

IF WE VANISH: A COLLECTION OF QUEER 'ŌIWI POETRY

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ABSTRACT

“If We Vanish: A Collection of Queer ‘Ōiwi Poetry” is a queer-identified full-length collection of ‘Ōiwi poetry by a Native Hawaiian wahine poet. Inspired by the ‘Ōiwi figure of the mo‘o, the collection explores issues of sexuality, belonging, and intergenerational cycles of trauma and healing. “If We Vanish” significantly addresses the lack of representation of queer Indigenous women in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Literatures. To interrogate issues of intergenerational trauma and silence, I develop a mo‘o poetics that centers the mo‘o figure as a water protector, whose kuleana to wai (water) and waiwai (prosperity) position them as models of erotic sovereignty and transformative healing. Prioritizing queer, ‘Ōiwi, and feminist expressions of “we,” the collection features lyrical, narrative, and documentary poems that are poly-vocal, nonlinear, and associative. I also deploy Native Hawaiian poetic devices such as kaona (hidden meaning) and pīna‘i (repetition) to experiment with received forms like the villanelle, sestina, and pantoum. The dissertation is organized into five sections: “skins,” which commemorates mo‘o and descendents of mo‘o in my family; “form a native daughter,” which acknowledges the mentorship of Haunani-Kay Trask; “beddings, sheddings & weddings,” which examines sexual pleasure, trauma, and healing; “polylasting: notes toward a mo‘o poetics,” which uses the lyric essay form to explicate a mo‘o poetics; and “erotics of aloha ‘āina,” which emphasizes decolonial connections between love, land, and nationalism. The creative work in this dissertation is suppressed in the UH institutional repository, Kahualike, kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu. Inquiries about the creative work should be made to No‘ukahau‘oli Revilla.

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Ho'okahi nō; he lehu ka inoa
There is only one; she has many names

--- mele ko'ihonua no Haumea,
J.M. Poeppoe, *Ka Na'i Aupuni*

'O Haumea Kaeo ke kane.
'O Wahinoe ka wahine.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o Kaumauma Haumea.
'O Kaumauma Haumea ke kane.
'O Kaeo Kaeo ka wahine.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o Camilla Kaumauma Kaeo Haumea.
'O Camillia Kaumauma Kaeo Haumea ka wahine.
'O Daniel Keli'i ke kane.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o Elizabeth Puninani Haumea Keli'i.
'O Elizabeth Puninani Haumea Keli'i ka wahine.
'O David Huewaa Kanana ke kane.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o Henrietta Lā'ieikawai Kanana.
'O Henrietta Lā'ieikawai Kanana ka wahine.
'O Ventura Repolidon Revilla ke kane.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o John Henry Haumea Revilla.
'O John Henry Haumea Revilla ke kane.
'O Deborah Cairme ka wahine.
Noho pū lāua a hānau 'ia 'o No'ukahau'oli Aisha Revilla.
'O No'ukahau'oli Aisha Revilla au. la'u ia wahi.

‘Ōlelo Mua: He Mo’o, He Wahine

Six generations before me have carried the name Haumea: my great-great-great-great grandfather passed down the name Haumea to seven of his children. Kaumauma Haumea gave the name to his daughter Camilla, who gave the name to my great grandmother Elizabeth Puninani Haumea Keli’i Kanana, who gave the name not to any of her children but instead to her grandson, the last of eight children born to my grandmother, my father John Henry Haumea Revilla. What I would call throughout my genealogy research “the Haumea gap” between my great grandmother’s generation and my grandmother’s generation puzzled me. Why did Grandma Nani keep the name to herself for so long? At this point in my research, the name Haumea traces back to my great-great-great-great grandfather Haumea Kaea and vanishes. As a Native Hawaiian¹ poet, I am intrigued by the hyperbolic nature of this strand in my mo’okū’auhau (genealogy). Whereas Tūtū Haumea gifted seven of his children with the name, Haumea – or the trace of Haumea – seems to disappear before him.

Throughout the near three-year process of writing this dissertation, Haumea has been a guiding inspiration for several reasons. First and foremost, in Native Hawaiian culture, Haumea is an akua nui (major god). As Moses Manu documents in the first helu (installment) of “He Moolelo Kaa Hawaii – Ka Kaua Nui Weliweli Mawaena o Pele-Keahialoa me Waka-

¹ In ‘ōlelo Hawai’i (Hawaiian language), the term *maoli* denotes that which is native, Indigenous, or true. *Kanaka Maoli* signifies Native Hawaiians whose descendants have lived in Hawai’i before 1778. In this project, Kanaka Maoli, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, Native Hawaiian, ‘Ōiwi and Hawaiian are used interchangeably. My usage of Kanaka/Kānaka is guided by Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua whose language policy offers the following distinctions: “kanaka” refers to an individual person or to a whole class of people whereas “kānaka” denotes a countable plural form. See Goodyear-Ka’ōpua.

Keakaikawai,” Haumea is not only an Akua nui but also a genealogical source of mo’o and Pele families.² In the mo’okū’auhau that Manu provides, Haumea is also linked to Mo’oinanea, the highest ranking mo’o whose name, as I later discuss, highlights the role of mo’o as models of erotic sovereignty.³ Specifically, in Manu’s 1899 account of Pele and Waka, Haumea and Mo’oinanea are punalua⁴ through Kāneilūhonua, who is also referred to as Ho’okumukalani. When positioned as Haumea’s partner, he is called Kāneilūhonua (other names cited in this partnership include Kūwahailo, Hīkāpōloa, Kapōkinikini, and Kapōmanomano). When positioned as Mo’oinanea’s partner, he is called Ho’okumukalani. In this partnership, Mo’oinanea takes on a complimentary form named Ho’okumukahonua. According to Manu, five classes of mo’o are born from the union between Ho’okumukalani and Ho’okumukahonua: Mo’o Akua (mo’o gods), Mo’o Ali’i (mo’o chiefs), Mo’o Kāula (mo’o prophets), Mo’o Kahuna (mo’o experts and spiritual advisors),⁵ and Mo’o Kanaka (mo’o people). From the class of Mo’o Akua, Haumea Niho’oi, or Sharp-Toothed Haumea, is born (Manu, “He Moololo Kaao”).⁶

² Like Manu, kumu hula and scholar Pualani Kanaka’ole Kanahale recognizes Haumea in the mo’okū’auhau of the Pele clan. See Kanahale, *Ka Honua Ola: ‘Eli’eli Kau Mai (The Living Earth: Descend, Deepen the Revelation)*, Kamehameha, 2011, pp. 1-7. Native Hawaiian historian Lilikalā Kame’eleihiwa also identifies Haumea as a mo’o. See Kame’eleihiwa, *Nā Wāhine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women*, ‘Ai Pōhaku, 2002, p. 5.

³ In this first helu, Mo’oinanea is referred to as Kamoinanea.

⁴ *Punalua* refers to a relationship in which two or more people share a companion, lover, or spouse. These relationships may or may not include sexual intimacy.

⁵ In her forthcoming manuscript on Manu’s mo’olelo of Pele and Waka, ku’ualoha ho’omanawanui translates “Mo’o Kahuna” as “lizard experts and religious leaders.”

⁶ In her forthcoming book *Ka Po’e Mo’o* from University of Hawai’i Press, Brown offers insightful analysis of the link between Haumea and Mo’oinanea in Manu’s account. See chapter four

Significantly, Haumea’s kuleana (sphere of authority and responsibility)⁷ includes childbirth, war, and politics, an intersectionality that would gain significance for me as I would later discover the “slyly / reproductive” scholarship and poetry of Haunani-Kay Trask, which mapped important parallels between my values and the values of Indigenous feminism; as I found and recognized myself in the stories of mo’o akua in Hawaiian history; as I left the so-called safety of heteronormativity on Maui to embrace with radical honesty my queer identity; as I returned home from New York University and learned ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and participated more actively in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement; and finally, as I chose to name, confront, and heal from cycles of sexual violence.

Of course the role of Haumea in my paternal family was significant as well. The question of who I am, which typically haunts and compels Indigenous writers, was actually a violent cluster of questions that I did not have the capacity to address in my youth: who am I as a Hawaiian if I wasn’t raised in my language and am not yet fluent? Who am I as a woman if I never want to have biological children? Who am I as a person if my own uncles and cousins sexually assaulted me? I decided to track the name Haumea in my paternal family as an early

“Kinship and Antagonism Between the Mo’o and Pele Clans” of Brown, *Ka Po’e Mo’o*, forthcoming from University of Hawai‘i Press 2020.

⁷ In her 2007 article “Pele, Hi‘iaka, and Haumea: Women and Power in Two Hawaiian *Mo’olelo*,” Noenoe Silva employs this definition of *kuleana* to contextualize the oppressive leadership of Kumuhona, who Haumea ultimately defeats in battle. I use Silva’s definition here as the word “sphere” effectively invokes the worldmaking (and worldbreaking) capacity that underlines the concept of kuleana. In Hawaiian epistemology, *kuleana* is a protean concept. In the *Hawaiian Dictionary*, *kuleana* has the following denotations: “Right, privilege, concern, responsibility, title, business, property, estate, portion, jurisdiction, authority, liability, interest, claim, ownership, tenure, affair, province; reason, cause, function; small piece of property, as within an ahupua’a; blood relative through whom a relationship to less close relatives is traced, as to in-laws.” See “kuleana” in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*.

method of answering one, if not each, of these questions.

Thus this dissertation is largely a naming project, a groping toward the different names that, while reckoning with my personal and collective pasts, summons the strength to regenerate and transform. I know how my body feels. In pleasure, in pain, in 'onipa'a (standing firm), in escape. I know how my body feels. Yet the power of poetry is metabolizing sensory knowledge into precision for the page and performance. Poetry is a struggle for precision. At the heart of this collection are bodies of Indigenous, queer, woman-identified survivors who struggle against intergenerational violence and interconnected systems of oppression while still claiming the right to give and receive pleasure. Significantly, as a descendant of mo'ō families through the 'Ōiwi and Mā'ohi (Tahitian) genealogies of both my mother and father, I structure this collection of poems around the mo'ō figure. Since the inception of this project, mo'ō have informed the lens through which I engage the concept of shapeshifting⁸ and the associated stakes of desire, survival, and belonging as a queer femme Native woman.⁹

Consequently, to ground this dissertation properly, I will provide a broad overview of mo'ō in the following tasks: first, by elucidating literal and figurative meanings of the word

⁸ On a basic level, shapeshifting denotes the ability to change one's form. The Hawaiian concept of kino lau is a connected but distinct category of transfiguration. Whereas shapeshifting in this dissertation is attributed to non-human (mo'ō akua) and human beings (queer Indigenous women and femme survivors of sexual violence), kino lau is often the exclusive province of akua and 'aumakua (deified ancestor and guardian) and, according to Brown, is "part of a complex system for understanding and organizing knowledge about our natural environment." See Brown, "Mo'ō Mo'olelo," *The Kohala Center Puana Ka 'Ike Lecture Series*, Vimeo, 24 Feb. 2012, <https://vimeo.com/41875595>.

⁹ Like any gender identity, "femme" has no one-size-fits definition. In this project, I hope to engage my personal experiences and historical understandings of mo'ō, queer, and femme alongside each other.

“mo’o” in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; second, by examining mo’o depictions in traditional and contemporary narratives of mo’o in both ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and English; and third, by positioning my dissertation in the growing archive of mo’o mo’olelo (mo’o stories and histories).

First and foremost, throughout this dissertation, I specifically refer to mo’o with the collective pronoun “we.” As a mo’o through my ‘Ōiwi and Mā’ohi heritage, I invest in and insist on this “we” to clarify my kuleana and intention. This dissertation does not analyze, research, or compose poetry about mo’o from a distance. The intimacy with which I approach my mo’o knowledge invokes the methodology outlined in the following ‘ōlelo no’eau (Hawaiian poetical saying), which Mary Kawena Pukui records in her 1983 collection *‘Ōlelo No’eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings*: “‘A’ohe o kāhi nānā o luna o ka pali; iho mai a lolo nei; ‘ike i ke au nui ke au iki; he alo a he alo (The top of the cliff isn’t the place to look at us; come down here and learn of the big and little current, face to face)” (24). With ‘āina-based imagery of cliffs and currents, this ‘ōlelo no’eau implores people to be direct and precise in communication and social interaction. In 2013, Native Hawaiian poet Puanani Burgess incorporates the concluding phrase of this ‘ōlelo no’eau as a refrain in her poem “He Alo Ahe Alo.” The speaker of the poem, who arguably symbolizes Burgess in her role as a grassroots activist and community mediator on the Wai‘anae Coast of O‘ahu, advocates “he alo a he alo” as an effective approach to conflict resolution and community building.

He Alo Ahe Alo

(Face to Face)

That’s how you learn about what makes us weep.

He Alo Ahe Alo

(Face to Face)

That's how you learn about what makes us bleed.

He Alo Ahe Alo

(Face to Face)

That's how you learn about what makes us feel. (28)

Burgess expands the poem through anaphora, listing action verbs (work, sing, fight, laugh) to humanize and make dynamic people who struggle to heal and transform. The use of repetition through refrain and anaphora establishes a growing sense of collective identity and community empowerment. Demonstrably, “he alo a he alo” is an ‘Ōiwi methodology of research and storytelling that is based on direct and sustained contact with a community.

Similarly, the work in the following pages reflects a growing and intergenerational pilina to and aloha for mo’o, for all that has been shared, all that has been hidden, and all I have yet to (l)earn from my biological family, chosen family, and archival resources.¹⁰ In ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, the collective “we” can be indicated by dual and plural pronouns that are either inclusive or exclusive: kāua (inclusive dual you and I), māua (exclusive dual you and I), kākou (inclusive plural you and I), and mākou (exclusive plural you and I). The “we” of mo’o that I emphasize

¹⁰ *Pilina* is a general expression of connectivity, which may or may not include a genealogical, political, or erotic relationship. The concept of *aloha*, which also signifies connectivity, is incredibly multi-layered. Although in this usage, *aloha* denotes love based on genealogy, the concept is much more nuanced, and a comprehensive review of the term is beyond the scope of this critical introduction. For an extensive discussion of pilina, see Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio’s 2017 dissertation “Aikāne, A Kanaka Maoli Mo’olelo Beyond Queer Theory: Unsettling White Settler Logics and (Re)membering Indigenous Desires.” For a queer and decolonial lyric essay on aloha, see our co-authored article “Aloha is Deoccupied Love,” *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai‘i*, forthcoming from Duke University Press.

here attempts to share ground not only with my biological family but also with readers who claim mo'ō in their mo'okū'auhau. Certainly, this “we” deepens with added connections of survival, sexuality, and genealogical connections to Maui.

Importantly, this dissertation does not intend to offer a comprehensive survey of mo'ō in Hawaiian history. Poems that appear in this dissertation are guided by family stories, personal experiences, as well as research and creative writing done by Native Hawaiian writers like Marie Alohalani Brown, Brandy Nālani McDougall, Brooke Leilani Hutchins, Māhealani Ahia, and Lōkahi and 'Iolani N.K. Antonio.¹¹ Other sources of mo'ō knowledge come from mo'olelo such as Manu's account of Pele and Waka and *Keaomelele* and S.N. Hale'ole's *Lā'ieikawai* serialized in nineteenth century Hawaiian-language newspapers like *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, *Ke Au Okoa*, *Ka Na'i Aupuni*, and *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*.

On May 21, 1908, *Ka Hoku o Hawaii* published a mo'okū'auhau that details the 14 parts of Haumea's body from which she issued children: fontanel, mouth, eyes, ears, right palm, knuckles, fingers, chest, vagina, knees, ankles, toes, feet, and left palm.¹² Like Haumea, my great-grandmother Nani gave birth to more than ten children. In fact she was forced to run away from her first husband and give birth in a cave in Hā'ō'ū. From my great-grandmother

¹¹ It is noteworthy that myself, Brandy Nālani McDougall, Māhealani Ahia, 'Iolani and Lōkahi Antonio are genealogically connected to the island of Maui. While beyond the scope of this dissertation, it would be interesting to compare traditions of mo'ō mo'olelo by island. Moses Manu also hails from Maui. Born in Hāna in 1837, Manu, like me, claims Native Hawaiian and Tahitian ancestry. As mo'ō are known to have come to Hawai'i from Tahiti, another worthwhile strand of analysis would be to compare mo'ō mo'olelo in Hawai'i to mo'ō mo'olelo in Tahiti.

¹² See William Hyde Rice, “He Moololo no Pele ame kona Kaikaina Hiiaka I ka Poli o Pele” in *Ka Hoku o Hawaii* on May 21, 1908.

Nani, my father inherited the name Haumea and the land Mo’o Loa in Mākena on Maui. Mo’o is in my blood.

Lizards, Fragments, and Succession: Overview of Mo’o Definitions

If we read deep and wide in the archive of our mo’olelo, we can see a nuanced understanding of and respect for mo’o by Kanaka Maoli. Throughout my research, I have noted the following descriptions of mo’o: akua mo’o (mo’o god), he po’e kuamo’o (ancestral guardians), he po’e mo’o ali’i ‘ai aupuni (ruling mo’o), akua wahine (wahine god), and ‘aumakua. In light of Manu’s designations of mo’o into classes of akua, ali’i, kāula, kahuna, and kanaka in 1899, I could not help but marvel at the sprawling diversity of mo’o identifications. In my family, mo’o and descendants of mo’o are notoriously elusive, and I kept wondering how much their unknowability in history and literature, especially compared to the Pele ‘ohana, motivates the urge to classify them.

‘Ōiwi scholar Marie Alohalani Brown defines mo’o as “reptilian water deities” who “embody the hō’ola, life-giving, and ho’omake, death-dealing, properties of the element with which they are associated, water” (“Mo’o Mo’olelo”).¹³ My positioning of mo’o as kia’i, or protectors, is elaborated later in this introduction. Māhealani Ahia, a diasporic ‘Ōiwi wahine scholar with genealogical connections to the mo’o akua Kihawahine, uses the term “lāhui mo’o,” which she defines as “water deities associated with shapeshifting supernatural lizards”

¹³ I am indebted to Brown’s methodology of hō’ola and ho’omake in mo’o research. As my dissertation insists on testifying to sexual violence while claiming the right to heal and to give and receive pleasure, the attention to cycles of life and death offers a productive framework.

("Kihawahine"). Demonstrably, both traditional and contemporary classifications of mo'ō emphasize their akua status, shapeshifting bodies, and intimate connection to water.

Generally, mo'ō denotes an 'Ōiwi concept of relationality in Hawaiian epistemology. Even a brief examination of the word identifies relationships, features of 'āina, and objects that signal connection. At this point, it is useful to highlight the range of definitions that the concept of mo'ō entails. Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert list ten definitions in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*. For the sake of clarity, I list these definitions here:

1. Lizard, reptile of any kind, dragon, serpent; water spirit
2. Succession, series, especially a genealogical line, lineage
3. Story, tradition, legend (less common than mo'olelo)
4. Narrow strip of land, smaller than an 'ili
5. Small fragment, as of tapa, not attached to a large piece
6. Narrow path, track; raised surface extending lengthwise between irrigation streamlets
7. Ridge, as of a mountain
8. Young, as of pigs, dogs; grandchild
9. Brindled, as a dog, favored sacrifice to the mo'ō spirits; streaked tawny, as cattle; color of a tabby cat
10. Side planks fitted to the middle section on each side of a canoe hull, technically termed gunwale strakes. ("mo'ō")

As with any project engaging our 'ōlelo makuahine (mother language), it is important to consider the conceptual assemblage produced by the definitions of a word, which are

simultaneously distinct and overlapping. By studying the different definitions of a word, we apprehend the world that the word attempts to maintain and are thus better able to navigate its rivers of kaona.¹⁴ In her analysis of the word “pono” in mele lāhui (songs written in honor of the nation), Leilani Basham offers an instructive model: “The reader should bear in mind that, although enumerated in the style of dictionaries, as if they are separate, different meanings, in actuality, each of the meanings are interconnected and overlapping” (154). In the case of *mo’o*, examining the different bodies of meaning summoned by this four-letter word affirms *mo’o* as an ‘Ōiwi concept of relationality and reveals the embedded role of *kia’i* (protectors).

In her M.A. thesis “Ka Po’e Mo’o Akua,” which is the most comprehensive survey of *mo’o* in Native Hawaiian literature to date, Brown is the first to deconstruct the conceptual assemblage of *mo’o* toward a meticulous analysis of these *akua* in Native Hawaiian literature.¹⁵ She explains how the lizard body forms the central node to which the nine other definitions of

¹⁴ *Kaona* is an ‘Ōiwi literary device that is generally translated as “hidden meaning,” which will be discussed later in this critical introduction. At this point, however, it is significant to note that *kaona* has been deployed throughout Native Hawaiian history toward artistic as well as political goals, as Noenoe Silva demonstrates in the context of *mele* (songs) in the Hawaiian Kingdom. In *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, Silva argues that *kaona* was “crucial in creating and maintaining national solidarity against the colonial maneuvers of the U.S. missionaries, the oligarchy, and the U.S. politicians. Without knowledge of the cultural codes in Hawaiian, foreigners who understood the language could still be counted on to miss the *kaona*” (8). See Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, Duke UP, 2004. See also Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa’s discussion of the different levels of *kaona* in her introduction to *A Legendary Tradition of Kamapua‘a: The Hawaiian Pig-God*, Bishop, 2003, pp. viii – ix. For a more recent analysis of *kaona* in contemporary Hawaiian literature, see Brandy Nālani McDougall, *Finding Meaning: Kaona and Contemporary Hawaiian Literature*, U of Arizona P, 2016.

¹⁵ Brown is currently finishing a book manuscript on *mo’o*, which is based on her M.A. thesis and forthcoming from University of Hawai‘i Press in 2020. Since her M.A. thesis is not available to the public, specific language from the M.A. thesis is not cited here. However, as is demonstrated in this critical introduction, Brown is the leading authority on *mo’o* in Native Hawaiian literature and contributes her knowledge in scholarship as well as creative writing.

mo'o can be traced. For instance, the vertebrae of lizards effectively visualize the concept of succession, whether it be of a genealogical line or stories. *Mo'o* is a recognizable prefix in words such as *mo'okū'auhau* (genealogy), *mo'olelo* (history, literature), and *mo'opuna* (grandchild). Brown also emphasizes similarities between the markings on lizard skin and the brindled markings of a dog, which she further compares to the long and thin characteristics of mountain ridges, narrow paths, and raised surfaces between irrigation streamlets (“*Mo'o mo'olelo*”).

To Brown's analysis, I propose another theme to unify the conceptual assemblage of *mo'o*. In my dissertation, I position *mo'o* as *kia'i* of *wai* (water) and *waiwai* (prosperity). In my writing process, as I reviewed the different land formations defined as *mo'o*, I perceived a pattern that evokes the role of protector and I started to make what I think to be exciting connections.

What does a mountain ridge and a raised surface between irrigation streamlets have in common? On a basic level, both are elevated land formations. A ridge is the uppermost part of a mountain. The raised surface between irrigation streamlets is uppermost to the watery expanse it traverses. Significantly, elevated surfaces often function as sites of guardianship and authority since they are higher and offer a wider field of vision. From atop a mountain ridge, for example, a *kia'i* is able to surveil their *kuleana*, monitor the comings-and-goings on their lands and waterways, and enjoy the scope of prosperity of the place they protect. The wider perspective gained at elevated positions also helps *kia'i* to brainstorm travel routes and strategies of resistance that may not be so clear from a lower vantage point.

Beyond 'āina-based definitions, the motif of that which is “uppermost” continues. Descendants are the newest or uppermost of a family line. Stories and legends stand out from

ordinary conversation by virtue of their lyricism and narrative expression of cultural values and ancestral knowledge. In their contrast with the lighter base coat, the darker streaks of brindled animals stand out with eye-catching allure. Finally, in a canoe, gunwales are the uppermost edges of the hull.

It is noteworthy that the favored wood for gunwales was ‘ahakea.¹⁶ Esteemed for its hardness and yellowish color, wood from ‘ahakea trees were used for gunwale strakes and left unpainted to contrast with the darker wood of the hull.¹⁷ The yellow color of ‘ahakea conjures the yellow color associated with mo‘o presence. In his version of the Hi‘iakaikapoliopole mo‘olelo, which was published in the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ka Na‘i Aupuni* in 1906, Ho‘oulumāhiehie specifically attributes lena as a signifying color of mo‘o. He writes: “O ka hoailona iho la no keia o ka moo, he lena na mea apau e pili aku ai lakou” (“Ka Moololo”). In the 2006 translation from Awaiaulu Press, Puakea M. Nogelmeier provides the following translation: “This is the sign of the mo‘o. Everything they get near yellows” (147). Lena is a yellowish color related to the ‘ōlena (turmeric) plant. The young rhizomes, or underground stems, of ‘ōlena were a common source of yellow coloring for Hawaiian kapa and were also used in traditional Hawaiian medicine and purification ceremonies.¹⁸

¹⁶ I am indebted to Luseana Raas for teaching me about ‘ahakea.

¹⁷ See Isabella Aiona Abbott, *Lā‘au Hawai‘i: Traditional Hawaiian Uses of Plants*, Bishop Museum, 1992, p. 81.

¹⁸ For more information on the medicinal uses of ‘ōlena, see Isabella Aiona Abbott, *Lā‘au Hawai‘i: Traditional Hawaiian Uses of Plants*, Bishop Museum, 1992.

Furthermore, 'ahakea are cited in the fourth wā (era) of the Kumulipo, the same wā in which mo'ō first appear: "Hanau ka Okea noho i kai / Kia'i 'ia e ka Ahakea noho i uka" (Johnson 58). Lili'uokalani translates: "The Okea was born and lived in the sea / Guarded by the ahakea that grew in the forest" (17). When we consider the aforementioned intersections, protection can be seen as an embedded trait across mo'ō definitions. Writing and healing are recursive processes, and as I wrote and rewrote the poems in this dissertation, I was also healing from old wounds. Grappling with the ways mo'ō conceptually indexed sites and strategies of protection was a steady source of encouragement. My mo'ō, my kia'i.¹⁹

In Ancestral Places: Understanding Kanaka Geographies, Katrina-Ann R.

Kapā'anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira emphasizes how the concept of mo'ō is "quite indicative of a Kanaka worldview that privileges the intelligence of the collective body, rather than that of a single brilliant individual...Mo'ō is a series, a culmination of insight gained and traditions practiced by the Kanaka community. We follow in the many footsteps of our ancestors; we know because our ancestors knew" (109-110). In addition to centering the mo'ō figure, this poetry collection also invokes *mo'ō* by attempting to create an intergenerational archive of

¹⁹ In *Archaeology of Oahu*, J. Gilbert McAllister makes the following observation of fishponds: "A small thatched watch house was placed near the gate of the pond, and a woman generally kept guard. Aside from the guards, according to Lahilahi Webb, the walls of a pond were tapu to women" (30). Again, intersections between gender, water, and protection emerge, specifically the relationship between gender and subjects of protection. Mo'ō, who are predominantly wahine, are known as guardians of fishponds. Although beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is useful to propose several questions: Is it possible that McAllister's observation reveals an important epistemological connection between akua, wai, and kanaka? Did Kanaka Maoli see the effectiveness of mo'ō as kia'i and therefore create a parallel system of protection in which the kuleana of guarding fishponds remained in the hands of kia'i wahine (woman-identified protectors)? Is this an extension of mo'ō in the lives of Kanaka Maoli? See McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, U of Michigan, 1933.

mo‘o descendants and related experiences of desire, belonging, trauma, and healing. As a queer ‘Ōiwi poet, I find Jack Halberstam’s definition of queer archives both elegant and useful: “The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity” (169-170). The strength of Halberstam’s definition lies in the connection between theory, community, and art. As this project strives to be a full-length collection of queer ‘Ōiwi poetry, it is important that I emphasize the value of theory and creativity sharing space.

In the rich and rigorous tradition of Native Hawaiian theory, Kanaka Maoli scholars invoke mo‘okū‘auhau not only to illustrate its foundational epistemological role but also to identify how one has inherited and earned the kuleana of research. As an oral, literary, and rhetorical device, mo‘okū‘auhau encompasses the composition and recitation of genealogy. More than a list of names, mo‘okū‘auhau reveal important details of one’s relationships to people, places, and responsibilities. Mo‘oku‘āuhau are statements of kuleana, and therefore an assertion of identity. In *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen: Reconstructing Native Hawaiian Intellectual History*, Native Hawaiian historian and language expert Noenoe Silva introduces the concept of “mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness” in her mapping of ‘Ōiwi intellectual history. Integral to her analysis of the writing careers of Joseph Ho‘ona‘auao Kānepu‘u and Joseph Moku‘ōhai Poepoe, “mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness” is “an ethic and orientation to the world” (4). Silva goes on to explain that writers like Kānepu‘u and Poepoe embody mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness by drawing from ancestral knowledge and producing work that speaks to Kanaka Maoli in their time and to future descendants (6). In other words, “mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness” emphasizes the interlocking kuleana to listen, record, and interpret. In Hawaiian culture, the question of

who you are cannot be answered meaningfully without knowing where and who you come from. For many Kanaka Maoli, these questions are traced to the Kumulipo.

It is worthwhile at this point to compare two Native Hawaiian translations of mo'ō references in the Kumulipo. As a mele ko'ihonua, or cosmogonic chant, the Kumulipo is a foundational text in which 'Ōiwi narratives of creation, partnership, and balance are recorded. To consider the depiction of mo'ō in translations by Lili'uokalani and Rubellite Kawena Johnson is illuminating because the work produced reveal 'Ōiwi attitudes to mo'ō at the end of the 19th century (Lili'uokalani) and through the 20th century (Johnson).

In the Kumulipo, the fourth wā outlines the birth of amphibians and reptiles, half-land and half-sea creatures that represent intermediary relationships. It is tempting, as American folklorist and anthropologist Martha Beckwith does in her 1951 translation, to view these creatures as a “prototype of the growth and spread of man over earth as human history emerges out of the dim past” (75). Yet an 'Ōiwi worldview acknowledges spirit in human and non-human beings. In other words, although kanaka are connected to lands, waters, and animals, the former is by no means the telos of the latter. Reciprocity and familial connection underline these relationships, not a human-centric conception of evolution.²⁰ Mo'ō emerge in the second paukū (stanza) of the fourth wā. More specifically, the first direct reference appears in line 447: "Hanau ka po ia mo'onanea" (Johnson 57).

²⁰ In a distinct but connected strategy of centering Kanaka Maoli worldviews, Kamana Beamer's theory of 'Ōiwi optics prioritizes Native Hawaiian perspectives of political leadership and intellectual history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 'Ōiwi optics is deployed as a corrective to the colonial lens that dominates discourses of governance in Hawaiian history. See Beamer, *No Mākou ka Mana: Liberating the Nation*, Kamehameha, 2014.

In her 1897 translation, Lili'uokalani offers the following translation: "The birth night of the lazy monster" (16). Although laziness may seem by some a reasonable translation of the word "nanea," the interpretation of "mo'onanea" as "lazy monster" participates in a literary habit of villainizing mo'o. "Nanea" more accurately denotes relaxation and joy. In 2001 Rubellite Kawena Johnson provides a different interpretation: "The night gave birth to the lizard at rest" (57). In the rest of her translation of this second paukū, Johnson reveals an important diversity of mo'o that help to contradict any one-size-fits-all approach to this class of shapeshifters. Although the word *mo'o* only appears in lines 447 and 448, Johnson's translation suggests that the next eight lines refer to lizards (see chart on the following page). While translations of the name Mo'oinanea may seem secondary to depictions of Mo'oinanea in mo'olelo, naming is an important practice in Hawaiian culture, and to consider, even briefly, the choices in connotation made by Lili'uokalani and Johnson is to illustrate the scope of how Native Hawaiians working closely with mo'olelo apprehended the mo'o figure. "Lazy" and "at rest" shape an archive of interpretations with which the mo'o-affirming poems in this collection engage.

Furthermore, this broad overview of mo'o in the Kumulipo is put in compelling juxtaposition to the mo'olelo *Keaomelele*, in which the supreme Mo'oinanea is described with reverence and awe by the author Moses Manu. *Keaomelele* was serialized in the Hawaiian language newspaper *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* from September 6, 1884 to June 27, 1885, five years before Kalākaua ordered the Kumulipo to be written down in 1889 and 13 years before Lili'uokalani published her translation of the Kumulipo in 1897. In *Keaomelele*, Manu explains how Mo'oinanea directs her entire mo'o 'ohana to leave Kuaihelani to celebrate the

Type of Mo'o	Johnson Translation	Citation in Kumupilo	Johnson Translation
mo'o nanea	lizard at rest	Hana ka po ia mo'onanea (447)	The night gave birth to the lizard at rest (447)
mo'o niania	smooth lizard	Hauna ka po ia mo'oni(a)nia (448)	The night slithered with the lizard of smooth skin (448)
mo'o pilipili	clinging lizards	Hana ka po ia pilipili (449)	The night gave birth to those that cling (449)
mo'o kalakala	rough-skin lizard	Kukala ka po ia kalakala (450)	The night proclaimed those with rough skin (450)
mo'o ka'uka'u	hesitant lizard	Hana ka po ia ka'uka'u (451)	The night gave birth to the hesitant (451)
mo'o palaka	indifferent lizard	Hana ka po ia palaka (452)	The night gave birth with those indifferent (452)
mo'o ihu kunini	sharp-nosed lizard	Hauna ka po ia ka ihu kunikuni (453)	The night gave birth to the sharp-nosed (453)
mo'o kūpelepele	indolent lizard	Hana ka po ia kupelepele (454)	The night dug out the indolent (454)
mo'o kele	mud-dwelling lizard	Hana ka po ia kele (455)	The night gave birth to mud-dwellers (455)
mo'o meheheu	track-leaving lizard	Kali ka po ia meheheu (456)	The night paused for track leavers (456)

Table 1. Catalogue of mo'o in Rubellite Kawena Johnson's translation of the Kumupilo. Compiled by No'u Revilla, Jan. 2019.

pilina between Keaomelemele and Kaumailiula: "e like me ka mana nui i loaia Kamooianea, no laila ua holo kona manao e hele pu me kona ohana a pau ma kahi i kauoha ia oia" (70). Pukui translates: "As she possessed great mana, she decided that her whole family must accompany her to the place to which she had been invited" (157). Far from a "lazy monster," Mo'oinanea is an organized and decisive leader. Her genealogical, political, and creative powers are highlighted throughout the mo'olelo of *Keaomelemele*.²¹

Significantly, translations of the Mo'oinanea name beyond the Kumulipo reveal links between mo'o as models of erotic sovereignty, which is a central claim in this dissertation. If sovereignty is the right to govern oneself, then erotic sovereignty is the right to govern one's body in relation to desire and belonging. While sovereignty should denote comprehensive and intersectional liberation for a whole people and not just those who represent the status quo, the reality of U.S. settler colonialism and Christian heteropatriarchy in Hawai'i requires precise attention to distinct and overlapping structures of power, specifically through the act of naming. I use the term *erotic sovereignty* to center a framework of decolonial love that pays specific attention to Indigenous strategies of resistance to U.S. settler colonialism and Christian heteropatriarchy.

In *The Polynesian Family System in Kā'ū*, Pukui and E.S. Craighill Handy model, albeit unwittingly, a strategy of erotic sovereignty in their translation of the Mo'oinanea name. While neither Lili'uokalani or Johnson note sexual kaona, Pukui and Handy translate Mo'oinanea as the "lizard-that-enjoys-itself" (125). In the very name Mo'oinanea is embedded both the right

²¹ Again, in addition to *Keaomelemele*, Manu's depiction of mo'o, including Haumea and Mo'oinanea, in "He Moolelo Kaa Hawaii Ke Kaa Nui Weliweli Mawaena O Pele-Keahialoa me Waka-Keaka-ikawai" is also foundational to the archive of mo'o mo'olelo.

to and power of self-pleasure.²² Pukui and Handy's translation suggests an autoeroticism that is neither perverse nor infantile. Mo'oinanea is a sex-positive and sex-innovative figure.²³ Furthermore, as mo'o are shapeshifters of many bodies and protectors of water, the notion of a mo'o who enjoys her own body increases the number of possible intersections between pleasure, knowledge and power. As Moses demonstrates in his mo'olelo of Pele and Waka, Mo'oinanea is the highest-ranking mo'o akua and the mana of her name cannot be ignored.

For this dissertation, the relationship between the "nanea" of Mo'oinanea and the concept of hō'ola is valuable. Nanea and hō'ola are distinct but connected states of being. Whereas hō'ola denotes the capacity to live, revive, and bring back to life, nanea outlines practices of pleasure and replenishment. In other words, hō'ola and nanea offer one possible mapping of two major claims in this dissertation: first, the erotic is integral to political sovereignty; and second, what we need to survive is not always what we need to thrive. By her name alone, Mo'oinanea models to mo'o descendants today that nanea, or pleasure, does not require a detour through the penetrative male gaze and settler heteronormative systems that commodify Indigenous women. Erotic sovereignty is inscribed in mo'o mo'okū'auhau.

As mo'okū'auhau defines an 'Ōiwi worldview, the literal and symbolic value of iwi kuamo'o (backbone or vertebrae) is logically cited to animate a Hawaiian sense of connection. In *The Polynesian Family System in Kā'ū*, Mary Kawena Pukui explains: "The imagery of mo'o

²² It is noteworthy that lizards are parthenogenetic creatures who have the capacity to reproduce without the help of a male. I am grateful to Marie Alohalani Brown for bringing this to my attention (Personal communication, 5 Feb. 2019).

²³ 'Iolani N.K. Antonio makes an insightful connection between Pukui and Handy's translation and Haunani-Kay Trask's poem "Nā Wāhine Noa." See footnote 33 in Antonio's M.A. thesis "Ka Waiwai o Ka Mo'o," p.61.

(lizard, with vertebrae visible) and *kua mo’o* (vertebrae backbone) is apt and obvious as a simile for sequence of descendents in contiguous unbroken articulation” (197). During this project, I struggled with Pukui’s remarks on a “sequence of descendents in contiguous unbroken articulation.” Although the contiguity of Pukui’s sequence arguably advocates healthy relationships based on direct contact between living descendents and their lineage, the ideal of the “unbroken” troubled me.²⁴ What happens when the sequence breaks because the mo’o suffers any of the myriad scales of violence – illegal overthrow, occupation, banning of a language, rape, self-loathing homophobia? Is my goal as a poet to aspire to wholesomeness?

Returning to the definitions of mo’o was regenerative. Of the 10 listed definitions, Pukui and Elbert note the following denotation: “Small fragment, as of tapa, not attached to a larger piece” (“mo’o”). I was drawn to this description not only for its acknowledgment of the capacity for attachment but also for its gesture to the practice of loving detachment. For me, a sense of choice and sovereignty defined the phrase “not attached to a larger piece.”²⁵ Of course, my reading is informed by my surviving multiple cycles of sexual violence from within and beyond my biological family since I was young. Was I seeing something in this definition that was not

²⁴ It is important to reiterate that my response to Pukui here is meant to illustrate the effects of my trauma on my approach to belonging. The links I discuss in this section do not appear in Pukui’s work but rather reveal the work of associative writing in a mo’o poetics. It is also significant to note the role of religion in this dissertation as ‘Ōiwi scholarship like that of Pukui’s was indubitably shaped by Christian values while my work explicitly departs from my Catholic upbringing. I intend to elaborate this comparison in the critical companion text to this creative dissertation.

²⁵ What becomes the “larger piece” and the different ways we practice attachment as we heal is taken up by the theme of belonging in this dissertation. Some specific examples include: “Sestina for Sisters Who Pray with Fire,” “Dirtiest Grand,” and “Shapeshifters Banned, Censored, or Otherwise Shit-listed, aka Chosen Family.”

there? Was I seeing a girl “not attached to a larger piece” because the “larger piece” was rape, patriarchy, homophobia, and victim-blaming?

Yes, I needed that mo‘o.

I needed her to be so bold in her detachment because the world was trying to kill her.

To meditate on the stakes of “contiguous unbroken articulation,” I juxtapose two narratives of connection that use the metaphor of a bridge. In the first, Mo‘oinanea extends her sacred back as an act of family duty. In the second, the metaphor of the bridge is problematized by poet Donna Kate Rushin in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. While these examples represent two different fields of inquiry and intellectual production, the following discussion of bridge metaphors is meant to map my own intellectual mo‘okū‘auhau that honors Native Hawaiian literature as well as the intersectional feminism of women of color in the continental United States in the 1970s and 1980s. In a Hawaiian context, Mo‘oinanea shapeshifts her body into a bridge, which not only models the “contiguous unbroken articulation” that Pukui cites but also activates what Silva outlines as “mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness” in *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen*. In the context of intersectional feminism, feminists of color in *This Bridge Called My Back* reveal complexities in acts of passage that remind me to be vigilant of power as I continue to produce decolonial research, poetry, and pedagogy. The juxtaposition of the following bridge metaphors helps to reinforce the generative tension between “contiguous unbroken articulation” and mo‘o as fragment.

According to an unpublished version of the Hainakolo mo‘olelo told to Pukui by her mother, Mo‘oinanea transforms her body into a bridge, which she stretches from Waolani in Nu‘uanu on O‘ahu to Kuaihelani in wao akua (realm of the gods). Mo‘oinanea shapeshifts into a

bridge so that her mo'opuna, Hainakolo, can join her kāne and conceive a child, thus perpetuating Mo'oinanea's lineage (Beckwith 507). In this mo'olelo, the metaphor of the bridge not only invokes shapeshifting specific to a benevolent ancestral mo'o but also demonstrates the positive effects of the "contiguous unbroken articulation" that Pukui relates to mo'o in *The Polynesian Family System in Kā'ū*. Here a "contiguous unbroken articulation" is shaped by aloha not abuse, futurity not foreclosure.²⁶

The extension of Mo'oinanea's back is grounded in the cultural logic of mo'okū'auhau in Hawai'i nei. In *This Bridge Called My Back*, the bridge metaphor is problematized from a different cultural standpoint, one that reflects feminists of color grappling with racism, sexism, and homophobia in 1980s America. Although distinct fields, Native Hawaiian literature and intersectional feminism are foundational to my intellectual mo'okū'auhau and significantly shape the poems in this collection. *This Bridge Called My Back*, which was co-edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, engages positive and negative implications of the woman-as-bridge metaphor. On the one hand, women's bridging bodies signal the feminist potential of cross-cultural, transnational collaborations and solidarities. On the other hand, however, a woman's bridging body is not always voluntary. A woman's bridging body may be forcibly subject to imperial mobility, militarization, sexual violence, and commodification. Can a bridge be connection and refusal simultaneously?

²⁶ Mo'o are not always presented in benevolent metaphors of bridges. In the mo'olelo of Hi'iakaikapoliopole, for example, Piliamo'o and Nohoamo'o are the kia'i of Wailuku river on Hawai'i island. In Kapihenui's version, the mo'o are identified as ancestors of Hi'iakaikapoliopole and she is identified as their mo'opuna. Yet in their protection of passage across "ka papa kahulihuli o Wailuku," Piliamo'o and Nohoamo'o are depicted as antagonists. See Kapihenui, "He Moololo No Hiiakaikapoliopole," *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, vol. 1, no. 18, 23 Jan. 1862, p. 1.

To this question, Donna Kate Rushin delivers a passionate response in “The Bridge Poem.” Indeed the speaker of “Bridge” scorns the tokenism of her body and rejects the exploitation of women of color in the guise of multiculturalism. The speaker plainly states: “I’m sick of seeing and touching / Both sides of things / Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody” (xxi). As a survivor of incest and rape, I was also sick. Although far from what Pukui arguably intended by advocating mo’o as heroes of “contiguous unbroken articulation,” the expectation of unbroken-ness manifested for years in my family as silence for the sake of “peace” and men’s reputations. Rushin’s defiance is healing. Like Rushin, I do not value connection that discards accountability and reciprocity. A bridge is multi-directional and connection is a responsibility that should not sacrifice self-understanding or self-love.

Here I take refuge in the interpretive framework of Māhealani Ahia. Like Pukui, Ahia invokes the metaphor of iwi kuamo’o to discuss mo’okū’auhau. “Every vertebrae is like a node,” she explains, “a particular story of a generation. And the longer the tail, the stronger and more stable the balance” (“Kihawahine”). To this mo’o-centric definition, Ahia provides the imperative reminder that mo’o possess the mana of regeneration. Her reminder is necessary because stories are not immune to violence, and sometimes small fragments are not attached to a larger piece because they had to sever their own tail to escape. Yet, as Ahia elaborates, even if the mo’o tail (literal or figurative) is severed, new tails will grow.

He Po'e Kia'i: Mo'ō as Protectors of Wai and Waiwai

Although Pukui and Elbert's *Hawaiian Dictionary* does not list any negative descriptions of mo'ō, we are often depicted as terrifying monsters who cause unnecessary harm through their jealousy and reckless tempers. Furthermore, mo'ō are notoriously pitted against the Pele clan, who frequently emerge as morally superior victors to the arrogant, territorial yet ultimately vanquished mo'ō. In Nathaniel Bright Emerson's version of the Pele and Hi'iakaikapoliopole mo'olelo, for example, mo'ō are "demonlike creatures" (*Pele and Hiiaka* 84). It is subsequently noted that "the extermination root-and-branch, of the whole cursed tribe of mo'ō from one end of the land to the other" was a "side-purpose" of Hi'iakaikapoliopole. Emerson's remark that the extinction of mo'ō was merely a "side-purpose" implies that mo'ō even as a collective of akua were significantly less powerful and easily dispensable.²⁷

In a refreshing description in 1870, however, Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau portrays mo'ō as effective and judicious protectors: "he poe kiai keia me ka malama i ka pomaikai o ka ia, a me ke ola pu kekahi o ke kino, a me ka pilikia ulia wale maluna o ke kino a me ke ola o ka ohana a me na hoaaloha" (*Ke Au Okoa* 1870). Pukui translates this passage: "They were the guardians who brought the blessing of abundance of fish, and of health to the body, and who warded off illness and preserved the welfare of the family and thier friends" (*Ka Po'e Kahiko* 84). Kamakau's attention to the kuleana of mo'ō as kia'i invokes Brown's methodology of

²⁷ By including Emerson's description of mo'ō, I do not mean to equate non-'Ōiwi perspectives with 'Ōiwi perspectives. Instead, by referencing Emerson, I intend to illuminate a wide range of literary considerations to which contemporary mo'ō mo'olelo respond. Given the vitriolic representation of mo'ō in Emerson's work, it is instructive to show how Pele-positive versions of mo'olelo are not exclusive to debates between Native Hawaiians. The rivalry between Pele and mo'ō 'ohana was perceived as significant even by outsiders, so my attempt to reclaim mo'ō narratives in this collection of poetry responds to a diversity of layered antagonisms.

hō'ola-ho'omake, which significantly acknowledges cycles of life and death. As intermediary figures guarding thresholds between land and water, health and sickness, skin and viscera, mo'o are kia'i of the in-between.

In addition to literary depictions, mo'o are presented as kia'i in visual art as well. In the work of Native Hawaiian poet and multimedia artist 'Imaikalani Kalahēle, mo'o are often depicted as watchful and authoritative. To his poem for Hale Mōhalu in volume one of *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, for example, Kalahēle pairs a black and white drawing of a protest scene advocating patients' rights at the once 11-acre treatment facility for people with Hansen's disease. Using portrait boxes, Kalahēle not only adds depth to the overall drawing but also focuses the viewer's attention. Through an aesthetic series of framing, viewers are directed to the middle of the page, where Native Hawaiians are demanding the protection of other Native Hawaiians.

At this point it is important to remember that in 1983 residents were forcibly evicted from Hale Mōhalu and the facility was bulldozed. Survivor Bernard Punikaia remembers the event as "a day of terror" (Leidemann). With such tension between hō'ola and ho'omake in this drawing, it is no surprise that Kalahēle chooses to portray a mo'o as kia'i. Spanning the length of the second portrait box is a large mo'o, whose head wraps around the top left corner while its tail coils at the bottom left corner. The only eye visible to the readers looks accusingly not at the protest scene but rather at the readers themselves, who are arguably implicated in the ho'omake of Hale Mōhalu's history. Kamakau's discussion of mo'o justice is again instructive:

Aia ke kiai ke nana mai me ke aloha i ka poe ilihune a me na keiki makua ole, a o ka lawe ae la no ia, o na kiai nei i na ia a pau ana i haawi mai la na ka poe kiekie a

me ka poe haahaa, a nana no i haawi mai na ka poe waiwai a me ka poe ilihune,
a i ka ike ana o ua kiai la ua hoopilikia ia ka pono o ka lehulehu, o ka lawe ae la
no ia o ua kiai la i na pomaikai o ka ia a pau, aole e koe kekahi, i koe ka pohaku i
ka paakiki, a i koe ka lepo i ka puehu, aole e na ka lili i ke kalokalo, aia no ka na o
ka huhu a mihi me ka uku, a pela wale no ka pomaikai e hoi hou ai maluna o ka
aina (“Ka Moolelo Hawaii”)

Then the guardain *mo’o*, who loved the poor and the fatherless, would take
away all the “fish” she had given for high and low alike, for the rich and the poor.
When she saw the rights of the many abused, she took away the blessing
altogether, leaving nothing but the rocks which endure and the earth which
crumbles. Her chagrin (*lili*) could not be appeased by supplication (*kalokalo*) but
by penitence and restitution; that was the only way to bring prosperity back to
the land. (Pukui *Ka Po’e Kahiko*, 85)

To emphasize the scale of pono adjudicated by *mo’o*, Kamakau utilizes *’ēko’a*, the Hawaiian
poetic device of oppositional pairings.²⁸ Indeed if some people are made to go hungry, despite
the abundance made possible by *mo’o*, everyone will starve, from *ka po’e ki’eki’e* (the rich) to

²⁸ For a groundbreaking discussion of *’ēko’a* as *meiwi mo’okalaleo*, or Native Hawaiian ethno-literary device, see Hiapo Perreira, “He Ki’ina Ho’okuana’ike Maui Hawai’i ma ke Kālailai Mo’okalaleo.”

ka po'e ha'aha'a (the poor). Thus the accusatory stare of Kalahela's mo'o is a warning. E mālama kekahi i kekahi (take care of each other)...or else.²⁹

In this dissertation, I emphasize the role of mo'o as kia'i as inspired by the rhetorical strategies of contemporary Hawaiian activists working to protect Mauna Kea from further desecration. Kia'i Mauna activists advance the role of protectors in order to emphasize Hawaiian practices of aloha 'āina (love of the land) and kapu aloha (a code of conduct that emphasizes respect and compassion during direct action). Related movements in Maui also deploy the language of "protectors" to identify Indigenous non-violent direct action against settler colonialism, extractive capitalism, and police brutality. Importantly, the use of "protectors" combats attempts in the media to depict kia'i as violent protestors. Elevating the kuleana of protection is an effective rhetorical strategy that redirects focus on the emotional and cultural labor of aloha 'āina activism.

Emphasizing mo'o as kia'i also underlines the intricate kuleana of protection, from the personal to the institutional. It is no surprise that in a collection of poetry addressing sexual violence, the potential and failures of protection are significant as is the related issue of belief. Movements to protect Indigenous waterways and Indigenous women are similarly bound by

²⁹ Kalahela's poetry and visual art are incredibly mo'o-centric and deserve a more comprehensive analysis, which I intend to provide in the critical companion text to this creative dissertation. For the sake of reference, however, Kalahela positions a mo'o as kia'i in another black-and-white drawing in the inaugural issue of *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*. Similar to the mo'o paired to his Hale Mōhalu poem, the mo'o in "H-3. A series of questions" is a towering figure who watches over a highly contested place on O'ahu. See Kalahela, "H-3. A series of questions," *'Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, vol. 1, Dec. 1998, pp. 164-165. Brandy Nālani McDougall analyzes Kalahela's work in the second chapter of her book *Finding Meaning: Kaona and Contemporary Hawaiian Literature*. See McDougall, *Finding Meaning*, U of Arizona P, 2016, pp. 66-71.

Indigenous conceptions of the sacred. In Native Hawaiian culture, the integral role of wai and wahine spans from wao akua to wao kanaka (realm of humans). Yet both wai and wahine are systematically targeted by extractive capitalism, environmental racism, militarization, heteropatriarchy, and sexual violence. Consequently, this dissertation explores the kuleana of protection through poetry. Specifically, by centering the Native Hawaiian figure of mo'ō as kia'i, I engage the metaphor of shapeshifting as both a strategy of survival and an act of regeneration. Mo'ō, who represent a class of akua, are shapeshifting water protectors whose kuleana to wai and waiwai position them as models of erotic sovereignty and transformative healing.

And the lizards fuse into her skin: Contemporary Mo'ō Mo'olelo³⁰

Like traditional mo'olelo, contemporary mo'ō narratives are important sources of knowledge and inspiration. As this dissertation is a collection of poetry guided by the mo'ō figure, I engage three contemporary works of creative writing as positive examples of mo'ō-centric storytelling: Brown's short story "Dreams of Bones and Other Things," Brandy Nālani McDougall's short story "Nā 'Ili'ili," and Lōkahi Antonio's poem "Calling All Mo'ō!"

³⁰ This section title takes language from Brown's short story "Dreams of Bones and Other Things." Before the mo'ō makes physical contact with her human male lover, she pools her mana by embodying the different mo'ō around her: "The woman begins chanting softly and the lizards fuse into her skin." For the complete story, see Brown, "Dreams of Bones and Other Things." *Star Advertiser*, 31 Oct. 2010. A more detailed discussion of mo'ō and auditory imagery follows a brief analysis of McDougall's short story "Nā 'Ili'ili."

In 2010 Brown's award-winning short story "Dreams of Bones and Other Things" was published in the *Star Advertiser*.³¹ The short story depicts a relationship between a mo'ō wahine and a human male lover. While "Dreams" may seem like a simple story of mo'ō seduction, it is, as Brown herself describes, "a short story that takes traditional views of mo'ō and combines them into one symbolic depiction through the medium of the short story" (Personal communication). Beginning with the first-person narrative of a human man whose wife is dreaming of buried bones while he dreams of a beautiful woman, Brown's short story quickly shifts to the third-person narrative of a mo'ō wahine who successfully lures the dreaming husband to her cave and conceives a child. "Dreams" concludes with the death of the human lover and a happy mo'ō family.

"Dreams" is instructive for several reasons. First, access to the mo'ō is restricted as both physical descriptions of and narrative access to her are partial, never exhaustive. For example, when the mo'ō's body first appears in the story, her feet are immersed in a shallow pool of water and her face is hidden "beneath a cascade of long-dark reddish-brown hair" (Brown, "Dreams"). In the mo'ō's first encounter with her human lover, observable actions, like her stringing a lei 'āpiki³² and summoning the mo'ō 'alā (mo'ō of 'alā-stone), are clear and decisive. Yet the legibility of her body remains elusive: "Her face shimmers like radiating heat; wavering briefly between human and reptilian before settling back into human guise" ("Dreams").

³¹ Brown's short story earned second place and a \$100 prize in the *Star Advertiser's* 2010 Halloween Fiction Contest. More than 200 entries were submitted. See Christie Wilson, "Ghost story winner inspired by dad's spooky tendencies," *Star Advertiser*, 31 Oct. 2010.

³² 'Āpiki is another name for 'ilima. According to the *Hawaiian Dictionary*, the 'ilima lei was known as lei 'āpiki "because it was believed to attract mischievous spirits; some did not wear this lei but others consider it lucky." See "'āpiki" in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*.

Invoking cultural associations to mo'ō with that which is hidden and concealed, Brown's physical descriptions make it difficult for the reader to consume the mo'ō body. In the context of my dissertation, I interpret Brown's careful negotiation of mo'ō visibility as a refusal to be complicit in the objectifying gaze of settler patriarchy. Like the human lover, readers may see the mo'ō but cannot seize her.

Indeed, while the story begins in the human lover's first-person singular point of view, his narrative control lasts a mere three paragraphs, and majority of the story unfolds from a limited third-person point of view. Even in narrative, readers are not entitled to intimacy with the mo'ō character. In fact it is the human male lover whose dreams are dominated by the intermediary figure. Significantly, in Hawaiian spirituality, dreams are valid forms of communication and intelligence.

In *Nānā I Ke Kumu: Volume 2*, Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine A. Lee explain: "The *hō'ike na ka pō*, the revelatory dream, nearly always brought a message from the 'aumākua. These ancestor gods spoke clearly or in allusion; they appeared visually in any of their mystical plant, animal, or mineral forms; they hid their appearance in symbol and allegory" (172). Dreams channeled communication from akua and 'aumakua and were consequently considered important sources of information. Manulani Aluli Meyer, a Native Hawaiian scholar of 'Ōiwi epistemology, elaborates: "The fact that *hō'ike*, the receiving of knowledge, is done via dream states pushes the boundaries of what epistemology is and can be." She continues: "Sensory information for Native Hawaiians, then, is not only mediated by one's living resources, but by a whole host of historical and metaphorical images that continue to explain, educate, and inspire" (107). In Brown's short story, the mo'ō enters and directs the dreams of her human

lover, which, in a Hawaiian worldview, establishes intelligence and divine authority.

Furthermore, by transgressing the divide between dream and reality to bring her lover “deep into the valley of her dwelling,” Brown’s mo’o not only pushes the boundaries of epistemology, as Meyer discusses, but also models erotic sovereignty (“Dreams”).

Demonstrably, the mo’o innovates relationality and navigates multiple worlds in order to conceive a child. While some may claim that the death of the male lover only perpetuates the murderous reputation of mo’o and exalts violence, there are key details to consider. First, the male lover is married to a human woman, who he does not tell of his dreams about the mo’o. Arguably, his infidelity becomes a punishable but useful offense: “He has served his purpose” (“Dreams”). Second, the death of the male lover is connected to the birth of the mo’o’s daughter. Succession is emphasized, not death. Third, the bones of the male lover remain active in the story. In Native Hawaiian culture, a person’s bones are sacred, even those of an enemy. Death, in Brown’s story, is neither unprincipled nor random. Instead, the human lover’s bones are used to make a rattle for the mo’o infant, which continues to delight her even in the final sentence of the story. Brown’s mo’o embodies pono (righteous balance). As Brown emphasizes in her scholarly work, mo’o, like water, are tasked to care for and adjudicate the properties of hō’ola and ho’omake. The fate of the cheating husband does not exalt violence but rather activates a balance between life (mo’o daughter) and death (human lover).

Brown’s short story is also a significant index of mo’o skin. Although a detailed analysis of mo’o skin in “Dreams” is beyond the scope of this introduction, it is worth gesturing to here if only to illustrate the promise of contemporary mo’o mo’olelo in the intersections of Native Hawaiian literature, literary studies, and Indigenous queer theory. Indeed throughout

“Dreams,” mo’o skin manifests as a site of gathering; a site of collective identity formation; an agent of memory, control, and consent; a motif of shapeshifting and intermediary subjectivity; and an efficient metaphor of the passage of time.³³

I pause here, however, to remark on the description of the mo’o’s mana in “Dreams.” When the mo’o has adorned herself with the lei ‘āpiki, it is remarked that the ‘o’opu, or goby fish, has left from the tide pools to be closer to her.³⁴ Brown writes: “Hers is the power to attract fish...and men.”³⁵ A significant departure of this dissertation is the explicit choice to queer the mo’o figure. Although the mo’o in “Dreams” goes beyond her class of akua to conceive a child with a human, sexual relations between akua, ‘āina, and kanaka are not queer but rather typical of traditional mo’olelo. Of course, same-gender desire is not entirely absent

³³ I plan to pursue this analysis in a scholarly review of the three texts cited in this section and Lōkahi Antonio’s Hawaiian-language poem “Nee ka moo.”

³⁴ ‘O’opu is a kino lau of mo’o. In her forthcoming book *Ka Po’e Mo’o*, Brown explains: “‘O’opu bear a remarkable resemblance to lizards. To begin, most ‘o’opu are brindled. Moreover, certain species possess fused pelvic fins that act like suction cups, which allow them to climb vertical surfaces like lizards. Alamo’o have been known to climb up the rocks in waterfalls as high as one-hundred meters. Nōpili can also climb, but their skills do not compare to those of the alamo’o. Furthermore, many ‘o’opu species have strong pectoral fins, which they use to perch themselves on rocks in a pose that is quite lizard-like. You can see also them in streams or tidal pools using their fused pelvic fins or sturdy pectoral fins to hop from rock to rock, moving in a way that resembles a lizard’s short bursts of movement.” See chapter two “The Mo’o Akua Form and the Kino Lau Associated with All Mo’o” of Brown, *Ka Po’e Mo’o*, forthcoming from University of Hawai’i Press 2020.

³⁵ In Native Hawaiian culture, sex and beauty are often symbolized through metaphors of fish and fishing. For example, Mary Kawena Pukui records the following ‘ōlelo no’eau in her collection of Hawaiian proverbs and poetical sayings: “Li’ili’i hāuliuli, monimoni ka hā’ae (Little hāuliuli fish, makes the mouth water).” In her annotation, Pukui explains that the ‘ōlelo no’eau is used to describe “a young person who is already wise in the ways of sex and has a strong attraction for the opposite sex” (215). For more examples, see ‘ōlelo no’eau 727, 789, 873, 964, 1715, and 1992 in Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No’eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings*, Bishop, 1983.

from Native Hawaiian literature. In fact our mo'olelo illustrate how Kanaka Maoli approached sexuality and erotic partnerships with flexibility and openness. Same-gender desire was often communicated through kaona, a traditional 'Ōiwi poetic device, which I discuss later in this introduction.³⁶

Yet as a self-identified queer 'Ōiwi poet, I offer an explicit queering of mo'o that is direct and literal. Metaphor and other figurative language, as I discuss later, are powerful tools of empathy. Yet literature is also necessary in its clear-throated testament to difference, which inspires community building and defeats isolation.³⁷ As a 32-year-old wahine, I still yearn for stories of Native Hawaiian women loving and building life with other Native Hawaiian women, stories where our love is not hidden in metaphors but stated plainly. Even if the art of metaphor is placed in high esteem, queer Native Hawaiian women deserve more than a lifetime in metaphor. Toni Morrison speaks plainly: "If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it" (Morrison). I identify this dissertation as a queer 'Ōiwi collection of poetry and I offer explicitly queer narratives of desire because I know what it's like to have to dig far and wide for stories that love like me. Although my kūpuna

³⁶ Aikāne denotes intimate relationships between people of the same gender. Although aikāne relationships are often explained as deep but ultimately platonic friendships, queer Native Hawaiian scholars like Kahala Johnson argue: "Aikāne are sexual until proven otherwise" (personal communication, 15 Mar. 2019). Nevertheless the poems in this collection and the mo'o poetics they represent go beyond aikāne relationality to explore punalua dynamics and erotic relationships between akua, 'āina, and kanaka. However, for a specific analysis of aikāne relationality in Native Hawaiian literature, see Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio's 2017 dissertation "Aikāne, A Kanaka Maoli Mo'olelo Beyond Queer Theory: Unsettling White Settler Logics and (Re)membering Indigenous Desires."

³⁷ For foundational texts on the role of difference in literature, scholarship, and activism, see Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, Crossing, 1984.

did not explicitly position the mo'ō figure as a symbol of same-gender desire, mo'ō are shapeshifting akua who defy attempts to regulate, discipline, and commodify the 'Ōiwi body into a single object of consumption. He wahine (she is a woman), he mo'ō (she is a mo'ō), he wahine, he mo'ō. The hierarchical taxonomy that seeks to define a god as only a god, a shapeshifter only a shapeshifter, a woman as one thing and one thing only is extractive and despairing. Mo'ō rebel against such scarcity models and as such emerge as promising queer figures for contemporary Native Hawaiians. In "Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing 'Sexy Back' and Out of Native Studies' Closet," Chris Finley supplies a simple yet resounding affirmation: "We are alive, we are sexy, and some of us Natives are queer" (40). To Finley's affirmation, I add that we are not merely monsters and we are not alone. I offer this dissertation as an opportunity for recognition and connection for mo'ō wahine and queer Native Hawaiian wahine who love and rebel like me.

Nevertheless, the mo'ō of Brown's short story models erotic sovereignty by embodying the pono dynamic of hō'ola and ho'omake and withstanding penetrative gazes that seek to control and consume her body. The balance between hō'ola and ho'omake appear in another contemporary mo'ō mo'olelo. Four years after "Dreams" was published, Native Hawaiian scholar, literary critic, and writer Brandy Nālani McDougall published "Nā 'Ili'ili." The short story is a third-person account of a Hawaiian pastor newly transferred to a small church in the fictional village of Anamo'ō in Wailuku on Maui. In his attempt to support Ed and Kamani Kahula as they try to save a dying girl, the kahu (pastor) is overwhelmed by legions of mo'ō laha, or common mo'ō, who seize the Kahula home. A large mo'ō also appears, who, upon close

reading of the text, is arguably a *kino lau*³⁸ of the *kahu*'s mother. Whereas his mother is described in a memory as having "a quiet stare, the pupils of her eyes like dark whirlpools of pity," the *mo'o nui* (giant *mo'o*) is described as "maybe four or five feet long, and her eyes, well, her eyes were like whirlpools of enveloping water, calm and knowing" (139, 141). Again, 'Ōiwi conceptions of *'ike*, which denote sight and knowledge, return in *mo'o mo'olelo*, as the *kahu*'s mother was a caretaker of Native Hawaiian knowledge and the *mo'o nui* and *mo'o laha* are protecting the threshold of *hō'ola* and *ho'omake* dynamics in the Kahula home. In "Nā 'Ili'ili," McDougall uses the repetition of "whirlpool" to reinforce genealogical connections between *'āina*, *akua*, and *kanaka*.

Notably, the place name of the fictional Maui village combines the words "ana" and "mo'o," which translate to "mo'o cave." Unsurprisingly the site of spiritual strength does not occur in the pastor's new church but rather in the home of two Native Hawaiians. The Kahula home is readily understood to be the operative *Anamo'o* as "mo'o covered every surface, turning the dark hallway into a tunnel of pulsing darkness and primal sound" (137). It is important to note that the male-identified protagonist is never named beyond his *kuleana* as pastor, a narrative strategy that emphasizes the cultural role of *kahu* and the associated role of *mo'o* as *kia'i*. In addition to denoting "pastor, minister, reverend, or preacher of a church," the word *kahu* can also mean "keeper, administrator, warden, caretaker" ("kahu"). Thus the *kahu*'s

³⁸ *Kino lau*, or "many bodies," are physical manifestations of *akua* in the natural environment. For a more detailed discussion of *kino lau* in the context of this dissertation, see sub-section "O kela *kino weliweli wale no anei ko ka moo: On Poetic Forms, Devices, and Themes*" in this critical introduction.

character signifies the life-saving matter of caring for ancestral knowledge and, again, the adjudicating role of mo'ō to act when such kuleana is ignored or poorly fulfilled.

Indeed, unlike the hō'ola function of the mo'ō 'alā in Brown's story, the engulfing movement of mo'ō in McDougall's story is punitive and life-threatening to its protagonist because he has not demonstrated proper respect for his kuleana. In fact the mo'ō fatally engulfs the kahu's body until he begins to recite a mele linked to his mother: "The claw seemed to loosen enough for him to gasp in more air, and he continued the mele: 'Na pili o kakae nā pua i mohala i ka pēlā, Kepaniwai a'o 'lao...' His mother's voice seemed to take over. It was she who had sung the mele for him as a child whenever he felt afraid" (138). Again, genealogical connections are made clear in the use of repetition. McDougall uses parallel structures to highlight the claw of the engulfing mo'ō laha ("The claw seemed to loosen enough for him to gasp in more air") as kino lau of his mother ("His mother's voice seemed to take over"). As I discuss in the following section of this introduction, 'ōlelo pīna'i, or Native Hawaiian poetic devices of repetition, are central to this dissertation.

Also instructive for this dissertation is the emphasis on auditory imagery. In the short stories by Brown and McDougall, mo'ō directly respond to sound. Like the mo'ō in "Dreams," who are positively summoned by "a short chirping-clicking sound," the mo'ō in McDougall's story release him when he begins to sing the mele "Kololio Waikapū." The auditory imagery in "Nā 'Ili'ili" accomplishes several things: first, it establishes the authoritative presence of mo'ō in the Kahula home; second, it invokes the sound of 'ili'ili stones and thus connects the mo'ō presence to the protagonist's mother; third, it contrasts and interrogates the silence of the protagonist when he "stopped talking to rocks" in his childhood; and fourth, it highlights water,

the connective element of McDougall's story (139). Indeed the auditory imagery of "Nā 'Ili'ili" embodies Silva's concept of "mo'okū'auhau consciousness." The striking auditory imagery of mo'o ("deafening sound," "percussive rhythm of high, guttural clicking," "primal sound," and "pulsing song") not only dominate the reader's first introduction to mo'o in the story but also serve as the primary sensory mode that links the kahu's occupational present to his cultural and genealogical past (137). McDougall's story exemplifies how mo'o-centric Native Hawaiian literature utilizes auditory imagery to represent "mo'okū'auhau consciousness" as well as regenerative power.

Similar to Brown and McDougall's emphasis on sonic imagery in their literary depictions of mo'o, Kumu Hula John Ka'imikaua showcased a hula mo'o (lizard dance) at the "Na Makua Mahalo 'Ia" Award Concert in 1982 that innovates mo'o storytelling through sound. In tribute to Kumu Hula Harriet Ne, Ka'imikaua and his dance troupe, Halau o Kukunaokala, performed "I Ka Moo Hanu E."³⁹ In this performance, Ka'imikaua's choreography emphasizes the breathing body of a mo'o nui who once lived in the plains of Ho'olehua in northern Moloka'i. In his introduction to the hula mo'o, Ka'imikaua explains: "In this dance, you will hear a breathing sound, which depicts this huge lizard Kihanuiloa as he walked through the grasslands, and this dance is to show the spiritual strength of the ancient inhabitants of Moloka'i" ("1982"). To simulate the breathing sounds of Kihanuiloa, the hula dancers press their palms to their mouths and exhale, opening and closing their fingers against their cheeks as they breathe into their

³⁹ Both Ne and Ka'imikaua claim connections to the island of Moloka'i. Ne learned hula from her uncle in Pelekunu Valley and Ka'imikaua established Halau Kukunaokala in 1977 on Moloka'i. See Hula Preservation Society, "1982 'Na Makua Mahalo 'Ia (The Most Honored)' Award Concert." 2014, http://www.hulapreservation.org/Press/HPS_NaMakua_1982_DescriptiveFile.pdf.

hands. The breathing choreography punctuates the hula mo'ō like a refrain. In this way, Kihanuiloa never stops breathing. Ka'imikaua's unique attention to breath not only animates a history of mo'ō presence in Ho'olehua but also embodies connections between ancestral memory and contemporary cultural production.⁴⁰

Indeed learning about our mo'ō akua significantly builds community between mo'ō descendents today. In his poem "Calling All Mo'ō!" Native Hawaiian poet Lōkahi Antonio addresses mo'ō as a collective rather than a singular mo'ō akua or mo'ō mo'opuna. Writing to an intergenerational audience of mo'ō descendants, Antonio prefaces his poem: "Stand tall. Keep moving forward. Let no one step on our tails. Protect the Family. Protect our Places. Always be proud of the heritage we have received *mai ka pō mai*" (151 emphasis original). "Calling All Mo'ō!" is a coming-out poem that demands mo'ō-identified readers to assert their presence and claim their place in our culture. Appropriately, visibility and the act of looking are major themes in Antonio's poem. When the speaker tells readers to "[p]ut on those Mo'ō eyes and take a closer look," he invokes what José Esteban Muñoz refers to as a "disidentificatory optic" to find mo'ō in Hawaiian history, literature, and 'āina. Similar to Audre Lorde's insistence that we look at our erotic power and bear witnesses to the erotic capacity of others, "the disidentificatory optic is turned to shadows and fissures within the text" (Muñoz 29). When compared to the plethora of materials on other legendary figures in Hawaiian history, mo'ō mo'olelo are scarce, often appearing as fragments or episodes in larger narratives. Despite these "shadows and fissures," Antonio assures his mo'ō readers:

⁴⁰ Although beyond the scope of this critical introduction, I intend to elaborate the implications of ea (breath, sovereignty, rising) in Ka'imikaua's hula mo'ō in the critical companion text to this dissertation.

Just keep on the lookout for each other.

Give each other the secret handshake.

Wink those beautiful eyes.

Keep making more Mo’o

And more Mo’o Puna.

And...

COME OUT!

When everybody sees us,

As who we are,

The picture of Hawai’i will be complete. (209-218)

Antonio’s worldmaking is mo’o-centric, and “Calling All Mo’o!” reaches for more than canonical modes of identification so that mo’o readers may access strategies of self-formation and community building that resonate with their mo’o heritage.

In addition to literary and visual explorations of mo’o, this dissertation is also inspired by another form of ‘Ōiwi storytelling. Nearly 20 years after Ka’imikaua and his hālau performed their hula mo’o at the “Na Makua Mahalo ‘Ia” Award Concert, Natasha Kamālamalamaokalāilokokapu’uwaimehanaokekeikpunahale Oda embodied mo’o in her hula kahiko and won the title of Miss Aloha Hula at the 38th Merrie Monarch festival in 2001. Representing Kumu Hula Johnny Lum Ho and Hālau Ka Ua Kani Lehua from Hilo, Hawai’i, Oda

performed “Mele Aloha No Kaulana-i-ka-pōki’i E Keaomelemele” for her hula kahiko (*Thirty Eighth Annual Merrie Monarch Festival*). Although the mele and accompanying hula focus on Keaomelemele and her younger sister Kaulana-i-ka-pōki’i, Oda’s six-minute and 27-second performance is remembered fondly for her embodiment of mo’o. The innovative approach to the ne’e movement of mo’o⁴¹ was overwhelmingly met with cheers and applause from the near-capacity audience of 4,000 at the Edith Kanaka’ole Stadium (Ryan). For me, Oda’s performance is a precedent to the experimental poetic work in this dissertation. With ne’e-like choreography, Oda invokes the mo’o bodies of Mo’oinanea and Kilikilipua with open palms, fingers fanned at either side of her torso while her body snaps left to right, up and down like a climbing lizard. Her hula kahiko is inspiring in its spirited approach to traditional mo’olelo and artistic expression.

Aia ma laila kona wahi i hoonoho pono ai i kana huakai nui, oia hoi ka huakai o na moo:

Literary and Scholarly Influences⁴²

Beyond the mo’o mo’olelo and scholarship that I have briefly reviewed, three chief influences on this dissertation are woman-identified writers who have engaged in a dynamic

⁴¹ In traditional mo’olelo, kinesthetic imagery associated with mo’o often remarks on their quick and deadly movement. In my own poetry, specifically one approach to enjambment, is shaped by the Hawaiian concept of ne’e, or to move by fits and starts. See “ne’e” in the *Hawaiian Dictionary*.

⁴² Pukui offers the following translation: “There she arranged her great company of lizards.” This phrase and its translation are taken from the mo’olelo *Keaomelemele* as written by Manu and translated by Pukui (71, 157). Mo’oinanea has landed her entire mo’o family at Puaena in Waialua and the island of O’ahu is covered. I invoke this moment to honor the abundance and continuity of knowledge and leadership in the different mo’okū’auhau I cite here. See Manu, *Keaomelemele*, Bishop Museum, 2002.

body of poetry, scholarship, and activism: Kanaka Maoli nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask, Black lesbian warrior poet Audre Lorde, and self-identified queer disabled femme writer Leah Lakshmi Pipezina-Samarasinha.

Over the past four decades, shifts in feminist consciousness have reflected changing understandings and approaches to difference. Within mainstream U.S. feminism in the 1960s, for instance, sex-based differences were deployed to pit women against men. In the 1970s, women of color increasingly demanded that “whitestream”⁴³ feminists also pay attention to the differences between women, particularly in terms of race, class, and sexuality. Consequently anthologies like *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* and *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* feverishly circulated in the 1980s and exemplified the production of new discursive formations in which the theoretical feminist subject, heretofore assumed to be white, heterosexual, and middle-class, was significantly reconfigured by women of color. Such creative collaborations gave voice to a resounding collective refusal to capitulate to an essentialized category of woman.

In 1991, Kimberlé Crenshaw identified women of color as an intersectional identity, one that had been ignored by feminist and anti-racist discourses (1243). Indeed women of color often struggled between doing feminist work or anti-racist work, a spurious choice that relegates women of color to a hopelessly faint political horizon, or, as Crenshaw herself

⁴³ The phrase “whitestream feminism” was coined by Native scholar Sandy Grande to mark whiteness in mainstream feminism. See Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morril’s “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy” in *Feminist Formations* vol. 25, no. 1, 2013, pp. 8-34.

describes, “a location that resists telling” (1242). Intersectionality was a major response to the failure of single-issue agendas to develop solutions that answered the complex, community-oriented lives of women of color.

As developed by Crenshaw, intersectionality is a feminist methodology that acknowledges the dimensions of one’s identity as multiple and shapeshifting, and in order to account for such plurality, one must trace specific identity categories to their intersections. Significantly, intersectionality is not premised on binary oppositions.⁴⁴ In “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” Crenshaw identifies three categories of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational (1245). Structural intersectionality demonstrates how the intersecting vectors of race and gender produce qualitative differences in the lives of white women and women of color. Political intersectionality reveals how conflicting, single-issue agendas rely on narrow conceptions of identity, ultimately failing women of color and reducing the lifespan of social justice movements in general. Finally, representational intersectionality illustrates how cultural constructions of women of color ignore or simplify their lived realities.

While intersectionality is complex, it is by no mean exhaustive. The structural axes originally examined in Crenshaw’s research were gender, race, and class, and her work is largely defined by the black/white binary typical of U.S. feminism in the twentieth century. To her credit, however, Crenshaw advocates that the practice of intersectionality be more inclusive of other identity categories. Unsurprisingly, Indigenous feminists have answered this call with

⁴⁴ In this way, intersectionality informs the way shapeshifting is deployed in this collection. The self is not written as a singular and fixed “I” but rather as a collective “we” of multiple kuleana determined by configurations of place and power.

force. To the analytical framework of intersectionality, Indigenous feminist scholarship has introduced the categories of land, nation building, and sovereignty. These categories are necessary in their recognition of Indigeneity and settler colonialism as complex geopolitical entities as well as shared grounds for solidarity.

In Hawai'i, Haunani-Kay Trask helped to develop the political consciousness of Kanaka Maoli and non-Kanaka Maoli alike as an educator, poet, and nationalist leader of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Arguably, her intrepid collection of essays *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* is one of the most important books in Hawai'i's history. First published in 1993 on the centenary of the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom by the United States military, *From a Native Daughter* offers a searing analysis of U.S. colonialism, militarization, corporate tourism, and overdevelopment in Hawai'i.

Throughout Trask's book, it becomes increasingly clear that the Hawaiian sovereignty movement features strong and visible female leadership. Whereas the corrupt, state-sanctioned electorate is decidedly male, Trask argues that the fight for self-determination is effectively led by Native Hawaiian women. Significantly, she outlines Kanaka Maoli women's leadership in the cultural contexts of mana and pono. While acknowledging the intersectional differences of genealogy, cultural training, and politics, Trask identifies mana as a major common ground between Hawai'i's women leaders (95). In Hawaiian culture, mana is a central attribute of cultural and political leadership, and effective leadership reestablishes pono, or harmonious, relations between people, land, and ancestors. According to Trask, mana "serves the nation not only as an opposing force to colonialism but as a Native reenactment of the reality that Hawai'i is *our* mother and we are her children" (97 emphasis original). She further

explains that mana does not rely on electoral victory. Instead, mana begins in the power of one's ancestors, which include Hawaiian land, and evolves as individuals fulfill their social, political, and spiritual responsibilities.

The distinction between mana and electoral victory is important because the promise of the economic spoils of political victories is little to the larger demands of sovereignty. Mana exceeds politics. As Trask's discussion of mana and pono demonstrates, decolonial feminist practices consciously draw on Indigenous concepts to root social justice movements in place-based and culturally relevant frameworks. Since mana is also rooted in Papa, mana is a spiritual and land-based concept that honors female creative power. So unlike the single-issue agendas critiqued by Crenshaw through political intersectionality, Trask's discussion of Native Hawaiian women's leadership illustrates consideration for land, nation building, and sovereignty in addition to race and gender.

The concept of mana is also examined by Kanaka Maoli scholar, editor, and mo'olelo specialist ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, who explores Mana Wahine as it is embodied by Kanaka Maoli women in politics, culture, and literature. In "Mana Wahine: Feminism and Nationalism in Hawaiian Literature," ho'omanawanui distinguishes between Mana Wahine and mainstream U.S. feminism. First and foremost, Mana Wahine denotes an Indigenous, culturally-based, female power. On the one hand, mainstream U.S. feminism largely denotes white, middle class, and heterosexual women whose ultimate goal is to be equal with white, middle-class, heterosexual men. On the other hand, as ho'omanawanui elaborates, Mana Wahine "often employs collaborative strategies with other women for the benefit of the 'ohana (family) or lāhui (nation) where women are the source of knowledge" ("Mana Wahine" 28). Like Trask,

ho‘omanawanui demonstrates that nationalism and Mana Wahine go hand in hand in Indigenous feminist scholarship. To decolonize centuries of engineered assimilation and colonial violence, conscious political resistance is required. Furthermore, as decolonization is an ongoing process, a diverse and flexible range of oppositional strategies and community-building practices are also vital. Crenshaw’s feminist methodology of intersectionality has been taken up by many Indigenous women to not only understand how identity has been conceived to satisfy colonial regimes of authority and control but also, more importantly, to cultivate anti-capitalist, decolonial, community-oriented feminist praxes.

One year after publishing *From a Native Daughter*, Trask released her first book of poetry *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*. Although it is tempting to interpret the title as a reference to the light at the end of the colonial tunnel, the title celebrates the decolonizing brilliance of Kanaka Maoli nationalists who gather and fight against U.S. settler colonialism. Specifically, poems such as “Women,” “Nā Wāhine Noa,” “Sons,” “Long-Term Strategies,” and “Sisters” are Indigenous feminist responses to U.S. settler patriarchy. Located in the second section of *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, which is entitled “Raw, Swift, and Deadly,” these poems represent Trask’s ‘Ōiwi nationalist poetics. For instance, the rape of the land and violation of Native Hawaiian women’s bodies are countered in “Long-Term Strategies.” The last stanza invokes Pele and reports: “beneath the bloody moon / young women dancers / learn castration / as an art” (57). While some may argue that the last stanza spectacularizes violence, the reference to Pele honors a more nuanced configuration of power that, like mo‘o, are

calibrated by the balance between hō'ola and ho'omake.⁴⁵ Also, the title of the poem, "Long-Term Strategies," implies pro-action rather than re-action. Trask's poetry demonstrates 'Ōiwi nationalism that is unapologetically premised on the creative and generative strength of Hawaiian women.

Interestingly, Māori feminist Ngahuia Te Awekotuku defines Mana Wahine Māori in terms of re-action and pro-action. Of Māori feminism, she explains: "It is not re-action to males, and their violence against us; it is a pro-action, a determining of ourselves as Maori women, with authenticity and grace" (10). Marking the prefix "re" and the prefix "pro" reveals significant differences between the feminism that Indigenous women distrust and the feminism that Indigenous women create. Whereas "re" denotes repetition and backward motion, "pro" denotes affirmation and forward motion. In her explanatory vision of Mana Wahine Māori, Te Awekotuku argues that feminisms that advance Indigenous ways of knowing and take the lives of Indigenous women seriously will outlast feminisms that are merely reactionary.⁴⁶

Demonstrably, intersectional feminism has provided important tools for theorizations of Mana Wahine. In this dissertation, the influence of Mana Wahine scholarship and Native Hawaiian poetry intersect in the scholarly and creative work of Trask. For example, when I read Trask's essay "Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization" for the first time as a 19-year-old, I was transformed not only by its analysis of American colonialism in Hawai'i but also

⁴⁵ Interestingly, Trask is genealogically connected to Pele and mo'ō clans, both of which are represented in her poetry.

⁴⁶ Māori scholar Leonie E. Pihama takes up Mana Wahine as an Indigenous theoretical framework in her 2001 dissertation "Tīhei Mauri Ora (Honoring Our Voices): Mana Wahine as a Kaupapa Māori Theoretical Framework." See Pihama, "Tīhei Mauri Ora," PhD dissertation, 2001.

by its argument that Native Hawaiian poetry is an important tool of decolonization. I had recently returned to Hawai'i from undergraduate study at New York University and Trask's *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* and *From a Native Daughter* were instrumental in bringing me back home. Yet when I first read "Writing in Captivity," I felt an unprecedented affirmation by Trask's claim that the creative and critical were not mutually exclusive but rather connected.

For Trask, culture and politics are "the two springs of our Hawaiian renaissance" ("Writing" 18). Unlike the Western habit of positioning artistic production and political activism as mutually exclusive, Trask identifies the connected function of culture and politics. Describing the dynamic as "two springs," Trask invokes the concept of pūnāwai, the source of rivers that, when flowing, connects the health and wellbeing of kanaka from mountain to sea. Thus a significant contribution of Trask is her dismantling of the binary between creative and critical writing: "Like most Native people, I do not perceive the world of creative writing as divided into categories of prose and poetry or fiction and nonfiction. Nor do I imagine myself crossing from political resistance into artistic creation and then back again. Life is a confluence of creativities: art is a fluid political medium, as politics is metaphorical and artistic" (18). Similar to Trask, I assert that creative writing is a critically rigorous and politically active practice that contributes to the imperative of growing the Hawaiian nation.

Secondly, in "Writing in Captivity," Trask gestures to the intimate and generative relationship between anger and desire. Engaging a simultaneously declarative and lyrical discussion of her poetics, Trask marks without apology a relationship between anger, desire, and the impulse to tell stories. The moment that especially caught me as a young kanaka was Trask's juxtaposing the following phrases: "In the midst of this ferocious suffering, I feel both

rage and an insistent desire to tell the cruel truths about Hawai‘i” and “Finally, rage is entangled with rapture” then “it is a furious, but nurturing, *aloha* for Hawai‘i” (19). Indeed Trask was the first Native Hawaiian woman beyond my biological family to grant me permission to be angry, to acknowledge my anger and assure me that anger did not disqualify my intellect or capacity to participate and contribute fairly. My anger was not a debilitating thing but a source of creativity and knowledge that went hand in hand with desire which went hand in hand with storytelling. “In my work, writing is both decolonization and recreation” (“Writing in Captivity” 19). In Trask’s writing, the role of the Native Hawaiian wahine writer became so much more capacious. It felt like me. It felt possible. The “belongingness” that I had felt for years was no longer something impossible or obscene.

In this same essay, Trask explains that loss is not only a theme but also, significantly, a guiding rubric for her work: “What we have lost, as Hawaiian people and as the Hawaiian nation, shapes my vision and provides the context for all I write” (19). Since leaders like Trask paved the way in literature, scholarship, and activism in the 1980s and 1990s, my generation and beyond are capable of holding hope and being attentive to pleasure and play. So in this dissertation, while loss is certainly an active theme, it is joined by a celebration of bodies, desire, and growth.

Specifically, in a mo‘o poetics, relationships exceed kanaka-kanaka binaries to include intimacies between akua, ‘āina, and kanaka. Like her political and scholarly work, Trask’s poetry sets a precedent for decolonizing the so-called “natural” human pursuit to conquer land. For instance, in her poem “To Write By Moonlight,” Trask deploys ‘āina-based images of mahina (moon), mai‘a (banana), and niu (coconut) to empower Kanaka Maoli metaphors and assert

Native Hawaiian's genealogical relationship to land. Mai'a leaves are "the green / ink of night" and the silver niu "the hair of dark's // blue quill" (50). In Trask's poetry, 'āina is not passive but an active and exemplary storyteller. Furthermore, as Kanaka Maoli are descendents of 'āina, "To Write by Moonlight" implies that literary production is not only a creative act but also a genealogical inheritance. It is noteworthy that "To Write By Moonlight" is included in her second poetry collection *Night is a Sharkskin Drum*, specifically in the final section entitled "Chants of Dawn," which emphasizes forms of healing that are defined on 'Ōiwi terms. Arguably, if Kanaka Maoli articulations of healing are central to "Chants of Dawn," then Trask's poem "To Write By Moonlight" considers literary production as a key element in decolonization.

Similar to Trask, Audre Lorde's necessary and gut-wrenching poem "A Litany for Survival" presents a collective voice. Litany, of course, is a genre of prayer, specifically a fixed call-and-response in which the leader of mass recites a series of supplications to which the congregation answers. Appropriately, "A Litany for Survival" is defined by two anaphora. The first anaphora, "for those of us," enacts both an audience as well as a collective identity to which the speaker belongs, namely queer Black women in the United States. Like Trask, Lorde offers her poem in a spirit of protection, and in its repetition of "for" the anaphora also activates this sense of duty. The concluding stanzas are shaped by the anaphora "when," which depicts how time is experienced by those trying to survive trauma. The poem illustrate how it is easy to lose sight of large-scale oppression when one is completely embroiled in the daily act of surviving.

In "Litany for Survival," Lorde's use of repetition is significant for several reasons. First and foremost, repetition affirms the call-and-response form of which the prayer is part. Second,

repetition defines audience. Third, and intimately related, repetition is a mode of community building and identity formation. Indeed the “those of us” grows into a “we,” to which the speaker belongs, and the poem connects the speaker to readers, establishing shared ground on which a history of violence, kill-ability, the trauma of surviving, and the will to survive is based. Repetition is subversive. Repetition is dangerous. Fear, for instance, is a dominant theme in Lorde’s poem. Yet repetition, particularly in the context of call-and-response, becomes a way of moving around fear to activate language instead of silence. I am deeply guided by Lorde’s poetry, and deploy similar techniques of repetition in this dissertation to metabolize fear into language and action.

Since the 1970s, Lorde’s critical work has also galvanized women, especially queer women of color, to claim their erotic power and transform silence into language and action. Although the erotic is not inherently male or female, it is useful in this dissertation to draw from Lorde’s celebrated discussion of the erotic as power. “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” was first delivered at the Fourth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women at Mount Holyoke College in 1978. Understandably, the work engages the erotic as “an assertion of the life-force of women” (*Sister Outsider* 55). Significantly, Lorde distinguishes between used and unused kinds of power, claiming the erotic is a source of information that has been suppressed by heteropatriarchy.

The erotic is also a guide to self-definition. She elaborates: “For the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing. Once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion, we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that

fullness” (54-55). Thus, if the erotic is a faithful barometer of “fullness,” and the erotic is located in the body and in feelings, then women can confidently assert the political relevance of pleasure and emotional knowledge.

“Uses of the Erotic” maps the deeply intersectional nature of sexuality, power, and identity. Indeed mapping the affective circuits of knowledge production and activism effectively stages how the personal is political. Unsurprisingly, the metaphor of the bridge reappears as Lorde explains how the erotic functions as a bridge. First, the erotic connects women to their bodies, to their unrecognized or misnamed potential. Thus being in touch with the erotic helps women to militate against oppression, against subjugation, against the numbness that makes living under such conditions manageable. Second, the erotic connects physical, spiritual, and political power, which challenges false binaries between the spiritual and the political, the spiritual and the erotic. Third, the erotic is a generative mode of sharing.

More specifically, Lorde clarifies that the erotic is meant to be cultivated and shared in relationships based on empathy and recognition. Since I draw from Lorde’s insightful outline of the erotic and its ethics of looking to develop a mo’o poetics,⁴⁷ it is quoted at length here:

When we look away from the importance of the erotic in the development and

⁴⁷ See the fourth section of this dissertation, “polylasting: notes toward a mo’o poetics.” A poetics maps a theory of poetry in which approaches to craft, content, and aesthetics are defined by a specific logic, such as a particular school of poetry, political project, or cultural worldviews. In the broadest terms, an ‘Ōiwi poetics maps a theory of poetry that reflects aesthetic, epistemological, and ontological principles representative of Native Hawaiian culture. ‘Ōiwi scholars like Rubellite Kawena Johnson, ku’ualoha ho’omanawanui, and Brandy Nālani McDougall continue to develop a rigorous archive of original ‘Ōiwi poetry as well as literary analysis that seeks to define Native Hawaiian poetry on Native Hawaiian terms. In this dissertation, I offer a mo’o poetics that continues this work with specific attention to the ways mo’o and descendents of mo’o like myself enter, participate in, and expand discussions of what Native Hawaiian poetry does and is capable of doing.

sustenance of our power, or when we look away from ourselves as we satisfy our erotic needs in concert with others, we use each other as objects of satisfaction rather than share joy in the satisfying, rather than make connection with our similarities and our differences. To refuse to be conscious of what we are feeling at any time, however comfortable that might seem, is to deny a large part of the experience, and to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic, the abused, and the absurd. (59)

An ethics of looking as contextualized by Lorde's theorization of the erotic requires compassionate witnesses, not spectators. To look means to bear witness, to acknowledge, to participate in worldmaking. Sharing emotional knowledge and testifying to acts of pleasure and self-creation produce communities that do not deny or ignore difference but critically weave them into our affective ties. Demonstrably, "Uses of the Erotic" has lasting power because of its audacity to demand that women, especially queer women of color, see and feel each other deeply.

The stakes of using the erotic as a resource are higher for those whose bodies have already been marked as murderable, ownable, or marketable. As my body was marked rape-able since childhood, I was grateful to find the poetry and creative nonfiction of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. As a queer femme survivor whose narrative poems were unapologetically sex-positive, Piepzna-Samarasinha gave me the permission to write about sexual trauma while insisting on my right to give and receive pleasure.

For example, in her poem "dirty river girl," she writes of masturbating through physical pain: "sometimes I just hover there in that place with no coming for hours, and there is no pain,

just me being the slut that kept me alive” (34). Sensitive to transformative justice, *Bodymap* continues to help me to understand how capacious I am as a survivor, as a queer survivor, as a queer femme survivor, as a queer Indigenous femme survivor. After all, women of color are often positioned between a rock and hard place when it comes to testifying to our trauma and claiming paths for healing. Stereotypically, we are the nurturers, we are the caregivers, so who are we to ask for care? And if the violence we suffered was at the hands of a family member or someone in our community already plagued by racism or settler colonialism, how dare we share our stories when those very stories may contribute to the further criminalization of our people and feed the alibis of oppression? Queer women of color poets like Lorde and Piepzn-Samarasinha model how erotic sovereignty must not only include the struggle to testify to our trauma but also the ongoing self-love required to keep fucking, regenerating, and writing more stories.

O kela kino weliweli wale no anei ko ka moo: On Poetic Forms, Devices and Themes

The body is central in this dissertation. Specifically, my poems seek to recognize, name, and empower bodies subject to violence. Although I speak and write from the position of a queer Indigenous working-class able-bodied femme wahine, I offer my work as both pu‘uhonua (place of refuge) and provocation to queer people of color, Indigenous women, and survivors of trauma. We are not merely monsters and we are not alone.

As if to confirm my beliefs, a hō'ailona⁴⁸ appeared in the middle of writing this dissertation and navigating the end of a long-term relationship. While reading installments of Kamakau's "Ka Moolelo Hawaii" in *Ke Au Okoa*, I retraced my steps through a passage that was made blurry by black ink. Slowly discerning the typewritten words, I felt as if my kūpuna had offered me an erasure poem, and if I took the time to earn each word, I would earn something more than a sentence. Since a question mark anchored my eyes, I read backwards from its mysterious place on the page. The words "moo" and "weliweli" urged my body closer and closer to the sentences. I read slowly and was rewarded. On April 28, 1870, Kamakau asked readers of *Ke Au Okoa* the following question: "O kela kino weliweli wale no anei ko ka moo?" Is that terrifying body the mo'o's only form?

He hō'ailona nō.

In reverence for mo'o, Kamakau subsequently explains: "Eia he haili wale no ma luna oia ano kino, he mau kino anela no ko lakou" ("Ka Moolelo Hawaii"). In *Ka Po'e Kahiko*, Pukui translates: "That body is only one of the spirits in this form – they had many 'angel' forms" (83). Of a mo'o's human form Kamakau argues: "oia ke ano mau o na mea kupanaha ke hoike ia mai na mea huna." According to Kamakau, two functions of a mo'o's human form include but are not limited to signaling imminent danger and revealing hidden things ("Ka Moolelo Hawaii").⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hō'ailona are signs from gods or ancestors that often manifest in the natural environment. In Native Hawaiian literature, some functions of hō'ailona include but are not limited to marking the presence of a chief, symbolizing an epic quest, serving as a mapping device for protagonists in their quest, and affirming or warning against decisions made throughout a quest.

⁴⁹ In this same article Kamakau compares the blackness of mo'o bodies to "na nika negero ke kuhe moe wai ka poniponi o ka eleele" ("Ka Moolelo Hawaii"). In *Ka Po'e Kahiko* Pukui translates: "the blackest Negro" (83). Although beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worth

While it is important to reiterate that Kamakau is but one of many voices in Native Hawaiian intellectual history, mo'ō are a class of shapeshifting akua associated with that which is lurking, hidden, and elusive. As such, mo'ō are obvious agents of kaona.

According to Pukui and Elbert, kaona is: “hidden meaning; concealed reference, as to a person, thing, or place; words with double meaning that might bring good or bad fortune” (“kaona”). In the context of Hawaiian poetry, Pukui elaborates: “There are but two meanings: the literal and the *kaona*, or inner meaning. The literal is like the body and the inner meaning is like the spirit of the poem” (“Songs” 247). While Pukui warns against any “dangerous guessing” that may compromise “what is actual knowledge,” her counsel does not forbid the development of contemporary ‘Ōiwi hermeneutics as much as it belies the stakes of poetry in Native Hawaiian culture (“Songs” 252). Pukui herself states: “The *kaona* of a chant was believed to be potent enough to bring lovers together, to mend broken homes or to break up an undesirable union” (“Songs” 249). Kaona is clearly an interactive force. Thus Pukui’s warning is productively understood as gravitas for storytelling kuleana. I ka ‘ōlelo no ke ola, i ka ‘ōlelo no ka make. Native Hawaiian poets occupy a serious role with life-giving and death-dealing capacities, and Pukui reinforces the cultural respect due to this kuleana.

Again Pukui herself emphasizes kaona as interactive, and her added description of kaona as ‘uhane (spirit) returns us to her work on dreams in *Nānā I Ke Kumu*.

Hawai’i called dreams, in general, *moe ‘uhane*. Literally, ‘spirit sleep.’ The literal meaning is a bit confusing. Hawaiians believed that while the body slept, the

noting the racial implications of Kamakau’s description, especially in the aftermath of the American Civil War and Hawai’i’s growing sugar industry.

‘uhane, one’s personal, immortal spirit or soul, wandered. Leaving through the *lua ‘uhane* or ‘spirit pit’ – the tear duct at the inner corner of the eye – the spirit went traveling, seeing persons and places, encountering other spirits, experiencing adventures, and, most important, passing on messages from the ancestor gods, the *aumākuā*. Tired of wandering, the *‘uhane* re-entered the body through the same *lua ‘uhane* and the dreamer awoke. (Pukui, Haertig, Lee 170)

Juxtaposing Pukui’s discussions of dreams and kaona is a productive exercise because both arguments connect the sensory intelligence of the ‘Ōiwi body to Hawaiians’ epistemological value of spiritual and symbolic labor. If we draw parallels between the literal meaning of a poem to the body of the dreamer and the inner meaning of a poem to the *‘uhane*, kaona could arguably be considered as interactive, if not as willful, as *‘uhane*.

As a deeply associative tool, kaona elegantly crafts community beyond the world of the text, and contemporary scholars of Native Hawaiian literature continue to discuss kaona as an artistic and political tool. In *Finding Meaning: Kaona and Contemporary Hawaiian Literature*, McDougall makes important interventions in the common approach to kaona as simply “hidden meaning.” One of her interventions, she argues, is “to place the reader or audience on equal footing with the composer in the practice of kaona. Just as there would not be kaona without the composer and her knowledge and language skill, there would also not be kaona without the audience to receive and actively complete the connective process of meaning making” (32). Again, kaona is an interactive practice that establishes community and defines parameters of “belongingness” that Trask theorized in “Writing in Captivity.” Significantly, McDougall notes the capacity of kaona “to carry and elicit ancestral memory,

empathy, and various forms of cultural sovereignty, namely aesthetic sovereignty” (33). It is in this context that I utilize kaona throughout this dissertation, particularly in the first section “skins,” where poems alludes to different mo’o akua and ali’i wahine in Hawaiian history. Allusion is one of the many tools of kaona. By referring to a historical place, person, or event, allusion deepens the pleasure of experiencing a composition by cultivating shared ground with readers who have earned similar knowledge. Allusion, much like the broader category of kaona, creates a multi-dimensional shorthand for deserving readers.

Meiwi mo’okalaleo, or Native Hawaiian ethno-literary devices, like kaona are woven throughout this dissertation.⁵⁰ Such weaving conjures the metaphor of lei. Johnson explains: “In the act of composing poetry, the haku mele behaves as a haku lei, a weaver of leis whose technique is so good that the materials are bound together in the design of the internal structure and strength of the braid” (24). ho’omanawanui elaborates this metaphor in the context of Hawaiian poetry. She explains: “Both lei and mele are composed, with the mea haku (one who composes) selecting, arranging, and putting in order the pua – literally, the flowers; in poetry, the metaphors and symbolic imagery that evoke kaona” (“He Lei Ho’ohenō” 32-33). Of the different meiwi woven through these pages, I highlight my use of pīna’i as representative of my poetics.

In Native Hawaiian literature, pīna’i denotes a broad category of repetition. As a rhythmic and performative device, pīna’i is utilized toward two major poetic goals: to

⁵⁰ For extensive discussions of meiwi mo’okalaleo, see Hiapo Perreira, “He Kī’ina Ho’okuana’ike Maui Hawai’i ma ke Kālailai Mo’okalaleo” in *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being*, vol. 9, 2013, pp. 53-114. Also see ku’ualoha ho’omanawanui, *Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi’iaka*. U of Minnesota P, 2014.

mesmerize and memorize. Branching from these goals are more specific objectives, including but not limited to: invoking akua and kūpuna; honoring ‘āina; structuring long sequences of action, chant, or song; signaling transitions; emphasizing the emotional, political, and symbolic significance of a person, place, or event; and designating ritualistic space and time. However tedious repetition may be to some readers, the vast number of storytelling tasks to which repetition is slated illuminates why it is highly desirable in ‘Ōiwi aesthetics.

At the very least, pīna‘i establishes sonic patterns that are incantatory and pleasurable. In *Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi‘iaka*, ho‘omanawanui presents groundbreaking analysis of ‘Ōiwi aesthetics and astutely observes pīna‘i as “a stylistic element linking the mo‘olelo to its oral roots” (76). The orality of pīna‘i returns storytelling to the body, and the storytelling body returns erotic and aesthetic sovereignty to Kanaka Maoli. As mo‘o are shapeshifting water protectors, repetition and associative writing arguably serve a mo‘o poetics, which this dissertation attempts to outline. Of the broad category of pīna‘i,⁵¹ the following techniques are featured in this dissertation: anaphora,⁵² epistrophe, refrain, parallelism as well as assonance, consonance, and alliteration. Appropriately, I include and

⁵¹ It is noteworthy that a possible definition of pīna‘i is an overstayed welcome. Pukui and Elbert offer the following: “Again and again, repeatedly; to come or do repeatedly, constant; to wear out a welcome by repeated visits; close together, crowded” (“pīna‘i”). While it is tempting to use the denotation of an overstayed welcome to affirm critiques of repetition in Native Hawaiian literature as tedious, a more productive approach considers how Native Hawaiian poets deploy pīna‘i with the level of care they would show while in the hospitality of a loved one. Although beyond the scope of this introduction, I write elsewhere about pīna‘i and the ‘āina-kama‘āina-malihini dynamic in creative writing pedagogy.

⁵² In collaboration with poet Elizabeth Soto, I am currently developing the concept of transformative anaphora in experimental poetry by women of color poets.

experiment with received forms⁵³ that advance content through repetition like the villanelle, sestina, pantoum, triolet, ghazal, and sonnet. These received forms are recursive, and with content shaped by intergenerational violence and healing, they offer a regenerative experience of returning to the same sonic and visual landscapes vis-a-vis refrain, anaphora, or epistrophe, but also reveal difference. Somewhat similar to the shimmering face of Brown's mo'o in "Dreams of Bones and Other Things," repetition offers an opportunity to acknowledge past trauma while interrogating and revising toxic patterns. Oppression requires a permanent past, one in which those in power have always been in power and those unloved by power have always been unloved. Such a permanent past rationalizes the savior rhetoric of settler colonialism toward Indigenous peoples and misogyny against women.

In this collection, received forms like the sestina collectively refuse a permanent past. For example, in "Sestina for Sisters Who Pray with Fire," I experiment with the sestina form to visualize iwi kuamo'o and to embody hō'ola for sisters on the brink of ho'omake. To visualize the iwi kuamo'o, I separate the six stanzas into two columns, which are flush to the center of the page, utilizing the recursiveness of the sestina form to emphasize themes of return and belonging. The two sisters of this sestina are alienated from a world that neither understands nor values them, so they necessarily become sources of protection for each other: "First we

⁵³ I do not use the phrase "received forms" to perpetuate stereotypes of Native Hawaiian women as forever passive and sexually available to the wandering foreigner. In fact I use the phrase "received forms" to emphasize choice, autonomy, and ingenuity in my poetics. Just as my kupuna embraced the technology of writing to preserve and innovate traditional knowledge, I embrace Western poetic forms not only to invigorate my 'Ōiwi content but also to interrogate and shapeshift the Western form.

aren't bright enough, first / we burn the suburbs down" (82). These two sisters experience the extremes of acceptance and ruin, invisibility and hypervisibility.

The motifs of blood and fire invoke violence and creation as the younger sister draws her creative power from fire and they destroy structures of power with fire. The experimental form of the sestina also invokes dialogue, a back-and-forth rhythm that is not afforded by a more traditional single column of stanzas. In this, a rhythm of *iwi kuamo'o* forms: "There is no first / without daughters" (82). As the eye move from column to column, stanza to stanza, the kinetic energy parallels the sisters' deepening loyalty to each other and their refusal to be split apart. Apropos of the *iwi kuamo'o*, the vertical column in the middle of the page visualizes a spine to which the sisters always return.

Like many of my experiments with received forms, the prose poem was another opportunity to explore the metaphor of shapeshifting through form. The paragraph block, for example, simulates a whole body, a whole category, clean and undisputed. Yet the prose poem has an inner wildness that lends to biomythographic retellings. Furthermore, caesurae within prose poems effectively interrogate the regulatory function of wholeness, which surveils and corrects in different degrees of violence women-identified, Indigenous, POC, queer, and differently-abled bodies. Shedding, moreover, is not just an external process of eliminating old skin and generating new skin but also an internal process of questioning and retooling what and how we ask things of our healing and worldviews. In this way the prose poem offers clandestine moments of regeneration and subsequent free verse poems elaborate these pursuits.

Significantly, the prose poem embodies a specific theory of survival that I have been offered in different contexts of my life as a source of comfort. I was first offered this theory in a

dentist's office as a young girl while getting a cavity filled. I have since heard variations of this theory from my father and in consensual and nonconsensual sex acts, in academia, and in activism. The theory argues: pressure isn't pain. For the content of this dissertation, this theory – reflecting the various ways it has worked into my life – is constellated by different but intersecting issues of sexuality, violence, healing, art, and aloha 'āina. Pressure isn't pain. Although poetry in general distinguishes itself from prose by its compression, the prose poem is particularly dense and that density has always been a generative site of worldmaking for me. Pressure is not pain. Of course this theory, depending on the context, is questionable, if not entirely abusive. Yet there are contexts in which this theory has helped me understand my threshold for pain, what causes me pain, and what does not. Furthermore, in my life, the proximities between pain and pleasure, trauma and healing have always been dangerously close, and these proximities are effectively simulated in the prose poem.

Unsurprisingly, in navigating form and content about mo'ō, violence, and healing, the dynamic of hō'ola and ho'omake returns me to water. Undeniably, water is an essential source of life and death. As a kino lau of the god Kāne and a meticulously shared resource throughout ahupua'a, fresh water was and continues to be integral for Native Hawaiians. In the mid-19th century, introduced practices of private land ownership began to trouble the care for waterways in Hawai'i while the appetite of the sugar industry marked a catastrophic departure from Hawaiian principles of mālama 'āina (caring for the land). In the name of profit and American imperialism, water was treated as a commodity rather than a sacred, collective resource. Diversion, after all, is an act of extractive capitalism.

Competing systems of wealth between U.S. settlers and Kanaka Maoli are highlighted in

the history of water rights in Hawai'i. Although beyond the scope of this dissertation, the privatization of water and Native Hawaiian campaigns to restore these diverted resources illustrate how deeply intertwined are 'Ōiwi conceptions of prosperity with water.⁵⁴ Our language provides a basic example. In 'ōlelo Hawai'i, the word "wai" denotes water and its reduplication "waiwai" denotes "value, worth, wealth, importance, benefit" ("waiwai"). Demonstrably, in a Hawaiian worldview, the health of kanaka is amplified by the health of our waterways.

The metaphorical value of water in Hawaiian language offers further insight. Three years after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the Republic legislature outlawed Hawaiian-language instruction in public and private schools. Critiquing the effects of this law, Joseph Moku'ōhai Poepoe, who actively promoted the perpetuation of 'ōlelo Hawai'i, published the following argument in the daily newspaper *Ka Na'i Aupuni* in 1906: "Ua maopopo loa mamuli o ka hoopauia ana o na kula aupuni olelo Hawaii, ua hoopauia na poowai nui e loa mai ai na auwai o ka ike ma ia olelo i na opio o Hawaii nei (It is quite clear that because of the closing of the government's Hawaiian-language schools, the poowai nui from which our Hawaiian youth refresh the canals of knowledge in this language are dammed)" ("Mai Haalele").⁵⁵ The metaphor of Hawaiian language as a po'owai nui, or great water source, from which 'Ōiwi youth draw intellectual nourishment reinforces the cultural link between wai and waiwai, especially as wealth is not conceived in monetary terms but rather in the right to

⁵⁴ See 'Iolani N.K. Antonio, "Ka Waiwai o ka mo'ō: The Transformative Mana of Mo'ō 'Ōlelo in Maui Water Battles and Kanaka Maoli Resurgence Movements Toward Ea," MA Thesis, May 2010.

⁵⁵ My translation.

education rooted in cultural knowledge.

Thus in this dissertation I move to multiply the stories of 'Ōiwi, to expose and interrogate what it (can) means to be Native/woman/queer/femme, the realities and potentialities of identity, desire, belonging, trauma, and healing. Shapeshifting is a generative and mo'ō-oriented metaphor to guide these intentions. In this collection, I explore shapeshifting as a culturally-rooted and place-based disidentificatory practice. As Muñoz reminds us, disidentification denotes strategies for survival and resistance so that resources and worldmaking is possible. To disidentify is to hijack oppressive modes of representation to survive, to create a livable self. Coming from a long line of mo'ō descendents who have suffered domestic abuse, sexual violence, racism, and homophobia, I have learned shapeshifting primarily in the context of survival. Yet in this collection I also approach shapeshifting as a practice that reveals the potential of a body to shed and transform.⁵⁶

Shapeshifting also reflects queer, Indigenous, and feminist responses to Enlightenment-era fixations on taxonomy, which necessitated the division between those who are classified and those empowered to classify (read as: empowered to subjugate, dehumanize, murder). Indigenous assertions against blood quantum, for instance, refuse colonial assessments of authenticity and belonging. Intersectional feminism demands that we are attentive to the simultaneous and interlocking nature of oppression and identity, and the subjectless critique of queer theory redirects our analysis to structures of power rather than individuals. In this dissertation, shapeshifting offers a kinetic, nonhierarchical strategy for

⁵⁶ For a mo'ō-specific discussion of shapeshifting and Kihawahine, see Māhealani Ahia, "Kihawahine: Shapeshifting Life and Afterlife of Maui's Famous Akua Mo'ō," *Brown Bag Series*, Center for Biographical Research, Honolulu, 18 Oct. 2018.

survival as well as worldmaking.

When asked about violence in her poetry, Jamaican writer Safiya Sinclair explains that “some mode of transfiguration” needs to happen so that she is not “stuck in the hurt” (“Interrogating”). Sexual violence and shapeshifting take on similar roles in my work. As I have discussed before, shapeshifting becomes a survival strategy. If I cannot be anything else than a woman who has been raped, a woman who has been molested, a woman whose sexuality renders me killable, then what else do I have? To be sure, shapeshifting is not ignoring trauma or burying trauma. Shapeshifting is a way of cultivating breath, taking space from trauma in order to clarify, cleanse, and heal. Writing these poems is, in a sense, an act of shapeshifting and the shapeshifting continues as the poems are circulated to different audiences.

It is unsurprising that my grandmother is the nexus of shapeshifting for my generation of mo’o descendents. Even her name, written as Laieikawai without diacritical marks on her first birth certificate, is debated between her daughters and granddaughters. Even in her own mouth, my grandmother’s name is never consistent. When she is in Hāna, she is Lā’ieikawai – “that’s a princess, you know.” Before and after church, eating hot cakes at Tasty Crust in Wailuku, she is Aunty Lā’ie this, Aunty Lā’ie that. When she is in Kahului in the kitchen of her second-born daughter, she says she doesn’t want to talk about it. When she lived on Pōhai Street and her sister Puni was still alive, she did not go by Lā’ieikawai at all. She was called Henrietta, the woman who made shave ice at the Kahului laundromat. “Das your grandma, ya? Da one wit da red hair make shave ice?”

Ho’okahi nō; he lehu ka inoa.

In this dissertation, I extend the feminist principle of the personal is political to argue

that poetry is political. Art for art sake is a luxury that I cannot afford nor would I want to purchase. The poems in this dissertation testify to contact in both consensual and nonconsensual forms, scripted and improvised, conventional and queer. Stories of abundance combat the fear-mongering of scarcity rhetoric, as if there is not enough hilina'i (belief) for Pele mo'olelo and mo'o mo'olelo, as if there is not enough hilina'i or waiwai for mo'o who are benevolent and weliweli, po'e aloha and po'e kia'i. Through form and content, this dissertation attempts to deliver an abundance of contact⁵⁷ and to decolonize my and readers' capacity to feel, grow, and heal. This is not a romanticized celebration of contact; I know firsthand how contact can ravage a body. I do not reach for the heroic sublime. I do not glorify the singular lyric "I." As a queer 'Ōiwi poet, I did not consent to the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. I do not consent to the continued occupation of Hawai'i by United States military. I do not consent to the trans and homophobia inherited from Christianity. This collection does not map a neat, orderly telos from pain to no pain, confusion to clarity, baby girl to well-adjusted lady. A "lady," with its connotations of Christian heteropatriarchy, I am not.

The refusal to produce a body legible to cisheteronormative structures of visibility and acceptance is decolonial and queer. Specifically, in a mo'o poetics that centers the shapeshifting body, the fragment gestures to oppositional and improvisational worldmaking. Aloha is not straight. Fragments, crafted through enjambment, caesurae, white space, and techniques of documentary poetry illustrate cycles of regeneration and transformation. After all, a broken heart covers more territory, and there is agency and creative power in

⁵⁷ "Abundance of contact" is inspired by Audre Lorde's imperative to young poets to touch that "boiling inside of you." See Lorde, "A Litany for Survival," *BOMB* no. 56, 1996, pp. 34-37.

acknowledging the broken pieces and claiming the right to put those pieces back together to form something new. Something stronger, more flexible, adaptable.

My poetry does not journey according to inflexible coordinates that plot queer and Indigenous as irreconcilable. As a child, I was raised to obey straight lines and to crave the rewards for that obedience. Straight lines through cisheteronormativity: birth, marriage, biological children, private property, and death. Straight lines from the left margin to the right margin of a page. Dear straight line: I am going to wrap my body around you and squeeze. Squeeze until I hear you call my name, all my names, and all the names of women who came before me.

Of her documentary poetry collection *Look*, Solmaz Sharif explains: “I wanted to, somehow, in this historical moment drop just one pin to say we didn’t all consent. We weren’t all standing behind this. I really believe all action is political. As a poet, my action, my medium, is language, so that’s where I register my defense, or my outrage, or my grief.” She goes on to argue: “The lyric self is the political weapon I have as a poet. My subjectivity is maybe the most potent force I have in interacting politically on the page” (“This isn’t theoretical”). Poetry is necessarily political and must bear witness to what is going on in the world. To this end, documentary poetry appears twice: first as a commemorative poem for Haunani-Kay Trask in “skins” and second in the final section entitled “erotics of aloha ‘āina.” In the last section, documentary poetry attempts to expand understandings of aloha ‘āina to seriously consider the role of erotic sovereignty.

He kini, he mano, he lau, he lehu ke kino o ka wahine:⁵⁸ Summary of Sections

“If We Vanish” is divided into five sections: “skins”; “form a native daughter”; “beddings, sheddings, and weddings”; “polylasting: notes toward a mo’o poetics”; and “erotics of aloha ‘āina.” In the first section, “skins” expands the concept of mo’okū’auhau to honor mo’o and Mana Wahine in my biological genealogy and in histories of Native Hawaiian literature and leadership to which I am connected. By beginning the dissertation this way, I also hope to clarify that one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to provide a source of belonging for queer Native Hawaiian women, especially those who identify as mo’o kin. This first section is meant to participate in the legacy of literature combating isolation. By establishing the “we” of my mo’okū’auhau, I acknowledge those who came before me, demonstrate the value of community in self-care, and offer narratives of community-building that exceed the settler heteropatriarchal household.

For instance, “skins” introduces two of the most important Mana Wahine in my mo’o mo’okū’auhau. First, “Grandma tells” positions my paternal grandmother Henriette Lā’ieikawai Kanana as the matriarch of my biological family. Subsequently, in “bath water” a mo’opuna seeks multiple scales of permission from Haumea. These poems function as a collective kāhea (call) to which the rest of the dissertation responds. “Grandma tells” offers intergenerational mo’o advice that preemptively distinguishes the non-mo’o world into two categories: “the ones without the eyes” and “ones with the eyes” (67). For the speaker, this distinction is an act of

⁵⁸ Noenoe Silva provides the following translation in “Hawaiian Literature in Hawaiian”: “Forty thousand, four thousand, four hundred forms the woman’s body takes (112). My translation chooses diction that alludes to her battle with Kumuhonua: “Forty thousand, four thousand, four hundred, her forms are legion.” I invoke this Ōiwi poetic expression of many to emphasize the metaphor of shapeshifting.

protection by her grandmother, which necessarily sets the stakes of (mis)recognition, relationality, and identity for mo‘o wahine. Although the weliweli typical of mo‘o descriptions creates an ominous mood, a sense of vulnerability also develops through tactile imagery (“dropping her wrinkled hands” and “tail. Duct-taped to your thigh” [68]) and short lines.

In the second poem "bath water," the mo‘opuna of "Grandma tells" starts to earn her narrative power by commemorating Haumea. Specifically, "bath water" honors the first time I visited and performed poetry at Papahana Kualoa in the ahupua‘a of He‘eia in the ‘ili of Waipao on O‘ahu. At Waipao I was introduced to the po‘owai Haakolea, which is associated with Haumea who, as I was told, is sometimes seen on the rocks nearby. "bath water" also shapeshifts into an erotic poem for Haumea and engages the theme of consent in the context of Native Hawaiian and feminist epistemologies. Since I was malihini (foreign) to Haakolea, I wrote "bath water" as part of a longer process of asking permission to be on that land and near that body of water. The repetition of "may I" throughout the poem underlines the significance of ongoing enthusiastic consent in the connected acts of acknowledging one's kuleana to land and story, asking permission to share story on land to which one is not kama‘āina (child of the land), and centering consent in sexual contact. Collectively, "Grandma tells" and "bath water" establish shapeshifting in the context of Native Hawaiian women, intergenerational stories, queer desire, and consent.

The second section “form a native daughter” is a single poem that commemorates the mentorship of Haunani-Kay Trask. As my work acknowledges, participates in, and expands the decolonial legacy of Trask in Native Hawaiian scholarship and poetry, I dedicate an entire section to her memory and use documentary strategies to juxtapose real-life information, such

as dialogue and Trask's publication history, with poetic commemoration.

The third section "beddings, sheddings & weddings" offer poems related to queer desire and intergenerational cycles of trauma and healing. As the longest section of the dissertation, "beddings, sheddings & weddings" animates the metaphor of shapeshifting with the largest variety of poetic forms and techniques. The predominant poetic forms in "beddings, sheddings & weddings" are prose poems and recursive forms like the villanelle. If kino lau are the different forms mo'o can take,⁵⁹ and genres are the different forms story can take, it is instructive to think of genre in terms of occasion, place, desire, and kuleana. Rather than emphasize the what of genre boundaries, this dissertation explores the why of a kino lau and thus the why of form. Why is this body the one to survive? Why this body to heal this wound? Kino lau and genre are conceptually juxtaposed in this dissertation to keep alive the relationship between form and content. Just as certain bodies possess different mana and privilege, certain poetic forms provide different conditions of visibility and movement.

In the fourth section, I outline a mo'o poetics and the theory of polylasting. In the beginning of my Ph.D. program, during a teacher-student conference, Craig Santos Perez asked me to define the line as it functions in my poetics. What is the line? As I progressed through my course work, area exams, and dissertation requirements in the creative writing track, my answer to this question developed concurrently with my crafting of a mo'o poetics. In poetry, the line is a basic tool of expression, organization, and rhythm. In my strand of mo'o poetics, I have come to claim the line as something to wrap my body around. Since writing is a recursive

⁵⁹ Some mo'o kino lau include but are not limited to: mo'o, wahine, 'ilo mo'o (brindled dog), and 'o'opu (goby fish).

process, I am constantly wrapping my body around stories to remember and re-member desire and belonging.

In my strand of mo'ō poetics, I gravitate to fragments because memory and survival happen in fragments. To re-member stories of trauma as well as pleasure, I utilize fragmentation and caesurae to index the act of shapeshifting and the different strategies of regeneration and transformation therein. Healing, after all, involves intricate and long-term processes, which do not produce bodies instantly “cured” of trauma. Instead, as poems like “Mercy” reveal, healing happens in stages, and poetic devices like fragmentation and caesurae illuminate the ways we shapeshift through these stages.

On the page, fragmentation visualizes the act of re-membering. As smaller pieces of a larger whole, poetic fragments imply a larger interpretive structure without necessarily aspiring to become wholesome. Arguably, poetic fragments are autonomous with their own narrative and figurative centers. Fragments also reveal constraints in time and space, interrupting the orderly flow (read as: business as usual) of time as structured by heteropatriarchy, rape culture, settler colonialism, and extractive capitalism. By interrupting these timelines, fragments also recalibrate the relationship between our bodies and our environment. In this way, fragmentation is a poetic device apropos of the sever-to-survive ethos that informed my initial grappling with Pukui's ideal of “contiguous unbroken articulation.” In a mo'ō poetics, fragmentation embraces the motifs of shedding, severing, and shattering not as irredeemable points of trauma but rather as useful sites of (re)creation and transformation.

Trauma, however, is undeniable in this dissertation. In order to balance the overwhelming weight of trauma in some poems, I also use fragmentation as an act of code-

switching. Code-switching is a communication tactic that enables people inside an unsupportive, if not dangerous, rhetorical context to exchange information without explicitly flagging themselves as transgressive subjects. In my 'ohana, for instance, sexual violence perpetrated between family members is not discussed openly. Yet when I say "screen door" instead of "rape" in the poem "Cutting Flowers for the Dead," or when I say "that lap" instead of a specific uncle's name in "The moment of water we need," I acknowledge the reality of testimony as a punishable offense in my family while also revealing the system of protection that young girls like my cousins and I developed to help each other survive and outsmart sexual violence.

Caesurae is another primary mode of communication in a mo'o poetics. According to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, caesura "refers to the place in a line of verse where the metrical flow is temporarily 'cut off'" (174).⁶⁰ Caesurae, whether initial (beginning of a line), medial (middle of a line), or terminal (end of a line), are marked by punctuation or white space. Some critics argue that caesurae are distinct from performative pauses and individual speech tempos in traditional metrical design; it is a break in syntax that is related to meter. Demonstrably, the caesurae was traditionally poised as a pause in the metrical flow of verse that was used to prevent monotony. However, like the work of many Native Hawaiian writers, my poetry is not governed by meter, so it was important throughout my dissertation to consider how and why I use caesurae.

⁶⁰ As a mo'o poetics emphasizes fragmentation, it is important to note that the etymology of *caesura* traces back to the Latin term for "cutting." See "caesura," *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 2019, <http://www.oed.com.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/view/Entry/26025?rskey=Xr5rMY&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

“Pantoum for Missing Bride,” for instance, uses caesurae to defamiliarize the pantoum form by stretching its tight circuit of repetition. The nineteenth century French pantoum is based on the Malay form *pantun*. Although the French pantoum is not regulated by a specific length, the form is characterized by cross-rhyme and repetition of lines. The form begins and ends with the same line and the second and fourth lines of each stanza becomes the first and third line of subsequent stanzas, thus invoking themes of return and cycles. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland observe: “Of all verse forms the pantoum is the slowest: The reader takes four steps forward, then two back. It is the perfect form for the evocation of a past time” (44). Indeed the French pantoum is non-linear and recursive. By experimenting with caesurae and repetition of lines, I reinforce the theme of shapeshifting. Traceability and adaptation is also reinforced when the repeated lines share major words but not necessarily the same syntax or punctuation. What was missed the first time can be revisited the second time. Consequently, shapeshifting through caesurae and repetition establishes what Strand and Boland describe as “antinarrative time,” which is non-linear and exploratory (45).

In my strand of mo’o poetics, caesurae, like fragments, are used as opportunities to grapple with the sever-to-survive ethos that I take on in response to Pukui’s “contiguous unbroken articulation.” Although caesurae are traditionally deployed more as sonic rather than conceptual pauses in metered poetry, I use caesurae as an entry point to thinking through gaps in knowledge. Even without direct contact between words and phrases, caesurae create horizontal movement across the page. When caesurae are used in the place of line breaks, juxtapositions between fragments illuminate the edges of words, phrases, and images, forcing readers to rest on a specific (dis)(re)connection and evaluate how it reinforces or subverts

theme.

In line with non-linear and exploratory modes of writing, a mo'ō poetics also emphasizes associative writing. Specifically, in my prewriting process, I use free-writing exercises in word association to generate material. Although my prewriting strategies are mixed and are often poem-specific, I generated a lot of material based on word association exercises that are attentive to sound. Consequently, sonic relationships in the pre-writing stage frequently led to uses of repetition in the writing and revising stages that highlight alliteration, consonance, assonance, anaphora, and refrain.

My strand of mo'ō poetics also informs my revision stage. In addition to asking what the controlling diction or image of a poem may be, revision also challenges me to identify and honor how continuity and contiguity unify each poem. Consequently, techniques of juxtaposition, collage, and polyvocality, which I directly draw from my training in documentary poetry, come into play. A central question throughout my revision stage, for example, was whether more voices needed to emerge in certain poems. Both “The moment of water we need” and “Epigenetics of sharp” began as single-column poems that featured a single voice, and both poems later demanded polyvocal representation as well as an expansion across the page into multiple columns. Thus the contrapuntal is a featured genre in mo'ō poetics.

Drawing from the “slyly / reproductive” ethos of Trask and Lorde’s theory of the erotic as power, a mo'ō poetics contributes to the field of Native Hawaiian literature through content and form. In terms of content, my strand of mo'ō poetics emphasizes stories of mo'ō, queer desire, and intergenerational cycles of trauma and healing. Motifs of skin, water, and rope testify to queer Native bodies as palimpsests of multiple pasts and presents that write toward decolonial

love. In terms of form, a mo‘o poetics is defined by polyvocal, non-linear, associative, and fragmented writing.

Finally, in the fifth section “erotics of aloha ‘āina,” I feature documentary poetry, papa helu (list form), and experimental typography to explore issues of desire and Hawaiian sovereignty. Indeed the question of how we become free must actively include discussions of gender, sexuality, and pleasure.

Inspired by the Indigenous queer theorizing of Native Hawaiian scholar and activist Kahala Johnson, “erotics of aloha ‘āina” includes erasure poems of dictionary entries for the Hawaiian concepts of ‘ai and aloha. In “Bringing Ai Back to Aina,” Johnson explains his own process of mapping erotic sovereignty in the lunar journal⁶¹ produced by Kealopiko and the Moon Phase Project. “Lesbehonest,” he writes. “When my lunar journal finally arrived in the mail, I immediately did what any self-respecting poly-queer Hawaiian researcher would do: I converted it into a record for logging sexual play under the guise of kaona” (“Bringing Ai”). Central to his mapping is the intersection between erotic knowledge and “mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness.” Or, as my opening poem of “erotics of aloha ‘āina” summarizes:

if ‘āina is that which feeds,
if aloha ‘āina is love and lover of land,
then she who feeds is she who fucks.

‘Āina will fuck back. (136)

⁶¹ See “Hilo ‘Ia A Pa‘a: Moon Phase Journal.”

Johnson offers the theory of ai sensualities to emphasize links between the sensory intelligence of Indigenous bodies and political movements for sovereignty (“Bringing Ai”).⁶² Quite similar to Lorde’s imperative in “Uses of the Erotic,” Johnson conceptualizes erotic knowledge as a source of healing and decolonization.

Similarly, in *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature*, queer Indigenous writers present work in which sexuality is not a finite category of identification but rather afforded space to proliferate and interrogate connected systems of power and desire. Daniel Heath Justice articulates this point efficiently: “Every orgasm can be an act of decolonization” (qtd. 3). The queer indigenous body is claimed as a veritable site of information and creativity, which underlines one of the main themes of this collection.

I wai no‘u: An Offering of Mo‘o Poetics

I wai no‘u.

Give me water.

Said to challenge another to a game or contest.

--- ‘Ōlelo No‘eau 1264

When shapeshifting becomes more overwhelming than regenerative, “I wai no‘u” is the ‘ōlelo no‘eau that replenishes me. Hawaiian language translator, scholar, and editor Bryan

⁶² In her discussion of Haumea, who she explicitly identifies as mo‘o, Native Hawaiian historian Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa remarks on the ai-‘ai dynamic that both my and Johnson’s work elaborates: “Indeed, sexual power and political power are very close in the Hawaiian mind; the word *ai* means to make love and the word *‘ai* means to rule the land. Thus we have the female *Akua* Haumea, most famous on the island of O‘ahu, who is a goddess of childbirth, war, and politics” (4). See Kame‘eleihiwa, *Nā Wāhine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women*, ‘Ai Pōhaku, 2002.

Kamaoli Kuwada explains how the ‘ōlelo no‘eau exceeds an ordinary request for water. Implicit in the phrase “i wai no‘u” are “different facets of urgent desire, constant seeking, and yearning, all crying out to be quenched” (Kuwada, Bacchilega, Lizzo 1). Kuwada adds that he first learned the phrase “i wai no‘u” to denote physical thirst, which is both a reasonable and practical application of the ‘ōlelo no‘eau. However, after several years of studying Hawaiian language, culture, and history, Kuwada learned how the phrase can also function in the contexts of battle, romance, and politics.

My relationship with “i wai no‘u” has similarly evolved to consider different forms of thirst and satisfaction that are not listed in Pukui’s foundational text. In this dissertation, I attempt to widen the lens of traditional mo‘o mo‘olelo and ‘Ōiwi poetics to grapple with issues of identity, desire, and belonging that inscribe my 32-year-old body. As an Indigenous and queer poet, I still long for books that will reflect desire the way it works inside my body. I still long for books that depict queer Indigenous femme survivors. To date, there is no full-length poetry collection explicitly identified as authored by a queer Native Hawaiian wahine, certainly not a queer Native Hawaiian wahine who descends from mo‘o. While no single publication can encompass the diversity of queer ‘Ōiwi wahine, this project hopes to improve the representational power and visibility in contemporary Hawaiian literature of mo‘o akua, mo‘o descendents, and queer ‘Ōiwi wahine who have survived cycles of sexual violence. The following poems are offered as a queer decolonial resource based in ‘Ōiwi worldviews and poetics.

With this collection, I join the ranks of queer Pacific poets like Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Dan Taulapapa McMullin, Lehua Taitano, Kai Gaspar, Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, Tagi

Qolouvaki, Keali'i MacKenzie, Jocelyn Ng, and Terisa Siagatonu whose work asserts: "The Ocean is Hella Gay" (Siagatonu). Yet in order to cultivate long-term literary and political significance, there needs to be more of us. More queer Pacific women writers must write, be published, be mentored, and be represented. We deserve more than a lifetime in metaphor. Elevating the "we" of LGBTQ communities in the Pacific, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku reminds us:

We will never go away. Never. Never. Never. For we are your technicians, waitresses, doctors, cashiers, mental workers, teachers, potters, dentist, cabin crew, shop-keepers, lecturers, nurses, bus drivers, secretaries, drain layers, florists, undertakers, telephonists, DJs, paperhangers, carpenters, hairdressers, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons. We are truly everywhere and we will never, ever go away. (41)

Queer Pacific women are everywhere. Mo'o are everywhere. If we vanish, it is not because we are irrelevant or passive. If we vanish, it is not because fear governs our bodies. If we vanish, it is not because we don't deserve to claim space. If we vanish, it is because you, dear reader, do not have the eyes to see us. Our bodies are not objects of consumption and neither our pleasure nor pain are your entertainment. If we vanish, as my grandmother tells it, you do not have the eyes. 'A'ohe 'ike. Yet you will feel the splashing water and you will feel the cold sky as our birds block the sun. I am a Native daughter. I use my poetry to root me to my mo'okū'auhau and re-route worlds of pain toward strength and strategy. This dissertation is a mo'o-inspired, 'Ōiwi wahine-centered, survivor-centered, sex-positive, queer-loving, and queer-living work. Ultimately, this collection is a statement of how I have shapeshifted to learn better

ways how to care for my body and the bodies of wai, waiwai, and wahine who I love and will always protect.

We are not monsters. And we are not alone.

To all the mo'o, in what ever skin you have chosen today, I see you. I believe you.