

Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, Richard Hamasaki, and the  
Afterlives of (Native/non-native) Collaboration  
against Empire in Hawai'i

And because they are with us *in spirit*, they are whom  
we turn to for *inspiration*, and in that sense they are  
*always* returning.

(Rodney Morales, *Ho'ibo'i Hou*)

I tell you his spirit for me is always here; sometimes I can  
just feel him, his presence and I feel as if he's constantly  
inspiring me.

(Richard Hamasaki, "Interview")

When Wayne Kaumualii Westlake passed away in 1984 at the age of thirty-six in Hawai'i, many of his poems and writings remained unpublished. They sat in boxes in the Hawai'i-Island shed of Westlake's former partner, Mei-Li M. Siy, for seventeen years, until Siy organized and sent them along to Richard Hamasaki, who had been Westlake's friend, fellow-poet, and collaborator. Hamasaki and Westlake had worked together on a range of literary-pedagogic projects, increasingly committed to the exigencies of Hawai'i as a space of creativity and struggle, from editing the journal *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1976-1984) to founding a course on the Ethnic Writings of Hawai'i at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. Their aim, at a time when there was hardly any institutional support for polemical art by local and indigenous artists, was to "publish works which depicted a 'consciousness' of Hawai'i's contemporary social, economic, and political situation",<sup>1</sup> and to encourage Hawai'i writers to explore their own situatedness within Oceania. For Hamasaki, who had long sustained a literary dialogue with Westlake within his own work, Westlake's spirit was in the poems: "his / poems", as he wrote in the poem "Westlake", were in a sense "his / bones".<sup>2</sup> To re-present them required loving attentiveness. There were numerous editorial decisions to be made: which poems to include and which versions to prefer; what contextual and biographical materials to provide. The best guidance he received, Hamasaki writes in the afterword to *Westlake: Poems*, which finally appeared in 2009, was to "be true to Westlake".<sup>3</sup>

The question of how to "be true" to one's friend is an old one in the European philosophical tradition, which has come back in the work of Jacques Derrida and others, for whom friendship can be seen as modeling the political. Relations among citizens in the realized democratic state are to resemble those between friends. To be friends in opposition to the state, as in the case with friendships between Natives and Settlers in an occupied or colonized place, is to point to flaws in governance. For Leela Gandhi, in *Affective Communities*, collaborative friendships thus offer a powerful critique of both the colonial state and its pure negation in forms of anti-

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hamasaki, "Singing in Their Genealogical Trees: The Emergence of Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry in English", MA Thesis (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 1989), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Hamasaki, *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (Honolulu: Noio Press, 2000), 11; hereafter referenced in the text as *SBD*.

<sup>3</sup> Hamasaki, Introduction, *Westlake: Poems by Wayne Kaumualii Westlake (1947-1984)*, ed. by Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 243; hereafter referenced in the text as *W*.

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colonial nationalist thought. Personal collaborations are regarded here in the fully-loaded political sense, as re-significations of the image of collaboration with the State, whether as direct collusion or insufficient resistance (passivity). In developing radical, improvisational, inventive projects, the friendships that Gandhi discusses refuse “alignment along the secure axes of filiation”, thus imagining the postcolonial future as differently organized.<sup>4</sup>

Given the centrality of mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) in kanaka maoli (Hawaiian) thought, and the ways in which U.S. State attempts to diminish the significance of mo‘okū‘auhau are legally deployed against Hawaiian ‘entitlements’, alliances in Hawai‘i that elide identity-recognition run a different set of risks than those Gandhi describes in *fin-de-siècle* India. For one thing, the current call of the U.S. State is to see Native/non-native differences as matters of ‘race’ or ‘ethnic heritage’ in ways that would abrogate all kanaka maoli land and resource claims. One might then distinguish between the senses in which the State denies that the situation in Hawai‘i is (any longer) colonial, and the suggestion on the part of a line of legal scholars/Independence-activists that, since Hawai‘i was a progressive multi-ethnic state at the time of the overthrow, citizenship in a reconstituted Kingdom would not exclude Settlers/non-natives.<sup>5</sup> The first position (classic ‘settler colonialism’) displaces the Native through assimilation; the second, more focused on citizenship, would neither foreclose indigenous claims or the possibility of non-native belonging in an Independent Hawai‘i. In this sense, Gandhi’s suggestion that dissident collaborative circles, based on affective connections and outlooks that exceed issue-specific tactical alliances, can reinfect the tone and terms of political discussion, is apposite. Within such a project the friendship and dissident artistic projects of Hamasaki (who always foregrounds his own position as Japanese-American) and Westlake (who writes as an Hawaiian) figure one example of a mode and space of what might be called Native/non-native<sup>6</sup> collaboration against Empire within the arts. Such collaborative friendships have a history in Hawai‘i, become a usable inheritance, and have an uncanny power to continue generating effects.

Much of friendship theory emphasizes death as the time from which the meaning of the friendship, and the principles upon which it was founded, are to be reassessed or reaffirmed. What is honored in the friend is recuperated and faced outward toward the reader as the commitment to shared ideals. To accept oneself as heir to the editorial problem of being true to one’s friend’s literary remains stimulates such a process, in which the being-possessed of mourning becomes a form of continuing the collaborative relation and activity. To ask the question of how the friend would want his writings to appear, were he present, is in a sense to feel the friend as a presence in the now-context in which the poems are consolidated into a collection bearing his name. If one were not to impose one’s own vision and shape on the legacy of the friend, it would seem necessary to keep on collaborating with his spirit, which would in a sense keep coming back. Hauntology, as Jacques Derrida calls such returns, is when a particular mourned spirit shows the uncanny power to make injunctions upon the living. There are always, in such returns,

<sup>4</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of the ways in which Asian settler claims to belonging categorically obstruct kanaka maoli drives for self-determination, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> My preference for the term “non-native” over “settler” in this essay is not meant to question either that subjects are prepositioned or that a structural critique of colonial/occupation remains necessary, so much as to emphasize the force of collaborative relationships against the state.

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several spirits in the archive that is attributed to a proper name. But the spirit or “specter” that is most compelling, Derrida writes, is the one who speaks to a crisis that remains urgent, offering direction at a time of an “out-of-joint-ness” that can only be imaged as “set right” or made more “just” in a “future-to-come”. (Place the Hawaiian word pono where Derrida uses “justice” and the theory here becomes more grounded in the poetics and priorities of Hawai‘i). The specter wants to cross the temporal gap, and can even seem to speak from the future, having gone in poetic flashes and revolutionary language conjunctions past the consciousnesses of those who read it in the present.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1994), 42. See Rob Wilson’s “Tracking Jack Spicer” on Spicer’s “lowghost” poetics that keep returning from the future (*Jacket*, 7 (1999), <<http://jacketmagazine.com/07/spicer-wilson.html>>, 1 August 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Craig Howes, Introduction, *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future*, ed. by Craig Howes and Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 5.

In Hamasaki’s writings, ‘Westlake’ is, among other things, just such a visionary, haunting ‘specter’, who speaks through his poems and activist writings to an ongoing crisis, the loss of sovereignty, which can be seen as the root of many of the spiritual and physical ailments in Hawai‘i. One of the themes emerging from a recent collection of essays on ‘value’ in Hawai‘i, Craig Howes writes, is that “Hawai‘i will remain economically, socially, and ethically troubled as long as we refuse to come fully to terms with Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty”.<sup>8</sup> One could say, echoing Marx, that a specter is haunting Hawai‘i – the specter of sovereignty. This is to recall a line of thought in Hawai‘i, from the time of the overthrow forward, which prizes home rule, which was supported at the time of the illegal overthrow of the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hawai‘i (in 1893) by most kānaka maoli and many non-natives. This line of thought was vigorously reanimated in the late 1970s, with the Hawaiian Renaissance and activist land struggles, in relation to which what might be considered the beginning of an oppositional literary arts culture began to emerge, taking a variety of lines.

The fault lines within such ‘localism’, in its literary form, became evident in the mid-1980s, and were debated through the 1990s, breaking around the question of whether Hawai‘i was to be thought of as affectively part of ‘America’ – as region, ‘local’ movement, or sub-nation within it, for which ‘Bamboo Ridge’ (the focal point of much of the debate about the politics of ‘local’ literature, despite, or because, its editors take a generally apolitical stance toward literature) might figure as sign – or taken to be an occupied/colonized place, whose subjects might form alliances internally, articulating their politics with indigenous claims, in support of the principle of sovereignty, and externally, in relation to decolonizing movements in the Pacific and elsewhere. To dissident creative writer/artists in Hawai‘i, the call of the U.S. state to a participatory citizenship built on Hawaiian displacement or legal assimilation inspires no affective loyalty. In this light, while there is a maverick, irreverent spirit of Westlake that Hamasaki invokes in his framings of his friend’s work, the name ‘Westlake’ evokes and sparks a mode of critique, tethered to an unequivocal belief “in a separatist relation” with the U.S. (*W*, xx), while internationalist in its poetic formation and sensibilities. This ‘Westlake’ names the spirit of a trajectory seen from its activist endpoint; the title of the book containing his poetic legacy would simply be his name, *Westlake: Poems*.

In the most immediate senses, Westlake, Hamasaki, and what began as what might be called the *Seaweeds and Constructions* hui (group) worked toward creating a

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space for a dissident Hawai'i poetics that situated itself within decolonizing Pacific frames. Their tactics were symbolically significant – confrontations (in letters to the editorial page, interventions at meetings, readings, and performances) of a set of institutions, such as the publishing culture and arts-funding organizations that did not at the time support local or indigenous work. It meant attempting to trouble at the curricular and pedagogical levels an educational system which undervalued kanaka maoli and Pacific literary traditions and productions. It meant being at odds with an 'English Department poetry culture' that had virtually no local or indigenous representation, and that was seen as promoting the ideas that fine literary models and teachers had to be imported from elsewhere, and that 'Hawai'i literature' was a colorful form of U.S. regionalism, best expressed through polished formal techniques that studiously avoided political engagement.<sup>9</sup>

From a radical viewpoint, all of these biases could be seen as elaborations – whether consciously maintained or not – of the workings of 'Empire', in the multiple and shifting senses of the term. One could refer here to an Imperial Anglo-Americanism, a set of anglo-centric attitudes about the meaning and function of literary arts culture, against which 'local' and indigenous peoples in Hawai'i began to make imaginative counter-claims; military-backed U.S. colonialism and the multi-sited project of interpellating subjects to collaborate with the U.S. State, which could be opposed by struggles for sovereignty and/or a commitment to leftist internationalism; and the exploitative and environmentally-destructive Empire of transnational corporatism, something that Hardt and Negri would come to describe in *Empire*, against which a pan-Pacific and global oppositional culture was forming across the Pacific.<sup>10</sup> Toward this end, *Seaweeds and Constructions* was ground-breaking in attempting to affirm cross-Pacific linkages as an imaginative correlative to political principle. Westlake and Hamasaki wrote in an introduction to an 'Hawai'i Edition' of *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* of beginning "artistic and literary exchanges between Hawai'i and other Pacific Islands",<sup>11</sup> not just to trade stories or engage in comparativism, but to empower collective expression and critique. The final issue that Hamasaki and Westlake co-edited, A Pacific Islands Collection issue of *Seaweeds and Constructions* (a collection of Pacific writing illustrated by Hawai'i-based artists), was presented as an expression of "cultural freedom and responsibility, a sensibility for human justice and a deep respect for the Earth" that were aimed to "stir thoughts and discussion in our .... exploited and endangered world".<sup>12</sup>

To advocate for and perform an understanding of the arts as an attempt to move the heart and consciousness politically against the structures of Empire in Hawai'i required for Westlake and Hamasaki both a highly place-centered, painterly aesthetic, informed by kanaka maoli expressive traditions, and an internationalist understanding of poetry. It eventuated in an ongoing commitment to an aesthetic that was multi-sourced and risk-taking, drawing openly upon the modes of anti-materialist, anti-exploitative thought to mourn and challenge what had and was being done to the 'āina (that which feeds, environment), indigenous and local cultures, and the

<sup>9</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask wrote in 1984 that there were only two small outlets for indigenous writing in Hawai'i at the time, *Seaweeds and Constructions* and *Ramrod*. "Indigenous Writers and the Colonial Situation", *Pacific Islanders in Communication*, 13.1 (1984), 77–81.

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hamasaki and Wayne Westlake, Forward, *Hawaii Edition. Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 6.1 (1981), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hamasaki, Preface, in *A Pacific Islands Collection. Seaweeds and Constructions*, 7 (1983), viii.

consciousness of Hawai‘i’s people, particularly kānaka maoli. Both Westlake and Hamasaki draw upon the wisdom and humor of Chinese sage-poets, dharma bums, Poundian modernism, and Japanese short satiric forms in developing a poetics that is openly about consciousness-raising. In Westlake’s oft-cited concrete poems, for instance, there is a subtle layering of what look like modernist-inflected Asian forms (haiku, Chinese ideograms) with a complex critique, as a poem which begins:

HAWAIIANS  
 EAT  
 FISH  
 EAT  
 HAWAIIANS. (*W*, 52, 225)

As ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui notes, the line contains both an injunction (Hawaiians should eat fish, or a traditional diet, avoiding unwholesome imports) and an historical echo of the 19th century apprehension that Hawai‘i would be consumed by colonial powers (David Malo’s warning that “they will eat us up”).<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the poem might be situated within the conventions of joyous recognition that all human things both consume and are consumed, and that this is as much a principle of artistic creativity as it is of physical survival.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, “He Lei Ho‘ohenoheno no nā Kau a Kau: Language, Performance, and Form in Hawaiian Poetry”, *Contemporary Pacific* 17.1 (2005), 55–58. See also *W*, 252.

<sup>14</sup> Before theorizing creative writing as a gift akin to sharing food, Lewis Hyde invokes the Upanishads: “O wonderful! / I am food! ... / I eat food! ... / I, who am food, eat the eater of food”. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Hamasaki, “The Full Moon Claimed Westlake”, in *Mālama: Hawaiian Land and Water*, ed. by Dana Naone Hall (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1985), 97.

<sup>16</sup> Westlake, *It’s OK If You Eat Lots of Rice* (Lafayette, IN: High/Coo Press, 1979), unpaginated pamphlet.

In Westlake’s more explicitly activist mode the emphasis is on how these natural cycles have been perverted, and with what effect. The concrete poem “HULI” (*W*, 130), which consists simply of the block-lettered word ‘huli’ turned upside-down, says it compactly. The word, one of whose primary meanings is ‘to turn’, evokes the overthrow of the Hawaiian government (ho‘ohuli aupuni), marked to this day by the flying upside-down of the Hawaiian Flag. Language in Hawai‘i has itself been ‘turned over’ to English: “Language the missionaries taught us was broken glass”, Westlake writes, echoing postcolonial invocations of Shakespeare’s Caliban (“you taught me language”): “Our tongues are still bleeding” (*W*, 225). The stress in a number of hard-hitting poems falls upon the crazy-making effects that flow from the loss of sovereignty. In literary terms, this might mean the sense of being held within restrictive institutional or imaginative structures, which, in Hamasaki’s remembrance, created in Westlake a “raging anger over his own brains being washed and hung out to dry upon line after line of dead literature”.<sup>15</sup> In material terms, it meant confronting a system, what Westlake spelled out as “Amerika”, in which “THE NAME OF THE GAME / IS PROFIT” (*W*, 143). In the face of the ugliness this produced, Westlake wrote poems of the mind in the act of recording impressions as it is acted upon. In this mode of embodied critique, Westlake documents the polluting effects of colonialism from interior perspectives, speaking through personae in a poetic diary mode (*W*, xi). The process makes his mind feel like a trash receptacle: “Wish I / could empty / my Mind / like an ashtray ...” (*W*, 171). Redemption feels possible only within a commercialized logic: “Tomorrow I / plan to cash / in my mind / like an empty / for the deposit!”<sup>16</sup>

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The critique of the effects of colonialism on subjectivity, as in much of first-wave Pacific and postcolonial literature, is most pointed in relation to tourism, of which Waikīkī appears as the inverted Mecca. In the poetic sequence, “Down on the Sidewalks in Waikiki”, written between 1972-3 under the pen-name Kamalii Kahewai, and unpublished at Westlake’s death, Waikīkī appears as a brutal physical manifestation of the spiritual desecration of Hawai‘i. The vantage point of the janitor who narrates the poems, “down” on the sidewalk, provides a bardic underview for the poet, who writes, “down on the sidewalk / in waikiki / I / SEE / EVERYTHING”, but who cannot simply observe without fearing for his own mind. When a starving, doped-up man breaks through a plate-glass window looking for BREAD, the janitor has to clean his blood from the bathroom (*W*, 143) and, subsequently, “wring his mind / like a blood-stained sponge” (*W*, 150); after days spent “cleaning piss / off the floor / of the japanese / tourist store” (*W*, 146), the tourists, whose self-crippling ignorance of the political economy behind their own presence in Waikīkī makes them no less complicit in the poet’s eyes, become one “gigantic PIG / PARADE / staggering by ...”. The streets, as a metaphor for mental life in Hawai‘i, come to feel inhabitable: “A SAVAGE / CAN’T LIVE / IN AMERIKA / and Amerika / i tell you / is EVERYWHERE” (*W*, 147); “i watch them / the Pigs – / the Pigs, /they watch me – / it’s enough to drive / any man / CRAZY” (*W*, 152). The kānaka maoli not displaced or made crazy undergo an assault on identity: as the persona of “Native-Hawaiian” puts it:

how we spose  
feel Hawaiian anymoa  
barefeet buying smokes  
in da seven  
elevan stoa ... ? (*W*, 189)

The bitter final twist to this sequence is that the poet has chosen to immerse himself in the ugliness of Waikīkī in order to give his poems “bite” (“to give my poems / BITE / i sit all day / down on the / sidewalk / in waikiki” [*W*, 152]).

The sense that “injustice provokes poetry” (*SBD*, 68), and that a kind of ‘guerilla’ stance toward poetry is necessary to provide a biting critique from the margins, is frequently referred to in Hamasaki’s poems, as in a series of serio-comic, itchy poems spoken from the persona “red flea”, which appeared as the spoken-word CD and chapbook *Virtual Fleality* (co-produced with Doug Matsuoka) (see “Guerilla Writers”, in *SBD*, 57). This chastising mode is presented as enervating, and in the poem, “Land of the Dead”, “red flea” visits “the poet Wayne Westlake”, serves him sake, and receives poetic reassurance. The cover of *Virtual Fleality* visually references Westlake’s cover to *Anthology Hawai‘i*, put out by *Seaweeds and Constructions*, with its small red (flea) fingerprint, an echo of Westlake’s signature use of a red Chinese seal. Likewise, the cover of *Westlake: Poems* was designed in fighting red (by Mark Hamasaki) as a companion cover to Hamasaki’s *From the Spider Bone Diaries: Poems and Songs* (2000), a selection of poems written over a twenty-five year

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Hamasaki likewise has had a long, productive collaboration with Kapu Landgraf. See the portfolio co-signed as “Piliāmo‘o”, *Mānoa*, 9.1 (1997), 119–136, and the forthcoming collection of photographs documenting the destructive process of building the H3 highway across O‘ahu.

<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson, *The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 209), 35–37.

period. To read in such moments the ways in which Hamasaki keeps returning to ‘Westlake’ is to feel his alliances to principles of how to be an artist (poet, teacher, editor, music producer) ethically in Hawai‘i.<sup>17</sup>

*Spider Bone Diaries* opens with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of an immense sea of stars, and a luminous moon seemingly stippled with islands as in a map of the Pacific. In the Oceanian context, these skies might recall celestial navigation, and the epic voyages that raised and linked the islands, affirming connections. If the visual image suggests that the collection both honors those voyages and sees its own poetic voyaging as a form of wayfaring, under the wonder and immensity of the world that surrounds human actions, then the chant-like dirge that follows the serigraph introduces Westlake as one of its navigating spirits. “For He Who Wears the Sea Like a Malo” is inscribed “for Wayne Westlake (1947-1984)”. On the facing page is a translation of the poem into Rarotongan by Kauraka Kauraka, which honors Westlake in the sounds of a Pacific language at the outset. As Hamasaki notes, the title and refrain refer to the line “O ka malo kai, malo o ke alii”, used in the eulogy “He Mele Inoa no Naihe” (name song for Naihe), reprinted in Nathaniel Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii*,<sup>18</sup> in which the malo kai (the ocean as a malo) hides the nakedness of the swimmer. The honored speaker returns, wrapped in the sea, to speak a series of injunctions that pass through Hamasaki to direct the vision of the collection:

listen to our ancestors speaking  
and to those who know ways to heal

Finish what has been started  
placing one stone then another  
to never again be defeated  
and begin rebuilding shelter (*SBD*, 2)

Mourning for Westlake includes a general sense of loss, as well as a resolve to rebuild. Part of what needs finishing but is never quite finished, for Hamasaki, is the process of honoring his friend, tending to his legacy. Placing one stone and then another is in one sense a poetic process of building more habitable, hospitable, protective structures, which is here implicitly compared to building a heiau (shrine) or fortress. By asserting that ‘Westlake’ is with him in spirit from the outset of his collection, Hamasaki performs what is for him one afterlife of collaboration. A certain spirit of ‘Westlake’ enjoins the reader to attend to an as-yet-unfinished process of healing and cultural reorientation. What is spoken *for Westlake* is in a sense spoken *by* or alongside of him or in alliance with his spirit. To open by foregrounding this relation between poet, mourned friend, and a broader sense of mourning suggests that the poems and songs in *Spider Bone Diaries* will never get too far from what ‘Westlake’ represents. That much of the imagery is drawn from Hawaiian culture, Hamasaki writes in a note to the poem, is both a way of honoring Westlake and a performance of the ways in which, as he writes in a note to the poem, the traditions and literatures of Native Hawaiians have “indelibly shaped [his] own poetic voice” (*SBD*, 98).

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The poem “Westlake”, a few pages later, presents Westlake as a haunting, recurrently spectral presence for the poet, and inscribes his legacy both within a broad activist movement and a collaborative arts circle:

Sometimes  
I  
see  
him  
in  
a  
crowd  
  
still  
suffering. (*SBD*, 8)

First brushing against Pound’s impressionistic haiku-like lines, “The apparition of these faces in the crowd”, Hamasaki goes on in the poem to picture a Westlake Agonistes engaged to the point of trembling, suspended in a state of engaged agitation: “His voice / would quiver / hands shake”.<sup>19</sup> The attempt to word his responses to events affects Westlake somatically, and it is the moment of passionate oppositional energy that Hamasaki marks.

His  
hands  
trembling –  
  
Kaho‘olawe. (*SBD*, 8)

The word ‘Kaho‘olawe’ sounds, for a generation of readers, the cries of protest against the U.S. naval bombing of the island of Kaho‘olawe, and the grief Hawaiian activists felt at the disappearance of George Helm and Kimo Mitchell.<sup>20</sup> Kaho‘olawe hovers over Hamasaki’s collection and keeps coming back as an image of struggle, protest, loss, commitment. *Spider Bone Diaries* closes with a serigraph by Mark Hamasaki of ocean swells rising like mountains, scattered with ink-stars, over which the phrase, “DEATH AT SEA IS SWEET IF YOU LOVE THE SEA ALL YOUR LIFE” (an allusion to Helm and Mitchell as lost at sea) is repeated as a concrete poem in stacked sentences. On the facing page is a poem titled “Alalākeiki”, the name of the channel between Maui and Kaho‘olawe (meaning “child’s wail”), which recalls the “kinship / between islands”, and the ways that the “shoulders” of Haleakalā refuse to let Kaho‘olawe drift (*SBD*, 93). As a teacher in Poets in the Schools on Maui, Westlake had compiled chants, legends, poems, stories by elementary school students about Kaho‘olawe, which were dedicated to Helm and Mitchell, and featured in *Seaweeds and Constructions* (1978) and later “flung like jewels” in Rodney Morales’s *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou*.<sup>21</sup>

The penultimate stanza of “Westlake” positions Westlake explicitly as, for the poet, part of a collaborative circle. (*Seaweeds and Constructions* stopped publication with Westlake’s passing, and was succeeded by *Ramrod* and *O‘ahu Review*, edited by

<sup>19</sup> Hamasaki credits Pound’s work with inspiring a desire to “work collaboratively with other writers, musicians, artists, and printers” (*SB*, 104).

<sup>20</sup> Like nuclear testing in Oceania, the bombardment disregarded the land as living. Helm and Mitchell disappeared while trying to rescue Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer during an occupation of Kaho‘olawe. See Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho‘ibo‘i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



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the poet Joe Balaz, with whom Hamasaki and Doug Matsuoka would collaborate on the amplified-poetry CD *Electric Laulau*). What Hamasaki foregrounds about the group is its conviviality and oppositional thinking:

Westlake, Oliveira, Takahashi, Matsuoka, Hamasaki  
heh, heh, heh ...  
a  
toast  
to  
“wrong thinking”. (*SBD*, 10)

Including artists, musicians, and writers, the group produced and distributed their work largely outside of funding structures, designing (through ‘Elepiao press) and printing their work themselves (in collaboration with presses, including Dennis Kawaharada’s Kalamakū and Susan Schultz’s *Tinfish*). Such creative circles, as Michael Farrell describes them, are marked by numerous, untraceable borrowings, conversations, critiques, that come to inform each member’s work. The circles might form through a common set of objections, in an anti-authoritarian mode, something in the spirit of “delinquent gangs”,<sup>22</sup> but they evolve into supportive, creative, durable networks, held through affective connections. Most of what has been done in terms of advancing the literary arts in Hawai‘i, it could be argued, has come out of such small collectives of friends, working to critique, support, and even staple together each other’s art.

<sup>22</sup> Michael P. Ferrell, *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16.

Perhaps because the signs of such alliances are often removed or confined to acknowledgement pages, Hamasaki in *Spider Bone Diaries* includes extensive notes, contexts, and literary sources for the poems, and a substantial Introduction and Afterword to Westlake’s poems. There is an emphasis in this on documenting work that was shared, that emerged out of movements and in relation to events, on recognizing personal identity as formed within a web of traditions and relationships, so that the poems exist at some level as both personal history and an annotated record of a poetic response to a history upon which future generations of artists in Hawai‘i might build. The history of the poems comes to include their publishing histories, which includes a sense of the restricted options for oppositional art (on one’s own terms) in Hawai‘i. For Hamasaki, then, it couldn’t help but seem that the difficulty in publishing Westlake’s work emblemized publishing culture in Hawai‘i. The same year that he received the box of Westlake’s poems, Hamasaki answered Lee Tonouchi’s question about “whether or not anybody will evah get around to publishing one Wayne Westlake collection” with the suggestion that:

some people didn’t understand what he [Westlake] was doing, what he wrote about, how he wrote about it. Everything takes time, I don’t think it’s lost at all. I think his spirit will live, y’know. Whether anybody does anything about it from now on, his work has already been documented, and I think people can search it out and discover it.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lee A. Tonouchi, “Da State of Unlearning: One Profile on Richard Hamasaki”, *Hybolic*, 2 (2001), 84.

It thus seemed significant that, when *Westlake: Poems* was finally accepted by the University of Hawai‘i Press (as part of its Talanoa: Contemporary Pacific Literature

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series) and fully edited and designed, Hamasaki was required to provide a subvention of several thousand dollars for publication. Hamasaki's response was to turn the process of raising funds for the subvention into both a pedagogic protest moment, a rally for the dissident arts themselves, and a celebration of the meaning and performance qualities of Westlake's legacy. The publication process of *Westlake: Poems*, at least for a moment, seemed an allegory of the situation that Westlake and Hamasaki had critiqued. Seeing the book into print highlighted both the historic lack of support and venue for dissident kanaka maoli artists (although now, within the changing structure of Empire, this was perhaps less an issue of ideological blockage than of the University of Hawai'i Press's acting like a bottom-line-driven corporation) and its undoing through the involvement of the arts community. The existence of the volume *Westlake: Poems* in its edited form would be a testament to the power of the spirit of a friendship and collaboration to keep sprouting new life; the hui that Hamasaki assembled to organize the fund-raiser for the subvention, which received the name "Ho'ūlu Hou Wayne Westlake" from Kapu Landgraf, came together in the name of and as an extension of a larger collaborative project. 'Ho'ūlu' might be translated as 'excite', 'taunt', 'stir up' and 'hou' as 'again', 'anew', or 'freshly': Westlake's words and example were to return as inspiration and provocation. The kaona (veiled meaning) of 'Ho'ūlu' included a reference to the word "ulu", not just as growth, but as breadfruit, one of Westlake's 'aumākua (family deities, ancestors) (see *SBD*, 251).

The fund-raiser illustrated a degree of responsiveness that marked a shift in consciousness about the value of dissident art, and its place in the community. Around one-hundred local artists, writers, and performers contributed to the event, held in 2006, which included a silent auction of donated literature and art. The funds raised far exceeded what was required for the subvention, and the surplus was donated to Kuleana 'Ōiwi Press, which publishes *Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*, to establish the Wayne Kaumualii Westlake monograph series, under the editorship of ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, that would publish works by kanaka maoli artists. To support a journal that maintains a distinct space of articulation for kōnaka maoli was illustrative of the honoring and valuing of kanaka maoli culture that Hamasaki saw as fundamental to his own art, and fundamentally behind his collaborative work in the arts with Westlake. Poetry collections by Māhealani Wendt-Perez (*Ulubaimalama*, 2007)<sup>24</sup> and by Brandy Nālani McDougall (*The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai*, 2008)<sup>25</sup> appeared in this series ahead of *Westlake: Poems*, which was finally launched in 2009, by another gathering of artists, who were asked to choose poems of Westlake's to perform. This was another occasion for the community to celebrate Westlake's legacy, hear ways in which his poetry spoke to and through people, and publically celebrate the ways in which the spirit of an old collaboration can have rich afterlives and keep coming back.

Among those poets who read Westlake's poems at the launching, it was the irreverent artist and activist 'Westlake' who seemed uppermost to consciousness. It is this 'Westlake', under whose accessible but layered line runs a bass-note of

<sup>24</sup> Māhealani Perez-Wendt, *Ulubaimalama* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, *The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa'akai* (Honolulu: Kūleana 'Ōiwi Press, 2008).

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<sup>26</sup> Kimo Armitage et al., eds.,  
*The Statehood Project: A  
Spontaneous Collaboration* (Fat  
Ulu Productions, 2009).

mourning, who resurfaces strikingly in contemporary Hawai‘i writing. For instance, a dramatic response to the 50th Anniversary of Hawai‘i’s admission as a U.S. State (*The Statehood Project*),<sup>26</sup> performed at Kumu Kahua Theater by the group Fat ‘Ulu in the same year of the Westlake launching, included Westlake’s poem “Statehood” as a refrain:

15 years today  
    since STATEHOOD  
it’s raining  
i feel like  
    crying .... (*W*, 125)