlier work, and his keen identification with people persecuted and oppressed under Fiji's political regime.

Thomas' play creates a bleak montage of post-Coup Fiji, introducing characters who are damaged, abused, estranged, or disillusioned, the victims of a history that is not over, and distinguished by a sense of what Puga calls "insile," or "exile within the boundaries of one's own country, characterized by feelings of isolation, nostalgia for the past, and impotence in the present" (27). A recurrent theme is losing one's way: a Fijian and an Indian man are lost on the way to the airport (25), characters experience crises of faith and lose their path to the Lord (13, 27-31), and teenagers testify to growing up without moral, emotional, or intellectual direction (20-2) – all of which accumulate as motifs for a society that has become unmoored. These

³⁴ Puga situates this particular argument in relation to the work of Chilean playwright Juan Radrigán, working in the post-Coup environment of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship (1973-1990).

testimonies are juxtaposed intermittently with film clips of Fiji's Independence celebrations in 1970, providing an ironic oscillation between these two historical moments that emphasizes the disjunction between the promise of the newly independent nation and the conditions of the present. Many of Thomas' characters are given generic labels, such as "Indian," "Woman 1," "Man A," "Y," and "Z," combining allegory and testimony to create figures who can speak both from personal standpoints and on behalf of the victims of social injustice. In performance, these representative figures who address us directly in ostensibly random order and emerge from abstracted space foreground the sense of disorientation and fragmentation that is symptomatic of post-Coup Fiji. Yet despite the fact that many of these characters' on-stage relations appear disconnected, these testimonies are sincere attempts to connect with the Fiji audience, heightened by the conflation of actor and role that obtains when Fiji citizens take on the task of representing the experience of post-Coup trauma on behalf of their own community. Instead of articulating a direct attack on political figures, Thomas lets the people do the talking, highlighting their "duty to tell" to stimulate public recognition and avowal of Fiji's social problems.

For instance, Thomas employs this technique to draw attention to the poverty faced by many Fiji citizens in the post-Coup economic decline, and how anger, inhibition, lack of trust, and physical and emotional abuse are exacerbated by these conditions. Against a projected backdrop of slides that intersperse happy, playing children with abused children and children working in factories and scavenging for food (19-20), a group of girls and boys come forward:

My name is Y. I am thirteen years old. The social welfare people came to my house one day and spoke to my father. I don't know what they said but he

chased them away and beat up my mother. She cried and made no sound but my small brothers and sisters were screaming. [...]

My name is Z. I am nineteen years old and I live here and there. I left home two years ago because I had to run away. My father used to have sex with me. The first time he did it to me I was only 12. [...]

My name is K. I live with my grandmother in a squatter area. I sleep in the day and at night I steal from people. [...] It is like I am split into two people and the good side of me can't do anything, like it is paralysed. (20-21)

These testimonies function simultaneously as personal experiences made public, and through the characters' representative status, as knowledge that may already be public, but disavowed. The process of turning these traumatic experiences into testimonies via the actor-witnesses, of catapulting into the public sphere what has previously been private or repressed, creates a powerful impact, especially in a society that Thomas fears has become resigned to its silence and repression.

Similarly, the process of naming oneself, to claim an identity and a story, or to have that identity confounded or denied, is brought to the fore in the testimonies regarding racial identity and prejudice, which forms the play's thematic fulcrum. Of the three playwrights in this chapter, Thomas' treatment is perhaps the most complex in terms of his acknowledgment of the range and mixture of ethnic identities in Fiji, and of the identity crises forced upon people in the environment of post-Coup nationalism and identity politics:

WOMAN 2: My mother is Fijian and my father is Indian. My mother's family didn't want her to marry an Indian and my father's family made him feel as if he was already dead. (12)

WOMAN 1: I always thought I was Fijian, but now they tell me I am an other. [...] I am neither a Solomon Islander nor am I a Fijian. But I was born here. What does that make me? (12, 32)

MAN 3: [W]hat do I say when people ask me what I am? Do I say I am Samoan or do I say I am Fijian, or do I say that I am part Fijian and part Samoan, born in Fiji? But what if I go a step further and say that my father is Samoan and my mother is of mixed ancestry. She is part Fijian, European and Chinese? What then? (13)

Thomas clearly critiques exclusionary concepts of national identity and the destructive effects of a public policy wherein “what” you are defines and overrides “who” you are. But these very avowals of the widespread diversity of Asian, European, and Pacific Islander heritages in Fiji confound the whole concept of a racial “purity” that can be used as a baseline for discrimination, pointing to a more multifaceted Fiji than can be accommodated by regulatory racial politics.

Like Mishra's *Ferringhi*, Thomas' play has its own self-reflexivity in that it is composed largely of storytelling. Likewise, while many of these embodied narratives are tales of trauma and displacement, of personal histories and social policies gone wrong in post-Coup time, there are hopeful messages contained in the more sustained narratives and interactions that help to bind this painful mosaic together, giving the play a larger shape and coherence among the raft of discrete testimonies. Three of

these suturing strands that I shall turn to are the Fijian and Indian men drinking kava, the epistolary narrative developed through letters written by a Fijian and an Indian to overseas family members, and the intermittent interactions between a Fijian warrior and an Indian dancer.

The six episodes between two rural, working-class Fijian and Indian men give *To Let You Know* some narrative grounding and lend the themes of loss, displacement, and uncertainty a different cadence. Moving away from the direct testimonial mode, the interactions between these men comprise an extended parting scene; in a move common among many Fiji Indians in the wake of the Coup, the Indian has decided to emigrate to Australia, and the two friends' conversations take place as they make their way to the airport for the Indian to catch his flight. In these brief, partial scenes, Thomas provides a counter to the prevailing stereotype of ethnic tensions between Fijians and Indians by emphasizing the characters' camaraderie and obvious affection for one another and for their country. Their conversation is characterized by their mutual reluctance and uncertainty about the Indian's decision; both acknowledge, if tacitly, the impossibility of the situation in Fiji, but also problematize its inevitability. The Indian struggles with his mixed feelings for Fiji: "I'm going to miss this country [...] You think I'm doing the right thing?" (4), and knows that his "life gonna change" (5), but is not sure how, and is "frightened" (35) by the reality of emigration. In the same way that the Indian will miss his grog (kava), the Fijian will miss his roti and curry. In telling his friend that "When you go you will leave your heart and soul here" (18), the Fijian openly acknowledges the Indian as an inherent part of Fiji, rather than a transient outsider.

Throughout, the dialogue between the men takes place over the kava bowl, the kava ritual (and the more general trope of communal eating and drinking) once again resurfacing as an allegorical marker of interethnic sociality. At the play's end, the

Fijian ritualizes their relationship in the context of the kava ceremony by promising, in the Indian's absence, to "drink two bowls, one for me and one for you" (36), before a video clip signals the Indian's departure with an Air Pacific plane taking off to the music of the iconic *Isa Lei*. In the final, short scene, against a projected backdrop of sunset over Suva harbor, the Fijian makes good on his promise, drinking two bowls of kava alone, while the Indian makes present his absence through a disembodied voiceover:

FIJIAN: What you doing now?

INDIAN: Drinking grog.

FIJIAN: Good grog?

INDIAN: Not the same. (42)

In this drawn-out scene of farewell that runs the length of the play and becomes its rueful refrain, Thomas points out what is mutually lost in the process of renewed displacement, while belying dominant political rhetoric by reinforcing the reality of the many affirming relationships between Fiji citizens, both Fijian and Indian, and their shared sense of a Fijian homeland.

Thomas develops these themes in the chains of letters from a Fijian father to his son studying in England, and an Indian father to his daughter abroad in New Zealand that are read aloud periodically throughout the performance. Once again, the address is not direct; we become eavesdroppers on a private discourse in a public space, and each particular family situation becomes a platform for debating wider issues highly pertinent to Fiji citizens at the time. Although these sequences are the most contrived and didactic element of the performance, they also situate the play most firmly in the socio-historic milieu of mid-1990s Fiji, centering on the pressing concerns of the 1997 Constitution (still in the process of being ratified at the time of

performance),³⁵ and the growing refusal of indigenous Fijians to renew land leased by Indian farmers. Here, Thomas is concerned to show that although Fijian and Indian communities occupy different perspectives on these issues, there are mutual concerns and desires. For example, the Fijian and the Indian both express their claim to the land, one by heredity, the other by labor. In a sentiment that echoes Seru's revelation at the end of *Ferringhi*, but which also points to ambivalence of indigenous claims, the Fijian man tells us, "As I walk the land I feel it's [sic] pulse and I know that my whole being, my blood, my heart and my soul belongs to it and I am part of it and it is part of me. But while I know all this, it is important to keep an open mind and see both sides of the picture" (8). Accordingly, this other side is provided by the Indian, who remarks that, "For those of us who have toiled and tilled the land, we are a part of it, but somehow our Fijian relatives find this hard to believe. But in the end [...] the land belongs to no one, sooner or later we will be a part of it and ultimately God will reclaim what is His" (11). Once again, the Indian father testifies to the repetition of historical trauma, lamenting how, after a century of working the cane fields, this renewed displacement has returned "like ghosts from the past" (10) and like "a new girit" (40), and tells his daughter that "It is hard to describe the hurt of becoming displaced and dispossessed in one's own country. [...] Despite all that, I am determined that I have every right to be here and I refuse to leave because of some threat" (40-1). The Indian's assertion is in complement with the Fijian's fear that "We are blessed, but we are blinded by hate. If we are not careful we will be likened to the Nazis. In Australia and New Zealand they are saying it" (38-9). Although positioned in their separate communities, these interlocutors are simpatico, revealing how Fiji

³⁵ The 1997 Constitution was Fiji's third Constitution, designed to replace the discriminatory pro-indigenous Constitution of 1990, which was developed after the original Constitution of 1970 was abrogated in 1987. The 1997 Constitution was itself abrogated in the coup of 2000.

citizens share similar hopes and fears and are, in general, desirous of harmony rather than strife. In placing these viewpoints in theatrical juxtaposition, Thomas demonstrates how Fiji citizens themselves have the potential to help the country transcend its post-Coup malaise.

At the same time, Thomas points to the conditions that inhibit productive participatory dialogue by having his characters express their frustration with the simultaneously all-pervasive yet exclusionary discourse of Fiji politics, especially the ways in which the political decision-making of government officials and consultants is carried out at the expense of the understanding of ordinary people. As the Fijian father declares: “There are some things that I understand and there are things I am not sure of and it is frustrating when there isn’t anyone around who can explain it to me plainly and simply as it is, without becoming involved in the politics of it all” (8). Similarly, the Indian father asserts: “It is difficult for people to listen to reason, and this is compounded by a great number of people who seem to have an opinion and many a solution, but who only seem to confound everything and create even more dissent than we already have” (10). These testimonies highlight the positioning of regular citizens outside official discourse, and point to the need for an alternative public ritual, like the theatre, in which these marginalized viewpoints can be articulated and shared in a way that begins to work through the ongoing repercussions of the Coup, reinforces a sense of community, and models possible responses and ethical directions for its members. As the Fijian father observes: “Beneath the smiling façade lies something quite disturbing which we have to confront and deal with if we are to be the Christians we say we are. In the end we have only ourselves to answer to” (42).

I have left until last the most abstract, atemporal feature of Thomas’ production, and significantly, what Thomas thinks the play is “about” (Whitney n.p.). The musical and physical interactions between the Fijian warrior and the Indian

dancer encapsulate most effectively Thomas' social vision that moves beyond the politics of racial difference toward a country that draws equally from the strengths of all its contributing cultures. The allegorical warrior and dancer figures represent an example of performative syncretism reminiscent of Hereniko's interventions, and are supported by respective musical accompaniments: the Fijian warrior performing a club-dance to the beat of the lali, a Fijian wooden slit drum with musical and ceremonial functions, and the Indian dancing to the rhythm of the tabla, a pair of hand drums of contrasting sizes and timbres, consisting of wooden drum shell covered with animal skin, and used in Indian classical, popular, and religious music. Woven throughout the performance, the warrior and dancer at first dance separately, the Indian with a more subtle, alluring dance, and the warrior more aggressive, intimidating the audience and others on stage, and frequently placed against a projected backdrop of video-clips of Indian land dispossession. At the end of the play, the Fijian and Indian dancers appear together. For a while they dance separately, then as the instruments play in unison the warrior lays down his club, and the two begin a dance together, a hybrid form that blends their two cultures (39-40). It seems significant that true "resolution" is enacted only through the symbolic gestures of the dancers, and Thomas may be suggesting that, in this present climate, such a resolution can only be symbolic, because Fiji citizens can only aspire to the condition that the dancers represent if they first acknowledge and address the issues that the ordinary people are trying "to let you know." Of all the playwrights considered here, Thomas perhaps goes the furthest in developing a direct dialogue with Fiji audiences, asking difficult questions about the country's past history, present state, and future directions. In many ways, in the wake of the twenty-first century coups, *To Let You Know* is prophetic, not in its vision of celebratory hybridity, but in its concern about the

implications of failing to listen to the messages contained in these public testimonies of contemporary Fiji.

The plays by Hereniko, Mishra, and Thomas demand a lot of their audiences; as with political drama in other countries, they stage a provocative critique geared toward social transformation, but often in coded terms that call for active interpretation. In their separate ways, all three plays are invested in bearing witness to and modeling possibilities for working through the trauma occasioned by the Coup – a process which, in every case, involves an acknowledgement of social responsibility. LaCapra argues that “Memory that confronts the traumatic dimensions of history is ethically desirable in coming to terms with the past both for the individual and the collectivity” and indeed “helps make possible a legitimate democratic polity in the present and the future” (*Writing History* 95, 91); however, in the case of contemporary Fiji, this potential is undermined by the coup-cycle phenomenon that has further fractured and destabilized the nation. As LaCapra reminds us, trauma may not be fully overcome; working-through may at best enable some distance or critical perspective “achieved with extreme difficulty and not achieved once and for all” (*Writing History* 70), but although one might not be able to fully transcend its force, one might be able to counteract or mitigate it in order to “generate different possibilities” (71). I argue that the plays’ social criticism and calls for reconciliation have become even more pertinent and poignant since the more recent military interventions and stand as increasingly important evidence of resistance to social division and repression, especially given the dearth of political plays presented in Fiji after 2000. In drawing attention to a contemporary social crisis, and registering its imbricated legacies in challenging theatrical forms, *The Monster*, *Ferringhi*, and *To Let You Know* are important examples of how theatre contributes to our understanding of, and functions actively within, the broader postcolonial Pacific.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary and Contributions

In this study, I have explored several ways in which playwrights from Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Fiji have employed the critical potential of the syncretic theatre form to address histories of colonialism and/or indigenous political oppression in different Pacific contexts. Working within and against the Western framework of theatre, these works mediate between different cultural traditions, forms, and viewpoints to open up heterogeneous spaces in which rigid historical narratives and their attendant power structures can be interrogated, and alternative models of historical understanding expressed that validate marginalized worldviews and different modes of belonging. Even though the activity of theatrical production in Oceania is often circumscribed by resources, limited audiences, prevailing political situations, or local conflicts, the works I have discussed are committed to remaking the past in order to intervene critically in present circumstances, addressing key issues of identity, genealogy, representation, political parity, or social unity. The comparative approach I have taken helps to demonstrate how the cultural work the plays undertake operates not just at the local or national level, but has the potential to cut across national borders and political frameworks in ways that reinforce Oceanic regional identities. As a consequence, these revisionist history projects, as with the broader theatrical genre they are part of, contribute to the democratic struggle to constitute a new Oceania – a regional identity that is not just about the emphasis on commonality and connection beyond colonially imposed partitions and ideologies, but is also a “critical regionalism” (Wilson 13) that enables the maintenance of cultural difference in the face of homogenizing forces wrought by the economic and cultural penetration of

globalism, with writers and artists “fabricat[ing] a creative space of their own whereby they can prevent the closure of the Oceanic world by its reabsorption into the global paradigm” (Subramani “Oceanic Imaginary” 161).

This study represents new interventions into a broad field; because it investigates a nascent area of theatre scholarship, with the lack of a visible archive and few scholarly precedents and theoretical models, the research process has necessitated an exploration of appropriate texts and frameworks for reading them. The study makes significant contributions to critical discussions in theatre and performance studies, while enriching conversations in postcolonial studies and Pacific studies, and engaging historiographic debates. Broadly speaking, within the disciplines of theatre and performance studies, my research opens up to comparative critical discussion a geopolitical region that has received little previous attention from theatre and performance scholars (particularly beyond the region), extending an understanding of the form and function of theatre in different cultural contexts, and tracing new dramatic traditions. More specifically, the study extends and develops existing analyses of postcolonial drama, and contributes to existing conversations in postcolonial studies about the decolonizing potential of literary and artistic endeavors; deepens surveys of syncretic theatre that place primary emphasis on theatrical form, through an in-depth consideration of the relation of theatrical syncretism to issues of critical historiographic representation and analysis; and expands current discussions of the diverse genre of the “history play” into alternate cultural, formal, and epistemic territories. As literary and performance texts, furthermore, the plays demonstrate how theatre might function as a mode of historiographic inquiry and critique. My research has shown how, in this capacity, the plays contribute to the important decolonizing project of decentering the practice of history in Oceania, adding to new discussions about the ways in which Pacific histories at both the national and regional levels

function and are developed, challenged, and revised. Consequently, this study might stimulate new debates in Pacific studies (where theatre has, similarly, suffered from a lack of critical exposure¹) about the social and political roles of the region's theatrical production.

Beyond the regional-national dialectic, this research raises questions about the purview of "global performance" as it is currently conceived of in the Euro-American academy. Given the broad regional spread of Pacific Island theatre and the dynamism of its production, it is surprising that this work does not have a more visible presence in major theatre anthologies and world theatre history textbooks. Even the most recent and comprehensive *Norton Anthology of Drama*, released in Spring 2009, goes only as far as Australia, and the textbook *Theatre Histories* (2006), heralded as revolutionary in its efforts to "provide a global perspective" (xvii) and centralize non-Western theatre, is largely silent on the subject of Oceanic theatrical traditions, especially its modern theatre. A similar case might be made from the literary standpoint, in that studies of Oceanic plays as dramatic literature are usually subordinate to analyses of poetry and prose genres. This situation suggests that, while this work is certainly garnering audience and critical attention at the local level and from a select number of scholars outside the region, there is still a way to go before this corpus of work enjoys international recognition, and it is my hope that this project and others like it will function to enhance the representation of Pacific playwrights, their work, and its relevance for people within and beyond Oceania.

¹ For example, the region's chief interdisciplinary journal, *The Contemporary Pacific*, while an excellent source of commentary on island affairs, still maintains an emphasis on history, anthropology, politics, and economics.

Avenues for Further Research

The eight plays discussed in the previous three chapters represent only a portion of the historical drama produced in Oceania, and in future iterations of this project the range of themes and geographical locations could certainly be extended to examine how other playwrights have approached their own cultural pasts and presents, enriching the regional purview. One option might be to offer a more balanced discussion of diasporic experience beyond the Fiji Indian context, engaging different histories of travel and displacement in productive comparison with indigenous histories. In addition, although I have deliberately centered my examples around responses to post/colonial histories, it could be fruitful to include a discussion of plays that address pre-contact histories and/or mythologies. Such plays would have a different focus and approach from those plays that deal directly with colonial impacts, but could provide a productive and illuminating contrast to the current emphasis on responses to foreign enterprise. I also look forward to the opportunity to include more work by female playwrights, especially Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, who has written a number of influential plays on Hawai‘i’s history from the point of view of central female protagonists, recalibrating masculine worldviews and concepts of what constitutes a “historical event.”

One of my aims in undertaking this study has been to draw attention to the dynamic corpus of Pacific playwriting and performance. Beyond this project and the particular historiographic focus there is a rich area of research. There are many ways in which future projects might extend the field from the point of view of textual or performance analysis, production, reception, and circulation, either in single Pacific sites or through cross-cultural or regional comparisons, and I shall outline a few broad possibilities. I do not address my comments only to outsider scholars but (especially) to Pacific Islander researchers, invested as I am in the belief that we should make

Oceania “not just an object of study but also [allow] it to produce its own cultures of scholarship” (Subramani “Oceanic Imaginary” 151).

This study has focused mainly on indigenous experiences and viewpoints – which represents an important and abundant area of research in itself – but there is also much to be learned by focusing on diasporic movements as other ways in which the “sea of islands” has been and is being (re)constituted and understood. Beyond Fiji Indian theatre, fertile sites for diasporic theatre include Pacific Islander theatre in Aotearoa; Australian South Sea Islander (Melanesian diasporic) performance in Australia; and Pacific Islander productions in communities on the West Coast of the United States; as well as theatre that reflects the experiences of diasporic populations who have moved into the Pacific region, such as local Asian American theatre in Hawai‘i, and Chinese and Indian theatres in Aotearoa. Some of these developments have been considered individually, but more research could be done in these areas, and certain comparative studies between diasporic traditions or between diasporic and indigenous theatres might also be illuminating.

Another productive possibility for future research in the field would be to move beyond the anglophone frame. There are a growing number of vernacular theatres that are deserving of note, supporting indigenous language revitalization efforts and representing attempts to adapt the theatrical medium as a more relevant conduit for expressing local concerns. In terms of plays scripted and performed in colonial Pacific languages, however, francophone playwriting is a developing area that seems marginalized in critical scholarship, despite several plays having been published and French Pacific playwrights having been shortlisted for international awards in dramatic literature.² This is partly to do with a dominant anglophone discourse in

² Pierre Gope’s *La Parenthèse*, for example, was shortlisted for the 2006 international Grand Prix de la Littérature Dramatique.

which, as Robert Nicole notes, “Pacific literature in English is all presence, visibility, articulation, and therefore power, while Pacific literature in French is all absence, invisibility, and silence” (265). Paying attention to francophone playwriting and performance would open up new ways of understanding how Pacific cultural products travel internationally. One implication of continued imperial ties between France and its Pacific overseas collectivities is that these plays tend to circulate in continental Europe; one of New Caledonian playwright Pierre Gope’s plays, for instance, was recently translated and published in Italian.³ Critical attention to the playwrights’ concerns – especially criticism that opens up routes between francophone and anglophone discourses – would register responses to a broader variety of (post)colonial experiences in the region, and, most importantly, would aid in strengthening regional connectivity by helping to overcome the linguistic blocs that mean that “many years after independence in other countries of the region, francophone Islanders remain conveniently gagged and are largely unheard by fellow Pacific Islanders, a potential powerful and sympathetic ally” (Nicole 265).

Finally, it would be useful to see Pacific playwriting being placed in productive conversation with other international theatres (including a more balanced rethinking of the Asia-Pacific dyad). While remaining sensitive to cultural difference, such comparative discussions would illuminate important connections and divergences that would enrich discourses of “global theatre.” Rather than leaving the drama and theatre of Oceania as a singular and enclosed regional genre, which risks encouraging a reiteration of the same problematic views of exoticism or anthropological particularity which have defined long-held Western stereotypes, we might treat it more

³ *Les Dieux sont Borgnes*, translated as *Gli dei sono ciechi* (2003) by Micaela Fenoglio.

inclusively, considering the complex and imbricated connections that it sustains beyond the region as well as from within.

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